

TEACHER PREPAREDNESS FOR
SPIRITUALLY TRANSFORMATIONAL TEACHING:
A CASE STUDY IN ONE CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL

by

Wendy Kearns Lewis

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctorate of Education

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ABSTRACT

This single instrumental case study examined a purposive sample of teachers from Live Oak Christian High School (a pseudonym) for indications that they were spiritually qualified, sufficiently trained, and intentionally committed to transformational Christian teaching. Spiritually qualified teachers would evidence an active Christian faith as demonstrated by a sound basic theology, verbalization of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and various spiritual practices. Teachers who were sufficiently trained would evidence personal knowledge, experience, education, or training related directly to Christian education. Teachers who were committed to transformational Christian teaching would evidence that intentionality in documents, surveys, classroom observations, and personal interviews. Twenty-two full-time teachers at the school completed a survey regarding their educational, professional, and spiritual backgrounds. Nine of these teachers were selected as participants in this study and represented a variation of age, gender, educational background, and spiritual background. Data collection included the survey results, document analysis, classroom observations, and individual interviews. The data was analyzed using Stake's (2005a) case study methodology. The findings showed that only teachers who evidenced an active Christian faith showed evidence of spiritually transformational teaching. Most teachers lacked sufficient formal training in either Christian worldview understanding, biblical knowledge, the integration of faith and learning, or spiritual nurture, though some compensated through personal study. Finally, the teachers who were intentionally committed to spiritually transformational teaching were those who evidenced an active faith. The study concluded with suggestions for further research.

Keywords: Christian education, Christian schools, high school, integration of faith and learning, intentionality, teacher preparedness, transformational teaching

Dedication

This study is dedicated first and foremost to my Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ, to whom I owe everything I hold dear in life. I bow humbly before you with thanksgiving for the privilege of being a daughter of the King, for the honor of studying under the Master Teacher, and for the joy of loving and serving Your children. My heart overflows with gratitude for Your lovingkindness!

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

American public and private schools share a common goal of teaching students a body of knowledge and a series of academic and socialization skills. Faith-based private schools set additional goals based on their religious convictions. Evangelical Christian schools, one kind of faith-based school, focus distinctly on integrating faith and learning (Burton & Nwosu, 2003; Gaebelin, 2009), promoting a biblical worldview (Lockerbie, 2005; Moreland, 2007), and fostering students' spiritual development (Boerema, 2006). Success in this mission positions the Christian school as a vital partner with parents and the Church in evangelizing the youth of America. Despite their intentions, however, Smithwick (2008) claimed that no more than 10% of Christian schools currently meet the criteria of "worldview-based" and the Christian school movement is "having only marginal impact on the next generation of the Christian community" (para. 28). Hull (2003) attributed this ineffectiveness to "the prevailing view in the Christian school movement, which assumes that Christian education more or less happens when Christians teach in Christian schools" (p. 204), suggesting that "what normally passes for Christian education can be more accurately named Christians educating" (p. 204). If Hull was correct, then researchers should ask, "Who are these Christian educators, why are they having only limited success in the distinctive mission of developing maturing disciples of Jesus Christ, and how can they become more effective?"

Answering this question first requires an understanding of the nature of spiritual formation. The word *formation* derives from the Greek *morphe*, the same word used in Romans 12:2 where Paul urges believers to "be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (All Scripture references used in this study are from the New International Version). The word

suggests that the person is radically altered so that he or she is no longer the same. . . .

Information alone will not make the difference. The person who has taken in the information has been reshaped, remolded, and significantly altered by the active transformation of the data into meaning for oneself.” (Dettoni, 1994, p. 15)

Put another way, “Formation requires knowledge of specific data as well as integrating those data within the larger whole of one’s life” (Dettoni, p.15). Therefore, if teachers want to influence students spiritually, they must engage them in a way that facilitates their deep interaction with information on a personal level.

Slavich and Zimbardo (2012) identified this broad approach to classroom instruction as transformational teaching, which they claimed “involves creating dynamic relationships between teachers, students, and a shared body of knowledge to promote student learning and personal growth” (p. 569). For purposes of this study, the goal of which is to discern the preparedness of teachers for teaching that is spiritually transformational, I will define transformational teaching as an educational approach in which a dynamic relationship between a teacher, students, the Holy Spirit, and a shared body of knowledge catalyzes both academic learning and spiritual formation. I use the verb catalyze because the word means “bring about; inspire” (Catalyze, n.d.), implying both the practical and motivational benefits of this teaching approach.

Facilitating this transformation or “renewal of the mind” (Rom. 12:2) is the high calling of Christian educators, requiring that they themselves are likewise undergoing the same transformational process, for “if a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit” (Matt. 15:14). Thus, Christian teachers should have a mature, growing relationship with Christ. Second, they need biblical knowledge and the skills to integrate faith and learning effectively and nurture students spiritually. Third, they must put forth an intentional, directed, consistent

effort toward this mission. Weakness in any of these three areas may contribute to spiritual ineffectiveness in the classroom. Thus, the aim of this single instrumental case study was to discern the degree to which a purposive sample of teachers in a suburban Christian high school in the southeastern United States are spiritually qualified, sufficiently trained, and directly committed to transformational Christian teaching.

Background

Spiritual State of American Adolescents

Barna Group (2004) discovered that children and youth in the United States embrace Jesus more readily than adults do. They defined “born again Christians” as

people who have made ‘a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in their life today’ and who also indicated they believe that when they die they will go to Heaven because they had confessed their sins and had accepted Jesus Christ as their savior. (Barna Group, 2004, para. 18)

Of the 40% of Americans who are born again Christians by this definition, only 23% of them accepted Jesus Christ after the age of 21. In other words, for every 100 American adults, approximately 60 of them have never become Christians, 31 of them accepted Christ before the age of 21, while only nine of them converted as adults. For Christians who take seriously Jesus’ call to “go and make disciples” (Matthew 28:19), one of the wisest strategies for increasing the kingdom of God is clearly to ‘train up’ children during their formative years when they are developing both an identity and a worldview which is likely to remain relatively consistent throughout their adult lives. Knowing that “the behavioral habits, core values, primary spiritual beliefs, relational strategies, and entertainment preferences” (Barna, 2011, p. 50) of adults are

developed and solidified by the age of 13 should instill a sense of urgency in those committed to the spiritual nurture of young people.

Whose responsibility is it to disciple these children? The authority and responsibility God gives parents to facilitate their children's spiritual formation during their earliest years cannot be overstated. Barna Group (2004) found that half of Christians in the United States who embraced Christianity before their teen years were led to Christ by their parents. However, that figure drops significantly to 20% for people accepting Christ between the ages of 13 and 21, when people and other sources outside of the family become increasingly influential in teens' lives. Unfortunately, the average adult church attendance in the United States from 2000 – 2009 was only 43% (Barna, 2011), thus churches have had less opportunity to assist parents in the spiritual education of their children. Even within families engaged in church, teenagers in particular spend very little time engaged in religious activities on a daily basis as compared with school, extracurricular activities, or the plethora of media that vie aggressively for their time and attention (Wight, Price, Bianchi, & Hunt, 2009), as demonstrated in Table 1. (Appendix B).

Table 1

Daily Activities of Teenagers Aged 15 to 17

Activity	Time Invested		
	Both Genders	Boys	Girls
Sleep	9.5 hrs.		
School	5 hrs.		
Television		2.37 hrs.	2.18 hrs.
Traveling	1.2 hrs.		
Paid Work		58 min.	46 min.
Sports/Exercise		59 min.	28 min.
Visiting	52 min.		
Eating	50 min.		
Games		44 min.	11 min.
Studying	30 – 50 min.		

Reading	7 – 11 min		
Religious Activities		7 min.	9 min.
Caregiving		3.5 min	7.7 min

Note. Adapted from “The time use of Teenagers,” by V. R. Wight, J. Price, S. M. Bianchi, & B. R. Hunt, 2009, *Social Science Research*, 38(4), pp. 792-809. Used with permission.

In a separate study of youth ages eight to 18, Rideout, Foehr, and Roberts (2010) discovered that young people typically spend seven hours and 38 minutes using media each day, or 10 hours and 45 minutes, if one does not overlap the time they spend using multiple forms of media simultaneously. Some of this media time could conceivably be used in Christian-related activities, but the huge influence of secular sources such as television, popular music, and the Internet leads many young people to experience a spiritual malnutrition of sorts. With the reduced time parents and churches spend with youth, school is the only social structure that makes a comparable time footprint in students’ lives as media. Consequently, parents are wise to partner with both the local church and the Christian school to evangelize and disciple their children.

History of the Christian School Movement

The modern Christian school movement in the United States arose because of many complex factors, including ideas traceable as far back as the time of Moses when God first commanded the Hebrew people to train their children proactively and consistently to know and follow the commandments of God. The Apostle Paul likewise commanded fathers to bring their children up “in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). Jesus broadened this concept beyond the family and local church by commanding His disciples to “go and make disciples of all nations . . . teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19 – 20). Thus, the biblical mandate was given for the Church to educate the masses in spiritual truth.

As Christians spread the Gospel to the Gentile world in keeping with this Great Commission, the Church organized catechumenal schools to prepare converts for baptism and to refute heretical teachings that had begun to creep into church teachings (Lawson, 2008). By the Middle Ages, the Roman Catholic Church exercised control over education, indoctrinating students in the beliefs of the Church as well as teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic (Gutek, 2005). Catholic theologians such as Thomas Aquinas and later Protestant theologians such as John Calvin “recognized the Bible as the principal authority for explaining the universe and educating people about it” (Gutek, 2005, p. 175).

About 1720, a series of spiritual revivals known as the Great Awakening spread through England and America, emphasizing the importance of a religious conversion and a life of holiness (Lawson, 2008). Religious groups such as the Anabaptists and the Moravians encouraged the formation of small groups to encourage spiritual growth and provide accountability, while leaders such as Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley encouraged the establishment of schools and colleges designed to provide spiritual instruction.

A Second Great Awakening began in the early 1800s, and during this time, a pastor named Horace Bushnell challenged the popular idea that, in keeping with human depravity, people needed a radical conversion experience (Lawson, 2008). Rather than revivalism, he championed the idea of nurture such that “the child is to grow up Christian and never know himself as being otherwise” (Bushnell, 2012, p. 10). Though this idea seemed controversial at the time, it is consistent with the earliest biblical teaching to “train up a child in the way he should go” (Proverb 22:6) and is basic to the concept of discipleship as well as contemporary Christian education theories.

Concurrent with the spiritual awakenings in America was the development of the common school, championed by Horace Mann, secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education (Lawson, 2008). These schools were publicly controlled, supported, and governed, but socially integrative, and were designed to develop responsible citizenship (Guttek, 2005). With the support of Evangelical Protestantism that was undergoing revival in the mid-1800s, Mann sought to have common schools reflect the values and beliefs of the dominant Protestant culture, including literacy needed for Bible reading. Meanwhile, Catholics, who had already been fighting anti-Catholic bias culturally, now perceived the same in the common schools (World Public Library, n.d.). With a recognized need to provide education for the masses of Catholic immigrants arriving in America and failing in their efforts “to reform American public schools to rid them of blatantly fundamentalist Protestant overtones, . . . they began opening their own schools” (World Public Library, n.d.). Parochial schools welcomed their unique mission to educate students within the context of spiritual truth:

Religion being the supreme coordinating principle in education, as it is in life, if the so-called secular branches of knowledge are taught without reference to religion, the Church feels that an educational mistake is being made, that the "one thing necessary" is being excluded, to the detriment of education itself. Therefore, she assumes the task of teaching the secular branches in such a way that religion is the centralizing, unifying, and vitalizing force in the educational process. (Ryan et al., 1912, para. 1)

While Protestants were initially pleased with the pro-religious, pro-Protestant slant in the common schools, the increasingly pluralistic religious climate of the latter years of the 19th Century eroded the delicate compromise between secularity and religion (Guttek, 2005). From the beginning, Enlightenment theorists such as Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson had

valued human reason over divine revelation as the key to understanding and had supported the separation of church and state in public education (Guttek, 2005). Laws were passed to this end, such as the Massachusetts School Law of 1827 that required that schools not use any book that favored a religious sect. The introduction of Darwinian evolution into the curriculum pitted science against religion, leading ultimately to a legal showdown in the famous Scopes “Monkey” Trial in 1925 (Alexander & Alexander, 2005). While the court upheld Tennessee’s statute against the teaching of evolution, evolutionists won the popular victory against Christian fundamentalists after Clarence Darrow’s cross-examination of creationist William Jennings Bryan. When religion was not being ignored or forcibly driven from public education, it was increasingly portrayed negatively, a practice which continues today. For example, in most current public school textbooks, little information is offered about the history and influence of Christianity beyond the Reformation, except that Prohibition and the Scopes Trial are taught as examples of Christian fundamentalism’s failed responses to modernity (Nord, 2010). This historical trend toward secularization of public education continued throughout the Twentieth Century, culminating in two landmark United States’ Supreme Court decisions in the 1960s that banned school prayer and Bible reading (*Abington School District v. Schempp*, 1963; *Engel v. Vitale*, 1962).

Court rulings such as these and a concern for the perceived overall moral decline in American culture (especially during the 1960s) led Christian parents to seek alternatives to the public schools so their children could receive an education within the context of their Christian beliefs (Deuink & Carruthers, B. A., 2007; Gaustad & Schmidt, 2002). Additionally, opposition to the forced racial desegregation of public schools in the late 1960s led many White parents to

withdraw their children from public schools and seek private or sectarian alternatives in a phenomenon known as *white flight* (Coleman, Kelly, & Moore, 1975).

The result was the birth of the modern Christian day school. Literally thousands sprang up quickly across America during the 1960s and 1970s, often as many as two or three per day, with widespread acceptance (Deuink & Carruthers, 2007). Unfortunately, this rapid growth often did not allow for the careful development of a sound philosophical, organizational, or financial base, causing declining enrollments, closures, and a surge in homeschooling during the 1980s. After this weaning process, the 1990s brought renewed interest in Christian schools, though less frenzied than before, and many schools have continued to experience success into the new millennium. Additionally, two organizations contributed to the maturation of Christian education. Christian Schools International (CSI), founded in 1920, has promoted a Reformed perspective while the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI), founded in 1978, has an evangelical focus (Hull, 2003).

In 2009 - 2010, 10.8% of all schools in the United States were private (U. S. Department of Education Statistics, 2011-12, Table 205.30). Among private schools, 22.8% were nonsectarian, 39.4% were Catholic, 13.9% were Conservative Christian, and 24.4% were “other religious” (U. S. Department of Education, 2010b, Table A-4-3). The National Center for Education Statistics defined Conservative Christian as holding membership in at least one the following associations: Accelerated Christian Education, American Association of Christian Schools, Association of Christian Schools International, or Oral Roberts University Education Fellowship (U. S. Department of Education, 2010b, Table A-4-3; U. S. Department of Education, 2011-12, Table 205.30). This demographic represented about 737,000 students from grades Pre-K - 12, about 158,000 of whom were secondary students. This study concerns the effectiveness

of the teachers working in a school that does not hold membership in one of the associations qualifying it as Conservative Christian by government standards; however, their stated theology is consistent with that of these associations. Therefore, the findings from this study are possibly transferable to the educators who teach these 158,000 students in helping them become committed, growing disciples of Christ.

Spiritual Engagement in American Youth

Current research shows that while teenagers' involvement in church is greater now than in previous years (Kinnaman & Hawkins, 2011), 61% of young adults who were church members in their teens disengage spiritually (defined as no longer actively attending church, praying, or reading the Bible) by the time they are 21. Furthermore, only 20% remain as spiritually active as they were in high school (Barna Group, 2006). One might infer that the intellectual skepticism of the college environment is to blame for their loss of faith, but Ham, Beemer, and Hillard's (2009) study of twenty-something evangelical church dropouts revealed that their disengagement began much earlier. While 95% attended church regularly in elementary and middle school, only 55% continued to do so through high school, and only 11% remained active in college. Likewise, Rainer and Rainer (2008) found that age 16 was a critical turning point, with a 15% decline during the 17th year, a 24% decline during the 18th year, a 29% decline during the 19th year, and a 5% decline during the 20th year.

Implications for Christian Educators

This disturbing trend begs the question: Are teachers in Christian schools effectively facilitating the Christian education their schools claim to offer (U. S. Department of Education, 2010a)? Because of the haste with which many Christian schools were begun, often as grassroots endeavors without the benefit of a well-considered, biblically grounded philosophical

base and a practical, systematic plan for achieving it (Deuink & Carruthers, 2007), Christian schools may fail to achieve their goal of offering students a distinctly Christian education. In a Christian sub-culture that sometimes tends to disdain traditional secular public education with its perceived bureaucracy and anti-Christian bias, Christian school educators should be careful not to err in the opposite direction by rejecting standards of professionalism and accountability. Instead, they must develop a clear vision for their schools and craft procedures purposefully designed to accomplish their mission. In a survey of Christian educators, Boerema (2011) found that the greatest perceived need for further research in Christian education is the linkage of school mission and practice.

As the pivotal point of contact between the school and the student, the classroom teacher plays a crucial role in carrying out this mission. Do Christian teachers actually “teach Christianly,” effectively integrating spiritual training and academic rigor? Hull (2003) suggested that many well-meaning Christian educators today fail, adopting “a Christianity-enhanced public school brand of education” (p. 204) instead of a distinctly Christian approach. Chuck Colson concurred:

Christian education has failed to make a convincing case that it is different from secular education, that we see all of education influenced by our understanding of revelation and truth from a Christian perspective, where every discipline is undergirded by a basically distinctive or Christian view of reality. If you’re simply offering a Christian adaptation of what you’re given in secular schools, then I would probably be urging my grandchildren to go to secular schools which are better known and would give them a better shot at further education. (as cited in Eckel, 2003, p. 53)

Instead, Christian schools need to be Christ-centered, and classroom instruction and interactions should derive from the premise that education is a tool for developing Christian disciples trained to influence the world intelligently and powerfully for the kingdom of God. For this to happen, classroom teachers must be uniquely qualified, trained, and committed to this purpose. For purposes of this study, I defined each of these characteristics as follows. To be uniquely qualified means that teachers must themselves be committed Christians, for teachers cannot teach or model effectively what they do not know or practice themselves. To be uniquely trained means to have the knowledge and skills necessary to cultivate spiritual development in students, empowering them to interpret academic content from a biblical worldview. This training should include a working and growing knowledge of the Bible, a deep understanding of the nature of Christian education, and skills necessary to integrate faith into the learning process. To be uniquely committed to this purpose means teachers have a clear intentionality to facilitate students' spiritual growth, which may require overcoming unhelpful attitudes fostered in public education that open discussions of Christianity are inappropriate.

Situation to Self

Philosophical Assumptions

I approached this study as a conservative evangelical Christian with certain ontological assumptions: God as described in the Holy Bible exists; objective truth also exists; humankind's sinfulness separates them from God; Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection have made possible the restoration of that relationship with God. I am convinced that every person needs to receive Jesus as their Savior and Lord in order to fulfill the purpose of their creation, to experience an abundant life of significance, effectiveness, and joy, and to enjoy eternity in loving relationship with God. These beliefs lead me inevitably to the conviction that there is no greater

personal or professional calling in life than to facilitate the spiritual growth of other people, particularly youth, since Scripture and research (Barna Group, 2004) support the reality that young people are typically more responsive than adults are to spiritual training.

I believe the theory of constructivism effectively describes not only how students learn, but also how they arrive at their personal worldview. Whereas a postmodern constructivist educator would interpret each student's developing worldview as equally valid, as an evangelical Christian, I believe that it is only valid to the degree that it aligns accurately with absolute truth and biblical teaching. I also believe that students learn through the interaction of their experiences and ideas, which means that teachers must model Christianity in their relationships with students as well as teach basic Christian truths. This modeling goes much deeper than keeping a Bible on one's desk or reading a devotional during homeroom. Not only do effective, spiritually mature teachers facilitate students thinking critically about academic subjects from a biblical worldview, but their Christ-centered, caring involvement in students' lives invites their interactive participation in spiritual formation as conversations naturally flow into spiritual topics over time both formally and informally.

Educational and Professional Experiences

Because of my convictions about the importance of investing in young people, I have spent 17 years working in private Christian education in the states of Georgia, Kentucky, and Texas as a director of church-based children's and youth ministries, as a secondary school teacher and administrator, as a college residence director, and currently as the head of a Christian school.

In my position as director of a residence hall of 250 college women working with a student development administration committed to the spiritual nurture of students, I experienced

personally the effectiveness of administrative vision and leadership, of ongoing spiritual and professional development opportunities, and of weekly collegial collaboration. Students grew spiritually because they had mentoring relationships with student and administrative leaders who were in turn engaged in mentoring relationships with their supervisors and colleagues.

Sadly, my experiences in Christian schools have led me to believe that spiritually nurturing environments of this depth may be unusual rather than customary. The majority of teachers and administrators I have worked with lacked sufficient training to integrate faith and learning effectively and mentor students spiritually. In addition, most of them graduated from secular education programs and often taught in public schools prior to teaching in Christian schools. In both settings, attempting to influence students spiritually would have been considered both inappropriate and illegal. Thus to become effective spiritual mentors in a Christian school, they needed to experience a significant paradigm shift, additional training, and ongoing administrative and collegial support. Meanwhile, the schools in which I served offered no supporting empirical or statistical evidence of teacher effectiveness in carrying out the school's mission. Nor did they offer ongoing professional learning opportunities in the area of distinctly Christian education.

Unfortunately, participation in an education program in a Christian college or university does not guarantee that graduates will be prepared to teach effectively in Christian schools. In my doctoral classes, the majority of my professors' teaching experience appeared to be in the public school setting, and approximately 90% of the students in my classes worked in public schools. As a result, even my Christian-based classes tended to focus upon public school teaching and administration, and most discussions of faith related to determining subtle ways to "slip God in" without violating the law in an environment sometimes hostile to Christianity.

While these conversations may have been helpful to the majority of students, they did not help teachers in Christian schools develop skill in integrating faith and learning in the classroom or in nurturing spiritual relationships with students.

While I have watched Christian educators seek to influence students spiritually, research indicates that young adults are disengaging from the Christian faith in record numbers (Barna, 2006; Ham, Beemer, & Hillard, 2009; Kinnaman & Hawkins, 2011; Rainer & Rainer, 2008). I believe that Christian schools must play a pivotal role in reversing this trend. Therefore, I chose to engage in this single instrumental case study to gather data regarding the preparedness of Christian school teachers to facilitate Christ-centered learning in the classroom. The term ‘Christian school teachers’ was used throughout this study to refer to teachers in Christian schools, as distinguished from ‘Christian schoolteachers,’ which would refer to schoolteachers who are Christians. I explored their personal faith experiences; the education and professional development and support they have received and currently receiving, and their intention to promote Christian growth in their students. As a result of this study, I have become more convinced that spiritually transformational teaching is critical to turn around current cultural trends toward the secularization of our youth, and that it must begin as early in children’s lives as possible. Therefore, I have recently taken a position as the new head of school at a small Christian preschool and elementary school in Texas with a great vision for growth. By creating a school culture where teachers are trained and empowered to nurture students spiritually, I hope to see many children accept Christ, grow in knowledge and wisdom, and develop convictions and character that will enable them to live God-honoring lives as adults.

Problem Statement

During the Twentieth Century, a secular mindset increasingly dominated the educational landscape in the United States. The 1960s Supreme Court decisions to forbid prayer and Bible reading in the classroom significantly curtailed overt expressions of Christian faith in public school classrooms. As “separation of church and state” became a coded expression for the attempt to eliminate religion completely from many avenues of public life (McConnell, 2011), hostility toward religion in educational settings became increasingly common, especially in American institutions of higher learning (Adrian, 2007; Hyers & Hyers, 2008). As a result, teacher education programs trained pre-service teachers to avoid expressions of religious faith in the classroom.

Meanwhile, the modern evangelical Christian school movement of the 1960s and 1970s was born largely as a grassroots effort to provide a Christ-centered alternative to public education; however, as previously noted, these schools were often founded so swiftly that they lacked a thorough philosophical foundation and a careful strategy to accomplish this purpose. As the Christian school’s primary point of contact with students, the classroom teacher’s role in impacting students was pivotal, yet the majority of these teachers had been trained in secular colleges and universities with the accompanying prohibition to refrain from teaching from a religious perspective.

Recent research has clearly shown that young adults are disengaging from church in record numbers (Kinnaman & Hawkins, 2011) and that this disengagement begins to accelerate while students are still in high school (Rainer & Rainer, 2008). In search of solutions to this alarming trend, Christian schools must examine whether their teachers are carrying out the school’s mission to develop students’ spiritual lives. Little research has been done to discover

whether these “point” men and women in the Christian school actually have the necessary relationship with God, education and training, and intentionality to help students develop a Christian worldview and develop spiritually.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this single instrumental case study was to examine teachers in a Christian high school in the southeastern United States for indications of preparedness for spiritually transformational teaching. Spiritually transformational teaching was defined as an educational approach in which a dynamic relationship between a teacher, students, the Holy Spirit, and a shared body of knowledge catalyzes both academic learning and spiritual formation. This study concerned aspects of transformational teaching related to spiritual formation, so preparedness was defined in terms of the following criteria:

- The teacher gives evidence of an active, committed personal relationship with Christ. This evidence usually includes but is not limited to a personal testimony of a salvation experience and current relationship with God, active involvement in church or para-church organizations, and the presence of personal spiritual disciplines such as prayer and Bible study.
- The teacher has personal experience, education, or professional training in subjects related directly to Christian education. These experiences may include but are not limited to having attended a Christian school, college, or university as a student or having taken courses in spiritual leadership, discipleship, youth ministry, the integration of faith and learning, or biblical worldview. They evidence a deep philosophical understanding of the nature of Christian education.
- The teacher verbalizes and demonstrates the intention to facilitate students’ spiritual

development in multiple ways. These strategies may include but are not limited to integrating faith and learning purposefully in lesson plans and classroom activities, nurturing appropriate personal mentoring relationships with students, and praying regularly for students.

Significance of the Study

Christian schools bear the name of Christ and have a high privilege and a sacred responsibility to encourage the spiritual development of their students, serving as an extension of the home and partnering with the Church in kingdom education (Schultz, 2006). They have a responsibility to parents who entrust their children to the care and influence of the school, making significant financial and personal investments to provide their children a distinctly Christian education.

The classroom teacher is the primary catalyst for the school in the lives of high school students who are in transition, developing a worldview and value system that will guide the direction of the rest of their lives. The theoretical framework of this study was grounded in an integration of a biblical foundation for Christian education with social constructivist theories of learning, and it provided a deep understanding of teachers' influence of students. Situated learning theory, social cognitive theory, and dimensions of learning theory each grew out of the social constructivist concept that knowledge is not discovered, but rather is constructed through social interaction. These three theories gave insight into how and why teachers influence students' construction of knowledge through interactions with them and ultimately can facilitate their spiritual formation.

Unfortunately, "everyone talks about the importance of IFL [integration of faith and learning], but few persons describe what it is or how to do it" (Burton & Nwosu, 2002, p. 3).

The teacher who lacks specific knowledge, skills, or commitment to spiritual leadership may be ill-equipped or reluctant to promote spiritual growth in students' lives. The significance of this study is that it has helped to fill a critical gap in the research about Christian education by adding to the information about the preparedness of teachers in Christian high schools to help their schools accomplish their stated mission of facilitating spiritual development in students. It has extended theory about how biblical truth and elements of social constructivism can be integrated to create a deeper understanding of how teachers can prepare for spiritually transformational teaching. Finally, it will empower current Christian educators to assess their preparedness for spiritually transformational teaching, gain confidence in their efforts, and prepare future Christian teachers more effectively.

Additionally, I hope that this study draws attention to the critical importance of evangelical Christian schools in American culture, the importance of further research in the area of Christian school teaching, and the need in teacher education programs for specialized training in the often-overlooked area of Christian education. Pre-service teachers who graduate from Christian colleges and universities should enter the work force with a fully integrated Christian-based philosophy of educational practice, equally qualified and prepared to teach in a public, nonsectarian private, or Christian school.

Research Questions

Previously, I described three criteria teachers must meet to be prepared for spiritually transformational teaching. Specifically, they must be spiritually qualified, sufficiently trained, and intentionally committed to transformational Christian teaching. The following three research questions addressed these criteria in order to discover indications of participants' preparedness for transformational teaching.

1. How do teachers at Live Oak Christian High School evidence elements of an active Christian faith?

The biblical model for education is that adults know and obey God's commands and impress them upon their children through a lifestyle of continual devotion to God in their daily lives (Deut. 6:1-9, 11:18-21; Ps. 78:5-7). Solomon claimed that a child who receives training in godly living would continue to live a godly life into old age (Prov. 22:6). Jesus explained, "The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher" (Luke 6:40). These passages imply that a spiritual teacher should both know God and follow His commands as a prerequisite for facilitating the development of those same characteristics in students.

While research linking spirituality and education is increasing, the term *spirituality* is typically used broadly with no generally agreed upon definition (Boone, Fite, & Reardon, 2010). Colleges have largely ignored the importance of personal spirituality in their teacher preparation programs (Nord, 1990; Serow, Eaker, & Ciechalski, 1992), much less specifically Christian spirituality. A significant gap exists in the literature regarding the presence of Christian faith among teachers in Christian schools, perhaps partly due to the assumption that Christian school teachers are indeed Christians or a failure to recognize the importance of teachers as catalysts for the spiritual growth of students (Hull, 2003). Therefore, the purpose of this first research question was to discern the nature of the Christian faith of teachers in the participating school.

2. How have the lifelong learning experiences of teachers at Live Oak Christian High School prepared them to influence students spiritually?

Possessing a genuine faith does not in and of itself qualify teachers to influence and nurture students spiritually (Myers, 2011). Graduating from a Christian teacher education

program does not necessarily mean teachers have been trained in how to disciple students, and certainly graduating from a secular college does not (Myers, 2011). According to an Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) survey, only 27.76% of Christian school teachers attended Christian colleges (Association of Christian Schools International [ACSI], 2009), suggesting that almost three-fourths of them were educated in secular teacher education programs where the assumption would have been that faith was neither to be integrated into the curriculum nor verbalized in the classroom. Professional development training can help counter this deficit. Approximately 81.25% of the Christian schools funded professional development as a benefit of employment, with 68.32% offering professional development courses themselves, but no data were obtained as to what percentage of these opportunities for additional training were uniquely Christian-based or related to faith in any way, a significant omission in the study. Boerma (2011) found that Christian educators want to understand better what it means to “teach Christianly,” so it behooves researchers to ask what prior knowledge Christian teachers bring to their jobs and from what sources.

3. How do teachers at Live Oak Christian High School demonstrate intentionality to influence students spiritually?

Christian schools typically have a mission statement to the effect that the school promotes students’ spiritual development. According to Edwards (2000), both the school and the teacher “share the obligation to determine in advance if the fundamental purposes for which the school exists and those embraced by the teacher are essentially alike” (p. 320). Myers (2011) concurred, asserting that spiritual nurturing and discipleship should be “planned, intentional, and systematic” (para. 2). For purposes of this study, this intentionality was defined as the consistent and conscious efforts of a teacher to promote the spiritual formation of students. However, few

researchers have examined teachers for indications that they seek to carry out their mission intentionally. The third research question therefore assessed this intentionality as it was indicated in curriculum maps, lesson plans, and assessments; demonstrated in teacher behaviors during classroom observations; and verbalized in interviews.

Research Plan

Qualitative research has five unique features:

- Studying the meaning of people's lives, under real-world conditions;
- Representing the views and perspectives of the people . . . in a study;
- Covering the contextual conditions within which people live;
- Contributing insights into existing or emerging concepts that may help to explain human social behavior; and
- Striving to use multiple sources of evidence rather than relying on a single source alone (Yin, 2014, pp. 7-8).

This study was appropriately qualitative because teachers were analyzed in their real-world setting, the Christian school, with the intention of representing their views and perspectives in that context. Data was gathered from four sources (survey, document analysis, observations, and interviews) interpreting the unique phenomenon of preparedness for transformational teaching in light of the teachers' views and perceptions. I employed a single instrumental case study method because it shares "with other forms of qualitative research the search for meaning and understanding, the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, an inductive investigative strategy, and the end product being richly descriptive" (Merriam, 2009, p. 39). In this study, the school was the primary case and the teachers were embedded units of analysis, or nested cases, within the primary case. For simplicity's sake, in this study I referred

to the school as the primary case and to the teachers simply as participants.

The selected site was chosen because its academic and spiritual characteristics suggest that the school would employ and empower spiritually transformational teachers. Academically, its status as an accredited, college preparatory school helped ensure that it was a credible institution of learning that met respected standards. Spiritually, the school demonstrated a clear commitment to a Christian perspective. In this case, the stated vision of the selected school is “to glorify God by partnering with families, churches and the local community in educating future generations through Christ-centered training, application and example” (Live Oak Christian High School, n.d.a), and the school states that it teaches “Biblical principles throughout the challenging curriculum reflecting a Christian worldview” (Live Oak Christian High School, n.d.c). Furthermore, it says, “our efforts to integrate faith, learning and service are not just to prepare our students for college, but more importantly, for a lifetime of learning and building the kingdom of God” (Christian Worldview, n.d.c). In summary, I chose a well-established, academically healthy Christian school where I would reasonably expect to observe teachers nurturing students spiritually.

Regarding data collection, I employed four primary methods. First, I asked the principal and all full-time teachers at the selected school to complete an online survey about their spiritual, educational, and professional backgrounds. Participants were able to answer the questions privately in an unhurried manner, enabling them time to recall information or even research their answers if necessary. Second, I used maximum variation to select a subgroup of 10 teachers who served as information-rich nested cases representing “the widest possible range of the characteristics of interest for the study” (Merriam, 2009, p. 79). The principal, who also teaches a class, was included in the survey and in the rest of the study. However, he was not considered

one of the nested cases. His data was analyzed separately from the teachers' data and was used only for purposes of understanding the influence of his leadership on the teachers, the hiring process, and the spiritual culture of the school. From these teachers and the principal, I collected curriculum maps as well as two current lesson plans and two current assessments used by these teachers to analyze for indications of biblical worldview and faith integration.

Third, I conducted two observations in these teachers' classes to look for evidence of biblical worldview integration and spiritual nurture in physical elements in the classroom, pre-class interactions, classroom management and discipline strategies, lessons and activities, and other teacher-student interactions. If these observations did not provide sufficient data, I conducted a third observation. Finally, I interviewed these teachers individually and confidentially regarding their educational philosophy, classroom practices, and spiritually-focused teaching practices. By collecting data using multiple methods and multiple sources of data to triangulate my data, I increased the credibility of my findings (Merriam, 2009).

My first priority in analyzing the data was to use the survey results to select a purposive sample of 10 primary participants with maximum variation based on age, gender, ethnicity, educational background, teaching training, spiritual background, and willingness to participate. Since Bible teachers' direct responsibility is to teach the Bible itself, they presumably have been trained extensively in that area and the question of whether they integrate biblical truth into other content areas is not applicable. Therefore, to avoid skewing the data, they were not selected for the second part of the study. Once the data collection methods were employed, I used Stake's (2005a) methodology and worksheets to analyze the data. This process began with a synopsis of each participant, listing findings from each data collection method as they occurred, noting relevance of the nested case to the themes, discussing the uniqueness of the case, and listing

possible excerpts for the final report. Once this process was completed, I conducted a cross-case analysis, identifying themes of the study, which derived from the three research questions.

Next I studied the expected utility of each case in understanding the phenomenon of teacher preparedness by discerning how ordinary or extraordinary each case was. Being cautious not to draw conclusions from weak evidence, I examined the findings from the nested cases and determined the themes to which they related. At this point, I finally began my cross-case analysis and merged similar findings from different participants according to themes. Ultimately, I generated cross-case assertions based on the themes, which provided the conceptual structure for the final report.

Delimitations

I chose to study teachers from one Christian school at a deep level over the option of studying teachers from several schools at a broader but less intense level. Live Oak Christian High School was selected based on its accredited status, college-preparatory curriculum, record of success and academic rigor, a clear statement of commitment to biblical Christianity, and its mission to nurture students spiritually. The school began with a clear evangelical focus and articulates its intention to teach from a biblical worldview, to integrate faith and learning, and to hire teachers who have a clear profession of Christian faith. However, during my data collection, I realized that the current headmaster and high school principal are not clearly evangelical in their leadership of the school and that the nature of the school has somewhat shifted away from its original evangelical moorings. In particular, the headmaster approaches Christian education more from a Reformed perspective. The participants were intentionally limited to secondary teachers because of my desire to address the identified problem of high school students beginning to disengage from faith.

Definitions

For the sake of clarity in communication, the following terms were defined.

1. *Christian* - Christianity centers on the historical figure of Jesus Christ, whom the Bible teaches was God's only Son (John 3:16), both fully human (John 1:14, Hebrews 2:14, 17) and fully divine (John 1:1). He lived a perfect life (Hebrews 4:15), was executed on a cross (Matthew 27:32-50) to pay the penalty for the sins of humankind (I Peter 3:18), and was then raised to life (Matthew 28:1-10). Scripturally, Christians are people who have placed their belief in Jesus Christ to forgive them of their sinfulness and to give them the unmerited gift of eternal life (John 3:16, 5:24, Romans 10:9, I John 1:9). The word *believe* in these passages is the Greek *pisteuō*, which is stronger than a simple intellectual acknowledgment; it implies a conviction, a commitment, an entrusting of one's self to something (*pisteuō*, n.d.). By God's grace and through faith (as opposed to works), individuals receive God's gift of salvation (Ephesians 2:8, 9), which reconciles them to God (Romans 5:10; 2 Corinthians 5:18, Colossians 1:20, 21) and enables them to inherit eternal life (Rom. 6:23). Once they are saved, God intends for Christians to experience an ongoing, personal relationship with Him.
2. *Evangelical* - The Bible does not use the term evangelical; rather, the word is "a construct created within the religious community many years ago to differentiate a subgroup of Christians that possesses a distinctive theological perspective" (Barna Group, 2007, para. 13). For the purposes of this study, I will define evangelical in accordance with the Bebbington Quadrilateral, which identifies four primary characteristics of evangelicalism:

- (a) Conversionism: the belief that lives need to be transformed through a “born-again” experience and a lifelong process of following Jesus
- (b) Activism: the expression and demonstration of the gospel in missionary and social reform efforts
- (c) Biblicism: a high regard for and obedience to the Bible as the ultimate authority
- (d) Crucicentrism: a stress on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross as making possible the redemption of humanity (National Association of Evangelicals [NAE], 2009; See also Bebbington, 2005)

Commitment to these principles has motivated many Christians to found private schools where students will learn academic knowledge and skills while concurrently developing a personal relationship with God and a biblical worldview. Preparedness to teach in an evangelical Christian school requires an understanding of and agreement with a series of presuppositions, priorities, and practices unique to this subculture.

3. *Spiritual Formation* - Spiritual formation is the process whereby people gain spiritual knowledge based on biblical truth, increasingly prize that information for their personal value system, and intentionally bring their actions into conformity with it (Gangel & Wilhoit, 1998). As their mind, will, and behavior become unified in accordance with biblical principles, they undergo an essential transformation of their personhood that enables them to reflect Christ’s image more purely (II Corinthians 3:18, Romans 12:2). This process of becoming more Christ-like is often called sanctification, and the end result is holiness (Romans 12:1, I Corinthians 1:2, I Thessalonians 4:7), both words of which come from the Greek *hagiazō* which means to separate from profane things and dedicate to God (*Hagiazō*, n.d.).

4. *Biblical Worldview* - Sire (2004) defined a worldview as "a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true, or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic construction of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being" (p. 20). People's worldviews are important because they motivate their lifestyle choices and strongly influence their views on moral behavior.

Persons with a biblical worldview (sometimes used interchangeably with the term 'Christian worldview') derive their most essential perspectives on life from the biblical metanarrative and from principles taught in the Bible. Barna Group (2003) defined a biblical worldview as the conviction that moral truths exist, the belief that these truths are defined by the Bible, and a firm belief in six specific religious views: "that Jesus Christ lived a sinless life; God is the all-powerful and all-knowing Creator of the universe and He stills rules it today; salvation is a gift from God and cannot be earned; Satan is real; a Christian has a responsibility to share their faith in Christ with other people; and the Bible is accurate in all of its teachings" (para. 5). By this definition, only 9% of Christians in America actually have a biblical worldview (Barna Group, 2003).

By way of contrast, Smithwick (2013) divides worldview into four categories: biblical theism, moderate Christian, secular humanism, and socialism. Biblical theists have a biblical worldview, seeing truth as absolute, God as sovereign, and the Bible as the guide for ethical, moral, and legal issues. The other three worldviews are not biblical. Moderate Christians see God as supreme in religious matters but consider governments, economics, and sometimes education as the purview of man. Secular humanists view

humankind as supreme and do not believe in the existence of God. Socialists view civil authorities as supreme and necessary to ensure the good of humankind. American evangelicals, who are biblical theists, often promote Christian education out of a commitment to help children develop a biblical worldview and to protect them from the dangers of these other worldviews which are on the rise nationally (Smithwick, 2004).

Summary

While parents have the primary responsibility for the spiritual formation of their children, they have traditionally depended upon the Church and the surrounding culture to support their efforts. With the decrease in parents' church attendance, the secularization of American society, and the increasing influence of outside sources (such as friends and media) in teens' lives, modern teenagers now spend very little time engaged in religious activities on a daily basis. In fact, research shows a significant spiritual disengagement of young adults by the age of 21 (Barna Group, 2006; Ham, Beemer, & Hillard, 2009; Rainer & Rainer, 2008).

Christian schools are ideally positioned to partner with parents in countering this trend. Unfortunately, due to the grassroots nature of the modern Christian school movement, many Christian schools lack a well-considered, biblically grounded philosophical base and fail in their attempts to offer a distinctly Christian education. As the primary point of contact with students, classroom teachers must be thoroughly prepared for spiritually transformational teaching that catalyzes both academic learning and spiritual formation.

The purpose of this instrumental case study was to examine teachers for indications of preparedness for spiritually transformational teaching in a Christian high school in the southeastern United States. I employed four methods of data collection: survey, document analysis, observations, and interviews. Twenty-two teachers at the selected school took the

survey, and then a purposive sample of 10 teachers plus the principal participated in the rest of the study. Ultimately, I addressed a significant gap in the literature regarding Christian education by examining the teachers in a Christian high school for indications that they were spiritually qualified, sufficiently trained, and intentionally committed to transformational Christian teaching.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The purpose of this chapter is first to ground the proposed research in a theoretical framework that integrates biblical foundations for Christian education with social constructivist theories of learning. Second, this chapter synthesizes the existing research on the preparedness of Christian teachers for spiritual influence in the classroom. Third, it demonstrates how this study addressed an existing gap in the literature and may contribute to the strengthening of evangelical Christian education.

Foundation for this Study

The spiritual nature is the most foundational and important aspect of a person's life and should inform, influence, and ultimately set the direction of that life (Matt. 22:35-38, Luke 9:23-25, Josh. 1:8). Parents bear the ultimate responsibility for the spiritual guidance of their children (Deut. 6:4-9, Ps. 78:2-8) and often seek the help of the local church in teaching and training youth to accept Jesus Christ as their Savior and to mature spiritually. Christian schools exist to partner with parents and churches in the spiritual formation of children and youth (Black, 2003; Deuink & Carruthers, 2007; Schultz, 2006) seeking to integrate faith and learning, to develop a biblical worldview in students, and to help them become committed Christian disciples.

Unfortunately, despite their combined efforts, research indicates that a majority of students who are active in church as teenagers leave the Church by the time they are in their twenties (Barna Group, 2011a, 2011b; Kinnaman & Hawkins, 2011). Multiple causes most likely contribute to this failure to develop committed Christian young adults. The intent of this study was to examine teachers in a Christian high school for indications they are prepared to facilitate the spiritual formation of students in the classroom.

Biblical Foundations for Christian Education

The importance of spiritual training. The Bible places great importance on teaching children the truths of God so that they will know Him and be faithful to Him in the present and “so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children . . .” (Ps. 78:6, 7a). Solomon taught that teaching children to follow the right path while they were young would help ensure they remained faithful to God throughout their lives (Prov. 22:6). The rewards would be far-reaching and would include future generations who trust and obey God (Ps. 78:7); a future in the land God gave His people (Deut. 11:18-21); peace and prosperity (Prov. 3:1,2); long life, health, exaltation, honor, and reward (Prov. 4:6-12, 9:12); guidance and protection from sin (Prov. 6:22-24, wisdom (Prov. 9:10); and knowledge of the mystery of God (Col. 2:2-4).

Other sources than the Bible, however, support the argument for training youth spiritually. Recent research in adolescent resilience has demonstrated that spirituality promotes mental health and well-being (Cotton, Larkin, Hoopes, Cromer, & Rosenthal, 2005; Kelley & Miller, 2007; Wills, Yaeger, & Sandy, 2003). Religion and spirituality help build attachment relationships, provide sources of social support, guide conduct and moral values, and offer opportunities for personal growth and development (Crawford, Wright, & Masten, 2006). Additionally, religion helps adolescents deal with adversity (Van Dyke & Elias, 2007) and provides life purpose that sustains them in stressful situations (Park, 2007), while spiritual values help them maintain an optimistic outlook (Werner, 1996).

In contrast, the consequences of false teaching or no teaching are devastating to individuals and society: stubbornness, rebelliousness, and unfaithfulness (Ps. 78:8); futile thinking and a darkened, foolish heart (Rom. 1:21), captivity to “hollow and deceptive

philosophy" (Col. 2:8); and rejection of truth and belief in myths (II Tim. 4:4). Jesus describes the blind teacher as leading students into a pit (Matt. 15:14, Luke 6:39). Perhaps most disturbing is Paul's list of characteristics of people who disregard the knowledge of God: sexual impurity, idolatry, shameful lusts, a depraved mind, every kind of wickedness, evil, greed, depravity, envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice, gossip, slander, hatred of God, insolence, arrogance, boastfulness, disobedience to parents, approval of sin, and lack of understanding, fidelity, love, and mercy (Rom. 1:24-32). Clearly, failing to train people spiritually as well as academically causes them to miss important benefits and experience serious consequences that harm both their lives and society as a whole in present and future generations.

What is the current spiritual condition of youth in America? Consider two studies of children and adults by Barna Group (2007, 2010). A survey of children aged eight to 12 found the following:

- Only 36% believed that the Bible is accurate in all of the principles it teaches.
- Only 58% believed that God is the all-knowing, all-powerful Creator of the Universe.
- Only 33% strongly believe in Jesus' physical resurrection.
- Only 46% stated that their religious faith was very important in their lives.
- Only 20% rejected the idea that good people can earn their salvation. (Barna Group, 2007)

In another study of 13 year olds, Barna (2010) found that "most of them think they already know everything of significance in the Bible (hence, they are no longer open to learning or actively studying the Scriptures)" (pp. 9-10). In light of this and other data, Barna (2010) declared Americans' failure to train children to become spiritual champions a crisis.

Parental responsibility. The logical question to ask then is “Whose responsibility is it to train up children in the faith, and how are they to do it?” The Bible assigns the primary responsibility for a child’s education to the parents. In the portion of Scripture known as the Shema, Moses instructed God’s people on the goal and process of education (Lawson, 2008), the goal being to love God and the process being to transmit God’s commands to the children continually through a variety of methods:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. (Deut. 6:4-9 11:18-21; see also Ex. 18:20)

Lockerbie (2005) suggested that only an all-pervading relationship with God such as the one described above could have prevented the Hebrews from acquiring by default the idolatrous worldview of the Egyptians among whom they had lived.

Moses also instructed parents to teach children how to live and behave (Ex. 18:20). Malachi taught that God seeks Godly offspring and that a lack of parental godliness sabotages this goal (Mal. 2:15). Paul charged fathers “to bring [children] up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). John warned Christians not to welcome false teachers into their home. Clearly, the Bible supports the pivotal role of parents in the spiritual training and protection of children; however, this responsibility extends to the spiritual community as well.

Unfortunately, American parents appear to be abdicating their primary responsibility for spiritual nurture of their children to others. In a 2004 Barna Group study, 62% of all adults in America agreed that children were not being well-prepared spiritually for life, and evangelicals were the most likely to believe the moral, spiritual, and emotional preparation of children was inadequate. Only 8% of adults said children get better-than-adequate spiritual training. In a study of parents of children under 18, parents ranked their efforts to teach their children morality and spirituality at the bottom of a list of 15 indicators (Barna Group, 2007). Ironically, most parents also believed that they are responsible for the moral and spiritual development of their children. Barna's studies suggested that parents tend to deny that the problems are as bad as the data suggest, and he warned,

The common strategy of waiting for social institutions to provide whatever their children need is seriously flawed. The family is obligated to invest in the life preparation of their own children. Passing youngsters off to agencies ought to be a secondary option, not the primary means through which values, skills and perspectives are developed. (Barna Group, 2004, para. 14)

The responsibility of the spiritual community. Even so, in biblical times, religion held a position of respect as the authoritative guide for daily life and community rule for the Jewish nation (Ex. 18:15, 16; Josh. 8:14, 15; Neh. 10:28, 29). Jews participated regularly in worship in local synagogues, studying the Scriptures and learning about God from the Levites, who served as priests and teachers. They also participated in a number of rites, feasts, and festivals that reminded the people what God had done and stirred curiosity in the children leading them to seek understanding from their parents (Lawson, 2008). By the age of twelve, Jesus had already cultivated a habit of “sitting among the [spiritual] teachers, listening to them and asking them

questions” (Luke 2:46). Although children were not formally educated in schools, Jewish culture integrated religion and education naturally and fully through the synagogues as a complement to and an extension of the family’s spiritual training in the home.

During Jesus’ ministry, he emphasized to his disciples the importance of ministry to children in His kingdom. When parents brought little children to Jesus for prayer and his disciples rebuked them, Jesus said “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Matt. 19:14). He explained that to enter the kingdom of heaven, a person must have the same spirit as a little child (Matt. 18:3, 4). Not only were children to be welcomed, but Jesus also described the great lengths to which God will go to find and rescue them because He “is not willing that any of these little ones should perish” (Matt. 18:10-14). Even more, he said that anyone who causes a child to stumble would be punished severely (Matt. 18:6). Thus, Jesus established a foundational principle for ministry and education to all persons but especially to children that was consistent with Old Testament teaching.

The dilemma for Christian parents today is how to apply these biblical principles in a contemporary culture that tends to undermine the influence of parents and churches. American parents who work often place young children in the care of others who may not share their Christian values. Teachers in public school classrooms are prohibited from sharing Christian teachings openly with students. Extracurricular activities keep students away from home. Media forms such as television, radio, and the Internet consume much of their free time, often communicating messages and values that conflict with Christianity. Social networking sites and cell phones invade the privacy of the home, allowing communication with peers to replace

family time. The net effect is that parents have to compete for time to invest in their children's spiritual formation far more now than in biblical times.

Additionally, parents have traditionally turned to the church to assist them with the spiritual training of their children; however, the church has a far less valued position in contemporary American society than the synagogue had in Jesus' time. According to Goheen (2002), the current church continues to assume the characteristics of Christendom from the early days of America but in truth "has lost its place of formative power within culture" (p. 14). Research indicates that younger parents in their twenties are significantly less likely (33%) to take their children to church than parents in their thirties (40%) and forties (50%) (Barna Group, 2006). The fact that 61% of young adults become spiritually disengaged by their twenties and only 20% have maintained a level of spiritual activity that is consistent with their high school experience (Barna Group, 2006) may explain this trend. Thus, a downward cultural spiral develops where disengaged young adults become parents who are less likely to collaborate with the church to train their children spiritually.

The Christian school has the unique opportunity to step into this vacuum and offset this damaging trend, not by replacing parents and the church, but by partnering with them (Black, 2003). In a metaphorical sense, the home, church, and Christian school comprise three legs of a stool, each providing necessary support to ensure the stool is able to accomplish its purpose of upholding the child. From a practical standpoint, the typical Christian school provides approximately 30 hours of Christian nurture and teaching every week that could and should have a transforming spiritual influence on students' lives. However, the first key to the effectiveness of a Christian school is having a clear understanding of the unique nature, mission, and priorities of Christian education.

The Nature of Christian Education

Teachers who have attended or taught in public schools or colleges know that teaching from an overtly Christian position is expressly prohibited in the classroom. Having experienced and been trained with a secular mindset, if these educators then become teachers in a Christian school, they may not fully understand the nature and characteristics of Christian education as opposed to secular education. Is a school Christian if teachers share a devotion during homeroom or open class with prayer? Is a school Christian because it sponsors weekly chapel programs or requires students to take a Bible class? The addition of these spiritual practices in a school may nurture students' faith, but Christian schools must, metaphorically speaking, enable students to drink knowledge and wisdom from a golden cup rather than a gilded cup. In practice, Christian schools run the risk of being inherently secular with simply a veneer of spirituality. Hull (2003) warned, "What normally passes for Christian education can be more accurately named Christians educating" which is essentially a "Christianity-enhanced public school brand of education" (p. 204). He suggested that many Christian schools achieve a lesser goal of elevating students' educational experience with teachers' moral integrity and biblical insights into a select group of topics, but fail at the greater transformational task of restructuring the school to reflect Christian priorities in every area. The problem is that Christian activities can disguise the fact that a Christian school is not inherently Christ-centered, and this concern therefore begs the question, "Does Christian education have a deeper qualitative distinctiveness?"

Benson (2001) defined Christian education as a deliberate, systematic, and sustained divine and human effort to share or appropriate the knowledge, values, attitudes, skills, sensitivities, and behaviors that comprise or are

consistent with the Christian faith. It fosters the change, renewal, and reformation of persons, groups, and structures by the power of the Holy Spirit to conform to the revealed will of God as expressed in the Old and New Testaments and preeminently in the person of Jesus Christ, as well as any outcomes of that effort. (p. 17)

A strength of Benson's definition is its comprehensiveness. It addresses the teacher and the student's mind (knowledge, skills), beliefs (values and attitudes), emotions (sensitivities) and actions (behaviors). It assumes the transformational nature of the Holy Spirit and the importance of conformity to the Bible.

Note that Benson (2001) spoke of knowledge, values, etc. that "comprise or are consistent with the Christian faith" (p. 17), suggesting that knowledge that is not overtly spiritual in content but coexists without contradiction with biblical truth is a legitimate part of Christian education. According to Estep (2008), "the integration of evangelical theology and the social sciences produces a distinctively Christian education" (p. 29). Thus, the study of science, history, or literature, for example, are part of Christian education to the degree that they are taught within the context of biblical truth. Before Christian school teachers can make a serious effort to integrate faith and learning though, they must have certain convictions about the nature of truth and the authority of the Bible. Yount (2012) summarized the appropriate view of Scripture for the Christian educator:

So we embrace Scripture as the structural steel of Christian Education. It stands as our gold standard, our filter, our framework for evaluating the truths secular thinkers discover in nature. We also reject fleshly abuses of Scripture to gain power for ourselves. We preach and teach it best by the way we live it every day. It is an easy commitment to

make, if we are serious about Christian Education as an intentional and consistent means toward Scriptural life. (p. S-56)

The nature of truth. Twentieth Century America witnessed a philosophical shift that changed the way people understand truth. Modernism, which began in the 1700s (Veith, 1994), emphasized the autonomy of the individual, rejected tradition and authority, and trusted in the power of reason (Benson, 2001). Moderns valued scientific investigation, predictable rules, order, and logic, insisting on conformity to objective truth as it was discovered (Veith, 1994). Postmodernism began to arise among people born between 1970 and 2000, partly as the paradigm-changing entrance of the Internet and other forms of advanced technology into people's lives led them to question the foundations of modernism: "Often conceived as a protest to modernity, the postmodern view, though variously understood, tends to tilt away from the rational toward the experiential, away from the individualistic toward the communal, and away from the scientific toward the artistic" (White, 2006, p. 188). In keeping with this rejection of the rational and scientific, postmoderns also demonstrate an incredulity toward metanarratives, explanatory accounts of how the world exists as it does (Lyotard, 1984). In contrast to moderns, postmoderns see truth as being constructed socially, believing that every person creates a personal truth which is no more or less valid than anyone else's truth. In this eclectic, relativistic philosophy, biblical truth is simply one belief option among many, neither absolutely true nor authoritative.

Within the realm of educational philosophy, postmodernism has led to the concept of constructivism, a theory that influences the approach of many contemporary educators. Phillips (1995) described it as "something akin to a secular religion" (p. 5). The core principle behind constructivism is that knowledge does not exist independently, but rather people construct

knowledge as they integrate various pieces of acquired information (Henze, 2009). In other words, knowledge is invented, not discovered. In the classroom, constructivist teachers avoid telling students ‘right answers,’ but rather guide students through a process of assigning meaning to information themselves. For example, instead of asking a student what an author meant by a line in poem, a literature teacher might ask what it means to the student.

In the face of these competing philosophies which influence Christian teachers along with the rest of society, Gaebelein (2009) asserted, “Truth is not an autonomous, self-existing reality that scientific enquiry objectively discovers, as modernists would have us believe. Neither is truth a relativistic social construction as the postmodern radical constructivists who dominate contemporary educational theory would have us believe” (p. 71). Instead, “all truth is God’s truth [and] all genuine truth can ultimately be traced back to God as its source” (Gangel, 2003, p. 60). This reality implies that the discoveries of mathematicians, historians, archeologists, physicists, geologists, astronomers, and biologists, etc., to the extent that they are objectively accurate, are not secular truth; rather, they exist within the domain of God’s truth and as such, are worthy topics of study in a Christian school.

The integration of faith and learning. As early as 1946, Clark expressed concern about Christian colleges, where Christian activities such as giving out religious tracts and opening class with prayer were common, “yet the actual instruction is no more Christian than in a respectable secular school. . . . The program is merely a pagan education with a chocolate covering of Christianity” (1946, p. 208). Rian (1949) expressed the problem this way: “The present tendency in education to add religion to the courses of study is comparable to attaching a garage to a home. What the building of knowledge needs is not a new garage but a new foundation” (p. 236).

In light of this concern, Gaebelein (2009) pioneered the concept of the integration of faith and learning in modern Christian education, asserting, “A dichotomy between sacred and secular truth has no place in a consistently Christian philosophy of education” (p. vii). The expression has evoked different understandings in different theorists. Holmes (1987) presented four approaches to the subject: attitudinal, ethical, foundational, and worldview. In the attitudinal approach, the teacher simply projects a Christ-like attitude in the classroom. In the ethical approach, students analyze information in a particular subject area in light of God’s purposes and principles related to that area. The foundational approach assumes that all disciplines have underlying principles and assumptions that need to be connected with relevant biblical principles. The worldview approach provides the deepest and most holistic connection between Christianity and learning, allowing us “to view life, learning, and culture in relationship to the Godhead” (Burton & Nwosu, 2003, p. 104). However, Burton & Nwosu (2003) proposed a fifth approach to the integration of faith and learning – the pedagogical approach – which more directly addresses teachers’ instructional skills:

Teachers interested in faith/learning integration approach their subjects from a biblical-Christian worldview perspective, discovering in the subject matter the themes and issues that naturally allow for an explicit connection between the curricular content, on the one hand, and the Christian faith, beliefs, and values on the other. Teachers highlight these connections in their course plans, lectures, student assignments, class discussions, thought questions in examinations, and other learning experiences, with the goal of leading their students to develop their own Bible-based view of knowledge, values, life's purpose and destiny. (p. 105)

For many years, the concept of integrating faith and learning appeared to be the best paradigm for and highest goal of Christian education. Over time, however, Christian scholars began to recognize an inherent flaw in this terminology. According to Moreland (2007), the expression integration of faith and learning

implies that insights gained from various disciplines from chemistry to literature deserve the cognitive label “learning,” while biblical assertions are named “faith.” When push comes to shove and there are tensions between “faith” and “learning,” guess who wins? The academic discipline in question will carry greater cognitive authority than biblical teaching, which, conveniently, will be placed in some complementary upper story of meaning and value, while the factual, intellectual labor will come from the academic discipline. (p. 93)

Moreland lamented that this understanding of faith results in “the loss of an Evangelical mind” (p. 93), but his concern was not new, for Noll (1994) had already expressed concern that “the scandal of the evangelical mind is that there is not much of an evangelical mind Despite dynamic success at a popular level, modern American evangelicals have failed notably in sustaining serious intellectual life” (p. 3).

To summarize the distinction, Americans tend to see secular public education as the norm, with Christian education being basically secular education with spiritual “value added” through various religious activities such as Bible classes or chapel programs. Because most Christians are products of public education, they tend to adopt this perspective without even being aware that a different perspective exists. However, contemporary Christian theorists are recapturing the understanding that true education is intrinsically Christian and that knowledge and truth, facts and faith, exist as an essential unity awaiting discovery by students in the

classroom. Thus, Christian education should be the norm and public education that secularizes learning is an aberration of God's design for "training up a child in the way he should go" (Prov. 22:6).

Theoretical Framework

Integrating faith and learning holistically in the classroom is vital, but effective teaching also requires a practical knowledge of how students actually learn. The following theories of learning were developed by secular theorists who occasionally drew wrong conclusions because they excluded God from their thinking. However, given that every concept that is consistent with reality is inherently God's truth, Christians can and should derive wisdom from them to the degree that they align with biblical truth.

Constructivism. In the 1960s, psychologists discovered the earlier work of Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky with the publication of *Social Development Theory* in 1962 and began to realize the importance of social contexts to learning. Vygotsky (1978), a pioneer of the theory of constructivism, asserted that cognitive development happens through the process of social interaction. He theorized that the classroom teacher functions as the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO), a person who has deeper understanding or ability than the student does. Unlike in traditional models where the teacher is the transmitter of information, Vygotsky saw the student as an active learner and the teacher as a facilitator and collaborator with the student in the process of constructing meaning. Henze (2009) explained that a core principle of constructivism is that "knowledge does not exist independently of the subjects who seek it" (p. 87). Olssen (1996) noted, "For constructivists the real world remains unknowable, no matter how well we manage in the domain of experience" (p. 279). Thus constructivism in its pure form posits that reality is unknowable and is invented rather than discovered, a concept that is incompatible with

Christian teaching (Prov. 2:1-6, John 8:32, James 1:5). Even so, certain elements of constructivist theory offer valuable insights with significant implications. Specifically, it affirms the importance of the teacher as the MKO who has a deeper understanding than the student. Thus, Christian teachers who hope to influence students spiritually must have an authentic and deep faith experience themselves. If they want students to integrate faith and learning, i.e. create a faith-based worldview, they must already do that effectively as well.

Situated learning theory. Rogoff (1990) posited that “children come to share the world view of their community through the arrangements and interactions in which they are involved, whether or not such arrangements and interactions are intended to instruct them” (p. 98). Lave and Wenger (2003) extended this idea, suggesting that learning happens unintentionally, situated within activity, context, and culture. Within a “community of practice,” learners interact socially, become engaged in the culture, and eventually assume the role of experts (Wenger, 2003, p. 122). Brown, Collins, and Duguid (1989) furthered this theory with the concept of cognitive apprenticeship: “Cognitive apprenticeship supports learning in a domain by enabling students to acquire, develop and use cognitive tools in authentic domain activity. Learning, both outside and inside school, advances through collaborative social interaction and the social construction of knowledge” (p. 39). This theory likewise affirms the importance of teachers (i.e. “experts”) who apprentice students and guide them to maturity through a process of social interaction in a Christian context and culture. The creation of lessons, the manner in which they structure the classroom, and the creation of a unique culture within the class are all important responsibilities of teachers, to be done wisely and intentionally.

Social cognitive theory. Bandura (2004) presented social cognitive theory as a positive alternative to the problematic psychodynamic model of human behavior that dominated the

1950s. Whereas psychodynamics focused on the impulses and complexes that operated at the unconscious level, social learning emphasized the influential role of modeling, self-regulation, and consequences in people's behavior. According to Bandura (1977), "Most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: From observing others, one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action" (p. 22). Bandura's theory further confirms the vital importance of teachers as role models for students, the assumption being that they would model qualities and behaviors that they would like students to adopt. Since the mission of a Christian school is to help students grow in knowledge, in wisdom, and in a personal relationship with God, teachers must model these pursuits in their own life.

Dimensions of learning theory. More recently, leading educational researcher Marzano (1992), having concluded that teaching should be centered on the learning process, developed a theoretical framework for classroom instruction called dimensions of learning theory that is grounded in constructivist theory. The five dimensions are as follows:

Dimension 1: Positive Attitudes and Perceptions about Learning

Dimension 2: Thinking Involved in Acquiring and Integrating Knowledge

Dimension 3: Thinking Involved in Extending and Refining Knowledge

Dimension 4: Thinking Involved in Using Knowledge Meaningfully

Dimension 5: Productive Habits of Mind (Marzano, 1992, pp. 3-14)

According to Marzano, these types of thinking are interactive and do not follow a clear linear order. In particular, Dimensions 1 and 5 function continually in the background as students learn, serving to promote or inhibit their success.

Although dimensions of learning theory wrongly assumes the constructivist notion that knowledge is invented rather than discovered, it effectively describes the process by which people learn. It aligns well with a Christian understanding of spiritual formation and provides a useful point of intersection between the spiritually-based goals of Christian education and the psychological tasks of the learner. In fact, one could easily insert the words “spiritual,” “spiritually-based,” or “biblically consistent” into each dimension and derive a useful paradigm for Christian school teachers. For example, for Dimension 1, teachers can consider how to create positive attitudes and perceptions in students both about academic and spiritual content. Attitudes that facilitate academic success include the belief that the subject matter has value, that the teacher is knowledgeable and cares about the student, that the classroom environment is emotionally and physically safe, and that the student has the ability to learn (a sense of self-efficacy). A teacher who studies the Bible regularly and shares insights from it naturally and appropriately in a history class, for example, cultivates in students a positive belief that the Bible offers valuable insight into historical and current events and fosters confidence in the teacher as knowledgeable about matters of faith and how they apply to academics.

Dimensions 2 – 4 delineate the process of learning a concept and integrating it with prior knowledge, deepening one’s understanding of its fuller implications for oneself and others, then learning to act upon it. The wise teacher will design lesson plans that give students opportunities to engage in these dimensions of learning through a process of differentiated instruction that could include strategies such as classroom discussion, journaling, or service projects.

Dimension 5, Productive Habits of Mind, refers to skills and ways of thinking that students develop over time. Educators might refer to a similar concept of becoming lifetime learners whereas on a spiritual plane, Christians might refer to this process as discipleship,

sanctification, or developing a Christian or biblical worldview. Regardless, the goal is the same: to help students become independent learners who are empowered to grow in knowledge, wisdom, and maturity throughout their lives. Again, Christian teachers must be effective Christian role models who are skilled in facilitating academic and spiritual learning and intentional in their efforts to do so.

Each of the above related theories, grounded in social constructivism, imply that the teacher plays a significant role in the student's construction of knowledge. The teacher serves as a role model within the unique context of the classroom, as the MKO with the greater understanding, and as an intentional facilitator/collaborator in the student's process of constructing knowledge. These three functions exist at the heart of effective teaching, and synthesized with biblical teachings about the nature of spiritual education, they formed the theoretical framework for this study.

Literature Review

In 2009 - 2010, 10.8% of all schools in the United States were private, and only 13.9% of those were Conservative Christian, defined as holding membership in at least one of the following designated associations: Accelerated Christian Education, American Association of Christian Schools, Association of Christian Schools International, or Oral Roberts University Education Fellowship (U. S. Department, 2010, Table A-4-3; U. S. Department, Private School Universe Survey, 2011-12). In addition to being a clear minority, the contemporary Christian school movement is still comparatively young, having arisen within the past 50 years (Deuink & Carruthers, 2007; Gaustad & Schmidt, 2002). Not surprisingly, the vast majority of educational research has focused on public education rather than private Christian education. Furthermore, the study of religious education is often difficult because of recent interpretations of the

separation of church and state clause in the Constitution (Kim & Esquivel, 2011) and because it is perceived as causing controversy (Revell, 2008) and creating social conflicts (Vermeer, 2010). Even despite the reluctance of researchers to address this issue, research on the link between spirituality (a broader and less controversial concept than Christianity) and education is growing (Boone, et al., 2010). This review of the literature begins with a discussion of key findings in the area of adolescent spirituality and their implications for Christian education. Next, research regarding Christian school teachers as a role model, MKO, and intentional facilitator of knowledge construction is addressed in juxtaposition with the three research questions in this study. Ultimately, the argument is made for the significance of this research study.

Adolescents & Spirituality

Religiosity and spirituality are often used interchangeably in research literature, but in fact, have distinct definitions. Religion can be defined as “an evolved system of beliefs, feelings, and actions shared by a group within a cultural context” (Kim & Esquivel, 2011, p. 755) that guides ethical, moral, and interpersonal conduct. Tisdell (2001) described a religion as an “organized community of faith that has a written code of regulatory behavior” (p. 1). Indeed, religion typically involves ritualistic or liturgical practices while spirituality is a broader term that typically allows for a freer, more individualized expression of belief in a reality that is somehow transcendent. For example, Mayes (2001) defined spirituality as “the pursuit of a trans-personal and trans-temporal reality that serves as the ontological ground for an ethic of compassion and service” (p. 6). Beazley (1997) asserted that spirituality involves a faith relationship with the Transcendent, a power beyond and independent of the material universe. According to Boone et al. (2010), it includes “a commitment to an idea or cause that is greater than the self” (p. 44).

Although researchers have been reluctant to address issues of religion as it interfaces with education (especially public education), the study of resilience among teenagers has awakened researchers to the importance of religion and spirituality as a core characteristic of adolescent resilience (Kim & Esquivel, 2011). For example, they may facilitate resilience “by helping build attachment relationships, by opening access to sources of social support, by guiding conduct and moral values, and by offering opportunities for personal growth and development” (p. 756). In fact, numerous studies have indicated that a positive relation exists between religiosity and psychological well-being, including happiness (Francis, Jones, & Wilcox, 2000), life satisfaction (Kelley & Miller, 2007), and coping with adversity (Cotton, Larkin, Hoopes, Cromer, & Rosenthal, 2005; Kelley & Miller, 2007; Wills, Yaeger, & Sandy, 2003). Additionally, in an examination of 19 studies, 16 of them indicated that religious involvement had a positive effect on academic achievement (Johnson, 2008). In general, spirituality and religiosity are positively associated with greater mental health, more healthy family relationships, academic success, and fewer problem behaviors (Good and Willoughby, 2008) and inversely associated with depression (Wright, Frost, & Wisecarver, 1993). Clearly, the benefits of spirituality are so numerous that it merits serious consideration by educators of adolescents.

What is the nature of spiritual development in adolescents? Kim and Esquivel (2011), wrote that “theologians and psychologists have identified adolescence as a period of ‘spiritual awakening’ characterized by an existential search for meaning, an enhanced capacity for spiritual experiences, and a process of challenging traditional religious values” (p. 756). Developmentally, their aptitude for abstract thought increases, allowing them to ponder and develop hypotheses about unfamiliar situations, ideas, and spiritual concepts (Good & Willoughby, 2008). Adolescents also develop a metacognitive orientation during this time

(Moshman, 1998), enabling them to reflect on and evaluate multiple perspectives, using reasoning to assess their validity (Byrnes, 2003). Perhaps most importantly, adolescents are engaged in the crucial process of identity formation (Erikson, 1968), with commitment to a set of spiritual beliefs being one key aspect of this formation (Kroger, 1996; Schwartz, 2001). To summarize, adolescence is a significant developmental stage where young people begin to consider a variety of perspectives about the nature of the world, life, and God. From their conclusions, they ultimately forge out their personal identity.

For this reason, Christian educators must embrace their responsibility to influence students spiritually. Young people respond more positively to the Christian message than do adults (Barna Group, 2004) and are developmentally at a prime age to evaluate and make life-transforming spiritual commitments. Researchers generally agree that the average timing of religious commitment or conversion is during adolescence (Donelson, 1999; Spika, Hood, Hunsberger, & Gorsuch, 2003). Barna Group (2004) found that 43% of born again Christians made their commitment to Christ before the age of 13, 21% did so between the ages of 13-17, and 13% did so between the ages of 18 and 21. For Christian educators who take seriously Jesus' call to "go and make disciples," (Matthew 28:19), high school is one of the most crucial and effective times to influence young people to accept Christ and become knowledgeably grounded in their faith, since they are developing both an identity and a worldview which is likely to remain relatively consistent throughout their adult lives. Given that only seven percent of American adults are evangelical Christians and only 38% are non-evangelical, born-again Christians (Barna, 2011), the Christian community – parents, churches, and Christian schools and organizations – faces a significant task with limited human resources. This task becomes

more complicated by the fact that another 40% of adults perceive themselves as Christians but lack the theological views that would define them as born-again.

To address effectively the challenge of spiritually transformational teaching, Christian educators should also understand the ways and the extent to which American adolescents are spiritual (or religious). The National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR) is the largest and most comprehensive study of American teenage religion and spirituality conducted to date (Smith, 2009). In this study, Smith found that approximately 84% of adolescents claimed to believe in God. About 52% were Protestant, 23% were Catholic, 16% were not religious, and the other 9% fell in a variety of other categories. Based on attendance at religious services, importance of faith in their lives, their perception of closeness to God, involvement in a religious youth group, and frequency of prayer and the reading of scripture, Smith categorized the youth in the survey into four categories: The Devoted (8%), The Regulars (27%), The Sporadic (17%), and the Disengaged (12%). (The other 37% did not fit cleanly into one category and thus were classified as “other-mixed.”) He reported that, in general, “religion actually appears to operate much more as a taken-for-granted aspect of life, mostly situated in the background of everyday living, which becomes salient only under very specific conditions” (Smith, 2009, p. 130).

The NSYR also found that among their close friendships, half of teenagers do not share their religious beliefs with others and they are very likely to have close friends with whom they never discuss religious matters (Smith, 2009). At school, only about 10% of teens express their religious faith at school often. In fact, Smith (2009) asserted that most teenagers are “*incredibly inarticulate* about their faith, their religious beliefs and practices, and its meaning or place in their lives” (p. 131).

At the conclusion of the study, Smith (2009) observed that today's teenagers are neither rejecting nor rebelling against the world of adult religion, but instead are "powerfully reflecting the contours, priorities, expectations and structures of the larger adult world into which [they] are being socialized" (p. 170). This reality is disturbing because a popular belief system called Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is "colonizing many historical religious traditions and, almost without anyone noticing, converting believers in the old faiths to its alternative religious vision of divinely underwritten personal happiness and interpersonal niceness" (Smith, 2009, p. 171). This dominant religion of today's American youth is characterized by the following beliefs:

1. A God exists who created and orders the world and watches over human life on earth.
2. God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.
3. The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself.
4. God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem.
5. Good people go to heaven when they die. (Smith, 2009, pp. 162-163)

According to Smith (2009), one core characteristic of this "religion" is its central tenet that living a good and happy life is to be a good, moral person. Since morality is a part of most religions, teenagers fairly readily accept the value of other religions besides Christianity. Second, Moralistic Therapeutic Deism focuses on providing therapeutic benefits to its adherents. It avoids many traditional Christian teachings such as repentance from sin, living a holy life, loving God wholeheartedly, etc. and instead focuses on "feeling good, happy, secure, at peace" (Smith, 2009, p. 164). Third, Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is deistic in that it embraces a rather

remote God who created the world but generally does not involve Himself in human affairs, but is more of a benign observer. According to Smith (2009),

The cultural influence of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism may also be nudging American civil religion in a ‘softer,’ more inclusive, ecumenical, and multireligious direction.

What in American civil religion that is conservative becomes more compassionate, what is liberal becomes more inclusive, and aspects that are particularistic are increasingly universalized. All can then together hold hands and declare in unison, ‘Everyone decides for themselves! And those who believe that only the born again who are justified by the spilled blood of Jesus Christ go to heaven . . . are suspect. (p. 170)

This worldview conflicts with biblical Christianity in ways that are blatant and yet at times subtle, requiring the Christian school educator who wants to influence students spiritually to be a strong Christian role model, a wise and discerning MKO, and an intentional facilitator of (spiritual) knowledge construction. These functions parallel the research questions in this study. The first question, “How do teachers at Live Oak Christian High School evidence elements of an active Christian faith?” is designed to discover indications that these teachers possess a vibrant personal faith, thus able to serve as genuine Christian role models. The second question, “How have the lifelong learning experiences of teachers at Live Oak Christian High School prepared them to influence students spiritually?” is designed to discern whether they actually have the knowledge base to function as the MKO. The third question, “How do teachers at Live Oak Christian High School demonstrate intentionality to influence students spiritually?” is designed to discern whether they are indeed intentional facilitators of (Christian-based) knowledge construction.

Teachers as Role Models

In a recent survey of teenagers' (ages 13 to 17) role models, Barna Group (2011c) found that when parents are excluded as an option, 37% of teens still name a relative as the person they admire most. After family members, teens mentioned teachers and coaches (11%), followed by friends (9%) and pastors or other religious leaders (6%). Kinnaman, who directed this study, observed that since two-thirds of teens are emulating the people they know the best, teens need to be surrounded by people modeling positive values and life choices. Significantly, teachers and coaches were selected because these "teens hope to follow their lifestyles and because of the encouragement coaches and educators dole out" (Barna Group, 2011c, para. 9). Clearly, adolescents are looking to their teachers to serve as role models, and for the Christian educator, this fact should inspire them to action.

Jesus' last instructions to his followers before ascending into Heaven was "go and make disciples . . ." (Matt. 28:19). The Greek term 'disciple' (*mathytys*) was derived from the word *manthanein* (Louw & Nide, 1988), which can refer to an apprentice or to an enthusiastic follower or imitator of a teacher (Rengstorf, 1967). Jesus had introduced his disciples to God by living incarnationally, teaching them not only with words but also through the engaging and compelling example of his life. Now, the disciples were to become teachers in the same way, serving as role models of lives surrendered in love and service to God and others. Christian schoolteachers should likewise embrace Jesus' call, both to be his disciples and to disciple the students under their care.

Wineland (2005) found hope for Christian education precisely because of the incarnational nature of discipleship, since postmodern youth are less interested in rational, systematical theological arguments and are more interested in a person's "story." He suggested

that not only does each teacher have a story, but that each teacher is a story, and that adolescents want to see how teachers live and observe how faith makes a difference in their lives (p. 11).

Using a different metaphor, Nel (2009) suggested that while Christian teachers must invite and initiate spiritual ministry with their students, their lives themselves are invitations to follow Christ.

In research among college freshmen at a Christian university, students ranked relationships as more important in the shaping of their faith than programming (Nuesch-Olver, 2005). According to Fenstermacher (1990), a teacher's example is the most effective tool for influencing students in educationally productive ways. Todd (2001) found that a teacher's moral actions greatly influence how a learner perceives a curriculum. Philosophical literature suggests that students learn virtuous conduct by observing a virtuous person (MacIntyre, 1984; Richardson & Fallona, 2001; Ryle, 1972). In essence, teachers must exhibit the traits they hope to pass on to their students (Richardson & Fenstermacher, 2001). (Parenthetically, principals should also exhibit the traits they hope to pass on to their faculty as well.)

According to Matthias (2008), "most theorists agree that individual faculty members play the most significant role in any institution's struggle to lessen the gap between its rhetoric regarding the integration of faith and learning and its reality on the campus" (p. 145). Gaebelein (2009) claimed, "The world view of the teacher, in so far as he is effective, gradually conditions the world view of the pupil" (p. 37), and Sikkink (2010) asserted that "the whole person of the teacher is engaged in the transformation of the whole person of the student" (p. 161).

What precipitates this transformation? A prerequisite is that teachers must themselves be authentic Christians personally engaged in spiritual formation, which is arguably the key organizing principle of Christian education (Prévost, 2001; Johnson, 1989; Steibel, 2010).

Spirituality for the Christian “is about roots, about living deeply grounded, non-superficial lives” (Stevens, 2001, p. ix). It “is ordinary, everyday life lived in an ever-deepening and loving relationship to God and therefore to one’s true or healthy self, all people, and the whole of creation” (Westerhoff, 1994, p. 1). One teacher expressed how her religious commitment influenced her teacher practices: “My faith in God, and thus in people as individuals uniquely worthy to be treated fairly, underlies everything I do as a teacher” (Pajak & Blasé, 1989, p. 299).

Students sense the authenticity and depth of such a teacher’s relationship with God and tend to respond positively to this form of incarnational role model. For example, research in religious schools showed that students believe their teachers are more interested in them (Jeynes, 2003) and listen to their opinions (Sikkink, 2009) as compared to students in public schools. Students in religious schools are also more engaged in learning and generally see their schools as loving, safe, and enjoyable places to learn (Jeynes, 2003).

An inherent danger, however, exists in an academic environment when Christian educators create a false dichotomy between the head and the heart. Payne (1989) criticized the schism educators create between more rational, objective ways of knowing truth and more intuitive, embodied ways. Iselin and Meteyard (2010) agreed, explaining that the Old Testament scriptures spoke of both head and heart but emphasized the essential unity of the whole person. Sweet (2000) lamented the over-emphasis on development of a rational Christian worldview as opposed to a biblical “world-life” (p. 9). In essence, these theorists encouraged Christian teachers to embrace an incarnational approach to faith and learning, where teachers are “paradigms of that which we ‘profess’ both academically and religiously” (Gill, 1979, p. 1012), or in other words, are Christian role models.

Are Christian School Teachers Christians?

While authors have written for centuries about the personal characteristics of the Christian, few contemporary researchers have studied the personal characteristics of teachers in Christian schools. According to Sikkink (2010), “the lack of research on the relationship between value orientations of teachers and teacher practices is surprising given the potential impact of teacher value orientations on educational outcomes, such as student effort and academic achievement” (p. 160). A few quantitative studies have been conducted at the college level to discover how faculty members perceive the integration of faith and learning (Cooper, 1999; Korniejczuk, 1994; Nwosu, 1999). Matthias (2008) studied seven noted exemplars of the integration of faith and learning to discern common characteristics. He found that each displayed passion for academic discipline, genuine faith, desire for integrity and wholeness, humility, and openness to change.

However, a significant gap in the literature exists regarding whether and to what extent Christian faith is present among teachers in Christian schools. Reasons for this omission may include the relative youth of the modern Christian school movement, the assumption that Christian school teachers would obviously be Christians, a shallow understanding of the goals and purposes of Christian education, or perhaps a lack of understanding of the vital importance of the classroom teacher as a catalyst for the spiritual growth of students (Hull, 2003). The first research question in this study, “How do teachers at Live Oak Christian High School evidence elements of an active Christian faith?” was designed to address this gap.

Are Christian School Teachers Trained for Spiritual Leadership?

Noddings (2006) rejected the common belief that great existential and spiritual questions should be addressed in religious institutions, not in schools. She argued, “There are certain

questions that every thoughtful human being asks, and most of us long to hear how other reflective people have answered them. To ‘educate’ without addressing these questions is to engage in educational malpractice” (Noddings, 2006, p. 250). Although Christian school teachers may exhibit genuine faith, they may not know how to influence and nurture students spiritually. Myers (2011) expressed it plainly:

It is possible to attend church for a lifetime and never gain instruction in how to disciple others. It’s also possible to get a degree in education from a Christian college without ever gaining instruction in how to disciple students. And what of those from secular colleges? (para. 10)

While effective teaching certainly requires well-designed methodologies and good materials and activities, teacher education should address “the hidden side of the work,” the “rich, varied, and complex learning process of learning to teach” (Freeman, 2002, p. 12). This learning process is even more crucial for teachers in Christian schools whose mission is spiritual as well as academic.

How can Christian school teachers fulfill this mission and begin to disciple students in the context of their classrooms? Ringenberg (2006) emphasized the partnership between teaching and training, suggesting that the former imparts knowledge while the latter imparts skill and shapes habits. Teachers need to develop a deep knowledge of the Bible, a biblical worldview, spiritual wisdom, and a deep understanding of how their Christian faith relates to their content area. However, Black (2003) cautioned, “The notion that Christian schools are not about the education of the mind is false. Mediocre education that is Christian is still mediocre education. . . . Failure to challenge students cognitively marginalizes the fact that God created humankind with a cognitive ability that is unique and powerful” (p. 153). Thus, Christian

teachers also need the developed skills to blend academics seamlessly with spiritual nurture to guide students into truth, wisdom, and maturity.

Prior knowledge. Teachers are each complex amalgams of informal and formal experiences, knowledge (whether accurate, distorted, or false), beliefs, feelings, and commitments, and their prior knowledge shapes their professional learning (Kennedy, 1991). From their 13 or more years of experience as students of multiple teachers, they develop a ‘teacher factor,’ the combined perception of all the ‘good’ and ‘bad’ teaching models they have observed over the years (Bailey et al., 1996). Partly from this, they develop what Denscombe (1982) referred to as a ‘hidden pedagogy,’ which is essentially their understanding of the nature of teaching. Whether these experiences were secular or Christian in nature may influence their thinking. Sikkink (2010) suggests that if secular models dominate American cultural understandings of what it means to be a school, then religious school educators may implicitly or explicitly conform to these models. For example, pressures from the educational field or from parents to focus on high scores on standardized tests may cause the spiritual mission of the school to be muted. Additionally, spiritual perspectives, experiences, and/or training developed intentionally or gleaned from parents, peers, churches, para-church organizations, or personal reflection and study contribute to the complexity of their worldview and perception of their roles as teachers. Their worldviews may be largely accurate and spiritually insightful or largely distorted and spiritually unwise. Regardless, “teachers, like other learners, interpret new content through their existing understandings, and modify and reinterpret new ideas on the basis of what they already know and believe” (Kennedy, 1991, p. 6).

Teacher education. Public colleges and universities, like public schools, teach pre-service teachers from a secular mindset and produce the majority of new teachers. According to

Ryan and Bohlin (1999), these education programs tend to ignore moral dimensions of teaching and learning, treating them as controversial or religious. Accredited teacher programs address aggressively the development of teachers' knowledge and skills, likely because of the dictates of state and national educational policies (Boone, et al, 2010). Meanwhile, they wrongly overlook the development of teachers' dispositions, which includes their spirituality and an often-resulting ethos of caring (Collinson, 1999; Mayes, 2001; Palmer, 2003; Thornton, 2002).

Even faith-based education professors realize that the majority of their students will teach in a public school, so teaching students how to integrate faith into lesson planning and training pre-service teachers in discipleship skills are uncommon. Moreover, with a shortage of teachers, many schools are now hiring professionals from the community who have work experience in their content area but did not graduate from a traditional teacher education program. As a result, teacher education programs often do not prepare students for spiritual effectiveness in Christian schools.

Indications exist that gradual changes may be forthcoming. Some Bible colleges have begun introducing "marketplace" majors, specifically teacher education, into their curriculum as an expansion of their mission to prepare students for full-time ministry (Watson, 2007). With their strong biblical focus, these programs hold the promise of preparing pre-service teachers more adequately for teaching in Christian schools. Christian colleges and universities such as Liberty University are beginning to require their teacher education students to participate in service-learning opportunities in both public and Christian schools (Ackerman, Parker, & Parker, 2010). As more pre-service teachers experience Christian schooling firsthand while still in their education programs, they will likely integrate their experiences into their philosophy of education and may even embrace Christian education as a vocation.

Induction. However, Freeman (2002) cautioned against the widespread “front-loading” approach, which is the erroneous belief that a teacher education program alone can fully equip a pre-service teacher for a career in the classroom (p. 12). Every school has a unique culture, and Christian schools are especially wise to provide a formal induction or training program to help new teachers learn and adapt appropriately to a faith-based culture (Looney, 2008; Wang, Odell, & Schwille, 2008). Wong (2004) extended the concept of induction further, defining it as “a comprehensive, coherent, and sustained professional development process that is organized by a school to train, support, and retain new teachers and seamlessly progress them into a lifelong learning program” (p. 42). Unfortunately, this definition appears to be more vision than reality at this point. A study by Harvey and Dowson (2003) discovered a lack of formal and effective transitional structures and processes inhibited teachers’ adjustment to new schools.

In one of the few studies done on Christian induction programs, new teachers in a Christian school in North Texas completed an anonymous questionnaire and participated in a conference with the researcher designed to investigate their preparation to teach in a Christian school and determine the effectiveness of the school’s induction program (Harmon, 2009). Harmon found that one third of the participants did not believe they were prepared to integrate the Bible into their instruction. One participant commented,

Speaking with other teachers that have made the transition from public schools to Christian schools, it takes a good six months to decompress from public schools to be able to be free to share your faith, talk about the Bible, and integrate a biblical worldview in the classroom. (Harmon, 2009, p. 42)

Sixty-three percent of the participants thought additional training in biblical worldview integration would have been helpful to them when they began their current job. However, this training should not only happen during induction but should also be ongoing.

Professional development. Just as Christian classroom teachers are called upon to function as a role model, they are also called upon to function as the MKO, or More Knowledgeable Other, to their students. More than 200 studies have demonstrated that teachers who have more background in their content areas and extensive knowledge of teaching and learning are more successful in a variety of fields (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1999). In a National Center for Educational Statistics (2001) survey, “The extent to which teachers felt very well prepared for most classroom activities varied with the amount of time spent in recent professional development in those activities” (p. 5). In addition to prior knowledge, teacher education programs, and induction programs, professional learning opportunities provide a fourth valuable source of information and training for Christian school teachers in topics from worldview studies, to the integration of faith and learning, to how to mentor or disciple students spiritually.

Unfortunately, participation of private school teachers (including Christian school teachers) in professional development lags behind that of public school teachers (Gruber, Wiley, Broughman, Strizek, & Burian-Fitzgerald, 2008) specifically noted that educators in rural areas, with limited financial resources, or who work in independent schools often lack the opportunities to meet professional development standards of their accrediting bodies. In Christian schools, for whom the spiritual formation of students is paramount, teachers need specialized skills to disciple students spiritually and concurrently foster the development of a biblical worldview. Important questions for researchers are whether Christian schools have perceived the need for

Careful, thoughtfully planned induction and professional development programs, whether they are training faculty specifically in discipleship and biblical worldview integration skills, and if not, whether the cause is a lack of vision, opportunity, or funding. To explore the nature and extent of this training, the second research question in this study was “How have the lifelong learning experiences of teachers at Live Oak Christian High School prepared them to influence students spiritually?”

Are Christian School Teachers Intentional Facilitators of Knowledge Construction?

Myers (2011) charged that spiritual nurturing and discipleship in Christian schools should be “planned, intentional, and systematic” (para. 2), but ultimately the success or failure of schools to disciple students rests upon the teachers as the point men and women in carrying out that mission. The decision, conviction, determination, or passion to share Christ with students indicates intentionality, and some teachers even describe their job as a calling from God, “the belief . . . that they are chosen by God for a specific role or task in life” (Dalton, 2001, p. 20). Consider the words of Pia Desideria, written about college professors, but equally applicable to Christian high school teachers:

The professors could themselves accomplish a great deal . . . by their example . . . if they . . . in everything would seek not their own glory, gain, or pleasure but rather the glory of their God and the salvation of those entrusted to them, and would accommodate all their studies, writing of books, lessons, lectures, disputations, and other activities to this end. . . . Besides, students should unceasingly have it impressed upon them that holy life is not of less consequence than diligence and study, indeed that study without piety is worthless. . . . It would be especially helpful if the professors would pay attention to the life as well as the studies of the students entrusted to them and would from time to time

Speak to those who need to be spoken to. (Spener, 1964, pp. 104-107)

Do Christian school teachers evidence such an intention, a sense of calling, or a passionate enthusiasm for sharing the Gospel with students? The third research question in this study sought to discern the answer, but asked not just for a statement of intentionality, but for efforts that indicate intentionality: “How do teachers at Live Oak Christian High School demonstrate intentionality to influence students spiritually?” The reason for this distinction is suggested in the old adage, “The road to hell is paved with good intentions.” Expressed intentions alone, if unaccompanied by supporting choices and behaviors, accomplish nothing. In fact, they may disguise a situation where students are receiving little or no spiritual nurture in the Christian school classroom. For this reason, this study looked not just for verbal or written indications of intentionality, but also for behavioral indications in the classroom.

However, intentionality is a potentially vague concept that merits clear definition. For purposes of this study, intentionality referred to the consistent and conscious efforts of a teacher to promote the spiritual formation of students. Teachers vary in training and experience, personal and spiritual maturity, personality, and spiritual gifts, and therefore intentionality is expressed uniquely in every individual. Ideally, their efforts are wise, skillful, and effective, but the determination of that is outside of the scope of this study. Parameters for measurement were determined by and grounded in the literature on intentional Christian teaching.

Academic indications of intentionality. According to Gabriel (2010), “intentional teachers understand that decisions about the instructional process must be made before, during and after teaching” (p. 23). Before teaching, lesson planning provides a valuable opportunity to choose resources and activities that will integrate content knowledge with biblically-revealed truth. A review of teachers’ lesson plans should reflect whether this integration is inherent in

their planning. If it is present, it indicates intentionality. If it is not present, one must question further to determine whether the reason is a lack of desire to or rather a lack of understanding how to plan for it.

Regarding instruction, Edwards (2000) claimed that “in truly Christian schooling, every curriculum subject is to be presented as integrated truth derived from God’s general and special revelation” (p. 322). Hendricks (1987) personalized it further by describing the process of teaching as “one total personality transformed by the supernatural grace of God, reaching out to transform other personalities by the same grace” (p. 85). Pazmino (2010) pointed out that “the implicit challenge for the Christian teacher is how to set the metaphorical table for the Holy Spirit in one’s teaching,” (p. 358) which he said required constant dependence upon prayer as well as flexibility to respond to the Spirit’s promptings. Thus, Christian instruction demands biblical integration and worldview development, efforts to transform student’s lives spiritually, and responding to God’s leading through consistent and intentional effort.

Even more, however, it requires a deep, purposeful, personal investment of the teacher’s self in the classroom. Iselin and Meteyard (2010) described incarnational instructors as those who “embody their message, en flesh their subject matter, and practice their propositions” (p. 39). As Palmer (1998) concluded, these teachers weave a complex web of connections between themselves, the subjects they teach, and their students, so that students can begin to weave a world for themselves. This ‘weaving’ is an intentional process that teachers should be able to acknowledge even if they cannot easily articulate all their methods.

In contrast, teachers can usually detail their assessment methods more readily, which may be as uncomplicated as publisher-created chapter tests or may include a variety of assessment methods, formal and informal, graded and ungraded (Heaton & Coon, 2003). Harrison (2001)

found that Christian schools typically use a norm-referenced grading system for student evaluation and do not promote or measure Christ-like development. However, Ramsey (2012) identified grading as a ministry and an opportunity for mentoring, saying, “to prayerfully and intently give time to the voice of the student is to start to view grading as an avenue for ministry. The student’s discovery, integration, and articulation of truth becomes the groundwork where the spiritual input of the teacher has access” (p. 413). Heaton and Coon (2003) explained:

Christian teachers . . . have the responsibility of developing in their students the ability to be biblically critical thinkers. Just as it is important that we teach our students to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate (higher levels of thinking in Bloom’s Taxonomy), we must also teach them to use that same critical thinking ability to examine this world through the lens of the Word. In so doing, we are developing in them a Bible-centered worldview. Assessment, if used correctly, can challenge a student to do that kind of thinking. With this in mind, Christian educators must acknowledge that assessment provides an opportunity for further education and perhaps is not simply a useful tool for instruction but the most powerful device in their arsenal. (p. 205)

Given that assessment and grading are valuable and somewhat unrecognized opportunities for spiritual formation, determining whether teachers in the current study use them intentionally for that purpose was a deliberate focus.

Additionally, the fact that Christian school teachers potentially overlook significant ways of influencing students spiritually suggests the need for ongoing spiritual and professional development. As Proverb 19:20 (NIV) states, “Listen to advice and accept instruction, and in the end you will be wise.” Therefore, in addition to lesson planning, instruction, and assessment, this study also considered teachers’ intentionality in seeking additional training to improve

teaching practices. Ideally, schools facilitate this by ongoing professional development programs that offer opportunities to grow and that challenge a teacher's intellect" (Zubay, 2006, p. 39), but unfortunately,

most of the staff development that is conducted with K-12 teachers derives from the short-term transmission model; pays no attention to what is already going on in a particular classroom, school, or school district; offers little opportunity for participants to become involved in the conversation; and provides no follow-up. (Richardson, 2003, p. 401)

Many teachers report that such activities are not meaningful to them (Hill, 2009; Richardson, 2003).

Indications of change do exist, however. Walter (2007) indicated that Christian schools are shifting from pre-packaged professional development conferences to internal, collaborative approaches where faculty and administrators co-create plans for growth. Ackerman (2009) saw evidence that professional development "now consists of attending and creating workshops that meet the needs of the learning community after collecting data and conducting a needs analysis on the outcomes of the school's shared vision" (p. 2).

In addition to professional development, teachers can engage in personal spiritual training and growth that will enhance their effectiveness in teaching from a biblical worldview and nurturing spiritual development in their students. Examples of this training include personal or corporate Bible study, personal reading of Christian education books or journals, and the cultivation of supportive or mentoring relationships with other educators.

Relational indications of intentionality. An initial task every teacher faces at the beginning of each year is the organization of the classroom. "Components of the organizational

plan of a classroom include room arrangement, discipline, creating routines, and a plan to teach students how their learning environment is organized. To the extent possible, effective teachers envision what is needed to make the classroom run smoothly” (Stronge, 2007, p. 39). “Good teachers manage the classroom well by planning procedures that will reduce class disruptions, communicating rules and expectations clearly, being aware of all students, and intercepting misbehavior at the earliest possible stage” (Brown, 2002, p. 73). While these tasks are partly logistical and practical, they serve a larger purpose that has relational consequences. According to Marzano (1992), the skillful handling of these classroom parameters provides a sense of comfort, order, and acceptance, which then creates a physical, mental, and emotional climate conducive to learning. The consistent and fair enforcement of these procedures further fosters positive attitudes and perceptions.

The creation of this climate is also largely relational. Even subtle behaviors, like making eye contact with students in all quadrants of the room, touching students appropriately, or providing thinking time for a student to respond to a question – make students feel safe and accepted (Marzano, 1992). Christian teachers who intentionally apply and teach biblical principles in their interactions with students can multiply their effectiveness. For example, teachers who model the fruits of the Spirit listed in Gal. 5:22, 23 – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control – will tend to see those behaviors reproduced in their students, for “the student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher” (Luke 6:40).

Ironically, even disciplining a student for offenses such as disruptive behavior or cheating on a test can serve to draw the student’s heart toward God and toward the teacher if handled appropriately. Fay and Funk (1995) teach the Love and Logic approach to classroom

management which promotes genuine love for students as one of its core principles:

One of our strongest desires is to be loved for who we are, not for how we perform. The most influential love is unconditional. If we have the sense that our magic people – those involved in our caretaking and learning – love us unconditionally, we feel established as being worthy in our own right, regardless of our abilities, behavior, or other characteristics. . . . The basic rule is: Unconditionally accept the worthy person, even while rejecting the questionable behavior. (pp. 128-129)

A good example of a teacher communication that epitomizes this acceptance/non-acceptance is to say to a misbehaving student “Just because I like you, do you think I should let you get away with that?” Edlin (2003) explained, “Discipline should not be separated from nurture but should focus on truth, confession, and restoration, using a discipling model” (p.77). A question for Christian school teachers is to what extent they intentionally apply Christian principles in discipline settings to disciple students.

However, a more important question is to what extent they intentionally invest their life in relationships with the students entrusted to their care by the parents, by the school administration, and by God. According to Noddings (1999), students need “the continuing attention of adults who will listen, invite, guide and support them” (p. 13). Smalley and Trent (1990) examined the concept of the family blessing in Old Testament Scriptures and discovered five valuable strategies adults can employ to encourage and inspire young people: meaningful touching, a spoken message, attaching a high value to the person, a picture of a special future for that person, and an active commitment to seeing the blessing become reality. As a teacher/student relationship becomes gradually cemented with love, trust, and respect, the teacher will be positioned to speak truth into students’ lives like the Psalmist and see them put

their trust in God:

O my people, hear my teaching;

listen to the words of my mouth.

I will open my mouth in parables,

I will utter hidden things, things from of old –

what we have heard and known

what our fathers have told us.

We will not hide them from their children;

we will tell the next generation

the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord,

his power, and the wonders he has done . . .

Then they would put their trust in God

and would not forget his deeds.

but would keep his commands. Ps. 78:1-4, 7

Summary

In summary, this chapter grounded the research in a theoretical framework that integrates a biblical foundation for Christian education with social constructivist theories of learning. This foundation includes the biblical mandate for the spiritual training of children by both parents and the spiritual community, which used to be the synagogue and later, the church. In contemporary American society, the local church holds less formative power in children's lives than it once did, leaving a vacuum for the Christian school to fill in partnership with both the parents and the church. However, secular public education is currently seen as the norm, and Christian education is often merely a "Christianity-enhanced public school brand of education" (Hull,

2003, p. 204). Thankfully, many Christian theorists increasingly understand that since all truth is God's truth, true education is intrinsically Christian and should be the norm, while public education that completely secularizes learning is an aberration of God's design for the training of children.

As postmodernism developed as the dominant worldview of Americans during the late 1900s, social constructivism became a dominant theory of learning, asserting that reality is unknowable and that knowledge is not discovered, but rather is constructed through social interaction. Situated learning theory, social cognitive theory, and dimensions of learning theory each grew out of social constructivism and emphasized the importance of teachers in students' construction of knowledge. While these theories are secular in nature, when synthesized with the reality of objective truth and a biblical perspective of spiritual education, they form an effective conceptual framework for studying the preparedness of Christian teachers for spiritually transformational teaching in the classroom.

Additionally, this chapter demonstrated how the research addressed an existing gap in the literature and has contributed to the strengthening of evangelical Christian education. Due to the relative youth of the modern Christian school movement and the reluctance of researchers to tackle the potentially controversial topic of religion in education, research in this area is limited. However, researchers have now discovered the importance of religion and spirituality as a core characteristic of adolescent resilience, positively influencing mental health, family relationships, and academic success while decreasing depression and problem behaviors. They have identified adolescence as a pivotal developmental stage for determining students' worldviews and forging their personal identity.

Research has further shown that teachers' example, moral actions, and worldview

strongly influence students' development; therefore, spiritually transformational teachers must themselves have an authentic Christian faith. Next, they need developed skills to blend academics seamlessly with spiritual nurture, skills that may come through prior knowledge, college teacher education programs, induction programs, or professional development opportunities. Finally, they must employ both academic and relational strategies intentionally to facilitate students' spiritual growth. Thus, the presence of a genuine Christian experience, sufficient training, and intentionality characterize preparedness for spiritually transformational teaching.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

This chapter delineates a single, instrumental case study designed to discern teachers' preparedness for transformational Christian teaching at a Christian high school in the southeastern United States. In this study, I sought to discover indications that a purposive sample of teachers from Live Oak Christian High School were spiritually qualified, sufficiently trained, and intentionally committed to transformational Christian teaching. Because teacher preparedness cannot be easily or accurately quantified, a qualitative study was the appropriate form of research for this project. According to Merriam (2009), "qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p. 5). Therefore, my data collection tools included a survey, document analysis, observations, and interviews.

In this chapter, I outline the research questions, explain the research design and focus of inquiry, and detail the procedures. Next, I discuss the selection of participants, the research site, specific procedures, and my role as a researcher. Data collection and analysis procedures are then described. Finally, I discuss the trustworthiness of the study as well as special ethical considerations.

Design

This research utilized a single instrumental case study methodology, which is "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 2009, p. 18). The focus of inquiry or phenomenon I studied was the preparedness of teachers for spiritually transformational teaching in a Christian high school in the southeastern

United States. A case study is a useful approach “when the inquirer has clearly identifiable cases with boundaries and seeks to provide an in-depth understanding of the cases or a comparison of several cases” (Creswell, 2013, p. 100).

The case itself is a noun, an entity, or a “thing” that exists, such as an organization or a program, but it is not the phenomenon itself that is being studied. (Stake, 2005b). Researchers examine a phenomenon, or functioning, by looking closely at the case. In this study, the case was the school and the teachers were nested cases within the primary case, qualifying this as a single case study with embedded units of analysis. The study of these embedded units enabled me to understand the phenomenon of teacher preparedness for spiritually transformational teaching. According to Baxter and Jack (2008),

the ability to look at sub-units that are situated within a larger case is powerful when you consider that data can be analyzed within the subunits separately (within case analysis), between the different subunits (between case analysis), or across all of the subunits (cross-case analysis). The ability to engage in such rich analysis only serves to better illuminate the case. (p. 550)

For simplicity’s sake, throughout the rest of this study I refer to the school as the primary case and to the teachers simply as nested cases or participants.

My purpose in examining each nested case individually was to understand the quintain, which Stake defines as “an object or phenomenon or condition to be studied” (Stake, 2005b, p. 6). After developing a rich understanding of each participant, however, a cross-case analysis enabled me to obtain a richer understanding of the quintain. In the same way that the proverbial blind men described the elephant differently based on their unique experience of it from different perspectives, each participant described the quintain based on their unique life experiences,

resulting in a fuller, 360° perspective of it. To emphasize, the focus of this study is the “elephant,” not the blind men, or in other words, the quintain as opposed to the nested cases themselves.

A final distinction in a case study design is whether the study is intrinsic or instrumental. An intrinsic case study exists when “the main and enduring interest in is the case itself” and instrumental when the primary interest is in the quintain. Because the purpose of this study was less to examine the nested cases themselves and more to go beyond the participants to study the quintain, this study is most precisely defined as a single instrumental case study with embedded units of analysis (Stake, 2005a).

A case study “relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion” (Yin, 2009, p. 18). Thus, this qualitative study employed four techniques of data collection: survey, document analysis, observations, and interviews. First, I conducted a survey of the principal and 22 of the full-time faculty members at the school to solicit information about their demographic, spiritual, educational, and professional backgrounds. This data helped inform the selection of a subgroup of 10 primary participants selected with maximum variation to represent as much diversity as possible in the following areas: age, gender, educational background (public, private, and homeschool), years as a Christian, denominational background, and years of teaching experience in Christian schools. Since Bible teachers’ direct responsibility is to teach the Bible, they were not selected for the second part of the study since it might skew the data. The principal was included in this subgroup; however, his data was gathered only for purposes of understanding the influence of his leadership on the teachers, the hiring process, and the spiritual culture of the school. It was analyzed separately and was not included as part of the analysis of the teachers’ data.

With each participant, I conducted a document analysis; I examined curriculum maps, two current weeks of lesson plans, and two current assessments for elements of biblical worldview and faith integration. Next, I conducted two to three classroom observations with each participant, taking field notes on the presence of spiritually transformational teaching. Finally, I conducted interviews designed to discover the dynamics of participants' relationship with God, details and perceptions regarding their preparedness or competency to influence students spiritually, and their degree of intentionality to disciple their students. With the conclusion of the interviews, my data collection was complete.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do teachers at Live Oak Christian High School evidence elements of an active Christian faith?
2. How have the lifelong learning experiences of teachers at Live Oak Christian High School prepared them to influence students spiritually?
3. How do teachers at Live Oak Christian High School demonstrate intentionality to influence students spiritually?

Site

Live Oak Christian High School is an independent, nondenominational Christian school located in a medium-sized city in the southeastern United States providing daycare through high school. The school is organized as a non-profit corporation governed by a Board of Trustees and administered by the Headmaster. The high school principal, Mr. Tanner (pseudonym), has direct supervision over curriculum, teachers, student activities, and parental involvement.

I selected this site carefully based on the following criteria. First, the school has an

accredited status, a college-preparatory curriculum, and a record of success and academic rigor. These strengths allowed the focus of the study to remain on the teachers' preparedness without significant school weaknesses strongly affecting the data. Live Oak Christian was founded in 1951 and became a college preparatory school in 1977. The high school is located on the 254-acre main campus and has approximately 475 students and 28 full-time, state-certified teachers who average 15 years of teaching experience. The school is fully accredited by AdvancED and nearly 100% of its graduates attend college. According to AdvancED (n.d.a), accreditation "engages the entire school community in a continuous process of self-evaluation, reflection, and improvement. It invites external scrutiny and welcomes the constructive feedback of peers. It demands rigor, is based in data, and approaches documentation of results with discipline" (para 1). To earn accreditation, schools must first meet criteria related to the following AdvancED standards: purpose and direction; governance and leadership; teaching and assessing for learning; resources and support systems; and using results for continuous improvement (AdvancED, n.d.b). These standards have been tied directly to research on factors that impact student learning. In addition, they must engage in continuous improvement and demonstrate quality assurance through internal and external review.

A second criterion for selection was that the school articulates a clear commitment to biblical Christianity. Live Oak Christian uses the Apostles' Creed as its statement of theological belief and has a published vision statement stating that the school "seeks to glorify God by partnering with families, churches and the local community in educating future generations through Christ-centered training, application and example" (Live Oak Christian High School, n.d.a). This priority evidences itself in various ways, including weekly chapel programs, Bible classes, and several Christian-based clubs and organizations.

The third criterion for selection was that the school expects its teachers to nurture students spiritually, since their preparedness for that task is the topic of this study. Live Oak's website asserts:

[Live Oak Christian High School] seizes the opportunity to teach Biblical principles throughout the *challenging curriculum reflecting a Christian worldview* (emphasis in original). Conducting Bible classes and memorizing scripture are integral components, but [Live Oak Christian] goes beyond, intentionally training their teachers on how to instruct every subject area from a Biblical perspective for real life application. (Live Oak Christian High School, n.d.c)

Teacher job applications inquire about prospects' Christian experience and theology, and work agreements require new hires to acknowledge that they subscribe to the Apostles' Creed. Curriculum maps developed for each course by teachers include a section on ways to integrate a biblical worldview into class instruction. The school is accountable to an independent Board of Directors for fulfilling its mission but has no formal relationship with an outside Christian organization for this purpose. The school's faithfulness to its mission is addressed in a general way, however, in its accreditation review process with AdvancED, which recurs every five years. In summary, I chose a well-established, academically healthy Christian school where I would reasonably expect to observe teachers nurturing students spiritually.

Participants

The participants in this study were the principal and 22 of the full-time teachers at the school who agreed to participate in the faculty background survey. Only full-time faculty were included because of the expectation that they would have a strong investment in the vision and mission of the school, participate actively in faculty meetings and professional training activities,

have the greatest time involvement with students, and have been hired with the most stringent professional qualifications. The principal participated in each form of data collection because of his influence on the teachers, the hiring process, and the spiritual culture of the school; however, his data was analyzed separately and was not included as part of the analysis of the teachers' data.

Data derived from the survey was intended to enable me to select a purposeful sample of teachers to participate in the second phase of the research. Patton (2002) posited, "The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting *information-rich* cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry" (p. 230). My intent was to select teachers using maximum variation to achieve as much diversity as possible because "any common patterns that emerge from great variations are of particular interest and value in capturing the core experiences and central, shared dimensions of a setting or phenomenon" (Patton, 2002, p. 234). Specifically, I looked for diversity in the following areas: age, gender, ethnicity, educational background (public, private, and homeschool), number of years as a Christian, denominational background, years of teaching in Christian schools, and subjects taught. I selected 10 teachers because in a high school with less than 30 full-time teachers, this number would give me "expected reasonable coverage of the phenomenon given the purpose of the study" (Patton, 2002, p. 246). One teacher withdrew from the study due to a death in his immediate family. In order to protect the participants' privacy, I refer to the selected school by the pseudonym Live Oak Christian High School and assigned pseudonyms to each participant. (Table 2)

Table 2

List of Primary Participants

Partic.	Age	Gender	Ethn.	Educ. Backgr.	Years as Christian	Denom. Backgr.	Yrs. as Chr. School Tchr.	Subject Area
Helen	60s	Female	White	Public	39	Presbyter.	23	English
Charlotte	60s	Female	White	Public	More than I can count	Lutheran	3	English
Sharon	60s	Female	White	Public	60	Lutheran	35	Math
Donna	50s	Female	White	Public	Long time	Baptist	15	Science
Kris	40s	Female	White	Priv.-Sec.	32	Methodist	12	Math
Mark	40s	Male	White	Christian	20	Non-Den.	21	History
Ann	50s	Female	White	Public	44	Non-Den.	8	Technology
Scott	40s	Male	White	Public	20	Baptist	16	Music
Bethany	40s	Female	White	Christian	39	Baptist	23	Math

Procedures

Prior to conducting the research, I obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Liberty University (Appendix A). The IRB is “a federally mandated body, the purpose of which is to ensure ethical treatment of participants in research projects” (*Doctorate*, 2014, p. 19).

After securing IRB approval, I conducted a pilot study of my interview questions to ensure that they were interpreted in a practical setting as intended and would provide useful data. I interviewed five Christian school teachers, from Live Oak’s separate middle school campus who are not involved in the study to take the survey, and then I discussed the questions with them to discover how they perceived their nature and meaning. I particularly looked for areas of confusion or frustration that might indicate poor wording or a lack of clarity in the questions. These interviews allowed me to practice my interview and interpretation skills and assess the order and flow of my questions before beginning data collection.

After the pilot study was completed, the high school principal asked an administrative assistant in the business office, who is not in a position of authority over the teachers, to serve as

the school facilitator for the study. This person served as an effective liaison with the participants and helped coordinate logistics and protect the confidentiality of the participants. Prior to collecting data, the principal briefly introduced the study to the teachers in a faculty meeting, encouraging participation while clarifying that participation was voluntary and that data would be confidential (Appendix C). A recruitment letter (Appendix D) and informed consent form (Appendix E) was distributed to full-time teachers' boxes explaining the survey, inviting them to participate, and providing them with a link to the online survey along with a personal code to enter.

Data collection included four methods: survey, document analysis, observations, and interviews. The online faculty survey (see page 98) was given to the 22 full-time teachers at the high school who choose to participate as well as the principal. Ten of the teachers agreed to participate in the second part of the study, but one teacher withdrew because of an unexpected death in the immediate family. Once these teachers received a recruitment letter for the second part of the study (Appendix G) and signed informed consent forms (Appendix H), they submitted two current weekly lesson plans (as available) and two assessments to the school facilitator. Two classroom observations were conducted with each teacher during the weeks of these lesson plans. If I perceived a need for further data, I conducted a third observation. These observations were audiotaped using an iPad or an iPhone, and I wrote field notes for each observation (Appendix I). Finally, 45-minute confidential interviews (Appendix J) were conducted with each participant. They were videotaped for later transcription, and the video files and transcriptions will be kept in password-protected files for three years per IRB requirements then will be permanently deleted. I have obtained permission from Guilford Press (Appendix K) to use

Stake's (2005a) worksheets to analysis the data from the survey, documents, observations, and interviews.

Researcher's Role

As a graduate of a Christian high school, a former church youth director, residence director in a Christian college, Christian teacher, and/or administrator in a public, secular private, and three Christian schools, and currently as the Head of School in a private Christian academy, I have experienced Christian education from a variety of perspectives. My three children have all attended both public and Christian schools. My husband and I have both been employed in Christian education for much of our careers. Currently, my husband is President of an independent, nondenominational seminary. As our career paths demonstrate, we both believe strongly in the value of Christian education.

Therefore, I approached this study as a clear advocate for Christian schools and Christian schoolteachers with a desire to strengthen the effectiveness of Christian education. However, personal beliefs and experiences can potentially bias research and must be acknowledged. I hold a conviction based on personal experience as a Christian school alumna, parent, teacher, and administrator in multiple Christian schools that some Christian schools fail to achieve their stated missions of influencing students spiritually. Additionally, I have a long term familiarity with the selected research site. Specifically, I graduated from Live Oak Christian 35 years ago, my children attended this school, my husband worked in the school's development office, and I taught middle school at Live Oak's satellite campus for nine years. The fact that three years have passed since anyone in my family has had a formal relationship with the school mitigates against the threat of bias, as does the fact that I never worked as an employee of the high school. However, I was continually aware of the potential threat of these factors and made every effort to

conduct the research objectively.

A second potential threat of bias existed in the design of my survey and interview questions (Yin, 2009). I phrased questions neutrally, not asking leading questions which could “reveal a bias or an assumption [on my part] which may not be held by the participant” (Merriam, 2009, p. 99). I had four experts in the fields of education and Christian ministry review my instruments to ensure clarity and objectivity. Additionally, I followed rigorous data analysis procedures to ensure that my conclusions were derived from and supported by the data.

A third potential threat of bias existed in my personal interaction with participants and with the data. I intentionally set aside my personal opinions and interacted with participants from a neutral position to avoid influencing their responses. For example, I avoided strong positive or negative reactions to participants’ comments that might have inhibited honest and open responses. In my data analysis, I ensured that I drew conclusions based upon data from multiple sources and avoided using data selectively to illustrate personally desired results (Merriam, 2009). To this end, I have also reported my preliminary findings to two colleagues to look for possible alternative explanations of the data (Yin, 2009).

Data Collection

“Data are nothing more than ordinary bits and pieces of information found in the environment” (Merriam, 2009, p. 85), yet the information gathered in a research study is “determined by the researcher’s theoretical orientation, by the problem and purpose of the study, and by the sample selected” (p. 86). In this single instrumental case study, my primary task was to study nested cases that would illuminate, explain, or clarify the quintain, or phenomenon, of spiritually transformational teaching. I did this through a rigorous and varied series of four collection methods that enabled me to triangulate my data because “each important finding needs

to have at least three (often more) confirmations and assurances that key meanings are not being overlooked” (Stake, 2005a, p. 33). My primary methods of data collection were survey, document analysis, observations, and interviews.

Faculty Survey

I developed a survey instrument to collect a combination of factual and subjective data from 22 of the full-time faculty at the selected school. The survey and interview questions were examined for content validity by four experts and then were reviewed and approved by the IRB before their actual use. Reviewers advised me on the length, clarity, and content of each instrument. Two experts have Doctor of Ministry degrees and several years of teaching experience in Christian schools. They were particularly helpful in improving the wording of survey questions that related to spiritual issues. The other two experts have Doctor of Education degrees, and one has served as the principal of a Christian school in Florida. She approved the instruments with only a couple of recommended changes, but expressed concern that the length of my interview guide (17 questions) might make the task of transcribing the data very time-consuming. The other expert helped me improve the wording of my interview questions to be more sensitive to emotional dynamics. I made appropriate changes, sent the survey back to them, and received final approval. Upon receiving IRB approval, I used the web-based company Survey Monkey to prepare the survey for later online availability to participants.

Stake (2005a) asserted that “each case to be studied is a complex entity located in its own situation. It has its special contexts or backgrounds. Historical context is almost always of interest, but so are cultural and physical contexts” (p. 12). Therefore, I asked several questions to discover participants’ cultural, educational, professional, and spiritual backgrounds. One purpose of the faculty survey was to inform my selection of a purposeful sample of teachers who

would be invited to participate in the rest of the study. I planned to seek a diversity of ages, gender, ethnicity, educational background, professional experience, and spiritual background. I also planned to look for some typical cases but to keep in mind Stake's (2005a) view that "when we choose, it is often better to pick the cases that most enhance our understanding than to pick the most typical cases. In fact, highly atypical cases can sometimes give the best insights into the quintain" (p. viii). In actuality, I received exactly as many volunteers to participate in the second part of the study as I needed, though not what I had hoped for, so maximum variation sampling was no longer an option. However, these participants provided the diversity and variation I sought in terms of gender, educational background, professional experience, and spiritual background. There was no racial diversity among the participants because the entire faculty was white. The core participants' ages ranged from 43 to 64, which is appropriate for the age demographic of this school.

Below are the Faculty Survey Questions, followed by an explanation of their purpose and usefulness in addressing the research questions.

Faculty Survey Questions

Demographic Information

1. Gender: ____ Female ____ Male

2. Age: ____

3. Ethnicity:

____ African American

____ Asian

____ Caucasian

____ Hispanic

____ Other: _____

Educational Background

Please check all that apply:

4. What type of elementary school did you attend? Check all that apply.

- ☐ Public
- ☐ Private – Secular
- ☐ Private – Catholic
- ☐ Private – Protestant or Evangelical Christian
- ☐ Private – Other Religious
- ☐ Home School

5. What kind of middle or junior high school did you attend? Check all that apply.

- ☐ Public
- ☐ Private – Secular
- ☐ Private – Catholic
- ☐ Private – Protestant or Evangelical Christian
- ☐ Private – Other Religious
- ☐ Home School

6. What kind of high school did you attend? Check all that apply.

- ☐ Public
- ☐ Private – Secular
- ☐ Private – Catholic
- ☐ Private – Protestant or Evangelical Christian
- ☐ Private – Other Religious
- ☐ Home School

7. What kind of college or university did you attend? Check all that apply.

- ☐ Public
- ☐ Private – Secular
- ☐ Private – Catholic
- ☐ Private – Protestant or Evangelical Christian
- ☐ Private – Other Religious

8. In what kind of college or university did you receive your teacher training? Check all that apply.

- ☐ Public
- ☐ Private – Secular
- ☐ Private – Catholic
- ☐ Private – Protestant or Evangelical Christian

____ Private – Other Religious

9. What is the highest degree you have completed?

- ____ Bachelor's degree
 ____ Master's degree
 ____ Educational Specialist
 ____ Doctorate

10. In your teacher education courses, how often did your professors, readings, or assignments address how to teach your content area from a Christian perspective, i.e., integrate faith and learning?

- ____ Never
 ____ Rarely
 ____ Occasionally
 ____ Regularly

11. In your college or graduate education courses, how often did your professors, readings, or assignments address how to manage a classroom from a Christian perspective?

- ____ Never
 ____ Rarely
 ____ Occasionally
 ____ Regularly

12. In your college or graduate education courses, how often did you receive training in how to nurture students in their spiritual development?

- ____ Never
 ____ Rarely
 ____ Occasionally
 ____ Regularly

Spiritual Background and Experiences

13. Do you agree with the following statement? "I believe in the eternally existing, triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."

- ____ No
 ____ I am not sure.
 ____ Mostly
 ____ Yes

14. Do you agree with the following statement? "I believe that Jesus was conceived by the

Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried.”

- ☐ No
- ☐ I am not sure.
- ☐ Mostly
- ☐ Yes

15. Do you agree with the following statement? “I believe that Jesus arose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.”

- ☐ No
- ☐ I am not sure.
- ☐ Mostly
- ☐ Yes

16. Which of the following most closely describes your view of the Bible?

- ☐ I don’t really know what I think about the Bible.
- ☐ The Bible is an ordinary book written by men and is not divinely inspired.
- ☐ The Bible contains God’s words and is a helpful book of wisdom.
- ☐ The Bible is God’s Word and should be interpreted at face value.
- ☐ The Bible is God’s Word and should be interpreted carefully in its historical and literary context.
- ☐ Other: _____

17. Do you agree with the following statement? “The Bible should be our final authority in matters of belief and practice.”

- ☐ No
- ☐ I am not sure.
- ☐ Mostly
- ☐ Yes

18. In your own words, what is your definition of a Christian? _____

By your definition, are you a Christian?

- ☐ Yes, for about ____ years
- ☐ No
- ☐ I am not sure.

If you answered, “Yes,” then about how many years have you been a Christian?

19. For purposes of this question, consider a Christian to be a person who has asked Jesus

Christ to forgive his/her sins and to become his/her Savior and Lord. Which of the following most closely describes your spiritual situation right now?

- ☐ I am an atheist; I do not believe that God exists.
- ☐ I am an agnostic; I do not believe it is possible to know if God exists.
- ☐ I am simply not interested in religion.
- ☐ I consider myself a spiritual person, but I do not subscribe to an established religion.
- ☐ I am considering becoming a Christian.
- ☐ I am a new Christian (less than one year).
- ☐ I am a Christian, but my faith is not an active part of my daily life.
- ☐ I am a Christian, and my faith is somewhat part of my daily life.
- ☐ I am a Christian, and my faith is integral to my daily life.
- ☐ I practice a religion besides Christianity. What religion? _____

20. How often do you attend worship services?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Rarely – usually just for special occasions such as Easter, weddings, or funerals
- ☐ Occasionally – 6 to 12 times every year
- ☐ Regularly – 2 to 4 times per month
- ☐ Often – 5 or more times per month

21. Aside from weekly church services, please list any additional church or other Christian activities you have participated in regularly within the last 2 years. Examples include Sunday school, Bible study, or a small group, church committee, mission team, nursery volunteer, prison ministry, choir, etc.

22. How often do you typically read or study the Bible personally?

- ☐ Never or Rarely
- ☐ Occasionally (once or twice a month)
- ☐ Regularly (once or twice a week)
- ☐ Often (3 or more times a week)

23. Which statement most closely describes your experiences with prayer?

- ☐ I rarely or never pray.
- ☐ I mainly engage in structured prayers, as in church services or before meals.
- ☐ I pray occasionally, as it occurs to me.
- ☐ I pray on most days, as it occurs to me.
- ☐ I pray on most days and strive to have an intentional and disciplined prayer life.

24. Which statement most closely describes your prayer life as it relates to your students?

- ☐ I rarely or never pray for my students.

- ☐ I mainly engage in structured prayer led by others for students.
- ☐ I pray occasionally for my students as it occurs to me.
- ☐ I pray regularly for my students, collectively and individually.

25. Which statement most closely describes your life right now?

- ☐ I am not really interested in living a Christian life.
- ☐ I want to have a closer relationship with God, but I'm not sure how to go about it.
- ☐ I would like to have a closer relationship with God, but certain struggles, sins, or doubts are preventing me from trying.
- ☐ I am seeking a closer relationship with God but am often inconsistent in my efforts.
- ☐ I am seeking a closer relationship with God and am fairly consistent in my efforts.

26. Consider all professional development courses or training you have had in the past two years that were taught from a Christian perspective. List all topics you remember learning about.

In the next three questions, a “spiritually effective teacher” will be defined as a teacher whose academic and personal interactions with students facilitate the development and growth of students’ relationship with God.

27. Please describe any additional experiences which have helped you become a more spiritually effective teacher. (You may share multiple experiences.)
28. Please list any books, websites, videos, or other similar resources which have helped you become a more spiritually effective teacher.
29. Who, if anyone, has most significantly helped you become a more spiritually effective teacher? Please indicate their role in your life, such as boss, colleague, friend, pastor, professor, etc. . . . and briefly describe their impact on you.

Professional Experiences

30. How many years have you taught in each of the following kinds of schools? Place a number in each blank.

- ☐ Public
- ☐ Private (secular)
- ☐ Catholic
- ☐ Protestant or Evangelical Christian
- ☐ Other: _____

31. What subjects do you currently teach? (Select all that apply.)

- _____ English
- _____ Math
- _____ Science
- _____ Social Studies/History
- _____ Bible
- _____ Foreign Language
- _____ Physical Education
- _____ Music
- _____ Art
- _____ Other: _____

32. Please list any extracurricular involvements you have with students such as coaching, club advising, etc.

33. Which statement most closely describes your view about nurturing students spiritually?

- _____ I don't believe Christian school teachers have a responsibility to nurture students spiritually.
- _____ I believe Christian school teachers have a responsibility to nurture students spiritually, but I do not make it a priority.
- _____ I believe Christian school teachers have a responsibility to nurture students spiritually, but I do not really know how to go about it.
- _____ I believe Christian school teachers have a responsibility to nurture students spiritually, and I try to do it sometimes.
- _____ I believe Christian school teachers have a responsibility to nurture students spiritually, and I work at it very intentionally.

34. In your interactions with colleagues, both in meetings and conversations, how often do you discuss or strategize ways to integrate faith and learning or to influence students spiritually?

- _____ Never or Rarely
- _____ Occasionally (once every month or two)
- _____ Regularly

35. How intentional are you about trying to be a Christ-like role model for your students?

- _____ Not intentional at all
- _____ Occasionally intentional
- _____ Somewhat intentional
- _____ Extremely intentional

36. In your lesson planning and teaching, how intentional are you about trying to teach your subject from a Christian worldview or perspective?

- _____ Not intentional at all

- ☐ Occasionally intentional
- ☐ Somewhat intentional
- ☐ Extremely intentional

37. Which of the following have influenced your current classroom management strategies significantly? Check all that apply.

- ☐ Teacher education courses
- ☐ Professional development experiences
- ☐ Biblical principles
- ☐ Trial and error
- ☐ Books (Name any you remember: _____)
- ☐ Other: _____

38. In your interactions and relationships with students, how intentional are you about developing personal relationships with them with the hope of helping them accept Christ or grow in their Christian faith?

- ☐ Not intentional at all
- ☐ Occasionally intentional
- ☐ Somewhat intentional
- ☐ Extremely intentional

39. This survey seeks to explore the spiritual lives, educational and professional background, and intentionality of teachers in Christian high schools as it affects their preparedness to nurture students spiritually. Please make any additional comments you would like on this topic below.

40. A subgroup of the survey participants will be selected to participate in the second phase of this study. If you are willing to be considered for participation, you will receive an Informed Consent Form with more specific details upon which to base your final decision.

Are you willing to participate in the second phase of this study?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Questions 1 through 3 of the survey solicited demographic data (age, gender, and ethnicity). Questions 4 through 8 determined whether the educational background of participants was primarily in public, secular private, or faith-based schools, and Questions 9 and 31 through 33 ascertained in what type of schools their professional experiences have been. Question 9 asked for the participants' highest degree of education completed. The answers to these specific

survey questions were designed to enable me to select a purposive sample of interview participants with maximum variation.

In the survey, questions were ordered to flow smoothly from one question to another from the respondent's standpoint rather than being grouped according to the research question they addressed. In the next section, however, I identify the purpose of survey questions in a different order as they relate to the research questions.

Research Question One. My first research question was "How do teachers at Live Oak Christian High School evidence elements of an active Christian faith?" I created survey questions that asked what respondents believe, what they profess, and what they do in relationship to God. What they believe about God is their theology. For the evangelical Christian, correct theology is grounded in and consistent with Scripture (II Tim. 3:6), but various Christian denominations use different phraseology to describe it. I asked four questions in the survey about participants' theology (13 through 16), and to minimize confusion about word choice, I used terminology taken directly from the Apostles' Creed, which the school uses as their Belief Statement and with which respondents are likely familiar.

Regarding what they profess, Romans 10:9 says, "If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." In the survey, I ask three questions (18, 19, and 25) that allowed participants to profess their faith and describe their spiritual position along a continuum from atheism to wholehearted faith and commitment.

Finally, the survey contained questions designed to discover actions that participants engage in that would suggest an active faith. For example, active Christians commonly study and know the Bible (Joshua 1:8, II Tim. 3:16). One of the eight significant discoveries of the

REVEAL Spiritual Life Survey (Hawkins and Parkinson, 2011) given to over a quarter million people in over 1000 churches was that “Nothing has a greater impact on spiritual growth than reflection on Scripture” (p. 19). Therefore, Question 17 asked participants about their view of the Bible, and Question 22 asked how often they read or study it. Additionally, active Christians usually engage regularly in prayer (Phil. 4:6, I Thess. 5:17) and worship (Rom. 12:1, 2; Heb. 12:28, 29). Questions 20, 23, and 24 addressed these common Christian behaviors. Finally, Question 21 gave respondents an opportunity to describe any additional Christian-based activities that they have participated in regularly in the past two years.

Research Question Two. My second research question is “How have the lifelong learning experiences of teachers at Live Oak Christian High School prepared them to influence students spiritually?” I wanted to know the extent of their experiences in Christian educational environments that may have prepared them to be effective Christian educators or at least have conditioned them to see Christian education in a particular light, either helpful or unhelpful to the goal of transformational teaching. Specifically, Questions 10 through 12 were designed to assess whether participants have had any formal training to empower them to integrate faith and learning in their content areas, manage their classes according to Christian principles, and nurture students spiritually. Questions 26 through 29 were open-ended to allow survey participants to describe in their own words people, experiences, and resources that have helped them become a more spiritually effective teacher.

Research Question Three. My third research question was “How do teachers at Live Oak Christian High School demonstrate intentionality to influence students spiritually?” The school vision includes the statement, “A committed, competent, creative faculty and staff will educate students as rigorous thinkers with a rock solid foundation of biblical values” (Live Oak

Christian High School, n.d.a). In Question 33, I sought to understand if the teachers believe it is their responsibility to carry out the spiritual dimension of this statement. In Questions 34 through 37, I asked teachers directly how intentional they are about carrying out the mission in terms of being a Christ-like role model, integrating faith and learning, managing their classes, and developing spiritually nurturing relationships with students.

In the belief that the survey would likely trigger thoughts that would make a valuable contribution to the study if given expression, I added Question 39, an open-ended invitation to the participants to comment on the study topic in any way they desired. Finally, since I was selecting interview participants from the survey results, I added Question 40 to ask respondents if they were willing to be considered as participants for the next phase of the research.

Document Analysis

After interview participants were chosen, the principal asked the teacher responsible for the curriculum maps to give me access to those written by the participants. Additionally, the participants submitted to me two current weeks of lesson plans and two current assessments. These documents were examined for the inclusion of elements that demonstrated an integration of Christian faith and learning. An example of such integration in a lesson plan could be a discussion of Fitzgerald's use of biblical allusions in *The Great Gatsby* and the irony of the author relating Gatsby to Christ. In a history assessment, an example of integration might be an essay question that asks students to evaluate from a Christian standpoint the morality of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's alleged plot to assassinate Hitler. Both of these examples would provide strong objective evidence of intentionality on the part of the teacher to influence students spiritually (Research Question Three).

Observations

The collection of lesson plans served an additional practical purpose of helping me schedule my next data collection method: classroom observations. Observations have several unique advantages as a strategy for data collection. They “take place in the setting where the phenomenon of interest naturally occurs,” but even more importantly, they “represent a firsthand encounter with the phenomenon . . . rather than a secondhand account” (Merriam, 2009, p. 117). Observations illuminate the context in which the phenomenon exists and “provide specific incidents, behaviors . . . that can be used as reference points for subsequent interviews” (Merriam, p. 119). In other words, observations help to “demystify what is actually going on as opposed to what one might hope or assume is happening” (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 1994, p.129).

I conducted two observations of each teacher participant, adding a third observation if needed to obtain saturation of the data. The first observation was scheduled ahead of time, while the others were mostly unscheduled. As much as possible, I selected different classes at different times of day for each observation in order to observe the teachers in multiple settings, since their behavior in any given class might have been partially affected by the unique student makeup of that class or the time of day it meets. I acted as an ‘observer as participant,’ able to “observe and interact closely enough with members to establish an insider’s identity without participating in those activities constituting the core of group membership” (Adler & Adler, 1998, p. 85). Given the impossibility of observing the class from a hidden location, this peripheral role was the least intrusive observational stance possible in the classroom setting (Merriam, 2009).

During the observations, I took detailed field notes, looking for elements of biblical worldview integration and spiritual integration. Specifically, I focused on physical elements in

the classroom, pre-class interactions, classroom management and discipline strategies, lessons and activities, and other teacher-student interactions. In order to allow for later review, clarification, and confirmation of my observations, I audiotaped the classes using an iPad with an iPhone available for backup in case of a technical failure. Permission for audiotaping was included in the Informed Consent Form. The audio files and transcriptions are being kept in password-protected files for three years per IRB requirements then will be permanently deleted.

On a day prior to beginning the observations, I visited each participant's classroom to determine an appropriate location from which to tape which would be as inconspicuous as possible. At this time, I also sought to establish rapport with the teachers, put them at ease, and answer any questions they might have had. Before each observation, I entered the classroom as soon as possible after the previous class to set up and observe the teacher's interactions with students before the class began.

Research Question One. My first research question was "How do teachers at Live Oak Christian High School evidence elements of an active Christian faith?" Evidences in the classroom of a vibrant relationship with God were unique to each teacher, but I was particularly interested in verbalized elements such as the sharing with students of personal spiritual experiences or relevant Bible verses or the ease in which they integrate biblical truth into classroom discussions. As an observer, I allowed these evidences to reveal themselves to me naturally as I attended carefully to the teacher's behaviors and words with the experienced eye of a person who has been a Christian, a pastor's wife, and a Christian educator for many years. I was careful not to equate the absence of overt spiritual elements with a lack of a dynamic faith because many classes do not lend themselves to frequent spiritual discussions.

Research Question Two. My second research question is "How have the lifelong

learning experiences of teachers at Live Oak Christian High School prepared them to influence students spiritually?” Again, the absence of overt spiritual content in a given class was not necessarily indicative of lack of preparedness for transformational teaching, but its presence at times gave indications of a teacher’s skill in this area. I was then able to ask the teacher more about their biblical background in a personal interview later.

Research Question Three. My third research question was “How do teachers at Live Oak Christian High School demonstrate intentionality to influence students spiritually?” Observations provided helpful data in answering this question. I looked for elements in lessons, activities, class discussions, personal interactions, classroom management, and discipline that suggested a biblical worldview, encouraged spiritually-based reasoning, or provided spiritual guidance or nurture. Simply, I asked myself, “Is this teacher engaging in spiritually transformational teaching?” and I carefully documented both positive and negative examples as they occurred.

Detailed documentation and rich description are important to establishing credibility. Field notes should include enough detail that readers feel as if they are in the classroom, seeing what the observer sees (Merriam, 2009). They should also be reflective and can include “the researcher’s feelings, reactions, hunches, initial interpretations, speculation, and working hypotheses” (Merriam, 2009, p. 131) but should be designated as the observer’s comments. For this reason, I took thorough field notes and audiotaped the classes for later review. To ensure accurate recall, I conducted my interview with each teacher as soon as possible following their final observation.

Interviews

Interviewing formats exist along a continuum from structured to unstructured/informal

(Merriam, 2009). I used a semi-structured interview format in this study. In this type of interview, the majority of the questions related to issues to be explored, and the questions were flexibly worded or occasionally rearranged to promote the natural flow of the conversation. According to Merriam (2009), “this format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic” (p. 90).

The interview guide below enabled me to explore the three research questions at a deeper and more personal level with the subgroup of teachers selected from the group of survey participants. The interviews provided richly descriptive data, an important characteristic of qualitative research (Merriam, 2009). I used “well-chosen open-ended questions that [could] be followed up with probes and requests for more detail” (Merriam, 2009, p. 17). Before seeking IRB approval, the interview questions were examined for content validity by the same experts who evaluated the faculty survey. After IRB approval to conduct this research study, I conducted five pilot interviews using the revised guide to determine the approximate length of the interview, to test the questions for clarity, and to practice my interviewing skills. These pilot interviews were conducted with teachers at the middle school at Live Oak Christian and were not included in the data for this study.

So that I could attend effectively to the participant during the interview without having to interrupt the conversation to capture quotes accurately on paper, interviews were videotaped for accuracy of later transcription. Permission for videotaping was included in the Informed Consent Form. The video files and transcriptions will be kept in password-protected files for three years per IRB requirements then will be permanently deleted. Before the interview, I set up the camera while chatting with the teacher to establish rapport. Most of the interviews took place in the teacher’s classroom unless a different location was preferable to ensure privacy. I

used an interview guide in order to “ensure good use of the limited interview time . . . make interviewing multiple subjects more systematic and comprehensive . . . and help to keep interactions focused” (Hoepfl, 1997, para. 32). While this guide provided a helpful measure of structure to the interview, I allowed myself the flexibility to probe and explore within these predetermined areas of inquiry. After the interviews were transcribed, interviewees were given a transcription of their interview and were able to make comments or clarify their answers as a form of member checking. The interview questions are listed below.

Semi-structured Open-ended Interview Questions

1. As you were growing up, who or what influenced you the most spiritually, and in what ways? Prompts: How did the religious beliefs of your family (or church) affect your belief system?
2. From your survey, I know you attended a (public/private/Christian/home) school. How would you describe the influence of attending a _____ school on your belief system?
3. In the faculty survey you recently took, you said that you (consider yourself/do not consider yourself/are not sure if you are) a Christian. Can you describe to me any experiences, insights, or decisions that led you to this belief (or uncertainty) about yourself?
4. What have been some other significant or defining moments in your spiritual life?
5. The Bible –What do you believe about the nature and importance of the Bible? What role does it play in your life? Prompt: Would you say it is more of a guidebook for you or a source of authority?

6. Prayer – What does prayer look like in your life? Prompts: Why do you pray? How do you pray? How often do you pray? What do you pray about? For whom do you pray? What does prayer accomplish in your life?
7. Church – Describe the nature of your involvement in church. Prompts: How important is church to you, and in what ways? Do you volunteer or serve in any capacity?
8. Can you give me three to five adjectives that describe your relationship with God right now? Prompt: Why did you select the word _____?
9. What would you say are your three most important goals as a teacher at this school?
10. Christian educators sometimes use the expression “integration of faith and learning” to describe one important goal of Christian education. Can you share with me any examples where you have intentionally included spiritual discussions within the context of your teaching?
11. What is your approach to classroom management? Prompts: What are some underlying principles that guide your approach? How do you typically handle discipline issues? Can you give me any examples of specific strategies you use?
12. In what ways should teachers interact with students outside of an academic context, if at all? Prompts: Should teachers interact with students directly about their relationship with God? What specific strategies do you use, if any, to help students develop or mature spiritually? How often would you say you have spiritual conversations with students? Can you describe a time when you had a meaningful spiritual interaction with a student?
13. While we have been discussing nurturing students spiritually, you may have experienced some emotions about the subject, either positive or negative or both. Think back over the

last few minutes. When you were considering the task of personally helping students mature spiritually, what emotions did it elicit in you?

14. In what ways did your educational background prepare or fail to prepare you to nurture students spiritually?
15. In what ways does your current personal relationship with God empower you to or hinder you from nurturing students spiritually?
16. In what ways does your level of biblical knowledge empower you to or hinder you from nurturing students spiritually?
17. Finally, is there anything you would like to share, clarify, or add to anything we have discussed?

When interviewing the principal, I asked these additional questions:

18. What would you say are your most important goals as the principal of this school?
19. When you are hiring a new teacher for the school, what are the most important qualities you look for in a candidate?
20. Do your new teachers undergo a process of initial training or induction, and if so, what does it include? Are there any specifically spiritual components?
21. During your tenure as principal, can you recall any professional development opportunities the high school has sponsored, sent teachers to, or paid for that had a clearly Christian focus?
22. Can you describe to me briefly the nature of your faculty meetings, for example, how often you meet, for how long, and your typical agenda? As you think back on the faculty meetings you have held this year, can you recall any discussions that had a clearly spiritual focus?

23. How would you describe any expectations you may have for your teachers regarding teaching from a biblical worldview? How are these communicated to the teachers? Is there any sort of supervision or accountability for teachers regarding this?
24. How would you describe any expectations you may have for your teachers regarding the spiritual nurture of students? How are these communicated to the teachers? Is there any sort of supervision or accountability for teachers regarding this?
25. In general, how would you assess the effectiveness of the faculty in general at teaching from a biblical worldview and spiritually nurturing students?

As with the faculty survey, the interview was designed to flow smoothly from one question to another from the respondent's standpoint. In the next section, I discuss the interview questions as they pertain to the research questions. Some of the questions have additional prompts I used to probe the question more deeply. Additionally, some of the questions applied to more than one research question and are therefore noted below.

Research Question One. My first research question was "How do teachers at Live Oak Christian High School evidence elements of an active Christian faith?" My intent was to address the gap in the literature regarding the presence of Christian faith among teachers in Christian schools. I used largely neutral and open-ended questions because "Leading questions reveal a bias or an assumption that the researcher is making which may not be held by the participant" (Merriam, 2009, p. 99). Therefore, I allowed participants the freedom to express feelings, beliefs, and opinions that may have contradicted biblical teachings or the school's Belief Statement with no expression of judgment or surprise.

Questions 1 through 9 were designed to craft a picture of participants' spiritual lives from childhood to the present. Since 64% of Christians accept Christ before the age of 18 (Barna

Group, 2004), I began the interview asking participants to identify the early spiritual influences in their lives, especially family and church (Question 1) and school (Question 2).

In Questions 3 and 4, I asked them to define the word ‘Christian’ and then asked if they were a Christian by that definition. I also asked them to describe significant spiritual moments in their lives. Without standing in personal judgment of a teacher’s faith, I sought to discover indications that the teachers were serving as a role model of genuine Christian experience, since teens typically emulate the people they know the best (Barna Group, 2011c) but also to discern the participants’ comfort level in verbalizing their faith. If teachers were reluctant to acknowledge their faith verbally, that same reluctance in the classroom might affect their ability to engage in spiritually transformational teaching and thus would merit further exploration. Questions 5, 6, and 7 related to spiritual elements or disciplines that may also have indicated an active Christian faith: the role of the Bible, prayer, and the church in their lives (Foster, 1998).

In contrast, Question 8 was designed purposefully to help participants articulate their faith by giving me three to five words that describe their current relationship with God. I could then ask them to explain why they chose each word, facilitating a brief discussion that could otherwise be lengthy, rambling, or hard to interpret later. In practice, this question seemed difficult to a couple of the respondents, causing me to reword it. Later, in Question 15, I asked one final question that drew on this initial discussion but addressed their ability to engage in spiritually transformational teaching: “In what ways does your current personal relationship with God empower you to or hinder you from nurturing students spiritually?”

Research Question Two. My second research question was “How have the lifelong learning experiences of teachers at Live Oak Christian High School prepared them to influence students spiritually?” Myers (2011) stated clearly that not even church involvement or

attendance at a Christian college assure that Christian school teachers know how to disciple students; therefore, several interview questions were designed as open-ended questions (in contrast to the more objective survey questions) to lead to a deeper understanding of these experiences. For example, Question 1 invited participants to share general influences on their lives that may not have been addressed in the survey questions. Question 2 specifically allowed participants to elaborate on how their unique school experiences may have empowered them. Questions 5 and 16 were designed to add rich description to that data as participants reflected verbally on the nature and importance of the Bible and how their level of biblical knowledge either empowered them or hindered them from nurturing students spiritually (a crucial aspect of transformational teaching). Question 7 inquired about the teacher's areas of church engagement, which sometimes revealed their involvement in specifically educational opportunities such as Bible studies.

Research Question Three. My third research question was “How do teachers at Live Oak Christian High School demonstrate intentionality to influence students spiritually?” Questions 9 – 14 addressed intentionality for transformational teaching both indirectly and directly. Question 9 asked “What would you say are your three most important goals as a teacher? More specifically, why did you decide to teach at this school?” My reason for asking this question neutrally and at the beginning of this section of the interview was to see if participants included answers that reflected a desire for transformational teaching without being prompted. For example, I looked for answers such as “freedom to teach from a Christian perspective” or “a desire to nurture students spiritually.”

However, transformational teaching requires action; it affects how teachers teach, manage their classroom, and relate to students (Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). Therefore, Question

10 inquired if participants have actually included spiritual issues within the context of their teaching. In Question 11, I asked participants to describe their classroom management and discipline style and to give examples. Question 12 was designed to discover participants' underlying beliefs and commitments regarding the development of personal relationships with students, particularly of a spiritual nature. In each of these three questions, I sought to determine how intentional the teachers are about influencing students spiritually in the variety of contexts in which they interact with them. However, I added an additional question (Question 13) that gave some insight into the issue of transformational teaching. I invited participants to reflect on the conversation we just had and asked, "When you were considering the task of personally helping students mature spiritually, what emotions did it elicit in you?" My belief was that this question might "tease out" or reveal feelings that teachers have of which they may not even be aware, that may influence their effectiveness at transformational teaching. These feelings might be positive, such as excitement and compassion, or negative, such as apathy or a sense of inadequacy.

Finally, I added Question 17 in case participants had thoughts that they would like to "share, clarify, or add to anything we've discussed." This open-ended question showed respect for the participants' role as helpful contributors to the study, but also elicited valuable data beyond the scope of the other interview questions.

Questions for the principal. As noted previously, the principal was not considered one of the nested cases but was included in the study to understand the influence of his leadership on the teachers, the hiring process, and the spiritual culture of the school. Understanding the nature of his leadership was important because "strong transformational leadership by the principal is essential in supporting the commitment of teachers" (Marks & Printy, 2003, p. 393) and because

it motivates teachers by focusing their attention on organizational goals (Bass & Avolio, 1993). Therefore, questions 18 – 25 were designed to provide contextual information about the principal that would aid in understanding the teachers in light of the research questions. Questions 18 and 19 were included to assess whether the principal articulated spiritual goals among his most important goals for the school and in his hiring practices, which might indicate whether he values and supports spiritually transformational teaching. Questions 20 and 21 addressed Research Question 2 by discerning whether teachers received spiritual training through the school in the form of induction or professional development opportunities. Questions 22 through 24 addressed Research Question 3 by discovering if and how the principal encourages teachers to be intentional in teaching from a biblical worldview and nurturing students spiritually. Question 25 allowed the principal to elaborate on his personal perceptions of teacher preparedness for spiritually transformational teaching at Live Oak Christian.

At the beginning of each interview, I engaged teachers briefly in casual conversation to establish rapport and put them at ease. I invited participants to respond openly and honestly, assuring them that my goal was understanding and not judgment and reminding them that confidentiality would be maintained by the use of pseudonyms in any published work. After my data collection was complete, each interview was transcribed with the assistance of a person unrelated to the study. Participants were given the opportunity to add comments and corrections to the transcription of their interview as a form of member checking.

Data Analysis

Bogdan and Biklen (1982) defined qualitative data analysis as "working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others"

(p. 145). As I began this complex task, I obtained aggregated responses to the survey from Survey Monkey, the web-based company which sponsored the online survey (Appendix F). My next priority was to select a purposeful sample with maximum variation sampling of eight to 10 teachers to serve as my primary participants. However, as previously noted, my request for volunteers elicited exactly the needed number, so my selection was limited to these candidates. All participated with the exception of one teacher who withdrew from the study after experiencing a death in the immediate family. As I note in Chapter 4, these participants represented a broad spectrum of backgrounds and characteristics and were likely as good a sample as I hoped to obtain using maximum variation sampling.

Once I selected the participants, I retrieved their survey data from Survey Monkey and began an in-depth analysis of it using Stake's (2005a) methodology and worksheets. I focused intensely on each nested case individually, bearing in mind Stake's (2005a) caution not to merge the findings of each case into the main research questions too quickly because "they need to be heard a while, then put aside a while, then brought out again, and back and forth" (p. 46). Reading through each survey, I used strategies such as highlighting, color coding, and marginal notes to organize essential information. From these notes I completed the Analyst's Notes Worksheet (Appendix L), giving a synopsis of each case, listing findings, noting relevance of the case to the themes, discussing the uniqueness of the case, and listing possible excerpts for the final report. This methodology empowered me to see the case as a whole (the synopsis) while also examining it in detail to recognize its separate parts (findings). I was then able to discern how the case shed light on the themes through characteristics that later proved to be either typical or atypical of the quintain.

Next, I conducted a document analysis for each teacher of their curriculum maps, two

weekly lesson plans, and two assessments. Per the school's requirement, teachers included a section on Christian Worldview on their maps, and it was helpful to discover how each participant viewed the concept of integrating faith and learning in their particular courses. The lesson plans and assessments had no such overt requirements, however, so the presence of spiritual elements in them may suggest both skill (Research Question Two) and intentionality (Research Question Three) in spiritual integration. I should note that not every teacher had completed curriculum maps or lesson plans available to share. As I examined these documents carefully, I again used a variety of strategies to note essential information which I assimilated into the Analyst's Notes Worksheet.

Similarly, I followed this pattern with the field notes from the observations and the transcriptions of the interviews. The survey was broad-based and limited largely to multiple choice answers, and the document analysis provided only specific information. In contrast, the observations and interviews offered deeper insights into the themes. They enriched the synopsis of each nested case by enabling me to use rich, thick descriptions and helpful quotes that captured the essence of participants' perspectives.

With each case explored through four data collection methods and examined thoroughly with careful focus on the individual case, I transitioned into cross-case analysis. The Expected Utility of Each Nested Case for Each Theme Worksheet (Appendix M) allowed me to assess how much a given theme was manifested in each case situation and how ordinary or extraordinary (unusual) each case was. This assessment was important to prevent faulty assertions from arising from weak or atypical evidence, and with my Analyst's Notes, enabled me to generate cross-case assertions that were based on the themes and documented in Tables 3, 5, and 6.

At this point, “the task shifted from analysis to synthesis” (Stake, 2005, p. 76), and I began to organize my conclusions and decide upon the issues I would discuss, additional topics to mention, and quotes and impressions to provide rich and descriptive supporting data. Having determined the conceptual structure for the final report, I wrote my case analysis, ultimately addressing the core issue of this study: teachers’ preparedness for spiritually transformational teaching.

Trustworthiness

A qualitative study “describes people acting in events” and is trustworthy to the degree that it “provides the reader with a depiction in enough detail to show that the author’s conclusion ‘makes sense’” (Firestone, 1987, p. 19). Lincoln and Guba (1985) developed a unique paradigm that uses four elements to address the crucial question of whether a qualitative study meets sufficient standards of rigor to be considered trustworthy. Credibility addresses whether a study presents a true picture of the phenomenon under scrutiny. Dependability requires that a study be conducted in such a way that it could reasonably be repeated by others. Transferability demands that a study provides sufficient detail of the context of the fieldwork that to determine whether findings can legitimately be applied to other settings. Confirmability demands that the findings emerge from the data rather than from the predispositions of the researcher (Shenton, 2004). Procedures to ensure that this study met all four of these standards for trustworthiness are outlined below.

Credibility

Credibility concerns the question of whether research findings match reality. Patton (2002) contended that credibility can be ensured through the rigor of the study, the transparency of the researcher in explicitly stating personal or professional information that might influence

the collection or interpretation of data, and the appropriate use of qualitative methodology. I helped ensure a rigorous study partly by providing in-depth, rich data in sufficient detail to show that my conclusions were credible and made sense (Merriam, 2009). I employed triangulation across cases and across methodologies to clarify meaning from multiple perspectives and because it “adds rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to any inquiry” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2012, p. 10). Additionally, I used member checks to establish credibility further by inviting participants to read and comment on the transcript of their interviews. According to Maxwell (2005),

This is the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and the perspective they have on what is going on, as well as being an important way of identifying your own biases and misunderstanding of what you observed. (p. 111)

Second, I helped ensure the credibility of a study by being trustworthy myself, carrying out the research with the highest standards of professional and ethical integrity (Merriam, 2009). My transparency in stating personal and professional factors that could potentially influence my objectivity increased my self-awareness and provided accountability for any potential biases. Third, I constructed this study with careful adherence to accepted qualitative methodology and the strategies of respected qualitative researchers.

Dependability

Dependability is the degree to which, “if the work were repeated, in the same context, with the same methods and with the same participants, similar results would be obtained” (Shenton, 2004, p. 71). Patton (2002) put it more succinctly, calling it “a systematic process systematically followed” (p. 546). I ensured dependability in my study by reporting my research

activities in detail in an audit trail so that future researchers can feasibly replicate this study. My methodology will be easy to repeat because I meticulously followed Stake's (2005a) case analysis strategies, which include careful documentation. I worked under the supervision and guidance of an experienced committee that oversaw and guided the research process.

Transferability

Transferability addresses "the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations" (Merriam, 2009, p. 223). Difficulty exists in the application of the results from a small sample of qualitative data to other contexts; however, the diversity of backgrounds and characteristics of my participants increased the transferability of my study. Also, Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Firestone (1993) suggested while investigators cannot make transferability inferences, they can provide enough contextual information about the fieldwork site for the reader to do so. Therefore, I used rich, thick description of the data in support of my findings to allow readers to determine how the findings may transfer to other environments and compare with the results of similar studies.

Confirmability

Confirmability involves steps "taken to help ensure as far as possible that the work's findings are the result of the experiences and ideas of the informants, rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher" (Shenton, 2004, p. 72). To this end, I kept an accurate audit trail as evidence that I have followed my prescribed methodology as reported. I made every effort to seek objectivity and transparency, being aware that prior knowledge or impressions of the school or a particular teacher (either positive or negative) could potentially affect my objectivity and acknowledging those moments in my audit trail. Finally, member checks of the interview data helped ensure that my data collection was accurate.

Ethical Considerations

“The burden of producing a study that has been conducted and disseminated in an ethical manner lies with the individual investigator” (Merriam, 2009, p. 234). As a Christian educator who dared to assume a role where I evaluated other teachers’ spiritual effectiveness, I attempted to act with the highest level of integrity and professionalism and to reflect the character of Christ by interacting with the study participants with an attitude of warm, positive regard; encouragement; humility; and a teachable spirit. I entered their world, not as a judge or expert, but as a learner, a colleague, and a sister in Christ. However, even outstanding schools and teachers can improve, and I have strived to describe the school’s strengths and weaknesses objectively for the benefit of the teachers and the school as well as for Christian education in general. In the analysis of my research, I avoided critical terminology and described any unfavorable results in terms of areas that can be strengthened.

Furthermore, I have been entrusted with knowledge that has the potential to bring great benefit to the field of Christian education; therefore I have been straightforward and honest in the reporting of my data. I am aware of the power that comes with a facility with the language, that truth can be manipulated to achieve success, influence, praise, and even favorable research results! It is the responsibility of the Christian researcher to resist any temptation to skew the data for selfish ends or even for noble ends. The truth of all findings should be allowed to speak for itself.

Protecting the confidentiality of participants is also a major ethical concern. I protected the privacy of survey participants within the school by working through a non-supervisory staff member who facilitated my communication with participants through procedures designed to protect their privacy. Per IRB confidentiality guidelines, I substituted pseudonyms for names or

other personal identifiers of participants in the rest of the study. I have stored their informed consent forms separately from the data and limited access to the data to persons directly involved in the transcription or interpretation of the data. Finally, I am keeping all research records in a secure physical location or a password-protected digital location.

CHAPTER FOUR

Overview

This study investigated teachers in a Christian high school in the southeastern United States for indications of preparedness for spiritually transformational teaching. A single instrumental case study design was used to explore the spiritual characteristics, education and training, and intentionality of a purposive sample of teachers at the school.

Site

Live Oak Christian Preparatory Academy was selected for study because its academic and spiritual characteristics suggest that it is a school that one expects would employ and empower spiritually transformational teachers. Specifically, the school has been in existence for 64 years, holds AdvancEd (2015) accreditation, and boasts a strong college-preparatory curriculum. The school began as The Evangelical Bible School, and its original purpose according to the founders was “to bring as many young people as possible to a saving knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and to help them grow in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ” (Stramm, 2006). Presently, the school has a clear vision statement “to glorify God by partnering with families, churches and the local community in educating future generations through Christ-centered training, application and example” (Live Oak Christian High School, n.d.a) and claims

to teach Biblical principles throughout the challenging curriculum reflecting a Christian worldview. Conducting Bible classes and memorizing scripture are integral components, but Live Oak Christian goes further, intentionally training teachers how to instruct every subject area from a Biblical perspective for real life application. (Live Oak Christian High School, n.d.b)

Furthermore, the school emphasizes that “Our efforts to integrate faith, learning and service are not just to prepare our students for college, but more importantly, for a lifetime of learning and building the kingdom [of] God.” (Live Oak Christian High School, n.d.c)

Entering the campus, visitors notice the expansive campus, the relaxed atmosphere, and the feel of southern charm. Nestled in a wooded area that hides Civil War trenches and several barrow pits, the campus is spread out over 265 acres and includes a daycare, preschool, elementary school, high school, cafeteria, media center, gym, and \$10 million athletic/performance facility, as well as numerous athletic fields and even a nature preserve. (A separate campus houses additional elementary classes and a middle school.) At the heart of the campus is a pecan grove where parents occasionally share special moments lunching with their young children at concrete picnic tables and where high school students lounge and talk between lunch and their next class. The boys are dressed in khaki pants and solid colored shirts, while the girls wear the same plaid skirts and white shirts that were worn by many of their mothers who also attended the school in years past.

Like the old moss-covered oak trees that adorn the landscape, the school has been here for many years and is steeped in tradition. The headmaster has been at the school for 17 years and is considered one of the newer arrivals, since the principal and many of the teachers have been at the school even longer. Parents who visit the office are greeted by the feisty office manager, who at 86 has kept things running smoothly at the school for 45 years. Alumni who visit the school are surprised at how many familiar faces they see and how little the school seems to have changed.

However, Live Oak has grown exponentially since its founding in 1951 as a boarding school for eight students. At present, under the leadership of Headmaster Charles Meldrim (a

pseudonym), the school currently has nearly 1800 students and over 200 employees and has graduated over 3500 alumni. Mr. Steve Tanner serves as principal of the high school, which currently has approximately 26 teachers and 1800 students.

Administrative Leadership

Headmaster

Mr. Meldrim presents with a quiet and gentle manner. As we spoke, he was polite but reserved until the conversation turned to the subject of Christian education, at which point he became animated. I needed only to ask general questions and he was immediately able to give me extended, well-considered responses with an enthusiasm that caused him to lean forward in his chair and his eyes to light with excitement. We spoke mainly of two elements of Christian education, the integration of faith and learning and the spiritual nurture of students. He described of a paradigm shift that significantly changed his educational approach and helped him learn to think and teach “Christianly”:

I didn’t know what worldview was, didn’t know what worldview meant. Um, and then in years later, the Lord really opened my eyes theologically to what I call the doctrines of grace, and I saw my hymnology meant something different, my theology was tremendously impacted, and my educational philosophy was impacted when I realized that history was “His Story” from beginning to end. See, I didn’t know that, I couldn’t understand that, I couldn’t articulate that, so when the Lord renovated my theology, it impacted my educational philosophy (C. Meldrim, personal communication, May 7, 2015).

I asked him how the school interprets the integration of faith and learning, and he answered that they are “really all over the map” on that topic and he does not believe the faculty understand it,

partly because the majority of them were trained in a secular setting as he was. Given his 17 year tenure at Live Oak and his obvious belief in the importance of teaching from a Christian worldview, I sought to discover whether teachers had been trained in this area. Several years previously, teachers had been asked to create curriculum maps for their courses and to include a Christian worldview component. It was not uncommon for Mr. Meldrum to give every teacher a book each year, such as *Kingdom Education* by Glen Schultz and *The Last Great Generation* by Josh McDowell, to influence their thinking. A benefactor to the school had begun to sponsor several students and the occasional faculty member to attend Summit, a training experience designed “to equip Christians to defend and champion the Biblical worldview by training them in worldview analysis, apologetics, cultural engagement, and leadership” (Colson Center, 2015). However, despite these initial efforts, Mr. Meldrim spoke as if the faculty was still largely ignorant about how to integrate faith and learning.

I then asked him to reflect on the role of the school in nurturing students spiritually. He began by explaining what the school is not. Live Oak is not a covenant school where “everybody in there is a believer, supposedly” (C. Meldrim, personal communication, May 7, 2015). It is not a discipleship school, where teachers are responsible for nurturing, counseling, and communicating with students on a weekly basis, nor is it an evangelical school. This last inference was surprising, given Live Oak was founded as an evangelical school and still meets Bebbington’s (2005) criteria for evangelical at least outwardly, until he explained the rather negative connotation he ascribes to the concept:

The evangelical school, in my opinion, is the school that takes the first two weeks of school and gets everybody, quote, “saved.” And you know, you have chapels and you give invitations and you don’t dismiss until at least one person comes down crying and

says that they want to accept Christ as their Savior. (C. Meldrim, personal conversation, May 7, 2015)

Instead, he said,

We're more of a college prep school that invites kids and teaches kids to think Christianly from a biblical worldview, and we see God work in their lives and change their thoughts and change their lives. And it may be while they're here and it may not be. (C. Meldrim, personal conversation, May 7, 2015)

Mr. Meldrim made it clear that the school should not encroach on the Church's role and said plainly, "we don't proselytize." (personal conversation, May 7, 2015) He was even more emphatic that the school should not encroach on the parents' role in a child's salvation:

As a dad, there is nothing more sacred and wonderful and glorious for me [than] to lead my own children to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, knowing that God opens the eyes, God does the salvation, but I'm leading my own children, and for somebody at a school, or even a church, to usurp that privilege and my responsibility to do that? I would be livid! I would be livid! (C. Meldrim, personal conversation, May 7, 2015)

Simply, Mr. Meldrim's primary concern was that students get a strong college preparatory education and develop a biblical worldview. He believed that it is not the responsibility of the school to lead students to a salvation experience or the responsibility of teachers to talk with or encourage them spiritually. He acknowledged that there is a diversity in theology among the faculty and that the school is a lot more loose or flexible on doctrinal issues than a lot of Christian schools:

See, our statement of faith is the Apostles' Creed – very basic, very fundamental. I just want people to be sound and fundamental on God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy

Spirit, the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ . . . you know, the fundamentals of the faith. (personal communication, May 7, 2015)

Principal

Mr. Tanner taught at Live Oak for four years before becoming the assistant principal. After serving for 10 years in this capacity, he stepped into the role of principal four years ago and also teaches a history class. Mr. Tanner grew up in a Christian home with parents who modeled faith and were active in the Baptist Church, and he attended secular private schools that had a pro-Christian leaning. He cannot remember a moment of salvation, instead describing his Christian experience as a natural progression over time. Today he has a growing faith, maintains an active devotional life, considers the Bible to be authoritative in his life, and serves as a leader in his United Methodist church.

As a teacher, Mr. Tanner has two major goals, to convey whatever he has been assigned to teach in such a way that students retain it and to model the behavior he wants students to develop. The first he described as the official curriculum, while the second he called the unofficial curriculum. Observing his class, it was obvious that he had a warm and comfortable relationship with his students, who seemed to both respect him and want to share with him details about their personal lives. He incorporates a biblical worldview into his classes on an occasional basis and described his efforts this way: “You can put in some lessons about the things that took place that really sort of stand out from a providential standpoint, but it shouldn’t be superficial” (S. Tanner, personal communication, April 13, 2015). For example, when teaching a lesson about the landing of the Allies at Dunkirk, he discussed how God may have responded to Eisenhower’s prayer by altering the weather and guiding German General Rommel to leave his troops shortly beforehand.

As a principal, Mr. Tanner’s primary goals are first, to prepare students for college in a supportive Christian setting, and second, to provide opportunities for growth in other areas of

interest, such as athletics, arts, or spiritual growth. I perceived a parallel in his upbringing and his current perspective about the spiritual nurture of students. He wants his teachers to be competent and Christian, but beyond the faith statements teachers write on their job applications, he does not typically probe into teachers' lives to ensure they are good role models of faith for students. Nor does he supervise the degree to which the faculty integrate faith and learning or nurture students spiritually. Homeroom teachers are expected to begin the students' days with a short devotion, Bible courses are a requirement for graduation, and weekly chapel programs and an annual spiritual emphasis week provide additional teaching. Beyond these activities, teachers have the freedom to interact or not interact with students spiritually to the degree that they choose.

Individual Participant Descriptions

Although my original intent was to select a purposive sample of participants with maximum variation from faculty survey respondents, only 10 teachers indicated a willingness to serve as primary participants. Therefore, I selected all 10, and was pleased that this sample reflected the diversity of age, gender, educational background, and subject areas that I had sought originally. Unfortunately, one teacher experienced the death of an immediate family member during the data collection phase and withdrew from the study.

Of the nine remaining primary participants, three were aged 60 or older, two were in their 50s, and four were in their 40s. These ages fairly represented the age spectrum of the teachers since the age of the survey respondents ranged from 43 to 69 with an average age of 54. The ratio of females to males was seven to two, also representative of the faculty that was 77% female and 23% male. The ratio of teachers who attended public schools vs. private schools was also six to three, also representative of the survey respondents. All of the teachers were White,

which is reflective of the Live Oak faculty. Of the nine participants, two taught English, three taught math, one taught science, one taught history, one taught business and technology, and one taught music. All of the participants answered survey questions in the affirmative that they agree with the basic tenets of the Apostles' Creed, which is the school's theological position.

Helen

Helen is a seasoned professional who taught in the public school system for 30 years before coming to Live Oak nine years ago. She began attending church at age six, experienced salvation at the age of 12, has been active in the same Presbyterian church for most of her life, and acknowledged that she is fairly consistent in her efforts to seek a closer relationship with God. Her many years of deep connection to God, commitment to the Bible, and strong church involvement have prepared her more than many teachers to integrate faith and learning and nurture students spiritually. In fact, she was unapologetic about sharing her faith in public school classrooms:

As I got into education and met other teachers that were very strong in their faith, we got sneaky. . . . We figured out ways to get around the political correctness and to allow teachers the autonomy to bring religion in correctly. And, you know, it's just a sneaky thing you have to do, and I didn't worry about it, and I was very glad that all of the people that worked with me were on the same base. . . . There was never anything in class that we did as a group with the children that somebody didn't start a prayer, or a blessing, or make a reference. We talked about the Bible. (Helen, personal communication, April 23, 2015)

The integration of biblical themes, references, and applications remains a key component of her literature classes today. For example, she explained:

I also point out to them how many of the great writers of the world included biblical reference in their writings. “Really look at what you read, guys,” and some of them catch the allusions. Those are the Bible scholars. They know their Bible. And the others are clueless, so I’m like, “Where is this? Go find it. Go back and read it in the Bible. See if you can apply it, because that’s what these people are doing, and you need to see how the Bible was important in their life. It influenced their novel, or poem, or whatever. Look at it. It’s not just a book. It’s important. (Helen, personal communication, April 23, 2015)

As I observed Helen in her English classes at Live Oak, her strong-willed determination to train her students in responsibility created a challenging atmosphere that included comments that were sometimes discomfiting:

- “Enabling you to be late is not preparing you for the real world.”
- “Sit down and be ready to listen. I am not going to be repeating anything so either listen or be ignored while we progress.”
- “Please don’t make the same mistake twice. I’m trying to help you but I’m not going to give it to you on a silver platter. Life doesn’t work that way!”
- “Pay attention. ‘Cutesy’ is not going to work anymore.”
- “John, you’re not going to have this in your day book when I check, are you? You’re hard-headed.” (Helen, observation, April 20, 2015)

Despite her “no nonsense” manner in the classroom, however, Helen does not hesitate to develop personal relationships with her students outside of class, welcoming them in her room at lunchtime, for example. “I am surrounded by children all the time; they’re part of me,” she

explained, and she is comfortable with “allowing them to be your friend a little bit in addition to a student.” (Helen, personal communication, April 23, 2015)

Charlotte

Charlotte is also an experienced educator who taught in the public school system for 23 years before coming to Live Oak Christian three years ago. While she described herself as being tough and hard-nosed, I quickly noticed that she was also warm, deeply sensitive, and open to sharing on a very personal and vulnerable level with both her students and me. Charlotte has been a Christian “more [years] than I can count” (personal communication, April 21, 2015). She was raised in a small town atmosphere where church and neighborhood people were like extended family, and her faith was grounded in the Lutheran tradition. While all her schooling was in public education, she does not believe it influenced her worldview significantly. Today, Charlotte practices her faith through personal Bible study and prayer. Regarding the Bible, she believes it is God’s Word, our final authority in matters of belief and practice, and should be interpreted carefully in its historical and literary context. Highly intelligent, Charlotte earned her Educational Specialist degree and clearly approaches her faith and her teaching first and foremost as a deep and critical thinker, and insists on examining her beliefs independently. She loves the structure of the liturgy in the Lutheran Church, but described a “wounding tragedy” – the death of two close family members – and other issues that have caused her to step back from church involvement for a season. “Yeah, I think spiritually I’m wounded. I’m struggling,” she said, “but that doesn’t mean that my faith has been shaken” (Charlotte, personal communication, April 21, 2015).

Observing her in the classroom, her Christian worldview was obvious, even though she admitted that she has received no educational or professional training in how to integrate faith

and learning. As an English, creative writing, and composition teacher, I saw clear evidence of this integration in her curriculum maps, classroom discussions, and class assignments. For example, in an English class, the students were studying the novel *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, and Charlotte asked the question, “How do you introduce God’s love and comfort to someone autistic like Oscar?” (Helen, observation, April 21, 2015). Reading her curriculum maps, you understand that she includes questions like that in her teaching intentionally:

The Book Thief and *Libra* both deal with historically significant events which have helped define American history and literature. These books spark debates about Christian principles such as how does God allow these horrible events to happen and what are we as His children supposed to learn from these events? Also, what purpose may God have in inspiring these novelists to write on these difficult topics, one reason being to help educate the world to help prevent similar events from happening again and discussing what we as individuals can do when faced with overwhelming circumstances by relying on God’s love and support. Also, some of these characters in these novels were motivated by greed, hate, etc. and by highlighting these motivations and their destructive results, we help teach our students to avoid these same pitfalls that God cautions His children about in the Bible.

An even more blatant example is a composition assignment Charlotte gave her students to write, a persuasive essay on the topic “Should/Could God Be Replaced?” where students were required to take a position and defend it. She had students discuss the ethics of certain rhetorical strategies of persuasion such as emotional appeals, personal attacks, and red herring (diversionary) tactics and asked, “Where do you draw the line? Is it ‘convince them at all costs?’

Do we want to coerce people?” (Charlotte, observation, April 15, 2015). Students were not only guided to ponder their personal theology, but also to consider its merits, defend their logic, and discern appropriate methods of communicating their faith to others.

Sharon

Sharon is likewise an experienced teacher who attended public schools and worshiped in the Lutheran Church. Also like Charlotte, she grew up in the church and therefore considers herself to have been a Christian essentially all of her life. She explained, “I’ve always believed that Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior; I’ve always known that. No, you weren’t born again or anything like that. You grew up in the faith, and you stayed in the faith” (Charlotte, personal communication, May 1, 2015).

Although all of her education was in public schools, faith was inherent in her school experiences, from the singing of Christian songs to teacher-led prayer. However, in college and in her teacher education classes, Sharon was never trained how to integrate faith in the classroom or nurture students spiritually. Her leadership and Sunday school teaching experiences in the church as a teenager and young adult helped her to a degree, but it was Live Oak’s curriculum mapping project that began to awaken her to new possibilities:

My teaching has changed in the last six years because of the curriculum mapping where we had to list the Christian worldview. And here I am listing all this junk with Algebra, and I’m like, how am I going to figure this out, and I actually found books that helped me do that, and I thought that was cool! So, you know, that doesn’t necessarily nurture their spirituality, but it does bring Christ, God, and a Christian view into the classroom, which doesn’t hurt their spirituality, right? (Sharon, personal communication, May 1, 2015)

Sharon seemed to be in the process of figuring out her role in nurturing students spiritually. Her

survey indicated that she believes Christian school teachers have a responsibility to nurture students spiritually and she works at it very intentionally. However, when I asked her directly if it is her responsibility to nurture students spiritually, she answered, “it probably is, but I’m not sure I do that. . . . The only way I do that is by example maybe. But maybe I should have a bigger role in that. I don’t know” (Sharon, personal communication, May 1, 2015)

As I sat in Sharon’s class, I observed that she indeed does attempt to influence students in ways she may not realize. First, I noticed several motivational posters on her classroom wall with quotes such as “With God all things are possible” and “Stand up for what is right even if you are standing alone.” Her manner was often direct to the point of bluntness and she occasionally used sarcasm with her students, but she seemed to act out of an underlying intent to promote appropriate behavior and build their character. For example, she chided one student repeatedly during multiple classes, always referring to him as “Mr. Duncan” (pseudonym): “Mr. Duncan, this has to do with study habits and paying attention. You’re lacking in that area” (Sharon, observation, May 1, 2015). “Mr. Duncan, no one said to stand up. Sit! Sit, Mr. Duncan! Don’t argue with me!” In a later conversation with me, Sharon described his personality and social relationships with others and then explained to me the reason for repeatedly correcting him: “Mr. Duncan is one of those people that you just have to be on him because he’s immature . . . but he has potential” (Sharon, personal communication, May 1, 2015).

In a separate situation, I observed her trying to teach a student honesty. The student was obviously making up an excuse for not having his homework, and she addressed him in front of the class: “Did you just make stuff up? You’ve told me three different stories and none of them were true!” (Sharon, observation, May 1, 2015). Later, however, she went to him quietly, explained that honesty was more important than good grades, and challenged him: “If you make

a zero, take a zero and be a man!” (Sharon, observation, May 1, 2015).

Sharon is a loud, boisterous teacher whose teaching style reflects her personality. Like Helen and Charlotte, she was somewhat brusque at times in the classroom, but it was also obvious that all three of the teachers cared deeply about their students. I observed that when students approached Sharon to discuss subjects like performing in a chapel service or facing an upcoming surgery, she expressed interest and concern. In our interview, she expressed that her main goals are to help her students to learn math, to give them skills to be able to learn in general, to make sure they know she cares about them, and to make them smile. Almost as an afterthought, Sharon said she does try “to tie the Lord into mathematics” (personal communication, May 1, 2015), and I sensed that this concept is still somewhat new to her but also intriguing. She expressed a desire for more training to know how to integrate faith and learning effectively in her classes and nurture students spiritually.

Donna

Donna is a practical, no-nonsense science teacher. She was raised Baptist in a small town in Georgia, was saved at the age of 11, and became increasingly active in youth activities at her church. Two experiences caused her to become very sensitive to others’ beliefs and unwilling to risk antagonizing people in the area of faith. The first was the presence of religious factions in her high school, where “the Church of God kids were cooler than everybody else, and they were somewhat arrogant in that... and we felt there was favoritism shown” (Donna, personal communication, April 29, 2015). The second experience was when she and her new husband moved to New York and developed a group of friends from diverse religions, holding many late night conversations that broadened her perspective. From my perspective as an observer in her classroom and in personal conversation with her, a third influence in her approach to her students

is that at heart, Donna is most thoroughly comfortable interacting in the world of science.

Six years ago, a tragedy happened that Donna likened to a Tibetan earthquake in her life: the unexpected death of her husband. In the wake of this devastating loss, Donna's faith has been deeply challenged, and her survey responses reflect this angst:

- Do you consider yourself a Christian? *Yes.*
- What statement most closely describes your current spiritual situation? *I consider myself a spiritual person, but I do not subscribe to an established religion.*
- Describes my life: *I would like to have a closer relationship with God, but certain struggles, sins, or doubts are preventing me from trying.*

When I asked Donna directly where she currently is in her faith journey, she responded poignantly:

Standing on a cliff. Don't know if I'm looking down at the jagged broken rocks beneath me or the lovely soaring sky ahead of me. I don't know. I don't know what I'm looking at. I'm just standing on the cliff. I don't see a path. And I don't want to turn around, and I'm scared to jump. (personal communication, April 29, 2015).

Therefore, the combination of a heightened sensitivity to offending others, a higher comfort level with discussing science than faith, and a significant faith crisis have resulted in Donna integrating faith and learning or nurturing students spiritually infrequently in the classroom.

Kris

Kris, the youngest of the primary participants, taught in public schools for eight years before coming to Live Oak 12 years ago. Kris accepted Jesus Christ at the age of 12 and credits her mother's deep influence and her Baptist upbringing and youth group for grounding her in the Christian faith. Unlike most of the study participants, Kris attended Christian schools until

college. Her belief about the Bible is that it contains God's words and is a helpful book of wisdom, and she reads it once or twice a month. Kris is not certain whether it is without error, but she leans toward it being authoritative "because I think His words ring true and there's some commandments in there that are definitely things that He, Jesus, stated" (personal communication, April 22, 2015). Kris is seeking a closer relationship with God but admitted that she is often inconsistent in her efforts; however, she thinks her experiences may help her in interacting with students spiritually:

I've walked off that path a lot. I mean, I'm not perfect, and so I think my experience and the fact that I keep coming back, and each time I get a little closer, and I get a little closer, and I get a little closer to God. I think that that's the, that's the thing that maybe helps more " (personal communication, April 22, 2015)

As the youngest primary participant in this study, I thought perhaps Kris reflected a generational difference in her worldview and approach to teaching from the older teachers. However, the differences could also be due to the fact that several of the other teachers were raised in more formal, liturgical-based denominations. Specifically, Kris creates an atmosphere in her classes that is markedly more relaxed than that of the previous teachers. I observed her chatting casually with a variety of students during class and showing warmth and compassion. For example, she quietly and thoughtfully sent a student to check on another student who left the room suddenly. She communicated affection appropriately with a gentle touch on the arm to one student and with quiet words of encouragement to another. Whereas some teachers see their role more in terms of training their students to think from a Christian perspective, Kris does not believe her content area inclines itself to that. Rather she seeks to develop nurturing relationships with students where they feel comfortable talking with her about their lives. I asked Kris if her

students talk with her about their relationship with God, and she answered, “Relationship with God, no. Their relationships in general, yes.” (personal communication, April 22, 2015). She added though, that these conversations sometimes lead in a spiritual direction.

Mark

Mark is a history and social studies teacher who has taught at Live Oak for 21 years. He is one of three primary participants who attended Christian schools growing up and said that it was a positive influence in teaching him the fundamental beliefs of Christianity and a basic sense of right and wrong. Although Mark attended an American Missionary Alliance Church as a child, he claimed that he really came to Christ along with his wife in his mid-twenties. Regarding the Bible, he believes it should be our final authority in matters of belief and practice, but he rarely reads it and admitted his Bible knowledge is more of a weakness than a strength in his teaching. Mark described his current relationship with God as follows:

I don’t know if the word [is] “dependent,” but trying to be more dependent on what God wants, but then also struggling and, you know, sometimes unsure of what that means.

And then hopeful that, you know, that He has a plan for everyone, and that when things seem negative, that there is meaning there, so that’s comforting I guess. (personal communication, April 21, 2015)

He acknowledged that he is often inconsistent in his efforts to seek a closer relationship with God but credited his pastor and the Bible-centered, non-denominational church he now attends with helping him to learn more about the Bible and prayer.

In the classroom, Mark’s manner was casual. He allowed students to eat, drink, and move around the room freely, and they seemed to like and respect him in return. His history and current events classes were very interactive and included the study of numerous issues which tie

in closely to worldview, ethics, and morality. However, in three classroom observations, I saw no efforts to integrate faith and learning, and Mark admitted that it is an area in which he could improve (personal communication, April 21, 2015).

Ann

Ann is a business teacher and track coach who has been at Live Oak for eight years. She was raised in a strong Christian family, accepted Christ at the age of 7, and was very active in the Southern Baptist church. Even her public school experiences were laced with Christian teachers and friends such that she said, “I don’t think I really knew that people . . . really grew up without the Lord in their life” (Ann, personal communication, April 30, 2015). As we talked, she was effusive in describing her relationship with God: “I couldn’t imagine my life without God. Everything I’ve been through and everything I’ve done, good and bad, He’s always . . . had His hand in it and directed me.” Today, she is active in a non-denominational church, and Bible study and prayer are an inherent part of her daily lifestyle.

As a teacher, Ann’s top classroom priority is spiritual in nature, even more important than academics. “I want to teach them the material, but most of all, I want to make a difference in their life. And it may not be by like quoting Scripture to them. It may just be by loving and caring for them where they are” (personal communication, April 30, 2015). Sometimes this means holding unplanned discussions with students on topics unrelated to the lesson plans, or even inviting students into her home.

Ann indicated that her leadership style does not always meet with the approval of the administration or other teachers, but the students clearly appreciate her caring manner and gentle humor and are generally well-behaved and on task. Her classes are very informal, partly because students are usually working independently on computer-based projects, and partly because of

Ann's leadership style. Students call her by her first name. She allows them to use her computer and borrow personal items. Despite four signs on the wall that say "No eating or drinking in this room," students do so freely, and I observed Ann thoughtfully collecting drink cans and food wrappers from them to throw in the trash. She sees herself as the school "mom," and her actions are guided by compassion:

I considered it a great compliment that I was [called] the mom of the school because I have the paper in there if they forget paper. I have notebooks. I have, at the first of school, I go buy those covers . . . well I actually bought them on the clearance, the covers they need for their day books because they'll come in there and they'll, and I know people say, "Oh, that's not teaching them responsibility," but I would want someone to do that for my child. I want them to be successful. I don't want them to be stressed out all the time because this curriculum's hard. So I like to provide that, you know, just the extra care for them. And if I see one hurting, I'm the first one there to - "what can I do for you? Do you need me to call your mom?" (Ann, personal communication, April 30, 2015)

Scott

Scott came from a very close knit family, grew up Independent Baptist in a small Georgia town, and was active in church from childhood forward. While he believes he was probably saved as a child, he made certain of it at the age of 29 because "I felt like in my heart that I wasn't saved, and if I perceive myself as not being a Christian, then I'm not a Christian" (Scott, personal conversation, May 4, 2015). Scott has regular devotions, reads his Bible often, and strives to have an intentional and disciplined prayer life. However, he is straightforward in admitting "[I] need to go to church more. Absolutely. I think Mama would be the first one to

tell you that. Don't go as often as I should. And do I feel bad about it? I absolutely do.”

Scott readily acknowledged that his opinions are pretty traditional and that he holds tight to what he was taught growing up. For example, he said of the Bible, “It’s literal, 100%, Old Testament to the New Testament. . . . I’m very orthodox in my belief. I’m very . . . I’m strict. I was raised that the King James Version is the only version of the Bible there is” (Scott, personal conversation, May 4, 2015), and he still adheres to that belief.

In the classroom, Scott integrates faith and learning very intentionally, and starts every music course by telling his students that the first and only reason music was created was for worship. While he wrestles how best to balance academics and spiritual teaching, his goals are clear:

The most important thing I do is to make sure that these kids understand that at the end of the day, no matter what we do and in what organization function or anything else that we’re doing, Christ has to be at the center of everything that we do. He has to be the leader of their life. (Scott, personal communication, May 4, 2015)

Outside of class, Scott believes that it is appropriate to establish personal relationships with students, but within certain guidelines. For example, he is not friends with any of his students on Facebook. However, as band director, he spends a lot of time with certain students outside of class, and they will often tell him things they would not tell anyone else because of the relationship they have established. The freedom to have spiritual conversations with students is a major reason he likes to teach at Live Oak. He would find it beneficial to have more training in ways to integrate a Christian worldview into his classes.

Bethany

Bethany has been teaching math at Live Oak for 20 years. In terms of spiritual nurture,

she has had almost every benefit a person could have. Her grandparents and parents were devout Christians and active leaders in their church. Bethany accepted Christ at the early age of 4 in her grandmother's Sunday school class. Both of her parents were Christian school teachers, and she attended the Baptist school where her mother taught from kindergarten through high school. After graduation, Bethany attended a Christian college where her professors modeled teaching from a Christian worldview, and she was able to listen to outstanding Christian speakers on a regular basis. She describes this experience as a "greenhouse" for spiritual growth. Following in her parents' footsteps, she became a teacher and she has now been teaching in a Christian setting for 23 years, alongside her husband, who also teaches at the school.

As a teenager, Bethany reaffirmed her commitment to God and said, "I will do whatever you want me to do. Here's a blank check, I'll sign my name at the bottom" (personal communication, April 27, 2015). Her complete surrender has brought her to the point where she now says,

He is my life. He is my light. He's my strength, my peace. The only way that I can get through difficult circumstances, the omnipotent, omniscient guide who is able to show me what He wants me to do and then make it happen.

Furthermore, she believes that what He wants her to do is to teach math:

It is my calling. It is my passion. It is my ministry. It is what God has currently told me to do until He tells me to do something different. And it is my way to serve Him, and I want to make sure I take advantage of every opportunity to put Him on display, and to proclaim Him, and to be bold in sharing my faith, and inviting other students to either come to know him or to grow in their faith.

Bethany believes strongly that she should provide both the best academic education and

the best Christian education for her students. Even though she teaches math, a subject many people find difficult to discuss from a Christian perspective, she does so regularly:

As we're looking at sequences and series and patterns and nature, we can see things like a Fibonacci sequence and go "there is no way by sheer probability that could come up over and over and over again in nature." We talk about that with the natural base e . We talk about that with π . Those types of things that we can discover in nature, I tell them that math is God's favorite subject and that He set up this great big scavenger hunt for us where now here's another one of those patterns or here's another one of those unique obscure numbers where the probability of that number showing up a few times in nature would be almost impossible, but for it to show up innumerably in nature is just God. It's fun to be able to show them God in nature and in mathematics and see how those things link together and how their academics can enhance their faith. (Bethany, personal communication, April 27, 2015)

Bethany shares Scripture verses readily with her students to encourage them, she is caring and models a servant spirit with them, she invites students to speak with her personally about their lives, and she takes advantage of teachable moments to develop students' faith. While I was at the school, two deaths occurred: a coach's wife died unexpectedly, and a former student known to many students was killed in a tragic car accident with several other young people. I observed Bethany's math class the day after the accident. At the beginning of class, Bethany announced, "In light of yesterday afternoon, we're not doing math today" (Bethany, observation, April 23, 2015). Instead, she played a video of Pastor Louie Giglio giving a clear presentation of the Gospel and sharing the testimony of a college age girl who accepted Christ just months before being killed in a car accident. Afterwards, she reviewed the events of the former student's

death, including the fact that the girl was committed to Jesus. She concluded with a gentle but passionate plea to her students to come to Christ: “To lose one of my students physically is all that I can take. *Please* get that taken care of today! Come talk to me. I love you and cannot fathom the thought of losing any of my students spiritually” Bethany, observation, April 23, 2015). At the end of the class, she gave the students a handout that included related Bible verses as well as Internet links to more information about Louie Giglio and the girl whose story he had shared.

Analysis across Nested Cases

In this section, I present the findings that were identified from the cross-case analysis of my data. My data collection methods included survey, document analysis, observations, and interviews. I analyzed each nested case individually employing Stake’s (2005a) methodology to assist me in both the individual and cross-case analysis.

Research Question One

The first research question focused on how teachers at Live Oak Christian High School evidenced elements of an active Christian faith. In Psalm 139, David acknowledged that God has searched him and knows him, perceives his thoughts, and is familiar with all his ways. In this study, it was neither my presumption to understand fully the hearts of the participants nor to judge their relationship with God, but rather to be descriptive of observed characteristics that often reflect an active faith. Christians differ in their understanding of theology, their degree of commitment, and their methods of practicing their faith, but the following categories are commonly accepted and scripturally reliable evidences of an active faith: a sound theology, verbalizations of a personal relationship with God, and spiritual practices such as church worship, Bible reading/study, corporate worship, Christian activities/service, and prayer. I list

assertions derived from the data in these three categories as they relate to Research Question One in Table 3.

Table 3

Research Question One Assertions

Category	Code	Description
Beliefs	Apostles' Creed	Teachers at Live Oak claim to believe in the basic tenets of the Apostles' Creed.
	Definition of Christian	Teachers at Live Oak understand that salvation is based on faith/belief but that right actions should follow.
	The Bible	While almost all the teachers at Live Oak believe the Bible should be the final authority in matters of belief and practice, their opinions differ on its nature and how it should be interpreted.
	Denominational Background	Denominational background is not a strong indicator of faith, but it does influence the way the teachers at Live Oak perceive, receive, and describe salvation.
Relationship	Moment of Salvation	Although some denominations do not emphasize the need for a distinct salvation experience, the presence of such a moment is suggestive of an active Christian faith in the lives of several teachers at Live Oak.
	Faith and Life Integration	Most teachers at Live Oak identify themselves as Christians and consider their faith integral to their daily life.
	Seeking God	Most teachers at Live Oak claim to be seeking God, although with varied levels of consistency.
Practices	Corporate Worship	The high school teachers at Live Oak vary widely in the frequency in which they attend church, but most attend worship services at least bimonthly.
	Christian Activities/Service	Some of the high school teachers at Live Oak participate in Sunday school, small

		groups, Bible studies, or other church or ministry-related activities.
	Bible Reading and Study	About half of the teachers at Live Oak study the Bible regularly or often.
	Prayer	Most teachers at Live Oak pray on most days, and about half strive to have an intentional and disciplined prayer life.
Administrative Factors	Hiring	Teacher applicants at Live Oak are asked to make a personal faith statement and sign a statement of agreement with the Apostles' Creed for employment.
		The principal seeks teachers who will be good Christian role models but is hesitant to probe applicants and teachers' lives deeply.

Theology. Christian faith involves the entrusting of a person's life and spiritual well-being to God through His Son, Jesus Christ. The Apostles' Creed has long been accepted as a summary statement of foundational Christian beliefs, and Live Oak Christian uses this creed as its basic belief statement. In the Faculty Survey, all 22 participants answered that they agree with statements derived directly from the Apostles' Creed, which include that Jesus is the God's Son, born to the Virgin Mary, was crucified, arose from the dead, and ascended into heaven. Respondents were then asked to give their personal definition of a Christian. Each primary participant with one exception referred to an experience of accepting Jesus, believing in Jesus, asking Jesus into their heart, being saved from sin, or having a personal relationship with God, and some also indicated that certain right behaviors should evidence themselves as well in the Christian's life. When asked if they considered themselves Christians by their personal definitions, all nine answered in the affirmative.

Approaching the same question from a different perspective, I asked the following as a

multiple choice question:

For purposes of this question, consider a Christian to be a person who has asked Jesus Christ to forgive his/her sins and to become his/her Savior and Lord. Which of the following most closely describes your spiritual situation right now?

Seven respondents answered, “I am a Christian, and my faith is integral to my daily life.” One responded, “I am a Christian and my faith is somewhat part of my daily life.” The one person who abstained from giving a personal definition of a Christian responded, “I consider myself a spiritual person, but I do not subscribe to an established religion.” This person was Donna, the science teacher who has been undergoing a crisis of faith in the wake of personal grief.

Interestingly, Donna responded elsewhere that she had a salvation experience as a child and considers herself a Christian, so the conflicting data is possibly indicative of the internal conflict she is currently experiencing.

The Bible. Survey respondents were almost unanimously in agreement with the following statement: “The Bible should be our final authority in matters of belief and practice,” with Donna being the only participant in disagreement. However, their answers diverged more when asked which statement most closely described their view of the Bible. Four participants answered, “The Bible is God Word and should be interpreted carefully in its historical and literary context.” Bethany and Scott, both Baptists, responded, “The Bible is God’s Word and should be interpreted at face value.” While I intended this response to be a “lower,” more simplistic response in terms of respect for the Bible, I believe that these participants actually chose that response to emphasize their belief in a literal interpretation of the Bible. For example, Bethany clarified her response by adding the personal comment, “The Bible is the inerrant Word of God, should be literally interpreted, and should shape every facet of my life as I seek to follow

Christ.” (faculty survey, April 27, 2015) In his personal interview, Scott said of the Bible:

It’s literal, 100%, Old Testament to the New Testament. . . . It should be the controlling factor from the time you get up in the morning till you go to bed at night and even, even as you’re sleeping. I mean, it’s, to me it’s the authority. That’s all there is. (personal communication, May 4, 2015)

As might be expected, denominational differences led to theological differences, particularly in how teachers experienced and described salvation. For example, Ann described her experience in a Baptist church this way:

I accepted the Lord as my Savior when I was seven years old. My sister and I went up together, and we were baptized. . . . It was amazing! I mean, I remember feeling so excited going into the baptistery and all that kind of thing. . . . I remember just feeling joy that day! And of course they played *Up from the Grave!* You arose when you came out of the water and it was just, you know, it was awesome! (personal communication, April 30, 2015)

In contrast, Sharon described her experience growing up as a Lutheran:

No, you weren’t born again or anything like that. You grew up in the faith, and you stayed in the faith. I mean, unless you got to a point in your life that you didn’t believe anymore, then yes, and now my friends were doing the born again thing, you know, ‘cause they were Baptists and stuff, but . . . and I didn’t understand it because I had always felt like I was a Christian, and I was always a Christian. (personal communication, May 1, 2015)

Relationship. Differing perspectives such as these affect a Christian school’s approach to spiritual nurture, and I discuss potential problems that may arise from differing views within a

faculty in Chapter 5. However, it is clear that the presence of such a definitive moment in a teacher's life is suggestive of Christian faith, at least at a previous point in time, as is a current expression of commitment. I approached the issue of teachers' current relationship with God from two perspectives in the faculty survey. First, I asked,

For purposes of this question, consider a Christian to be a person who has asked Jesus Christ to forgive his/her sins and to become his/her Savior and Lord. Which of the following most closely describes your spiritual situation right now?

As noted above, seven of the nine participants answered, "I am a Christian, and my faith is integral to my daily life." Mark, who accepted Christ in his mid-twenties and has been a Christian fewer years than the other participants, answered, "I am a Christian, and my faith is somewhat part of my life." Donna, who indicated that she was a Christian by her own definition in a previous question but did not describe that definition, answered "I consider myself a spiritual person, but I do not subscribe to an established religion."

The second question designed to elicit a general statement regarding the participants' spiritual condition from a different perspective asked respondents to select the statement that most closely describes their life right now. Helen, Scott, and Bethany answered, "I am seeking a closer relationship with God and am fairly consistent in my efforts." Charlotte, Sharon, Kris, Mark, and Ann answered, "I am seeking a closer relationship with God but am often inconsistent in my efforts." Donna answered, "I would like to have a closer relationship with God, but certain struggles, sins, or doubts are preventing me from trying." To get a better sense of whether this breakdown of responses was reflective of the faculty as a whole, I referred back to the 22 original responses, and found that approximately 50% selected "consistent," 41% selected "inconsistent," and 9% (2 respondents) selected the option about struggles, sins, or doubts

preventing them from trying. Given the small sample sizes, they were a fairly good representation.

Practices. What are the efforts that Christians use to seek God, whether consistently or inconsistently? While they may differ among individuals, I chose four of the most common practices for evidences of active faith: Bible reading and study, prayer, corporate worship, and Christian or ministry-related activities. Corporate worship, or church attendance, varied widely among the participants. Helen, who has had deep ties to the same church for 50 years, attends her church often, defined as five or more times per month. Bethany, who is active in church leadership with her husband, also attends often. Kris, Mark, Ann, and Scott attend regularly, defined as two to four times per month. Scott would attend more often if his family had not moved a significant distance from his church. Sharon, Charlotte, and Donna attend church occasionally, defined as six to 12 times per year. Sharon would like to attend church more but is currently caring for an elderly parent. Charlotte also stepped away from church to care for her elderly mother. Since her death, other issues such as a church split and finding a good church home have made church attendance more problematic for her. Ultimately, however, she admits, “I think it’s more of a heart issue . . . it’s still a real raw area” (Charlotte, personal communication, April 21, 2015). For Donna, her dissatisfaction with church began even before her husband’s death when their church had some legal issues that ended up in litigation. “It’s just like this isn’t giving us anything,” she said. “It sounds like we’ve walked into a soap opera instead of a church. We just don’t need that” (Donna, personal communication, April 29, 2015).

In addition to worship attendance, all but Charlotte, Donna, and Scott have been involved in other Christian activities within the past two years. These activities include but are not limited to Sunday school, small groups, Bible studies, choir, vacation Bible school, and service projects.

It should also be noted that the teachers are present for weekly chapel programs at the school as well as the school's annual spiritual emphasis week.

While public worship and activities are indicative of an active faith, personal spiritual disciplines such as Bible reading or study and prayer are perhaps even more indicative in that they are likely to be intrinsically motivated and done privately. In the area of personal Bible reading and study, participants varied considerably in frequency. Bethany, Ann, and Charlotte read the Bible often – three or more times a week. Helen and Scott read the Bible regularly – once or twice a week. Sharon, Kris, and Donna read the Bible occasionally – once or twice a month – and Mark rarely or never reads the Bible.

Interestingly, the teachers who read the Bible regularly or often not only pray on most days, but also strive to have an intentional and disciplined prayer life. For example, Bethany said, “There are definite set times of prayers where I have a prayer list of things I want to pray about,” but then she continued,

but it's also as I'm throwing laundry in the washing machine: I think of somebody that's going through a hard time, I'll throw up a little pray for them. We pray with our children on the way to school each morning. We pray with our students at school. We pray before every meal with our kids. We pray as a family for family devotions before the kids got to bed at night. (personal communication, April 27, 2015)

This attitude of praying throughout the day is in keeping with the scriptural imperative to pray continually (I Thessalonians 5:17) and is reminiscent of Moses' injunction to the Israelites in Deuteronomy 6:6-9 to keep God's commands continually at the forefront of their minds:

These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road,

when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. This spirit of constant communication with God was also present in other participants. Ann said, “I pray when I run. I pray myself to sleep at night. . . . I go to prayer for everything, you know” (personal communication, April 30, 2015). Scott said,

So, I mean, you know, I pray all the time. I’m constantly . . . I was taught that constant prayer doesn’t mean that you bow your head over and your eyes are closed and you’re constantly . . . but you know, I always have, I always have God in forethought, everything I’m doing and decisions that I make, I’m constantly praying. I think that’s just, you know, how I was always taught. (personal communication, May 4, 2015)

Finally, I noticed a characteristic in these same participants that was not evident in the others. The teachers who read the Bible and pray more often also seem to appreciate the importance of surrendering their will to God. Bethany explained,

As I pray and ask Him to please guide me and direct me, and empty me of myself, and fill me with Him, and help me to lay down my will for His will, and to do what He wants me to do, and to put my agenda aside, and to be open to whatever He wants me to do, I feel like He can clearly direct me to the things He wants me to do. (personal communication, April 27, 2015)

Regarding the Bible, Helen said, “It’s God’s Word. It has directed you. You do what it says, and if you do, you are following in the footsteps you’ve been given” (personal communication, April 23, 2015). Scott also indicated his belief about the importance of obeying God through the Bible:

I think a lot of people today want to put the Bible in the context of the way it fits into

their life rather than fit your life into the context of what the Bible is, and I think that also shows up on the news pretty much on a daily basis, you know. People always try to take a verse of the Bible and twist it around and make it fit their life, and that's not the way it was intended to be. God, as far as I know, He hasn't changed yet, and He's not going to. (Scott, personal communication, May 4, 2015)

Administrative factors. Ultimately, the principal is the gatekeeper of the faculty, determining who is hired and who remains at the school from year to year. Teacher applications require both a personal faith statement and a signature that the applicant agrees with the school's statement of faith, which is the Apostles' Creed. However, Mr. Tanner, the principal, allowed for the possibility that some believers are not very articulate about their faith:

Some folks are quite able to put their faith into words, and some aren't, you know. They may be very faith-based folks; they just have a harder time putting what they believe into words. You don't just want to hold, you know, hold that against them. But I think part of it too then is you sit there and reflect and pray, and hopefully you get a little guidance . . . (personal communication, April 13, 2015)

One teacher commented about a potential drawback to this allowance:

I guess [the administrators] just kind of feel like that it's up to each individual teacher how they want to handle [spirituality in the classroom]. Some, you know, some may not feel very comfortable at all talking about that. You don't even have to be a Christian to work here, if you think about it. I mean, [the work agreement] just says that this is what we teach, and if you agree to this, sign the paper, and that's, you can agree to it, but that doesn't mean that's what you are, you know. (Scott, personal communication, May 4, 2015)

This teacher's implication is that the school's inquiry into applicants' Christian faith and practice is not thorough enough to ensure that its teachers have an active or mature faith. I agree. As a researcher, I was an observer of written, verbal, and behavioral indicators of an active faith in the participants, and I discovered that these indicators varied greatly among participants. While all of the participants claimed to have a meaningful salvation or faith experience at some point in their lives, I concluded that for some of the teachers, their present relationship with God would not sufficiently prepare them for spiritually transformational teaching.

Research Question Two

The second research question focused on how the lifelong learning experiences of teachers at Live Oak Christian High School have prepared them to influence students spiritually. These experiences include their early training by parents, the Church, and the school; their college and teacher education programs; their personal Bible reading and study; and professional development experiences. Table 5 summarizes significant findings in these areas.

Table 5

Research Question Two Assertions

Category	Code	Description
Early Training	Parenting	All of the teachers at Live Oak were raised by Christian parents who either facilitated or significantly influenced their faith development.
	Church	All of the teachers at Live Oak were active in church throughout most of their childhood and teenage years.
	Public School	Teachers who attended public schools before the Supreme Court decision outlawing prayer in schools usually perceived their school experiences as affirming to Christianity.

Teacher Education	Preparation for Integration of Faith and Learning	Most Live Oak teachers attended public colleges where they received no training in how to integrate faith and learning in the classroom.
	Preparation for Spiritual Nurture	Most Live Oak teachers attended public colleges where they received no training in the spiritual nurture of students.
	Preparation for Christian-based Classroom Management	Most Live Oak teachers attended public colleges where they received no training in classroom management from a Christian perspective.
Biblical Knowledge	View and Interpretation of the Bible	Among the participants, a high correlation exists between the belief that the Bible is authoritative, that it is God's Word, and that it should be interpreted in its historical and literary context.
	Frequency of Bible Reading	Teachers who have a higher view of the Bible tend to read and study it more often.
	Spiritually Transformational Teaching	The more teachers read and study the Bible, the more likely they are to engage in spiritually transformational teaching.
Professional Development	Induction	The school's induction of new teachers does not include significant training in spiritually transformational teaching.
	Spiritual Collaboration among Colleagues	Most teachers at Live Oak do not collaborate with their colleagues about spiritually transformational teaching.
		Some teachers suspect that their efforts at spiritually transformational teaching might be criticized by administration or colleagues.
	Professional Development	All the teachers at Live Oak claim to have had little to no professional development

opportunities related to spiritually transformational teaching.

Early training. Participants painted portraits of mostly happy childhoods where Christian parents and extended family members nurtured their spiritual development significantly or at the very least, facilitated it by bringing them to church. All but one participant believed in Christ from a young age, and most remember a specific moment of salvation. The public schools most attended were faith-friendly, and several recall their teachers engaging in specifically Christian practices like prayer. Christians sometimes refer to parents, church, and school as a three-legged stool that can support a child, and for these teachers, the legs of the stool were fairly strong.

Schooling. Seven of the study participants were educated either in public schools or secular private schools during their elementary, middle, and high school years. Only two, Mark and Bethany, attended Christian schools during this time. Interestingly, the participants in general indicated that their public school and secular private school experiences were faith-affirming and had a generally positive effect on their spiritual lives. Sharon said.

We were Christians at our school. We sang “God bless America.” We sang “Jesus Loves Me” at chorus things. We had Christmas trees. We celebrated Christ. . . . So anyway, I would say people growing up around me were Christians, the children around me all went to church. The teachers were, you know, we prayed during, at the beginning of every day. So, it was no different than it is here. I was very similar to here. We even memorized Bible verses. (personal communication, May 1, 2015)

Likewise, Ann described her experience:

When we were in school, you could pray, and we had teachers that, you know, we had

that minute of silence, but we had teachers who prayed during that minute of silence.

Now, by the time I got to high school, I think I was taking it all or granted, the praying, because it was just a part of my life, and I don't . . . I don't think I really knew that people, you know – I though on the mission field – but I didn't think that people really grew up without the Lord in their life, because I was . . . I mean, I feel like I was in a little cushy bubble.” (personal communication, April 30, 2015)

A couple of the participants alluded to the fact that their early schooling came before the time when the Supreme Court eliminated prayer in the classroom. Helen explained,

We came through in the fifties, sixties, and early seventies before the political interference. So I was not as affected by being that political correctness that other children get involved in. I had religious instructors all the way through school. (personal communication, May 4, 2015)

In summary, the teachers' family, church, and public school backgrounds seem to have served these teachers well spiritually. Bethany and Mark remember their Christian school upbringing fondly and spoke well of its influence in their lives. Mark, however, remembers that the spiritual focus of his Christian school declined in his high school years. He also remembers a significant negative impression made by a Bible teacher at his school who was gossipy and somewhat mean-spirited. It is possible that his high school experiences influenced his view of Christian education; however, beyond that, I was unable to determine any specific influences this early training may have had on teachers' current practice of spiritually transformational teaching.

Teacher education. Regarding teacher's formal preparation for teaching, eight of the nine participants answered “Rarely” or “Never” to the following questions:

- In your teacher education courses, how often did your professors, readings or

assignments address how to teach your content area from a Christian perspective, i.e., integrate faith and learning?

- In your college or graduate education courses, how often did you receive training in how to nurture students in their spiritual development?
- In your college or graduate education courses, how often did your professors, readings, or assignments address how to manage a classroom from a Christian perspective?

Only Bethany, who attended Christian schools throughout her education, answered more positively, answering the three questions with “Regularly,” “Rarely,” and “Occasionally,” respectively. She noted, “[I] got a degree in Christian education that was distinctly Christian. It was taught from Christian textbooks. It was taught with Christian worldview.” (Bethany, personal communication, April 27, 2015) However, she attributed her spiritual growth to more than just the classroom:

What was different for me was outside of the classroom we had chapel every single day. You were at church Wednesday night, Sunday morning, Sunday night. You were in Sunday school. They were required activities, so it was a continue greenhouse for me. And they brought in some of the best speakers in the country. . . . so it was not as much as what I was taught in the classroom as how my heart was cultivated and how much I grew spiritually in that four years. (personal communication, April 27, 2015)

Biblical knowledge. As Bethany’s experience suggests, church involvement can provide valuable spiritual training. All nine participants have received some benefit from this early training. However, I was particularly interested in an overall perspective of each teacher’s biblical views and practices as foundational to their ability to engage in spiritually transformational teaching. Table 4 summarizes teachers’ views and practices regarding the

Bible. I added a column labeled “Spiritually Transformational Teaching?” as a subjective descriptor of their efforts at spiritually transformational teaching as perceived by my classroom observations and interviews. In making this general assessment, I looked for evidences of the integration of faith and learning, which includes teaching from a biblical worldview, and efforts at spiritual nurture. This descriptor is not intended as an assessment of the teachers’ effectiveness, but merely a recognition of the evidences themselves.

Table 4

Participants’ Biblical Views and Practices

	Final Authority?	God’s Word?	Interpret How?	Read How Often?	Spir. Trans. Teaching?
Helen	Yes	Yes	In historical/ literary context	Regularly	Med. High
Charlotte	Yes	Yes	In historical/ literary context	Often	Very High
Sharon	Yes	Yes	In historical/ literary context	Occasionally	Med. Low
Donna	No	I don’t know.	I don’t know.	Occasionally	Low
Kris	Yes	Contains God’s words	Helpful source of wisdom	Occasionally	Med. Low
Mark	Yes	Yes	In historical/ literary context	Never or rarely	Low
Ann	Yes	Contains God’s words	Helpful source of wisdom	Often	High
Scott	Yes	Yes	At face value, i.e. literally	Regularly	Med. High
Bethany	Yes	Yes	At face value, i.e. literally	Often	Very High

As might be expected, there was a high correlation between the belief that the Bible is authoritative, that it is God's Word, and that it should be interpreted in its historical and literary context. Also, those who have a higher view of the Bible tend to read it more often, and teachers who read it more often have a higher confidence level in their ability to integrate biblical knowledge into their teaching. For example, Charlotte, who said, "I am one that questions everything and discerns for myself" (personal communication, April 21, 2015) reads and studies the Bible often, and added,

I have a pretty broad knowledge of biblical concepts. I don't necessarily have trunks of passages that are memorized verbatim, but the concepts are there, and I can tell you where they are and [in] what context they are located.

Studying Charlotte's curriculum maps and observing her classes, it was obvious to me that she integrates biblical concepts naturally and confidently into the teaching of literature. In contrast, Mark, who came to Christ as an adult, said about the Bible, "I just don't know a lot of the answers" and is at the "tip of the iceberg learning things still in a lot of ways" (personal communication, April 21, 2015). His lack of confidence in his biblical knowledge causes him to rely on his pastor to explain the Bible to him (because he has a seminary degree), and Mark does not study the Bible personally. His lack of knowledge leads to a virtual absence of biblical integration in the classroom, despite the fact that his subject matter (history and current events) would lend itself easily to such an integration.

Professional development. Professional development can begin immediately when a new teacher is hired through an induction process. According to the principal, Mr. Tanner, the school sponsors a new teacher orientation each year to familiarize them with school policies and procedures, and new teachers are assigned a mentor to help them navigate their new role. From

a spiritual standpoint, this training is minimal, basically informing teachers about their need to include a devotion in homeroom and to help occasionally with weekly chapel programs.

Teachers at Live Oak were largely in agreement that they need more professional development opportunities related to spiritually transformational teaching. Eight of the nine teachers claimed to have had no professional development courses taught from a Christian perspective outside of the school and seven teachers claimed to have had none taught at the school. Comments from teachers included the following:

- “They always talk about a PLU and it never really happens.”
- “It’s not like we go in and have a session on how to deal with spirituality in the classroom. . . . I guess they just kind of feel like it’s up to each individual teacher how they want to handle that.”

However, Bethany, as a leader at the school, spoke positively both of the teachers’ desire for more training and the school’s intent to provide it:

That’s exactly what we’re trying to bring in as professional development for our teachers here. We’re trying to get them actual training. I have teachers asking me, “How do I teach from a Christian worldview?” And several of them I think genuinely want to, if they just had practical ways to do that. (personal communication, April 27, 2015)

Mr. Tanner concurred, saying that spiritually-based professional development is a priority for the near future, especially since a recent faculty survey demonstrated teachers’ desire for it.

While formal training is important, I also looked for more informal ways that teachers were empowered to learn and grow through spiritual collaboration with one another. Weekly faculty meetings are held before school and last about 20 minutes, allowing time only for an opening prayer and school business. Thus, spiritual collaboration currently must be initiated by

the teachers themselves. Of the nine participants, only Bethany and Scott indicated that they strategize regularly with colleagues about spiritual issues. Bethany described one helpful interaction with Ann:

Ann came in and she was, “How do I teach Excel from a Christian worldview?” and I’m like, “God is a God of order and He loves order and organization. Look at creation, how everything. . .” and she was like, “Oh!” and, I mean, she took off, I mean, she just started. . . and that was just all she needed was that little spark and then she came up with all this really great stuff that I never would have come up with, but it’s that interaction that one person might spark an idea with somebody else and then you just feed off of each other, let alone in a whole group that’s the same subject matter!” (personal communication, April 30, 2015)

Conversely, a consequence of teachers not collaborating spiritually is that it can breed fear, negativity, and distrust. For example, one teacher expressed her perception that others disapprove of her taking class time to nurture students spiritually:

Researcher: Do you think that there’s any conflict in your mind between spiritual nurture of the kids in that way and academics?

Teacher: I think others teachers here would have a conflict with that. I think that I don’t, and a lot of times they see me as just socializing with the kids.

Researcher: When you see it . . . ?

Teacher: I see it as being a Christian, being who God wants me to be.

Researcher: Do you believe you still get the lesson, lessons done?

Teacher: We still get them done. We still get them done.

Other comments from teachers were critical of others:

- I mean, it sounds bad, but there are teachers here at this school that don't ever show the kids they care about them.
- Do not put my name on this, but some of our teachers are a little bit so structured and so strict that the kids will never come to them. So, does that make sense? I know that, so I don't know, just somehow take that into consideration when you're looking at this.

While the statements above may have an element of truth, those feelings have developed in an environment that lacks planned opportunities for open sharing and where perceptions are sometimes developed with limited information. For example, I observed two teachers whose manner with students was harsh in the classroom, but in their interviews, I realized that they both have a passionate desire to build responsibility and character into their students' lives. Their strategies may be flawed, but their intent is noble.

Research Question Three

The third research question focused on how teachers at Live Oak Christian High School demonstrate intentionality to influence students spiritually. Intentionality ideally involves attention to three areas: self, subject matter, and students. The intentional teacher should therefore strive be a Christ-like role model who teaches the subject matter from a Christian/biblical worldview and seeks to nurture students spiritually. Table 6 lists my assertions about the intentionality of the teachers at Live Oak.

Table 6

Research Question Three Assertions

Category	Code	Description
Self	Christ-like Role Model	Most of the teachers at Live Oak vary between somewhat and extremely intentional in their efforts to be a Christ-like role model for students.

Subject Matter	Christian Worldview	<p>Most of the teachers at Live Oak are somewhat or extremely intentional in their efforts to teach from a Christian worldview.</p> <p>Some teachers express confusion about how to go about teaching from a Christian worldview.</p>
Students	Spiritual Nurture	<p>All of the teachers at Live Oak believe Christian school teachers have a responsibility to nurture students spiritually.</p> <p>Most of the teachers at Live Oak are somewhat or extremely intentional in their efforts to nurture students spiritually.</p>

Christ-like Role Model. Intentionality can be recorded in documents such as curriculum maps, lesson plans, or assessments; observed in the classroom, or communicated directly in surveys or interviews. To assess the teachers' intentionality to be a Christ-like role model, I relied on their survey responses and interview comments. When asked how intentional they are at trying to be a Christ-like role model for students, four teachers answered extremely intentional, three answered somewhat intentional, and two answered occasionally intentional. I noted that a person can try to be a Christ-like role model and fail, but a person can also be a Christ-like role model without consciously making the attempt. Given these factors and the fact that the responses were somewhat evenly distributed among the options, I was careful not to draw too strong a conclusion in this area beyond noting that a majority (78%) of the responses indicated a definite degree of intentionality. Scott is a good example of why I chose to be cautious in interpreting this category. He indicated below a consistent effort to live a Christ-like life, and yet he only answered that he was "somewhat intentional" about being a Christ-like role model:

I get excited about my Christianity just because of I know who I am. Yeah, because, you

know, you've got to know who you are, and a lot of people don't know who they are.

They are one way in public, and they're another way here, and I try to be as, I try to be as consistent with that as I possibly can, and that's so hard to do. It doesn't matter if it's Christianity, or music, or anything else – consistency is just tough, you know? But I try. (personal communication, May 4, 2015)

Christian worldview. Assessing teachers' intentionality in the area of integrating faith and learning and teaching from a Christian worldview is somewhat easier, but document analysis provided limited data. I began by studying lesson plans, assessments, and curriculum maps. The lesson plans were not helpful because teachers at the school complete very skeletal lesson plans. I was able to detect evidence of clear Christian worldview in some of Charlotte's literature assessments, but not in the assessments from other teachers. The curriculum maps were more helpful. The majority of teachers had completed curriculum maps for each of their subjects that included a Christian worldview component required by administration. Some maps, like Bethany and Charlotte's, were especially thoughtful and detailed, reflecting both a clear biblical worldview and an understanding of how to integrate faith and learning. Several included relatively few comments in the worldview column, suggesting either a half-hearted effort or a genuine confusion about how to go about it. Comments from the teachers suggested it was the latter. For example, Ann said,

I have the hardest time doing worldview on my curriculum maps because when I look at an Excel spreadsheet, I don't think, "How does God want me to use this?" Maybe I should be, but . . . so, the only way I see integrating all that together is by loving the kids and helping them succeed. (personal communication, April 30, 2015)

After having looked at some teachers' curriculum maps that contained Bible references in the

Christian worldview column, Donna commented,

I didn't know what it meant. And the when I started trying to write it, I was confused at . . . because I was seeing all the other teachers' . . . Scripture, Scripture, Scripture, without being quoted . . . just the . . . just the chapter and verse, and I'm going, "What's that mean? What is it?" I was very confused. (personal communication, April 29, 2015)

I asked Scott if it would be beneficial to have someone explain to teachers how to integrate a Christian worldview in to a classroom, and he answered, "Yeah, I think it needs to be done. And the reason why is because there's a lot of people who are confused about that term, Christian worldview. What does that really mean?" (personal communication, May 4, 2015).

Even with the confusion, some teachers clearly teach from a Christian worldview.

Charlotte explained,

It's such an integral part of what happens in my classroom. There is very little literature that we discuss that does not have ethos, pathos, and even the logos that we talk about involves our cultural understanding of what is logical. And in the Christian tradition, that is the ethos, which is our ethics that are wrapped into the morals that we have and hold dear. Now, having said that, then you have the symbols that are the water, and the life, and the tree, and the cross that are throughout a majority of what we're studying. And then you have those wonderful archetypes like the Savior, the mentor, and how do we fight against the flipside of those archetypes, like the monster, or the snake, or, you know, so it works its way into such a large part of everything that we do, literarily. (personal communication, April 21, 2015)

Likewise, Bethany incorporates a Christian worldview very naturally into her math classes:

I've said before that I don't want parents to have to choose between having the best academic education for their child and having the best Christian education for their child. So in my classroom, I want to be sure that I'm providing both, that they are getting everything that they need academically to go be anything that God wants them to be whether that's a Kindergarten teacher or an aeronautical engineer. I want them to have the solid mathematical tools and foundation that they need to be able to go and do anything that they need to do. But I also want them to have learned it from a Christian perspective. Whereas we're looking at sequences and series and patterns and nature, we can see things like a Fibonacci sequence and go "there is no way by sheer probability that could come up over and over and over again in nature." We talk about that with the natural base E . We talk about that with π , those types of things that we can discover in nature. I tell them that math is God's favorite subject and that He set up this great big scavenger hunt for us where now here's another one of those patterns or here's another one of those unique obscure numbers where the probability of that number showing up a few times in nature would be almost impossible, but for it to show up innumerable in nature is just God. It's fun to be able to show them God in nature and in mathematics and see how those things link together and how their academics can enhance their faith.

(personal communication, April 27, 2015)

In summary, all of the teachers are aware of the expectation that they teach from a Christian worldview, most do so either somewhat or very intentionally and effectively, but others are confused about what the concept means and how to implement it practically in the classroom. Additionally, some subjects, like English Literature or Current Events lend themselves easily to

worldview integration, while other subjects, like Algebra II or computer classes are more difficult.

Spiritual nurture. All of the teacher participants believe that Christian school teachers have a responsibility to nurture students spiritually, and most of them are either somewhat or extremely intentional in their efforts to do so. However, my classroom observations and personal interviews revealed that teachers' spiritual/denominational background, level of biblical knowledge, personality, and gender all potentially influence how teachers go about this nurture. I make these observations tentatively, not wanting to stereotype, but also recognizing certain tendencies. For example, teachers like Charlotte, Sharon, and Helen from more formal, traditional denominations like the Lutheran and Presbyterian Churches respectively tended to see spiritual nurture in terms of developing students' minds to think rightly and develop their character to act rightly. Teachers from the United Methodist and non-denominational churches, like Kris and Ann, tended to focus on developing warm, caring, grace-filled relationships with students. Bethany and Scott, both Baptists, placed a strong emphasis on salvation.

Similarly, teachers' personalities and gender seem to play a significant role in how they perceive spiritual nurture. Teachers like Bethany, Ann, and Kris are very nurturing and express warmth and compassion freely, so they nurture students partly through developing personal relationships with them. Sharon and Helen have "no nonsense" personalities, and while they care deeply about their students' growth, their approach is more confrontational. Charlotte sees herself as tough, yet in the classroom she is extremely vulnerable in sharing personal details of her life that students appreciate and emulate. Mark is introverted and tends not to reach out to students on a personal level, yet his relaxed and easy-going manner communicates respect and liking to students, creating a safe and welcoming environment where they can learn. Donna has

a scientific mind, and she is cautious about her approach to sharing faith: “I think it’s appropriate. I don’t think it’s always appropriate. You need to have knowledge of the students’ experience with their faith, and you need to listen a lot to them before you ever share” (personal communication, April 29, 2015). In contrast, Scott has a forthright, “black and white” personality that leads him to be very straightforward and occasionally blunt in the way he nurtures students. He says,

I want those kids to know that at the end of the day, I don’t care how much money those people make, I don’t care how many albums, records they make, if they don’t give their life to God and their heart to God, they’re going to die and go to hell, and it don’t matter. It don’t matter how popular you are. It don’t matter how popular John Lennon is. If he wasn’t a Christian, he went to hell. That’s everybody, you know. That’s why I like teaching here. . . . The most important thing I do is to make sure that these kids understand that at the end of the day, no matter what we do and in what organization function or anything else that we’re doing, Christ has to be at the center of everything that we do. He has to be the leader of their life. (personal communication, May 4, 2015)

Summary

After analyzing the data, I concluded that participants at Live Oak exist along a broad continuum of active faith commitments, with some exhibiting a vibrant, active faith that empowers them for spiritually transformational teaching while others exhibited a faith that is less empowering for this type of teaching. All of the teachers were raised by believing parents and have a solid educational and church background, but this seems to have encouraged their faith development but not effectively prepared them for the task of Christian school teaching. In fact, Bethany is the only teacher whose background as the daughter of Christian school teachers and

as a student in both a Christian school and Christian college offered her strong preparation for spiritually transformational teaching. Other teachers who engage in regular Bible reading and study on their own or through group study were more likely to teach from a biblical worldview and to have spiritually-oriented discussions in the classroom. Teachers who have both an active faith and who engage in personal Bible reading and study are more likely to be intentional in their efforts to integrate faith and learning and nurture students spiritually. Finally, I concluded that spiritually transformational teaching indeed occurs more consistently when teachers possess greater evidences of all three indications of preparedness: an active faith, sufficient training, and intentionality.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

In this final chapter, I synthesize the findings of this case study on teacher preparedness for spiritually transformational teaching at Live Oak Christian High School. I begin by summarizing the findings to my three research questions, noting several additional findings, and then discussing them in light of my theoretical framework and related literature. I explore the implications for Christian educators and make specific recommendation for Live Oak Christian High School. After describing the limitations of this study, I make recommendations for future research and end with some of my most significant conclusions.

Summary of Findings

The purpose of this single, instrumental case study was to discern teachers' preparedness for transformational Christian teaching at a Christian high school in the southeastern United States. Specifically, I sought to discover indications that a purposive sample of teachers from Live Oak Christian High School were spiritually qualified, sufficiently trained, and intentionally committed to spiritually transformational Christian teaching. The research questions that guided my study were as follows:

1. How do teachers at Live Oak Christian High School evidence elements of an active Christian faith?
2. How have the lifelong learning experiences of teachers at Live Oak Christian High School prepared them to influence students spiritually?
3. How do teachers at Live Oak Christian High School demonstrate intentionality to influence students spiritually?

I selected a site that has a long history of academic success and rigor and that articulates a

clear commitment to biblical Christianity and the expectation that its teachers nurture students spiritually. I used four techniques of data collection: survey, document analysis, observations, and interviews. I surveyed the principal and 22 full-time teachers and then examined a purposive sample of nine of these teachers in depth.

Research Question One

My data analysis led me to make 13 assertions regarding the first research question, which addressed the presence of an active Christian faith in the teachers. I categorized them as Beliefs, Relationship, Practices, and Administrative Factors. In terms of beliefs, the teachers believe in the Apostles' Creed with its clear description of the Trinity and affirmation of the Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, bodily resurrection, and eternal life (although it does not explain these). Eight of the teachers agree that the Bible should be Christians' final authority in matters of belief and practice. Denominational background seemed to be a factor influencing teachers' opinions regarding the nature and interpretation of the Bible and their understanding of salvation. In terms of their relationship with God, all of the teachers self-identified as Christians, describing either a specific moment of salvation or a gradual process of growing in faith. Seven teachers considered their faith integral to their daily life, though they acknowledged varying degrees of consistency in seeking God. In terms of their spiritual practices, there was a wide variation in terms of how active they are in church and in Christian-based activities or service, how often they read or study the Bible, and the degree to which they engage in a disciplined prayer life.

In summary, I found that while most participants generally had a sincere foundational Christian belief, they varied significantly in the depth of their self-professed relationship with God and in their degree of participation in activities that would generate a strong, active,

informed, and vibrant faith. Furthermore, the school's hiring practices are not thorough enough to confirm the presence of active faith among the faculty. As a result, some, but not all, of the participants have an active faith that sufficiently prepares them for spiritually transformational teaching.

Research Question Two

I made 13 assertions regarding the second research question that addressed how the lifelong learning experiences of the participants prepared them for spiritually transformational teaching. I categorized them as Early Training, Teacher Education, Biblical Knowledge, and Professional Development. In terms of their early training, all of the teachers reported having Christian parents who either facilitated or significantly influenced their faith, an active church involvement that nurtured their faith, and schooling which was faith-friendly even though most participants attended public schools. While this early training appears to have set them on a helpful course spiritually, all but one teacher attended secular colleges and teacher education programs where they received essentially no training in the integration of faith and learning, the spiritual nurture of students, or classroom management from a Christian perspective.

Furthermore, the teachers existed along a broad continuum regarding the Bible. Over half the teachers believe the Bible is authoritative, God's Word, and should be interpreted literally or in its historical and literary context, and these teachers tended to read and study it more often.

These teachers also tend to integrate faith naturally in their teaching and in their personal relationships with students. The teachers who have a lower view of the Bible typically read or study it significantly less often and expressed either a belief that faith doesn't naturally "fit" into the teaching of their particular subject or that they are uncomfortable about or unsure how to integrate it. Furthermore, the principal acknowledged that the induction process for new teachers

does not include a strong spiritual component, and the teachers report that they have not been provided with professional development opportunities of a spiritual nature. Nor does the school provide opportunities for teachers to collaborate, seek support, or reach consensus regarding these issues. Therefore, those teachers who do engage in spiritually transformational teaching at Live Oak do so primarily through knowledge, skills, and wisdom gained through church involvement, personal Bible study, and as a natural outgrowth of a vital relationship with God. The vast majority of the teachers have not received formalized training to empower them for spiritually transformational teaching.

Research Question Three

After examining my third research question, I made six assertions that addressed the intentionality of teachers regarding spiritually transformational teaching. I categorized them as related to Self, Subject Matter, and Students. Intentionality can be demonstrated by efforts to be a godly role model (self), to integrate faith and biblical truth into the subject matter, and to nurture students spiritually. In their efforts to be Christ-like role models, two teachers claimed to be occasionally intentional, three were somewhat intentional, and 4 were extremely intentional. The survey results were exactly the same regarding their efforts to teach from a Christian worldview. In interviews, about half of the teachers indicated some confusion about how to teach courses like math or technology from a Christian worldview and therefore were hindered in their efforts. Teachers expressed more intentionality in their efforts to nurture students spiritually, with five being very intentional and two being sometimes intentional. In summary, while all the teachers expressed an awareness that they should approach their teaching from a spiritual perspective and most have that desire, some of them lack the understanding, training, or professional support they need to make a consistent effort.

Additional Findings

Looking back over my study, I am struck particularly by two cases that were the most atypical, Bethany and Donna, in that they confirmed Stake's (2005a) assertion that highly atypical cases sometimes offer the greatest insights into the quintain. Bethany stood out as role model of preparedness for spiritually transformational teaching with her dynamic relationship with God, a strong background in Christian education and a deep knowledge of the Bible, and deep intentionality to influence students spiritually in every aspect of her teaching. Observing her in the classroom, I experienced personally the tremendous spiritual impact of teaching when all three elements of preparedness coalesce in one Spirit-filled teacher. In contrast, Donna's faith has been deeply damaged by personal trauma, she is very open in acknowledging her lack of training and biblical understanding, and she is exceptionally reluctant to "impose" her worldview on her students. She is a very intelligent and competent teacher, and her students learn valuable scientific information and skills under her teaching; however, everything from the classroom walls to course discussions are devoid of overtly spiritual content, and countless valuable opportunities for students to understand the connection between Creator and creation are missed. These cases confirmed my convictions about the importance of preparedness for spiritually transformational teaching.

Discussion

I begin this next section with a discussion of my findings in light of my theoretical framework. However, in my data analysis, I identified additional themes that merit attention. I determined that intentionality is not as overly helpful a construct in assessing preparedness for spiritually transformational teaching as I originally believed but that spiritual transparency is an important quality for Christian teachers to possess. I concluded that Live Oak is not nearly as

effective at the spiritual nurture of students as it could be because it follows a lesser model of Christian education that Hull (2003) calls, “Christians educating” (p.204). Despite its emphasis on Christian worldview, Live Oak probably qualifies more as “moderate Christian” in practice than “worldview based” by Smithwick’s (2013) understanding, which considers worldview in terms of approach to politics, economics, education, religion, and social issues. Finally, I realized that the diversity of Christian faith traditions among the faculty at Live Oak currently brings a measure of inconsistency to the school culture rather than strength. These findings are addressed more fully in this section.

Theoretical Framework

Dimensions of learning theory. The findings of my study proved to be consistent with my theoretical framework, which integrated a biblical foundation for Christian education with social constructivist theories of learning. Marzano’s (1992) dimensions of learning theory was particularly helpful in understanding how teachers create positive attitudes and perceptions in students regarding spiritual development. According to Marzano, a necessary precursor to learning is a student’s belief that the subject matter has value and that the teacher is knowledgeable about it. I found that a teacher who is openly and enthusiastically Christian shows the student that she values Christianity, and that in itself is influential. However, when the teacher is also capable of speaking knowledgeably about the Bible or about how faith intersects with and speaks to a particular content area, the teacher becomes a stronger role model and the students’ respect for the teacher’s faith and interest in learning is likely to increase. At Live Oak, most of the teachers profess a sincere commitment to Jesus, but several of them are unprepared to integrate faith in the classroom because they do not have a working knowledge of the Bible, do not understand the concept of a Christian or biblical worldview, or do not

understand how Christianity can influence a person's approach to a subject area like math, history, or technology. This prevents them from being what Vygotsky (1978) calls the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) as a Christian teacher, and thus their spiritual influence in the class is lessened.

This lack of training also sabotages the teacher's ability to facilitate students' progression through the other dimensions of learning. Dimensions 2 – 4 include the processes of acquiring and integrating knowledge with one's prior knowledge, extending and refining it, and using the new knowledge meaningfully. Pure constructivists believe that this knowledge is invented not discovered, but Christians know that a person can know the truth but can also believe something that is not true, correct, or real. Thus the role of the teacher should be as a helpful guide to the student in examining whether the conclusions they draw as they learn are grounded solidly in biblical truth and in reality. If a teacher's knowledge is not so grounded, how can the teacher assist the student in the quest for truth? Therefore, teachers at Live Oak cannot simply be content to have an active faith, but must seek to have a spiritually informed mind and the appropriate skills for integrating faith and learning in the classroom. At this point in time, they have received little to no training in these skills.

Finally, Marzano's (1992) fifth dimension of learning, Productive Habits of Mind, refers to skills and ways of thinking that students develop over time. These are helpful mental "behaviors" that are repeated regularly and systematically by learners that in a Christian context could be considered the continual process of "being transformed by the renewal of your mind." (Romans 12:2) Students are young and in the early stages of developing these habits; they need older role models and MKOs who demonstrate the habits of Christian thinking in a consistent way.

Social cognitive theory. Bandura's (1977) theory is consistent with Marzano's (1992) and emphasized that most human behavior is learned observationally. As students watch a teacher, they form ideas about how to perform new behaviors, ideas that later become a guide for action. In my observations of participants' classes in this study, I experienced a wide variety of teaching styles. In Donna's science classes, the culture was purely scientific and in three classroom observations, I observed no indications that faith had a legitimate role in student learning in these classes. Likewise in Mark's classes, there was no overt spiritual component in the students' study of history and current events. In Charlotte's classes, however, there was a strong emphasis on the intellect and interpreting literature through a thoughtful, Christian-based analysis. In Bethany's classes, there was an integrated approach of faith and reason along with significant spiritual teaching and nurture. With such a disparity of approaches and classroom cultures, I wondered what the overall influence upon the student who saw each of these teachers each day might be. Which new behaviors was he learning, and which ones would become his guide for action? Which worldview would he adopt, and would he experience confusion? Would he seek out Christ or determine that faith was not important? Would he possibly arrive at the postmodern conclusion that all approaches are equally valid? A unity of spiritual purpose and commitment to a Christ-focused classroom in all four of these teachers' classes could significantly increase the student's likelihood of spiritual growth.

Situated learning theory. According to Rogoff (1990), "children come to share the world view of their community through the arrangements and interactions in which they are involved, whether or not such arrangements and interactions are intended to instruct them" (p. 98). By this theory, a teacher's worldview is just as likely to be "caught" unintentionally as it is taught intentionally. Since all teachers have a worldview, biblical or otherwise, the classroom

culture they promote will reflect this worldview and students will likely be influenced by it.

According to Brown et al., (1989), students are “apprentices” of teacher “experts,” who learn through collaborative social interaction. Cognitive apprenticeship should be intentional, not accidental. In my study of teachers at Live Oak, I found intentionality was primarily built upon the scaffolding of an active faith and spiritual wisdom which comes from spiritual disciplines. In general, the more committed a teacher was to God, the more likely he or she was to speak about it to students and to engage in spiritual disciplines such as church attendance, Bible reading and study, and prayer. The more teachers engaged in these spiritual disciplines, the more spiritually knowledgeable they were and the more likely they were to have a Christian worldview. The more biblically literate and spiritually wise they were, the more expert and confident they were in integrating faith and learning in the classroom. In summary, I found that the three elements of preparedness that comprised my research questions were inextricably intertwined in the teachers who were most engaged in spiritually transformational teaching. When either active faith or adequate knowledge and skills were lacking, however, intentionality for spiritually transformational teaching was generally low.

Spiritual Transparency

Also consistent with the idea of cognitive apprenticeship is the importance of teachers allowing students “access” into their personal relationship with Christ. According to Wineland (2005), today’s postmodern youth are less interested in rational arguments and are more interested in a person’s “story.” They want to see how faith makes a difference in their teachers’ lives, which requires that teachers both have a genuine faith and allow students to see it. Just as Jesus’ Incarnation allowed humans to see the nature of God in human form, there is a strong incarnational aspect to discipleship when students see evidence of God in the life of a believer.

Do the teachers at Live Oak model an active faith in a way that students can learn from it? The answer is that many do, but some do not. For example, Donna discussed how she might interact with a student who was struggling with a problem:

What are your supports? What are your prayers? Are you, do you pray? What does prayer mean to you? Where are your parents in this? And then, who do you turn to? Do you need someone to listen? Who's listening, and what are they saying to you, and is what they're saying – is it helpful? Are you, do your friends turn to you? What do you say to your friends in these circumstances? So, it's just sometimes the life events of being a high school student are more my opportunity for Christian worldview, and it's not for me to present mine. It's for them to reflect and find their own from whatever sources they're getting it. (personal communication, April 29, 2015)

Donna was willing to guide students to consider prayer, parents, and friends, but seemed to have an aversion to sharing her own personal worldview with students. In a different part of our discussion, she expressed her fear of sharing her perspective with students:

I don't want to antagonize anybody. I don't want to make anyone uncomfortable. I don't want to upset anyone. I don't want people to see me as uncaring, or unfeeling, or ignorant of things I may be ignorant of. I'd rather be, I'd rather have something explained to me than make a blunder I have to apologize for.

Likewise, Mark expressed a general discomfort with personal interactions with students:

I tend to be kind of a "I'm over here, and they're over there," and that may just be the way I am, and . . . and so if I saw a student that seemed upset or had a problem, I would probably . . . my instinct would be "Well, do you want to go talk to a counselor?" that sort of thing. Because I just don't think I'm very good at, you know, asking the right

questions or dealing with those type of things. (personal communication, April 21, 2015)

My assessment was that spiritual transparency is both a function of personality and a result of a dynamic faith. Certainly, introverts may be less likely than extroverts to reveal personal details of their lives to students, so personality is likely a factor in spiritual transparency. However, teachers who are not comfort in their relationship with God or confident that they have spiritual wisdom will likely be reluctant to risk vulnerability. Consequently, when opportunities arise, they tend to “refer out” to other “experts.” Interestingly, the principal is aware of this dynamic in his hiring practices and gives allowance for this with teacher applicants:

Some folks are quite able to put their faith into words, and some aren’t, you know, they may be very faith-based folks, they just have a harder time, you know, putting what they believe into words. You don’t just want to hold, you know, hold that against them. (S.

Tanner, personal communication, April 13, 2015)

Sensitivity to this dynamic, though considerate, is ultimately unhelpful in the hiring process because part of spiritually transformational teaching is being a transparent role model of faith for students. The interview is an appropriate setting for a principal to discern a prospective teacher’s comfort level with spiritual transparency. Given that postmodern youth often learn best through a teacher’s “story,” he should seek to hire teachers who have a dynamic relationship with God and are able to discuss it comfortably with others.

Intentionality

This study defined preparedness for spiritually transformational teaching as having an active faith, sufficient preparation, and intentionality. In retrospect, I have come to believe that intentionality is less a defining characteristic of preparedness and is more a possible but not a definite consequence of the first two factors. Teachers who love God and are growing in their

faith often naturally reflect His character and speak of their relationship with God without conscious intent. However, if they recognize the importance of faith-sharing with students, they may do it intentionally as well. Study of the Bible and other Christian books prepares teachers to be able to interpret academic content in a Christian context. Interpretation through this lens may be the natural unplanned activity of a Christian mind, or it may be very intentional. Therefore, I would focus primarily on the first two indications of preparedness in future research.

Christian Education or Christians Educating?

The more time I spent at my research site, the more I realized that Live Oak follows a traded-down vision of Christian education that Hull (2003) calls “Christians educating” (p. 204). Christian educators should base their schools on a distinctively Christian educational philosophy that leads to “the transformation of the school's educational goals, curriculum, pedagogy, student evaluation, and organizational structure” (Hull, (2003, p. 204). However, the smaller vision of Christians educating is essentially a public school model of education that “revolves around what the teachers ‘add’ to the students' educational experience by means of their moral integrity, devotional piety and biblical insights into a select group of controversial topics” (p. 204). The concept “Christian perspective” finds its roots in Calvin’s emphasis on Scripture in the pursuit of truth, and Christians from a Reformed tradition often focus on this aspect of Christian education above others. Mr. Meldrim, a Presbyterian, approaches Christian education from a Reformed perspective, seeing its primary value as teaching students to “think Christianly.” He explained,

We’re more of a college prep school that invites kids and teaches kids to think Christianly from a biblical worldview, and we see God work in their lives and change their thoughts and change their lives. And it may be while they’re here and it may not be. But it’s not, that’s not our #1 mission is to be the Church; that’s what churches should do.

(C. Meldrim, personal communication, May 7, 2015)

Interestingly, I interviewed Mark several days later and asked him if he had received any measurable training in how to be an effective spiritual influence on students. He responded,

Not specifically. I mean, I think there's been a lot of sort of general, you know, just from the culture of the school. And then there's been when we've gone over the mission statement, you know, sort of like, 'Well, we're not the church. We're here to support what the family and the church does' . . . yes, we're a Christian school, but we're not to take the place of the church. That's not our goal or our mission. (Mark, personal communication, April 21, 2015)

Unfortunately, Mark's "takeaway" from his MKO about the school mission to "develop the whole person to the glory of God" was a teaching about what *not* to do. For Live Oak's teachers to become truly spiritually transformational in the classroom, they need training that encompasses the strengths of both the evangelical and Reformed traditions. It cannot promote a false dichotomy of the head and heart, but instead should emphasize the essential unity of the whole person (Iselin and Meteyard, 2010), embracing both rational, objective ways of knowing truth and more intuitive, embodied ways (Payne, 1989). Ultimately, it must result in the transformation of the school culture at a deep level, for a truly Christian school cannot simply be like a public school with Christian "value-added."

Worldview

Nor can a truly Christian school be like a public school with a worldview component added. Live Oak's addition of a Christian worldview column to their curriculum maps is an appropriate metaphor for the school's approach, and for some teachers, it was confusing rather than helpful. Ann, a technology teacher who has a deep love for the Bible, said,

I have the hardest time doing worldviews on my curriculum maps because when I look at an Excel spreadsheet, I don't think, "How does God want me to use this." Maybe I should be, but, so the only way I see integrating all that together is by loving the kids and helping them succeed. I don't see that I can write a worldview, you know. (personal communication, April 30, 2015)

I asked Donna, who does not have a biblical worldview but who is deeply philosophical, if the worldview element of the curriculum mapping was meaningful to her. She responded,

I didn't know what it meant. And then when I started trying to write it, I was confused because I was seeing all the other teachers: Scripture, Scripture, Scripture, without being quoted, just the, just the chapter and verse, and I'm going, "What's that mean? What is it?" I was very confused, and what I was thinking of C. S. Lewis stories or when you, what was going on in the times scientifically in the world, let's say Charles in the hot air balloon, and the gas law experimentation, and the types of thinking, and the changes in religion. I mean, so much of the history is intertwined, and then atomic structure, and all the understandings that came from the nuclear era and how it led up there, and things Oppenheimer has said, and all the other scientists and their . . . the hand of God and other peoples' personal religious comments in history seems to tie in more to my classroom rather than a Scripture passage. (Donna, personal communication, April 29, 2015)

Both of these teachers, coming from significantly different perspectives, found the worldview component inherently problematic. By definition, worldview should be the lens through which a person sees and interprets the world; it is not something to be applied after the fact. To use a different metaphor, a biblical worldview is not Christian icing to be spread on top of a secular cake. Of the four worldview categories identified by Smithwick (2013), biblical

theists have a truly biblical worldview, while moderate Christians are those who see God as supreme in religious matters but secular matters as the purview of man. Live Oak states that it promotes a Christian worldview, but in practice, a majority of teachers tend to function more as moderate Christians in the classroom. I believe that some of the teachers at Live Oak are moderate Christians, but that even some of the biblical theists (like Ann) expressed confusion about how to teach their particular content area through the lens of their worldview. The use of a Christian curriculum, the addition of biblical worldview training for teachers, and opportunities for spiritual collaboration among the faculty could inspire and transform their thinking.

The inclusion of three math teachers in the study was helpful in that it demonstrated different perspectives on teaching a subject which some people believe is completely unrelated to a biblical worldview. Kris explained:

Math is not something that I can just say, “Oh, well, you know, God showed the quadratic formula.” I mean, that’s not, we’re not going to be able to intertwine that, but I can do Christian values, and when they have questions, we’ve had some great discussions about, maybe it had nothing to do with math, but we had some great discussions, and they share their point of view. (personal communication, April 26, 2015)

In contrast, Bethany wanted to integrate Christian truth into her math classes, so she purchased teacher editions of math books from a Christian publisher and researched it independently. For Bethany, math is a wonderful tool for pointing students to God:

We calculate the probability of evolution in terms of calculating, once we cover sequences and series and permutations and combinations and all those different probability and statistics type things. Then we have a little science video that goes through and kind of lays out the structure of DNA and how it comes together and forms,

and we pause the video, and we go over to the board and work out the math of it, and we calculate out the probability of this single cell forming on its own. And then we're talking about how this is the most simple structure in a human body. We're now talking about an eye coming together. And when they see, they calculate that probability, and they see the probability of that occurring and then think about what it would take to create a universe - then, again, a lot of them, they write a paragraph, a summary about their feelings on that when they're done, and a lot of them say they've "always believed in creation but I didn't have a way to support my faith and this really is great to have fact to back up my faith.(personal conversation, (personal communication, April 30, 2015)

Meanwhile, the curriculum mapping process began a process of transformation in Sharon:

My teaching has changed in the last six years because of the curriculum mapping where we had to list the Christian worldview. And here I am listing all this junk with Algebra, and I'm like, how am I going to figure this out, and I actually found books that helped me do that. And I thought that was cool. So, you know, that doesn't necessarily nurture their spirituality, but it does bring Christ, God, and a Christian view into the classroom, which doesn't hurt their spirituality, right? (personal communication, May 1, 2015)

Sharon is beginning to understand the concept of spiritually transformational teaching and now is processing the implications:

Do you need to be trained to do that, or is it something that comes naturally? If it's something that comes naturally, then you need to really vet your teachers more. If it's something that you can train and help teachers with, then you probably need to do that. . . . If there was something when we first came to a Christian school, I think all Christian schools should provide something, even if it's an hour, just one hour a quarter or

something, where you could sit and talk about what do you do in the classroom to do this. What do you do? And teachers don't want to do that. But if you're at a Christian school, you should because that's why you're here. (personal communication, May 1, 2015)

Diversity of Christian Faith Traditions

Another reason for the lack of a common understanding of Christian education at Live Oak is the diversity of Christian faith traditions present among the faculty and administration. Badley (1996) believes that both evangelical educators and Reformed educators (such as Mr. Meldrim) have a particular weakness. Evangelicals emphasize personal transformation but exclude a foundational perspective, while the reverse is true for Reformed educators. Live Oak is unique in that it was founded 64 years ago as a strongly evangelical school, yet for the last 17 years, it has been led by a headmaster with a Reformed perspective, resulting in some contradictions. The school still verbalizes adherence to evangelical characteristics throughout its website yet the headmaster's focus is almost exclusively on teaching from a biblical worldview

I began this study confident that the school was solidly evangelical in its verbalized commitment and activities supportive of the four characteristics of the Bebbington Quadrilateral: Conversionism, activism, Biblicism, and Crucicentrism. During my data collection, however, I began to perceive the teachers as a melting pot of various Christian faith traditions, some that were more evangelical in nature, and some that were more Reformed or neither. Each tradition brings a valuable perspective to Christian teaching, but each alone is incomplete, and each teacher varies both in the perspective they bring from their particular tradition and the degree to which they are committed to God. For example, the teacher participants who came from a Baptist tradition tended to focus on salvation as an event that they can pinpoint in time. Teachers from the Lutheran tradition could not pinpoint the exact moment of their salvation, but saw it as a

lifelong process that began essentially from their birth. Both perspectives are important: certainly salvation takes place at a particular point in time whether a person can identify that moment in their life or not, but spiritual growth is also a lifelong process that must be emphasized.

A denominational school would not face this problem, but at Live Oak, the wide diversity of denominations represented has caused the school culture to be somewhat confused and fragmented. Diversity can bring strength when each person brings the best of their faith tradition to the common “table” and people learn from one another, but at Live Oak, the staff have no designated opportunity for discussions of this nature. For this reason if not any other, the administration should provide teachers with regular opportunities for spiritual collaboration to seek a unity of purpose.

This study addressed a significant gap in the literature regarding the presence of Christian faith among teachers in Christian schools. One reason for this omission is likely the relative youth of the modern Christian school movement, but also, it is very likely that people simply assume that teachers in Christian schools are Christians, which is an optimistic but unwise assumption. Others may lack a deep understanding of the crucial role of the Christian school teacher or underestimate the qualities and skills needed for spiritually transformational teaching.

Another unique contribution of this study to the field of Christian education is the revealing of how a clash of theological approaches can decrease the spiritual healthiness of a school and impede the carrying out of its mission. In the midst of differing traditions, evangelicals and Reformed teachers alike must guard against arrogance, and school leaders of one tradition must not position themselves as superior to schools of other Christian faith traditions or assume they have nothing to learn from them. To do so is to alienate parts of the

body of Christ from one another and to put personal agendas upon the throne rather than Jesus Christ. Our commitment must be to fidelity to the Truth, and as we invite other Christians to join us, we must also be ready to learn from them. Standing in the gap between Christians of different traditions is difficult, but it is the way of godly humility and love and does not require disloyalty to our convictions or to our Savior (I Corinthians 12:12 – 13:13).

Implications

The most significant implication of this study is that a vibrant and active faith proved to be the most foundational and crucial prerequisite for the practice of spiritually transformational teaching. Teachers who had a dynamic relationship with God tended to reflect it and verbalize it naturally in an attractive and winning way that invited students' interest. Likewise, I suggest that principals and headmasters with dynamic relationships with God also inspire the spiritual interest of the teachers under their supervision.

The second most important indication of preparedness was a solid foundation of biblical knowledge and wisdom. Teachers with an active faith tended to read and study the Bible more regularly, thus developing a biblical worldview and integrating it more easily into the classroom. Although personal study often compensated for a lack of formal training, this finding points out the importance of Christian college preparing students for spiritually transformational teaching. Education students should be solidly grounded in their knowledge of the Bible, in best practices for integrating faith into their specific content areas, and in effective strategies for sharing their faith. Whenever possible, they should complete practicums or their student teaching in a Christian school setting. Graduate students in educational leadership or administration should receive biblical training in best practices for hiring, training, and supervising a Christian school faculty.

Additionally, Christian school principals should seek to hire only teachers with an active faith and a solid biblical foundation and understanding. The teacher application process should therefore be thorough and involve not merely a signed agreement of the school's statement of faith, but also a clear demonstration on the applicant's part that he or she can articulate a dynamic commitment to Christ. New hires should participate in a robust induction program that ensures they embrace the school's spiritual vision and understand how to implement it. Christian schools that seek to increase spiritually transformational teaching in their schools must first recognize that it requires biblically knowledgeable and well-trained teachers. They should begin with an assessment of their current faculty and could use variations of the faculty survey and interview questions in this study to gather data. They should also evaluate their hiring practices to ensure that careful vetting procedures are in place. In the next section, I outline specific steps that Live Oak could take to become a more spiritually transformational school, but these suggestions are potentially applicable to any Christian school that seeks to become more effective in the spiritual formation of students.

Recommendations for Live Oak Christian High School

Live Oak Christian High School was founded with the express purpose "to bring as many young people as possible to a saving knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and to help them grow in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ" (Stramm, 2006). In the 64 years since its founding, the school has grown tremendously and has become widely known and respected in its community and state as a powerhouse of academics, athletics, and arts. However, it has shifted away from its strong evangelical focus in preference for a broader and less defined mission of "developing the whole person for the glory of God" (Live Oak Christian High School, n.d.a). If the school is to become a place where spiritually transformational teaching regularly leads to the

salvation and sanctification of students, several changes must take place over the span of perhaps two to four years.

First, change must begin with the leadership. The principal, assistant principal, and headmaster should engage in a period of study as a team, studying the Bible together, reading voraciously about Christian education, attending conferences about the integration of faith and learning, biblical worldview training, and the spiritual nurture of adolescents, and generally becoming experts and MKOs for the faculty and staff in the area of spiritual transformation. As they study, they can begin to craft a new vision for the future that embraces the founders' original spiritual priorities. This vision needs to be shared with the Board of Directors, the faculty and staff, parents, students, and all other stakeholders as often as possible. I recommend changing the school's mission statement to reflect this foundational change. Live Oak is currently undergoing a change of headmasters, so the timing for the casting of a new vision is ideal.

Additionally, I recommend a deepening of the school's Statement of Faith. While the Apostles' Creed is theologically sound and has a deservedly broad-based acceptance across many mainline denominations, it does not clearly address the purpose of the cross (I Corinthians 2:2), the nature of salvation (John 3:16, 5:24; Romans 1:16; Ephesians 2:8), or the importance of sanctification and personal holiness (Romans 12:1,2; Ephesians 4:24; Hebrews 12:14) which should all be foundational teachings in a Christian school.

Once the school formally acknowledges the importance of these teachings, they can move toward practices of hiring, training, and supervising teachers which align with those priorities. The principal can implement a deeper vetting process for hiring new teachers, including a more specific inquiry about applicants' personal relationship with God, including

their beliefs, biblical knowledge base, worldview, and faith practices. The application process could include a personal and pastoral letter of recommendation addressing the person's Christian witness. This process should not be considered personally intrusive, but rather as an effective means of ensuring that new teachers will be fully supportive of the school's vision and mission and will also be prepared to engage in spiritually transformational teaching. New hires can then participate in a deepened induction process of the kind described by Wong (2004): "a comprehensive, coherent, and sustained professional development process that is organized by a school to train, support, and retain new teachers and seamlessly progress them into a lifelong learning program" (p. 42). This process could be led by teachers who are recognized as being effective at spiritually transformational teaching and could include a year-long mentoring process.

A clear conclusion of my study is that a significant number of Live Oak's current faculty does not engage in spiritually transformational teaching. In fairness to these teachers, this simply has not been a clear expectation of the administration nor has the school provided professional development opportunities to train teachers what it means and how to go about it. These teachers, many of whom have long tenures at Live Oak, need to be inspired by an exciting new vision, not intimidated by changes that feel threatening. Providing them with dynamic (but required) professional development opportunities that are directly related to spiritually transformational teaching will help toward this end. Furthermore, they need regular opportunities to collaborate with other teachers in the presence of a knowledgeable facilitator (MKO) who can guide productive discussions. These conversations can be in the form of a Bible or book study, or even departmental meetings where time is available for teachers to share ideas, ask questions, and reflect on the practicalities of spiritually transformational teaching.

Ideally, current teachers will embrace the school's new vision, and they should be given time to do so, but in some cases, the principal may determine that an unqualified teacher needs to be replaced. The spiritual welfare of the students should be paramount. In this way, the school culture will be transformed, unity will grow among the faculty even in the midst of denominational diversity, and students will be influenced to receive Christ and develop a dynamic, growing relationship with God.

Limitations

The primary limitation of this study was that one school cannot possibly represent the variety of philosophies and practices common in Christian schools nationwide. As an independent, non-denominational, southeastern school, Live Oak Christian High School likely differs significantly in beliefs, practices, and culture from schools that do not share a similar heritage. Furthermore, by virtue of the broad range of denominational backgrounds represented by the faculty at Live Oak, the spiritual culture of the school is very eclectic and the classroom cultures vary widely from teacher to teacher. The average age of the teachers at this school is 54, and most of the faculty have long tenures. A school with young or inexperienced teachers might present much differently. Additionally, the school does not belong to one of the associations that the Digest of Educational Statistics uses to identify conservative Christian schools. Since the school is not held accountable for its spiritual mission by one of these or a similar organization, its teachers may or may not demonstrate a high level of preparedness for spiritually transformational teaching, possibly affecting the transferability of the findings of this study. Moreover, the spiritual culture of the faculty at a school is strongly influenced by the worldview and priorities of the administrative persons who hire and supervise the faculty. Thus, educators must be careful not to generalize the conclusions from this study, but rather should gain insight

from its rich, thick description and consider regional, cultural, denominational, and other factors that might make their situations unique.

Recommendations for Future Research

Christians are often positive and optimistic people, to their credit. However, researchers are called to test assumptions, not to make them, and so I encourage my Christian brothers and sisters to approach the study of Christian education with the same rigor that researchers use in studying public education. There remain large gaps in the study of Christian schools, and important questions cry for answers. Do Christian school principals understand the nature and importance of spiritually transformational teaching? Do they have an active faith and a sufficient knowledge base to create a culture that facilitates spiritually transformational teaching? What hiring processes do they use to ensure their teachers are spiritually qualified and sufficiently trained to influence students for Christ? What kind of teacher induction programs exist, and how effective are they? What are Christian colleges doing currently to prepare their students to teach in Christian schools? Given that most professors come from secular education backgrounds and have taught in public rather than private schools, how qualified are they to train future Christian educators? Do they know what best practices are for the training of young Christian minds and the nurturing of their faith? What type of professional development opportunities are available to Christian school teachers, and are they effective?

My research was a case study of one school, but this study needs to be replicated with some changes in different settings, particularly in schools that have maintained a strong evangelical emphasis and have very careful hiring practices. It is important to discover whether Christian schools in general meet the most basic requirement for the vital task of nurturing students' spiritual growth: spiritually transformational teachers. I recommend eliminating the

intentionality component and looking deeper at the teachers' biblical knowledge base and their understanding of the integration of faith and learning as well as their spiritual transparency. It would also be helpful to look at parents' understanding and expectations of Christian schooling. Finally, I recommend including the perspective of the student to see what qualities in teachers inspire them to faith.

Summary

The purpose of this single, instrumental case study was to examine teachers in a Christian high school in the southeastern United States for indications of preparedness for spiritually transformational teaching. I employed surveys, document analysis, observations, and interviews to look for three indications: an active faith, sufficient training, and intentionality. My nine participants existed along a broad continuum of active faith, from those who were highly committed to Christ to those whose were weak in faith and seriously burdened with doubt. I discovered that the vast majority of teachers had no professional training regarding the integration of faith and learning, but that some who engage in regular spiritual disciplines were comfortable and confident in teaching from a biblical worldview and integrating faith into their content areas. I also discovered that the more vibrant a teacher's faith and the more biblically knowledgeable he or she is, the more intentional they are likely to be about spiritually transformational teaching.

From an administrative standpoint, current principals and heads of Christian schools may conclude that their school needs a significant culture shift and that they need to seek training so that they qualify to be the MKO for their faculty, casting a dynamic and godly vision for their school. They should ensure their hiring process is detailed enough to ensure that they only hire teachers with a strong, vibrant faith and a solid command of the Bible. They need to provide a

thorough and extended intake process to equip new teachers with a knowledge of the school's spiritual culture and expectations. Many schools need to train current faculty who may have been hired before the school fully understood the need for a spiritually transformational culture. Leaders of these schools need to begin offering an abundance of professional development opportunities to train these teachers in biblical worldview development, the integration of faith and learning, and the spiritual nurture of students.

In summary, the training up of a child in the way he should go is a sacred privilege and responsibility given not just to parents and churches, but also to Christian school teachers. The task requires men and women who are filled with the wisdom and power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, who are biblically knowledgeable, and who intentionally invest themselves in the spiritual nurture of their students. May every Christian educator increasingly embrace the high calling of spiritually transformational teaching to the honor and glory of God!

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

March 12, 2015

Wendy K. Lewis

IRB Approval 2135.031215: Teacher Preparedness for Spiritually Transformational Teaching: A Case Study in One Christian High School

Dear Wendy,

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 from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

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

Sincerely,



Fernando Garzon, Psy.D.
Professor, IRB Chair
Counseling

(434) 592-4054



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Appendix B: Permission to Use Table 1

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Appendix C: Introduction to the Study

The principal introduced the study to the faculty in the following manner:

“During the next several weeks, the high school faculty will be participating in a research study on the preparedness of teachers in Christian high schools for spiritually transformational teaching. The study will be conducted by Wendy Lewis, a doctoral candidate at Liberty University, as a component of her dissertation process. Some of you will remember Mrs. Lewis as a Live Oak alumna, parent, and former member of our middle school faculty.

The research will begin with an anonymous online survey of all full-time teachers at the high school. While participation is voluntary, I strongly encourage each of you to participate. The results will likely contribute meaningful information to the body of knowledge regarding Christian education, but it will also benefit us, providing insightful data that we can use to help fulfill our mission to develop the whole person to the glory of God. The report will provide useful information the next time we go through an accreditation review.

Mrs. Patty Hall will be serving as the school facilitator for the study. After Mrs. Lewis reviews the anonymous survey data, she will select several surveys that represent a broad range of characteristics for further study. Using survey numbers supplied by Mrs. Lewis, Mrs. Hall will identify the teachers represented by those surveys and send you an Informed Consent Form. Again, participation is voluntary, but I think those of you selected will find the next part of the study to be engaging and personally meaningful. For you, there will be two or three classroom observations, document analysis, and a personal interview with Mrs. Lewis. Your total time commitment apart from the classroom observations will be about two hours.

Mrs. Lewis has asked me to assure you that all personal data will remain confidential and every effort will be made to protect your privacy throughout the process. Pseudonyms will be used for the school name and for teachers' names in any published reports.

On Monday, March 30, 2015, Mrs. Hall will send you a link to the online line survey. Please make every effort to complete it by Friday afternoon. I will be participating in this study with you and expect it to be a very enriching experience for all of us.”

Appendix D: Recruitment Letter #1

Live Oak Christian High School
Street Address
City Name, GA 12345

Dear Teacher,

As a graduate student in the Department of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctorate of Educational Leadership. The purpose of this research is to learn more about specific elements of teachers in evangelical Christian high schools, and I am writing to invite you to participate in this study.

The criterion for participation is that you teach full-time at Live Oak Christian High School with at least three courses being taught in the Upper School. If you are willing to participate, you will be invited to take an online survey that will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary and will be completely anonymous, and your survey will be identifiable only by the personal code assigned to you at the bottom of this letter. Only Mrs. Patty Hall in the Business Office will have the matching list of names and codes, and she will not have access to the survey data, so your anonymity is protected.

A subgroup of survey participants will be selected to participate further in the study. If invited, you will be asked to share with me two weeks of lesson plans and two class assessments. You will allow me to observe two to three of your class periods, one scheduled in advance and the other one or two unscheduled. The observations will be audiotaped for later review and I will be taking field notes during the classes. You will also participate in a 45 minute personal interview that will be scheduled at your convenience. The interviews will be videotaped for later review. You will be given an opportunity to indicate your interest in participating in the survey. If and only if you have indicated your willingness and are selected, your personal code will be matched to your name by Mrs. Hall, who will then give me your name. Your survey results will then be identifiable to me alone. In any published reports, you will be identified with a pseudonym to protect your anonymity.

To participate, please go to [web address] and click on the survey link at the end of the consent information to indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the survey. You will be asked to enter your personal code to begin.

Benefits to your participation in this study will likely be fresh insight into your personal effectiveness as a Christian school teacher and a renewed enthusiasm for the school's mission. Hopefully, this research will also contribute meaningfully to the broader body of knowledge about Christian teaching. Thank you in advance for your valuable contribution to this research!

Sincerely,
Wendy K. Lewis
Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

Appendix E: Informed Consent Form #1

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3/12/15 to 3/11/16
Protocol # 2135.031215

Informed Consent Form

Teacher Preparedness for Spiritually Transformational Teaching:
A Case Study in One Christian High School

Wendy K. Lewis, Principal Investigator
Liberty University
School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study related to the preparedness of teachers in Christian high schools for spiritually transformational teaching. You were selected as a possible participant because you teach full-time in the Christian school targeted for this study. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Wendy K. Lewis, doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to discover certain elements of teachers in evangelical Christian high schools.

Procedures:

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

- Take an online survey that will likely take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

The study has minimal risks, no more than the participant would encounter in everyday life.

The participants will receive no direct benefit. The school will benefit directly in that it will be given a the final report of this study providing compiled information about the faculty's educational, professional, and spiritual background that will serve as a useful artifact in the school's accreditation review process.

Compensation:

Survey participants will not receive compensation.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report, article, or book that may result from this research, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records and recordings will be stored securely in a locked box at my home

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for a period of 3 years and only the researcher and persons directly involved in transcription or analysis of the data will have access to the records.

Some survey participants may be invited to participate further in the study. If and only if a participant is asked and agrees to continue with the study, they will be asked to sign a second consent form allowing the researcher to access their individual survey results by name. Participation in the survey implies no obligation to continue with the study if invited.

The researcher cannot ensure that participants will not discuss their survey responses with others.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

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

Withdrawal from the Study:

If you decide to withdraw during the course of the study, please send an email to wendylewis79@liberty.edu. At the time that you contact me, your survey results and any other data that pertains to you will be destroyed immediately and not included in this study. Your reason for withdrawal is requested but not required and will not affect your future relationship with Liberty University or Savannah Christian Preparatory School in any way.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Wendy K. Lewis. If you have questions, you are encouraged to call me at (912) 713-4844 or email me at wlewis@liberty.edu. You may also email my faculty advisor, Dr. Gail Collins, at glcollins2@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1837, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or send an email to irb@liberty.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions as needed and have received answers. Please check each box with which you agree:

☐ I will participate in an online faculty survey.

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☐ I am aware that I may be invited to participate further in the study. If invited, I am aware that I will receive full details regarding continuation and will be given the opportunity to agree or decline at that time.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

Appendix F: Faculty Survey

All percentages are rounded to the nearest percent. The order of responses is rearranged in each question to protect the privacy of respondents since some information might be traceable to a particular teacher.

1. User Code (omitted)

2. Gender

Answer	Response Percent	Response Count
Female	78%	17
Male	23%	5

3. Age

Average Age = 54.14 years

Response Text	Response Text	Response Text	Response Text
43	47	59	44
55	66	52	64
44	58	51	44
60	59	51	62
46	45	50	60
62	69		

4. Ethnicity

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
African American	0%	0
Asian	0%	0
Caucasian	100%	22
Hispanic	0%	0
Other	0%	0

5. What type of elementary school did you attend?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Public	77%	17
Private – Secular	0%	0
Private – Catholic	5%	1
Private – Protestant or Evang.	23%	5
Private – Other Religions	0%	0
Home School	0%	0

6. What kind of middle or junior high school did you attend?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Public	73%	16
Private – Secular	0%	0
Private – Catholic	5%	1
Private – Protestant or Evang.	23%	5
Private – Other Religions	0%	0
Home School	0%	0

7. What kind of high school did you attend?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Public	64%	14
Private – Secular	0%	0
Private – Catholic	5%	1
Private – Protestant or Evang.	27%	6
Private – Other Religions	5%	1
Home School	0%	0

8. What kind of college or university did you attend?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Public	77%	17
Private – Secular	0	0
Private – Catholic	0	0
Private – Protestant or Evang.	18	4
Private – Other Religions	5	1

9. In what kind of college or university did you receive your teacher training?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Public	82%	18
Private – Secular	0%	0
Private – Catholic	0%	0
Private – Protestant or Evang.	23%	5
Private – Other Religions	0%	0

10. What is the highest degree you have completed?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Bachelor's	32%	7
Master's	64%	14
Educational Specialist	5%	1
Doctorate	0%	0

Other (please specify)		
------------------------	--	--

Other – Response Text		
MBA and Med		
With added certification in Gifted Education and Supervision		
EdS equivalent/ABD		

11. In your teacher education courses, how often did your professors, readings, or assignments address how to teach your content area from a Christian perspective, i.e., integrate faith and learning?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Never	73%	16
Rarely	14%	3
Occasionally	5%	1
Regularly	9%	2

12. In your college or graduate education courses, how often did you receive training in how to nurture students in their spiritual development?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Never	82%	18
Rarely	14%	3
Occasionally	0%	0
Regularly	5%	1

13. In your college or graduate education courses, how often did your professors, readings, or assignments address how to manage a classroom from a Christian perspective?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Never	86%	19
Rarely	0%	0
Occasionally	14%	3
Regularly	0%	0

14. Do you agree with the following statement? “I believe in the eternally existing, triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
No	0%	0
I am not sure.	0%	0
Mostly	0%	0
Yes	100%	100

15. Do you agree with the following statement? “I believe that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried.”

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
No	0%	0
I am not sure.	0%	0
Mostly	0%	0
Yes	100%	100

16. Do you agree with the following statement? “I believe that Jesus arose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.”

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
No	0%	0
I am not sure.	0%	0
Mostly	0%	0
Yes	100%	100

17. Which of the following most closely describes your view of the Bible?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
I don't really know what I believe.	5%	1
The Bible is an ordinary book written by men and is not divinely inspired.	0%	0
The Bible contains God's words and is a helpful book of wisdom.	18%	4
The Bible is God's Word and should be interpreted at face value.	18%	4
The Bible is God's Word and should be interpreted carefully in its historical and literary context.	59%	13
Other		1

Other – Number	Response
1	The Bible is the inerrant Word of God, should be literally interpreted, and should shape every facet of my life as I seek to follow Christ.

18. Do you agree with the following statement? “The Bible should be our final authority in matters of belief and practice.”

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
No	5%	1
I am not sure.	0%	0
Mostly	14%	3
Yes	82%	18

19. In your own words, what is your definition of a Christian?

Response Text
One who tries to live his life as Christ did
I believe
Someone who has accepted Jesus as their savior.
A person who has had a salvation experience with Jesus Christ.
Having a personal relationship with the God, Son and Holy Ghost. Believing an being a disciple for Jesus Christ and teachings.
One who has accepted the fact that Jesus is the son of God, sent to sacrifice for the sins of man, died and rose again. He is the way, truth and life, and it is only through Him that we have a relationship with God. This belief leads to good works and a willingness to live your life based on Biblical instructions.
A follower of Jesus Christ
A person that believes that Jesus was the savior and died for our sins
A Christian is someone who places their faith and hope in Jesus Christ as God's Son, and who also makes Him to be Lord (i.e. Boss) of their life.
A person who has asked Jesus Christ into his heart as his Savior from sin and sin's penalty of eternal death. He receives eternal life, and the Holy Spirit comes into his heart as Comforter, Conscience, Intercessor, and Guide.
A Christian in someone who accepts Jesus as his personal savior and lord.
Someone who believes all the tenets of the Nicene creed.
Someone who accepts Jesus Christ as my Savior
One who not only believes in Jesus Christ as our Lord and savior but also follows His teachings and serves as an example to others.
a person who is saved from sin by Christ's death on the cross and is submitted to Christ as their Lord
A person who has acknowledged and accepted Christ as Savior, recognized their own fallibility and is constantly working to improve self and their relationship with Christ.
Christian has accepted Jesus as their Savior and realizes that they are saved by Grace. Christian carry out the great commission.
Someone who accepts Jesus Christ as his/her savior
c [This was the participant's response.]
A Christian is a person who believes in the Trinity, accepts the Bible as God's word, and tries to live his life as Jesus has asked him to do.

20. By your definition, are you a Christian?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	100%	22
No	0%	0
I am not sure.	0%	0

21. If you answered, “Yes,” then about how many years have you been a Christian?

Average: 43 years

Response Text	Response Text	Response Text
35	20	54
60	40	40
28	58	Long time
39	59	More than I can count.
58	20	I accepted Jesus as my personal savior 44 years ago
24	60	54 Began attending church at 6 and baptized at 12 so 54
47	32	years
47	40	

22. For purposes of this question, consider a Christian to be a person who has asked Jesus Christ to forgive his/her sins and to become his/her Savior and Lord. Which of the following most closely describes your spiritual situation right now?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
I am an atheist; I do not believe that God exists.	0%	0
I am an agnostic; I do not believe it is possible to know if God exists.	0%	0
I am simply not interested in religion.	0%	0
I consider myself a spiritual person, but I do not subscribe to an established religion.	5%	1
I am considering becoming a Christian.	0%	0
I am a new Christian (less than one year).	0%	0
I am a Christian, but my faith is not an active part of my daily life.	0%	0
I am a Christian, and my faith is somewhat part of my daily life.	14%	3
I am a Christian, and my faith is integral to my daily life.	82%	18
I practice a religion besides Christianity. What religion?	0%	0

23. How often do you attend worship services?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Never	0%	0
Rarely – usually just for special occasions such as Easter, weddings, or funerals	0%	0
Occasionally – 6 to 12 times every year	23%	5
Regularly – 2 to 4 times per month	41%	9
Often – 5 or more times per month	36%	8

24. Aside from weekly church services, please list any additional church or other Christian activities you have participated in regularly within the last 2 years. Examples include Sunday school, Bible study, or a small group, church committee, mission team, nursery volunteer, prison ministry, choir, etc.

Response Text
Outreach events (Trunk or Treat), deacon widow ministry, teacher of a Sunday school class, and lead special Sunday night Bible classes.
Sunday School, Bible Study, Small Group, Student Ministry, VBS, church outreach service projects
Sunday School, annual mission trip for 8 days, member of Missions and Benevolence Committee, Session member
Church school, volunteering for various church projects, short studies of various works of literature w/ clergy
Bible Study Fellowship, Small group – reading through the Bible in one year, Social Committee
Church Music Committee, Choir member, Food Fellowship Committee
None
Bible Study
Small Group, teaching preschool Sunday school class, mission team
Young girls' teacher and leader. Homeless shelter volunteer with my church group
Choir, chapel, bible studies, radio services, tv services
Sunday School, Chapels at School, bake sales, etc...
Adoration of the Eucharist. say the rosary
None
small group
Sunday School Teacher, Library Committee, Constitution and By-Laws
None
N
Women's Bible Study
Sunday School, Church Administrative Activities, Wednesday Night Supper and Service
none

25. How often do you typically read or study the Bible personally?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Never or Rarely	9%	2
Occasionally (once or twice a month)	23%	5
Regularly (once or twice a week)	23%	5
Often (3 or more times a week)	46%	10

26. Which statement most closely describes your experiences with prayer?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
I rarely or never pray.	0%	0

I mainly engage in structured prayers, as in church services or before meals	5%	1
I pray occasionally, as it occurs to me.	14%	3
I pray on most days, as it occurs to me.	23%	5
I pray on most days and strive to have an intentional and disciplined prayer life	59%	13

27. Which statement most closely describes your prayer life as it relates to your students?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
I rarely or never pray for my students.	0%	0
I mainly engage in structured prayer led by others for students.	9%	2
I pray occasionally for my students as it occurs to me.	55%	12
I pray regularly for my students, collectively and individually.	36%	8

28. Which statement most closely describes your life right now?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
I am not really interested in living a Christian life.	0%	0
I want to have a closer relationship with God, but I'm not sure how to go about it.	0%	0
I would like to have a closer relationship with God, but certain struggles, sins, or doubts are preventing me from trying.	9%	2
I am seeking a closer relationship with God but am often inconsistent in my efforts.	41%	9
I am seeking a closer relationship with God and am fairly consistent in my efforts.	50%	11

29. Consider all professional development courses or training you have had in the past two years that were taught from a Christian perspective. List all topics you remember learning about.

Response Text
none
Have not had Professional Development from a Christian perspective
n
None
None
none – we desperately need these
none
I don't remember any being taught from a Christian perspective.
none
None

CPR Training
none
NA
AXIS talked about Christian worldview.
Axis for the past two years. Christian World View
Have not had any.
none
none
None
Outside of school presentations I have not had any presentations or courses from a Christian perspective
A Christian perspective
NA

In the next three questions, a “spiritually effective teacher” will be defined as a teacher whose academic and personal interactions with students facilitate the development and growth of students’ relationship with God.

30. Please describe any additional experiences which have helped you become a more spiritually effective teacher. (You may share multiple experiences.)

Response Text
attending Summit has had a major impact on my teaching but I believe that weekly sermons have a large impact as well
Personal awareness of students and their “body language”
Emmaus
N/A
N
None
Having prayer with students who are facing family emergencies. Having Homeroom students share prayer requests.
Just life and struggles that help me see God's work and how it pertains to myself and the students I teach.
None
Can't think of any
prayer
Daily prayer with students
Took a church youth group to inner city Atlanta to help that community
NA
Things I have heard my pastor say
Having to put Christian world view next in my lesson plans . . . curriculum mapping
Share teachable moments with my classes and provide Christian world views as often as possible

Challenged by sermons and convicted by the Holy Spirit to be more intentional in my witness to my students. Curriculum Mapping with column for Christian Worldview made me put teaching from Christian Perspective into planning and practice
I often share my experiences on mission trips with my students. I have them write letters to patients and bring in small items to take to those in the hospital.
Summit (two-week leadership camp for students)
As my relationship with God grows, I am becoming a more spiritually effective teacher
After 39 years as an educator I have had many experiences that have strengthened my faith and beliefs. As we discuss various pieces of literature I insert as many of these stories to help my students see how life experiences can strengthen their faith. They have to learn to do this for themselves in order to grow as a Christian throughout life.

31. Please list any books, websites, videos, or other similar resources which have helped you become a more spiritually effective teacher.

Response Text
NA
None
The Bible Various Devotional books
Bible
none
none
I regularly google this, but can't remember web sites
a teacher's edition of a text for a similar course that was written for Christian homeschooling parents - some Christian connections that I hadn't thought of
The Bible
All the novels and other pieces of literature we discuss in class are tied in some way to our spiritual beliefs. I encourage students to apply their knowledge and understanding of their faith to all literature.
Years ago I watched and read Walk thru the Bible's Seven Laws for the Learner and Seven Laws for the Teacher. I receive daily emails from Breakpoint and occasional emails from AXIS. I read World Magazine and Salvo. I also like to listen to John Stonestreet, John Piper, and the Ligonier Conferences on You Tube.
NA
none
Many of the spiritual applications of math topics I integrated into my lessons came from the Teacher's Edition of Bob Jones University Press high school math textbooks. I had to literally read through every section in the book as they are not in a special box or have any kind of distinguishing icon, but they list excellent Christian worldview examples. There are several in every chapter.
Heaven, by Randy Alcorn, Bible, The Bible App
None
N/A
Josh.org
I bought books that describe each lesson through a Christian perspective.

None
None
None

32. Who, if anyone, has most significantly helped you become a more spiritually effective teacher? Please indicate their role in your life, such as boss, colleague, friend, pastor, professor, etc. . . . and briefly describe their impact on you.

Response
Mr. Meldrim, Mr. Tanner
Father Jim, Boss
Father Andrew Browning (now deceased) He was a mentor and a friend, we worked together for 16 years and he had a great impact on my life.
Mother
Other teachers who pray for their students
Prayer Group at Live Oak
Just the overall atmosphere of this school. You want to have a greater understanding so you can discuss topics that typical teenagers face daily and help them see God's work and the value in "doing right even when everyone is doing wrong". See God and walk toward him.
Friend and co-worker(s) who are sounding boards for particular situations and prayer partners
I liked knowing we used to have a group that prayed for teachers and students
Colleague
Mrs. Green, Live Oak Bible Teacher, Mrs. Johnson, Live Oak English teacher, Mrs. Aimar, Live Oak math teacher
Mr. Meldrim's challenge to teach what cannot be taught in SS or public school
none
Miss Green! She's a great resource.
Brenda Green – colleague and mentor
Numerous pastors and other Christian colleagues have provided the guidance I need as a teacher. I find inspiration from former colleagues through social media where they share their thoughts and inspirations with others. Social media can be a tool by which we all share our faith and help others which would greatly benefit all who participate.
Mary Beth Schroder and Dr. Ann Valadez from Columbus International University sent student teachers to my classes for years. I learned so much from watching those students and hearing these two teachers critique their lessons. I still use lesson plans that I developed during those days.
Rev. Rick Fernell- mentor and Boss while in college Rev. Daniel Raymond – Pastor and Friend Rev. Jack Mulholland – Pastor and Friend Denise Newman Stephen Bonn Friend, mentor and Choir Director Diane Harrison – Friend Karen Williams-Smith, Cousin, mentor and friend Millie Parcell – friend and mentor Helen Patrick – Friend and mentor

Bethany Aimar
Boss, pastor, Sunday School class leader
n
Mr. Mike McMahon, our former headmaster, was a wonderful example of a Christian educator. I miss him dearly.

33. How many years have you taught in each of the following kinds of schools? Place a number in each blank.

Average: 27 years

Public	Private (secular)	Catholic	Protestant or Evang. Christian	Other	Total Years Teaching
10			6		16
13		24	4		41
6	8	21	2		37
	35				35
	21				21
33.3			13		46.3
8			12		20
20			10		30
3	1		18		22
			35		35
			19		19
			23		23
10				16	26
8			14		22
			34		34
30	9				39
			35		35
23	3				26
2			8		10
	8				8
7			15		22
1	37			25	38

34. What subjects do you currently teach? (Select all that apply.)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
English	18%	4
Math	23%	5
Science	18%	4
Social Studies/History	18%	4
Bible	5%	1

Foreign Language	5%	1
Physical Education	9%	2
Music	5%	1
Art	0%	0
Other		3

35. Please list any extracurricular involvements you have with students such as coaching, club advising, etc.

Response Text
Jazz Band, Marching Band, Concert Band, Pep Band
coaching
coach 3 sports
Coach Baseball and football
Quiz Bowl
Political Debate Club
Coaching Girls Basketball
Beta Club, Prom, Cheerleading, Senior Class teacher, liaison with sports booster club
Club advising
Yearbook, beta, cheerleading, flag corp, drill team, student council, SADD, math team, sewing club, computer science club, bible study, lunch advisement,
None currently, but I coached for about 15 years at Live Oak
Math Team
Student government adviser, leader of student travel
NHS, literary team coordinator
None
Previously in public school: cheerleading coach, Academic Decathlon Coach, Mock Trial Coach, Model United Nations Coach, Robotics Club Assistant Coach, National Honor Society Advisor. Private School: National Honor Society Co-advisor, Cooking Club sponsor
Through the years I have been the cheerleader sponsor, Bible club sponsor, Horsin' Around club sponsor, and chapel organizer. At different times those duties sent me out of town and on retreats with students. Currently the Horsin' Around club encourages students to help disabled children enjoy an afternoon riding horses. I have organized the upper school chapels for most of the 35 years that I have been at the school.
Book Club
Cross Country, Track & Field, Chess Club
Science Bowl, Engineering Design Team, Science and Engineering Club (for these reasons, this survey IS NOT confidential or anonymous)
n
Scorekeeper for basketball teams; meet manager for baseball games

36. Which statement most closely describes your view about nurturing students spiritually?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
I don't believe Christian school teachers have a responsibility to nurture students spiritually.	0%	0
I believe Christian school teachers have a responsibility to nurture students spiritually, but I do not make it a priority.	5%	1
I believe Christian school teachers have a responsibility to nurture students spiritually, but I do not really know how to go about it.	5%	1
I believe Christian school teachers have a responsibility to nurture students spiritually, and I try to do it sometimes.	41%	9
I believe Christian school teachers have a responsibility to nurture students spiritually, and I work at it very intentionally.	50%	11

37. In your interactions with colleagues, both in meetings and conversations, how often do you discuss or strategize ways to integrate faith and learning or to influence students spiritually?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Never or Rarely	36%	8
Occasionally (once every month or two)	46%	10
Regularly	18%	4

38. How intentional are you about trying to be a Christ-like role model for your students?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Not intentional at all	0%	0
Occasionally intentional	9%	2
Somewhat intentional	41%	9
Extremely intentional	50%	11

39. In your lesson planning and teaching, how intentional are you about trying to teach your subject from a Christian worldview or perspective?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Not intentional at all	5%	1
Occasionally intentional	23%	5
Somewhat intentional	41%	9
Extremely intentional	32%	7

40. Which of the following have influenced your current classroom management strategies significantly? Check all that apply.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Teacher education courses	64%	14
Professional development	68%	15
Biblical principles	68%	15
Trial and error	59%	13
Books	50%	11
Other	9%	2

"Other" Categories Listed
discipline
Interaction with other professionals

41. In your interactions and relationships with students, how intentional are you about developing personal relationships with them with the hope of helping them accept Christ or grow in their Christian faith?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Not intentional at all	14%	3
Occasionally intentional	18%	4
Somewhat intentional	41%	9
Extremely intentional	27%	6

42. This survey seeks to explore the spiritual lives, educational and professional background, and intentionality of teachers in Christian high schools as it affects their preparedness to nurture students spiritually. Please make any additional comments you would like on this topic below.

Response Text
I think this can be accomplished by being a positive role model.
None.
They say that Live Oak is not "church," but I tend to strongly disagree with that statement! Where ever "two or more followers are gathered" (i.e. at Live Oak) sounds like church to me! For some students, the only "Jesus they will hear and see" may be the time they are at SCPS-- and in my classroom! As a result, my primary goal as an educator is to educate students about Jesus Christ that they would know Him and know Him crucified. Our [my!] mission should be the one Christ handed down to us when He said "to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and TEACHING them to obey everything" He commanded us. Matthew 28:19-20 Thanks!
Nurturing my students spiritually is a task I take very seriously and believe all should. Because many parents do not fulfill the role as a spiritual guide for their children we are their only daily resource for this.
I am comfortable with all of the answers I have given except in the educational and professional background section. I did not have a correct answer to choose in that section because I did not take any teaching courses. I answered the questions according to the

seminary classes so of course there was not any instruction about "classroom management" or anything that was especially for teaching in high school.
none
Some questions do not have any answer choices I would like to choose. They do not reflect my life and beliefs adequately.

43. A subgroup of the survey participants will be selected to participate in the second phase of this study. If you are willing to be considered for participation, you will receive an Informed Consent Form with more specific details upon which to base your final decision. Are you willing to consider participation in the second phase of this study?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	32%	7*
No	68%	15

*Three additional survey respondents later agreed to participate.

Appendix G: Recruitment Letter #2

Live Oak Christian High School
 Street Address
 City Name, GA 12345

Dear <Teacher>,

Thank you for your recent participation in the faculty survey I am conducting as part of my research about teachers in Christian high schools. I also appreciate your willingness to consider participation in the second part of the study. The purpose of this letter is to invite you to continue with the study, inform you of what participation involves, and request that you sign and return the attached informed consent form to give me permission to move forward.

You were identified as a possible participant based on your anonymous survey answers. I am selecting participants using “purposeful sampling with maximum variation,” which simply means I am seeking participants who represent a wide variety of demographic and personal characteristics. At this point in time, your identity is still unknown to me, which is why you are receiving this letter via Mrs. Hall.

If you are willing to continue with the study, it will involve the following:

1. You will first return the attached informed consent form to Mrs. Hall by <date>.
2. Mrs. Hall will then give me your name and contact information. At this point, I will be able to match your name with your survey data. Your survey responses will then be known to me alone. I will protect your confidentiality by keeping your data in a secure location and by using pseudonyms of your name and the school’s name in any published reports.
3. I will then contact you personally to answer any questions you may have and to schedule a classroom observation. I will request a copy of your lesson plans for two weeks (as you create them) and copies of two current assessments (daily assignments, projects, or tests). Your lesson plans should be no different than what you normally submit to Mr. Tanner.
4. I will conduct two to three classroom observations. The second and possible third observation will be unscheduled. You will simply conduct your class as usual, and I will make every effort to keep my presence from disrupting your normal classroom activities.
5. After the final observation, I will schedule a 45 minute interview with you to be held at your convenience. No preparation will be necessary on your part.
6. After I transcribe the interviews, you will receive a copy of the transcription and will be invited to make comments to correct, clarify, or add to the interview.

I am convinced that participation in this study will likely be a thoroughly enjoyable experience, giving you insight into your personal effectiveness as a Christian school teacher and a renewed enthusiasm for the school’s mission. I trust this research will also contribute meaningfully to the broader body of knowledge about Christian teaching.

To participate, please complete the attached informed consent form and return it to Mrs. Hall in

the business office by <date>. Thank you in advance for your valuable contribution to this research!

Sincerely,
Wendy K. Lewis
Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

Appendix H: Informed Consent Form #2

The Liberty University Institutional
Review Board has approved
this document for use from
3/12/15 to 3/11/16
Protocol # 2135.031215

Informed Consent Form

Teacher Preparedness for Spiritually Transformational Teaching: A Case Study in One Christian High School

Wendy K. Lewis, Principal Investigator
Liberty University
School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study related to the preparedness of teachers in Christian high schools for spiritually transformational teaching. You were selected as a possible participant because you teach full-time in the Christian school targeted for this study. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Wendy K. Lewis, doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to discover certain elements of teachers in evangelical Christian high schools.

Procedures:

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

- Provide copies of two weeks of lesson plans and two classroom assessments
- Allow me to observe your classroom during one scheduled class period and one to two unscheduled class periods with different classes. The class will be audiotaped for later review, and I will be taking field notes on my observations during the class.
- Participate in one confidential 45 minute interview with the principal interviewer. The interview will be videotaped for purposes of accurate transcription and analysis at a later date, and you will be given a copy of the transcript so that you may check it for accuracy and clarity. Confidentiality will be maintained, and published results will use pseudonyms for the names of the school and the individual participants.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

The study has minimal risks, no more than the participant would encounter in everyday life.

The teacher participants will receive no direct benefits from the study. The school will benefit directly in that it will be given a the final report of this study providing compiled information about the faculty's educational, professional, and spiritual backgrounds that may serve as a useful artifact in the school's accreditation review process.

The Liberty University Institutional
Review Board has approved
this document for use from
3/12/15 to 3/11/16
Protocol # 2135.031215

Compensation:

Survey participants will not receive compensation.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report, article, or book that may result from this research, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records and recordings will be stored securely in a locked box at my home for a period of 3 years and only the researcher and persons directly involved in transcription or analysis of the data will have access to the records.

The researcher cannot ensure that participants will not discuss their interviews with others.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

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

Withdrawal from the Study:

If you decide to withdraw during the course of the study, please send an email to wendylewis79@liberty.edu. At the time that you contact me, any recordings or written information that you have already contributed to this study, along with any of data that pertains to you, will be destroyed immediately and not included in this study. Your reason for withdrawal is requested but not required and will not affect your future relationship with Liberty University or Savannah Christian Preparatory School in any way.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Wendy K. Lewis. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact me at (912) 713-4844 or email me at wlewis@liberty.edu. You may also email my faculty advisor, Dr. Gail Collins, at glcollins2@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1837, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or send an email to irb@liberty.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

The Liberty University Institutional
Review Board has approved
this document for use from
3/12/15 to 3/11/16
Protocol # 2135.031215

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions as needed and have received answers. Please check each box with which you agree:

- ☐ I will provide the principal researchers with copies of two weeks of lesson plans and two classroom assessments.
- ☐ I will allow the principal researcher to observe my classroom during one scheduled and one or two unscheduled class periods. I understand the classes will be audiotaped for the sole purposes of accurate review and analysis at a later date.
- ☐ I will participate in one confidential 45 minute interview with the principal researcher. I understand the interview will be videotaped for the sole purpose of accurate transcription and analysis at a later date.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

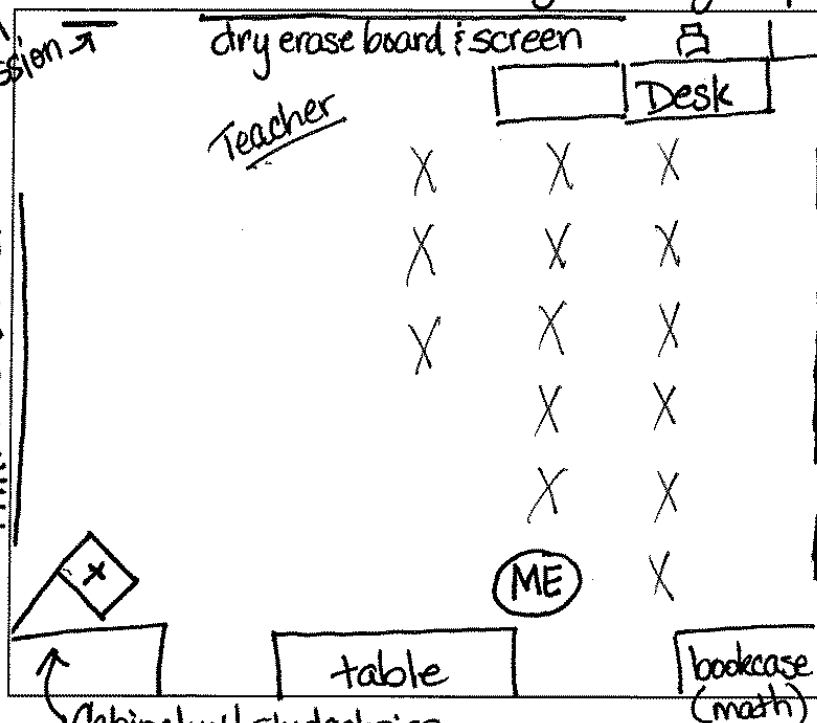
Appendix I: Field Notes Worksheets

Field Notes Worksheets

Teacher: Mrs. Bethany Aimar Observation # 3Date: 4/23/15 Time: 1:25 pm Period: 6th Classroom #: 18Subject: Adv. Alg. & Trigonometry # of Students: _____Purpose: Math Lesson Plan changed in light of former student's death

pic of school mission

Phil. 4:13 banner



Classroom Layout:

← "Knowledge is power." poster.

← Class of 2017 pictures

← "Think creatively." poster

Physical Elements or Messages Consistent with Christianity: _____

mission statementposters

Physical Elements or Messages Inconsistent with Christianity: _____

none

Teacher: Bethany Page: 2

Note the following:

Pre-class interactions Classroom management
 Lessons Discipline
 Activities Teacher-student interactions

Codes for Biblical Worldview Integration and Spiritual Nurture:

B = Promotes Biblical Worldview S = Consistent with Spiritual Nurture
 IB = Inconsistent with Biblical Worldview IS = Inconsistent with Spiritual Nurture
 UB = Unrelated to Biblical Worldview US = Unrelated to Spiritual Nurture

Timer	Activity	Codes	Description
	Intro		In light of yesterday afternoon, we're not doing math today we are talking about Fruitcake? Ice Cream today
	Video (Louie Giglio)		Grace message - God @ work. Clear presentation of the Gospel. Seen potently w/ J off on the cross.
		B	II Cor. 5:21 "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us." Grace is what happens when I can't do anything and God steps in.
			→ so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.
		S	12 min - summary. Skips video forward Read's Ashley's story - her journal is full of language, a girl living w/ J, breaks up, moves in w/ Christian girl ("fruitcake"), on? off w/ "M", asked told Fruitcake about M who asked to pray for her. 14 days from hating God to believing in God. Read lyrics to Mighty to Save - "Everyone needs compassion..." Ashley died in a car accident. Louie giglio If you're Krista today - and if you're Ashley ... oh my gosh. This story today is even for the screwups even for you.
	Bethany describing situation		reviewed events of yesterday, hearing about Annie's death 39 min Annie had asked J into her heart She had fallen in love w/ Him
		S	"To lose one of my students physically is all that I can take ... but →

Teacher: Bethany Observation #: 3 Page: 3

Codes for Biblical Worldview Integration and Spiritual Nurture:

B = Promotes Biblical Worldview

S = Consistent with Spiritual Nurture

IB = Inconsistent with Biblical Worldview

IS = Inconsistent with Spiritual Nurture

UB = Not related to Biblical Worldview

US = Unrelated to Spiritual Nurture

Timer	Activity	Codes	Description
	Invitation to accept Christ	S	Invitation PLEASE get that taken care of today! Come talk to me. I love you and cannot fathom the thought of losing any of my students spiritually
	Return to video.	B S	Video - All of our mess ups were what messed you up on the cross.
	Gave out handout for further reading.		Handout Left room - video music playing Class left quietly. Very emotionally poignant class. Slightly tearful at times, but not uncontrolled. ↑ students

Appendix J: Teacher Interview Guide

Semi-structured Open-ended Interview Questions

1. As you were growing up, who or what influenced you the most spiritually, and in what ways? Prompts: How did the religious beliefs of your family (or church) affect your belief system?
2. From your survey, I know you attended a (public/private/Christian/home) school. How would you describe the influence of attending a _____ school on your belief system?
3. In the faculty survey, you said that you (consider yourself/do not consider yourself/are not sure if you are) a Christian. Can you describe to me any experiences, insights, or decisions that led you to this belief (or uncertainty) about yourself?
4. What were some other significant or defining moments in your spiritual life?
5. The Bible –What do you believe about the nature and importance of the Bible? What role does it play in your life? Prompt: Would you say it is more of a guidebook for you or a source of authority?
6. Prayer – What does prayer look like in your life? Prompts: Why do you pray? How do you pray? How often do you pray? What do you pray about? For whom do you pray? What does prayer accomplish in your life?
7. Church – Describe the nature of your involvement in church. Prompts: How important is church to you, and in what ways? Do you volunteer or serve in any capacity?
8. Can you give me three to five adjectives that describe your relationship with God right now? Prompt: Why did you select the word _____?
9. What would you say are your three most important goals as a teacher at this school?
10. Christian educators sometimes use the expression “integration of faith and learning” to describe one important goal of Christian education. Can you share with me any examples where you have intentionally included spiritual issues within the context of your teaching?
11. What is your approach to classroom management? Prompts: What are some underlying principles that guide your approach? How do you typically handle discipline issues? Can you give me any examples of specific strategies you use?
12. In what ways should teachers interact with students outside of an academic context, if at all? Prompts: Should teachers interact with students directly about their relationship with God? What specific strategies do you use, if any, to help students develop or mature spiritually? How often would you say you have spiritual conversations with students?

Can you describe a time when you had a meaningful spiritual interaction with a student?

13. While we have been discussing nurturing students spiritually, you may have experienced some emotions about the subject, either positive or negative or both. Think back over the last few minutes. When you were considering the task of personally helping students mature spiritually, what emotions did it elicit in you?
14. In what ways did your educational background prepare or fail to prepare you to nurture students spiritually?
15. In what ways does your current personal relationship with God empower you to or hinder you from nurturing students spiritually?
16. In what ways does your level of biblical knowledge empower you to or hinder you from nurturing students spiritually?
17. Finally, is there anything you would like to share, clarify, or add to anything we have discussed?

Additional Questions for the Principal

18. What would you say are your most important goals as the principal of this school?
19. When you are hiring a new teacher for the school, what are the most important qualities you look for in a candidate?
20. Do your new teachers undergo a process of initial training or induction, and if so, what does it include? Are there any specifically spiritual components?
21. During your tenure as principal, can you recall any professional development opportunities the high school has sponsored, sent teachers to, or paid for that had a clearly Christian focus?
22. Can you describe to me briefly the nature of your faculty meetings, for example, how often you meet, for how long, and your typical agenda? As you think back on the faculty meetings you have held this year, can you recall any discussions that had a clearly spiritual focus?
23. How would you describe any expectations you may have for your teachers regarding teaching from a biblical worldview? How are these communicated to the teachers? Is there any sort of supervision or accountability for teachers regarding this?
24. How would you describe any expectations you may have for your teachers regarding the spiritual nurture of students? How are these communicated to the teachers? Is there any sort of supervision or accountability for teachers regarding this?

25. In general, how would you assess the effectiveness of the faculty in general at teaching from a biblical worldview and spiritually nurturing students?

Appendix K: Permission to Use Stake's Worksheets

from: **GP Permissions** <Permissions@guilford.com>

to: wendylewis79@liberty.edu

cc: guilford2@formatease.com

date: Wed, Nov 12, 2014 at 9:22 AM

subject: Re: Coursepack Permissions Request

Hi Wendy,

We can grant the rights to use the material as requested for your dissertation.

--

Permission is hereby granted for the use requested.

Any third party material is expressly excluded from this permission. If any of the material you wish to use appears within our work with credit to another source, authorization from that source must be obtained.

This permission does not include the right for the publisher of the new work to grant others permission to photocopy or otherwise reproduce this material except for versions made by non-profit organizations for use by the blind or handicapped persons.

Credit line must include the following:

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Please let me know if you have any questions.

Best,

Mandy Sparber
Guilford Publications

Appendix L: Sample of Analyst's Notes

Synopsis of Case:

- #3 51 years old
- #4 white
- #2 female
- #10 Master's
- #34 teaches Business
- #35 Extracurricular: Cross Country, Track & Field, Chess Club

Relevance of Case for Cross-Case Themes:

Theme 1: Active Christian Faith

Apostles' Creed	<p>#14 yes</p> <p>#15 yes</p> <p>#16 yes</p>
Bible	<p>#17 The Bible contains God's words and is a helpful source of wisdom.</p> <p>#18 The Bible should be our final authority in matters of belief and practice. yes</p> <p>#25 Bible reading: Often (3 or more times a week)</p> <p><i>It's our instruction book. It's our . . . it's where you go every day. I read before I come to school. Sometimes when I have a sixth period like I did last quarter, I read during school. And then I read before I go to bed at night. I . . . it gives me a peace to read His word, and then it gives me a direction.</i></p> <p><i>Right, and I don't think I'm all the way at the authoritative end of it because I still feel like it's an interpretation when you're reading it. [Lewis: Uh-hum] I believe that the Bible is God's word, but I believe too that the way God . . . the way Jesus cared about people, that He was not authoritative about it. He met you where you needed to be met, and He met you with grace.</i></p>
Christianity	<p>#19 Personal Definition: <i>A Christian has accepted Jesus as their Savior and realizes that they are saved by Grace. Christians carry out the great commission.</i></p> <p>#20 Are you a Christian? Yes</p> <p>#21 How many years? <i>I accepted Jesus as my personal savior 44 years ago. (7 years old)</i></p>

	<p>#22 Current spiritual situation: I am a Christian, and my faith is integral to my daily life.</p> <p>#28 Describes my life: I am seeking a closer relationship with God but am often inconsistent in my efforts.</p>
Church & Denomination	<p>#23 How often do you attend worship services? Regularly – 2 to 4 times per month</p> <p><i>So, but we were at church, growing up, every time the doors were open.</i></p>
Faith/Salvation	<p><i>Well, I grew up in a Christian home – very Southern Baptist, tea-totaling - and my dad was military, so our family depended on God all the time for direction when we moved, when . . . I mean, just everything. If daddy was gone, we had devotions every night as a family, probably up until I was in high school. I accepted the Lord as my Savior when I was seven years old. My sister and I went up together, and we were baptized. And, I couldn't imagine my life without God. Everything I've been through and everything I've done, good and bad, He's always been . . . had His hand in it and directed me. And, when I got married, I looked for someone who was a Christian. And I wanted my kids to grow up the same way with devotions every night.</i></p> <p>Theological Understanding: <i>Probably through my parents. I would say my parents. If I ever had a question, I knew I could ask Mom and Dad,</i></p>
Prayer	<p>#26 I pray on most days and strive to have an intentional and disciplined prayer life.</p> <p><i>Oh, it's very important. I . . . I pray when I run. I pray myself to sleep at night. I remember someone saying, "What better way to go to sleep than with your mind speaking to the Lord." I go to prayer for everything, you know. You don't always get an answer the way you want, but I can't see the big picture and He can.</i></p>
Christian Activities	<p>#24 Women's Bible Study, 4-5-6ers, Looks at the school as their ministry</p>

Theme 2: Lifelong Learning Experiences

Education	<p>#5 Elementary: Public #6 Middle: Public #7 High: Public #8 College: Public #9 Teacher Training: Public</p> <p><i>When we were in school, you could pray, and we had teachers that, you know, we had that minute of silence, but we had teachers who prayed during that minute of silence.</i></p>
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Multiple Case Study Analysis, Robert E. Stake. 2005a. Copyright Guilford Press. Reprinted with permission of The Guilford Press. Adapted from Worksheet 3.

	H	C	M	Sh	K	D	A	Sc	B
Integration of F&L – Never		X	X	X	X	X			
Integration of F&L– Rarely	X						X	X	
Integration of F&L– Regul									X
Spiritual Nurture – Never	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Spiritual Nurture – Rarely									X
Spir Class Manage – Never	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Spir Class Manage – Occas.									X
No PD w Xn Pers – Outside	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
No PD w Xn Pers – School		X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Biblical Knowledge – Yes		X					X	X	X
Biblical Knowledge – No	X		X		X	X			
Research Question Three									
Christ-like – Occas. Intent.			X			X			
Christ-like – Somewhat Int.					X		X	X	
Christ-like – Extremely Int.	X	X		X					X
Xn.Worldview – Occasion			X			X			
Xn Worldview – Somewhat				X	X		X		
Xn Worldview – Extremely	X	X						X	X
Spir. Nurture – Not a Prior.			X						
Spir. Nurture – Don’t know							X		
Spir. Nurture – Sometimes					X	X			
Spir. Nurture – Very Intent	X	X		X				X	X
Strat. w/ coll – Never/Rare.		X	X		X		X		
Strat. w/ coll – Occ Intent	X			X		X			
Strat. w/ coll - Regularly								X	X

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* “More than I can count”

** “Always a Christian”

+ “The Bible is the inerrant Word of God, should be literally interpreted, and should shape every facet of my life as I seek to follow Christ.”