

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY ON MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS TOWARD THE  
LONGEVITY OF CHRISTIAN SCHOOL TEACHERS

by

Rochelle Ancheta Achuff

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe factors that influenced the motivation of teachers toward longevity in Christian schools located in the Southeast region of the United States. This study attempted to answer the following research question: What do Christian school teachers perceive as motivational factors toward longevity in a Christian school? The theory that guided this study was London's (1983) career motivation theory as it relates to what motivated teachers to teach long-term in a Christian school. Findings from this study provided a description of what Christian school teachers perceive as motivating factors toward longevity in a Christian school. The primary source of data collection was in-depth interviews with 12 participants, in addition to a questionnaire and a focus group interview. Using Moustakas's (1994) method of data analysis, collected information was coded and described to give a rich description of what teachers perceive as motivational factors toward longevity in Christian schools. Factors that contributed to the motivation of Christian school teachers toward longevity in a Christian school are: spiritual impact, calling, love of teaching, student interaction, and school support.

*Keywords:* Career motivation theory, motivation, Christian schools, Christian school teachers, longevity.

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**List of Abbreviations**

American Association of Christian Schools (AACCS)

Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI)

Florida Association of Christian Colleges and Schools (FACCS)

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### Overview

Examining the lives of teachers can be very insightful in discovering what motivates them to teach. This chapter presents the framework for this study on the motivation of teachers in Christian schools, particularly the motivational factors that influence longevity in Christian schools. I examined motivation through the theoretical lens of London's (1983) career motivation theory. Motivation of teachers was examined through the lives of teachers who have taught in a Christian school for over 10 years. This chapter discusses the central question: What do Christian school teachers perceive as motivational factors toward longevity in a Christian school? This chapter also discusses subquestions that relate to London's (1983) career motivation theory.

Research regarding teacher motivation is focused mainly on two groups of teachers: pre-service teachers (Thomson & Palermo, 2014; Thomson, Turner, & Nietfeld, 2012) and inservice teachers (Ghenghesh, 2013; Mertler, 2016; Mkumbo, 2013; Sinclair, Dowson, & McInerney, 2006; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). Most of the literature on teacher motivation centers on public school teachers with fewer studies on teachers in private schools, particularly those who choose to teach in Christian schools. The purpose of this study was to describe teachers' perspectives regarding factors that motivate them to continue long-term in a Christian school. The results from this study provide Christian school administrators, Christian school teachers, future teachers interested in Christian education, and teacher educators with an understanding of what motivates teachers toward longevity in Christian schools.

## **Background**

The education of our children is important for the success and prosperity of this country. Although much of the focus in education is on creating standards for students to meet in order to be competitive with other nations, or providing students with up-to-date technology and authentic learning experiences, the problem exists that many schools are struggling to have enough qualified teachers due to teacher attrition. According to Ingersoll, Merrill, and Stuckey (2014), from 1988-2008 there was a 34% increase in the number of beginning teachers who left the profession. Although more beginning teachers have entered the profession, very few of them continue to teach. As many beginning teachers leave the profession and veteran teachers retire, schools are under pressure to find replacements for these teachers. The teaching profession has been characterized as a “revolving door” (Gujarati, 2012) as a result of many aspiring teachers who enter the profession and then exit within a short amount of time. Teacher attrition is problematic because it hinders schools from having the teacher force that is necessary to provide quality education for students.

Research has indicated that there are a variety of reasons for attrition such as heavy workloads, student behavior (Brill & McCartney, 2008), opportunities for better salary (Mertler, 2016), a lack of or very minimal pedagogical training prior to entering the profession (Ingersoll, Merrill, & May, 2012), poor work conditions (Darling-Hammond, 2003), emotional exhaustion, or lack of job satisfaction (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). Research has been dedicated to understand why teachers, especially beginning teachers, leave the profession; however, according to Keogh, Garvis, and Pendergast (2010), the best way to lower attrition is for schools to focus on retaining their existing teachers.

Findings from several studies have suggested ways that schools can retain their teachers. Some studies suggest that schools should offer induction or mentoring programs for new teachers (Gujarati, 2012; McCoy, Wilson-Jones, & Jones, 2013). These types of programs, however, are only successful if they are effective. Successful mentoring programs, according to McCoy et al. (2013), ensure that mentors are experienced teachers who have been trained according to specified standards and who have the desire and disposition to encourage and help new teachers. Ingersoll et al. (2012) argued that teacher retention can begin before teachers enter the classroom by ensuring that schools of education sufficiently prepare pre-service teachers for the profession. Teachers' lack of preparedness can contribute to feelings of inadequacy and discouragement, which in turn causes teachers to leave the profession. Teachers with a strong sense of preparedness are more likely to continue long-term in the profession (Smith, 2015).

Another area that schools should consider in their attempt to retain teachers is to discover what motivates existing teachers to continue in the profession and in particular schools. Despite the lack of long-term commitment from many beginning teachers, there remains a dedicated group of teachers who do not have intentions to leave the profession or the schools where they serve. These teachers have years of teaching experience and their love for teaching and commitment to their students is evident. It is beneficial to learn more about these teachers and to discover what influences them to continue teaching. Discovering what motivates teachers to continue long term can help schools to decrease attrition and increase teacher retention. Teachers who have accumulated years of experience can offer helpful insight about motivation that can be applied to newer teachers.

Teacher attrition affects not only public schools, but private schools also face challenges with keeping their teachers long-term. Ingersoll, Merrill, and May (2014) indicated that

“beginning teachers in private schools were about twice as likely to depart as those in public schools” (p. 23). This is alarming for private schools since their faculty size tends to be much smaller compared to the faculty population in public schools. Therefore, it is necessary for leaders in private schools to be more diligent in creating strategies to retain their teachers. Most studies on private schools focus mainly on Catholic schools. This study focused on one type of private school that has not been examined as much: the Christian school. Christian schools provide an education from a “Christian perspective” (De Wolff, Miedema, & De Ruyter, 2002, p. 240) with the understanding that “a truly Christian education is possible only when Christian conviction underlies not a part, but all, of the curriculum of the school” (Machen, 2004, p. 81). Some of the research on Christian schools has covered longevity of teachers (Hardman, 2010; Teodori, 2015), retention (Kauffman, 2010; McLaughlin, 2005), and turnover (Oster, 2007). This study sought to extend existing research on Christian schools by contributing current research on Christian school teachers and adding research pertaining to the motivation of Christian school teachers toward longevity in a Christian school.

The problem of teacher attrition affects several groups in society. Communities suffer when many of the schools within their school district struggle with teacher attrition. Schools that struggle with teacher turnover can create a lack of trust from those within the community who depend on the school system to educate their children. Unless parents choose to homeschool their children or send them to private schools, they must use the schools within their school district. If these schools cannot provide an excellent education due to the lack of qualified teachers, the community can lose confidence in their schools and develop a low opinion of the effectiveness of the schools within their district. Parents may seek to move to other communities or find another way to get their child into higher performing schools.

The immediate impact of teacher attrition affects schools, teachers, and students. Schools that face teacher attrition must expend time and money to search for and to recruit new teachers. In some cases, schools may hire teachers who are not qualified to teach or are not qualified to teach the subject area in which they will be assigned to teach. Attrition affects the teachers who remain in the schools by possibly causing low morale, especially if these teachers are burdened by extra responsibilities to make up for the lack of teaching faculty. Richardson's (2014) qualitative case study on an urban school that struggled with both teacher and administrative attrition described the frustration and stress the remaining teachers felt regarding the lack of leadership at the school to establish an effective school culture. The participants in Richardson's (2014) study admitted that the students were the main reason they remained at the school. Students are impacted by attrition by having to deal with constant changes in teaching faculty. A changing school environment brings instability, especially if teachers who leave are not being replaced by effective teachers.

This study on teacher motivation was examined through the lens of London's career motivation theory. Career motivation is "the set of individual characteristics and associated career decisions and behaviors that reflect the person's career identity, insight into factors affecting his or her career, and resilience in the face of unfavorable career conditions" (London, 1983, p. 620). Career motivation theory has been applied in quantitative research studies outside the realm of education (Alnıaçık, Alnıaçık, Akçin, & Erat, 2012; Day & Allen, 2004). This study sought to extend the literature on London's (1983) theory by applying it to education, particularly Christian school education. The purpose was to discover how the different elements in career motivation theory are evident in the lived experiences of Christian school teachers.

Since previous research has implemented quantitative analysis, this study adds another dimension of career motivation through qualitative methods.

### **Situation to Self**

Qualitative studies require philosophical assumptions that will help to frame the research study (Creswell, 2007). According to Creswell (2007), “Good research requires making these assumptions, paradigms, and frameworks explicit in the writing of a study, and, at a minimum, to be aware that they influence the conduct of inquiry” (p. 15). As a researcher, I brought my own values and assumptions to this study that must be explicitly discussed.

### **Personal Experience**

As a teacher involved in a large Christian school ministry, I have worked with a variety of experienced teachers. Several of my colleagues have taught in Christian education for over 15 years and continue to have the desire to teach for as long as they possibly can. I greatly admire their faithfulness and their passion to continue educating their students with a biblical perspective. I instruct college students who are preparing for a future ministry in education. My desire is to teach and to train these students to be excellent, dedicated teachers who are well prepared to serve the Lord in the field of Christian education or wherever God may lead them.

While researching about teacher attrition and retention, I developed an interest to learn more about what motivates teachers to dedicate years of their life to teach in a Christian school. As a teacher I understand how challenging and difficult teaching can be, and I understand why some teachers choose to pursue other careers that are less stressful and time consuming. However, there are many teachers who are motivated to remain in the profession regardless of the challenges and difficulties and who dedicate years of service to their schools.

As a teacher-educator, I have a desire to discover what factors motivate veteran Christian school teachers to continue teaching in order to help foster and retain preservice teachers' motivation to teach. Understanding what motivates veteran Christian school teachers can also help me to develop strategies in helping preservice teachers to sustain their motivation to teach once they finally enter the teaching profession.

My years of experience in a Christian school helped me to be able to relate to the participants in this study. Discovering what motivates Christian school teachers can help me to further instruct my future students who have a desire to teach in Christian schools. This study can also be helpful for Christian school administrators to understand how to motivate their teachers toward longevity. In addition, this study can help Christian school teachers to foster their own motivation for teaching or to reignite the motivation that perhaps has waned through the years.

### **Philosophical Assumptions**

**Constructivism.** This study was based on a constructivist worldview as it sought to interpret what motivates Christian school teachers. Creswell (2007) stated that according to the constructivist worldview “individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work” and “develop subjective meanings of their experiences” (p. 20). This worldview incorporates the multiple meanings individuals bring to their experiences. According to Creswell (2007), “the goal of research, then, is to rely as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situation” (pp. 20-21).

**Ontological.** The ontological assumption of this study reinforced the fact that multiple realities exist regarding what motivates teachers toward longevity in teaching, particularly those in Christian schools. This study presented the various perceptions and realities of the

participants. Through the interviewing process, these teachers' backgrounds and experiences in the classroom reflected their own perceptions and interpretations of reality regarding what motivators influence longevity in a Christian school.

**Epistemological.** The epistemological assumption acknowledges that I have a relationship with the participants in this study; and in order to answer the research questions, I must have personal contact with the participants. Through interviewing, I had the opportunity to bridge a gap with the teachers in order to learn more about them and what they perceive are motivators toward longevity in a Christian school.

**Axiological.** The axiological assumption acknowledges the role of values in a study. As a teacher, I value the importance of an education; however, as a Christian school teacher, I value the importance of Christian education. Throughout my adult life, I have been involved in Christian education and have seen the importance of providing an education with a Christian, biblical worldview.

**Rhetorical.** The rhetorical assumption relates to the type of language that was used throughout this study. Unlike the impersonal nature of quantitative studies, I chose a qualitative study because I wanted to write in a narrative style using my personal voice to present the perceptions of the teachers who were involved in this study.

### **Problem Statement**

Schools in the United States are constantly dealing with teacher attrition. Several studies have examined why teachers have chosen to leave the profession (Buchanan, 2012; Curtis, 2012; Ingersoll et al., 2014; Lloyd, 2012) while other studies have examined ways to increase teacher retention (Gujarati, 2012; Hodgman, 2012; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; McCoy et al., 2013). Keogh et al. (2010) argued that rather than focusing on ways to recruit more teachers, schools

should strive to retain their existing teachers. One way to retain teachers is through induction programs that help novice teachers adjust to the first few years of teaching (Gujarati, 2012). Hodgman (2012) suggested offering extrinsic rewards and increasing intrinsic rewards to keep teachers. Others pointed out the vital role veteran teachers have in the retention of novice teachers (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; McCoy et al., 2013). There are many suggestions which seem to offer the most effective means of retaining teachers.

Retaining existing teachers is important; however, amidst all the studies on teacher attrition and retention there is a lack of research that explains why teachers choose to remain in the profession (Levine, 2013; Perrachione, Petersen, & Rosser, 2008). More research is needed which goes beyond retention and examines the longevity of teachers and what they perceive as motivating factors toward their longevity in the profession and in their schools. Describing the perceptions of what motivates experienced teachers can be helpful in gaining a better understanding of how to retain teachers long-term.

Most of the literature on teacher attrition, retention, motivation, and longevity have examined teachers in public and Catholic schools. There are more beginning teachers leaving private schools than in the public schools (Ingersoll et al., 2014). The problem is very few research studies focus on what motivates teachers to remain long-term in Christian schools (Hardman, 2010; Teodori, 2015); therefore, more research must be added to the literature to provide additional insight on this important topic. This qualitative study on 12 to 15 teachers with over 10 years of experience in Christian schools has extended the literature on Christian teachers.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe factors that influenced the motivation of teachers toward longevity in Christian schools located in the Southeast. At this stage in the research, motivation will be generally defined as “the degree to which an individual wants and chooses to engage in certain specified behaviors” (Mitchell, 1982, p. 82). The theory that guided this study was London’s (1983) career motivation theory. London’s theory helped to discover factors that motivate Christian school teachers toward longevity in a Christian school.

### **Significance of the Study**

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributed to the literature on London’s (1983) career motivation theory. Studies with London’s (1983) theory are limited to quantitative studies which have examined occupations other than teaching (Almaçık et al., 2012; Day & Allen, 2004). This qualitative study extended research regarding London’s (1983) career motivation theory to include the teaching profession, focusing on teachers in Christian schools. Studies on teacher motivation have applied various motivation theories such as Self-Determination Theory (Van den Berghe et al., 2014), Herzberg’s Theory of Motivation (Convey, 2014; Mertler, 2016), and expectancy value theory (Watt et al., 2012). This study has provided an application of London’s (1983) career motivation theory to teacher motivation that is missing in the literature.

This study on teacher motivation was empirically significant because it provided information about Christian school teachers. Several studies focus on the motivation of public school teachers in the United States (Edwards, 2003; Mertler, 2016; Thomson & Palermo, 2014; Thomson et al., 2012) and of teachers in other countries such as Tanzania (Mkumbo, 2013), Egypt (Ghenghesh, 2013), Australia (Sinclair et al., 2006), and Belgium (Van den Berghe et al.,

2014). However, there are few studies on Christian school teacher motivation (McLaughlin, 2005; Mkumbo, 2013). Other studies similar to this by Hardman (2010) and Teodori (2015) focused particularly on Christian school teachers who were part of Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI). This study provided a perspective on what motivates Christian school teachers who have served long-term in Christian schools which may not be part of ACSI.

This study has also contributed to the literature on veteran teachers as it examined the motivation of teachers with long-term experience in a Christian school. The literature on teacher motivation has focused on pre-service teachers and their motivation to enter the profession, but more research should be conducted examining the lives of veteran teachers (Edwards, 2003). Although there were 85,530 public schools and 26,230 private schools in the United States during the 2011-12 school year (U.S. Department of Education, 2013), only 4,574 Conservative Christian schools existed across the country during that same school year (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Because there are fewer Christian schools across the United States, it is vital that those schools strive to retain their teachers.

Veteran teachers have accumulated knowledge that can be shared with other teachers to encourage them during challenging years and to assist them in developing their skills as teachers. Veteran teachers can provide information which can help to prevent what Smits (2009) referred to as “organizational discontinuity,” which is “the lack of coherence and consistency that often occurs in schools when teachers frequently move or leave” (p. 6). Christian schools will be more effective as organizations if they can retain motivated teachers who have a desire to continue long-term in their schools. Contributions to existing research about veteran teachers will provide more information for those who are invested in Christian education and who desire to retain more teachers in Christian schools.

Not only did this study have theoretical and empirical significance, but it also had practical significance particularly to those who are involved in Christian education. Christian school administrators must be concerned not only with the students, but also with their teachers. According to Ingersoll and Strong (2011), beginning teachers who perceive that they do not have the support from their leaders tend to leave. Administrative support is valuable for teachers. Christian school administrators can benefit from the findings of this study especially if they struggle with unnecessary attrition; however, administrators who have not faced attrition can still benefit from the results of this study. The findings from this study can help Christian school administrators understand what motivates teachers toward longevity, which in turn can help administrators to create strategies to increase teacher motivation and to proactively develop interventions to reduce attrition.

Besides Christian school administrators, Christian school teachers can also benefit from the findings of this study. According to Ingersoll and Strong (2011), veteran teachers can be a positive influence on beginning teachers. Teachers who are new to the profession benefit from the experiences of veteran teachers and the wise counsel and encouragement that veteran teachers can offer. Beginning teachers can also seek advice and increase their motivation from veteran teachers during the challenging times in their career.

In addition to administrators and teachers, this study can also benefit teacher-educators preparing students for a career in education. Ingersoll et al. (2012) stressed the impact teacher education programs have on preparing students for a career in teaching. If teacher-educators are not aware of the challenges and struggles that beginning teachers face once they enter the profession, they will not be able to fully prepare the students. Teacher-educators should address

the realities of teaching and instruct students on what they can do to maneuver through challenging times.

### **Research Questions**

This qualitative study answered the following research questions:

Central Research Question: What do Christian school teachers perceive as motivational factors toward longevity in a Christian school?

Few studies have examined the motivation of Christian school teachers (McLaughlin, 2005; Mkumbo, 2013). This study discovered motivating factors that influenced the longevity of Christian school teachers. London's theory of career motivation (1983) provided a means of analyzing what motivates Christian school teachers toward longevity. Results from this study provided information to help Christian schools understand what they can do to motivate their teachers toward longevity.

Sub-Question 1: What role does career identity have in motivating Christian school teachers toward longevity?

According to London (1983), a person's identity is intertwined with his or her career. In connection to this study, it was interesting to discover that for many of the participants their identity and career were interrelated and it appeared that their career identity has motivated their longevity in teaching.

Sub-Question 2: What role does career insight have in motivating Christian school teachers toward longevity?

According to London (1983), career insight guides people to match their abilities with goals that relate to their career. It was interesting to discover that the participants did not indicate that their personal abilities motivated them to pursue a career teaching in a Christian

school, nor did they indicate that their personal abilities influenced their motivation toward longevity.

Sub-Question 3: How does career resilience impact Christian school teachers' motivation to teach?

According to Ingersoll et al. (2014), private school teachers are more likely to leave the profession than that of public school teachers. It was interesting to discover how the participants developed their career resilience and how their career resilience impacted their motivation to teach long-term in a Christian school.

### **Definitions**

1. *Career motivation theory*—London (1983) defined this theory as a “set of individual characteristics and associated career decisions and behaviors that reflect the person’s career identity, insight into factors affecting his or her career, and resilience in the face of unfavorable career conditions” (p. 620).
2. *Motivation*—Mitchell (1982) defined this as “the degree to which an individual wants and chooses to engage in certain specified behaviors” (p. 82).
3. *Christian education*—Schultz (1998) defined this as “*God’s plan to educate future generations to develop a God-centered worldview and, therefore, to think and act according to God’s ways*” (p. 49, emphasis in the original). Schultz uses the term *Kingdom education* in place of Christian education.
4. *Christian schools*—De Wolff et al. (2002) defined this as schools “which have a religious commitment and therefore seek to educate children from a Christian perspective” (p. 240).

### **Summary**

This chapter explained the background, problem, and purpose of this study. The problem was that very few studies focus on what factors motivate teachers to remain long-term in Christian schools. This study centered on the following research question: What do Christian school teachers perceive as motivational factors toward longevity in a Christian school? The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to discover motivational factors which lead to the longevity of Christian school teachers. Findings from this study added an important perspective of the teaching profession that is lacking in London's career motivation theory (1983), provided a voice for veteran Christian school teachers regarding what factors motivated their intentions for longevity, and informed those who are involved in Christian education about what veteran teachers perceive as motivators toward longevity in Christian schools.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Overview

Teacher attrition has been a problem that many schools in the United States face every year. According to Ingersoll et al. (2014), from 1988-2008 there was a 34% increase in the number of beginning teachers who left the profession. About 30% of novice teachers leave the profession within three years (Brill & McCartney, 2008; Cook & Engel, 2006; Yost, 2006), and attrition rates increase from 40% to 50% after only five years of teaching (Bobek, 2002; Brill & McCartney, 2008; Keogh et al., 2010). During the 2009-10 school year, about 65% of beginning public school teachers left the profession for reasons other than an unrenewed contract (Kaiser, 2011). A review of the literature revealed that attrition can be caused by lack of support (Buchanan, 2012; Curtis, 2012), classroom management (Buchanan, 2012), opportunities for better salary (Mertler, 2016), dissatisfaction with work (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011), poor pedagogical preparation (Ingersoll et al., 2014), and burnout (Lloyd, 2012).

Attrition is problematic not only because many capable teachers leave the profession prematurely, but also because it affects the quality of education in many schools (Cook & Engel, 2006). Because of teacher turnover, many schools are spending their resources searching for new teachers. When teachers are available, they may be required to teach subjects that they are not competent to teach, which not only hinders the teachers' effectiveness but also the students' quality of learning. Bobek (2002) stated, "Teachers do a disservice to themselves and their students if they are not prepared to teach their chosen subject matter and if they carry out assignments in subject areas where they lack mastery" (p. 203). High attrition rates place a burden on schools to search for qualified teachers.

Perhaps one way to help with attrition is to recruit more students to enter the teaching profession. According to Keogh et al. (2010), the solution to attrition is not recruiting more teachers but retaining existing teachers. Rather than trying to recruit more people into the teaching profession, attention should be focused on strategies that can help schools to retain both their existing teachers and beginning teachers. Increasing retention is one means of stopping the “revolving door” (Gujarati, 2012; Ingersoll, 2003) of the teaching profession.

The literature discusses teacher retention in relationship to public schools (Smith, 2015) and Catholic schools (Cook & Engel, 2006; Przygocki, 2004; Swanson, 2012), but research concerning Christian schools is not as prevalent. More research is needed concerning attrition and retention of teachers who serve in Christian schools.

Although attrition is a problem that affects both public and private schools, not all schools struggle with high attrition rates. There are many teachers who have not left the profession and they continue to teach and to serve in their schools. Veteran teachers in particular have overcome the struggles that many beginning teachers face and continue to teach despite various circumstances.

Examining the lives of veteran teachers can provide an important perspective of what motivates them to continue in the profession for many years. This study seeks to discover motivational factors that influence veteran Christian school teachers to continue teaching for many years in Christian schools. This chapter discusses London’s career motivation theory (1983), Christian schools, teacher motivation, and teacher longevity.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Teaching is a unique profession that allows teachers to be involved in the lives of their students both academically and personally. A teacher has the opportunity to be a positive

influence in the lives of many students. However, daily challenges of teaching and struggles with difficult students can cause discouragement and a loss of excitement and motivation to teach. There is strong temptation to leave after only a short time in the profession. If teaching is such an influential occupation, why do some teachers lose their motivation to teach while others maintain their motivation to teach for many years?

Understanding the motivation of teachers to teach and how they maintain their motivation can be helpful in determining ways to retain teachers in schools. Since much has been studied about public school teachers, it will be helpful to examine Christian school teachers. It would be particularly helpful to examine the thoughts and beliefs of veteran teachers in order to understand what motivates them to continue in Christian schools. This study will examine the motivation of veteran Christian school teachers using London's (1983) career motivation theory.

London's (1983) model of career motivation was the result of an effort to discover how to motivate managers, and it was eventually used in developing career programs (London & Noe, 1997), not necessarily for use in the realm of education. This study seeks to apply career motivation theory in understanding the decisions and behaviors of teachers in Christian schools.

Career motivation is defined as "the set of individual characteristics and associated career decisions and behaviors that reflect the person's career identity, insight into factors affecting his or her career, and resilience in the face of unfavorable career conditions" (London, 1983, p. 620). Career identity, career insight, and career resilience are the three major domains of career motivation. *Career identity* is the interconnectedness of one's self-image and one's career (London, 1983). A person's identity and career are intertwined in that a person is defined by his career. *Career insight* is understanding one's personal abilities and matching these abilities to career goals (London, 1983). *Career resilience* is remaining committed despite challenging

situations at work (London, 1983). These three areas work together to understand a person's career motivation. Although some aspects of career motivation apply specifically to managers of organizations, London (1983) stated that many other aspects of career motivation can apply to other areas of work.

London (1983) described career identity as “the direction of career motivation” (p. 620) and stated that those who have high career identity “are likely to find career satisfaction to be more important than satisfaction from other areas of life (primacy of work)” (London, 1983, p. 621). In other words, for those with high career identity, work is their life and that brings more satisfaction to them than perhaps other things such as relationships, personal hobbies, or even family. According to London (1983), there are two subdomains of career identity: “work involvement” and “desire for upward mobility” (p. 621). Aspects of work involvement are “job involvement, professional orientation, commitment to managerial work, and identification with the organization;” and aspects of upward mobility are “needs for advancement, recognition, dominance, and money” (London, 1983, p. 621). Applying career identity to teachers in Christian schools can help to discover how these teachers identify with their career in teaching and whether their career identity affects their motivation to teach in Christian schools. It will be especially interesting to discover how Christian school teachers perceive aspects of work involvement such as job involvement, commitment to work, and identification with the organization.

London and Noe (1997) described career insight as how realistically a person perceives himself in relationship to his career and the level of his abilities, in addition to his ability to establish career goals. Two elements of career insight are goal clarity, which is creating career goals, and path goal clarity, which is determining how to accomplish the goals (London, 1983).

Career insight can be examined in Christian school teachers in how they perceive themselves as teachers and whether their strengths in teaching and their teaching goals influence their motivation to teach long-term in Christian schools.

London (1983) described career resilience as “a person’s resistance to career disruption in a less than optimal environment” and added that someone with high career resilience “will be able to cope more effectively with a negative work situation” (p. 621). According to London (1983), career resilience entails three subdomains: self-efficacy, risk taking, and dependency. Career resilience can be examined in Christian school teachers in the areas of self-efficacy and risk taking. Elements of self-efficacy that can be applied to Christian school teachers are self-esteem, adaptability, need achievement, initiative, need creativity, inner work standards, and development orientation (London, 1983). One element of risk taking that can be applied to Christian school teachers is need security, which London (1983) stated is “negatively related to risk taking” (p. 624).

According to London and Noe (1997), the three domains of career motivation (career identity, career insight, and career resilience) are similar to other trait-factor career theories. London and Noe (1997) stated that career identity has similar concepts to work commitment and organizational commitment, career insight is similar to Super’s vocational self-concept of crystallization, and career resilience is similar to Bandura’s self-efficacy and Dawis and Lofquist’s theory of work adjustment (p. 63).

Regarding research with career motivation, studies have been quantitative in nature and focused on occupations other than teaching. Almiaçık et al. (2012) studied 245 participants in Turkey using a questionnaire to measure their career motivation, affective commitment, and job satisfaction. This study reported a positive relationship between career motivation and

organizational commitment. Day and Allen (2004) studied 125 participants in a group called SAMP Employees (Supervisory, Administrative, Managerial, and Professional) to discover a relationship between career motivation and self-efficacy in the success of protégés. They discovered that protégés with high career motivation were those who were mentored and had career success.

Knowledge about how people are motivated toward turning their work into a career provides great insight into what causes some to remain in a career long-term, while others leave after only a short period. Examining the career motivation of Christian school teachers, along with their decisions and behaviors as teachers, will assist in discovering what Christian school teachers perceive as motivating factors toward their longevity in Christian schools and provide a perspective on how the theory is applied to the teaching profession.

### **Related Literature**

In addition to career motivation theory, this chapter also discusses other topics that are related or applicable to this study. The following sections discuss the literature on Christian schools, teacher motivation, teacher longevity, teacher retention, and organizational commitment.

#### **Christian Schools**

Parents who would like for their children to have an education that supports their religious beliefs have the option to enroll their children in a private school rather than sending them to the local public school. Fewer students in the United States attend private schools compared to public schools. During the 2011-12 school year, the U.S. Department of Education reported 85,530 public schools compared to only 26,230 private schools in the United States (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). According to the 2011-12 Private School Universe

Survey, Catholic schools are the largest type of private school with a total of 6,873 schools and an enrollment of 1,928,388 students (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Another type of private school that is not as prevalent as Catholic schools are Conservative Christian schools. According to the Private School Universe Survey, during the 2011-12 school year there were 4,574 Conservative Christian schools across the country (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). In that same school year, 630,557 students were enrolled in Conservative Christian schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Although fewer Christian schools exist, they offer an alternative for many parents who want to send their children to private Christian schools that promote a biblical worldview of education and that teach children biblical principles that will help them to live the Christian life.

The enrollment practices among Christian schools vary depending on the mission or purpose of their schools. According to Burrell, Johnson, and Tatham (1997), Christian schools may choose to have open, limited, or closed enrollment. Open enrollment allows students from unchurched homes or those who do not know Jesus as their Savior to attend their schools. Limited enrollment accepts students who have at least one parent who confesses to be a Christian and belongs to a church. Closed enrollment allows only students who are members of specific churches. Other closed enrollment schools may choose to accept students if they make a profession of faith as a Christian or if they are from a particular fellowship of churches that are like-minded in certain doctrines of the faith.

Christian schools are also different in their organizational leadership. Some Christian schools are an extension of a church in which the pastor is also the administrator of the school. Other Christian schools operate independently of a church but have a board of directors who make decisions that affect the school. Many Christian schools are members of Christian school

organizations such as the American Association of Christian Schools (AACCS), Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI), or Florida Association of Christian Colleges and Schools (FACCS). These organizational bodies provide services for schools in their membership such as accreditation or professional development.

There are many differences between Christian schools and public schools. Public schools are generally larger than Christian schools because they offer free education to the communities within the school district. Like other private schools, parents pay tuition for their children's education in Christian schools, and Christian schools tend to have fewer students which results in smaller class sizes. Compared to public schools, Christian schools typically have fewer teachers, not only because of the smaller population of students, but because fewer teachers actually teach in Christian schools. According to the 2011-12 Private School Universe Survey, there were 59,545 full-time Christian school teachers (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). In that same year, 3,385,200 teachers were employed in public schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). A huge disparity exists in the number of teachers because there are more public schools in the United States. Compared to Christian schools, many public schools provide services like after-school programs or accommodations for special needs students and opportunities for students to be involved in competitive sports or music programs. Some Christian schools may not have the resources to provide many activities that public schools can offer.

Christian schools differ from public schools in their purpose of educating students. The main thrust of Christian schools is to provide an education which centers on a biblical worldview rather than the secular worldview which is common in public schools. Christian education is intent on applying biblical principles from God's Word in all subjects. According to Van Brummelen (2002), "a Christian worldview is shaped by God's revelation in His Word: His

Word in creation, His Word in the Bible, and His Word Incarnate, Jesus Christ. The Bible makes clear that reality is God's creation. God created, upholds, and rules His world. He sustains the laws of nature. He also provides us with the norms or values for human culture and society that enable and call us to be His coworkers in carrying on His work" (p. 49). Having a Christian worldview is an essential part of a Christian school. Schultz (1998) referred to Christian education as "Kingdom Education," which is "*God's plan to educate future generations to develop a God-centered worldview and, therefore, to think and act according to God's ways*" (p. 49, emphasis in the original). The responsibility of providing Kingdom Education is a joint effort by the home, church, and school (Schultz, 1998). According to Morris (1977) the main goals of Christian education are "the transmission of the truth; the training of individual students for productive lives in the will of God; and the development of corporate completeness in Christ" (p. 29).

Despite the fact that fewer Christian schools exist compared to public schools, research has been conducted on Christian schools and Christian school teachers. Studies on Christian school teachers have included the following: longevity of teachers in schools which are members of Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) (Hardman, 2010; Teodori, 2015), teacher turnover at schools which are members of Florida Association of Christian Colleges and Schools (FACCS) (Oster, 2007), motivation of teachers in Tanzania (Mkumbo, 2013), teacher retention (McLaughlin, 2005), veteran teachers and technology (Snoeyink & Ertmer, 2001), teacher self-efficacy (Anderson, 2016), professional development (Bailey, 2013), and teacher-student relationships (Stouffer, 2016).

After examining the literature, it appears that studies regarding Christian school teachers have covered a variety of topics. However, more studies are needed in the areas of teacher

retention, longevity, and motivation. Several studies have examined teachers who are part of ACSI schools (Bailey, 2013; Hardman, 2010; Teodori, 2015). More research can be added to the literature that expands knowledge of Christian teachers beyond those in ACSI schools, and more up-to-date research can be added on teacher retention, longevity, motivation, and veteran Christian school teachers. Since most of the studies mentioned earlier are quantitative by design, more qualitative studies must be added to the literature to allow for more in-depth investigation on the lives of Christian school teachers. This study is significant because it seeks to address the needs of veteran Christian school teachers and their motivation toward longevity in Christian schools.

### **Teacher Motivation**

Interest in teacher motivation has been around for decades. According to Watt et al. (2012), interest in what motivates people to a career in teaching started far back to World War II, and within the last 10 years, researchers have taken renewed interest not only in what motivates people to choose a career in teaching, but also how to motivate people to continue in the profession. Some schools in America's education system have experienced low literacy rates, scandals involving teachers who manipulated students' answers on tests to boost low test scores, on-campus violence, and temporary school closures due to teachers protesting for smaller class sizes and higher wages. Despite these issues, people are still entering the teaching profession, and those involved in education are trying to discover the best ways to retain teachers once they enter the profession.

A review of the literature revealed a spectrum of areas regarding teacher motivation. Research has been conducted on the motivation of preservice teachers (Sinclair et al., 2006; Thomson & Palermo, 2014; Thomson et al., 2012; Watt et al., 2012), teachers in foreign

countries (Canrinus, Helms-Lorenz, Beijaard, Buitink, & Hofman, 2012; Ghenghesh, 2013; Mkumbo, 2013; Sinclair et al., 2006; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011; Van den Berghe et al., 2014; Watt et al., 2012); physical education teachers (Van den Berghe et al., 2014), Catholic school teachers (Convey, 2014), university faculty (Ghenghesh, 2013), and inservice teachers in the United States (Mertler, 2016).

Of particular interest to some researchers has been discovering what motivates people to choose a career. People take into consideration various factors as they search for a career. Some choose a career that reflects the values that they believe are important. Watt et al. (2012) asserted, "Motivations for career choices are forged from personal values and expectancies, experienced in particular sociocultural settings within the context of different demand and reward structures" (p. 4). People often make career choices based on accumulated experiences and values that they have personally developed. On the other hand, some choose a career that will reflect their personality and support what interests them. According to Swanson (2012), a person chooses a career "to express one's personality orientation in a workplace environment that embraces the individual's competencies, abilities, and interests" (p. 524). Contrary to what some may believe, salary is not necessarily the main issue when it comes to choosing a career. There are those who search for a career that will match their personality or a career that enables them to live out their personal values. A formula does not exist for how a career is chosen; career choice is an individual, personal matter.

Motivation, however, is an important factor in career choice. Mitchell (1982) defined motivation as "the degree to which an individual wants and chooses to engage in certain specified behaviors" (p. 82). This definition points out that an individual experiences varying levels of motivation. People can be described as "highly motivated" or "unmotivated" to

accomplish a task. Motivation levels vary depending on how much the action or outcome is desired by a person. Another definition generally defined motivation as movement toward an action (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The extent to which people find a job or career and achieve success in their work not only depends upon whether motivation exists, but also the level of motivation one has to achieve a particular action.

In addition to one's "level" of motivation, there is also what Ryan and Deci (2000) referred to as "orientation" of motivation, which "concerns the underlying attitudes and goals that give rise to action—that is, it concerns the why of actions" (p. 540). People are driven according to their level of motivation, but they are sustained by the reason behind their motivation. People who are unmotivated will not put forth the effort to achieve their goals, or their efforts will wane within a short time. People who are highly motivated will put forth tremendous efforts to achieve their goals and to persevere.

The two main orientations of motivation are referred to as intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), a person who is intrinsically motivated will "act for the fun or challenge entailed rather than because of external prods, pressures, or rewards" (p. 56). In other words, intrinsically motivated people are driven toward an action by personal or genuine interest in what they do. Extrinsic motivation can be considered the opposite of intrinsic motivation because those who are extrinsically motivated perform an action that results in "a separable outcome" (p. 55). Those who are extrinsically motivated are not necessarily driven to accomplish the task but more for what is gained by accomplishing the task.

People experience varying levels of satisfaction based on the orientation of their motivation. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), "Over three decades of research has shown that the quality of experience and performance can be very different when one is behaving for

intrinsic versus extrinsic reasons” (p. 55). A person who seeks a career simply for the pure enjoyment of the work and the opportunity to influence others will experience a different type of satisfaction in his work compared to another person who seeks a particular career because of the prestige and power he will receive.

Everyone has experienced instances in life when motivation was very high, moderate, or in some cases lacking or nonexistent. Professionals have experienced days when much has been accomplished because of high motivation levels, and they also experienced days when very little was accomplished because of a lack of motivation. These types of experiences also occur in the lives of teachers. Teachers can be extremely motivated, especially during certain times of the school year, and yet teachers can also be unmotivated due to various circumstances. Research on understanding what motivates teachers to teach and to remain long-term in the profession can be very helpful in assisting both beginning and experienced teachers in their careers, as well as providing insight into how teacher retention can be improved.

Research studies have found that individuals have intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic reasons for choosing a career in teaching (Thomson et al., 2012; Watt et al., 2012). Extrinsic reasons are salary, recognition from others, or longer vacation, while intrinsic reasons are associated with the love of working with children or enjoyment of the subject matter(s). Altruistic reasons deal with a person’s belief that teaching contributes to society’s and children’s success (Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000). In regards to teaching, it appears that altruistic motivation is similar to intrinsic motivation because a teacher is willing to perform duties for the benefit of others without expecting anything in return.

Most studies on teacher motivation have focused primarily on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Interestingly, Watt et al. (2012) stated that researchers are not unified in what they

consider as intrinsic, extrinsic, or altruistic motivations, and this has resulted in a lack of consistency of how these terms are defined and how motivational factors are categorized. Watt et al. (2012) cited two examples in which “desire to work with children” (p. 2) was considered a type of intrinsic motivation in one study but in another study it was considered a type of altruistic motivation. Inconsistent categorizing of motivational factors among researchers is problematic and will create confusion.

Much research has been done to determine the motivation of preservice teachers in choosing a career in teaching. Preservice teachers have been motivated to teach for intrinsic reasons (Mkumbo, 2013; Sinclair, Dowson, & McInerney, 2006; Thomson et al., 2012; Thomson & Palermo, 2014; Watt et al., 2012); however, Thomson and Palermo’s (2014) qualitative study demonstrated that preservice teachers do not consistently choose to be a teacher for intrinsic reasons. After interviews with three students, the researchers found that one student was intrinsically motivated, the second student had a combination of both intrinsic and altruistic motivations, and the third student was motivated extrinsically. This study has shown that people have various motivations for choosing a career in teaching depending on their background, current circumstances, and personal beliefs.

Other countries have conducted studies on preservice teachers and what motivated them to choose a career in teaching. Balyer and Ozcan (2014) surveyed 1,410 student teachers in Turkey to find out what motivated them to choose teaching as a profession. The results of their study indicated that women chose teaching as a profession because of altruistic/intrinsic reasons while men were motivated by extrinsic reasons such as status and pay. Many students chose teaching because they considered it a “blessed profession,” which according to the researchers may be due to an overall cultural view of teaching. A study conducted in Turkey surveyed 176

freshman elementary education student teachers. Dündar's (2014) results supported previous research that more females tend to choose teaching as a career and that females are motivated to choose teaching for more social and intrinsic reasons. Compared to the previous studies on teachers located in one country, Watt et al. (2012) compared 2,290 elementary and secondary preservice teachers from the United States, Australia, Germany, and Norway. Although the participants were located in four different countries, their motivations for choosing a career in teaching were actually similar. The study confirmed other findings that intrinsic value and perceived ability are top motivators in choosing a career in teaching. In a review of the literature, much attention has been given to understanding the motivations of preservice teachers. Examining the lives of preservice teachers can help to obtain an understanding of what could be done to attract more students into the teaching profession and what factors would cause them to leave the profession. However, examining the lives of inservice teachers also provides helpful insight into teacher motivation.

Besides preservice teachers, researchers have also examined teacher motivation of inservice teachers. Mertler (2016) studied teacher motivation, job satisfaction, and retention of 9,053 PK-12 public and charter school teachers in Arizona. Regarding motivation, this study focused on various aspects of teaching that motivated teachers in addition to intrinsic and extrinsic incentives that influenced motivation. According to Mertler (2016), the top three aspects of teaching that motivated Arizona teachers were sense of achievement, interpersonal relationships with students, and recognition. The top three incentives that influenced the degree of motivation were student appreciation for help on a difficult concept, observing students' improvement since the start of the year, and ability to purchase needed classroom equipment. Interestingly, Mertler's (2016) study found that salary was the reason for both remaining and

leaving the teaching profession. Participants in the study felt that finding another job with a better salary was enough motivation to leave; yet participants also felt that they would be motivated to stay if they received an increase in pay. It would appear that the participants in Mertler's (2016) were extrinsically motivated in their career decisions.

Many studies have discussed teachers' intrinsic and extrinsic reasons for entering the teaching profession; however, studies have found that some teachers enter teaching for spiritual reasons. Convey (2014) conducted a study with 716 Catholic school teachers and found that more than half of those teachers had religious motives for teaching in a Catholic school such as "commitment to Catholic education" and "God's choice for my life" (p. 12). These teachers believed in the mission and purpose of the Catholic church and chose to teach in Catholic schools in order to teach and instill Catholic ideology to students.

Studies in career choice have found that people are motivated to a particular career because they felt a calling to it. Initially associated with religious connotation, calling has shifted from a religious view of work to a secular one. Duffy, Allan, and Bott (2012) defined calling as "a meaningful and prosocial career prompted by an external force" (p. 470). Galles and Lenz (2013) defined calling as "the extent to which individuals feel summoned or called to enter a particular career or life role" (p. 241). Buskist, Benson, and Sikorski (2005) described calling as "an inner urge or prompting that compels an individual to undertake a specific course of action" (p. 112). These secular definitions no longer confine a calling as performing works of service for God, but rather finding and doing work that one feels is personally meaningful or fulfilling. These definitions allow calling to be applicable to those who are not necessarily spiritual and who do not view their work as having spiritual purposes.

With all the research on teaching as a profession, research on teaching as a calling is limited. Bullough and Hall-Kenyon (2012) expressed concern regarding the limited research on teaching as a calling by stating, “Surprisingly, while often recognized especially by teachers as an important motivating factor, the sense of a teacher’s ‘calling’ or ‘vocation’ has received remarkably little research attention, and been the object of but very few empirical studies” (p. 7). Their contribution to the literature was a mixed-methods study of 145 in-service teachers in Utah and Nevada. Their study examined the teachers’ sense of being called to teach and its connection to the teachers’ sense of hope and commitment to teaching. Results from the survey indicated that there was no significant relationship between teachers’ sense of calling and sense of hope. However, interview data clearly revealed a connection between the teachers’ level of commitment and sense of calling to teach. Although this study added a necessary perspective on calling and teachers’ sense of hope and commitment, it did not provide a perspective from veteran teachers and whether their calling to teach influenced their commitment to teach and longevity in a particular school.

Hardman (2010) surveyed 417 Christian school teachers who were members of ACSI schools and discovered that the qualitative section of the survey revealed calling as the main motivational factor toward longevity. Teodori (2015) interviewed 14 Christian school teachers with at least three years of teaching experience and found a common theme of faith in the lives of the teachers. One aspect of their faith was that they believed their calling helped in their persistence in Christian education. Teodori’s (2015) study could have contributed to the literature on veteran teachers if all the teachers had 10 or more years of teaching experience. Interestingly, Myers’ (2008) qualitative study about 11 public school elementary teachers also supported findings about having a calling to the profession.

Teacher motivation has been studied in other contexts, such as a study by Canrinus et al. (2012), in which change in teachers' level of motivation was examined along with other indicators such as job satisfaction, self-efficacy, and occupational commitment as they relate to teachers' sense of professional identity. Convey's (2014) study focused on factors of motivation and job satisfaction and found that Catholic teachers had higher internal satisfaction with their self-esteem compared to non-Catholic teachers and that being able to teach in a Catholic school was motivating to Catholic teachers. Mertler's (2016) study on teacher motivation and retention found that teachers were more likely to remain teaching if they received a pay increase.

In addition to literature on teacher motivation and career choice, studies about teacher motivation have also been examined in the context of teacher attrition and retention. Many researchers have sought to discover how to prevent the premature loss of teachers and what should be done to retain teachers in the profession, especially for those with many years of experience. In fact, it is important to foster teacher motivation the longer that a teacher remains in the profession. According to Day (2012), "Whilst many teachers enter the profession with a sense of vocation and with a passion to give their best to the learning and growth of their pupils, for some, these become diminished with the passage of time, changing external and internal working conditions and contexts and unanticipated personal events" (p. 17). Teaching has its moments of gratification, yet many strenuous factors can eventually decrease a teacher's desire and motivation to teach the longer one remains in the profession. Schools must do better to retain their teachers, but they must also do better in assisting veteran teachers in maintaining their motivation to teach.

## **Teacher Longevity**

Another topic relevant to this study pertains to teacher longevity. Teacher longevity can be defined as the length of time a teacher has worked in the profession. To examine teachers at various stages in their career, researchers have created categories that are based on years of teachers' experience. Day and Gu (2007) developed six categories of teachers' professional life phases in their four-year research project on variations in teachers' work, lives, and effectiveness (VITAE). This study examined 300 teachers and placed them in one of six categories depending on their professional life phase, which Day and Gu (2007) considered the number of years these teachers had experience teaching. Gu and Day (2013) combined the six categories into three broad categories and referred to those who have taught for fewer than seven years as early career teachers, those who taught between 8-23 years as middle career teachers, and those who taught more than 24 years as late career teachers.

Teachers who have accumulated years of teaching experience are referred to as late-career teachers, veteran teachers, or long-term teachers. A review of the literature revealed that studies on veteran teachers cover a wide spectrum of experience. One research study by Cohen (2009) focused on two veteran teachers with over 25 years of experience. These teachers would be considered late-career teachers according to Gu and Day's (2013) breakdown of professional life phases. Other studies focused on veteran teachers with at least 10 years of experience (Beasley, 2013; Edwards, 2003; Hardman, 2010). Applying Gu and Day's (2013) professional life phases means that these teachers would be considered midcareer teachers since they have surpassed the novice stage but have not reached late-career status. Lavigne and Bozack (2015) created a different breakdown of career stages in their study that analyzed the successes and struggles of teachers. Lavigne and Bozack (2015) categorized three career stages as beginning

(1-5 years), midcareer (6-10 years), and veteran (10+ years). This categorical breakdown of career stages differed considerably from Gu and Day's (2013) professional life phases. Most studies which have examined veteran teachers usually focused on teachers with at least 10 years of experience. Ten years in a profession often indicated that a person will most likely continue long-term. Cohen (2009) argued, "It is rare for a teacher to remain in one urban school for more than 10 years, and even more unusual for that teacher to be highly educated and deeply invested" (p. 472).

Although many researchers required their participants to have at least 10 years of teaching experience to be considered a veteran teacher, a few studies included teachers with at least five years of teaching experience. However, one study in the literature implied that longevity should be relative to the nature of the study. Kokka's (2016) study of 16 STEM teachers in an under-resourced urban high school included only teachers with at least five years of teaching experience. Kokka (2016) considered five years of teaching experience long term because STEM teachers in under-resourced schools typically leave within five years. The site for this study was unusual because 16 out of 20 STEM teachers had more than five years of experience at the school. Longevity for STEM teachers at this site was particularly high. Another study of 15 veteran teachers in high poverty elementary schools considered a veteran teacher as one who has earned tenure in the school district and has taught at the same school for at least six years (Kearney, 2011). Although many studies required a minimum of 10 years of teaching experience to be categorized as a veteran teacher, a review of the literature revealed a lack of consistency among researchers as to the minimum number of years of teaching experience for those who would be regarded as veteran teachers.

Much attention has been given to preservice teachers and novice teachers on how to motivate and retain them in the profession. However, research on veteran teachers has often been overlooked (Cohen, 2009; Edwards, 2003). It would be beneficial to less experienced and future teachers to examine the professional lives of teachers who have dedicated many years in the classroom. Identifying and describing what motivated these teachers and how they endured the challenging seasons of their career can provide important insight in the motivation and longevity of teachers.

Research on teacher motivation has been mostly quantitative, but the literature revealed that most studies on teacher longevity have been qualitative as researchers sought to understand why teachers chose to stay so long in the profession. The nature of qualitative research provides more in-depth understanding of the beliefs, feelings, and perspectives of teachers. Qualitative studies on teacher longevity in public schools have produced similar findings despite the various demographics of participants such as age, length of experience, type of school, grade level, or subject matter. One common theme among veteran teachers was the importance of relationships and interaction with peers and/or students (Beasley, 2013; Boe, 2013; Kearney, 2011; Kokka, 2016; Richardson, 2014). Although teachers work in an environment in which they are surrounded by students and other teachers, those who have developed meaningful relationships and interacted with their colleagues and students typically have been more satisfied and have chosen to remain longer in the profession. Participants in Beasley's (2013) study commented that fellow teachers "are their source of energy and strength" and "help them experience a sense of belonging, ownership, and satisfaction in their jobs" (p. 144). Boe's (2013) study of emotional and/or behavioral disorder (EBD) teachers described the personal relationships with

teachers and students as “family-like” and that their relationships with the students allowed them to “understand and de-personalize the maladaptive behaviors” (p. 137).

Another common theme found in qualitative studies on teacher longevity was having a support system (Boe, 2013; Kearney, 2011; Kokka, 2016; Myers, 2008; Richardson, 2014). Teachers are forced to deal with all kinds of pressure and stress from managing classrooms and students’ behavior to ensuring academic success for all their students. Studies have found that teachers highly value the support from not only their fellow colleagues, but also from school administration. Myers’s (2008) study discovered the frustrations the teachers felt their first year teaching when they were placed in challenging classrooms that would make it very difficult to be successful. They could not understand why school administration would do this to their new teachers. This is a perfect example of why schools may struggle with teacher attrition. Myers (2008) argued, “When new teachers experience failure and leave the profession, they not only lose a job, but they suffer a loss of pride and confidence” (p. 140). These teachers argued they would have felt more supported if school leaders had taken more consideration in how they assigned new teachers. In addition to better forethought on the placement of new teachers, teachers also desired support from administrators regarding basic necessities for the classroom. Participants in both Myers’ (2008) and Kearney’s (2011) studies mentioned the lack of support from administration in providing teachers with the necessary supplies and materials for the classroom. Yet another area of support that teachers appreciated was administrator support when dealing with parents (Kearney, 2011). Administrative support for teachers in their efforts to manage students’ behavior is very important if schools want to retain their teachers long-term.

Other reasons for teacher longevity found in the literature were having a positive work environment (Beasley, 2013; Hardman, 2010; Kokka, 2016; Richardson, 2014), having a calling

(Hardman, 2010; Myers, 2008; Teodori, 2015), and having an influence on the students (Hardman, 2010; Kokka, 2016).

Most of the research conducted on teacher longevity pertained to public school teachers, particularly in urban areas. Very few studies examined the longevity of teachers in Christian schools. Hardman (2010) surveyed 417 Christian school teachers with over 10 years of experience. Some of the results of this study were similar to other studies with public school teachers such as student interaction and environment. However, Christian school teachers in Hardman's (2010) study believed they were motivated to stay long-term because of their calling to teach and the personal impact Christian education had on their lives.

Teodori (2015) conducted a phenomenological study on the persistence of teachers in an urban K-12 Christian school and noticed one theme for persistence was the teachers' faith in God which included their calling, giftedness in particular areas, and the belief they were "sent" to share their knowledge and faith in a Christian school. Results from these two studies demonstrated that although teachers in Christian schools may have similar reasons for longevity as teachers in public schools, it is evident that spiritual reasons were more significant in the lives of Christian school teachers.

The reason for such a variety of results may be due to the fact that teacher longevity is a personal issue that is influenced by numerous factors such as age and years of experience, in addition to circumstances such as school environment, administrative support, and job satisfaction. More research on teacher longevity in Christian schools is needed to help leaders create strategies that can help to motivate their teachers toward long-term service. More research on veteran teachers is also necessary in order to gain perspectives on what it is like to experience longevity in Christian schools.

## **Teacher Retention**

Research on teacher retention is relevant to this study because Christian schools need to actively work to build and sustain the motivation of their teachers in order to retain them. With the problem of teachers leaving the profession after only a few years of teaching, attention has been focused on how to retain America's teacher force. Problems with teacher attrition affects schools in all areas. Teachers leave from both elementary and secondary levels, and specifically in areas such as music (Gardner, 2010; Hancock, 2008; Hancock, 2009) and special education (Berry, Petrin, Gravelle, & Farmer, 2011; Gehrke & McCoy, 2007). Some have suggested that the best way to reverse the attrition problem is to recruit more teachers, while others argue that strategies for retention are needed (Beesley et al., 2010; Borman & Dowling, 2008; Guarino, Santibañez, & Daley, 2006; Ingersoll et al., 2012).

Researchers who have studied teacher retention have suggested various strategies of retaining teachers. Increasing teacher salary has been suggested as a means to boost teacher retention, although there is disagreement in the literature as to whether or not salary really is an issue regarding retention. Darling-Hammond (2003) suggested that teachers' salaries should compete with other occupations and that lower salaries for newer teachers can affect teacher retention. Brill and McCartney (2008), on the other hand, argued that increased salary does not affect retention and that there are conflicting views about salary and teacher retention. Salary may not be the primary reason teachers choose to leave the profession.

According to the literature, other ways to increase teacher retention are to create better work environments, increase professional development, and provide effective induction and mentoring programs (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008; Brill & McCartney, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Mihans, 2008). Work environment is an important factor in determining job

satisfaction. In the realm of education, school environments can have a significant impact on whether teachers choose to leave. Schools that have teachers who personally feel threatened or have high incidences of school violence are more likely to have problems with teacher retention. According to Darling-Hammond (2003), “the high attrition of teachers from schools serving lower-income or lower-achieving students appears to be substantially influenced by the poorer working conditions typically found in those schools” (p. 9). Schools interested in retaining qualified teachers should work to improve the working environment for these teachers.

Several studies recommend that schools provide a teacher induction program to help novice teachers succeed in their early years of teaching (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008; Coronado, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Gujarati, 2012; Parker, Ndoye, & Imig, 2009). Some argue that induction programs can help novice teachers to adjust to their school environment more quickly. “The combination of professional development and exposure to their mentors’ and other teachers’ experiences can shorten the time it takes for new teachers to perform at the same level as an experienced teacher, which is, on average, from three to seven years without induction” (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008, p. 6).

Parker et al. (2009) conducted a study with 8,839 teachers in North Carolina who were mentored during their first two years of teaching. The study sought to determine if there was a relationship among matching mentors, how much support was provided by mentors, and the teachers’ intentions to remain. Parker et al. (2009) found that 88% of novice teachers who were specifically placed with mentors in the same location had intentions to remain in teaching. Mentors who were very supportive of their novice teachers influenced their decision to remain in teaching. The most important finding of the study was that matching novice teachers with mentor teachers in the same grade level can help to minimize attrition. It appears that the most

successful induction programs are those that pair novice teachers with other teachers within the same school and grade level.

Job satisfaction is also mentioned in the literature of teacher retention (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Steca, & Malone, 2006; Perrachione et al., 2008; Woods & Weasmer, 2004). According to Woods and Weasmer (2004), “Teacher satisfaction reduces attrition, enhances collegiality, improves job performance, and has an impact on student outcomes” (p. 118). Many aspects of a person’s occupation are clearly impacted by job satisfaction. In a study by Perrachione et al. (2008), 201 elementary school teachers in Missouri were surveyed to determine their satisfaction in teaching. The results indicated that 79% of the teachers were satisfied with the teaching profession because of “working with students” and “personal teaching efficacy” (Qualitative Analysis of Job Satisfaction Responses section, para. 2). Concerning job satisfaction, 63% of the teachers were satisfied because of “good students,” “positive school environment,” and “small class size” (Qualitative Analysis of Job Satisfaction Responses section, para. 4). Job satisfaction is a significant factor in deciding whether to remain in the profession. Those who are not satisfied will be less likely to continue with their line of work.

Teacher retention is important to maintain stability in a school’s faculty, and retention helps to maintain morale in schools. Schools with fluctuating or low teacher retention and low morale amongst the faculty will struggle to effectively provide an education for the students. School administrators must understand the importance of retaining their teachers and finding ways to keep their teachers in the profession. One way to retain teachers is to discover what would motivate them to choose to remain long-term in the classroom. This study will provide helpful perspectives from teachers about what motivates them to remain in Christian schools.

## **Organizational Commitment**

Since this study will focus on factors that motivate teachers toward longevity in Christian schools, the topic of organizational commitment is relevant. As mentioned earlier, Christian schools are much different than public schools, and even other private schools. Those who teach in a Christian school, in most cases, purposefully chose to be there rather than at a public school. These teachers agree to abide by the mission and standards of the school. Teachers who are motivated to remain long-term in Christian schools demonstrate organizational commitment.

Mowday, Steers, & Porter (1979) stated that organizational commitment “involves an active relationship with the organization such that individuals are willing to give something of themselves in order to contribute to the organization’s well being” (p. 226). Employees with strong organizational commitment are valuable to any organization because of their loyalty and personal desire to make the organization successful. According to Mowday et al. (1979), organizational commitment has three factors: (a) employees fully adhere to and align with the organization’s goals and values, (b) employees exert personal effort to do what needs to be done for the organization, and (c) employees have a desire to remain as part of the organization. Interestingly, London and Noe (1997) stated that career identity, one of the three components of career motivation theory, and organizational commitment are conceptually similar because in each case, an individual wants to be closely identified with a particular organization.

Research concerning organizational commitment has covered a variety of areas such as management, public agencies, and health care (Mowday et al., 1979). Researchers have also examined the organizational commitment of employees in public educational institutions. Tatlah, Ali, and Saeed (2011) studied over 150 secondary school leaders and teachers in Pakistan to determine the relationship between leadership behaviors and organizational commitment. The

study reported that leaders with strong leadership behaviors affect their teachers' commitment to the school. Another study examined the effects of school climate and social-emotional learning on teachers' general professional commitment, future professional commitment, and organizational commitment (Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2011). Anari (2012) studied organizational commitment and its relationship to both emotional intelligence and job satisfaction. This study indicated positive significant relationships with these factors and suggested that schools must work to keep teachers with high emotional intelligence. Schools must also motivate teachers' commitment and satisfaction by creating and sustaining a pleasing environment.

Studies on organizational commitment have also included private schools. Squillini (2013) studied 339 school teachers with 10 or more years of teaching experience in Catholic schools. This study reported several motivating factors which influence one's commitment to teach in a Catholic school. Many of these factors are similar to the factors concerning job satisfaction in Catholic schools. According to Squillini (2013), Catholic school teachers in the study were committed to teach for the following reasons: "the ability to teach Christian values, the personal and spiritual fulfillment of the Catholic school environment, a positive relationship with colleagues and school administrators, job security, autonomy, and the students" (p. 348). Among these reasons, the greatest motivating factor for these teachers was working with the students and observing their success in school (Squillini, 2013).

Schroder (2008) surveyed faculty and administrators at a Christian university to measure their job satisfaction, and their organizational and religious commitment. Predictors of organizational commitment differed between faculty and administrators. According to Schroder (2008), factors that predicted faculty organizational commitment were "organizational policy and

administration, work itself, and religious commitment” (p. 91); and factors that improved organizational commitment were “working policies and management as well as salary and working conditions” (p. 92). Schroder (2008) also discovered that factors that predict organizational commitment for administrators were “growth followed by religious commitment, responsibility, job security and relations with students” (p. 92). A factor that would encourage organizational commitment for administrators is having opportunities for professional development.

All organizations, including Christian schools, should be concerned about the level of commitment of their employees. Highly motivated employees who work diligently and are satisfied with their work would be more likely to remain long-term in their organization. This also applies to teachers in Christian schools. It would be in a Christian school’s best interest for administrators to plan strategies that would help boost teacher motivation in order for teachers to be more willing to stay long-term in both the school and in the profession.

### **Summary**

Chapter 2 discussed various aspects that relate to this study of Christian school teachers. This chapter explained how London’s (1983) career motivation theory will be applied in order to help answer the research question: what do Christian school teachers perceive as motivational factors toward longevity in a Christian school? A review of the literature revealed that career motivation theory has been primarily applied in studies that examined occupations other than teaching. Career motivation theory has not been applied to the teaching profession, and it also has not been applied to teachers in Christian schools. These are gaps in the literature that this study will address. This study will add to the literature on career motivation theory and add a perspective on career motivation that will benefit those who are involved in Christian education.

Many studies have discussed preservice teachers' motivation to enter the teaching profession, particularly teachers who serve in public schools. Little research has been done to examine the motivation of teachers in Christian schools, especially veteran teachers. Because of the attrition problem, more attention has been given to the motivation of preservice and beginning teachers. Studies have explained why preservice and beginning teachers chose the teaching profession and what motivated these teachers to leave the profession. More studies are needed to discover what motivates Christian school teachers to remain long-term in Christian schools. The purpose of this study is to discover motivational factors that lead to long-term service in Christian schools.

Research pertaining to longevity, retention, and organizational commitment have also primarily focused on public school teachers. Very few studies have addressed the longevity and retention of Christian school teachers. More studies need to be addressed concerning longevity and retention. This study will provide a voice for veteran teachers in Christian schools and discuss how veteran Christian school teachers motivate themselves to continue teaching.

Studies on organizational commitment have examined teachers in Catholic schools but not teachers in Christian schools. Research on Christian schoolteachers' motivation to remain in Christian schools can offer a perspective on organizational commitment that is lacking in the literature.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

### Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to discover factors that motivate teachers toward longevity in Christian schools. To understand what motivates teachers, several methods of data collection were needed. Data collection methods for this study included a questionnaire, in-depth interviews, and a focus group interview. These methods provided information that was helpful in answering the research questions. Data was analyzed using Moustakas's (1994) modified version of Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen's method. The information gathered and analyzed helped to identify themes that described what motivates Christian school teachers. This chapter will discuss the design, procedures, data collection, and data analysis for this study.

### Design

Qualitative research allows the researcher to delve into deeper issues to present an understanding of the participants and to explain these issues in a narrative fashion (Creswell, 2007). An aspect of a qualitative approach focuses on describing personal life experiences that quantitative studies do not thoroughly provide. Marshall and Rossman (1999) explained the importance of qualitative research:

For a study focusing on individuals' lived experience, the researcher could argue that one cannot understand human actions without understanding the meaning that participants attribute to those actions—their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, values, and assumptive worlds; the researcher, therefore, needs to understand the deeper perspectives captured through face-to-face interaction. (p. 57)

Qualitative studies can be patterned after a variety of research designs. This study followed a phenomenological research design. In his book regarding phenomenological research methods, Moustakas (1994) pointed out Hegel's definition of phenomenology as "the science of describing what one perceives, senses, and knows in one's immediate awareness and experience" (p. 26). This study was based on transcendental phenomenology. Phenomenology originated from German philosopher Edmund Husserl, who was influential in Moustakas's concept of phenomenology. Moustakas (1994) discussed and described procedures for conducting a transcendental phenomenological study. According to Moustakas (1994), transcendental gives the idea that "everything is perceived freshly, as if for the first time" (p. 34). This type of phenomenology requires the researcher to completely rely on what the participants describe regarding their personal experiences without allowing his prior experience, thoughts, or beliefs to taint his conception of the phenomenon.

The phenomenon in this study is motivation, which is defined as "the degree to which an individual wants and chooses to engage in certain specified behaviors" (Mitchell, 1982, p. 82). A qualitative method of study brings a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of motivation as the participants share their experiences as teachers and what they believe are important motivating factors toward their longevity in Christian schools.

Discovering Christian school teachers' perceptions about what motivated them toward longevity and their experiences in a Christian school can provide Christian school administrators with insight about the lived experiences of veteran teachers. Understanding veteran teachers' beliefs about what they feel motivated them to continue in Christian schools can help Christian school administrators to develop ways to further motivate their teachers toward longevity and reduce teacher turnover.

## **Research Questions**

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

Central Research Question: What do Christian school teachers perceive as motivational factors toward longevity in a Christian school?

Sub-Question 1: What role does career identity have in motivating Christian school teachers toward longevity?

Sub-Question 2: What role does career insight have in motivating Christian school teachers toward longevity?

Sub-Question 3: How does career resilience impact Christian school teachers' motivation to teach?

## **Setting**

Since the focus of this study was to understand the perceptions of Christian school teachers, it was necessary to find participants who, at the time of the study, taught full time in a Christian school. The setting for this study was five Christian schools in the Southeast that were located within 80 miles from the researcher. These Christian schools offer grades K-12 and are part of organizations such as American Association of Christian Schools (AACCS), Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI), and Florida Association of Christian Colleges and Schools (FACCS). These Christian schools are either an extension of a local church in which the pastor may be part of the administrative team of the school, or these schools function separately from the church. Interviews were conducted on-site at each participant's school or at a convenient or agreed-upon location.

## Participants

Several different sampling strategies can be used in qualitative research. The primary intent of these strategies is “selecting information-rich cases—cases from which one can learn a great deal about matters of importance and therefore worthy of in-depth study” (Patton, 2002, p. 242). In order to gather information-rich cases, purposeful sampling rather than random sampling must be used. Participants for this study were chosen by criterion sampling. Criterion sampling was appropriate for this study in order to focus on those who have experienced a particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2007), which in this study was motivation to teach long-term in Christian schools. In addition, this study also recruited participants who taught full time in an accredited Christian school that was within 80 miles from my location.

The nature of phenomenological research is to discover in-depth the lived experiences of people. In order to gather pertinent information regarding the phenomenon of motivation to continue in Christian schools, it was important to contact participants who could provide valuable information that would address the research questions. Quantitative studies require large sample sizes of randomly selected participants compared to qualitative studies which typically have smaller sample sizes of purposefully chosen participants. Phenomenological studies can have varying sample sizes. Creswell (2007) mentioned studies with variations in their sample sizes, while Patton (2002) hesitated to provide a specific sample size, but emphasized that “validity, meaningfulness, and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with the information richness of the cases selected and the observational/analytical capabilities of the researcher than with sample size” (p. 245). Similar studies to this have varied in the number of participants. Beasley (2013) studied the longevity of nine public school

teachers and Ransdell, Grosshans, and Trunnell (2004) studied 12 public school health teachers. This study about Christian school teachers involved 12 participants.

Studies on teacher longevity had different requirements for teachers' years of experience. Participants in Beasley's (2013) study had at least 10 years of experience, while Ransdell et al. (2004) studied teachers with at least 18 years of experience. Cohen (2009) examined the lives of two veteran teachers who taught for 25 years in one urban school. It appears that most studies on longevity used teachers who have taught at least 10 years or more. This study recruited participants with at least 10 consecutive years of experience teaching in Christian schools. There were some participants who had 10 years of cumulative experience teaching in more than one Christian school, while others had taught for over 10 years at the same Christian school. Teaching for a decade is quite an accomplishment considering the many challenges teachers endure, but it is an even greater accomplishment to remain in the teaching profession for over 20 years. It was unlikely to enlist 12 to 15 teachers with over 20 years of teaching in a Christian school; therefore, I chose to enlist teachers who have taught for over 10 years in Christian schools.

One study by Day and Gu (2007) examined the professional lives of 300 teachers in England during a four-year period to determine their effectiveness based on the phase of their professional lives. Day and Gu (2007) proposed that teachers' work and lives can be divided into six professional life phases: 0-3, 4-7, 8-15, 16-23, 24-30, and 31 years or more of teaching. According to Day and Gu (2007), teachers at professional life phase 8-15 faced changes in their role and identity, and during this phase they either learned how to increase their motivation to teach or they lost their motivation to teach. It can be inferred from Day and Gu's (2007) study that those who have taught for at least 10 years are considered at a crossroads in their

professional life phase and if they continue beyond 10 years they are more likely to maintain their motivation to teach and to remain long-term in a Christian school.

### **Procedures**

Careful planning of procedures was necessary prior to conducting this study. After defending the proposal, the next step was to secure Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval in order to begin the study. Data were not collected until IRB approval was granted. Once IRB approval was secured, I e-mailed administrators of Christian schools located in the Southeast to explain my study and to inquire about possible participants who meet the requirements of 10 consecutive years of teaching experience in a Christian school and who has taught full time. It was important that I obtained permission to have access to these teachers before contacting them personally. I contacted several Christian schools to enlist a total of 12 teachers who were willing to participate in this study. I e-mailed the candidates a recruitment letter (see Appendix A) to invite them to participate in my study and I attached a participant consent form that explained the study and why they were chosen to participate (see Appendix B). The consent form had instructions for participants to sign the attached consent form indicating that they agreed to participate in this study and that they understood that they may withdraw from the study at any time without any explanation. I scheduled a time to meet with each participant to collect the participant consent form and to give the participant the questionnaire (see Appendix C) to fill out. After each participant answered the questionnaire, I conducted a one-on-one interview. In addition to the questionnaire and individual interviews, I scheduled a focus group interview with those who were willing to participate. Data collected from these methods helped to understand the phenomenon of motivation to teach long-term in a Christian school. Questionnaire data was kept secure in a securely locked file container. Interview data was audio and video recorded,

transcribed, and kept secure. Data were analyzed following Moustakas's (1994) modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method.

Prior to the conducting the actual study and only after IRB approval, I conducted a pilot study with teachers who did not participate in this study. I piloted the questionnaire with a small group of teachers and incorporated recommendations to improve the questionnaire. I also conducted a pilot interview and focus group with a small group of teachers who did not participate in this study. I took into consideration recommendations that were made through these pilot studies.

### **The Researcher's Role**

After several years of teaching in a Christian school and having the opportunity to work with teachers who have taught at the same Christian school for over 10 years, I am inspired by their commitment and unfailing dedication to teach. From personal experience, I have seen how the experience and wisdom of these veteran teachers have helped many new and aspiring teachers to grow professionally. Many of these same teachers were examples for me to follow when I first started teaching. I believe whole-heartedly in Christian education and have a passion to teach students who are interested in teaching in a Christian school.

As the human instrument in this study, I did not have close associations with the participants, such as socializing or attending any school or church events, prior to the study. During the study, I established a relationship with the participants as I listened carefully during one-on-one interviews and again during a focus group. During the interviewing process, I was an objective listener and allowed the participants to openly express their beliefs, feelings, and perspectives. I assumed that the participants in this study would indicate that a major motivating factor toward longevity in a Christian school was their calling to teach.

### **Data Collection**

Data collection for this study began only after IRB approval. After IRB approval, permission was obtained from Christian school administrators to contact any of their teachers who had over 10 consecutive years of teaching experience in a Christian school and who taught full time in a Christian school. Permission was granted by the participants to conduct the study. I e-mailed the consent form for the teachers to read and sign indicating that they would like to participate in this study. It was necessary to build a “rapport” with the teachers by explaining the purpose of the study and why they were chosen as potential participants (Creswell, 2007).

Triangulation is necessary for qualitative studies to be trustworthy, reliable, and valid. “Triangulation is the act of bringing more than one source of data to bear on a single point” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 194). This can be achieved by implementing several methods of collecting data such as observations, interviews, documents, or memoing. Unlike quantitative research which uses information gathered from surveys, qualitative research relies on implementing several methods to allow for more in-depth answers to the research questions. Data for this study were collected through a questionnaire, individual interviews, and a focus group interview to obtain information to answer the research questions. Field notes were kept during the research study to help determine common themes that can provide more insight about what motivates Christian school teachers toward longevity in a Christian school.

### **Questionnaire**

Questionnaires can be useful in qualitative studies to “learn about the distribution of characteristics, attitudes, or beliefs” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 129) of a particular group of people. I met with each participant to collect the participant consent form and to have the participant fill out the questionnaire (see Appendix C). The purpose of the questionnaire was to

gather information such as age, gender, years of teaching experience, and level of education. Participants also answered questions that described their experiences and feelings regarding teaching in a Christian school. This information provided some general information about each participant, and responses from the questionnaires could generate more questions that could be asked during interviews and focus groups. Having the participants fill out the questionnaire prior to conducting interviews gave the researcher more time during interviews to ask questions that directly address the research questions. The items on the questionnaire were general in nature to give a broad understanding of each participant. Questions for the interviews and focus group were geared toward answering the three subquestions that pertain to career motivation theory.

Prior to the study, I consulted three local college professors who have taught graduate-level education courses to review the questionnaire for face and content validity. After receiving feedback from the college professors, necessary changes were made. Another way to ensure reliability of this method of data collection was to pilot the questionnaire with three veteran teachers who were not be involved in the study. I sent the questionnaire to these three volunteers and requested that they answer the questions and provide feedback on the wording of the questions and whether the number of questions are sufficient. Based on their recommendations, I made necessary revisions for the questionnaire to be reliable and useful.

## **Interviews**

The primary means of data collection for this study were interviews with the participants. Marshall and Rossman (1999) asserted that “qualitative in-depth interviews are much more like conversations than formal events with predetermined response categories” (p. 108). In-depth interviews allows the researcher to have a conversation with the participants to understand their thoughts and feelings about what motivating factors they believe influence longevity in Christian

schools. Interviewing is an effective method of gaining in-depth information from participants that quantitative research methods cannot provide. The interviews were semistructured, which is an approach that allows researchers to “ask predetermined but flexibly worded questions, the answers to which provide tentative answers to the researchers’ questions” (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011, p. 45). A semistructured approach provides information that the participants freely provide through their own interpretation of life rather than what the researcher perceives (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011).

Creswell (2007) suggested that researchers use an “interview protocol” (p. 133). This is a form of predetermined open-ended questions to help the researcher to stay on track during the interview and to ensure consistency for all interview sessions. To ensure clarity and validity, a peer-review panel reviewed the interview questions. This peer-review panel included three veteran teachers who did not participate in the study. Revisions were made based upon the panel’s recommendations, and a pilot interview was conducted with a small sample of teachers who did not participate in the study. Revisions were not necessary according to the teachers in the pilot group. The pilot interview was conducted only after IRB approval.

Prior to each interview, the researcher explained the purpose of the interview and assured the participants of the confidentiality of their information and identity by assigning each participant a pseudonym. Interviews were conducted at the participants’ school or at a convenient location and lasted between 45 minutes to an hour and a half. Each interview was recorded on an audio recorder and video recorded on my computer. I personally transcribed all the audio recordings.

For the one-on-one interviews, participants answered questions that would describe their experiences as Christian school teachers. The purpose of questions 1-8 was to provide individual

perspectives on the participants' progression in their teaching experience. Literature on teaching and motivation indicates that reasons or motivating factors for preservice education students to teach are social utility values, such as shaping children's future and making a social contribution (Dündar, 2014; Watt et al., 2012) or intrinsic value and one's perceived ability to teach (Watt et al., 2012). I wanted to ask these questions to determine whether veteran Christian teachers share the same perspectives on motivating factors compared to preservice teachers. Participants answered the following questions to provide their perspectives on being a Christian school teacher:

1. Please explain why you chose to become a teacher.
2. Please explain who or what was influential in your decision to become a teacher.
3. Why did you choose to teach in a Christian school?
4. What do you enjoy the most about being a teacher?
5. What do you enjoy the least about being a teacher?
6. What brings you the greatest fulfillment teaching in a Christian school?
7. What advice would you give to future teachers who are hesitant about teaching in a Christian school?
8. How much weight should salary have on a teacher's decision to continue teaching in a Christian school?

Additionally, questions pertaining to self-identity, self-insight, and self-resilience were asked to provide support for London's theory of career motivation (1983). Limited research studies which used or referenced London's theory are primarily quantitative (Alnıaçık et al., 2012; Day & Allen, 2004). Conducting a qualitative study provided a richer explanation of how London's theory was applied to the teaching profession through the participants' responses to the

interview questions. This study discovered how career motivation theory can be applied to Christian school teachers. The following questions were asked:

9. How has teaching defined you personally?
10. Besides teaching, what else are you involved with at your school?
11. What activities do you enjoy on the weekend or during the summer when you are not teaching?
12. In what ways are you committed to your job as a teacher?
13. How important is it for you to receive recognition for your work as a teacher?
14. What kind of satisfaction do you receive from teaching and how does that compare to other areas in your life?
15. Do your professional life goals interfere or coincide with your personal life goals?
16. In what ways do you feel your personal life goals and your professional life goals are being met as a teacher?
17. What have you done through the years to improve your abilities as a teacher?
18. What do you believe are important abilities that a person should have to be an effective teacher?
19. What challenges have you faced as a teacher?
20. How did you motivate yourself to teach when you faced those challenging times?
21. Have you ever had doubts of whether you should continue teaching? If yes, how were you able to overcome those doubts?
22. Have you ever felt like leaving the teaching profession altogether? If yes, what influenced you to change your mind?
23. Is there anything else you would like to say about being a teacher in a Christian school?

## Focus Group

After all the one-on-one interviews were completed, a one-hour focus group interview was conducted with three participants. According to Patton (2002), focus groups are beneficial in a qualitative study because they provide much information in a short amount of time and the participants are able to give responses based on what others in the group have contributed. Information discussed during the focus group interview can provide more explanation as to what motivates teachers toward longevity in Christian schools that was not discussed during individual interviews. The interview session was audio and video recorded. It was important to establish a system to ensure that all participants had the opportunity to contribute a response and to prevent one person from dominating the entire interview. I was aware of who had not contributed and gave everyone an opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings.

Questions for the focus group interview were examined by a peer-review panel, and a pilot interview was conducted with teachers who were not part of the study. This was important to ensure clarity and validity of the interview questions. Revisions of the interview questions were made through recommendations from the peer-review panel and sample focus group. The pilot focus group interview occurred only after IRB approval.

Questions 1 to 4 were important because they provided information about what the participants in the focus group felt about being a Christian school teacher. According to Day (2012), teachers' professional life phases change during their career. As teachers' professional life phases change, it is likely that teachers' feelings have changed. These questions examined these teachers' perspectives about their profession. The following questions were asked:

1. What is the most challenging aspect about being a teacher?
2. What is the most rewarding aspect of being a teacher?

3. What do you like most about teaching at your Christian school?
4. What are some challenges with teaching in a Christian school?

Questions 5 to 8 specifically targeted how the participants felt about factors that motivated them toward longevity. Participants' responses from this study can be compared to Convey's (2014) study of Catholic school teachers to determine if Christian school teachers are motivated by the similar factors. Findings from a study by Watt et al. (2012) indicated that preservice teachers had intrinsic reasons for choosing teaching. Responses to these questions can provide a clearer understanding of what motivates veteran Christian school teachers.

5. Describe ideal factors which would motivate teachers to keep teaching.
6. Describe negative factors which would influence teachers' lack of motivation to teach.
7. What do you believe teachers should do personally to increase their likelihood of longevity in a Christian school?
8. Do you believe there are teachers who are not committed to longevity at their schools? If yes, why?

According to Ingersoll and Strong (2011), one reason why beginning teachers chose to leave was because of the lack of support they received from the administration. The responses from questions 9 through 12 provided information that other teachers will be able to benefit from, particularly beginning teachers. Perhaps more instruction to beginning teachers on how to maneuver through challenging times without administrative support can help to prevent early departures. Participants' responses to these questions can help to support the literature that beginning teachers can learn from the experiences of veteran teachers (Gujarati, 2012).

9. What advice would you give to beginning Christian school teachers who want to quit?
10. What advice would you give to college students contemplating a career in teaching?

11. What advice would you give to Christian school administrators to help them motivate their teachers toward longevity in their school?
12. What characteristics should Christian school administrators look for in potential teachers?

### **Researcher Journal**

A researcher journal was the last source of collecting information that was helpful to me as I conducted my research. Creswell (2007) listed a journal as a type of document that can be used in addition to other data collection methods. The main source of data collection were the individual interviews. After each interview, I journaled my thoughts to record what I observed during the interview, feelings about what I heard, and questions I had. The journal also helped me think through the data and helped me notice emerging themes that helped to address the research questions.

### **Data Analysis**

A large volume of information was collected to discover motivational factors that influenced teachers toward longevity in a Christian school. It was necessary to establish a procedure for analyzing data from each participant in a consistent manner. Creswell (2007) stated three general strategies to analyze data are “preparing and organizing data,” “coding and condensing the codes,” and “representing the data in figures” (p. 148). After I organized the data, I read the transcripts several times to familiarize myself with the information. Then memoing, or making notes to myself and creating codes, was necessary to the beginning stages of data analysis (Creswell, 2007). The next step in this process was to describe my personal experience with the phenomenon of motivation to teach. Moustakas (1994) referred to this as Epoche, “a process of setting aside predilections, prejudices, predispositions, and allowing things, events, and people to enter anew into consciousness, and to look and see them again, as if

for the first time” (p. 85). This was an important step to avoid bias and to help me to focus on the participants’ responses rather than my own feelings and beliefs about the study.

The data from the questionnaires provided biographical information about each participant such as age, gender, level of education, years of teaching experience, years of teaching experience in a Christian school, grades level(s) taught, in addition to responses to questions about teaching. Gathering biographical information about each participant in a questionnaire provided more time during the interview to ask questions pertinent to the research questions.

A large portion of analyzed data were the one-on-one interviews with the participants. It was necessary to have procedures for analyzing data to extract responses that helped me to answer the research questions. The data were analyzed using Moustakas’s (1994) modified version of Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen’s method of analyzing data. The steps are quoted as follows:

1. Using a phenomenological approach, obtain a full description of your own experience of the phenomenon.
2. From the verbatim transcript of your experience complete the following steps:
  - a. Consider each statement with respect to significance for description of the experience.
  - b. Record all relevant statements.
  - c. List each nonrepetitive, nonoverlapping statement. These are the invariant horizons or meaning units of the experience.
  - d. Relate and cluster the invariant meaning units into themes.
  - e. Synthesize the invariant meaning units and themes into a *description of the textures of the experience*. Include verbatim examples.

- f. Reflect on your own textural description. Through imaginative variation, construct a *description of the structures of your experience*.
  - g. Construct a *textural-structural description* of the meanings and essences of your experience.
3. From the verbatim transcript of the experience of *each* of the other *co-researchers*, complete the above steps, a through g.
  4. From the individual textural-structural descriptions of all co-researchers' experiences, construct a *composite textural-structural description of the meanings and essences of the experience*, integrating all individual textural-structural descriptions into a universal description of the experiences representing the group as a whole. (p. 122)

Once all the interviews were transcribed, I began the process of analyzing the data using Moustakas's (1994) modified version of Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen's method. Significant themes were identified from the data that helped to describe what Christian school teachers perceive as motivational factors toward longevity in Christian schools. The same procedures were used to analyze the data from the focus group interview with participants.

### **Trustworthiness**

According to Patton (2002), "Trustworthiness of the inquirer is one dimension of rigor. The issue, then, is not really about objectivity in the abstract, but about researcher credibility and trustworthiness, about fairness and balance" (p. 576). The trustworthiness of a study depends on the validity of its data collection methods and the analysis of the findings.

### **Credibility**

A challenge with qualitative studies is ensuring the credibility of the study. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000) credibility is similar to validity in quantitative research. Validity in

qualitative research has to do with “description and explanation and whether or not the explanation fits the description” (p. 393). Does the study provide realistic findings based on what the researcher described? Credibility ensures that the researcher’s own views, biases, and analytical abilities have not incorrectly influenced the findings of the study. One way to establish credibility in this study was through triangulation (Patton, 2002). Multiple data collection methods were used such as a questionnaire, one-on-one interviews, and a focus group interview with the participants. The process of triangulation “involves corroborating evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective” (Creswell, 2007, p. 208). Another way to obtain credibility was what Creswell (2007) referred to as “clarifying researcher bias” (p. 208). I needed to articulate my personal experiences and biases that may influence how I interpreted and conveyed the information in the study. Member checking was also a helpful strategy to ensure credibility and validity. Creswell (2007) suggested that the participants check the accuracy of information by examining “preliminary analyses consisting of description or themes” (p. 209).

### **Dependability and Confirmability**

Dependability relies on the actions of the researcher to “account for changing conditions in the phenomenon chosen for study and changes in the design created by an increasingly refined understanding of the setting” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 194). Similar studies in the future may not yield the same results from this study. However, I used an audit trail to provide details regarding the steps that I took to conduct this study (Creswell, 2007).

Confirmability refers to whether “the data help confirm the general findings” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 194) and that the findings are a result of objective analysis of information rather than the researcher’s biased subjectivity. Member checking was used for participants to

review collected information and to ensure their thoughts and feelings were accurately interpreted. Another method of ensuring confirmability was to explain how data will be analyzed by “checking and rechecking the data” and to have “purposeful examination of possible alternative explanations” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 195).

### **Transferability**

Transferability refers to whether the findings of this study will assist other studies that are similarly framed (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). One way to achieve transferability is through triangulation. Marshall and Rossman (1999) stated, “Designing a study in which multiple cases, multiple informants, or more than one data-gathering method are used can greatly strengthen the study’s usefulness for other settings” (p. 194). Data collection involved a questionnaire, in-depth interviews, and a focus group with participants. These methods of data collection, in addition to providing a rich description of the participants and their experience with motivation to teach in a Christian school, allowed this study to be useful to other studies.

### **Ethical Considerations**

According to Marshall and Rossman (1999), “In qualitative studies, the researcher is the instrument: Her presence in the lives of the participants invited to be part of the study is fundamental to the paradigm. Whether that presence is sustained and intensive, as long-term ethnographies, or whether relatively brief but personal, as in in-depth interview studies, the researcher enters into the lives of the participants” (p. 79). Because of the personal nature of qualitative studies, it is important to address ethical issues. The researcher has to build trust with each participant and to ensure that what is shared will be used only for this study. Confidentiality must be expressed for the participants to freely share their thoughts and feelings about their motivation to teach in a Christian school.

Before any information was collected, it is important to obtain IRB approval. Once approval was given, I contacted administrators of Christian schools to explain this study and to obtain access to teachers who have taught over 10 years in a Christian school. I sent potential candidates a consent form that explained the study and what their participation entailed if they chose to participate in this study.

Patton (2002) suggested several ethical issues that are important to address in a qualitative study. One suggestion was to explain the purpose for the study and how the participant's contributions can provide helpful insight into what motivates teachers to remain long-term in Christian schools. It was also necessary to inform potential participants that participation in this study is voluntary and they may choose to discontinue their involvement at any time.

Patton (2002) also addressed issues regarding reciprocity and risk. Participants were informed that they would receive a gift card for their involvement in the study. Participants also obtained assurance that there was no anticipated risk involved with this study since they would be mainly discussing what has motivated them to teach in a Christian school.

To maintain confidence or trust in the study, Patton (2002) suggested that the issue of confidentiality should be addressed. To protect the identity of each participant and site, Creswell (2007) suggested that the researcher assign a number or an alias. This was necessary for the participants to be willing to participate and to be honest in responding to questions pertaining to what motivated them toward longevity in a Christian school. To ensure that I correctly represented the thoughts, feelings, and beliefs of each participant, I implemented member checking. Participants had an opportunity to read their transcripts to clarify or correct their responses. Only two participants wanted to clarify information in their transcript.

Another aspect of confidentiality was to protect the large volume of data that was collected. Information was stored on my own personal computer, and it was protected by a password that only I was able to access. All electronic data was backed up on a flash drive and secured in a locked file along with paper copies of the questionnaires and my own written notes during observations and data analysis. All data will be kept secure in a locked file for six months after the completion of the study and then will be destroyed.

### **Summary**

This chapter explained the purpose of using a qualitative design for this study and provided an explanation of the type of participants that would be recruited to participate in this study. Triangulation was achieved by utilizing a questionnaire, one-on-one interviews, and a focus group interview. All these sources to collect data helped to provide an understanding of the participants' perspectives on their longevity in Christian schools. This chapter also discussed strategies used to analyze data from a transcendental phenomenological approach. Moustakas's (1994) procedures for analyzing data was used to discover motivational factors toward the longevity of Christian school teachers. Areas of trustworthiness such as credibility, dependability, confirmability, transferability were also discussed to address the validity of the research study. Ethical considerations were also addressed to explain the steps that were taken to ensure the confidentiality of the participants.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe factors that influenced the motivation of teachers toward longevity in Christian schools. The purpose of this chapter is to give a brief description of the participants of the study and to present themes that were developed through data analysis. A rich description provides a glimpse into the lives of the participants involved in this study. This study examined the experiences of 12 participants with over 10 years of experience teaching in a Christian school. The participants were recruited from five accredited Christian schools in the Southeast region of the United States. Originally, I indicated I would seek teachers from three or four Christian schools with fewer than 500 students; however, I included a fifth school to recruit more teachers for this study and this school has an enrollment above 500 students. Results from this study are also discussed in this chapter, beginning with the development of themes generated from the data collected from one-on-one interviews and the focus group interview. After a presentation of the themes, a discussion follows which addresses the research questions.

### **Participants**

This study on the longevity of Christian school teachers presented information about 12 Christian school teachers in the Southeast. These teachers have various years of experience in the classroom which qualified them to participate in this study. The participants have experience in kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Three of the participants had previous experience teaching in a public school. One teacher was not formally trained in teaching. Three teachers teach at their current Christian school because their initial contact with the school was to enroll their children

in the school. Each participant answered questions on the questionnaire to provide more information about their experiences (see Table 1).

Table 1

*Participant Information*

Participants	Age	Yrs. Exp. Chr. Sch.	Yrs. Exp. Pub. Sch.	Grade Level(s)	Education
Paul	30-39	10+	None	4 <sup>th</sup> -6 <sup>th</sup> /h.s.	Bachelors
Cynthia	60+	20+	None	K-12	Bachelors
Leslie	40-49	20+	None	K-12	Bachelors
Anna	60+	20+	less than 5	1 <sup>st</sup> -3 <sup>rd</sup>	Bachelors
Hope	40-49	10+	None	4 <sup>th</sup> -6 <sup>th</sup>	Bachelors
Elaine	50-59	20+	None	7 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup>	Masters
Grace	50-59	10+	less than 10	7 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup>	Bachelors
Kate	50-59	10+	less than 5	1 <sup>st</sup> /7 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup>	Masters
Sharon	40-49	20+	None	K-3 <sup>rd</sup>	Bachelors
Faith	40-49	10+	None	4 <sup>th</sup> -6 <sup>th</sup>	Masters
Michelle	60+	20+	None	K-3 <sup>rd</sup>	Bachelors
Mary	30-39	10+	None	7 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup>	Bachelors

**Paul**

Paul was the only male who agreed to participate in this study. He is a husband and proud father of two children. Paul has over 10 years of Christian school experience in one school. When I first met Paul, he was dressed in jeans and a t-shirt because he was working on the set for a production that would be performed that weekend. He was very down-to-earth, and

despite being busy with preparations for the church production, he gladly took the time to complete the questionnaire. The next time I met with Paul for the interview, he was dressed in a suit. His down-to-earth, fun-loving personality still shone through even though he was dressed in a suit for the interview.

As the interview progressed, Paul's passion and excitement for young people was evident in his enthusiasm and eagerness to talk about his experience as a teacher in a Christian school. Also evident during the interview was Paul's heart to minister to others. He believes that teaching at a Christian school has given him the opportunity to minister to both the students and their parents. It was evident that Paul has a ministry heart. Paul enjoys escape rooms, spending time with his wife, who also taught at the Christian school, and "being Mr. Dad" to his girls. Although he has taught in both upper elementary and high school, Paul's original plan was not to become a teacher but a youth pastor. After all these years, the Lord finally opened doors for Paul to be a youth pastor. At the time of the interview, Paul was finishing his last year as a teacher. Paul believed that being a teacher allowed him to have the same kind of ministry like a youth pastor.

### **Cynthia**

I met with Cynthia after school in her third grade classroom. Her room was organized and decorated with students' work and all the typical educational posters and reminders for her students. When I met with Cynthia, she was about to finish her last year as a teacher. Cynthia retired with over 22 years of experience teaching in Christian education. The Lord has allowed her to accomplish much during her many years of teaching. Cynthia's original goal after college was to return to Philadelphia to work in Bible clubs; however, her plan was unexpectedly redirected because God had another direction for her life. Instead of returning to Philadelphia,

God lead Cynthia to the Christian school where she taught for over 22 years. Cynthia started her teaching career in kindergarten but spent most of her career teaching third grade. One word that Cynthia used to describe her experience as a Christian school teacher is *joy*. It was very evident that Cynthia truly enjoyed her years as a teacher. Besides teaching, she loves to decorate her home and read in her spare time. Although she retired, her heart will always be with the students and the faculty at her school. Her dedication to teaching is seen in her willingness to step in and substitute. During the interview, I was touched when she talked about her decision to retire. There were several times that tears flowed down her face when she talked about how it was time for her to retire. But despite the tears, she emphasized the joy that she experienced as a Christian school teacher. I walked away truly inspired by Cynthia's dedication to Christian education.

### **Leslie**

Leslie is a single mother of two children. Leslie knew she wanted to be a teacher when she was in high school. With over 20 years of teaching experience in both elementary and high school, Leslie is thankful to have the opportunity to teach at the school that she attended as a child and teen. She feels blessed to have had the opportunity to work alongside the same teachers who taught her as a young girl and teenager. Having a heritage of dedicated teachers at her school has inspired Leslie to follow in their footsteps. Leslie was quick to praise the Lord for how He has worked in her life and was thankful for the opportunity to have an influence in the lives of her students. It was evident that as a single mother raising her children, she was thankful for all that God has done to provide for her family's needs. Because of her love for outdoor activities, each summer Leslie has been involved in summer camp, which gives her an opportunity to interact with children even when she is not in school. Leslie's passion for the ministry and love for her students was evident as she discussed her experience with longevity in

her Christian school. The gratitude Leslie has for God's provision in her life, and the pride she has for the legacy of her school was clearly noticeable throughout the interview.

### **Anna**

Since the school year had already ended when I contacted Anna for an interview, she graciously offered to meet me at her home since it was a convenient location for the both of us. Unlike other participants whom I have interviewed before her, Anna was much more reserved and direct in answering my questions. When deciding what to do with her life, other occupations did not interest her, and Anna felt that teaching would be best suited for her. Anna has 11 years of experience teaching first grade. Prior to teaching at her current school, Anna homeschooled her children and taught at a Christian school in another state. She loves seeing the different personalities of her students and interacting with them at school. Outside of school, Anna enjoys spending time with her grandchildren and reading. During the summer, she usually spends time with her sister as they enjoy shopping at garage sales and talking about things that pertain to the classroom. Anna has a calm, quiet demeanor that is valuable in being able to teach first graders.

### **Hope**

Hope originally worked in the field of accounting, but after enrolling her daughter in a Christian school, she had a desire to become a teacher. Hope never had an intention to teach but began to have a strong interest in researching ideas for the classroom and a desire to become a teacher grew. Hope believes that God put the desire to teach in her heart. Hope had the opportunity to work in her daughter's Christian school as a substitute teacher and eventually an opportunity opened for her to teach 4th grade. Hope has taught at her Christian school for over 10 years and enjoyed the interaction with her students. During the interview, I sensed Hope's heart for Christian education and desire that her students would not only grow academically but

that they would choose to walk in truth. Her love for the mission and philosophy of her school shone through in how she talked about her experiences as a Christian school teacher. Outside of the classroom Hope enjoys using her creativity to make her own cards, and she also likes to sew, quilt, and read. At the end of the school year, the Lord redirected Hope to work in the office at her Christian school using her accounting skills.

### **Elaine**

Elaine has a Masters degree and over 20 years of experience teaching math on the junior high and high school level. Prior to being a teacher at her current school, Elaine was in retail and changed careers after she enrolled her daughter at a Christian school in town. While at church, Elaine heard about the need for a math teacher at their Christian school. Elaine had rededicated her life to the Lord and was open to serving the Lord in any way He chose. She applied for the position at the Christian school and has been teaching ever since. Elaine enjoys teaching math and has a teacher's heart for her students. Her desire is to "minister to the student's spiritual and mental growth" so that the student could "make an impact on our world for Christ." Her burden to minister to her students' needs also extends to her fellow co-workers. Elaine assists new teachers at her school by helping them to get their classrooms set up at the beginning of the year and by simply being an encouragement to them in any way that she can. Because another teacher took the time to help her when she started as a teacher, Elaine wants to do the same for all new teachers at her school. Her dedication and love for her school was obvious throughout the interview, and she is proud to have the opportunity to teach at a Christian school that recently celebrated its 50th anniversary.

**Grace**

Grace has experience teaching in both public and Christian school. She has taught at her current Christian school for over 10 years. Grace has always enjoyed learning and wanted to continue that love of learning as a teacher. Although Grace taught in the public-school system, she and her husband chose to enroll their sons in a Christian school. After noticing what her sons were learning in school, Grace became interested in Christian education and inquired about a teaching position at her sons' Christian school. Teaching at a Christian school was a different experience for Grace because even though she was a Christian, she did not know about "a true Christian education" until she started teaching at her Christian school. After discovering the purpose and mission of Christian education, Grace fully appreciated the opportunity to be a Christian school teacher. During the interview I could sense from Grace how significant it was for her to teach in a Christian school. Grace enjoys teaching English classes and interacting with her students both in and out of the classroom. Grace's passion for teaching in a Christian school was very evident during the interviewing process. Besides teaching in a Christian school, for several years Grace has been involved with a leadership program for high school students. She thrives on interaction with other students and finds it fulfilling to be a part of her students' lives.

**Kate**

Kate comes from a family of teachers and has experience teaching children, college students, and adults in both Christian school and public school settings. There came a point in Kate's career when she decided to leave her position teaching in a public university because living out her faith was more important to her. Kate did not consider Christian education until she enrolled her daughter in a Christian school. She began teaching at the Christian school the same year her daughter started first grade and has been teaching there for 10 years. This school

year Kate faces a new challenge as she moves to the junior high and high school to teach English. During her time teaching first grade, Kate loved interacting with her students and seeing them grow academically and spiritually. Kate's decision to teach in the junior high and high school will allow her to be more available for her husband and three children. This needed change is an answer to Kate's prayers. Although teaching teens will be a big change, Kate looks forward to the opportunity to be able to teach students on a higher level and to connect with her students on a deeper level to help them with their walk with the Lord. Kate enjoys ballet dancing, reading, being a mom, and gleaning ideas from other teachers. The love and loyalty she has for her school was evident as she talked about the opportunity to teach from a Christian perspective and the joy it is to serve with her fellow coworkers.

### **Sharon**

As a little child, Sharon often played school and dreamed about becoming a teacher one day. After graduating from college with a teaching degree, Sharon returned to the Christian school she attended from elementary to high school because she wanted to "give back to children" what was given to her. Sharon was very humbled to have had the opportunity to work with the teachers that she had when she was in school. During her 20 years of teaching, she has taught kindergarten and second grade. For Sharon, teaching in a Christian school is a joy because she can freely teach her children about Jesus and integrate a biblical worldview in her lessons. For Sharon, another blessing as a teacher is seeing her students grow both academically and spiritually. Sharon takes great pleasure in also seeing her former students succeed and excel. Sharon enjoys spending time with her husband and daughter, shopping at the flea market, and singing in the choir every Sunday. When she has more time in the summer, she also loves to make crafts and cross stitch.

**Faith**

Faith's original plan was to get a job that would make her a lot of money. Teaching was not an occupation that Faith ever considered, but with the encouragement of her mother, Faith finally decided to become a teacher when she was in high school. She has been involved in Christian education for over 10 years and has taught at two different Christian schools. Faith has experience teaching grades 4-6 and thoroughly enjoys the opportunity to interact with her students. Faith enjoys studying God's Word in preparation for teaching a Bible story, and she loves to get her students excited about grammar. For Faith, teaching older students is fulfilling because of the opportunity to teach these students about biblical discernment. Faith, her husband, and children enjoy spending time together whether they are at home, going to farmers markets, or visiting historical sites.

**Michelle**

Michelle did not have a desire to be a teacher despite the fact that her father taught 5th grade in the public school system. When the time came for Michelle to decide what she wanted to do with her life, she realized that she enjoyed working with children and made the decision that she could work with children by being a teacher. Several years after graduating from college, Michelle began teaching at her current Christian school. She now has over 20 years of teaching experience in kindergarten, first, and second grade. Nothing brings Michelle more joy than to be able to teach children about Jesus and to lead her students to Christ. The reality of retirement has been on Michelle's mind and she knows that she may need to retire soon. I could sense that this decision will be a difficult one for Michelle since she enjoys teaching and interacting with children. During the interview Michelle made a comment that I was not anticipating. She brought up the feeling of isolation as a veteran teacher among many younger

teachers. I never considered that veteran teachers could feel isolated. When Michelle is not in the classroom she loves to spend time with her family and grandchildren. Her desire is to minister to others and to have an influence in the lives of her students and those with whom she meets.

## **Mary**

Mary decided to become a teacher in high school after she had the opportunity to tutor another student in her school. This experience caused Mary to “fall in love with teaching.” She attended a Christian college and majored in secondary education with a primary teaching field in math. During her teaching internship, Mary discovered that she had a passion for teaching English. Mary has over 10 years of experience teaching at her Christian school and loves to interact with her high school students. Because of the various responsibilities she has besides teaching, Mary has opportunities to interact with her students outside of the classroom and to also interact with other students in the school who are not in her classes. She chose to teach in a Christian school because she wanted to be able to freely tell her students about the Lord. Growing up, Mary attended a public school and knew that she did not want to teach in the public school system. For Mary, being able to teach from a Christian perspective is very important to her because she wants to be able to freely tell students about God and how to live for the Lord. One thing that I noticed about Mary’s life as a Christian school teacher was how much her family is involved in Mary’s activities at school. Mary’s husband is very supportive of her calling to be a teacher and he is often at school with their daughters to help Mary in any way, even if it is just to be together as a family. Mary wants her daughters to see the joy of working in a ministry.

## Results

The purpose of this study was to discover the influences that motivated longevity in Christian school teachers. Data collected from the questionnaire, interviews, and focus group interview was analyzed using Moustakas's (1994) modified version of Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen's method. Initially I had planned to analyze data using a qualitative software program; however, I decided I could organize the data in tables and analyze data without the assistance of a program. This chapter will discuss steps for data analysis that lead to the development of themes and a discussion on the participants' responses to the research questions.

### Theme Development

A distinguishing aspect of qualitative research involves the process of data analysis. To answer the research questions, information collected from the questionnaire, one-on-one interviews, and focus group interview was analyzed and themes were developed to describe how the participants experienced motivation toward longevity in a Christian school. The following information discusses the steps taken to analyze the data and the various themes are presented.

**Epoche.** Transcendental phenomenology requires researchers to bracket their experience with the topic of study to fully analyze the participants' perspectives. Moustakas (1994) described Epoche as "a process of setting aside predilections, prejudices, predispositions, and allowing things, events, and people to enter anew into consciousness, and to look and see them again, as if for the first time" (p. 85). It was important that I set aside my personal thoughts and opinions to be able to focus on the experiences of the participants without constantly referring to my personal experiences. Before conducting one-on-one interviews, I answered the interview questions that I prepared for the participants, and this helped me to describe my experiences as a Christian school teacher with over 10 years of experience in Christian education. I did not want

my opinions or biases to affect my interpretation and analysis of the data I collected from the participants. Throughout the data collection process, I wrote memos to clear my thoughts and express hunches and I asked myself questions to help me analyze my data. I also reminded myself to view each interview without bias based on my experiences teaching in a Christian school.

**Questionnaire.** Each participant was required to complete a questionnaire prior to the one-on-one interview. Information from the questionnaire was gathered to help provide some background to the lives and experiences of the participants. Information related to education, number of years teaching, and experience in teaching, as well as personal thoughts about experiences as a teacher was gathered and analyzed. During the one-on-one interviews, the participants were given an opportunity to further elaborate on a few of their responses on the questionnaire.

**One-on-one interviews.** The main source of data that was analyzed for this study came from the individual interviews with the participants. The interview questions were based on London's (1983) career motivation theory and questions were asked about general perspectives on teaching. I conducted face to face interviews with each participant which lasted from 45 minutes to an hour and 30 minutes. The setting for the interviews occurred in several places, mostly at the participants' Christian schools, but I met with one participant in her home and interviewed four participants and the focus group in a library conference room on a college campus. I did my best to make the participant comfortable before the interview began simply by talking about other things to set the participant at ease. Surprisingly, I felt quite at ease with the participants. I think it was because I felt a sense of camaraderie with these teachers because of our experiences teaching in a Christian school. I recorded the interview with an audio recorder

and with the video recorder on my computer. Only one participant did not want to be video recorded but was fine to have the video recorder on as long as this person was not in the screen shot.

**Focus group interview.** After completing all the individual interviews, I conducted a focus group interview. Participants indicated on the questionnaire whether they were interested in participating in a focus group. Out of the 12, only three had the time available to meet me for a focus group interview—Faith, Cynthia, and Kate. I was disappointed that more could not participate, but at that time it was towards the end of summer vacation and some of the teachers were preparing to go back to school. I wanted to have a participant from each school represented, and I wanted to have Paul in this interview as well to get a male teacher's perspective. We met in a library conference room on a college campus and the interview took a little over an hour. The participants were at ease with each other and I gave each one an opportunity to respond to each question if she wanted. Although these ladies never met each other before, they each represented perspectives about experiences in their Christian school, and there seemed to be an overall sense of agreement with their responses to the questions. It was a blessing for me to see that although these ladies taught at different Christian schools and had various years of teaching experience, there was a sense of unity in their purpose as Christian school teachers and camaraderie because of their shared experiences.

**Researcher Journal.** Throughout the data collection process, I kept a researcher journal in a OneNote file on my computer. After each interview I wrote in my journal to reflect upon my experience interviewing each participant. I recorded observations that I had regarding the environment of the interview, thoughts I had about meeting each participant and comments that participants made that I thought were interesting and wanted to go back to during data analysis. I

enjoyed the interviewing process and recorded in the research journal how I often felt inspired by many of the participants' sense of passion and love teaching and for their students. I also used the researcher journal to record my thoughts during the data analysis process to help me make connections and to brainstorm themes that would help to answer my research questions.

**Horizontalization and clustering.** After the initial step of Epoche and collecting data through the questionnaire, one-on-one interviews, and a focus group interview, Moustakas's (1994) modified version of Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen's method was followed to analyze each interview transcript. I read and reread each transcript looking for significant statements that could answer the research questions. The process of horizontalization occurs when "every statement initially is treated as having equal value" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 97). For each of the participants' transcript, I marked each significant statement, created a table to list each significant statement, and then reread the list to remove overlapping statements. Then I examined the remaining statements and clustered those statements and created themes. I followed this same procedure for each participant. Once all 12 of the transcripts were read and analyzed for significant statements, I combined the significant statements from all the participants. A list of significant statements across participants is listed in a table (see Appendix D) with a formulated meaning for each statement. After combining all the significant statements across participants, I followed the same process and removed overlapping statements and clustered statements into themes that depict all the participants' experience with motivation and longevity in a Christian school.

**Themes.** During the process of horizontalization significant statements from each participant were identified and related statements were clustered together. Once these statements were clustered together, themes were developed to help answer the main research question.

Significant statements were combined across participants and a table was created listing significant statements across participants and related statements were clustered together to develop themes to answer the research questions. A total of 13 themes emerged that answered the research questions (see Appendix E).

This study answered the following research question: What do Christian school teachers perceive as motivational factors toward longevity in a Christian school? The following themes emerged: spiritual impact, calling, love of teaching, student interaction, and school support.

*Spiritual impact.* This was an important theme that was expressed among all the teachers in their interviews. The opportunity to freely and openly talk about God, to insert biblical principles into their teaching, or to use Scripture to admonish the children was important to what these teachers wanted to accomplish in the lives of their students. For these participants, teaching in a Christian school was the best way that they could have any kind of spiritual impact. For some of the teachers who did not start out in Christian education, this was the missing link in their career that they were able to finally satisfy when they chose to teach at a Christian school. Grace had this experience and said, “My mission changed . . . it’s still about loving the kids, it’s still about loving what I teach—I love my subject matter—but the eternal consequences of that has completely changed.” Grace was able to add the spiritual aspect to her role as a teacher that she was prohibited from expressing in the public school. After learning about what Christian education is and the purpose of Christian education, Grace’s driving force as a teacher became clearer. “My work has eternal value. The struggle for our children is real, and I want this generation for Christ.”

Others shared the same passion of having a spiritual impact on their students. Elaine said, “I am furthering something that’s going to please the Lord and going to make an impact on

what's going on all around." She felt that her responsibility as a teacher was something that should not be taken lightly since she was pleasing the Lord and impacting everyone around her. For Paul, that spiritual impact was important to him because he initially wanted to be a youth pastor. When God directed Paul into teaching, he applied that desire for spiritual impact in the classroom instead. Paul stated, "That's what I was interested in in the beginning is the spiritual side of things, and as a teacher, it has allowed me now to have that spiritual impact and that spiritual influence in these children's lives." Still others shared the same sentiment that Faith mentioned in her interview. "And in the Christian school, not only can I help academically, and I can teach what the Bible says, [but] I can teach Christian character, life principles, life skills." Spiritual impact was essential for these teachers to have a significant purpose to what they were doing in the classroom with their students. For Michelle, having a spiritual impact in the lives of her students was simply the natural overflow of her concern for the spiritual needs of everyone she comes across. "I want to go tell people about Jesus, I want to help them spiritually. Teaching has done that." For Faith, having an impact was an important part of being a teacher. "If I could just have just a little bit of that influence on someone else . . . I couldn't want for anything more than that in my life."

**Calling.** In addition to having a spiritual impact, many of the participants believed that teaching was a calling that they received from the Lord. Five of the 12 participants expressed a clear calling to teach from the very beginning and pursued that calling for their lives. The seven other participants had different interests besides teaching or they pursued other occupations prior to becoming a teacher. One participant wanted to be a youth pastor, another one wanted to get involved with Bible club work, and two others were in accounting or retail. Two participants decided to pursue teaching because they needed to select a major in college and teaching seemed

to be the right fit for them. One participant wanted a career in which she would make lots of money but decided to listen to her mother's encouragement to become a teacher.

Cynthia wanted to be involved in Bible club work but the Lord closed that door and redirected her path to become a teacher instead. "I feel like the Lord has put me in it . . . so I don't have any regrets." Although Grace started her career teaching in public schools, her true calling to teach became clearer once she started teaching at her Christian school. "I really do think that that's what I was made to do."

Surprisingly, a sense of calling was not only applied to teaching but calling also applied to teaching at a specific Christian school. Kate stated, "I am confident this is where I belong." Leslie knew in her heart that God wanted her to return to the school that she attended as a child. "I knew the Lord wanted me here. This was the right thing to do. I knew I was in the right place."

***Love of teaching.*** Another theme that emerged was a definite love of teaching. The opportunity to see the students learn and to be the one to teach a concept for the first time and see the light bulbs turn on has been a rewarding aspect of teaching for these participants. Mary enjoys teaching but found that observing her students' progress was more fulfilling to her. "But seeing them when they try, the success and the feeling of I can do this—that's huge." Besides possessing a love for teaching, another aspect is a love for Christian education. Growing up, Paul did not attend a Christian school, and he did not know much about Christian education until he attended a Christian college and minored in Education. Paul did not have an appreciation for Christian education until he started teaching at his school. "I kind of found out here that although my heart was not Christian education, once I got into it the Lord made it my heart." The opposite is true for Leslie because she grew up in Christian education and was able to

observe excellent teachers who had taught at her school for many years. Leslie witnessed true joy in teaching and the influence that one can have as a teacher, particularly one in a Christian school. These experiences growing up in a Christian school strengthened her ability to teach, and Leslie stated, “Teaching in general is home for me.” Leslie feels the most comfortable being in front of students as their teacher.

***Student interaction.*** Listening to students during class discussions or talking to them in class or other times during the day has been an enjoyable part of teaching. Some of the participants see their students regularly at church or at extracurricular events and enjoy the interaction outside of the classroom. Mary teaches in the high school and looks forward to times when she can interact with students. “I know I’ve said this already, but I just really—I love it. And I love all aspects of it. I very much enjoy being with the students, seeing their reaction to things.” Grace also teaches high school students and absolutely loves the interaction she can have with the students. In fact, Grace stated that she thrives on her interaction and relationships with her students. “[Interaction] gives me energy . . . that makes me tick.” The interaction Grace has with her students enables her to have a part in making a difference in their lives.

***School support.*** The last theme that clearly developed among the participants was school support. Several of the teachers expressed appreciation and heart-felt love for their peers and administration. Receiving encouragement from fellow teachers and support from their administrators helped these teachers to press on despite their challenges and to continue long-term.

Cynthia arrived at her Christian school two weeks before the start of the school year. She was hired to teach kindergarten and was not confident in how to go about teaching. God used two teachers to help Cynthia start her career. Cynthia was able to observe them teach and then

applied it in the classroom. Cynthia would never forget the impact they had on her as a young teacher. “They were just master teachers. They helped those of us under them come along. I don’t know, if I had gone some place else, I don’t know if I would have lasted this long. But they had a love for children and just really knew how to bring the best out in children. You wanted to be like them when you saw them as teachers. That’s probably a lot of why I stuck at it.” Elaine shares the same experience as Cynthia. Stepping into the classroom can be overwhelming for a new teacher, and Elaine has never forgotten how encouraging it was for veteran teachers in her school to come alongside to help her. “I came on board and [I felt] I’m part of the ministry now and you’re going to be serving not underneath but alongside—I got that feel[ing]. It just felt like I got an arm put around me and said, ‘Welcome, let’s work together for the Lord and make a difference.’” Now as a veteran teacher, Elaine encourages and helps new teachers at her school by being available for them. She returns to school early each year to set up her classroom so she can help new teachers to set up their classroom.

But support from others in the school goes beyond just being helpful at the beginning of the school year. It is a relationship that starts and continues year after year. It is a unity within the school that pushes everyone along toward a common goal. Hope described it as: “I’m working with like-minded people for a common goal. Speaking into the lives of these children.” Having a supportive structure is essential for teachers to remain motivated to teach. Kate states, “But if I had to deal with all the challenges of teaching without that kind of support, I don’t know that I could take it, so even if it’s not the main reason, it’s certainly high on the list.”

An interesting finding for school support was that three teachers described their school as being “home” for them, and the love and dedication they have for their work has been fueled by their perception of school as a second home. Like Leslie, Sharon also grew up in the Christian

school she has taught in and the school has a special place in her heart. “It’s like a home to me [be]cause it was always, I’m at home, now I go to school. I’m at home, [now] I go to school. It’s where I [always] was, and it’s been a second home to me all my life so I wouldn’t want to teach anywhere else.” Mary also shares the same sentiment as Sharon that school is like another home. “I enjoy working with my co-workers so when I come to work, you know, you kind of have that ‘I’m home’ sort of feeling when you walk in the door because you just enjoy being here.” The enjoyment of working in a place where one’s fellow peers are also considered family makes school a second home for Mary. Unlike Sharon and Mary, Grace considers her school home for a different reason. Grace had the experience of first being a parent of children at her Christian school before she decided to teach at the Christian school. Her love of the school started as a parent and then increased as she became a parent/teacher at the school. For Grace, the school has a special place in her heart because of the memories she has that are linked to her sons’ experiences at the school. Grace says the school is a second home because of “some of the greatest moments of my life.” The support of those within the school made a huge impact on both the teachers’ motivation to continue teaching and motivation to continue teaching at their Christian schools.

Besides the main research question, this study also discovered the role that each of the three aspects of career motivation theory had on the participants’ longevity in a Christian school. This study answered the following sub-question: What role does career identity have in motivating Christian school teachers toward longevity? Career identity is the interconnectedness of one’s self-image and one’s career (London, 1983). In other words, a person believes that his career embodies who he is as an individual. Participants expressed career identity by making statements such as teaching is “who I am” and that they could not imagine “doing anything else.”

Career identity did have a role in motivating teachers to continue long-term in their career.

Three themes emerged that are related to career identity: teaching identity, school identity, and permeates life.

***Teaching identity.*** This theme emerged from examining the lives of 12 Christian school teachers. Teaching has been their career for over 10 years and for some over 20 years; therefore, teaching is considered their identity. For Hope, accounting was her first career, but when she enrolled her children in a Christian school, the Lord placed a desire in her heart to teach. Through the years, Hope has learned to identify with teaching. “It’s a lot of my time so it has to kind of define me. I’m proud to say I am a teacher.” Leslie also understands the amount of time teachers spend to fulfill their responsibilities, and sometimes, that teacher mentality does not leave. During the summers, Leslie and her children have visited places where she considered taking her class on a field trip. She was constantly in teacher mode even when she was not at school. “I guess I eat, breathe, and live teaching really. I guess you get to a certain point that’s your life sometimes.” Those with a teaching identity never really take a vacation from being a teacher. It is an identity that is carried with them and they are proud of that identity. Kate stated it clearly, “I just feel like it is part of me. It is who I am, and I can’t really separate myself from that. Teaching defines me. I just love being part of the process and that makes me, I feel, honored and I feel privileged to do it.” Kate proudly identifies as a teacher, yet she acknowledges that it is a privilege to have that responsibility.

***School identity.*** Longevity in a Christian school was not solely the result of identifying with the teaching profession. Perhaps the most interesting theme that emerged from examining the role of career identity in Christian school teachers is school identity. During the interviews it was evident that a few of the teachers strongly identified with their school. One way that a

Christian school teacher may identify with a school is through the purpose and mission of the school. Hope's experience with school identity first began as a mother who enrolled her children in a Christian school. After God put an interest in teaching in Hope's heart, she then became a substitute teacher in that same school and was eventually hired to teach fourth grade. As a parent first and then as a teacher, Hope developed a love and an identity with the school. "I totally buy in to the philosophy and the mission of this place." Aligning oneself with a school because of shared values and a common purpose can be a motivating factor toward longevity in that school. Teachers may be more likely to continue at a school if the philosophy of education and mission of the school aligns with what they believe and what they want to accomplish in the lives of students.

Sharon experienced school identity in a different way than Hope. Instead of the philosophy and mission of the school, Sharon's identification stems back to her experience when she accepted the Lord as her Savior in the second grade. After Sharon made that decision to accept the Lord, the growth she experienced in her Christian life was a direct result of having Bible classes and teachers who taught her about growing in Christ. "Not growing up in a completely Christian home . . . I didn't hear all that" and "what I learned from the Bible I learned from school." The school had a significant role in developing Sharon's spiritual growth and it was the place where she received her education until she graduated. For these reasons, Sharon's identity is so closely associated with her school. "It's where I was, and it's been a second home to me all my life, so I wouldn't want to teach anywhere else."

Mary's experience with school identity is based purely on the love she has for her school. She has taught at her Christian school for over 10 years and has been involved in many activities in the high school that require extra time outside of her own teaching responsibilities. Having to

spend extra time after school or on a Saturday can be challenging for teachers who have young children, but because Mary and her husband believe that what she does as a teacher is a ministry, they view those times that Mary must be at school as opportunities for their family to be together. If Mary must be at school late or on a Saturday, her husband and children come to help her. Mary's desire is that her children see that it is fun to be in the ministry and to serve the Lord, and because Mary sees teaching as a ministry and not a job, she fully identifies with her school. "I think this is the best place in the world to teach . . . I love what I do. I love this ministry." Mary firmly believes she was called to her school but has said, "Lord if you ever call us away from this place, it's going to be so hard."

*Permeates life.* For those who have taught for many years, teaching is not merely an identity but also a way of life as teaching has become ingrained and intertwined in their own personal life. The responsibilities of a teacher continue even when the teacher leaves the classroom. Much of what teachers do to prepare for the next day occurs at home. Their work as a teacher never remains at school. Sharon's lifestyle as a teacher is one that many teachers can understand. "I rest my head at night and all that I'm thinking about is school. I'm thinking about what I need to do. [I] try to do more than I need to . . . I will do more than the average person would do." The responsibility of being a teacher is constantly on the hearts and minds of those who identify with teaching because it permeates a teacher's life. Interestingly, even Sharon's own husband could see that she wholly identified as a teacher. Sharon's husband has experienced what it is like to be married to a teacher. He has seen all the work she puts into being a dedicated teacher, yet it was not until recently that her husband realized the extent to which teaching has impacted Sharon's life. One summer during Vacation Bible school Sharon's husband was present in the room as she taught the children a Bible lesson. After watching his

wife teach children at Vacation Bible school, Sharon's husband suddenly realized what his wife has been so passionate about all these years. Sharon recalled, "He just told me, you couldn't do anything else. He said, that's you, that who you are . . . you're a teacher." This example illustrates that even other people associated with Christian school teachers can see how being a teacher is not just a job, but for some people it is their life.

The theme of teaching as permeating one's life is also seen in Faith's discussion on the time she spends doing school work. "Where do I spend my time? I spend so much of my time at school or doing school work more during the week than I do with my own family . . . there's not a bigger sacrifice that I could make." Faith admits that there are challenges with being a wife, a mom, and a teacher; however, the organization and preparation she dedicates to her responsibilities as a teacher have also reached into how she manages her home.

For teachers who have taught for over 20 years, teaching permeated their lives as their daily routines revolved around teaching. By teaching year after year, the routines of teaching became so much a part of these teachers' lives that when the time comes for a teacher to step away, it can be a difficult decision. Michelle has taught for over 20 years and understands too well that she will not be able to continue teaching for much longer. The love for teaching and for her students has not waned, but it has become more challenging physically to keep up the busy pace of a teacher. However, when Michelle contemplates retirement, she is torn in her heart. "[Teaching] is so part of who I am that it would be so strange not to do it." Longevity in teaching can bring so much satisfaction and fulfillment that when the time comes to step away, it can be a very difficult decision to make. Career identity has a significant role in motivating Christian school teachers toward longevity. The participants have manifested career identity

through their teaching, identity with their Christian school, and how teaching has permeated their lives.

Besides career identity, this study also focused on another aspect of career motivation theory which was career insight. Results from this study answered a second sub-question: What role does career insight have in motivating Christian school teachers toward longevity?

According to London (1983), career insight is when a person seeks a career that matches his abilities, and that career enables a person to fulfill career goals. For example, a person who can simplify concepts and clearly communicate them may pursue a career in teaching because he aspires to educate the next generation. An interesting finding from this study was that career insight did not have a role on the longevity of Christian school teachers. Two themes emerged that brought to light a different perspective on career insight: opportunity over ability and spiritual purpose.

***Opportunity over ability.*** The focus of career insight is on one's abilities and how he can use those abilities to meet career goals. The participants in this study did not indicate that they pursued a career in teaching or remained in Christian education because of their outstanding abilities. They did not pursue teaching because of their ability to communicate with students, or their creativity in presenting information to students, or for their ability to get students to like them. Instead, the participants pursued a career teaching in a Christian school for the opportunities that being involved in Christian education could offer, not because of their personal abilities. Teaching in a Christian school provides the opportunity for teachers to have a spiritual impact on their students. This was discussed earlier as one of the motivating factors toward longevity in a Christian school and has emerged again when considering the role of career insight on Christian school teachers' motivation toward longevity.

Teaching in a Christian school provides opportunities for teachers to have a spiritual impact that teachers cannot have in the public schools. This was an important reason why Anna chose to teach in a Christian school. Although she understood that she would be paid more as a public school teacher, Anna believed that it was more important to have the opportunity to tell her students about Jesus. “I want to be allowed to share Christ and influence children to serve Him.” Cynthia also believed it was important to be able to talk freely about the Lord, not just during Bible lessons, but in other subjects as well. “When we study history and you see the Lord’s hand . . . I know in a public school I wouldn’t be able to present that so I appreciate that.” Other participants expressed similar sentiments that indicated their goal of having a spiritual impact on their students. Elaine stated, “I wanted to be able to minister . . . to the whole child.” As a teacher, it was not her goal to simply teach students academics; Elaine wanted to minister to their spiritual needs and understood that the only way she could accomplish that goal was through Christian education. “I just feel that teaching in a Christian school was more aligned with what I wanted to accomplish in a student’s life.” Hope strongly believed that the spiritual impact she made as a teacher was the most important way she could serve the Lord. “So, my ability to touch these children’s lives . . . is how I feel like God is using me to further His kingdom.” These participants did not pursue a career teaching in a Christian school because they felt their personal abilities would contribute to the success of a Christian school. For these participants, they believed that teaching in a Christian school provided the best opportunity for them to freely teach students about the Lord and to have a spiritual impact.

*Spiritual purpose.* Another theme that emerged in relationship to career insight is the belief that they have a spiritual purpose for teaching in a Christian school. Personal abilities did not draw these participants to teach, it was a purpose to teach students about the Lord and how to

live for Him. Some expressed how teaching in a Christian school fulfills that spiritual purpose. Kate understood how gratifying it was to be able to fulfill a spiritual purpose once she started teaching in a Christian school. “I love being able to openly share and live out my faith with my students.” Kate’s passion to fulfill a spiritual purpose as a teacher in a Christian school was evident when she said, “I think it’s really important that they see how all of this is a part of God’s purpose for them . . . and to really get that . . . they don’t want to walk into that world without God . . . they need the Lord.” For Paul, the Lord gave him an understanding of Christian education which would add to his spiritual purpose of teaching from a biblical perspective. “I kind of found out here [at his school] that although my heart was not Christian education, once I got into it the Lord made it my heart.”

In this study, career insight does not have a role in the longevity of Christian school teachers. The teachers in this study did not have their career goals met because of their own personal abilities. Their career goals were met due to the opportunities that were available to them because of their decision to teach at a Christian school. The insight these teachers have was the realization and understanding that because they teach in a Christian school, they have opportunities to fulfill goals that do not impact them personally, but rather impact the students instead. For these participants, pursuing a career in teaching was not to fulfill a personal goal, but rather to have an opportunity to influence others in light of a spiritual purpose.

Finally, this study focused on the third aspect of career motivation theory which was career resilience. The results from this study answered the following sub-question: How does career resilience impact Christian school teachers’ motivation to teach? Those who can endure and overcome challenging work situations have career resilience (London, 1983). Challenging situations in the classroom or school environment can cause teachers to leave the profession

prematurely. Although Christian school teachers tend to deal with fewer problems than public school teachers, they do have their own challenges. The participants mentioned challenges such as: failing to meet their students' needs, communicating or working with difficult parents, teaching a class with significant differences in ability levels, or feeling pressured to meet parents' unrealistic expectations. Three themes emerged that helped to understand career resilience in Christian school teachers: peer support, assurance of calling, and relationship with God.

*Peer support.* Having supportive peers is one way for teachers to increase career resilience no matter where they teach. In this study, all but two of the teachers recognized that they would not be teaching without the help and support of other teachers. Cynthia is extremely thankful that God lead her to the school where she has served for over 20 years. Through the years her school has had veteran teachers who were role models for new teachers to follow. Cynthia remembered her first year and was grateful for the help and support of the veteran teachers. "They were just master teachers. They helped those of us under them come along . . . if I had gone someplace else, I don't know if I would have lasted this long . . . But they had a love for children and just really knew how to bring the best out in children. You wanted to be like them when you saw them as teachers. That's probably a lot of why I stuck at it." The testimony of the veteran teachers also inspired Leslie, who teaches at the same Christian school. In looking back at how these veteran teachers impacted her life, Leslie recalls these teachers encouraging her to "keep going" and "don't give up." Leslie also observed one thing they all had in common that continues to inspire her to continue teaching. "It's their Christian testimony. It boils down to just their Christian testimony." The lives of these veteran teachers demonstrated for Leslie that "there's no time to quit and God gives you that rest when you need it." Despite

the challenges that Cynthia and Leslie faced throughout their careers at their Christian school, the encouragement and support from veteran teachers helped the career resilience of these ladies.

*Assurance of calling.* Another theme exhibiting career resilience is the assurance that teachers had of their calling. It was not only an assurance of their calling to teach, but also an assurance that they were called to teach at their Christian school. Hope stated that her Christian school is not merely a place where she worked, but she stated it was “my mission field.” Part of the reason why Hope experienced longevity at her school is that she viewed it as a place where God called her to minister.

With almost 15 years of combined experience teaching in both the public school and at her Christian school, Kate understands the challenges and hardships that teachers face. Her career resilience is based on the assurance of her calling to teach. “It’s a hard job and there have been times when I was close to burnout and the only reason that I kept going is because this is what God has called me to do.” Those who teach for lengthy periods of time may eventually face the prospect of burnout and the temptation to walk away from teaching. Kate’s calling to teach gave her the strength to continue teaching despite the feeling of burnout.

Sharon’s career resilience has also been strengthened because of her assurance that God has called her to teach. Sometimes at the end of a difficult day, it is tempting for teachers to wonder about their choice to be a teacher. During these challenging times, Sharon reminds herself about her calling. “When I go home, and I’ve had a rough day and I say, ‘Why am I doing this?’ the Lord reminds me [that this is] what I’ve called you to do, it’s who you are” and Sharon reminds herself that “this is where I’m happy.” Having this assurance of her calling has allowed Sharon to continue teaching at her Christian school for over 20 years.

During the interview, it was evident that Mary was secure in her calling as a Christian school teacher. She understood that her calling was to be a Christian school teacher and she views her work not as a job but as a ministry. “I think it’s being all in. Wherever the Lord has called you, be all in. Make it 100%. Make it your ministry. And when you do that, it’s not really about [whether] I stay [or] do I leave; it’s just you do what the Lord’s called you to do ‘til He tells you to do something else.”

***Relationship with God.*** A third theme that strengthens career resilience is the importance of having a close relationship with God. Peers are a helpful source of encouragement during challenging times, and having the assurance of one’s calling to teach goes a long way in motivating a person to continue teaching. However, it was also important to have a close relationship with God to help strengthen career resilience. Cynthia firmly believed that a “personal relationship with the Lord that doesn’t get stale” is important. Career resilience in Christian education can be strengthened by understanding that a relationship with the Lord that is thriving and healthy will help a teacher maneuver through difficult circumstances.

As a single mother, Leslie has learned throughout the years to fully rely upon God for all her needs. Her relationship with the Lord is an important part of her life as she raises her children and teaches her students. Leslie has been motivated by staying close to the Lord through His Word, prayer, and the assurance that she is doing what God called her to do. “You just have to keep your eyes on Christ. Put your focus where it should be and then you can get through those days...”

Grace experienced a time in her career when she wrestled with the thought that she had not accomplished more in her life. She felt she was “just a teacher” and had not obtained career goals like others had done with their lives. In that challenging time in Grace’s life, she looked to

the Lord and He gave her great peace. “During a devotional time, God just got a hold of me and said, ‘You’re doing exactly what I want you to do and there’s great honor in being a teacher.’”

The Lord brought other instances into Grace’s life to help strengthen her relationship with the Lord and to solidify in her heart that her work as a teacher is important.

**Textural and structural descriptions.** After themes were generated for each participant, a textural, structural, and textural-structural description was written for each participant. A textural description was written to explain what the participant experienced pertaining to longevity in a Christian school. Next, a structural description was written to explain how the participant experienced longevity in a Christian school. Then, a textural-structural description was written to explain the essences of each participant’s experience with longevity in a Christian school and the motivating factors which supported their longevity. This process was followed to create a composite of all 12 of the participants’ experiences to extract essences of what motivated these Christian school teachers toward longevity in a Christian school. The following is a textural description of the what the participants experienced regarding what motivated their longevity in a Christian school. A structural description is included that revealed how the participants experienced longevity in a Christian school.

**Textural description.** For some, the experience of longevity in a Christian school was a journey that began with a sense of calling to teach, and for others it started with a willingness to walk through God’s open doors. In both instances, these participants had a heart to serve and to follow God wherever He led them. For those with a sense of calling to teach, their journey began when, as a young child, a high school student, or a freshman college student, they knew in their heart that God had called them to teach. Having the assurance of God’s calling to teach can be a strong motivator to continue teaching for many years in a Christian school. For others who

did not have an initial calling to teach, but were willing to walk through God's open doors, the journey toward longevity in a Christian school began with prayers asking God for His direction in their lives. Because of walking through those open doors, God lead them to be teachers.

Having a calling to teach or being willing to walk through God's open doors was the initial step in the journey toward longevity. However, other experiences contributed to their decision to continue teaching for much longer. One experience was the opportunity to spiritually impact students' lives. Christian school teachers can freely talk to their students about God, explain how to know Him as their Savior, and teach them how to grow in their relationship with God. There are opportunities to use Scripture to teach students character and to teach biblical principles in other subjects besides Bible class. The opportunity to spiritually impact students was an integral part of the teachers' experience with longevity in a Christian school.

Possessing a love for teaching also contributes to the satisfying experience with longevity in a Christian school. This love for teaching, however, goes beyond the love for teaching subject content, although that is part of the passion for teaching. What causes teachers to continue teaching is witnessing those "light bulb" moments when a student finally grasps a concept or an important lesson. For the participants, it was a rewarding experience for them to be able to contribute to the success of their students.

Another experience that contributed to longevity in a Christian school was student interaction. Interacting with students builds a relationship that continues even after the students have moved on to another grade. Engaging students during class or seeing them outside the classroom at ball games or extracurricular activities adds another level of interaction that teachers enjoyed and appreciated.

An area that teachers value, which in turn helps to motivate longevity, is the support they receive from other teachers and their administration. Knowing that other teachers had the same experiences or challenges and receiving encouragement during difficult times in one's career gives the teachers hope to keep pressing forward. Participants also felt supported when they received words of encouragement and appreciation from their administrator. Having school support can help teachers to continue long-term despite the challenging moments.

***Structural description.*** The experience of longevity in a Christian school was one in which there is a love for the students, unwavering trust in God, and faithful commitment to their work. Longevity in a Christian school is not an experience only for those who felt a sense of calling from God to teach, but longevity also occurs for those who entered teaching through God's leading and direction.

It may seem reasonable to assume that those who pursue a career in teaching must enjoy being with children or young people, otherwise they would not have chosen to teach. Part of what motivated these participants was their love for the students that they were privileged to teach. The mere presence of their students was enjoyable to these teachers as they learned about each child or young person—their likes, dislikes, abilities, and dreams. However, the interaction with the students was an integral part of the relationship that the participants loved about being a teacher. It was through these relationships with their students that they could make a connection and feel as though they were a part of their students' lives. Being in a Christian school gave the teachers opportunities to continue those relationships beyond their classrooms. Having those experiences motivated these teachers to continue teaching in their Christian schools.

Having a love for the students was only one part of the structure of what it means to experience longevity in a Christian school. Another structure that was just as evident in the lives

of these Christian school teachers was their unwavering trust in God. Although these Christian school teachers may not experience exactly the same type of challenges or the same level of challenges that public school teachers face, they still experience challenges nonetheless that can put their faith to the test. Through the process of time these teachers experienced God's divine intervention and provision which caused their faith to grow which, in turn, impacted their motivation to continue teaching. Since Christian schools do not traditionally pay their teachers the same salary that the public school teachers receive, there have been challenges for some of the teachers in providing for the needs of a family. However, these teachers experienced God's provision in that area and have come to trust that because they are doing God's will for their lives, God will always provide for their needs.

The participants' experience with longevity in a Christian school was not complete without including faithful commitment to their work. The responsibilities of a teacher go beyond simply preparing to teach lessons each day. Teachers must inform parents of their child's progress, grade papers and tests, gather materials for their lessons, and fulfill extra responsibilities such as supervising children during arrival and dismissal times, tutoring, or organizing extracurricular activities like plays, fundraisers, or academic competitions. All these other duties require extra time outside the regular classroom responsibilities that can be overwhelming for any teacher. These teachers, however, maintained a sense of commitment to their work because they were confident that they were doing what God called or wanted them to do. Their faithful commitment allowed them to persevere during challenging and uncertain times during their career as a Christian school teacher. Without that assurance of their calling, these participants would not have experienced longevity in a Christian school.

## Research Question Responses

**Central research question.** “What do Christian school teachers perceive as motivational factors toward longevity in a Christian school?” To answer this research question, it was necessary to examine the lives of Christian school teachers who experienced longevity and then to describe what they perceived as factors that motivated their longevity in Christian schools. Participants in this study had at least ten years of experience teaching in a Christian school and some had over 20 years of experience, making the results of this study valuable to the research on Christian schools, Christian education, and related areas such as teacher motivation and teacher longevity.

The main reason the participants were motivated to continue teaching in a Christian school was evident through the theme of spiritual impact. Overwhelmingly, having a spiritual impact made their work as Christian school teachers meaningful because they had a role in the spiritual lives of their students. Elaine explained that “knowing that I’m helping them grow to be used of God, however He plans to use them, making sure they have that foundation that God can use, is very important and feels very satisfying to me.” Having these opportunities for spiritual impact was possible because of a choice to teach in a Christian school.

Besides spiritual impact, other themes that emerged in understanding what motivated the participants toward longevity were calling, love of teaching, student interaction, and school support. Most of the participants indicated that they believed God called them to teach and that calling directed them during their career. Comments such as “I knew the Lord wanted me here,” and “This really is my mission field” indicated that teaching was a calling. However, included in that calling was a love to teach and interacting with students. Faith expressed “not only can I help academically . . . I can teach Christian character, life principles, life skills.” Another

participant stated that she enjoyed interacting with students “to see them laugh and sometimes I’ll see them cry when they do something wrong.” Having that opportunity to teach and to interact was motivating but continuing to teach would have been challenging if there was a lack of school support. One participant described her school as having “a culture of team spirit” and another expressed support as “working with like-minded people for a common goal.”

**Sub-question 1.** What role does career identity have in motivating Christian school teachers toward longevity? Career identity has a significant role in motivating the participants toward longevity and this was evident through the three themes that emerged: teaching identity, school identity, and permeates life. The findings revealed that these three themes can be a tremendous driving force in motivating the participants toward longevity. Statements such as, “It is who I am,” “Teaching in general is home for me,” and “I love teaching, I love what I do” reveal how much teachers identify with their work. Those who consider teaching their life often put much greater effort into their preparation and study because they believe that what they do is important for their students. An interesting discovery was that some participants had a strong school identity. Several of the participants were motivated to continue teaching because of their identity with the Christian school where they serve. One participant stated, “I totally buy in to the philosophy and the mission of this place” and another considered her school as “home” because of the special place it has in her heart.

The third theme of career identity is one that can be described as permeates life. Several of the participants expressed that teaching permeates their lives. Statements such as “I guess I eat, breathe, and live teaching” and “I rest my head in bed at night and all I’m thinking about is school.” Career identity has a significant role because as seen through the lives of these

participants, it drives them and gives them a sense of purpose in what they do and in who they are in the lives of their students.

**Sub-question 2.** What role does career insight have in motivating Christian school teachers toward longevity? The findings from this study revealed that career insight did not have a role in motivating teachers toward longevity. This study, however, produced themes that supported another perspective of career insight that applies more appropriately to Christian school teachers. They did not pursue the teaching profession because they felt they had personal abilities that would benefit them as teachers, nor did they pursue teaching to fulfill career goals. Two themes emerged that revealed a different perspective of career insight based on the experiences of the participants: opportunity over ability and spiritual purpose.

The participants did not express that they chose the teaching profession because they had certain abilities that would make them great teachers or that becoming a teacher would help them to accomplish specific career goals. Instead, what emerged as career insight for these participants was the understanding that teaching in a Christian school provided an opportunity to freely talk about God and teach biblical principles. Teaching in a Christian school provided the opportunity to “minister to the whole child” or as one participant stated that “teaching in a Christian school was more aligned with what I wanted to accomplish in a student’s life.” Their career insight was not what they had to offer as far as personal ability was concerned, but it was the understanding that teaching in a Christian school provided the opportunity to talk about the Lord and to teach biblical principles. These teachers’ career insight also revealed that having a spiritual purpose was an important motivating factor. Being able to freely talk to students about God and to teach them how to live for God gave the participants spiritual purpose. Although

London's (1983) career insight did not have a role in motivating these teachers toward longevity, this study provided a new perspective on career insight from Christian school teachers.

**Sub-question 3.** How does career resilience impact Christian school teachers' motivation to teach? Career resilience was necessary in the participants' motivation to teach because resilience helps to push teachers through the tough challenges they face throughout their career. Three themes emerged that indicated what contributed to the career resilience of the participants: peer support, assurance of calling, and relationship with God.

Some of the challenges that the participants faced were dealing with parents, understanding individual needs of students, difficult students, or having to teach a class of students with huge differences in academic ability. Many of the participants expressed how thankful they were to have peer support during their careers as teachers. One participant admitted that without the support of peers "I don't know that I could take it" and another one stated "I don't know if I would have lasted this long" referring to those who helped her when she first started teaching. Another contributor to career resilience was assurance of a calling. As mentioned earlier, many of the participants believed that God had called them to teach, and that calling has motivated them to continue teaching. Having an assurance of a calling was also important especially for career resilience. When Sharon has doubts about why she is teaching she said "the Lord reminds me because it's what I've called you to do" and that reminder motivates her to continue. Besides having an assurance, the participants expressed the importance of having a relationship with God to be able to continue long-term. One participant stated that "a personal relationship with the Lord that doesn't get stale" was important to remember because a teacher needs to be close to the Lord to be able to minister to the students.

### **Summary**

This chapter provided a description of the participants involved in this study, discussed the procedures that lead to the development of themes, and reported the results of the study by answering the research questions. It was evident that two of the three aspects of career motivation theory did apply to the lives of Christian school teachers and their motivation to teach long-term in a Christian school. Although career insight did not have a direct application to the lives of Christian school teachers, the results revealed a different perspective of career insight that was unique to the Christian school teachers who participated in this study. This study added to the literature on career motivation theory, its implications on the teaching profession, and provided an important perspective of Christian school teachers that had not been examined in previous research studies.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe motivational factors toward the longevity of Christian school teachers. This chapter summarizes the findings of this study, discusses the implications of this study in relationship to the previous studies in the literature, addresses theoretical, empirical, and practical implications, explains delimitations and limitations that affected this study, and provides recommendations for future research regarding longevity and Christian school teachers.

### **Summary of Findings**

This study explored the motivation of Christian school teachers and how London's (1983) career motivation theory applied to Christian school teachers. The central research question was: What do Christian school teachers perceive as motivational factors toward longevity in a Christian school? Based on the data collected through questionnaires, one-on-one interviews, and a focus group interview, the participants in this study perceived that having a spiritual impact on students, knowing God's calling, enjoying the act of teaching, interacting with students, and receiving support from fellow colleagues and administrators increased their motivation to continue long-term in a Christian school.

In addition to the central research question, this study also explored three sub-questions that focused on the three aspects of London's career motivation theory. The first sub-question was: What role does career identity have in motivating Christian school teachers toward longevity? Career identity had a significant role motivating many of these teachers to continue long-term in a Christian school. Three themes emerged that indicate the role of career identity in the lives of these participants: teaching identity, school identity, and permeates life.

Another question based on London's career motivation theory was: What role does career insight have in motivating Christian school teachers toward longevity? Career insight does not have a role in motivating teachers toward longevity in Christian schools. However, two themes emerged in this study that revealed a different perspective on career insight. One theme revealed a perspective that choosing a career teaching in a Christian school was more about opportunities that were possible in a Christian school rather than choosing to pursue teaching because a person's abilities are a perfect fit for teaching. Another theme that resurfaced was the spiritual purpose that these participants had in choosing Christian education. Most of the participants chose Christian education because they believed they had a spiritual purpose and not because they had specific abilities that they felt could contribute to the teaching profession.

The third research question was: How does career resilience impact Christian school teachers' motivation to teach? Career resilience helped to strengthen and sustain the motivation these teachers needed to continue teaching in a Christian school. Three themes revealed how career resilience was strengthened and sustained: peer support, assurance of calling, and a close relationship with God. If these three areas can be nurtured and strengthened, one's career resilience as a teacher will increase and strengthen resulting in an increased desire to continue teaching.

## **Discussion**

The results from this study provide information that supports and extends existing research mentioned in the literature review. This section will discuss the results of this study in relationship to career motivation theory, Christian schools, teacher motivation, teacher longevity, teacher retention, and organizational commitment. These areas are important to the success and

growth of Christian education and more research should be conducted to add to the literature in these areas.

### **Career Motivation Theory**

First, this study extends the research on London's (1983) career motivation theory. This theory was initially applied to the business field, particularly on examining the motivation of managers, but later this theory was applied to help in the development of career programs (London & Noe, 1997). Very few studies have incorporated career motivation theory as part of their theoretical framework, and the ones that have are quantitative in nature (Alnıaçık et al., 2012; Day & Allen, 2004). Therefore, not much is known about the implications of career motivation theory on the lives of individuals. Not only is the literature scant on examining career motivation theory in general, the literature offers very little research on the implications of career motivation theory and the teaching profession.

This study adds to the literature on career motivation by extending the research to include the teaching profession. This study examined the perspectives of 12 teachers with over 10 years of teaching experience in a Christian school, and the findings from this study add to existing research on career motivation theory, particularly in the areas of career identity and career resilience. Results from this study reveal that of the three aspects of career motivation theory, career identity has a significant role in motivating teachers toward longevity. Career resilience also had an important role in motivating Christian school teachers toward longevity. Results from this study indicate that career insight does not contribute to motivating Christian school teachers toward longevity. Instead, this study suggests a different perspective on career insight that would apply to Christian school teachers.

**Career identity.** As a domain of career motivation theory, career identity does have a significant role in motivating the participants toward longevity. According to London (1983), career identity entails two subdomains: work involvement and upward mobility. The responses from the participants indicate that their experiences as Christian school teachers align positively with work involvement and negatively with upward mobility. Work involvement includes the following: “job involvement, professional orientation, commitment to managerial work, and identification with the organization” (London, 1983, p. 621). Responses from the participants reflected an agreement with the aspects of job involvement and identification with the organization. Teachers can gain a sense of career identity when they feel involved in their job beyond simply teaching their students. School administrators who approach their faculty for input can bolster teachers’ motivation, especially the veteran teachers. Faith expressed, “It’s tremendously encouraging to me when my principal comes to me and says, ‘Tell me what your experience is on this,’ or ‘Tell me what you think about this.’” Having the opportunity to be involved in her job was very motivating to Faith.

Besides job involvement, another area of work involvement that resonated with some of the participants was identification with the organization. Nearly all the participants expressed a love for and an appreciation of the school that they have served for over 10 years. Both Sharon, Grace, and Mary identified with their school as being “home” for them, and Hope stated, “I believe in this place” and “I totally buy in to the philosophy and the mission of this place.” One way that Paul expressed identification with his school was to “positively promote our ministry in any way I can.” Based on the literature, I was not surprised that participants would have a strong commitment to their organization, but I was surprised to hear from more than one participant that

school is a place of “home” for them. Other studies on Christian school teachers did not find that teachers had a strong connection with their school to the point that they even likened it to home.

Another subdomain that pertains to career identity is upward mobility, which includes the following: “needs for advancement, recognition, dominance, and money” (London, 1983, p. 621). The participants did not indicate that upward mobility was an important factor in their career identity. None of the participants expressed any importance on the need to advance themselves. What they do as teachers is not about advancing themselves, but rather seeing the growth and success of their students. Sharon stated, “Seeing my students grow in the classroom spiritually [and] academically and seeing them continue from year to year” is what motivates her to continue teaching. Dominance does not seem to be relevant in being motivated toward longevity in a Christian school, and money does not affect the career identity of any of the participants. All the participants agree that money is necessary for living, but it should not be the sole factor for choosing to teach or to continue teaching. Anna understands that her school cannot afford to pay its teachers a large salary and stated that “the Lord has met my needs.” Leslie feels the same way and through experience knows that “God supplies every need” and believes that one’s pay “comes in eternity with Christ.” These teachers understand very well that they could go elsewhere or find another job if money was an important factor in their happiness. Hope and Grace have a different perspective on salary compared to the others. Money is not necessarily an issue for them because their husbands have a job that can provide for the needs of their family, which means that they can afford to teach at a Christian school.

**Career resilience.** It is important to have career resilience to be able to continue long-term in a career. The findings from this study indicate that career resilience supports the motivation of longevity in a Christian school. Career resilience entails three subdomains: “self-

efficacy, risk taking, and dependency” (London, 1983, p. 621). The self-efficacy subdomain involves: “self-esteem, need autonomy, adaptability, internal control, need achievement, initiative, need creativity, inner work standards, and development orientation” (London, 1983, p. 621). It appears that the participants in this study demonstrated career resilience through their self-efficacy. Specific areas of self-efficacy that emerged from the experiences of the participants are adaptability, need achievement, inner work standards, and development orientation.

Adaptability is the ability to continue working despite changes in the work environment (London, 1983, p. 622). Out of the 12 participants, three expressed that flexibility (adaptability) is important because teachers cannot control every situation and will sometimes need to make unexpected changes. Leslie believes that flexibility is necessary because “kids do so many different things during the day that you have to be able to keep your brain in the school mode and yet sometimes be mom.” Faith also believes that a teacher needs to be flexible because “there [are] so many things that can upset the schedule and the teacher who is not flexible will be miserable.” Mary feels that a teacher should be flexible to be able to “roll with the punches and know that it’s really going to be okay in the grand scheme of things.” These teachers value adaptability to be able to calmly work around the unexpected situations that can arise at school.

A second subdomain of self-efficacy in career resilience is need achievement, which is striving to accomplish challenging tasks with excellence. In some ways this is a mindset in which one works to accomplish tasks because of the commitment to one’s work. A committed teacher will accomplish tasks, whether he feels like it or not, because it would be in the best interest of the students. Cynthia understands how teachers feel when they would much rather do other things but instead choose to finish their school work. “Because you just have to. You are

committed to . . . you don't want the children to suffer just because you're tired . . . So if something doesn't get done, it's the vacuuming, the picking stuff up and straightening so you can get the school stuff done." Need achievement is also seen in how the participants do their work. Paul is an example of having the mindset of striving to do one's work well. "I like to think I go the extra mile . . . [to] positively promote our ministry in any way I can." He continues this thought by stating, "If I am going to show up at work, I am going to be at work and do what I need to do to promote that place and help that place along." This was the kind of mindset that Paul had toward his work even before he was a Christian.

Another subdomain of self-efficacy is inner work standards. A person with inner work standards will strive to have higher standards of accomplishing work rather than settling for mediocre work (London, 1983, p. 622). Four participants responded in a way that would reflect inner work standards. Sharon constantly thinks about what needs to be done and how she can do more. "I will do more than the average person would do." Sharon mentions staying a little while longer after school to add more things to her board or to add stickers to papers because she enjoys it and she knows the children would too. Faith shares a similar attitude about her work. "I like to find one spot, one job, and just get good at it and just keep being good." Inner work standards can also be seen in Michelle's experience as a Christian school teacher. Her experience, however, focuses on why she strives to do her best as a teacher. Michelle believes, "If I did my best for God, that's all that mattered." Michelle believes that doing her work for the Lord is what matters most. By giving her best to the Lord, she is ministering to her students.

Examining the lives of the participants also revealed that development orientation is another factor in motivating teachers toward longevity. Those with development orientation are motivated to work toward being knowledgeable in their area of work (London, 1983, p. 623).

All the participants indicated a desire to improve themselves as teachers. Although all the participants learn more about their craft by attending annual teacher conferences with their schools, they also revealed other ways to develop their knowledge and skills in teaching. One way is through observation. Four of the participants mentioned how they observe how other teachers manage their students.

The participants' personal development also contributed to their overall career resilience. Teaching is hard work and learning how to accomplish tasks more efficiently or how to communicate ideas to students can be challenging. One way that these teachers have successfully taught for over 10 years is by taking the initiative to find ways of improving their teaching skills. Some searched online for ideas on Pinterest or teacher blogs, others read books or articles that would help improve areas. For example, Michelle looked for ways to strengthen her abilities to communicate more effectively with parents because she felt that was a weak area for her. Since Paul's degree was in Youth Ministry and not teaching, he understood the need to learn techniques on his own. He read books and spent countless hours watching videos of math teachers to gain ideas on how to teach math more effectively. "I try to be a sponge whenever I hear something or hear other people talk." Paul also stated, "I try to stretch myself in making the classroom fresh and new every year. I try to look for different avenues or say hey this didn't go over very well, what can I do better. I try to self-analyze a lot." His dedication in personal development increased his ability to teach and helped him to be able to teach for over 10 years. Like Paul, Hope also was not formally trained to be a teacher, yet she worked diligently to improve herself as a teacher. "I spend so much of my personal time and personal money (some) trying to be better . . . I'm always looking for a different way to explain something, a different manipulative in math that really helps."

Another means of developing knowledge and skills in teaching is by seeking the advice of other teachers. Throughout their careers as teachers, all but one specifically mentioned that they talked to other teachers to get ideas or to ask questions. Kate often meets with another teacher friend to bounce ideas off each other and to talk about ways they could improve their teaching. Having that kind of connection with another teacher is invaluable as they motivate each other to continue doing the work they were called to do. The participants understood that there was always room for improvement and learning from the experiences of other teachers, and in some cases older veteran teachers, provided valuable insight that helped these teachers to continue teaching.

Although all the participants had a personal desire to increase in their knowledge and skills in teaching, only three of the 12 participants pursued further education beyond a college degree. Elaine, Faith, and Kate were the only teachers who have earned a master's degree. Grace has considered pursuing a master's degree, but the others did not mention the desire to earn a graduate degree. This study revealed that having career resilience enables a teacher to continue long-term in a Christian school, not a master's degree. Nearly all the participants in the study do not have a graduate degree in education, yet they managed to remain motivated toward longevity in a Christian school.

**Career insight.** London (1983) described career insight as “the extent to which the person has realistic perceptions of him or herself and the organization and relates these perceptions to career goals” (p. 621). Career insight is comprised of the following: goal clarity, path goal clarity, goal flexibility, need change, social perceptiveness, self-objectivity, realism of expectations, career decision making, and future time orientation (London, 1983, p. 622-623).

These areas pertain to achieving career goals and how one's abilities and expectations affect the career goals.

According to the findings of this study, career insight did not have a role in motivating Christian teachers toward longevity. The results of this study revealed a different perspective of career insight than the one by London. The participants' career insight did not relate to abilities they perceived they could offer to the teaching profession, neither did they pursue teaching as a means of fulfilling career goals. None of the participants stated that they chose a teaching career because they had specific abilities that they felt were important or necessary to be a teacher. Instead, their career insight reflected an understanding of the opportunities they could have by teaching in a Christian school. Teaching in a Christian school provided opportunities to teach from a biblical perspective and to spiritually impact the lives of their students. The teachers' motivation to teach was not based on their personal abilities to teach, but rather the opportunities they had to reach their students for Christ simply because they chose to teach at a Christian school.

According to the participants' responses, career insight, has nothing to do with personal abilities and goals, but rather an understanding of the opportunities that teachers have to minister. Elaine stated, "I wanted to be able to minister...to the whole child." Her career insight had nothing to do with her ability to minister, but rather the opportunity she had to minister to the whole child because she taught at a Christian school. Elaine knew that if she wanted to have a spiritual ministry with children as a teacher, her best option was to teach at a Christian school. Paul also had a different experience with career insight. It began when he started teaching and realized the importance of Christian education. "I kind of found out here [at the school] that although my heart was not Christian education, once I got into it the Lord made it my heart."

Paul went into teaching because the Lord opened the doors for him to teach rather than be a youth pastor. He did not choose to be a teacher because he felt he had specific abilities that would make him a successful teacher. Instead, Paul experienced how God can lead a person to follow His will and give that person the ability or desire to accomplish God's will. Career insight, for the participants in this study, had more to do with understanding that teaching in a Christian school provides opportunities to minister to children and to fulfill spiritual purposes rather than personal goals.

### **Christian Schools**

Christian schools provide a service to parents who desire to have their children educated in an environment where the Scripture is taught and academic subjects are presented with a biblical worldview. Therefore, research related to Christian schools and Christian school teachers is necessary for Christian education to continue and thrive in future generations.

Most Christian schools are members of nationwide accreditation organizations such as Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) and American Association of Christian Schools (AACCS) or a regional accreditation organization such as Florida Association of Christian Colleges and Schools (FACCS). Previous studies by Hardman (2010) and Teodori (2015) have limited their research to examine teachers at ACSI schools. This study extends the literature on Christian schools by including the perspectives of teachers employed at schools that are members of other accreditation organizations like AACCS and FACCS. Not all Christian schools are ACSI members, therefore, it is important to include the perspectives of teachers from Christian schools associated with other accreditation organizations because the perspectives of these teachers can also make important contributions to Christian education.

## **Teacher Motivation**

Besides research pertaining to Christian schools, this study contributes to the literature on teacher motivation. Most of the research on teacher motivation examines the perspectives and experiences of public school teachers with fewer studies pertaining to teachers in private schools. Since public schools are more prevalent than private schools, it would make sense that more research would be found in the literature. However, available research about private schools do exist, albeit the research mainly focuses on Catholic schools. More studies about Christian schools are necessary not only because there are fewer studies available, but also because those involved in Christian education should have up-to-date research and information that can assist them in establishing successful Christian schools and teachers. This study not only provides current information about 12 Christian school teachers and their motivation towards longevity in Christian schools but it also provides insight for those involved in Christian education to help retain teachers and bolster their motivation to continue teaching.

Although Christian schools and Catholic schools are private, religious schools, the main difference between Catholic and Christian schools primarily has to do with doctrine. Despite the difference in doctrine, one of the findings of my study corroborates with Convey's (2014) study, which found that student interaction was an important factor in motivating Catholic teachers to teach. This corroboration was interesting to discover because a majority of the participants in Convey's (2014) study taught at their Catholic school for five or fewer years, compared to my study which examined participants with 10 or more years of teaching experience in a Christian school. These two studies indicate that student interaction is an important motivating factor for teachers regardless of what type of school they teach at or how many years of experience they have in teaching. In addition, this study also corroborates with research concerning veteran

public school teachers and the importance of relationships and student interaction (Beasley, 2013; Boe, 2013; Kearney, 2011; Kokka, 2016; Richardson, 2014). It appears that student interaction is a motivating factor for all teachers to continue teaching, regardless of whether they teach in a public school or a small Christian school.

In addition to the importance of student interaction, Ryan and Deci (2000) asserted that people who are passionate about what they do tend to be more motivated. In my study, it was evident that the teachers were passionate about teaching in a Christian school, particularly those who initially began their teaching career in a public school. The results from my study revealed that the teachers had a love of teaching and that love for teaching easily motivated them to continue long-term. Ryan and Deci (2000) also asserted that those who are typically passionate about what they do are intrinsically motivated. My study also supports the significant role that intrinsic motivation has on the overall success and endurance of Christian school teachers.

A study done by Mertler (2016) examined public and charter school teachers in Arizona and found that teachers were motivated through their sense of achievement, interpersonal relationships with students, and recognition. The study also discovered that salary influenced teachers' decisions to continue teaching, and they were more likely to stay if they received an increase in salary. My study on the experiences of Christian school teachers does not corroborate with the findings in Mertler's (2016) study. The Christian school teachers in my study were not concerned about their sense of achievement, recognition, and even salary. The difference may be due to the spiritual calling that the Christian school teachers had and the understanding that their calling as teachers is ultimately to serve the Lord.

## **Teacher Longevity**

Besides teacher motivation, this study also contributes to research regarding teacher longevity. The main goal for Christian schools is to retain their teachers by motivating toward longevity. My study sought to find answers for this by examining the lives of veteran Christian school teachers through a qualitative research design, which adds to other qualitative research studies on teacher longevity (Beasley, 2013; Boe, 2013; Cohen, 2009; Kearney, 2011; Kokka, 2016; Myers, 2008; Richardson, 2014; Teodori, 2015).

Interestingly, a common theme found in qualitative studies that has emerged again was the importance of student interaction (Beasley, 2013; Boe, 2013; Kearney, 2011; Kokka, 2016; Richardson, 2014). My study added to the qualitative literature on teacher longevity and also supported the role of student interaction in teachers' decisions toward longevity. Several of the participants in my study enjoyed the opportunities they had to interact with their students to learn more about them on a personal level, and they also enjoyed opportunities to interact with students outside of the classroom. Student interaction provides an opportunity for Christian school teachers to show their students genuine love, concern, and interest.

Another theme found in qualitative studies on teacher longevity was the importance of having a support system (Boe, 2013; Kearney, 2011; Kokka, 2016; Myers, 2008; Richardson, 2014). My study agreed with others that a support system had an essential part in helping teachers to navigate through challenging seasons in their teaching career. The support system does not only include fellow colleagues, but also the administration and their efforts to support their teachers. It was interesting to notice that school support was a common motivating factor for both public and Christian school teachers.

This study specifically extends research conducted by Hardman (2010) and Teodori (2015) on the longevity of Christian school teachers, but it differs from those studies in two ways. First, Hardman's (2010) quantitative study examined teachers with more than 10 years of teaching experience in schools that were only affiliated with the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI). My study examined teachers with more than 10 years of teaching experience from schools that are not necessarily affiliated with ACSI. The perspectives of teachers from schools other than those affiliated with ACSI should also be included to gain a broader understanding of longevity in Christian schools. Second, Teodori's (2015) qualitative study examined Christian school teachers with at least three years of experience. My study examined Christian school teachers with over 10 years of experience, including a few who had over 20 years of teaching experience at a Christian school. I purposefully chose teachers with over 10 years of experience because they have already contributed over a decade of work in a Christian school which indicated their intention to continue long-term. Future teachers and beginner teachers can greatly benefit from learning about the experiences of those who have served for over a decade in Christian education.

Another contributor to teacher longevity, according to a study by Boe (2013), indicated that teachers of students with emotional and/or behavioral disorder achieved longevity due to the sense of "family" that the teachers experienced amongst themselves. Several participants in my study shared the same feelings about their colleagues and even described school like "home" to them. The reason why they continue year after year was due to their view of school as a second home to them. Viewing one's school as "home" was a unique contribution from my study that is not found in existing studies on teacher longevity.

According to the literature other contributors to longevity are calling (Hardman, 2010; Myers, 2008; Teodori, 2015) and influence (Hardman, 2010; Kokka, 2016). Those who believe God called them to teach have strong motivation to continue teaching long-term or until the Lord directs them a different way. Having an opportunity to influence students also provided motivation to continue teaching. My study agrees that calling and influence are essential in the lives of Christian school teachers who desire to continue long-term at their Christian school. Many of the participants in my study felt strongly about the role their calling has on their ability and motivation to continue teaching. Their calling gives them the assurance to continue despite the challenges they faced during their career.

### **Teacher Retention**

When examining teacher motivation and longevity, it is necessary to include teacher retention. The discussion on teacher retention is applicable to this study because schools with teachers who are motivated to continue teaching will have higher retention. Schools must understand and learn how to retain their teachers to be able to successfully continue. The literature on teacher retention indicated some areas that affect retention such as work environment, professional development, and induction and mentoring programs (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008; Brill & McCartney, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Mihans, 2008).

Teachers in Christian schools typically do not have to worry about the safety of their work environment, compared to some teachers in the public schools. Participants in this study described a positive work environment, one in which they enjoyed working with the children and fellow faculty members. In addition, professional development was not a motivating factor in the teachers' decisions to continue long-term. Many indicated they had professional

development either through weekly faculty meetings or at annual school conferences for Christian educators.

Although the concept of an induction or mentoring program was mentioned in the literature as a means of increasing teacher retention, participants in my study did not indicate that they participated in an induction or mentoring program. Instead, what many of the participants discussed was their appreciation for the guidance and advice given to them from older, experienced teachers at the school. The example of veteran teachers inspired some of the participants to strive toward excellence and to follow the examples of these veteran teachers. One participant was so greatly impacted by the help she received from veteran teachers when she first started teaching that she purposefully sets aside time to help new teachers at her school. This kind of camaraderie and help from older, veteran teachers has been shown consistently to help with teacher retention.

### **Organizational Commitment**

The last area of related literature to this study is organizational commitment. According to Mowday et al. (1979), employees with organizational commitment agree with and abide by the organization's goals and values, work diligently for the organization, and desire to remain with the organization. In my study, all the participants except two seem to embody strong organizational commitment. For a few participants, their organizational commitment was so strong that they stated that they could not imagine teaching anywhere else.

The literature on organizational commitment has also included studies focused on a variety of organizations, including educational institutions. Studies have also been conducted examining the organizational commitment of school leaders (Tatlah et al. , 2011), teachers (Collie et al., 2011), and Catholic schools (Squillini, 2013). My study extended the literature on

organizational commitment, particularly in Christian schools, and included the perspectives of Christian school teachers. The study also corroborated with London and Noe's (1997) assertion that a close relationship exists between organizational commitment and career identity. The participants in my study with strong career identity also expressed strong organizational commitment to their school. My study revealed that longevity in a Christian school was the result of strong organizational commitment from the teachers.

### **Implications**

This study on the experiences of Christian school teachers and their motivation toward longevity in a Christian school revealed specific implications that can benefit those who are involved in Christian education. This section discusses theoretical, empirical, and practical implications for Christian school administrators, teachers, and teacher educators at Christian colleges.

#### **Theoretical Implications**

Although originally intended to examine the career choices of those outside the realm of education, this study revealed that London's (1983) career motivation theory applies to Christian education, particularly in two of the three aspects of the theory—career identity and career resilience.

Those who are involved in Christian education must understand the importance of career identity. Career identity is the interconnectedness of one's self-image and one's career (London, 1983). In this study, the participants demonstrated strong career identity as Christian school teachers that for some, teaching permeated their lives. Christian school teachers need to understand that having strong career identity can greatly motivate them to continue teaching long-term in their Christian schools. Having strong career identity can also help teachers to view

their influence as Christians differently because Christian school teachers should be examples for their students to follow.

Christian school administrators and teacher educators at Christian colleges must also understand how London's (1983) theory applies to education. For Christian school administrators, examining career identity can provide insight in understanding the lives of the veteran teachers at their schools. Teacher educators at Christian colleges can also benefit from examining this aspect of career motivation theory because they interact with students who aspire to be teachers and can make a significant contribution to Christian education.

The second aspect of career motivation theory that applies to those involved in Christian education is career resilience. People who endure and overcome challenging work situations have career resilience (London, 1983). The results of this study clearly indicate that career resilience applies to Christian school teachers and influences their longevity in Christian schools. Christian school teachers would benefit from learning more about career resilience to increase their motivation to continuing long-term not only as a teacher, but also as a teacher in a Christian school. Christian school administrators who want a solid, dedicated faculty that will remain long-term should seriously consider career resilience and develop ways to foster this in the lives of their faculty. Teacher educators at Christian colleges and universities should also consider career resilience and work toward implementing purposeful strategies in educating future teachers about the necessity for career resilience. This is important since teacher burnout is a common occurrence in the teaching profession.

The third aspect of career motivation theory is career insight. According to London (1983), a person has career insight when he chooses a career that matches his abilities and enables him to fulfill desired career goals. The results from this study indicate that career

insight, according to its original intent by London (1983), does not have a role in the longevity of Christian school teachers. These teachers did not believe that their personal abilities resulted in making a spiritual impact on their students. Instead, they understood that they were able to make a spiritual impact because they chose to teach in a Christian school where they had opportunities to freely discuss spiritual matters with their students and invest in their students' spiritual development.

Although only two of the three aspects of London's (1983) career motivation theory specifically apply to the teaching profession, those involved in Christian education should not discredit this theory but seriously consider how career identity and career resilience can be bolstered in the lives of both current and future Christian school teachers. This will not only help to motivate teachers to teach in Christian schools, but it will also help to strengthen the impact of Christian education in general.

### **Empirical Implications**

Besides discussing theoretical implications of this study, it is also necessary to consider empirical implications based on the related literature in chapter two. This section will address empirical implications related to Christian schools, teacher motivation, teacher longevity, teacher retention, and organizational commitment.

**Christian schools.** Since there are fewer Christian schools available compared to public schools, it is in the best interest of those involved in Christian education to help Christian schools to thrive and to encourage the establishment of more Christian schools in areas that lack a Christian influence in education. For some of the participants in this study, it was because of the availability of a Christian school that they chose to enroll their children at the school, which in turn lead them to teach in a Christian school. This study emphasizes the importance of Christian

schools to those who are seeking for an alternative besides the public school. A thriving Christian school also gives the parents of the children enrolled at the school confidence that the school is effective in educating their children because there are many teachers at the school who are dedicated to their jobs and to the school itself.

Potential teachers who want to dedicate their lives in educating students from a biblical perspective want to be a part of a Christian school where they can make a difference and have a spiritual impact on the lives of their students. Christian schools need those kinds of teachers to accomplish the purpose of reaching students for Christ and providing an excellent academic experience.

Teacher educators at Christian colleges should strive to steer future teachers toward a ministry in Christian schools and emphasize that teaching in a Christian school allows for great freedom and opportunities to lead students to Christ, to instruct them in spiritual growth, and to teach all the subjects from a biblical perspective. All the participants in this study indicated how important it was to be able to freely talk about the Lord and teach from a biblical perspective. Christian schools should be able to depend on Christian colleges to promote Christian education to those interested in the teaching profession.

**Teacher motivation.** The success of any Christian school depends on how motivated its teachers are toward fulfilling their duties. Christian school teachers must strive to increase and maintain their motivation to teach. Leaders in Christian schools can assist in this area, but Christian school teachers must learn how to motivate themselves. The participants in this study reiterated the importance of knowing their calling to teach and constantly assuring themselves of their calling when they faced challenging times in their career. Each year Christian school teachers can benefit greatly by renewing their sense of calling and encouraging their colleagues

by reminding them of their calling to teach. The shared experiences of Christian school teachers make it much easier to encourage and admonish each other when faced with challenging situations or the realities of teacher burnout.

Christian school administrators must realize the importance of fostering and maintaining teacher motivation. The participants in this study not only appreciated the camaraderie they had with their colleagues, but they also appreciated the encouragement and support they received from their administrators. If Christian schools are to thrive and be effective in educating students, administrators must diligently work toward motivating their teachers in their work. They can do this simply by acknowledging the teachers' faithfulness and diligence through individual meetings with teachers and at faculty meetings. The participants expressed that a simple word of encouragement or recognition for hard work was all that they needed to remain motivated. Administrators who also consult their teachers for their opinion or experience in a matter is highly motivating for the teachers because they feel like they are an important part of the school.

Teacher motivation can also be emphasized by teacher educators at Christian colleges. They have an opportunity to teach future teachers not only how to teach but they should also point out the realities of being a teacher such as challenges with difficult students, helping struggling students, or working through the demands of grading, lesson planning, and communicating with parents. Future teachers will adjust to a career in teaching better if they hear about the realities of teaching and learn how to navigate through those challenging times. Teacher educators at Christian colleges can strive to emphasize the significance of having a calling to teach, the necessity of depending on the Lord for wisdom and guidance, and the necessity of learning how to motivate oneself to continue teaching. The participants in this study

acknowledged that their relationship with God was crucial in helping them to endure challenging times in their career.

**Teacher longevity.** Christian schools benefit from the longevity of effective teachers because they will have a reputation of having a qualified faculty with years of teaching experience. Teachers with longevity can educate and influence several children within a family and can also teach two generations within a family. Parents come to trust those teachers that are effective and demonstrate faithfulness in a school. Christian school administrators can ensure the continued success of their Christian school by promoting longevity with the faculty. A Christian school can demonstrate its commitment to excellence by having many teachers with longevity at the school.

Christian school teachers with longevity can be an inspiration to new or beginning teachers by demonstrating how to handle challenging situations and what it means to truly serve the students and their parents. Several of the participants appreciated the example and testimony of veteran teachers in their school and aspire to be that same example to others.

Teacher longevity can also be instilled through teacher educators. Future teachers can benefit from learning about teacher longevity, so they can begin to develop a mindset of longevity and dedication to their work as a teacher. They can begin to understand the benefit of committing to serve in one school rather than bouncing from school to school when they are dissatisfied.

**Teacher retention.** Christian schools with high attrition cause administrators to constantly search for replacements. This can be quite challenging for administrators because they must search for teachers who will fit well with the goals and purposes of the school, and who would be willing to teach for a private school that pays less than what teachers make at

public schools. Administrators must be vigilant in providing an environment where teachers want to stay and continue teaching. If the school constantly has turnover, it runs the risk of losing the confidence of the parents who have children enrolled in the school.

Teacher retention should also be discussed by teacher educators to help future teachers understand that they contribute to the overall success of a Christian school by staying and being faithful to do their duties as a teacher. Future teachers need to understand the reality of teacher attrition and that teachers do leave the profession within the first few years due to various reasons. Teacher educators can discuss some causes for teacher attrition and how future teachers can navigate through those challenges to successfully remain in the teaching profession.

**Organizational commitment.** Organizations benefit when they have employees who are committed to the success of that organization. Christian school teachers can be committed to their school if the administrator fosters a spirit of commitment among the faculty. If both Christian school teachers and future Christian school teachers understand the importance of Christian education and the significant role of Christian schools as an alternative to public education, it will strengthen their commitment to Christian education and Christian schools. It is ultimately the parents' responsibility to educate their children, but Christian schools can offer an alternative to public schools and they can reinforce biblical thinking and principles that parents are trying to instill in their children.

### **Practical Implications**

Lastly, it would be beneficial to discuss practical implications based on the results of this study. These practical implications provide a plan of action for those involved in Christian education to help increase teachers' motivation toward longevity in Christian schools.

**Christian school administrators.** Leaders in a Christian school are responsible not only for the safety and education of the students, but they are also responsible to hire effective, competent teachers and to provide the necessary support for teachers to be successful. A lack of administrative oversight can greatly affect the attrition and retention of its teachers. Beginning teachers need support and encouragement to be able to adjust to the many demands of being a teacher. Experienced teachers, whether they have taught for only three years or over 20 years, also need support and encouragement to continue teaching. They may not struggle in the same areas as new teachers, but they will face challenges in other areas such as apathy or health.

There are several recommendations that would be helpful for Christian school administrators. First, according to the experiences of the participants, it would be in the administrator's best interest to establish and build a culture of support in the Christian school. Some of the participants indicated that they were grateful to work in an environment where they loved going to school and appreciated the camaraderie of fellow teachers. Having a culture of support is important for the teachers to be able to continue long-term. Administrators should encourage faculty to pray for one another, be available to help and encourage fellow colleagues, and offer classroom advice and tips. This is especially important for the new teachers. The first year can be less overwhelming when other teachers come alongside to help new teachers to adjust. Some of the participants mentioned how much they appreciated their daily faculty meetings in the morning where they are admonished in God's Word and given instruction for professional development. Administrators can also create a mentoring system for the new teachers. This will benefit the new teachers who have curriculum questions or need advice on teaching or behavior management. A mentoring program will also help veteran teachers to assume a mentoring role that will encourage and inspire the new teachers. Learning from the

experiences of veteran teachers can be highly motivating and can influence new teachers to want to continue teaching long-term. Veteran teachers involved in mentoring program can also find a sense of satisfaction in helping to contribute to the overall success and effectiveness of their Christian school, which can also bolster their motivation to continue teaching.

Another recommendation to bolster motivation would be for Christian school administrators to remind the teachers of their calling and commitment to teach. Almost all the teachers in this study indicated that they had a calling to teach. Sometimes teachers need to be reminded of their calling to teach, especially when they are going through challenging circumstances. Sharon, like some of the other participants, attributes her longevity to the confidence she had in God's calling for her life. It would help all teachers in the school to be reminded of their calling and how they can trust God to fulfill His calling in their lives. In addition to reminding teachers of their calling to teach, Christian school administrators should also encourage their teachers to remember that what they do each day in the lives of their students matters greatly and that all their work and efforts as teachers has a purpose and will not be in vain.

Perhaps the most important recommendation for administrators is to proactively give encouragement and affirmation to their faculty. They can do this simply by acknowledging the teachers' faithfulness and diligence through individual meetings with teachers and at faculty meetings. Motivation increased when the participants received encouragement from colleagues or their administrator, or when they received affirmation from their administrator regarding their effectiveness as a teacher. Participants in the focus group indicated that it was highly motivating when their administrators asked for their opinion or consulted them for input to make informed decisions.

**Christian school teachers.** Christian school teachers have a significant role not only in educating students academically, but also influencing students spiritually by leading students to Christ and teaching them how to grow in their relationship and walk with the Lord. It is very important for Christian school teachers to be motivated to continue long-term in a Christian school. There are ways to increase and sustain their motivation to continue teaching.

One recommendation for experienced Christian school teachers is to be proactive in assisting new teachers with their transition into teaching. Seven of the participants expressed appreciation for the example, encouragement, and guidance of veteran teachers. For Cynthia and Leslie, it was through the example of veteran teachers at their school that inspired them to continue teaching. Veteran teachers can be a valuable resource for new and beginning teachers because veteran teachers can mentor and encourage these teachers. Veteran teachers can influence a new teacher's attitude toward long-term teaching and veteran teachers can demonstrate the joy and satisfaction of teaching in a Christian ministry.

Another recommendation, based on the findings from this study, is for Christian school teachers to foster a culture of support and encouragement among the other teachers at the school. Having a culture of support among the teachers can help to sustain teachers' motivation to teach. Galatians 6:2 states, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." The responsibilities and duties of being a teacher can be overwhelming and burdensome at times. Fostering a culture of support means that teachers take the initiative to lift one another's burdens by being available to be a listening ear, praying for one another, and giving each other words of encouragement. Establishing and sustaining a culture of support can be made possible when the teachers create an environment of camaraderie. Several of the participants mentioned that they

appreciated the closeness and the support of the other teachers in the school. Having a culture of support can make a huge difference in a teacher's decision to continue teaching.

**Teacher educators.** Institutes of higher education have an important role in educating and preparing students for work in specific careers. Faculty who are part of Schools of Education have a significant opportunity to prepare students to be effective teachers in schools across the country. Teacher educators should strive to prepare their students to be effective teachers who can provide an excellent education for future generations of children.

Based on the experiences of the participants, there are some recommendations for the faculty in Schools of Education. First, teacher educators should teach students how to deal with challenging situations such as teaching and managing difficult students, parent-teacher relationships, and meeting the individual needs of the students. These can be difficult areas for new teachers to manage and without sufficient knowledge or support, new teachers may choose to leave the profession due to frustration in these areas.

Faculty in Schools of Education should also consider teaching students the importance of being a committed teacher. Schools need teachers who will be committed to their work and who will work to overcome challenges they face. Schools benefit when there is less attrition and a higher retention of dedicated teachers.

The most important recommendation for Schools of Education in Christian colleges is to encourage students to teach in a Christian school. More emphasis is needed on the purpose and importance of Christian education and the opportunities teachers have in Christian schools to openly and freely teach from a biblical perspective. Many students desire to teach in a public school so they can be salt and light in an environment that desperately needs it. However, the Christian philosophy of education contradicts the philosophy of the public education system and

therefore greatly affects the Christian teacher's effectiveness and responsibility of being a light to the world. More students in Christian colleges and universities who desire to be a teacher should be encouraged to teach in a Christian school where they can freely proclaim Christ and teach from a biblical perspective. There are many Christian schools who are seeking for more teachers to fill in the gaps and who can replace those who have been so faithful for many years and are now seeking to retire from teaching.

### **Delimitations and Limitations**

In any qualitative research study, there are delimitations and limitations that must be addressed. Delimitations are choices that restrict the study to be designed in a way that would assist in answering the research questions. The main delimitation in this study required that the participants have at least 10 years of teaching experience in a Christian school. This was necessary because according to the literature on veteran teachers, many considered teachers with longevity to have at least 10 years of teaching experience. The purpose of this study was to understand what factors contributed to the motivation of Christian school teachers to remain long-term in Christian schools. To understand the experience of longevity, it was necessary to only select participants with 10 or more years of experience.

Another delimitation of this study required that the participants teach at a Christian school. Most of the research on classroom teachers focuses on public school teachers, and studies which have focused on private schools have been predominantly on Catholic school teachers and not so much on Christian school teachers. Since many Christian schools exist across the United States, it is important to conduct more research that focuses on the perspectives of Christian school teachers. This will benefit those in leadership positions at Christian schools as they make decisions in hiring and retaining teachers. Although Christian schools tend to have

a smaller population of students compared to public schools, they are not exempt from facing problems with teacher attrition. Christian schools cannot afford to lose effective teachers; therefore, it is important to conduct more research about Christian school teachers to provide information that can help leaders of Christian schools in retaining and motivating their teachers.

A third delimitation to this study was to select teachers who were still actively teaching and exclude retired Christian school teachers. I wanted to focus on the perspectives of teachers who were still in the profession who could share their experiences not only from the past but their current feelings about their lives as teachers. Those who are retired may not remember exactly how they felt or feel this same passion about teaching as someone who is still teaching.

A fourth delimitation to this study was limiting the setting of the study to schools that were within 80 miles of where I am located. Since one method of data collection was one-on-one interviews, I wanted schools that I could reasonably drive to for interviews and that would be reasonable for participants to drive if they chose to participate in the focus group study. I could have extended the setting to beyond 80 miles and interviewed participants via Skype, but I wanted to meet each participant in person and conduct the interviews face-to-face to gain a better perspective of each teacher and so the interview would be more personable.

Besides delimitations, this study also had limitations that should be mentioned for the sake of future research regarding this topic of motivating Christian school teachers toward longevity. One limitation was that the results reported in this study are predominantly from a female perspective. Out of the 12 participants, only one was male. If more male participants were involved in this study, there could be wider variation in the teachers' perceptions of teaching in a Christian school and a more balanced perspective between the genders would have

been included. When I contacted teachers to participate in this study, there were other men that I contacted but Paul was the only male that volunteered to participate in my study.

Another limitation to this study was the lack of ethnic variety among the participants. All the participants are of Caucasian descent except for one who is of Brazilian descent. It would have been interesting to discover if cultural differences in the participants would have offered a unique perspective of teaching in a Christian school. Most of the population in this particular region is of Caucasian descent so it is not surprising that most of the participants would be Caucasian.

A third limitation was the time the participants had to answer the questionnaire. When I met with the participants I had them complete the questionnaire before we conducted the interview. Although I informed the participants that they could take their time answering the questions, part of me wonders if they would have provided more information if they completed the questionnaire on their own time rather than right before the interview.

The fourth limitation was the number of participants I could recruit for this study. I would have had more data to help answer my research questions if I had 15 participants, but I was only able to recruit 12. If I had not been pressed for time to complete my study, I would have contacted more schools to recruit three more teachers.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

It would be beneficial to add more information to the literature regarding Christian school teachers because there are many who are involved in Christian education that could benefit from more research that explores the experiences of Christian school teachers and Christian education.

Recommendations for further study must include more qualitative research to explore and to understand the experiences of Christian school teachers. One recommendation is to conduct a

case study on a teacher who has over 20 years of experience teaching at a Christian school to provide an in-depth look at that teacher's experiences. The results from that study could inform Christian school administrators and future teachers as to what influences teacher longevity in a Christian school. A case study could also examine a specific Christian school with high teacher retention to examine how the leadership in that school supports and motivates its teachers toward longevity. It would be interesting to discover whether the school has intentional strategies to motivate its teachers and how those strategies are implemented. This would be helpful for Christian school administrators to understand what they can do to foster and sustain longevity in their schools.

In addition to case studies, ethnographic research is needed to understand the experiences, values, and culture of Christian school teachers. Realist ethnography would be beneficial in studying Christian school teachers because it uses an objective method of examining the study rather than what Creswell (2007) describes as critical ethnography, which seeks to draw attention and defend groups of people who have been unfairly treated.

Future research on Christian school teachers could also be explored through grounded theory research. The purpose of grounded theory is to discover a theory that could explain certain practices or experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2007). McLaughlin (2005) conducted a grounded theory study which examined the lives of seven Christian school teachers and their experiences with motivation and longevity in a Christian school. The result of McLaughlin's (2005) study was the development of a theory of faithfulness. Grounded theory studies examining the lives of Christian school teachers can also provide more information in the literature pertaining to teachers in Christian schools. The results from the various research designs previously mentioned could provide valuable information as to the role veteran teachers

in a Christian school can have in creating a culture of longevity and what Christian schools can do to promote and instill longevity in their schools.

Besides recommendations for future research and specific research designs, there are several practical recommendations that would extend this research study. One recommendation is to extend this current research study to other areas in the United States to discover how teachers in other areas would respond. This study took place in the Southeast region of the United States. Replicating this study in other regions like the Midwest or the Northeast would provide other perspectives about the longevity of Christian school teachers. It would be interesting to understand the experiences of Christian school teachers across the United States and how career motivation theory can be applied to their experiences with motivation to teach in a Christian school.

Another recommendation is to conduct research on motivating factors toward the longevity of male Christian school teachers. This was brought to my attention during an interview when one of the participants commented that compared to women, there are so few male teachers in Christian schools. The participant stated that perhaps there are fewer men because a Christian school does not offer enough salary for a man to support his family. Interviewing male Christian school teachers with a family could provide helpful insight into how they managed to continue in a Christian school. The results can also provide helpful information for Christian school administrators in hiring and retaining male teachers. Understanding what male Christian school teachers perceive as motivating factors toward longevity and comparing their perceptions to female Christian school teachers could provide an insightful perspective.

A third recommendation is to conduct further study on the career insight aspect of London's (1983) career motivation theory. The findings from this study revealed a different

perspective on career insight than London's definition of career insight. It would be beneficial to conduct a study that examines career insight in both public and Christian school teachers to discover how career insight is demonstrated in the two groups of teachers. Would Christian school teachers' career insight differ from public school teachers simply because of teaching in a religious organization?

### **Summary**

This study examined the lived experiences of 12 Christian school teachers in the Southeast to discover what they perceived as motivating factors toward their longevity in a Christian school. Data collected through questionnaires, one-on-one interviews, and a focus group interview provided information that the participants perceived that having a spiritual impact on students, knowing God's calling, enjoying the act of teaching, interacting with students, and receiving support from fellow colleagues and administrators increased their motivation to continue long-term in a Christian school.

After examining the lives of these 12 Christian school teachers, I was inspired to see how dedicated these teachers were to what God has called them to do in their respective schools. These teachers were dedicated to not only providing an excellent education for their students, but they were even more passionate about pointing their students to Christ and to teach their students how to grow in the Lord and how to live for Him. This has inspired me personally to be faithful in doing what God has called me to do—teaching and training the next generation of teachers who will impact students for Christ.

This study revealed to me the importance of sharing with future teachers the blessings of teaching in a Christian school ministry. Having the freedom to share the Gospel with students was one of the main reasons why these teachers chose to teach in a Christian school. These

teachers had the freedom to integrate biblical principles throughout the day and did not have to be concerned about losing their jobs or suppressing their faith. It is important for future teachers to see Christian schools as an open door to evangelize children and to teach them how to grow and serve the Lord. But it is also important for future teachers to see that their best opportunities to have a spiritual impact on students is through Christian education.

This study also revealed how important the Christian school culture is to the retention and longevity of its teachers. Christian schools, by their nature of having a smaller faculty, cannot afford to lose their teachers. It is vital for Christian school administrators to foster and maintain a culture of support within their schools to retain and motivate teachers toward longevity in their schools. The participants in this study expressed how they appreciated the support of their administrators through sharing words of encouragement. Most of the attention sometimes is focused on new or beginning teachers and helping to motivate them through the challenges of teaching for the first time. Although veteran teachers do not need as much guidance, they do need words of encouragement and affirmation from their administrators to motivate them to continue. The stresses and challenges teachers face do not disappear simply because one has taught for over 10 years. Sometimes staying motivated can be the challenge for veteran teachers. Not only is it important for Christian school administrators to foster and maintain a culture of support for their teachers, but it is also important for Christian school teachers to foster a culture of support for each other. This study revealed how motivating it can be for teachers to have the example of other teachers to follow and to have a sense of camaraderie among the faculty. Teachers are the best sources of encouragement for each other because they all share the same experiences and know how it feels to face challenging circumstances. Teachers need to foster a culture of support for each other. Having strong faculty support will not only benefit the

reputation of the school, but it will also benefit the students and the parents whom the teachers serve.

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**APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT LETTER**

Dear Fellow Christian Educator:

My name is Rochelle Achuff, a doctoral candidate at Liberty University's School of Education. I would like to invite you to consider participating in a research study which attempts to discover the motivation behind the longevity of Christian school teachers. More research is needed to explore the experiences of Christian school teachers. You have an opportunity to contribute information that can inform future Christian school teachers. In order to participate in this research study, you must meet the following criteria:

- 1) Teach full-time in a Christian school
- 2) Have at least 10 consecutive years of teaching experience in a Christian school

If you agree to participate in this study, I would ask you to do the following:

1. Respond to a confidential questionnaire that should take no more than 30 minutes.
2. Participate in a one-on-one interview that should last between 45 minutes to one hour. This interview will be audio and video recorded. Your identity will be confidential in this study.
3. You will be invited to participate in a focus group interview with other teachers in this study. If you choose to participate, the interview should last about an hour. The interview will be audio and video recorded. All responses included in the written portion of this study will be confidential.

I have attached an informed consent document that provides more information about the study so that you can make an informed decision.

Thank you for taking the time to consider participating in this study. If you choose to participate in this study, please respond by email to raachuff@liberty.edu or you may call me at XXX-XXX-XXXX. I will schedule a time to personally meet with you to collect the signed informed consent document to participate in the study. At that time, I will also have you fill out the questionnaire and schedule a time to conduct the one-on-one interview.

Sincerely,

Rochelle Achuff  
Doctoral student at Liberty University

## APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM

### A Phenomenological Study on Motivational Factors toward the Longevity of Christian School Teachers

Rochelle Achuff  
Liberty University  
School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study of what motivates teachers towards longevity in a Christian school. You were selected as a possible participant because you have at least 10 years of teaching experience in a Christian school. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Rochelle Achuff, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

**Background Information:** The purpose of this study is to discover what motivates teachers to remain long-term in a Christian school.

**Procedures:** If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

4. Respond to a confidential questionnaire that should take no more than 30 minutes.
5. Participate in a one-on-one interview that should last between 45 minutes to one hour. This interview will be audio and video recorded. Your identity will be confidential in this study.
6. You will be invited to participate in a focus group interview with other teachers in this study. If you choose to participate, the interview should last about an hour. The interview will be audio and video recorded. Responses included in the written portion of this study will be confidential.

**Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:** The risks involved in this study are minimal, no more than you would encounter in everyday life.

There are no benefits to participating in this study. However, Christian school teachers and administrators can benefit from the results of this study by gaining a better understanding of how teachers are motivated toward longevity in Christian schools.

**Compensation:** Participants will receive a \$20 gift card for participating in this study.

**Confidentiality:** The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Responses to the questionnaire will be kept confidential. Questionnaires will be stored in a locked file cabinet and will be destroyed three years after the completion of the study. Each participant will have an alias for the one-on-one interview to protect his/her

identity. Printed transcripts of interviews will be stored in a locked file cabinet and will be destroyed three years after the completion of the study.

- Information stored on the researcher's computer will only be accessed by the researcher and the computer can only be unlocked by a password.
- Audio and video recordings will only be accessed by the researcher. Recordings will not be used for educational purposes. The recordings will be erased three years after the completion of the study.
- Participation in a focus group will limit confidentiality since the researcher cannot assure participants that other members of the group will maintain their confidentiality and privacy.

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

**How to Withdraw from the Study:** If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

**Contacts and Questions:** The researcher conducting this study is Rochelle Achuff. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at raachuff@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty advisor, Dr. James Swezey at jaswezey@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, Green Hall 1887, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

*Please notify the researcher if you would like 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 and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

The researcher has my permission to audio-record and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

---

Signature

Date

---

Signature of Investigator

Date

## APPENDIX C: QUESTIONNAIRE

### QUESTIONNAIRE

#### Motivating Factors Toward the Longevity of Christian School Teachers

Instructions: Please answer by either checking the box(es) or writing in a response in the space provided.

Name:

Age:             30-39 years     40-49 years     50-59 years     60+ years

Marital Status:         married         single         other

Highest degree earned:  Bachelors     Masters     Specialist     Doctorate

Teacher certification:  religious     state     other     none

How many years of experience do you have teaching in a Christian school(s)?

fewer than 10 yrs.     over 10 yrs.     over 15 yrs.     20+ yrs.

Are the number of years teaching in a Christian school for one school or for more than one school?

If you have at least 10 years of experience teaching in a Christian school(s), are these consecutive years?  Yes     No    If you answered no, please explain.

Are you currently teaching full-time?  Yes     No

How many years have you been teaching at this current Christian school?

fewer than 10 yrs.     over 10 yrs.     over 15 yrs.     20+ yrs.

Do you have experience teaching in public schools?  Yes (How many years? Check below.)     No

fewer than 5 yrs.     fewer than 10 yrs.     over 10 yrs.     over 15 yrs.     20+ yrs.

In your years of teaching experience, what grade level(s) have you taught? Check all that apply.

- Kindergarten    1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> grade    4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade    7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade

What grade level do you currently teach?

- Kindergarten    1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> grade    4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade    7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade

Why did you choose to become a teacher?

What do you enjoy most about being a teacher?

What do you enjoy least about being a teacher?

Why did you choose to teach in your current Christian school?

What reason(s) lead you to teach in a Christian school?

In what way does your school support your development as a teacher?

How do you show your support for younger/beginner teachers in your school?

If you could start your first year of teaching over again, what would you would do differently?  
Please explain.

Would you be willing to participate in a focus group interview?  Yes  No  Maybe

## APPENDIX D: SIGNIFICANT STATEMENTS

### Significant Statements and Related Formulated Meanings Across Participants

<i>Significant Statement</i>	<i>Formulated Statement</i>
...it has matured me...I still like to have fun, I still entertain, but it has grounded me and has made me more responsible. It has made me understand the seriousness of other people and investing and helping other people.	Becoming a teacher has made a positive change in his life.
...that's what I was interested in in the beginning is the spiritual side of things and as a teacher, it has allowed me now to have that spiritual impact and that spiritual influence in these children's lives.	Being a teacher fulfilled a desire to impact students spiritually.
I kind of found out here that although my heart was not Christian education, once I got into it the Lord made it my heart.	Christian education became important once it was experienced through teaching.
I think that now that I have been doing this for 10 years, I am beginning to see the fruit as graduates go on and now some of them come back and some of them are in the ministry here. In fact, some of them I taught who are now teaching in our ministry are back and that is very satisfying and rewarding.	It is motivating to see the fruit of one's labor.
I fully believe this is where the Lord has put me and has helped me all these years to teach. Certainly I couldn't have done it in my own strength.	It is assuring to acknowledge God's hand in where one is placed.
They were just master teachers. They helped those of us under them come along. I don't know if I had gone some place else I don't know if I would have lasted this long. But they had a love for children and just really knew how to bring the best out in children. You wanted to be like them when you saw them as teachers. That's probably a lot of why I stuck at it. Ultimately, it goes back to, I believe, I know that's what the Lord had for me to do and that makes a difference.	Support from fellow teachers gives a teacher the strength to continue teaching and support from others can remind teachers of their calling.
Teaching in general is home for me.	For some there is a comfortableness in teaching.
God can overcome anything and with God all things are possible. So that in and of itself motivates me.	Having the right perspective of God helps during challenging experiences.

I guess I eat, breathe, and live teaching really. I guess you get to a certain point that's your life sometimes.	Teaching can consume a person's life.
I knew the Lord wanted me here. This was the right thing to do. I knew I was in the right place.	A teacher can have confidence in where she should teach.
...there's a closeness here and the family atmosphere...	A loving atmosphere can be motivating.
You have to be committed...that this is what God wanted you to do...	A teacher can be committed when she understands her calling.
This really is my mission field.	The purpose for teaching goes beyond academics.
So my ability to touch these children's lives . . . is how I feel like God is using me to further His kingdom.	Teaching provides opportunities to affect lives spiritually.
I totally buy in to the philosophy and the mission of this place.	A teacher should identify with the school's philosophy and mission.
It's a lot of my time so it has to kind of define me. I'm proud to say I am a teacher. I teach school. I am a teacher. I'm very proud of that.	Teachers put forth much time into their work.
I'm working with like-minded people for a common goal. Speaking into the lives of these children.	Teachers can be unified in their sense of purpose in ministering to students.
I came on board and I'm part of the ministry now and you're going to be serving not underneath but alongside—I got that feel[ing]. It just felt like I got an arm put around me and said 'welcome let's work together for the Lord and make a difference.'"	New teachers are motivated when they feel included with the other teachers to accomplish a goal.
I am furthering something that's going to please the Lord and going to make an impact on what's going on all around.	Knowing that a teacher can impact others for Christ is motivating.
...knowing that I'm helping them grow to be used of God, however He plans to use them, making sure they have that foundation that God can use, is very important and feels very satisfying to me...	Knowing that they are part of God's purpose in the lives of students can be motivating for a teacher.
I wanted to be able to minister...to the whole child.	Christian education allows for opportunities to minister to all the child's needs.
I just feel that teaching in a Christian school was more aligned with what I wanted to accomplish in a student's life.	Teaching in a school that aligns with a teacher's goals is rewarding.
My mission changed it became...it's still about loving the kids, it's still about loving what I teach—I love my subject matter, but	Teaching in a Christian school puts eternal things into perspective.

the eternal consequences of that has completely changed.	
...that gives me energy...that makes me tick...	Teaching is who a person is.
And that is incredibly satisfying to know that I can be a little part of somebody...	It is fulfilling to have a small part in someone's education.
I really do think that that's what I was made to do...	Some teachers feel that God made them to teach.
My work has eternal value. The struggle for our children is real, and I want this generation for Christ.	Teaching is more than academics; its influence lasts for eternity.
I think it's really important that they see how all of this is a part of God's purpose for them...and for them to really get that, to get that they don't want to walk into that world without God, that they need the Lord. I'm just so passionate about that I don't even know how to put that into words.	Teaching at a Christian school allows for opportunities to explain how God has a plan for students and how to follow His plan.
...I just feel like it is part of me. It is WHO I AM and I can't really separate myself from that. Teaching defines me. I just love being part of the process and that makes me, I feel, honored and I feel privileged to do it.	Teaching is defining.
It's a hard job and there have been times when I was close to burnout and the only reason that I kept going is because this is what God has called me to do.	Teachers need to rely on God's calling to endure challenging times.
I am confident this is where I belong.	A teacher can have confidence in where God places him.
I love being able to openly share and live out my faith with my students.	Teaching at a Christian school provides freedom to teach and to live out one's faith.
I want to give back to the children what was given to me. The love of Christ and a fantastic education, and to do it in the school I grew up in, it just makes me so proud.	It is motivating for a teacher to provide the same quality education that she has received.
It's like a home to me cause it was always, I'm at home, now I go to school, I'm at home, I go to school. It's where I was and it's been a second home to me all my life so I wouldn't want to teach anywhere else.	School is not just a place of work for a teacher, it is a place that feels like home.
Seeing my students grow in the classroom—spiritually, academically---and seeing them continue from year to year. When my students in 2 <sup>nd</sup> grade leave me, I'm still their teacher at least in my thought. I like to see them grow.	It is motivating to see students growing spiritually and academically.

<p>I eat, sleep, and drink—because I rest my head at night and all that I’m thinking about is school. I’m thinking about what I need to do, try to do more than I need to...I will do more than the average person would do.</p>	<p>Teachers who are committed can never stop thinking about their work.</p>
<p>When I go home and I’ve had a rough day and I say “why am I doing this?” the Lord reminds me because it’s what I’ve called you to do, it’s who you are...this is where I’m at, this is where I’m happy.</p>	<p>At times teachers have doubts, but they know how to draw strength from their calling.</p>
<p>...if I could just have just a little bit of that influence on someone else that would just be...I couldn’t want for anything more than that in my life.</p>	<p>Teachers are motivated by the opportunity to be a part of someone’s life.</p>
<p>And in the Christian school, not only can I help academically and I can teach what the Bible says and I can teach Christian character, life principles, life skills, and open up worlds of opportunity to the students and not handicap them in some way.</p>	<p>Teaching in a Christian school allows for freedom to teach spiritual things.</p>
<p>...where do I spend my time? I spend so much of my time at school or doing school work more during the week than I do with my own family...there’s not a bigger sacrifice that I could make.</p>	<p>Committed teachers are willing to sacrifice time with their own children to do what needs to be done.</p>
<p>The freedom to teach [the] Bible and biblical principle[s] throughout the academic day, to teach and train students in what it means to live a Christian life, to be able to say what I believe, backed by the Bible, without fear...</p>	<p>Being a Christian school teacher gives freedom to share the Bible and teach students to live by it.</p>
<p>...even more to see them laugh and sometimes I’ll see them cry when they do something wrong. That’s important for me to bring out too if I can help them spiritually when they’ve done wrong, let them know how serious that is but that we still love them and God still loves them.</p>	<p>Teaching in a Christian school gives teachers the chance to teach students about God’s love.</p>
<p>I want to go tell people about Jesus. I want to help them spiritually. Teaching has done that. Spiritual needs, that’s where my mindset is as far as who I am.</p>	<p>Teaching in a Christian school is the best place for telling children about Jesus. Teachers are ministers to their students’ spiritual needs.</p>
<p>...it’s so part of who I am that it would be so strange not to do it.</p>	<p>Teachers who identify with teaching cannot see themselves doing anything else.</p>
<p>But seeing them when they try, the success and the feeling of I can do this—that’s huge.</p>	<p>Seeing students’ successes is motivating for teachers.</p>

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<p>I tell my students this, you need to do what the Lord's called you to do and do your best at it. And if you do what the Lord calls you to do, no matter what that is, you're going to be happy doing it.</p>	<p>Teachers who have experienced God's leading in their lives can have confidence in admonishing students to trust God.</p>
<p>I know I've said this already, but I just really- I love it. And I love all aspects of it. I very much enjoy being with the students, seeing their reaction to things. I enjoy working with my co-workers so when I come to work, you know, you kind of have that "I'm home" sort of feeling when you walk in the door because you just enjoy being here.</p>	<p>When a teacher views school as "home" it gives her a love for students and for those with whom she works.</p>
<p>I think this is the best place in the world to teach [laughs] so I love teaching, I love what I do. I love this ministry.</p>	<p>Having loyalty to the school identifies teachers with the school.</p>
<p>I think it's being all in. Wherever the Lord has called you, be all in. Make it 100%. Make it your ministry. And when you do that, it's not really about do I stay, do I leave, it's just you do what the Lord's called you to do 'til He tells you to do something else.</p>	<p>Teachers can be content wherever God places them.</p>

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### APPENDIX E: THEMES

<b>Motivational Factors</b>	<b>Career Identity</b>	<b>Career Insight</b>	<b>Career Resilience</b>
Spiritual Impact	Teaching Identity	Opportunity Over Ability	Peer Support
Calling	Permeates Life	Spiritual Purpose	Assurance of Calling
Love of Teaching	School Identity		Relationship with God
Student Interaction			
School Support			