A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY EXAMINING HOW CHRISTIAN EDUCATION HAS

INFLUENCED A HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE'S WORLDVIEW

by

William Lorigan

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this multiple case study was to understand how the Christian education offered by Country Lakes School System (CLSS; pseudonym) has influenced the worldview of its graduates. CLSS defines a biblical worldview as follows: "The entire process of education is seen as a means used by God to bring the student into fellowship with Himself, to develop a Christian mind in him and to train him in Godly living so that he can fulfill God's total purpose for his life." The theoretical framework that guided this study was Sire's three-dimensional concept of worldview, which served as a basis for worldview development. Conceptually, this research defined Christian education through the framework described in *Kingdom Education* by Schultz. This study was guided by three research questions which examined how recent graduates described a biblical worldview, the influence CLSS has had on their worldview, and how their worldview has subsequently influenced their future decisions. This multiple case study was conducted within a bounded system and utilized three data collection methods: a survey, a participant's self-written personal faith journey, and one-on-one, semi-structured, interviews. Data were then coded to find and examine how influential CLSS was at developing a biblical worldview in its graduates. The findings of this research suggested that CLSS did an excellent job at influencing their graduates propositional and heart orientation towards a biblical worldview; however, these convictions were generally only reflected in each graduate's moral convictions but not the consummation of the graduate's life purposes.

Keywords: Christian, education, biblical, worldview, development

Copyright Page

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To my children, Wrigley, Maddux, Raley, and Ryne: I pray the fruits of this labor will provide you with the opportunity to receive a Christian education where a biblical worldview is the most important priority when equipping you for the lives ahead of you. Without the firm foundation of God and His Word, our lives are built on shifting sand. I pray that you will always seek God's truth and His glory in everything you do – even when you don't understand. There is no greater treasure.

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List of Abbreviations

American Culture and Faith Institute (ACFI)

Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI)

Country Lakes School System (CLSS)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Everyone has a worldview, and it is expressed through an individual's thoughts, speech, and actions (Van der Kooij, de Ruyter, & Miedema, 2015). A biblical worldview is the answer to the wellspring of life's essential questions, including origin, purpose, morality, and the after-life (Thomson, 2012). The development of a coherent and clear biblical worldview is a lifelong process; however, both the Bible (Proverbs 22:6) and Fowler's (1981) *Faith Development Theory* describe an individual's formative years as critical in this development process. A worldview is not only the acquisition of knowledge, manifested through actions; it is also a matter of the heart (Goheen & Bartholomew, 2008; Naugle, 2002; Sire, 2015; Proverbs 4:23). The purpose of Christian education is to help lay a firm foundation from which students will develop a heart for God, seek first God and His righteousness, and then go on to proactively build God's kingdom through whatever vocation or calling they feel God is leading them to (Schultz, 2015). The purpose of this multiple case study was to understand how Christian education has influenced former students' worldviews after graduation from the Country Lakes School System (pseudonym).

Chapter One provides an outline for this study, including the growth of Christian education within the United States and the evolving importance of a biblical worldview. The chapter also describes the researcher's understanding of a biblical worldview and how it needs to be imparted through Christian education. Additionally, this chapter presents the problem and purpose statements of this multiple case study, including the significance of the study. Finally, this chapter introduces the research questions, the overall research plan, and applicable definitions.

Background

Christian education has a long and proud history within the United States of America, dating back further than the founding of the country itself. Some of the earliest settlers to North America, the Puritans, were instrumental in laying the foundations of education in the colonies.

Historical

Christian education fundamentally began with the landing of the Puritans and the signing of the Mayflower Compact in Massachusetts in 1620. Pledging the "Advancement of the Christian Faith . . . for our better Ordering and Preservation, and Furtherance," the Puritans sought to establish "just and equal Laws, Ordinances, Acts, Constitutions" (Commager, 1968, p. 22) to achieve such ends. The first Puritans sought to establish a Calvinist social order, which included the passing of laws in 1642 that required trustees in every town to "make certain that children could read and understand the commonwealth's religion and the laws" (Gutek, 1995, p. 147). These laws included the *Old Deluder Satan Act*, passed in 1647, to ward off the potential for evil, believing that illiterate, rather than literate people, were more likely to be tempted by evil (Gutek, 1995). Such laws and statutes resulted in the ability of Puritan children learning to read and write before the age of 6, and literacy rates of between 89 and 95% throughout Massachusetts and Connecticut (Moreland, 1997).

The establishment of the Puritans within the Massachusetts Bay area also led to the founding of Christian institutions of higher learning, including the most notable Puritan institution of learning, Harvard University in 1636, followed by Yale in 1701, Dartmouth in 1754, and Princeton in 1769 (Anthony & Benson, 2003). Harvard University was initially founded with the mission of training Puritan ministers (Carter, 2008) and the advancement of a Christian worldview, while Yale was founded for the purpose of "upholding and propagating of

the Christian Protestant religion" (Cremin, 1970, p. 321). Over time, however, education within the American colonies, and then the United States, began to take a more secular direction.

Social

Beginning with the passage of the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, education increasingly became more and more widespread and standardized. Usurping the responsibility initially held by the church, individual states began to take the lead in education, with the purpose and curriculum of public schools evolving as a consequence of the Industrial Revolution and Progressivism. Ironically, in early American history, public schools were synonymous with religious education. Private schools were established for those parents who wished their children to receive a less religious education (Anthony & Benson, 2003). Some of the main textbooks used in early public schools included the Bible, the English Catechisms, the Psalter, the hornbook, and the *New England Primer*, all of which were religious in origin and instruction. However, what began as an exercise in biblical literacy eventually became an effort to assimilate young adults into a labor market as productive, skilled, civic minded workers (Gutek, 1995). Since the late-1800s, education in the United States has become increasingly secular, as secular state governments gradually assumed more and more control of the education system (Gutek, 1995). As state governments assumed control of the education system, the purposes and principles behind education began to shift.

Initially, the industrialization of American society and the need for an educated work force reshaped the purpose of education. Then, coupled with the federal government's influence on education, most prominently through the decisions of the Supreme Court and its intentional focus on personal freedoms, the purpose of education and the religious intentions of many founding Americans were undermined and then jettisoned (Gutek, 1995). As a consequence of

these compelling forces, increasing numbers of Christians have sought to educate their children in environments that promote biblical literacy and understanding and freedom to talk about and worship God, which theoretically will result in the impartation of a biblical worldview (Anthony & Benson, 2003).

Theoretical

Today, Christian education has attempted to reflect the principles of the Puritans and early Christian systems of education; however, many Christian schools have found themselves, either intentionally or unintentionally, catering education to fit the pursuit of worldly rather than heavenly treasure (Schultz, 2015). Christian education has become decidedly more secular in focus, with an unhealthy emphasis on test scores, athletic prowess, and other secular achievements, to the detriment of developing a coherent biblical worldview within its students, a phenomenon labeled as "Christians educating" rather than "Christian education" (Hull, 2003). Even though some studies have addressed this phenomenon, more recent research has confirmed the misplacement of priorities or the lack of intentionality within Christian education (Baniszewski, 2016; Barrows, 2014; Boerema, 2011).

No studies provide an in-depth understanding concerning how well Christian high schools inculcate a biblical worldview, particularly from a student's perspective. Many Christian schools practice biblical integration within their content areas; however, if there is little to no evidence of change in student worldviews, as related by students, then such biblical integration may be deemed unsuccessful. Country Lakes School System (CLSS) is one of the largest Christian school systems accredited by the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) in the United States. As such, it is worthwhile understanding how influential and successful the CLSS has been at inculcating a biblical worldview from the perspective of actual graduates.

Findings from this study have the potential to inform other Christian schools in their goal of imparting a biblical worldview to their students.

Without a clear commitment to the development of a biblical worldview within its students, Christian schools merely become private exponents of education, missing an opportunity of earthly and eternal consequence for the Gospel of Christ. More investigation needs to be conducted to identify deficiencies and help refocus the priorities of Christian education, including the development of a model that successfully imparts a biblical worldview at the high school level (Dickens, 2014).

Situation to Self

My interest and motivation for understanding how influential CLSS has been at developing a Christian worldview within former students of CLSS is both professional and personal. I have been an educator within CLSS for the past 13 years. During this time, there has been a strong emphasis on developing and implementing a strong biblical worldview within every sphere of the school system's influence, including all content subjects, sports, and the fine arts. During this time, however, I have noticed that, while many graduates from this school system confessed a biblical worldview, few of them exhibit the fruits of one. This has led me to conclude that while many students propositionally understand the concepts and precepts of the Bible, far fewer of them, for whatever reason, display this knowledge through their actions.

I did not grow up in a Christian home, or even a Christian society. I grew up in New Zealand and did not become a follower of Christ until I was 21. As a new believer, I read the Bible and began a life-changing process. I "put off the old man" (Ephesians 4:22 New King James Version), seeking to renew my mind, and by consequence, my actions. After a short period of time, I became increasingly perplexed by the inconsistency of mature believers' words

in contrast to their actions. It was not until after immigrating to the United States at the age of 27 that I was introduced to the concept of a *worldview* and the implications behind it. Four years after arriving in the United States, I began working at CLSS.

At CLSS I taught many students who were passionate about their faith. They willfully engaged in spirited conversations about the Bible, faith, and Christian doctrine, including difficult concepts like predestination, the Trinity, and life after death. However, many of these same students would go on to live lifestyles and make choices that could only be defined as sinful. Shortly after I began teaching at CLSS I was introduced to a book, *Already Gone,* by Ham and Beemer (2009). The premise of the book, according to Barna Group's (2008) research, was that two-thirds of all high school aged students who attended church would leave the church by their mid-20s. Both of these examples led me to question why so many students, immersed in strong biblical teachings and principles, were turning their backs on Christianity or falling away from the faith.

In 2010, I was introduced to an equally powerful and compelling concept known as "Moralistic Therapeutic Deism." The concept of moralistic therapeutic deism was introduced in *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*, by Smith and Denton (2009). Smith and Denton (2009) found that "a significant part of Christianity in the United States is actually only tenuously Christian in any sense that is seriously connected to the actual historical Christian tradition" (p. 171). After interviewing 267 teenagers in 45 states, they summarized their findings that most teenagers, including self-professing Christians, believe:

- A god exists who created and ordered the world and watches over human life on earth.
- God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible

and by most world religions.

- The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about one's self.

- God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem.

- Good people go to heaven when they die. (pp. 162–163)

In the intervening years, I have conducted research on biblical worldview development through my master's thesis at Indiana Wesleyan University, read countless books and articles, and listened to many well-educated Christians who teach about a biblical worldview. Additionally, above all this research, I scoured the Bible for answers about why professing Christians fall away from their faith. The Bible and research both point to the same answers: that a person is more likely to remain in the faith if they are trained up as a child "in the way he should go" (Proverbs 22:6a), and that some people "have no root in themselves" (Mark 4:17a).

These two answers leave me asking many different questions, specifically about the principle of training up a child in the way he should go, and the idea that there seems to be an overemphasis on works, grace, and knowledge that somehow shrouds the power of the Gospel. I began seeking answers to questions such as the following: Is the development of root or character in an individual the responsibility of internal or external forces, or a combination of both? What role does the Bible say the Holy Spirit plays in the maturation of a believer and can we assist in His work? If two-thirds of confessing students at Christian high schools are leaving the church by the time they graduate college, Christian education is either not asking these questions or not answering them effectively.

As a result of these experiences I felt compelled to examine how successfully CLSS imparted a biblical worldview to its students. The best method to examine this was through a

multiple case study with an interpretive framework of pragmatism. All good educators seek to identify good and bad practices with the intention of identifying what works and improving their practice. An interpretive framework of pragmatism allows for the identification of characteristics associated with a well-developed biblical worldview, specifically with an eye to "what works" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 27). The identification of useful and practical practices provides the ontological context of this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This will help provide ways to better incorporate practices and principles that can enhance the development of a biblical worldview.

The focus of this study examines the development of a biblical worldview from the perspective of the students. Consequently, the epistemological use of research tools that seek to identify student realities will be used, with a focus on characteristics associated with propositional, behavioral, and heart-orientation through the use of both deductive and inductive evidence (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Axiologically, all moral and philosophical or religious truth claims will be weighed against the truth of scripture. It is understandable that some of the participants may have personal experiences or truth claims contrary to scripture. However, because these experiences or truth claims are being contrasted against the truth of a biblical worldview, a standard of absolute truth needs to be established firmly grounded in scripture.

Problem Statement

The examination of a biblical worldview at the high school level is a comparatively neglected area of research. There are many studies that have examined the impact of a worldview on people in general (Frisancho & Delgado, 2016; Van der Kooij et al., 2015) and Christians specifically (Barrows, 2014; Mittwede, 2013; Watson, 2007). Many of these Christianity-oriented studies focus on the tertiary level of Christian education (Baniszewski,

2016; Erdvig, 2016; Esqueda, 2014; Smith, 2013), rather than the high school level. Studies that have focused on the high school level have sought to examine curriculum (Barrows, 2014; Gauch, 2009; Reiss, 2009), role-modeling and relationships (Fyock, 2008; Horan, 2017), or teacher- and leadership-oriented purposes (Glanzer & Talbert, 2005; Kanitz, 2005) as a means of evaluating or measuring the effectiveness of passing on a biblical worldview through Christian education. The underlying concepts of a biblical worldview should impact a student's propositional understanding, behavior, and heart-orientation (Sire, 2004).

While Christian school curriculums are often laden with the Bible and biblical concepts, the purpose of Christian education is not clearly defined, and teachable moments are often missed for the sake of standardized test scores and college admissions requirements (Watson, 2007). The term *Christian education* is often used but very rarely defined from a biblical perspective. Many, including Christian educators, believe that Christian education is core content, being taught by Christian teachers, with students being permitted to talk about God and use the Bible in the classroom. Such beliefs have resulted in a phenomenon labeled as *Christians educating* rather than Christian education (Hull, 2003). Though limited in number, more recent studies have confirmed the misplacement of priorities or the lack of intentionality on behalf of Christian education (Baniszewski, 2016; Barrows, 2014; Boerema, 2011). Consequently, Christian education often becomes a euphemism for private education or college preparatory school. Christian education, including the curriculum taught within the CLSS, should be infused with a biblical worldview, from course content, to the assessment, to the worldview of the educators themselves (Kanitz, 2005). Presently there is little research that confirms whether Christian education is achieving one of its core elements, which is passing on a biblical worldview to its students. The problem this study addresses is examining whether

CLSS, through the use of Christian educators, a biblically integrated curriculum, and the freedom to discuss spiritual issues in the classroom, effectively passes on a biblical worldview to its students, specifically from the perspective of the students themselves.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this multiple case study is to understand how Christian education has influenced former students' worldviews from the CLSS. CLSS defines a biblical worldview as follows:

> The entire process of education is seen as a means used by God to bring the student into fellowship with Himself, to develop a Christian mind in him and to train him in Godly living so that he can fulfill God's total purpose for his life.

Conceptually, this research defines Christian education through the framework of *Kingdom Education* by Schultz (2015). The theoretical framework guiding this study is Sire's (2015) three-dimensional concept of worldview, which encompasses the dimensions of proposition, behavior, and heart-orientation as a true measure of worldview.

Significance of the Study

The results of this study offer important theoretical, empirical, and practical significance towards developing a biblical worldview through Christian education. From an empirical perspective, there is little research on the effectiveness of the development of a biblical worldview for Christian high school graduates based on the Christian education received from that school. Most research on the development of a biblical worldview has focused on the tertiary level of education and the effectiveness of Christian colleges in developing a biblical worldview in their students (Esqueda, 2014; Quinn, Foote, & Williams, 2012; Smith, 2013; Wrenn & Cafferky, 2015). More rigorous case studies need to be conducted to help Christian

schools "begin to understand how God works in the lives of children and how we can encourage a healthy spiritual walk with God" (Lawson, 2006, p. 161). Research information collected from this study may spur further critical research in the field of biblical worldview development, specifically in ways that help foster its development at the primary and secondary school levels.

From a theoretical perspective, this research may provide meaningful answers to help curb disturbing trends found within the church and Christian education. Barna Group (2000) research found that two thirds of all high school aged students will leave the church by their mid-20s. A more recent survey conducted by the American Culture and Faith Institute (2017) revealed only 4% of 18- to 29-year-olds had a biblical worldview. If Christian schools are failing to effectively impart a biblical worldview into their students, greater research needs to be undertaken to identify areas of deficiency that need to be resolved and areas of success that need to be replicated. These concerning research statistics also necessitate answers in the practical realm.

Practically, most Christian schools boldly declare as a part of their philosophical teachings the impartation of a biblical worldview. However, little research has been done to determine the effectiveness of this claim (Boerema, 2011). What little research does exist found Christian schools to be ineffective in developing a biblical worldview in their students (Baniszewski, 2016). As a school system that espouses teaching through a biblical worldview, CLSS needs to evaluate the effectiveness of its biblical integration efforts and promote any positive findings while making any appropriate changes to correct any detrimental practices, thus enhancing its mission of imparting a biblical worldview to its students. These findings, both positive and negative, could help other Christian schools reevaluate their own strengths and weaknesses of effective biblical worldview integration, with the result of making appropriate

changes or modifications. More importantly, this study could have eternal significance for those who graduate from Christian schools whose mission is to impart a biblical worldview to its students.

Research Questions

There are three research questions driving the focus of this multiple case study.

Research Question 1: How do graduates of the CLSS describe a biblical worldview?

The biblical worldview concept is not a new phenomenon. A biblical worldview provides the answers to life's essential questions, including origin, purpose, morality and the after-life (Thomson, 2012). CLSS describes the purpose of a biblical worldview, in addition to God bringing a student into fellowship with Himself, as developing "a Christian mind in him and to train him in Godly living so that he can fulfill God's total purpose for his life." Although the development of a worldview is a lifelong process, the Bible advocates for a biblical foundation to be made in the formative years of one's life (Proverbs 22:6). As American culture and society become increasingly more secular and hostile towards biblical Christianity, it has become more imperative for students to develop a biblical worldview before they graduate high school, rather than lapse into a dualistic perspective (Greene, 1990). Dualism encourages an individual to hold certain cognitive beliefs or principles but believes and acts differently if inconvenient. Other Christians have described this ideology as compartmentalization (Stackhouse, 2014). Research has suggested that although many Christian teens affirm biblical principles and ideas, the way in which they live their lives and make decisions contradicts these professed beliefs (Smith & Denton, 2009).

Research Question 2: How do graduates of the CLSS describe the influence of their school experience on the development of their worldview?

The purpose of Christian education is to impart a biblical worldview. It is a partnership between parents, the church, and the school to help children know Christ as Savior, be continually transformed into His image, and be fully equipped to serve God in any capacity necessary (Schultz, 2015). An individual's worldview is expressed through his or her thoughts, speech, and actions (Van der Kooij et al., 2015). The purpose of this second research question is to ascertain the influence of the CLSS on its students' worldview development as perceived by its graduates, including understanding of the essential propositions, behavior modification, and deeper heart-orientation towards God. Rather than merely receiving a state accredited high school diploma through a Christian school, students need to have their worldview nurtured and developed from a biblical perspective (Hull, 2003).

Research Question 3: How do graduates describe the influence of a biblical worldview on their decisions after graduation?

An individual's worldview is not reflected in one's thoughts or ideas; rather, it is reflected through their actions (Sire, 2003). Many teenagers profess faith as a Christian in high school. However, upon leaving home a significant portion of Christian teenagers display signs of spiritual dysconnectivity either through open rebellion or willful sin (Ham & Beemer, 2009). Without the restraints of watchful parents, teachers, and various forms of church accountability, a student's heart may not fully know its true orientation until the opportunity for competing ideologies and temptations are fully realized (Kinnaman & Hawkins, 2016).

Definitions

There are four key terms that are continuously used throughout this research that require defining.

1. *Christian Education* – A "life-long, Christ-centered process of leading a child to Christ, building a child up in Christ, and equipping a child to serve Christ" (Schultz, 2015, p. 29).

2. *Biblical Worldview* – A biblical worldview is not driven or defined by denominational beliefs or understanding. A biblical worldview is simply thinking about anything and everything in a consistently Christian way or in "a manner that is shaped, directed, and restrained by the truth of God's Word and God's Spirit" (Guinness, 1994, p. 136). This study examines three characteristics of a biblical worldview: propositional, behavioral, and heart orientation. Propositional truth is defined as truth based on the inerrancy of scripture, that the Bible is true and contains no false assertions (Frame, 2014). Biblical behavioral beliefs assert that truth is the "framework for every human endeavor" (Colson & Pearcey, 1999, p. 489). The heart, from a biblical perspective, is "the religious, intellectual, affective, and volitional center of a person" (Naugle, 2002, p. 270).

3. *Dualism* – The "effort to divide life into different parts and operate each part from a different worldview perspective" (Schultz, 2015, p. 129).

4. *Moralistic Therapeutic Deism* – A spiritual movement influencing many U.S. teenagers, that has replaced the language and experience of historic Christianity which encompassed words such as, "Trinity, holiness, sin, grace, justification, sanctification, church, Eucharist, and heaven and hell," with "happiness, niceness, and an earned heavenly reward" (Smith & Denton, 2009, p. 171).

Summary

Christian education is a concept that is widely used throughout the United States to identify with certain educational philosophies and principles. Inherent within these principles is

the idea of a biblical worldview. A biblical worldview is the cornerstone of Christian education, seeking to impart spiritual importance and understanding to the philosophies and concepts behind education. However, many Christian schools, despite their best efforts, fail to successfully pass on a biblical worldview to their students. This has led to an increasing amount of Christian school graduates with a secular understanding of their life's purpose and a dualistic lifestyle. Consequently, many Christian school alumni are endowed with a lack of hope, an erroneous understanding of the Bible and the Gospel, and a false sense of spiritual assurance. As such, the purpose of this study was to examine the influence of Christian education on the development of a high school student's worldview, specifically from the perspective of the students themselves, within the CLSS. The results of this study offer important theoretical, empirical, and practical significance towards developing a comprehensive biblical worldview through Christian education.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The literature review for this multiple case study examines the theoretical framework for this research which is Sire's (2015) three-dimensional concept of worldview, the researcher's philosophical assumptions, and the rationale for using recent high school graduates to examine an individual's worldview, based on Fowler's (1981) stages of faith theory. The chapter also examines the need and value of a biblical worldview, including historical and recent contributions to biblical worldview development. Finally, this chapter also examines the historical background for Christian education, the political and economic changes that spawned the need for the moniker Christian education, the purpose and definition of both secular and Christian education, and the present state of Christian education in the United States.

Theoretical Framework

A worldview highlights essential beliefs or values, including personal parameters and boundaries, while avoiding dogmatic prescriptions (Valk, 2012). Developing a biblical worldview is not just the changing of one's thoughts, but the reorientation of one's life and intellectual commitments, often through specific events and experiences (Sire, 2015). A theoretical framework allows research to be seen and understood from certain aspects or experiences while concealing others (Anfara & Mertz, 2006). A theoretical framework serves as "any empirical or quasi-empirical theory of social and/or psychological processes" (Anfara & Mertz, 2006, p. 15) or lenses that can be applied to understanding a phenomenon. The lens of the theoretical framework provides new insights and understanding concerning the phenomenon through which research findings can be identified and contextualized to help enrich the research results.

The need for worldview examination is evident given the current research into worldviews held by recent high school graduates, including graduates from Christian schools. At the turn of the 21st century, Barna Group (2000) research found that two thirds of all high school aged students had left their church by their mid-20s. More recent research by Barna Group (2009) found that while approximately one in nine older adults possessed a biblical worldview, less than one half of one percent of adults aged 18 to 23 had a biblical worldview. Even more recently, an American Culture and Faith Institute (ACFI, 2017) survey, found that while 46% of American adults claimed to have a biblical worldview, only 10% of American adults actually did. For young adults between the ages of 18 to 29, only 4% held a biblical worldview.

A Holistic Biblical Worldview

The greatest problem when addressing an examination of worldview is that it is impossible to accurately measure a person's beliefs merely through intellectual examination (ACFI, 2017). Many people intellectually or propositionally understand the principles of religion; however, their actions may convey an alternate belief system, often rooted in the desires of the heart. As George Barna of the Barna Group attested:

> Any time you attempt to measure people's worldview or spiritual standing, you have to tread carefully. We recognize that this research provides an estimate, not an absolute. Only God really knows who is a Christian. Only He knows who has a biblical worldview. God alone knows what's in the mind and heart of each person. (ACFI, 2017, p. 1)

Consequently, it is important to examine not only the intellectual or propositional perspective of a worldview but also the behavioral and heart-orientation of the individuals

involved (Sire, 2004). The blending of fundamental truth propositions, behavior, and heart-orientation is the basis for Sire's (2004) comprehensive three-dimensional concept of worldview. Similarly, the survey by ACFI (2017) attempted to measure the blending of both core beliefs and core behaviors, in the hope of estimating the biblical consistency of an individual's worldview. ACFI (2017) found that the assessment process requires both beliefs and behavior, since the fundamental purpose of a biblical worldview is to become an imitator of Christ, not only in thought, but in deed. George Barna, who directed the ACFI (2017) study, noted:

> It's very important to know how many people have a biblical worldview because peoples' behavior is driven by their beliefs – we do what we believe. In other words, our worldview determines the choices we make and the resulting actions we take. . . . Everyone has a worldview. The critical question is *which one* people have embraced. If we want to transform our culture then we will need to change the choices people make that produce that culture. And in order to change those choices we must identify the beliefs that led to those choices. (p. 1)

The importance of a biblical worldview, or the "mental framework that helps people to make sense of their world" (ACFI, 2017), drives not only an individual's thought process but ultimately their actions as well. For a concept that is so pivotal in understanding an individual's or group's motivations and actions, very little research has been conducted to measure what kinds of worldview people have in general, and biblical worldviews specifically (ACFI, 2017).

Biblical Context

The concept of a biblical worldview begins in Genesis 2:15–17, when God gives His first instructions to Adam. God defines Adam's role, which was to live in the Garden of Eden, while also working and taking care of it (Genesis 2:15). Furthermore, Adam is instructed concerning

what to do and what not to do (Genesis 2:16–17). In Genesis 3, the serpent offers Adam and Eve

an alternate worldview, "knowing good and evil" for themselves apart from God (Genesis 3:4).

This resulted in the fall of humanity. Since that time, God has actively sought to bring His

creation generally, and humanity specifically, back into alignment with His original intentions

(Romans 8:22–24).

Through the birth of Jesus, God began the capstone of His reconciliation project,

conceived before the creation of the world (Revelation 13:8). Jesus extols the faithful believer to

seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33). For many Christians, the

kingdom of God is difficult to understand (Mayhue, 2012). This may be because the kingdom of

God is so expansive in its influence, including God as the King of eternity, creation, history,

redemption, earth, and heaven (Mayhue, 2012). For illustrative purposes, Jesus likened the

kingdom of God to seed being scattered on the ground (Mark 4:26), leaven (Luke 13:20), a

mustard seed (Luke 13:18), a great supper (Luke 14:5), and money (Luke 19:11). On other

occasions Jesus commented that "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than

for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (Matthew 19:24), told other individuals that tax

collectors and harlots would enter the kingdom of God before them (Matthew 21:31), and told

people that if their eye caused them to sin, to gouge it out because "it is better for you to enter the

kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes" (Mark 9:47). These teachings and

others have made pursuing the kingdom of God difficult and confusing for many. The kingdom

of God, however, impacts every aspect of a believer's life. Jesus declared that preaching the

kingdom of God was the reason that He was sent (Luke 4:43). If the kingdom of God is the

reason Jesus was sent, it is therefore imperative that all Christians understand what the kingdom

of God is and how to orientate their lives towards it.

It is only through a biblical worldview that it is possible to understand the kingdom of God. Although a biblical worldview is centered around the concepts of creation, the fall, and redemption (Naugle, 2008), it is the biblical worldview alone that coherently explains the more encompassing truths behind origin, meaning, purpose, morality, and destiny (Zacharias, 2014). Similarly, Dockery and Thornbury (2002) suggest that a worldview answers the following questions:

- Where did we come from?

- Who are we?

- What has gone wrong with the world?

- What solution can be offered to fix it? (p. 3)

To do this, the Apostle Paul exhorts believers to, "not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:2). Furthermore, Paul encourages a believer that, whatever they do, "in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (Colossians 3:17), while the Apostle Peter tells believers to be "as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct" (1 Peter 1:14–15). These three verses address the essence of the Christian worldview: propositional understanding (Romans 12:2) and the condition of the heart (Colossians 3:17), both of which are reflected through a believer's actions (1 Peter 1:14–15).

Practical Importance of a Biblical Worldview

The purpose of possessing, practicing, and imparting a biblical worldview is important in both a practical and theological sense. Practically, Christians should possess and practice a

biblical worldview as it is the driving force behind all of life's decisions (Huffman, 2011). "A worldview must offer a way to live that is consistent with reality by offering a comprehensive understanding of all areas of life and thought, every aspect of creation" (Dockery & Thornbury, 2002, p. 4). Moreland (2007) further explains that an individual's worldview "is the most important fact about that person" (p. 34). Sire (2015) defines a worldview in two parts: an ontological definition and associated presuppositions, specifically defined as follows:

> A worldview is a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being. (p. 141)

For Christians, the foundation upon which we live, move, and have being, should be the good works to which we are called, prepared before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 2:10). These good works include preaching the Gospel (Mark 16:15), baptizing new believers (Matthew 28:19), and utilizing spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4–7), among other reasons, all for the purpose of doing God's will here on earth as in heaven (Matthew 6:10).

Theological Importance of a Biblical Worldview

Theologically, a biblical worldview takes on a much weightier responsibility. For the believer, a biblical worldview has eternal consequences, beginning with the punishment for sin, which is death (Romans 6:23). Without a propitiation for our sins (Romans 3:25; Hebrews 2:17), upon death a person stands in personal condemnation before a righteous and holy God (Romans 5:15; John 5:29). Finally, at the second judgment, a person without forgiveness of sins (1 John 1:19) is condemned to eternal damnation (Revelation 20:15). Without a strong biblical

worldview, the theological ramifications of a biblical worldview can seem abstract, even fanciful, which is why the Apostle Paul encourages believers not to lose heart, because "we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18). As a consequence of these beliefs, Dockery and Thornbury (2002) point out:

> The beginning point for building a Christian worldview is a confession that we believe in God the Father, maker of heaven and earth (the Apostles' Creed). We recognize that "in him all things hold together" (Colossians 1:15–18), for all true knowledge flows from the One Creator to his one creation. (p. 3)

For the Christian, a biblical worldview is the conceptual scheme or arrangement of ideas through which they consciously or subconsciously fit everything they believe, and how they interpret reality (Nash, 1992).

The Origins of Worldview as a Concept

As evidenced by the writings of the Apostles Paul and Peter and found in many of the other writing by Old and New Testament authors, the concept of a biblical worldview was implicit in the teachings of the early church. Despite these biblical allusions, the concept of a worldview was first articulated by the enlightened German philosopher Immanuel Kant. Kant (1790/1987) used the word *Weltanschauung*, which was more than just a philosophical term. To Kant, Weltanschauung had a broader meaning that embraced the sum of "one's beliefs, convictions, and presuppositions" (Watson, 2007, p. 361). The term Weltanschauung, however, was not used by Kant as a framework for biblical interpretation (Kanitz, 2005). Weltanschauung, or Weltansicht, was a term most often used to describe alternate views of reality, including theistic, atheistic, or pantheistic (Orr, 2001).

The modern origins of a biblical worldview can be attributed to 19th century Christian scholars, including James Orr and Abraham Kuyper (Thomson, 2012). Orr was a Scottish minister and theologian who taught during the turn of the 20th century, a time C. S. Lewis described as the "un-christening of Europe" into a "post-Christian" age (Lewis, 1969, pp. 4–5, 12). In 1891, Orr gave a series of addresses at the United Presbyterian Theological College in Edinburgh as part of the Kerr Lectures. In these addresses, which Orr spent three years preparing for, he lectured on the concept of Weltanschauung with a specific emphasis on a biblical worldview. Noting the increasingly hostile attacks on the Christian faith in Europe, particularly from a scientific perspective, Orr advocated for a "fresh, coherent presentation of the Christian definition of reality in all its fullness" (Naugle, 2002, p. 7). Orr's sentiments were echoed by the Dutch theologian Abraham Kuyper.

Kuyper was a contemporary of Orr and was philosophically familiar with the concept of a biblical worldview. It was not until after Kuyper read Orr's (1893) *The Christian View of God and the World*, which was the publication of Orr's Kerr Lectures, that he formally articulated his ideas on a biblical worldview. Kuyper publicly expressed his philosophy on a biblical worldview through his own series of lectures collectively known as *Lectures on Calvinism*, given at Princeton University in 1898. In this lecture series, Kuyper argued that a defense of Christianity cannot be robustly made unless it addresses all areas of life. Advocating for a comprehensive Christian Weltanschauung, Kuyper (2009) noted that if "in Modernism the vast energy of an all embracing life-system assails us, then also it must be understood that we [Christians] have to take our stand in a life-system of equally comprehensive and far-reaching power" (p. 11). This meant moving beyond the mere use of apologetics to combat an

increasingly hostile secularism driven by science. It called for recognizing that every single facet of an individual's life should be dominated by one's relationship with God (Kuyper, 2009).

Unlike Orr, Kuyper further explained that this divide between a biblical worldview and the modern, and by extension postmodern, worldview was found in what the Germans called *Wissenschaft*, or science (Kuyper, 2009). Wissenschaft addresses scientific enquiry, especially concerning the origins of life, which by extension includes human meaning and purpose. For Kuyper, the divide was not between science and Christianity, but rather the worldviews each assumed, including their motivations and assumptions (Naugle, 2002). Kuyper saw science as a neutral endeavor shaped by the worldviews of those exploring it. The different conclusions reached through scientific investigation were the "undeniable difference which distinguishes the self-consciousness" (Kuyper, 2009, p. 138), found between naturalists and Christians. These conclusions and differences would begin to manifest themselves in the way people viewed themselves and others, including purpose, morality, absolute truth, and how one viewed the existence of God.

It was not until the mid-20th century that significant progress was made from the foundation laid by Orr and Kuyper. Francis Schaeffer widely popularized the idea that everyone, regardless of their vocation or spiritual heritage possessed and practiced a worldview (Naugle, 2002). In *How Should We Then Live*, Schaeffer (1976) articulates his concern about modern Western culture's slide into relativism. As such, Schaeffer became an advocate for a Christianity "that embraced the whole of life" (Naugle, 2002, p. 30), including contemporary cultural issues. In *Escape from Reason*, Schaeffer (2006) articulated worldview knowledge as being located either in an upper room or lower room. Schaeffer described the difference between the upper room and lower room as a distinction between rationality and non-rationality. Non-rationality,

or the upper room, is described in terms such as principles or universal ideals, including God, faith, and love. The lower room, or rationality, is described using nature, science, and knowledge. Initially, the upper room provided direction, purpose and context for the lower room. However, over time, through the influences of the Renaissance, Enlightenment, and modernity, the connection between the upper and lower rooms has been separated by a concrete horizontal barricade, "ten thousand feet thick, with highly charged barbed wire fixed in the concrete" (Schaeffer, 2006, pp. 60–61). This permanent separation provided a modern distinction between philosophical morality and practicality.

In 1980, Charles Malik, in his address later published in *The Two Tasks of Evangelism*, emphasized the need to convert individuals not just spiritually but intellectually as well, in essence forming a staircase between the upper and lower rooms. During his address, Malik (1980) stated, in reference to intellectual growth and understanding of the world from a biblical perspective, that "intellectual nurture cannot take place apart from profound immersion for a period of years in the history of thought and the spirit" (p. 40). What Malik was emphasizing was the fact that the Gospel should have a transformative effect not just in an individual's heart but also in one's mind and consequently one's actions. This transformation can take years to take root and germinate.

Since Schaeffer and Malik, there has been an ever-increasing array of Christian authors that have espoused philosophical concepts concerning a biblical worldview. This is hardly surprising as both culture and education in the United States have been increasingly gravitating towards a more secular bent since the 1960s. The most prominent of these Christian authors is James Sire. In 1976, Sire published *The Universe Next Door*, which challenged the practicality

and validity of many different worldviews while defining and expounding upon a biblical worldview.

Like Dockery and Thornbury (2002) and Zacharias (2014), Sire (1997) presented the biblical worldview through the lens of a series of defining questions or propositions:

1. What is prime reality – the really real?

2. What is the nature of external reality, that is, the world around us?

3. What is a human being?

4. What happens to a person at death?

5. Why is it possible to know anything at all?

6. How do we know what is right and wrong?

7. What is the meaning of human history? (p. 20)

Recently, in the fifth edition of his book *The Universe Next Door*, Sire (2009) added an eighth question to his worldview propositions: "What personal, life-orienting core commitments are consistent with this worldview?" (p. 23). Sire (2009) felt that the first seven questions did not "adequately encompass the notion of a worldview as a commitment or matter of the heart" (p. 23). This question was added as a result of Sire's (2004) companion volume to *The Universe Next Door*, published as *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept*. In *Naming the Elephant*, Sire (2004) defines a worldview as follows:

> A commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true, or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being. (p. 141)

Within this definition, Sire (2004) identified a worldview as having three core components: propositions or presuppositions; actions, described as how we live and move; and orientation of the heart. For Sire (2004), the heart was an important third element to add to the definition of a biblical worldview because of the weight of importance given to it in the Bible. Sire (2004) describes the biblical concept of the heart as including the notions of "wisdom (Prov 2:10), emotion (Ex 4:14; Jn 14:1), desire and will (1 Chron 29:18), spirituality (Acts 8:21), and intellect (Rms 1:21)" (p. 143). Consequently, as Kuyper (2009) campaigned for a biblical worldview that addressed all areas of life, Schaeffer (2006) advocated for a reconnection of the upper and lower story, and Malik (1980) sought a Gospel that transformed an individual's heart, mind, and actions, Sire's (2015) definition of a biblical worldview required an examination of propositional understanding, one's actions, and, if possible, an individual's heart orientation.

Sire's Three-Dimensional Concept of Worldview

Sire (2009) explained that the commitment towards a worldview "lies deep in the inner recesses of the human self" (p. 20). It is a matter of an individual's mind, spirit, body, and soul. Fundamentally and biblically speaking, Sire (2009) viewed a worldview as a matter of the heart. In scripture, the concept of the heart, although never definitively defined, includes the summation of an individual's wisdom, emotions, desire and will, spirituality, and intellect. Succinctly, Naugle (2002) defined this, and Sire (2009) concurred, that the heart is "the central defining element of the human person" (p. 266). It is therefore from the heart that every individual's thoughts, and consequently actions, proceed.

To this end, Sire (2009) stated that a worldview can be expressed in the answers to eight propositions:

1. What is prime reality – the really real?

2. What is the nature of external reality, that is, the world around us?

3. What is a human being?

4. What happens to a person at death?

5. Why is it possible to know anything at all?

6. How do we know what is right and wrong?

7. What is the meaning of human history?

8. What personal, life-orienting core commitments are consistent with this worldview?

Each of these propositions in turn has basic underlying parts or assumptions. For a Christian, Sire (2009) outlined the following part or assumptions for each worldview proposition:

1. What is prime reality – the really real? For the Christian, this question implies that God is infinite (i.e., beyond scope and measure), and is the source of all reality. God is also personal, which means that God is not simply a force or energy, but God is both self-reflective and self-determinant. God's personal characteristics are found, among other ways, in His triune nature or what is commonly referred to by Christians as the trinity. God is also transcendent, meaning that God "is beyond us and our world" (Sire, 2009, p. 29), and omniscient, or all-knowing, and is also the source of all knowledge and intelligence. God is sovereign. Without confusing God's permissive will with God's perfect will, God's sovereignty "expresses the fact that nothing is beyond God's ultimate interest, control and authority" (Sire, 2009, p. 30). Finally, prime reality expresses the truth about God's character, that is that God is good. God embodies and defines good. God's goodness is expressed through God's holiness and through His love.

2. What is the nature of external reality, that is, the world around us? According to Sire (2009), this question encompasses the biblical idea that God created everything (Genesis 1).

There are two main themes associated with the creation account found in Genesis 1. The first is that God spoke everything into existence. The second is that God "created the cosmos as a uniformity of cause and effect in an open system" (Sire, 2009, p. 31). The importance of this second point includes the concept that God created everything with order, rather than chaos, and that as an open system, it is not preprogrammed or void of human free-will.

 3. What is a human being? Scripture defines humans as being made "in the image of God" (Genesis 1:27). This implies that humans have inherent worth and value and that they are conscious, intelligent, decision making beings, capable of transcending the cosmos; that is understanding creation around us and acting in ways that can effect change.

 4. What happens to a person at death? From a biblical perspective, death results in an individual continuing their existence in either heaven or hell. This is important because it is the ultimate expression of the freedom God gave to each individual, that is to "choose whom we would serve; it is a recognition that our decisions have a significance that extends far down into the reaches of foreverness" (Sire, 2009, p. 41).

 5. Why is it possible to know anything at all? As beings made in God's image, we have the capacity to know and understand. Sire (2009) stated that "the foundation of human knowledge is the character of God as Creator" (p. 36). As such, humans can only know what God has chosen to reveal to them. Knowledge is expressed through two forms of revelation: general and special. General revelation is knowledge found through God's creation and created order (Romans 1:18–20). Special revelation "is God's disclosure of himself in extranatural ways" (Sire, 2009, p. 37). Through such means God reveals Himself, who He is, and His desires for humanity. It is because of God, and through God, that humanity has the ability to acquire and build knowledge.

6. How do we know what is right and wrong? Just as God is the source of the physical and spiritual realm, God is also the source of moral law. Fundamentally, God has revealed His moral law and His character through scripture. This has occurred many times and in many ways throughout the Bible, beginning in the Garden of Eden, through the Mosaic laws, the prophets, and the teaching of the apostle Paul. Ultimately, the fullest embodiment of right and wrong is found in the person of Jesus Christ, which was affirmed through His resurrection from the grave after the crucifixion. Sire (2009) succinctly stated the determination of right and wrong as follows: "We are not the measure of morality. God is" (p. 43).

7. What is the meaning of human history? Sire (2009) ascribes value to history, and therefore by definition, people's lives, actions and events, as having meaning because God stands behind all human existence and experiences. God uses the blessings and chaos of everyone's lives to draw people to Himself. Despite the seeming randomness of life and events, a loving God is orchestrating all things to "work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28b).

8. What personal, life-orienting core commitments are consistent with this worldview? According to Sire (2009), the culmination of a biblical worldview is found in the answer to this question. The previous seven questions lay the foundation for this question, which brings forth the essence of the Christian life. Sire (2009) defines a personal, life-orienting core commitment worldview in this manner:

> The way in which it serves as the focus for the ultimate meaning of life, not just the
>
> meaning of human history or human existence in the abstract, but the meaning of life for
>
> each Christian. As God himself is the really real, the ultimate ground of being and the

creator of all being other than himself, so devoted Christians live not for themselves but

for God. (pp. 44–45)

To further press the point, Sire (2009) adds Question One of the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*,

"What is the chief end of man?" The answer to which is "to glorify God and enjoy him forever."

There are myriad of ways Christians have sought to pragmatically define a biblical worldview,

including the "Golden Rule." However, no matter what practical application Christians seek to

define as an individual's devotion to God and the outworking of that in their life, fundamentally,

Sire (2009) explained, Christians will attest that, "life is all about God . . . not about themselves"

(p. 45).

The culmination of Sire's (2009) eight propositions results in what he considers a

succinct and clear biblical worldview for an individual, or they highlight the disparities or

deficiencies of an unbiblical worldview in both believers and unbelievers alike. According to

Sire (2009), theism is "a complete worldview" (p. 46), rooted in metaphysics, ethics,

epistemology, holding that everything stems from God and points to God. As such, the central

tenant of Christianity, and consequently a biblical worldview, is the greatness of God.

Sire (2009) described the greatness of God, recognized by a believer who "consciously

accepts and acts on it," as the "central conception" and "the rock, the transcendent reference

point, that gives life meaning" (p. 46). Based on Sire's (2009) working definition of a

worldview and his own conclusion that a theistic or biblical worldview is centered on the

greatness of God, a biblical worldview would resemble something similar to the following:

A commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed through the

greatness of God, that are held about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides

the foundation on which Christians live and move and have their being.

This definition expressly identifies the heart, the mind, and an individual's actions as the core ingredients commensurate to their worldview (Sire, 2015). When choosing to examine an individual's faith, two factors need to be considered: both how and when. Sire (2015) concluded that faith should best be analyzed through the lens of heart, mind, and actions. Fowler (1981), through his stages of faith theory, concluded that the best time to examine an individual's faith is between Stages 3 and 4, often defined as beginning in late adolescence and usually ending with young adulthood. Stages 3 and 4 can also be defined as the transition from belief to conviction (McDowell & Hostetler, 2002), or movement beyond "the self and awareness of self, which can lead to a growing clarity and commitment to beliefs, values, and purpose" (King, Clardy, & Ramos, 2014, p. 206).

Fowler's Stages of Faith

The development of an individual's faith is a distinctly personal and individual phenomenon. Faith grows and matures at different speeds within different individuals based on a variety of different circumstances and influences. In *Stages of Faith*, Fowler (1981) divides faith development into six different stages:

- Stage 1: Intuitive-Projective Faith

- Stage 2: Mythic-Literal Faith

- Stage 3: Synthetic-Conventional Faith

- Stage 4: Individuative-Reflective Faith

- Stage 5: Conjunctive Faith

- Stage 6: Universalizing Faith

It is worth noting that, prior to Intuitive-Projective Faith, Fowler (1981) describes a pre-stage called Undifferentiated Faith. During this stage, which begins at birth and lasts through infancy,

the seeds of trust, courage, hope, and love are sown. Conversely, threats, such as the sense of abandonment, inconsistencies, and depravation, may also be sown, and these may impact an infant's environment and subsequent faith development.

Stage 1: Intuitive-Projective Faith. Fowler (1981) describes the Intuitive-Projective Faith as beginning with the convergence of thought and speech and is most typical of children between the ages of 3 and 7. During this stage, which is fantasy-filled and imitative, the child is "powerfully and permanently influenced by examples, moods, actions and stories of the visible faith of primarily related adults" (Fowler, 1981, p. 133). Of utmost importance during this stage is the principle of self-awareness, particularly with regard to death, sex, and strong taboos, reinforced by culture and family.

Stage 2: Mythic-Literal Faith. During the Mythic-Literal Faith stage, perspective is remarkably literal, encompassing principles of fairness and justice based on reciprocity, as well as moral rules and attitudes. Understanding through narrative coherence and meaning provides contextualization of experiences. It is through these avenues that the beliefs and observances symbolizing one's belonging in community are formed (Fowler, 1981).

Stage 3: Synthetic-Conventional Faith. Synthetic-Conventional Faith transitions at the beginning of adolescence, however, do not necessarily leave once adulthood is reached; in fact, many adults remain in this stage. During this stage, one's personal experience beyond the family, including school or work, peers, society, media, social media, and religion, provide the basis for identity and future prospects. Each competing value and influence is synthesized into a coherent personal myth of one's own sense of identity and faith (Fowler, 1981).

Stage 4: Individuative-Reflective Faith. If reached, Individuative-Reflective Faith usually occurs during young adulthood. During this stage, an individual moves away from

finding one's identity through relationships or significance to others. Instead, self-identity and outlook are found through the reactions, interpretations, and judgments of one's actions and the actions of others. It is during this stage that Fowler (1981) first explicitly acknowledged an individual's adherence to an individual worldview.

Stage 5: Conjunctive Faith. The Conjunctive Faith stage is usually entered during mid-life. With the benefit of hindsight through experience, this stage provides greater clarity of self and one's outlook for the future. While seeking to reconcile the past with the benefit of knowledge and experience, Stage 5 looks to unify truth and experience, freeing oneself from the constraints of class, religious community, and other previous self-identifying factors found in previous stages, but falling short of radical actualization (Fowler, 1981).

Stage 6: Universalizing Faith. Fowler (1981) describes Universalizing Faith as exceedingly rare, signified by "liberation from the social, political, economic, and ideological shackles" (Fowler, 1981, pp. 200–201) that influence most people's lives. Universalism seeks to unify and transform the world into a utopian idealism, freed from the common constraints many feel, including those of religion. Although Fowler (1981) conveys a message of universalism, which is antithetical to the Christian faith, he distinguishes between universalism as a secular or polytheistic goal, and the Kingdom of God promulgated throughout the Bible, specifically in the New Testament. Although not without flaws, the coming kingdom envisioned by Fowler (1981) in Stage 6, speaks to a spiritual maturity of Christian believers.

Fowler's (1981) stages of faith are not biblical in the sense that they do not accurately or easily describe the processes of salvation, discipleship, or sanctification. However, during the early and middle stages of faith, Fowler (1981) adequately describes what theologians would define as the transition from belief to conviction (McDowell & Hostetler, 2002). Most students

within the CLSS would be living through Stage 3: Synthetic-Conventional Faith and heading

into Stage 4: Individuative-Reflective Faith. According to Fowler's (1981) stages of faith

theory, the transition from Stage 3 to 4, or moving from belief to conviction, starts with the

beginning of adolescence and usually ends with young adulthood and encompasses a number of

features. These features include a faith that is influenced by "family, school or work, peers,

street society and media, and perhaps religion" (Fowler, 1981, p. 172), and more recently, social

media, to a faith that is no longer defined by "one's roles or meanings to others" (Fowler, 1981,

p. 182). Instead, faith becomes defined by one's own boundaries, inner connections, and self-

awareness that Fowler (1981) defined as an individual's worldview.

During Stage 3, an individual examines the multitude of influences found in one's life,

looking for coherency, while constantly synthesizing values and information to provide a basis

for personal identity and future outlook (Fowler, 1981). These beliefs and values, however, are

tacitly held, often rooted in the traditional authority roles that are influential over an individual's

life, with little or no opportunity to reflect or examine them explicitly or systematically outside

of the confines of one's immediate environment (Fowler, 1981). It is important to note that not

everyone makes the transition from Stage 3 to Stage 4 in early adulthood, with many not making

the transition until their mid- to late-30s or early 40s, while some people never make the

transition at all. There are many important and relevant contributing factors to this breakdown in

faith transition, including contradictions in values between the individual's valued authority

sources and significant changes in policies and practices by official leaders, including a

substantive change in theological teachings or practices. Other factors include encounters with

perspectives or experiences that are critical of one's beliefs and values, including challenging the

relevance of one's beliefs to one's life (Neuman, 2011). For many, the physical or emotional experience of leaving home is often the trigger to such self-examination and inner turmoil.

Stage 4 results in the emergence of two essential features which are "the critical distancing from one's previous assumptive value system and the emergence of an executive ego" (Fowler, 1981, p. 179). As this process occurs, a new identity is formed that takes ownership of one's faith, shaped by personal choices and external influences, resulting in the shaping of lifestyle choices or personal worldview (Fowler, 1981), a theory affirmed by Gutierrez and Park (2015). It is this development and ownership of an individual worldview, a biblical worldview, that is one of the fundamental goals of Christian education (Schultz, 2015). As such, the development of a biblical worldview can be seen as a result of an individual's transition between Stage 3: Synthetic-Conventional Faith and Stage 4: Individuative-Reflective Faith of Fowler's (1981) stages of faith.

Philosophical Assumptions

The fundamental philosophical assumption and underpinning of this research is a biblical worldview. A biblical worldview is thinking about anything and everything in a consistently Christian way—or in "a manner that is shaped, directed, and restrained by the truth of God's Word and God's Spirit" (Guinness, 1994, p. 136). A biblical worldview consists of a number of underlying principles, all of which can be found in many early Church creeds and declarations, including the Nicene Creed and the Westminster Confession of faith. These basic principles are as follows: God created the universe and everything in it (Genesis 1; Hebrews 11:3), and it is sustained by His own power (Hebrews 1:3). God made everything good and perfect, to express and reflect His glory (Genesis 1). God made mankind, as the pinnacle of His creation, in His likeness and for His glory (Genesis 1 and 2). Mankind, through their own free will, disobeyed

God through sin, causing not only mankind but all of creation to fall (Genesis 3; Romans 8:19–23). God, knowing all things from the beginning until the end (Isaiah 46:9–10), was not surprised by the fall of mankind and creation (Revelations 13:8). Mankind's fall brought about the implementation of God's redemptive plan, conceived before creation, and was initiated at the fall (Genesis 3:15; Acts 2:23). God's redemptive plan, foreshadowed through the lives and experiences of many individuals and the nation of Israel (1 Corinthians 10:1–11), was ultimately brought to fruition through the birth of His son Jesus Christ (Matthew 5:17). Jesus was born of a virgin (Luke 1:34–37), lived a sinless life, and then died on a cross as a substitute for the sins of mankind (2 Corinthians 5:21). Through Jesus' death on the cross, all things were reconciled to Himself, allowing mankind to benefit from His atoning work (Colossians 1:19–22), being filled with the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 1:22), and becoming co-workers in His redemptive process. Through guidance from the Holy Spirit, mankind can aid in the process of building God's kingdom for both temporal and eternal benefit (1 Corinthians 3:9–11). At a time appointed by God the Father (Matthew 24:36), Jesus will be returning to judge the living and the dead (Acts 10:40–43): those who have received forgiveness of sins will receive eternal life; those who have spurned God's redemptive work will receive eternal judgment and suffering (Revelation 20:12–15).

As a result of the Bible's clear teachings on creation, the fall, sin, and its eternal consequences, a relationship with God, founded and strengthened through the development of a biblical worldview, is of the highest importance. Simply stated, there is nothing else more important for students to understand and invest in than a relationship with God found through Jesus Christ. This can only be done when an individual begins to see the world and all of

humanity the way God does, which makes a biblical worldview significant in this life and for all of eternity (Schultz, 2015).

Related Literature

To understand the importance of a biblical worldview, it is necessary to identify the theological importance of a worldview and the secular progression of education. This review includes the examination of both the secular and Christian purposes for education, including worldview development, its significance towards students, and the deficiency of a clear purpose for worldview concerning Christian education.

The Evolving Purpose of Education

Because of its practical and theological importance, education in the United States was initially driven by religious purposes. Dating back to the Puritan colonies of Massachusetts in the 1600s, the primary purpose of public education was to educate children so that they could read and become conversant with scripture (Anthony & Benson, 2003). The primary texts in these early schools were the Bible and the English Catechisms, to which was later added the *New England Primer*, which included *Spiritual Milk* and the *Westminster Catechism* (Anthony & Benson, 2003). Private schools were also established in the early New England and Middle Colonies, ironically, to provide less religious oriented parents a more secular alternative to the religious education synonymous with public education in the American colonies during the 17th and early 18th centuries (Anthony & Benson, 2003). Over time, however, education within the American colonies and then the United States began to take a more secular direction.

Beginning with the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, new states were required to establish schools and provide public education. This resulted in education slowly becoming more widespread and standardized (Gutek, 1995). As a consequence of the Industrial Revolution and

Progressivism, labor conditions and economic prosperity began to cause "Americans to focus more on their resources than on their Creator" (Anthony & Benson, 2003, p. 326). An increased focus on scientific inquiry and the scientific method gradually undermined the Bible, moral absolutes, ethical decision making, and the basis for Christian education as a whole (Cairns, 1996). Although education began as an exercise in biblical literacy, eventually it became an effort to assimilate young adults into a labor market as productive, skilled, civic minded workers (Gutek, 1995).

Some of the greatest obstacles for state run schools to provide a Christian education and biblical worldview began to appear in the 1920s, manifesting themselves in the late 1930s. The most notable challenge towards upholding a biblical worldview in the classroom was *The State of Tennessee v. John Thomas Scopes* (1925), more commonly known as the Scopes Monkey Trial. The Scopes Monkey Trial challenged a Tennessee state law that made it unlawful to teach human evolution in a state-funded school (Larson, 2006). Although the law was upheld, it was the first signal of the legal and cultural war for the Bible in public schools. As the states assumed more control of the education process, the United States Supreme Court began to systematically erode Christianity's historical influence on education. Beginning in 1937, the Supreme Court of the United States began to redirect its focus from property rights to personal freedoms. The majority opinion by Chief Justice Harlan F. Stone in Footnote Number Four of *United States v. Carolene Products Company* (1938) noted "when statutes impinged on personal rights, there would be a much higher standard of review" (Urofsky, 1997, p. 11). These personal rights included religious, national, racial minorities, and "discrete and insular minorities" (*United States v. Carolene Products Company*, 1938). The precedent set by the *Carolene Products* decision would begin a lineage of Supreme Court decisions that would gradually but effectively

chip away at the legality of Christianity in public schools.

Thomas Jefferson, in his letter to the Danbury Baptist Association, interpreted the First Amendment establishment and free exercise clauses to mean that there should be a wall of separation between Church and State (Weber, 1990). Echoing the words of Thomas Jefferson, the Supreme Court, in its decision *Everson v. Board of Education* (1947), declared that "the First Amendment has erected a wall between church and state. That wall must be kept high and impregnable. We could not approve the slightest breach" (Weber, 1990, p. 127). In *Everson*, the Supreme Court, through its majority decision delivered by Associate Justice Hugo Black, established a new constitutional principle that would forever change the relationship between government and the Church, and dramatically influence public education.

Everson was followed in proceeding years with *Engel v. Vitale* (1962), which declared prayer in school as unconstitutional, and *Abington School District v. Schempp* (1963), which declared the organized reading of the Bible unconstitutional as well. The possibility of conserving a biblical worldview was further eroded when *Epperson v. Arkansas* (1968) invalidated an Arkansas statute prohibiting the teaching of human evolution, and *Edwards v. Aguillard* (1987) prohibited the public schools from teaching "Creation Science" in addition to evolution. An additional challenge to Christianity within the public-school system included prohibiting of a nativity scene and other overtly Christian displays or endorsements through *Lynch v. Donnelly* (l984).

Within the United States today, teaching from a biblical worldview in public schools is not only legally forbidden, it is undermined by secular humanist theories and philosophies such as evolution, pluralism, moral relativism, and postmodernism. As a consequence of the State's and Supreme Court's influence on public education, increasing numbers of Christians have

sought to educate their children in environments that promote biblical literacy and understanding, a freedom to talk about and worship God, and biblical morality, all ultimately resulting in the impartation of a biblical worldview (Anthony & Benson, 2003). Unsurprisingly, as the influence of the Bible and Christianity has waned within public schools, the characterization and necessity of a biblical worldview has grown. With scattered beginnings, what became known as the Christian school movement saw tremendous growth in the late 1970s (Tozer, Gallegos, Henry, Greiner, & Price, 2011). After experiencing rapid growth in the 1980s and 1990s, Christian schools now cater to over 1.2 million students annually, making up more than 15% of all private school attendance in the United States (Tozer et al., 2011). Despite the rapid growth of Christian education throughout the United States, the understanding of what constitutes Christian education and its purpose is still highly subjective and unsettled.

Definition of Christian Education

The definition of Christian education is incredibly subjective, with significant diversity found in different levels of oversight, curriculum guidelines, accreditation, and teacher certifications (Tozer et al., 2011). Although there is widespread consensus that Christian education should incorporate principles foundational to a biblical worldview, the building blocks upon which a biblical worldview rests have been highly debated. Some opinions emphasize the teaching of faith, promoting an emphasis on character, virtue, and morality (Glanzer & Talbert, 2005). Other perspectives emphasize faith in conjunction with academic learning, as the heart of effective Christian education (Iselin & Meteyard, 2010). Consequently, such diversity and disunity has not always resulted in the embodiment of biblical worldview principles within Christian education. Fundamentally, Christian education should seek to promote "God's plan to

educate future generations to develop a God-centered worldview and, therefore, to think and act according to God's ways" (Schultz, 2015, p. 49).

Purpose of Christian Education

Since the founding of the nation, the earliest educational institutions embraced a distinctly Christian purpose. Colonial American pastor and theologian Jonathan Edwards viewed the purpose of Christian education with a three-fold function. The first was to help learners understand the world as God-related and filled with His glory. The second was to help learners appreciate that the world was made for them, and themselves for the world. The third was to promote sound morality through human actions, primarily to reflect His glory (Potgieter, 2016). Christian education, as reflected through Paul's exhortation to Timothy (2 Timothy 2:2), was expected to help facilitate the process of sanctification. This was to be done through teaching and modeling to help bring about a worldview-level transformation and increasingly holy lives (Mittwede, 2013). Therefore, Christian education should embody two principles: helping students discover, while simultaneously preparing them, to do what God has called them to do for His glory, and, helping students to grow in their love for God and humanity (Fowler, 2000; Dickens, 2014).

The process of Christian education, however, has become increasingly convoluted or diluted as additional worldly goals and unbiblical measures have been intentionally and unintentionally introduced. Some Christians and Christian educational institutions view the principles of religious education as merely moral development, consisting of something that encourages "students to make changes in their lives as a result of what they learned" (Hilton & Aramaki, 2014, p. 101). There is little research evidence, however, that supports such a theory (Schlaefli, Rest, & Thoma, 1985). Similarly, a significant emphasis has also been placed on

academic achievement and cultural assimilation over and above spiritual growth and development (Schultz, 2015). It has also been suggested that students should be given the opportunity to explore different theories concerning the meaning of life and significance, which would help them develop into healthy, balanced individuals (Hand, 2012). A Christian education should seek to move past the transmission of knowledge, skills, and shared values. Educators can and will, intentionally or otherwise, influence the worldview of their students (Wolf, 2011). Rather than merely the transfer of knowledge, Christian education should seek to challenge the worldviews of this age through dedicated Christian educators teaching about purpose and the glory of God (Hand, 2012).

Definition of a Biblical Worldview in Christian Education

Although there is widespread consensus that the integration of a biblical worldview lies at the heart of effective Christian education, such aspirations have not always resulted in the embodiment of the principles associated with a biblical worldview within Christian educational institutions (Iselin & Meteyard, 2010). A biblical worldview should be the most fundamental goal of Christian education. Rather than focusing on test scores and athletics, Christian educators should be encouraging students to think about the purpose of their lives and their relationship with their Heavenly Father. A biblical worldview should challenge every Christian to "think about anything and everything in a consistently Christian way – in a manner that is shaped, directed, and restrained by the truth of God's Word and God's Spirit" (Schultz, 2015, p. 136). To do this, God and the Bible need to move beyond being merely the topic of classroom discussion, instead becoming integrated into every facet of an educator's pedagogy, including, their character, instruction, and assessment (Kanitz, 2005).

The opportunity for Christian educators to help develop vibrant, holistic Christian worldviews within their students is both a great challenge and a glorious opportunity (Kanitz, 2005). The focus of Christian education should be to create missionaries, not employees, or proselytes equipped for spiritual battle and earthly ministry; that is to say that every Christian, regardless of their place of employment, should view their job as a mission field rather than merely a vocation. To effectively achieve this, teachers must be thoroughly grounded in their own biblical worldview and be willing to take any necessary steps to align all that is said and done within a biblical worldview (Watson, 2007). Teachers must be willing to draw on their own knowledge and experiences (Cooling, 2010), effectively applying their own biblical worldview to their educational practice (Van der Kooij et al., 2017).

The Importance of a Biblical Worldview

A worldview is a potentially powerful tool that every person possesses. A worldview dictates an individual's thoughts, speech, and actions for good or for bad (Reiss, 2009). The development of a coherent and clear biblical worldview is a lifelong process. However, students should be stimulated and inspired to examine their own worldview and the worldviews of others (Van der Kooij et al., 2013). A biblical worldview is the answer to the wellspring of life's essential questions, including origin, purpose, morality, and the after-life (Thomson, 2012). Although some investigation has been undertaken into the exploration of the spiritual lives and experiences of children, much more needs to be done to understand the growth and development of a student's worldview, in addition to encouraging a healthy spiritual walk with God (Lawson, 2006).

The Lack of a Biblical Worldview

Despite the opportunity and even responsibility of Christian schools to impart a biblical worldview, many schools fail to do so. Research conducted by Baniszewski (2016) found "no statistical difference shown that would affirm that attendance at a Christian school resulted in the development of a biblical worldview that's significantly different from the biblical worldview of students who did not attend a Christian school" (p. 104). The significance of this research is that beliefs lead to behaviors. As a result of being educated by people who are Christians, in an environment where Christianity is freely taught and discussed, many students seem to be able to articulate the propositional components of their faith. However, they fail to express them in their actions, which may be symptomatic of the condition of their hearts. With this in mind, coupled with the growth of Christian education, the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) was founded.

ACSI Accreditation

Founded in 1978, ACSI seeks to advance excellence in Christian education. The vision of ACSI is to "become a leading international organization that promotes Christian education and provides training and resources to Christian schools and Christian educators" (ACSI, 2017b). According to ACSI, this vision will result in the following:

- schools that contribute to the public good through effective teaching and learning and that are biblically sound, academically rigorous, socially engaged, and culturally relevant.
- educators who embody a biblical worldview, engage in transformational teaching and discipling, and embrace personal and professional growth.

ACSI provides accreditation for elementary and secondary Christian schools in addition to standalone and attached preschools (ACSI, 2017a). ACSI, which has partnerships with all U.S.

regional accreditation agencies, helps member and prospective member schools to "validate their quality and verify that they are striving for excellence based on a solid Christian philosophy of education foundation" (ACSI, 2017a). As a part of the accreditation process, schools must adhere to the regulations found in the ACSI *Reaching for Excellence Through Accreditation and Continuous Improvement for Higher Achievement 2.1: Standards Manual for Accreditation* (REACH 2.1).

In this manual, considerable time is devoted to the promotion and development of a biblical worldview for both faculty and students. In the *Foreword and Recognition*, ACSI articulates one of the four interwoven educational strands of an authentic Christian school as "biblical worldview grounding" (ACSI, 2016, p. iv). As a part of Standard 5: Instructional Program and Resources, through their curriculum guide or mapping, schools must show "a well-documented biblical basis for instruction of students in each course consistent with the goal of developing a biblical worldview in students" (ACSI, 2016, p. 13). Standard 7: Character, Values, and Spiritual Formation of Students, states that "the school shall provide for spiritual nurture and discipleship of its students with the goal of developing a biblical worldview" (ACSI, 2016, p. 19). Furthermore, REACH 2.1 states,

> The distinctive nature of a Christian school is that it seeks to produce rational, reasoned, and responsible Christian citizens—rational in that it is shaping its students to be spiritually formed thinkers, reasoned in that Christian schooling trains pupils for the thoughtful use of a biblical worldview, responsible because it deliberately educates students for Christian living. (ACSI, 2016, p. 19)

One of the indicators that ACSI uses to quantify character, values, and spiritual formation in member schools is that "the school and its instructional program reflect developmentally

appropriate application of a biblical worldview and Christlike character and values" (ACSI, 2016, p. 19).

Finally, within REACH 2.1, Appendix H states that a Christian or biblical worldview is one of the ways ACSI quantifies a school's Christian mission and spiritual formation outcomes: "Rather than a list of Bible verses, these elements should be connective concepts that make appropriate references between content and the school's Christian distinctive" (ACSI, 2016, p. 30). The use of a biblical worldview by ACSI as one of its tests for Christian authenticity speaks to the importance of such a principle in the uniqueness of Christian education. Finally, for the simple purposes of definition and understanding, ACSI defines spiritual formation, in part, as helping

> the broad area of teaching and nurturing of students in their spiritual development, including their understanding that all truth is God's truth . . . and they have been called to become a disciple of Jesus and become more like Him. In addition, the school's role in spiritual formation is to help students develop a biblical worldview as they are taught and nurtured intellectually, socially, and physically through every planned learning activity. (ACSI, 2016, p. 38)

ACSI accreditation is a rigorous and thorough process that speaks to the importance and uniqueness of Christian education. The development of a biblical worldview is articulated throughout the ACSI accreditation manual and described as one of the four interwoven educational strands of an authentic Christian school. The frequency and weightiness placed upon the development of a biblical worldview as a part of the ACSI accreditation process illustrates not only its special importance but underlines it as one of the fundamental responsibilities of a Christian school.

Unfortunately, many Christian schools have found themselves, either intentionally or unintentionally, catering education to fit the pursuit of worldly rather than heavenly treasure (Schultz, 2015). Christian education has become decidedly more secular in focus, with an unhealthy emphasis on tests scores, athletic prowess, and other secular achievements, to the detriment of developing a coherent biblical worldview within its students; this phenomenon is labeled as *Christians educating* rather than Christian education (Hull, 2003). Though limited in number, more recent studies have confirmed the misplacement of priorities or the lack of intentionality within Christian education (Baniszewski, 2016; Barrows, 2014; Boerema, 2011).

Consequently, it is important for a Christian school to remain focused on and invested in imparting a biblical worldview to its students. To ensure the successful impartation of a biblical worldview, the three-dimensional worldview advocated by Sire (2015) is best used as a standard to examine a student's worldview. The three-dimensional worldview seeks to assess the dimensions of proposition, behavior, and heart-orientation as a true measure of worldview. However, equally as important as how to measure a student's biblical worldview is when to measure a student's worldview. Simply stated, it is equally important to identify in a child's development not just when an individual's thoughts, intentions of the heart, and actions align, but also when he has the freedom and wherewithal to act upon his desires.

Summary

Christian education and a biblical worldview are not a new phenomenon. The development of a biblical worldview has been one of the primary goals of Christian education since the Puritans established their colonies in Massachusetts in the 1600s. However, as government involvement and secular utilitarianism became increasingly popular influences in education, the importance of any Christian influences dwindled and then eventually diminished.

Beginning in the late 1940s and gaining momentum by the 1960s, secular education became increasingly more hostile to religion generally and to Christianity specifically. Consequently, many Christians felt a need to establish Christian schools that would effectively impart a biblical Christian worldview, which had been removed gradually from public education. To help regulate and promote the growth of Christian education, ACSI was established as a global accrediting agency. Like many Christians from previous generations and today, ACSI views the development of a biblical worldview as one of the most important responsibilities of a Christian school. Unfortunately, to date, most research concerning biblical worldview analysis has focused on the tertiary level of education (Esqueda, 2014; Quinn et al., 2012; Smith, 2013; Wrenn & Cafferky, 2015). As more and more young people leave the church before they reach their mid-20s (ACFI, 2017; Barna Group, 2000, 2009, 2017), more rigorous case studies need to be conducted to examine whether Christian schools successfully impart a biblical worldview (Boerema, 2011; Lawson, 2006). The little research that has been conducted has found Christian schools to be ineffective in developing a biblical worldview in their students (Baniszewski, 2016). Fowler's (1981) stages of faith theory identifies the period between adolescence and young adulthood, or the high school years, as a critically important stage of faith development that should be examined for evidence of a biblical worldview. As such, it is important to validate the claims of Christian schools concerning the impartation of a biblical worldview, specifically during the high school years, and develop ways to help them become more successful.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this multiple case study was to understand how the Christian education offered by Country Lakes School System influenced its graduates' worldviews. This study was conducted using a multiple case study within a bounded system of the Country Lakes School System (CLSS), which graduates approximately 220 students annually across the whole school system. This chapter focuses on the research design, research questions, site, participants, procedures, my role as the researcher, and data collection. It also outlines and explains data analysis, trustworthiness, credibility, and ethical considerations.

Design

This study utilized a qualitative research method because, unlike quantitative research, qualitative research generally involves the studying of people's lives (Yin, 2016). A case study design was used because it is the most conducive for answering *how* and *why* questions (Yin, 2014). Specifically, it was conducted as a multiple case study within a bounded system. This method was chosen for many reasons. A multiple case study design was selected because it allowed the researcher to "select for study several programs from several research sites or multiple programs within a single site" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 99). Additionally, a multiple case study accommodates research that seeks to examine literal replications, specifically how and why the outcomes might have occurred from case to case (Yin, 2014). For multiple case studies, Yin (2014) recommended two or more cases, with Creswell and Poth (2018) recommending four or five; four were used in this case study which are the four individual school campuses that make up the CLSS. Stake (2006) refers to the multiplicity of cases as a *quintain*. Stake (2006) defined the quintain as the collective targeting concerning an object,

phenomenon, or condition to be studied. For multiple case study research, "we study what is similar and different about the cases in order to understand the quintain better" (Stake, 2006, p. 6). For this multiple case study, the quintain was the biblical worldview of recent graduates, which is addressed further by the "Research Questions" section of this chapter. This multiple case study also required an embedded design because of the requirement to analyze each individual participant and school campus, in addition to the school system as a whole (Yin, 2014). Finally, this multiple case study was conducted within a bounded system. The bounding for this study was the eligibility criteria placed on alumni for this study (Yin, 2014).

This multiple case study was conducted within a single context that has multiple cases. In this multiple case study, the context is the CLSS, while the cases are the four schools within CLSS, consisting of two K–8 schools and two K–12 schools. Generally, qualitative researchers are usually reluctant to generalize from one case to another; however, generalizations are best suited for case studies that represent multiple cases (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The successful growth of the CLSS was one of the primary reasons for choosing the CLSS for study. By examining four representative cases for inclusion in the multiple case study, it was possible to understand how CLSS influenced its students' biblical worldviews as perceived by its graduates. Although all four schools are part of a single collective school system, they vary in socio-economics, ethnic diversity, curriculum, faculty, administrative leadership, and geographic locations. Consequently, any differences or successful similarities may provide helpful insights to other Christian schools trying to foster and develop a biblical worldview among their students.

This multiple case study analyzed individual data from CLSS graduates. The data were collected via three different means: an online blog forum, a written document outlining their personal faith journey, and individual interviews. Once the data were collected, the surveys were

tabulated for direct comparison with results from the same survey given by the ACFI (2017).

Each interview was transcribed, and then along with each written document from the

participants, they were open coded for key and common words and ideas. The words and ideas

were then grouped and subjected to cross-case synthesis to identify individual groupings in a

uniform framework (Yin, 2014).

Research Questions

There are three research questions driving the focus of this multiple case study.

Research Question 1: How do graduates of the CLSS describe a biblical worldview?

Research Question 2: How do graduates of the CLSS describe the impact of their school

experience on the development of their worldview?

Research Question 3: How do graduates describe the influence of a biblical worldview on

their decisions after graduation?

Sites

The CLSS is a large ACSI-accredited Christian school system located in the Midwestern

region of the United States. The CLSS began in 1976 as a single school in rented facilities,

serving 120 students in Grades 1–6. In 1977, a middle school was added; then in 1978, the first

of the four current campuses, *Alpha* campus (pseudonym), was built. Grade levels were added

each successive year until, by 1982, CLSS celebrated its first graduating class. As a result of

growing class enrollments, a second campus, *Bravo* campus (pseudonym), servicing Grades pre-

K through 12, was opened in 1998. In 1999, the school Board of Directors voted to become a

school system. In 2000, a third campus, *Charlie* campus (pseudonym), which was located

nearby in an adjoining state, was added. Charlie campus was formed after two previous

Christian schools joined the CLSS. Both Christian schools merged to form one school, and by

2003, Charlie campus was serving 450 students K–12. Through the initiative and cooperation of a local church, a fourth campus was opened in 2000. Initially only consisting of K–2, *Delta* campus (pseudonym) opened, and in 2005, ground was broken for a new school building. By the fall of 2006, the first classes commenced at Delta campus serving Grades K–8. Today, the CLSS serves over 3,000 students across four campuses and two states, making it one of the largest accredited Christian school systems in the United States.

Bravo Campus

Despite all four schools operating under the same regulations and guidelines as a single school system, there are clear distinctions between all four campuses. Today, Bravo campus is the largest campus in the school system with 1,781 students enrolled in pre-K through 12th grade. Bravo campus is located in a fairly affluent area of the city, and as a consequence tends to attract students from affluent families. Bravo campus is not very ethnically diverse, with only 15.5% of all attendees coming from minority backgrounds. As a result of the large number of affluent families who attend this campus, sometimes there is an unwritten expectation of certain grades or opportunities because parents are "paying for it" with their tuition. Despite any unrealistic or unreasonable parental expectations, Bravo portrays itself positively in academics, athletics, and the fine arts. For example, within the last 10 years both the middle school and high school on Bravo campus have been named National Blue Ribbon schools by the U.S. Department of Education. Bravo campus is also the location of many of the system's leadership and administration. For example, both the Superintendent and the Executive Director, in addition to many of the system's business office personnel, work at Bravo campus. One factor that needs to be acknowledged is that Bravo campus, as well as Alpha and Delta campuses, are located in a struggling public school system. There are plenty of non-Christian private schools

for affluent and/or unreligious parents to send their children, so a potential spiritual diluting of the student body is not an issue. This factor is only mentioned to contrast it with the location of Charlie campus, which is addressed later.

Alpha Campus

Alpha campus is the oldest, and in some respects, the most established of the four school campuses. Although Alpha campus is also situated in a relatively affluent area of the city, it is often described as having more of a warm and homey feeling than the other three campuses. Alpha campus currently serves 164 students Grades K–5. Alpha campus is slightly more diverse, with approximately 17.6% of attendees coming from minority backgrounds. Alpha campus also pilots the school system's expansion program known as *Nurture* (pseudonym). The purpose of this program is to meet the academic, spiritual, and social needs of children with Down syndrome. Within the last 10 years Alpha campus has also been named a National Blue Ribbon school by the U.S. Department of Education. Once students finish Grade 5 at Alpha campus, they usually continue in the school system at the Bravo campus.

Delta Campus

Delta campus is the newest of the four campuses. Delta campus currently has an enrollment of 252 in Grades Pre-K through 8. Unlike both Alpha and Bravo campuses, Delta campus is located in a very working class, middle to lower income area of the city. Because of these socioeconomics circumstances, Delta campus has continually struggled to grow numerically because of the financial resources of the local families. One of the consequences of the geographic location of Delta campus is the increased amount of minority students at the school. Although smaller in actual numbers, the percentage of minority students at Delta campus is nearly double the percentages of Alpha and Bravo campus at 26%. Some families have chosen

to send their children to Delta campus rather than Bravo campus because of the more intimate and personal atmosphere. At Delta campus, class sizes are generally smaller, which allows for more one-on-one engagement with the teachers. Like Alpha campus, once students finish eighth grade, they have the option of completing their Christian education at Bravo campus. Unlike Alpha campus, Delta campus is also situated close to Charlie campus. Many students, rather than going from a small classroom environment to a large high school, instead choose to attend the high school on Charlie campus.

Charlie Campus

Charlie campus is the most unique of all four campuses. Like Bravo campus, Charlie campus is a Pre-K through 12 school; however, unlike the other three schools within the school system, it is located in a different state. The region of the state that Charlie campus resides in is mostly working middle class, with a few poorer and affluent pockets. As a consequence of these socioeconomic and geographical difference, there are many factors, both good and bad, that influence Charlie campus. The most notable benefit of being located in a different state is the state's school voucher program. The school voucher program in this state allows parents to enroll their children in any school in the state, public or private, with a portion of any school fees or tuition paid for by the state. The state uses a percentage of the money that would ordinarily be allocated to the student's local public school to go towards the cost of a different school, even a private Christian school. The amount of money a family is entitled to through the school voucher system is income based and on occasion prorated. The school voucher system allows the parents of students who would otherwise be financially unable to afford to send their children to a Christian school, the opportunity to receive an education with a biblical worldview.

The school voucher system has not had a significant effect on the percentage of minority

students attending Charlie campus. This percentage is comparable with Alpha and Bravo campus at nearly 14%. However, the voucher program has significantly impacted the total student body, with 35% of all students at Charlie campus attending with vouchers. In total, 60% of all students attending Charlie campus receive some form of financial assistance, compared with 54% for Delta Campus, and 42% for Bravo and 24% for Alpha campuses, respectively.

Coupled with the state voucher system is the state's school of choice law. Within this state, students can attend any school of their choice as long as they can transport themselves to and from that school. School buses are still provided for students within a school's district; however, if a student wishes to attend a school out of district they must find their own transportation. In many ways, the state's school choice law has more of a detrimental effect on student enrollment at Charlie campus than a positive effect. Unlike the public-school system the first three schools are located in, one of the local public schools within the surrounding counties near Charlie campus is considered by many parents to be a "good" school. As a consequence of this, many parents, including Christian parents, do not see the need to spend thousands of dollars on a Christian education when their child can receive a "good" education from the local public high school. This factor probably influences the enrollment size at Charlie campus, though not significantly. Possibly the greatest effect is that the parents who send their children to Charlie campus are intentionally investing in a Christian education. As a consequence of this, there seems to be a greater appreciation for the work that the teachers do at Charlie campus from the parents, and a much closer feeling of community, particularly at the high school level, than at Bravo campus.

This brief overview implies, and in some cases explicitly illustrates, some distinct differences and similarities between the campuses within the CLSS. Some similarities include

the mission and vision statements for each campus. Other similarities include the requirement that biblical integration take place in each class and content area throughout the school system and the regional accreditation bestowed upon all four schools as a result of being part of a Christian school system. Biblical integration is not only an academic endeavor, student athletes are held to a high moral standard on and off the court, while all coaching staff are expected to mentor and invest their time and talents to further promote an authentic Christian faith. Most other similarities pertain to procedures and responsibilities beyond a direct impact on a student's life. Despite an intentional effort to standardize as much as possible, one of the biggest differences between the campuses is curriculum.

All four CLSS campuses are accredited by ACSI through a system accreditation, rather than each individual school being accredited separately. Alpha, Bravo, and Delta campuses are all under the same state standards; however, because Charlie campus is located in a different state, its procedural, academic, and curriculum standards are different. Some of the key areas to consider include the number of hours a school is in session per year, make-up day procedures, and state requirements for attaining a high school diploma. Another significant difference, unrelated directly to state education laws, is when the school year starts and stops for each campus. Each campus roughly follows the start, holidays, and school year end times for the local public school system where they are located. For Alpha, Bravo, and Delta campuses, this consists of a "regular" school year that includes a two-week Christmas break, one week of spring break, and a long summer holiday of at least two months. For Charlie campus, all the local surrounding schools have switched to year 'round schooling. This means Charlie campus starts the school year significantly earlier than the other three campuses; however, it has a two-week fall break, Christmas break, and spring break. Each campus finishes schooling at approximately

the same time, but Charlie campus is on summer break for less than two months. Despite their differences, the CLSS has continued to be blessed by God and, at least statistically and anecdotally, has thrived academically, athletically, and spiritually.

Consequently, the size of the CLSS and the breadth of its academic, extracurricular, and spiritual programs make the school system an excellent option for a multiple case study. By examining the fundamental purpose of Christian education and the development of a biblical worldview through the CLSS, it was possible to identify key factors that helped strengthen or weaken the development of a biblical worldview within a Christian school environment.

Participants

The sample for this research was a purposeful, criterion sample (Yin, 2016). The sample criteria included graduates who had graduated from CLSS more than a year ago but not longer than five years and had attended the school system continuously between Grades K–12. It was also important that all of the case study participants had been graduated for at least a year. This was important for two reasons. First, it allowed for the possibility for temptation to potentially come to fruition, and if applicable, any actions, such as repentance, to be taken. Second, the gap between graduation and living on one's own provides the best opportunity for the transition between Fowler's (1981) Stage 3: Synthetic-Conventional Faith and Stage 4: Individuative-Reflective Faith to occur. Because this research examined the propositional, behavioral, and heart-orientation of the participants, it was necessary to see if there was any connection between understanding a biblical worldview (propositional), possibly acting in a way contrary to a biblical worldview (behavioral), and the possibility of conviction and repentance (heart-orientation).

The sampling procedure involved obtaining the contact information of everyone who had

graduated within the last five years to determine who fit the sampling criteria. After permission for both the case study and the use of the school system's data collection resources had been obtained from the system's superintendent, access for this sampling information was obtained through the CLSS admissions office. Once all eligible participant information has been obtained, a survey via email was sent out that explained the purpose of the study, the time commitments, and the various research methods used. A sample size of at least 12 participants, 6 from each high school campus, was used. To ensure an even spread of all the academic programs in the study, a minimum sample size of 3 students who attended Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, and Delta elementary schools was used. Other questions pertaining to gender, age, physical location, socioeconomics, and ethnicity were included to achieve as much participant variety as possible that paralleled student diversity statistics for the CLSS (Yin, 2016).

Procedures

The first step taken before conducting the study was applying for and receiving approval from Liberty University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Once IRB approval was obtained, official approval from the CLSS Superintendent to contact all eligible participants was received with direct help from the CLSS alumni association. All eligible participants were initially contacted via email with a survey to establish participant interest and other important demographic information. The CLSS administration and alumni association was consulted to help obtain a purposeful sample that as closely as possible mirrored the student body demographics within the CLSS.

Once all the participants had been selected, informed consent was sought, including the opportunity to ask any questions about the research and the researcher that were applicable to the study, and the option to withdraw if they ever felt it necessary. Once consent was obtained, an

online blog forum link was sent out via email that measured a participant's worldview, using questions similar to those found in the survey used by the ACFI (2017).

In addition to the online blog forum, guidance was also given to the participants concerning the writing of their faith journey. This self-described faith journey was at least one page long and was returned by email prior to conducting the interviews. Once a participant had completed the survey and returned their faith journey document, an interview time and date were set. All the interviews were conducted in a distraction-free setting conducive to audio recording and convenient to the interviewee (Creswell & Poth, 2018). All the interviews were conducted one-on-one and last approximately 25 minutes using a semi-structured format. Each interview covered the same questions, but sometimes varied with additional questions depending upon the participant's answers and experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). All the interviews were transcribed and sent back to each participant for member checking, and if necessary, corrected or clarified (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Once an interview transcript had been member checked, data analysis through open coding begin.

Informal data analysis began once the survey and personal faith journey transcripts were received, with the intention of discovering participant specific questions used during the interview phase. Both descriptive and in vivo coding formally began with analysis of the personal faith journey transcript and continued with the interview transcript once it had been transcribed and member checked (Saldaña, 2016). Memoing was periodically conducted to pull together thoughts generated while coding, in addition to other non-textual observations and thoughts (Yin, 2014).

The Researcher's Role

As the researcher for this study, I was the human instrument for data collection (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I was in contact with the participants via email and in direct contact with them during the interview process as well as member checking. As a teacher within CLSS for the last 13 years, it was likely that I would have had previous contact with some of the participants in the study. However, at the time of the study I had no leadership influence or authority over any of the CLSS alumni who participated in this study. I had never had contact with approximately half of the participants in the study, that is, all those participants who graduated from Bravo campus. The remaining participants, those who graduated from Charlie campus, I had taught mostly as freshmen, along with some as sophomores. Because the study focused on CLSS alumni, it was at least four years since I had had any of the participants in class.

The research was conducted through a single interpretive framework and various philosophical assumptions. The interpretive framework that guided this study was pragmatism. The study sought to identify both good and bad practices that contributed to a well-developed biblical worldview or undermined the formation of one. Pragmatism was the most practical framework to work through because of its underlying principle of trying to understand "what works" and formulating solutions to problems (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 27). Through a pragmatic framework, the researcher was able to examine the research problem free of any specific philosophy or reality. Although truth from a biblical perspective is absolute, from a pragmatic perspective, the researcher was free to identify what did and did not work within the bounded system of the CLSS. The practices involved in establishing and imparting a biblical worldview by other Christian schools to their students may vary; however, principles found through the CLSS could still be applied. Additionally, pragmatism allows for the influence of

"social, historical, political, and other contexts" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 27), which allowed for different findings across the cases within the study. Within the pragmatic interpretive framework, three philosophical assumptions were applied, including ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions.

Ontologically, I wanted to identify what was useful, practical, and what worked (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To do this, I needed to identify common themes among all the participants that have both helped and hindered the shaping of their biblical worldview. Although I understood that each individual's experiences are unique to themselves, and therefore true, I also wanted to identify what was universally useful in every participant's worldview development. From these commonalities, different areas of success and improvement were identified for future improvement.

Epistemologically, I needed to use research tools that would help provide the most detailed account of reality about the research participants from a propositional, behavioral, and heart-orientation perspective. To this, pragmatism required the use of both deductive and inductive evidence (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Consequently, the use of an online blog forum as well as a written individual faith journey provided opportunities for deductive or objective analysis. Conversely, the one-on-one individual interviews and the individual faith journey document both provided the opportunity for inductive or subjective reasoning and evidence.

Axiologically, this research was conducted with all moral and philosophical or religious truth claims weighed against the truth of scripture. While it was understandable that some of the participants had personal experiences or truth claims contrary to scripture, within the light of absolute truth found in scripture they could not be accepted as true. Furthermore, it was beneficial to examine where, how, and for how long these contrary truth claims had been

believed. While ontologically it was appropriate to receive each individuals' truth claims as true to themselves, to provide pragmatic answers for this research study, they had to be weighed against the truth of the Bible.

Data Collection

Data collection was initiated after approval had been received from Liberty University IRB. Once approval had been granted, data collection was undertaken in three forms: an online survey, a personal faith journey document, and one-on-one interview.

Online Blog Forum

The online blog forum that was open to all participants at the outset of data collection was modeled after a survey designed and given by ACFI (2017). However, the blog forum questions had been modified to make them more suitable for this research. The ACFI (2017) survey was initially given in 2017 as a nationwide study by the ACFI to see what percentage of Americans possessed a biblical worldview. The survey evaluated the following:

> People's worldview using 20 questions about core spiritual beliefs and 20 questions assessing behavior. The 40 data points were then evaluated in relation to biblical content and the number of biblically consistent answers was tallied for each respondent. Those who answered 80% or more of the questions in accordance with biblical principles were included in the category of "Integrated Disciples" – that is, people who are designated as having a biblical worldview based on integrating their beliefs and behavior into a lifestyle that reflects foundational biblical principles. (ACFI, 2017)

The survey questions were designed to measure basic biblical principles, not complex theological theories, including, "attitudes and behaviors related to practical matters like lying, cheating, stealing, pornography, the nature of God, and the consequences of unresolved sin"

(ACFI, 2017). The online blog forum was the first piece of data collection that was completed.

Once participants had been selected for the study they were asked to complete the online blog forum as soon as possible. The purpose of the online blog forum was two-fold. The first purpose was to examine the spiritual conviction or beliefs of the participants, and then, if possible, used to help discern if there was any difference between an alumni's beliefs and their actions. The online blog forum was designed to examine the propositional and behavioral implications recommended by Sire (2015). The online blog forum questions can be found in Appendix D.

Personal Faith Journey

This data collection method included a personal expression written by each individual about his or her personal faith journey. This self-described faith journey was at least one page long and emailed to the researcher prior to conducting the interviews. The document was not designed to assess whether the participant was a follower of Christ or not; that is a question that only God can answer. Rather, the personal faith journey document was intended to provide the participant with the opportunity to evaluate and analyze his or her own spiritual walk. The document also provided the opportunity to help assess whether the propositional answers from the survey matched the participant's personal actions, and possibly even the intent of the heart, which was addressed through the interview process. The following questions were included in the prompt:

1. Describe your family's spiritual background—including none at all.

2. When and why did you choose to, or choose not, to become a Christian?

3. How do you believe your worldview was influenced by attending CLSS?

4. What were the strongest factors at CLSS that helped you develop or strengthen your

worldview perspective?

5. How did your worldview influence your choices after CLSS?

Interview

Once a participant had completed the survey and emailed his or her faith journey, the data from the survey and the faith journey were analyzed. Analysis was conducted so that any ambiguous or confusing statements made during the completion of the survey and faith journey narrative could be clarified. Once this was complete, an interview time and date were set. All interviews were conducted in a neutral, informal, one-on-one, distraction free setting, conducive to audio recording (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The interview process was undertaken in a semi-structured format and lasted approximately 25 minutes in length (Creswell & Poth, 2018). All participants were asked the same questions, but provision was made to allow for the researcher to redirect the interview depending upon the participant's answers and experiences, in addition to any clarification needed for responses on the survey and faith journey document. All interviews were transcribed and sent back to each participant for member checking for any corrections or clarifications (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Once an interview transcript had been member checked, data analysis through open-coding began. The interview questions consisted of the following:

1. What did you enjoy most about your experience [at this school]? Why?

2. What did you enjoy least about your experience [at this school]? Why?

3. What were the students like? Did they influence your personal faith journey?

4. What were the teachers/coaches, etc., like? Did they influence your personal faith journey?

5. How did the curriculum as a whole or individual subjects specifically help you grow in your faith?

6. How were you challenged in your faith during your years in the CLSS? If so, how did you resolve this?

7. What recommendations or changes would you make about [this school]?

8. How would you describe your spiritual walk?

9. What is the purpose of education?

10. What were your grades likes at school and what was your motivation?

11. What do you want to do with your life?

12. What is the purpose of Christian education?

Participant interview questions 1 and 2 were neutral questions designed to build rapport with the interviewee (Patton, 2002). These questions were designed to allow the interviewees to express their opinion without fear of offense or eliciting any form of response from the interviewer (Patton, 2002; Yin, 2016). These questions were open ended to elicit more of a conversational mode to the interview with the intention of creating dialogue or free conversation (Yin, 2016).

Questions 3–12 were designed to draw out answers that addressed the interviewees' knowledge, actions and heart orientation to topics integral to CLSS's mission and vision, as well as their own personal faith journey. Questions 3 and 4 were feelings-based questions, designed to provoke a response based on experiences and thoughts (Patton, 2002). These questions addressed the issue of the heart in the hope that they provoked the use of stories and presuppositions which are "assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false" (Sire, 2015, p. 141).

Questions 5 and 6 were opinion questions that addressed the knowledge and actions component of a biblical worldview. Question 7 was directed towards the student's heart through

the use of a feelings-based question (Patton, 2002). Question 8 was another feelings-based question designed to address the participants' actions in light of their previous responses that focused on knowledge and orientation of the heart. Questions 5 through 8 were designed to help the interviewer and the interviewee draw any connections between Fowler's (1981) Stage 3 Synthetic-Conventional faith and State 4 Individual-Reflective faith. These connections could have been made internally by the interviewee; however, any inconsistency between knowledge, actions and heart orientation was evident to the interviewer.

Questions 9 through 12 were both knowledge and opinion-based questions (Patton, 2002). These questions sought to understand an individual's worldview as a set of presuppositions but also as a commitment (Sire, 2015). Part of the maturation of an individual's worldview is taking ownership and responsibility for individual lifestyle choices, attitudes, and beliefs (Fowler, 1981). This includes an understanding of one's own value and purpose, including the associated belief system and its implication (Fowler, 1981; Sire, 2015).

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is not a rigid, methodological structural procedure that leads directly to analytical findings. Nor is qualitative analysis undisciplined or void of analytical procedures that follow any sense of direction or procedure (Yin, 2016). Analyzing qualitative data follows a five-phased cycle that requires a constant examination and reexamination of new and used data as well as the methods of analysis. This five-phased cycle consists of compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding (Yin, 2016).

For this research, no computer software was used for the data analysis. The use of data analysis software has both its advantages, including ease of analysis and coding, and disadvantages, including mastering software programs and the rigidity of the program being used

(Yin, 2016). Regardless of whether analysis software is or is not used, the researcher must "develop the entire underlying substantive procedure, such as sorting, coding, combining, and recombining portions of the text" (Yin, 2016, p. 189). For this research, data coding utilized open codes, including in vivo codes (Saldaña, 2016; Yin, 2016), as well as category codes (Yin, 2016) through the use of convergence (Patton, 2002). For cross-case analysis, Stake's (2006) cross-case procedure was used to identify themes within the coding. Throughout the data analysis process pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of all the participants.

Stake (2006) describes the most common methods of data gathering and analysis as interviews, coding, data management, and then interpretation. The data collected by the online blog forum were open coded and then category coded (Yin, 2016). The coding for this data was dictated by the findings but included categories such as biblical integration, peer relationships, teacher interactions, and mission trips, among other categories that the data required. The online blog forum was designed to elicit propositional, behavioral, and, if possible, the heart motives recommended by Sire (2004).

Audio recordings were used for the interviews. Once the interview had been completed, it was transcribed verbatim and member checked for accuracy. Once member checking had been completed, both the interviews and the personal faith journey transcripts were open coded for common words and ideas that were grouped. This was done with color coding, using line by line analysis to ensure the thoroughness and easy identification of common themes. These groupings were also used to identify common themes or evidence concerning propositional, behavioral, and heart analysis in comparison to biblical truths and understanding. Each participant's interview transcript and faith journey transcript were subjected to within-case analysis, followed by cross-case analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014). The within-case and cross-case

analysis helped lead to assertions on lessons learned about each case and the context as a whole (Stake, 2010; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Throughout the data collection and analysis process, memos were also used to record researcher thoughts and assumptions.

Trustworthiness

Any credible study must provide assurances that data collection and analysis have been conducted without prejudice (Yin, 2016). Trustworthiness occurs through the infusion of different safeguards and procedures, including explicit and methodological reporting, to ensure that the research was conducted properly and without bias. Trustworthiness also demonstrates a study's authenticity, including soundness of data sources, accurate representation of the participants, and detailed account of the fieldwork (Yin, 2016). As such, this multiple case study employed many safeguards to ensure trustworthiness, including methods that increased credibility, dependability, confirmability, and, transferability.

Credibility

Credibility is established through the use of triangulation. Through triangulation, "the researcher makes use of multiple and different sources, methods of investigation, and theories to provide corroborating evidence" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 260). Triangulation also ensures that the researcher has not oversimplified the data, read too much into single words or dialogue, and has not misconstrued any meaning the participants intended to convey (Stake, 2006). This research employed three different forms of data collection. A survey for quantitative purposes, a participant driven written record, and a researcher driven, semi-structured interview. Through these three forms of data collection I looked for convergence of evidence, and evidence that reflects propositional, behavioral, and heart-oriented convictions (Yin, 2016). Member checks

were also conducted for accuracy and contextualization of each transcript after every interview, and once final conclusions were made at the end of the case study (Yin, 2016).

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability and confirmability were established through the use of an audit trail. The audit trail utilized a timeline of events for data collection, including dates, personal notes, and memoing. The audit trail was structured to document the thinking processes and helped to provide understanding towards the thought process throughout the research, including retracing the processes through which final conclusions were made (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The audit trail includes interactions and thought processes to help readers understand or other researchers replicate the study.

Transferability

Research has found that very few Christian schools provide their students with a biblical worldview (Baniszewski, 2016; Barrows, 2014; Hull, 2003). This research project was conducted from a pragmatic framework. Pragmatism seeks to find out what works (Creswell & Poth, 2018), and provide solutions to problems. As such, the results of this study, particularly because of the examination of four distinctly different programs, was able to yield transferable results through the use of "rich, thick description" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 263) that can help other Christian schools improve their impartation of a biblical worldview to their students. This included extensive quotes and deep, background information that helps the reader understand the faith and academic journey of the participants.

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Ethical Considerations

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Numerous ethical considerations were undertaken before, during, and after this study to ensure the safety and confidentiality of all participants. Data collection was not begun until

permission had been granted from the CLSS and Liberty University IRB, after which I followed Liberty University's IRB guidelines to ensure that all experimental procedures were ethical. Once permission had been granted from CLSS and Liberty University IRB, potential participants were identified and contacted, with informed consent obtained directly from those involved in the gathering of data during the research process. Consent was obtained through the use of a signed written consent form (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Data collection began with confidentiality being preserved for all participants through the use of pseudonyms, including the various sites involved and the school system in general (Creswell & Poth, 2018). No participants in the study were students or subordinates of the researcher. All collected data were stored under lock and key or in a password-protected electronic device (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Summary

The purpose of this multiple case study was to understand how the Christian education offered by Country Lakes School System has influenced its graduates' worldviews. Chapter Three described the methods that were used for conducting this research study. The data collection methods used included an online blog forum, a personal faith journey, and a semi-structured interview. Addressed within the chapter was the research design, including the research questions, site, participants, and procedures. Data collection methods were described, including the triangulation of data through the use of an online blog forum, written personal faith journey, and semi-structured interviews. An outline was also provided concerning data analysis, followed by safeguards that address the trustworthiness of the research, including credibility, dependability, conformability, and transferability. Through the use of these tools and safeguards, useful and transferable data were produced that can help Christian schools improve their single most important function which is imparting a biblical worldview to their students.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this multiple case study was to understand how the Christian education offered by Country Lakes School System (CLSS) influenced its graduates' worldviews. Chapter Four provides a comprehensive explanation of the results of this study. The chapter begins with a description of each participant, including his or her background and education experience. Next, I will explain the results of the study, including both strengths and weaknesses, which influenced the CLSS graduates' worldview development. Finally, the purpose statement is addressed and the research questions are answered.

Participants

There were 14 alumni participants in this study, each of whom spent his or her entire primary and secondary education within the CLSS. Additionally, each participant, at the time of data collection was at least one year removed from graduation at CLSS but had not graduated more than five years ago. The following is a summary of the participants, followed by a brief description of each participant, listed in alphabetical order by pseudonym.

Summary of Participants

The participants ranged in age from 20 to 23 with an average age of 21. All of the participant in this study were Caucasians, except for one who was bi-racial (half Caucasian and half African American). At the time of the research each of the participants except for one professed a faith in Christianity, with one admitting to straying from his faith early in college, although recently returning (see Table 1).

Table 1

Description of Study Participants

Name	Age	Elementary	High School	Ethnicity	Confession of Faith
Abby	20	Alpha	Bravo	Caucasian	Yes
Chris	21	Delta	Charlie	Caucasian	Yes
Dave	22	Alpha	Bravo	Caucasian	Yes
Jason	23	Charlie	Charlie	Bi-racial	No
Jenny	22	Charlie	Charlie	Caucasian	Yes
Julia	23	Bravo	Bravo	Caucasian	Yes
Lucy	20	Bravo	Bravo	Caucasian	Yes
Mary	20	Charlie	Charlie	Caucasian	Yes
Matt	20	Charlie	Charlie	Caucasian	Yes
Megan	20	Alpha	Bravo	Caucasian	Yes
Nick	20	Charlie	Charlie	Caucasian	Yes
Noah	20	Bravo	Bravo	Caucasian	Yes
Steve	23	Delta	Charlie	Caucasian	Yes
Susan	22	Delta	Charlie	Caucasian	Yes

Abby

Abby is a 20-year-old Caucasian female who attended the Alpha campus of CLSS for Grades K–8 before attending the Bravo campus for Grades 9–12. Abby comes from a Christian family where both her parents have been in full-time ministry as pastors, although they are now part-time ministers at her church. Most of Abby's extended family are also Christians, including her father's parents who are still pastoral counselors in full-time ministry. Abby states that she became a Christian at the age of 5 because she "wanted to devote my life to him because of all he

sacrificed for me." Despite her early understanding of the Gospel and her desire to serve God, Abby acknowledged that she "rededicated my life in high school because my faith was becoming my own." Currently, Abby attends a Christian university as a sophomore.

Chris

Chris is a 21-year-old Caucasian male who attended the Delta campus of CLSS for Grades K–8 before transferring over to Charlie Campus for Grades 9–12. Chris grew up in a Protestant Christian home with both of his parents being believers. During Chris's second-grade year, his family changed churches, choosing to attend a more dynamic Protestant church. Chris describes his family as being "very involved in the church," with his whole family being "very serious about our individual relationships with God." Personally, Chris states, "I became a Christian when I was almost nine years old and then I was baptized shortly after to show that I had started a new life in Christ." Despite his young age, Chris realized, "I was a sinner and in need of a savior. I have tried to live my life according to the Word since then, despite falling short at times and messing up." Chris currently works full-time, while also taking university classes part-time, to further his career opportunities in his chosen vocation.

Dave

Dave is a 22-year-old Caucasian male who attended the Alpha campus of CLSS for Grades K–8 before moving over to the Bravo campus for Grades 9–12. Dave described his family's faith heritage as being "spiritual since before I was born." Dave's father grew up as "a pastor's kid," while his mother "grew up in a non-religious home but was converted to Christianity in college shortly before meeting my dad." Dave's family has always attended church, with his parents heavily involved in the life of their church. His parents have served as worship leaders and youth pastors, with his parents relinquishing their role as youth pastors

shortly after Dave entered high school. They both still serve as worship leaders. Dave described all of his immediate family as Christians, as well as almost everyone on his father's side of the family. Most people on his mother's side of the family still are not Christians. Dave's personal faith testimony is that he "officially dedicated my life to Christ when I was four years old. I mostly did it because it was all I knew." He was then baptized at the age of 8; however, "at some point in high school, I rededicated myself after reevaluating my faith and learning more about it. I did not tell anyone about it, though." Dave currently attends a Christian university as a student athlete.

Jason

Jason is a 23-year-old bi-racial male who attended the Charlie campus from pre-school all the way through graduation in 12th grade. Jason comes from a single parent home, spending his whole childhood growing up with his mother, while his father made infrequent and brief appearances throughout his childhood. Consequently, Jason knows very little about his father's side of the family, with almost all his knowledge about his family background found on his mother's side. According to Jason, his mother's side of the family, "has been Christian for as long as I can remember." Jason and his mother, "used to go to church every Sunday, but over time we stopped attending." Despite acknowledging that his family background is Christian, he stated, "Although my family claimed to be Christian, there was always very little talk of God or our faith at the dinner table or family gatherings." Jason began questioning his faith during his junior year of high school, and "fell out of Christianity throughout my years of college." Jason attributed this falling away from his faith through the realization that "my worldview and religious beliefs were never actually mine. . . . As I grew older, I came to the realization that being a Christian was never actually my choice to begin with." Jason currently does not describe

himself as anti-Christian. Rather, his college experiences caused him to question everything he believed. Jason stated, "I just don't know what to do right now. I'm not saying I'm against Christianity, I just need to step back for a few years and try and figure things out." Jason is unmarried and currently working in his chosen career field.

Jenny

Jenny is a 22-year-old Caucasian female who attended the Charlie campus of CLSS Grades K–12. Jenny's dad was raised as a nominal Catholic, eventually leaving the church at the age of 14, before becoming a Christian at the age of 22. Jenny's mother was raised as a Protestant her whole life. Jenny describes her parents as taking their faith "very seriously," with a "personal relationship with Jesus and honoring God" being at the center of her parent's lives. Jenny says she became a Christian when she was 7, mostly she admits, because she didn't want to go to hell. Jenny was baptized at 8, however, she chose "to actually commit my life to Christ [and] made a choice to turn my life around when I was 12, so that is when my faith journey began." Jenny recently graduated from a Christian university and now teaches at a Christian high school.

Julia

Julia is a 23-year-old Caucasian female who attended the Bravo campus of CLSS for Grades K–12. Julia described her immediate family as all being Christian; however, her extended family is Catholic, which Julia delineates as "more of a title than a belief." Although she does not remember exactly when, Julia became a Christian when she was in elementary school. Concerning her faith decision, Julia stated that "there was never any doubt that I wanted to choose Jesus." Julia recently graduated from university and currently works as an elementary teacher at a Christian school.

Lucy

Lucy is a 20-year-old Caucasian female who attended the Bravo campus of CLSS for Grades K–12. Lucy described her family background as having "grown up in a Christian family my whole life." Lucy's parents and grandparents are all believers. As such, Lucy was raised with "biblical principles instilled in my life ever since I was very young." Lucy's family "has attended church [her] whole life" and has always been supportive of Christian education. Lucy described her own faith journey as accepting Christ "at a very young age," and she was baptized around the age of 12. Lucy decided to follow Christ because she "knew that Jesus died on the cross for my sins and I wanted to give my life over to him and follow his commands." To that end, Lucy described her family environment as one that has always "helped me pursue and glorify Him with my life." Lucy currently attends a Christian university.

Mary

Mary is a 20-year-old, Caucasian female who attended Charlie campus for Grades K–12. Mary describes her upbringing as having "always grown up in a Christian home." Her mother grew up Catholic, attended public high school, and never took her "religion super seriously." However, once she met her father, who was raised in Christian education, they "started going to church and raised me in that church as well." Mary freely admits that "Jesus was all I ever knew and ever since I heard the gospel, there was no other truth to me," stating that, since "I was 8 and could fully understand what it meant to make it a personal relationship and get baptized I did." As a consequence of Mary's home upbringing and subsequent education at a Christian school, she stated, "I have never questioned God's existence or my faith. Of course, sometimes you have questions, but never have wanted to try other things out." Currently, Mary attends a public college, where she is a student athlete and competes nationally at her chosen sport, gaining both

conference and national recognition. Mary described her faith as strong and growing stronger since she started attending college. She still regularly attends church and helps out in the children's ministry. Additionally, Mary mentors a girl at the local elementary school and is an active member of Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Christian Student Fellowship, and helps lead a small group for players on her sports team.

Matt

Matt is a 20-year-old Caucasian male who attended Charlie campus of CLSS for Grades K–12. Matt grew up in a Christian home "and was taught Christian values from a young age." When Matt was younger, his family regularly attended church; however, as he grew older he realized that "the teachings of my old church were not in line with Biblical doctrine." Matt's own spiritual journey began around the age of 7 when he made a decision to follow Christ and was baptized. Despite getting saved, Matt admits, he "did not realize what that would require until sophomore year of high school." Prior to his sophomore year, Matt describes himself as having "lived a 'good' life until then"; however, sophomore year was "when I truly began to live out my faith and began to learn what it meant to be a Christian." Matt originally chose to become a Christian because both of his parents were Christians, but "at a certain point in life I realized that it had to be a decision I made consciously every day to live like Christ and stand up for the beliefs that I hold to be true." Currently, Matt is the only person in his family who regularly attends church. He does not doubt his parent's salvation, but he does concede that "they are not choosing to live their lives the way they should." Matt currently attends university while working part-time.

Megan

Megan is a 20-year-old Caucasian female who attended the Alpha campus of CLSS for Grades K–8 before transferring over to the Bravo campus for Grades 9–12. Both of Megan's parents grew up in Protestant Christian homes. Once at university, both of Megan's parents left their individual home churches, choosing to attend a local church that was more spiritually dynamic. Eventually, Megan's grandparents also began attending this church, which is the same church Megan has attended her whole life. Having been brought up in a Christian home, Megan acknowledged that she has "always had Christ in my life." However, at the age of 8, Megan "understood the value of God's sacrifice and wanted to get baptized." After talking with both her pastor and parents, Megan was subsequently baptized. Megan agrees that 8 can seem like a young age to understand the fullness of the Gospel; however, she has never had any cause to "doubt my commitment to Christ because of how much he has worked in my life." Megan is currently attending a Christian university as a student athlete.

Nick

Nick is a 20-year-old Caucasian male who attended the Charlie campus of CLSS from Grades K–12. Nick's father grew up in a Protestant church while Nick's mother was raised as a devout Catholic. Nick's mother attended a private Catholic school for her education, and his mother's side of the family are still extremely devout Catholics. Nick began questioning his own spiritual convictions while in middle school. It wasn't until "about ninth or tenth grade when I actually chose to be a Christian on my own after questioning it for about 2–3 years." Nick confesses that it "took me a while to actually believe I was one after much self-doubt and gained confidence my 11th and 12th grade year." Concerning his faith, Nick declared that he "chose to

be a Christian because it answered the questions in my head in the most reasonable and realistic way." Nick currently attends university while working part-time.

Noah

Noah is a 20-year-old Caucasian male that attended the Bravo campus of CLSS for Grades K–12. Noah described himself as coming from a "strong spiritual background." Noah's father grew up a Protestant, while his mother's side of the family is heavily Catholic. Despite her Catholic upbringing, Noah's mother became a Protestant believer shortly after meeting his father at university. Noah became a Christian "sometime" during elementary school. He said, "I chose to do this because my parents raised me under the Christian influence." Noah described choosing to become a Christian once "I learned about what Jesus did for me on the cross." Despite his young conversion to Christianity, Noah admits he "struggled" with his faith until high school. That was when he "learned what it really means to be a Christian. I realized that it took total devotion to Christ as not only my Savior, but as my Lord." Currently, Noah attends university on an athletics scholarship.

Steve

Steve is a 23-year-old Caucasian male who attended the Delta campus of CLSS Grades K–8 before attending Charlie campus for Grades 9–12. Steve describes his family's spiritual background as "pretty strong." Steve's father became a Christian in his 20s and has held numerous leadership positions within his local church, while his mother "has always been a churchgoing person for all of her life." Steve describes his own spiritual journey as accepting "Christ at the early age of 7"; however, he "wavered a lot until last year." Steve recently graduated from university after enduring a year that he describes as "a lot of emotional stress and pressure." As a result of these circumstances and school work, Steve admits he "kind of drifted

away from faith." Consequently, Steve reconnected with a mentor from high school whom he credits with helping "me get back on track and started to help me figure out where my faith stood in my life." Steve realized his faith was not his own, partly, he described, because of his mother "always shoving it [Christianity] down my throat." Now, as a new believer, Steve stated, "In a sense, I kind of started over." As a result of his upbringing, Steve recognized that he had to "figure out who I was outside of" his parents, which lead him to eventually making his "way back and . . . building from the ground up."

Susan

Susan is a 22-year-old Caucasian female. Susan is a graduate of the Charlies campus; however, her elementary and middle school years were spent at the Delta campus of CLSS. Susan's father comes from a strong Catholic background, while Susan's mother comes from a Protestant background. Both Susan's mother and father nominally practiced their faiths as youths, then, during their late teenaged years, each, independent of the other, realized their need for a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. This resulted in more frequent attendance and active participation in church, ultimately culminating in Susan's father becoming a pastor in a Protestant church. Susan describes becoming a Christian at the age of 5. Her father use to "read to me from the Bible every night growing up, and one night he asked me if I wanted a personal relationship with Jesus and I said yes I did." Susan described her spiritual walk with God as having grown since high school. This is in large part because, as Susan described, the "last year was very difficult for me. . . . I'm in a waiting period, I'm in a transition period." This difficultly, ironically, is because of the clarity God has given her concerning the call Susan believes God has placed upon her life. Between her freshman and sophomore years of college, Susan went on a mission trip to China. Susan now feels called to teach in China. Consequently,

Susan is earning her degree, "so I can go back and do what God's called me to do." This has caused Susan to spiritually have to "dig in, I've really had to go deeper. This is what I'm doing, this is why I'm here, this is my purpose." Susan is currently completing her junior year of college.

Results

This research was conducted using three methods of data collection: an online blog forum, a written personal testimony, and a one-on-one interviews. The one-on-one interviews were transcribed by the researcher and then member checked for accuracy. The written personal testimonies and one-on-one interviews were then read and reread for common categories or themes. After repeated analysis, 16 codes were identified to describe the data in the transcripts, listed in alphabetical order (see Table 2).

Table 2

Codes Used in Analysis of Transcripts

Code	Instances	Description
12th grade Bible	8	One of the classes on Charlie campus that participants from that campus all specifically cited as very influential to their worldview
Biblical integration	14	Classes where the teacher's faith and the Bible was effectively integrated into their curriculum
Caring	14	The word most often used by the participants to describe the teachers' attitudes towards them
Choosing friends	9	Ways through which the participants intentionally chose their friends
Christian modeling	12	The example of the teachers through their actions and character to reflect Christ in their classroom
Coaches	5	The impact of Christian coaching on the worldview of the participants
Elementary education	5	Experiences participants reflected upon as important to their worldview development in elementary school
High school connectivity	9	Ways which the participants felt helped them become quickly integrated in the culture of their high school

Legalism	7	The perceived over-abundance of rules or strict enforcement of rules that participants felt influenced their spiritual growth
Lifelong fellowship	5	Participants who still regularly fellowship with their friends for purposes of spiritual growth and accountability
Mission trips	6	Opportunities for students to travel outside the United States in service of other cultures
Most influential classes	11	Classes specifically mentioned by the participants whose content impacted their worldview development
Relatability	14	The willingness of the teachers to share their lives with the participants
Relevant teaching	14	Ways which helped the participants to practically understand and apply their faith
Spiritual compatibility	11	The level of spiritual comfort or rationale behind choosing their friends
World history	8	One of the classes on Charlie campus that participants from that campus all specifically cited as very influential to their worldview

After analysis of each of the codes was conducted, a number of themes and sub-themes were able to be identified. Both the themes and sub-themes had characteristics that were common throughout the school system as a whole, and unique to the high school campuses individually (see Table 3).

Table 3

Themes and Sub-Themes Found in Analysis of Codes

Theme	Description	Sub-themes
The School System	System-wide opportunities for student involvement and spiritual growth	Elementary education High school connectivity Mission trips Legalism
Peer Groups	Distinguishing factors that defined a participant's relationships with other students	Choosing friends Spiritual compatibility Lifelong fellowship
The Teachers	People identified as having the most influence on students while at CLSS	Caring Relatability Biblical integration Christian modeling Coaches Relevant teaching Most influential classes 12th grade Bible World history

Overview of Findings

Each participant spent his or her entire primary and secondary years of education within the Country Lakes School System (CLSS). Although some participants noted, to varying degrees, the influence of their elementary education, every participant turned to their high school years of educational experience to reflect on their worldview development. While this is understandable, given that this is their most recent interaction with CLSS and most likely the clearest memories and reflections they possess, this is also reinforced by Fowler's (1981) stages of faith theory. It is during high school, Grades 9–12, that students begin to transition from Stage 3 or Synthetic-Conventional Faith during the beginning of adolescence, to Stage 4 or Individuative-Reflective Faith. During the Synthetic-Conventional Faith stage, students begin to reflect upon their personal experiences beyond the family, including school. During this stage,

the basis for identity, future prospects, competing values and other influences are synthesized into a coherent personal myth of one's own sense of identity and faith.

If the Synthetic-Conventional Faith stage is successfully completed, an individual will enter the Individuative-Reflective Faith, which usually occurs during young adulthood. During this stage, identity begins to be found less and less through one's family, friends, or school. Instead, self-identity and outlook are found through the reactions, interpretations, and judgments of one's actions and the actions of others. It is during this stage that an individual first explicitly acknowledges an adherence to an individual worldview (Fowler, 1981). Below are the most frequent and influential actions and experiences shared by all the participants during Stage 3, both individually and collectively, during their time at CLSS that helped them to transition into Stage 4.

Although each participant reflected on their experiences individually, they could be collectively coded into three distinct themes. The first theme is the School System, which includes shared or common experiences across the system as a whole, regardless of which campus a student graduated from. The second theme is their peers or fellow students. Although each participant's experiences varied across campuses for a variety of reasons, including socio-economically and school size, the participants' experiences were all similar when interacting with their peers. The final theme is the teachers. Generally, the participants across both high school campuses took the same core classes, including English, math, Bible, history, etc. Despite this, each participant's individual experiences with different teachers and different subjects were varied and influential, both positively and negatively.

The School System

Throughout the school system there are a variety of opportunities for student involvement and spiritual growth. These opportunities include athletics, clubs, various councils and committees, and honor societies to name a few. Despite graduating from two distinctly different high schools located in two different states, three clear sub-themes emerged concerning experiences common to all students across the school system.

Elementary education. Despite an overarching emphasis on their experiences in high school throughout the study, many of the participants reflected upon the biblical foundation they received in elementary school. Jason remembered that "the curriculum was good though. Growing up I learned a lot about the Bible, my faith, and Christianity." Likewise, Dave observed, "in the earlier years, you know, however many years I was there. The curriculum was helpful just because it was good to get that base knowledge of Christianity." With an experience similar to Jason and Dave, Chris added that "learning from strong Christian leaders and teachers from a young age really opened my eyes to a worldview based on Christian beliefs and morals," while Jenny noted, "I still remember most of the scripture I learned as a child in elementary school." Matt encapsulated most of the participants' shared experiences of elementary school by observing,

> You don't realize it when you are really little, and I don't think I really appreciated it until high school. When you realize how much they [the teachers] really devoted their time to you and helped you along the way. I think back to my elementary teachers and, just the love they showed for me.

As most of the participants transitioned to middle school and then into high school, many acknowledged their lives, and consequently their faiths, become more complicated.

High school connectivity. Despite attending the same school system their whole lives, many of whom remained in the same school building, most of the participants expressed some sense of being overwhelmed once they reached high school, particularly at the Bravo campus. The participants, however, quickly realized that becoming involved in the student body, whether through sports, the fine arts, or other participatory activities significantly lessened their sense of loneliness. Julia acknowledged that by quickly becoming "involved in the music department . . . that gave me a sense of belonging." Similarly, Jason described his involvement as part of the student body, specifically at athletic events, as being "part of the family." Susan described her experience at Charlie campus:

> I liked that it was a close atmosphere; that it felt like a family. It felt like you really knew each other and you knew your classmates, you knew your teachers, you could talk with your teachers, and, could talk with most of your classmates.

Matt described Charlie campus as becoming his "home away from home," while Julia also described Bravo campus "like a place to belong to. Like a second home in that way." Upon reflection, Mary noted, "Looking back on it, and when I got to college, a lot of my friends are not close with people they went to high school with." For Mary, that was a foreign and unusual concept. Regardless of campus size, each participant felt a sense of belonging once they became woven into the fabric of their respective campus.

Mission trips. Another increasingly popular and influential extra-curricular activity conducted while in high school is a mission trip. Mission trips are limited to students at Bravo and Charlie campuses; however, eligibility is open to anyone who expresses an interest from those campuses. Abby described the mission trip opportunities as "a huge factor in my faith

development," a sentiment similar to Susan, who similarly described her mission trip as something that "also helped develop and strengthen my worldview." Susan went on to note,

> I decided to go on a final mission trip after my senior year and that was when God called
> me to be a missionary. I left any plans I had made for myself and chose to follow God's
> plan and path for my life completely, in all things. If I had never gone on missions trips
> with CLSS, I would never have been in a place spiritually or mentally to accept the call
> God placed on my life.

Mary's observation describes the intended purpose of the mission trips within CLSS. She noted, "Another huge thing that helped shape my worldview was the ability to go on mission trips and see other cultures and parts of the world." This cultural exchange and interaction helped Mary to see "what the other parts of the world are like and how much they need Jesus and the support of other believers." For the participants who chose to go on a mission trip, it opened a window into a world foreign to their own that often resulted in a reprioritization of ideas and spiritual identity.

      Legalism. Despite the various strong elements of spiritual growth experienced across the system, another common theme was legalism. Many participants, like Dave, expressed legalism by equating it with the perceived overabundance of rules. "It was definitely overly strict. The rules, they were extremely rigid." Chris expressed similar feelings: "At times I guess, I felt like the school was a little legalistic on some things. That kind of frustrated me at times." Dave also expressed his frustration with the amount of rules, particularly with what he described as trivial rules. Reflecting, Dave recounted,

> I got a detention today because I forgot my belt at home? Are you kidding me? Looking
> back on it now I don't even understand why. Like I don't, I don't even understand why

that was a rule that was adhered to so rigidly. There also wasn't really a place for students to have their own input on some of these rules either.

Some girls, like Megan, reflected on gender specific rules. "The amount of restrictions, rules, especially for dances . . . I don't know. Too legalistic I guess sometimes with the rules." While the abundance of rules may have been necessary, it was the unintended consequences that should be of most concern. Julia, a self-described "perfectionist," lamented, "I do believe that I gained a sense of legalism by rule following and equating that with Christianity. . . . But I think, I like, became a little too harsh on myself, legalistic in a way. Like I have to do these things or else. Um, kind of like a perfectionist mindset. Kind of been installed in me I guess."

Upon reflection, Matt tried to reconcile the amount of rules with the System's mission, noting, "While I understand that CLSS is trying to foster your faith and make you into a better person, you also have to give students their free space and their ability to make their own mistakes." Chris also lamented on the imperfect balance of rules and spiritual growth, stating, "You can say that you're loving and accepting of people but it's not always the case I've found. I don't like legalism, and I saw that a lot." Moving forward, Dave offered his own thoughts on the struggle between a rules structured system and legalism:

> Probably just be a little less rigid. I mean, meet students where they are. Lighten up on punishments for minor things, because they are just that. They're minor things and they make people not want to listen to you on the big things.

Most participants, however, generally expressed a similar sentiment towards the balance between rules and legalism as Chris did, when he noted, "it wasn't to the point that it made me feel different about my time at CLSS."

Peer Groups

Every participant, when asked, expressed a clear delineation between the two "types" of students found within CLSS. For good or for bad, and for various reasons, each participant expressed an affinity to certain peers groups and an intentional effort to avoid others.

Choosing friends. Proverbs 27:17 states, "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another" (New International Version). Whether intentionally or otherwise, every participant incorporated this principle when selecting their peer group at CLSS. Steve stated plainly, "There are two sides to it. There are people who helped keep you on the good side, devoted to it. But then there were, people who . . . brought in what the outside world was like." Matt shared a similar black and white observation of the student body: "Well you had two different camps. There were very few people in between." In greater depth, Lucy describes each participant's choices:

> There's always a little bit of both. I feel like there was a lot who definitely had the right
>
> intentions, the right mindset, everything else, but there was a few, you know,
>
> questionable. Are you really a Christian? Are you a believer? Are you putting on a
>
> show or are you believing this or are you doing this because your parents put you here? I
>
> know there's kind of both, but more of the good than the bad. I never personally
>
> experienced anything too bad, but I heard things that people were doing. Like doing
>
> drugs, or drinking, or whatever it might be, and you're just like, what? That doesn't line
>
> up. But I never saw it happen or anything so it's hard to actually say.

Choosing with whom to invest one's time was based on many variables and not always an easy decision. Jenny observed, "You have to make hard choices, like not being friends with somebody because of the choices that they make." Sometimes peer group choices were made for

spiritual reasons, according to Jenny: "There were some friends that I had that did influence my personal faith journey because they were also Christians. And so, being in classes with them helped me." Other participants chose their peer group based on academic reasons. Julia explained, "I put myself around really, really sweet girls, but very competitive and very high achieving people." Other students, like Noah, now a collegiate athlete, found themselves gravitating towards peers because of a common interest, such as the fine arts or athletics. Even so, Noah noted of his friends, "I think my group of students that I hung out with were really tight, really close. They were inclusive but maybe exclusive at the same time."

However each participant chose his or her peer group, there were always other options. Nick stated, "It's mixed, because there were some that you know were bad influences but I choose to distance myself from that, and I choose to associate myself with people that I know would better me as a human being." Many of the participants were like Steve, who was, "really picky on my friends, so picked who I wanted to be around. So for me it wasn't really a problem because I picked good friends." Most participants viewed their social interactions with their peers as a way to continue spiritual growth and development.

Spiritual compatibility. Ultimately, when choosing to invest in a peer group, each of the participants expressed a spiritual comfort level with those with whom they spent most of their time. For most, it was to edify themselves and grow in their faith and knowledge. As Jason observed, "It was good comradery and all that kind of stuff. No one pushed me away from faith or anything like that. If anything they pushed me towards it more." Julia noted that her peer group choices were based on "people that were really, um, that I could just grow with," further adding, "there were people that if I hung out with them, they would have influenced me, so I tried to choose people that wouldn't influence me negatively." Steve concurred, and referring to

negative influences, added, "Me and my friends steered away from that mostly." Abby shared, "I had an accountability partner through CLSS and that was nice. I also did a Bible study with some of my friends as well and that helped too." Julia observed, "I could see the values of the Christian school better when I was surrounded by the right people," while Lucy added, "Being surrounded by believers, classmates and teachers, who continually poured into me as a Christian, it shaped the way in which I face the world and develop my beliefs."

While not condemning, most of the participants were extremely aware of the varying degrees of spiritual maturity and commitment to one's stated beliefs held throughout the student body. Dave noted, "We're all going through that same time period in life. A lot of people had the same questions. Some people had answers to the questions, other people didn't," adding, "So just being around those people all day it was beneficial for sure." Having peers of weaker faith, however, was sometimes detrimental. Susan commented,

> There's also some bad points to that. Some struggling Christians, or if you're working on your faith or learning your faith, sometimes having people around who are weaker in their faith or don't have a faith, they can kind of pull you down or pull you off the path.
>
> But that's more dependent on who you surround yourself with and interact with.

Further echoing Susan's comment, Dave stated, "Yes. I mean, I guess it really depended on who you surrounded yourself with. Because, you know, not everybody was in the same place in their spiritual journey." Upon reflection, some participants felt as though CLSS should have done a better job of corralling and even removing students with clearly subversive motives. Concerning some peers' spiritual walk, Dave noted, "Some people didn't even really have one. I know that you had to sign that little form that says you go to church somewhere but that doesn't mean you have." Likewise, Jenny added,

I think it should be possible for students to be kicked out based on their spiritual life, because you have to sign a statement of faith to go here. So I think it's detrimental to the Christian community when students who are not Christian continue to go here.

Overall, however, all of the participants felt that their individual peer group helped them grow and mature in their faith. Megan observed, "I would say my closest friends definitely did. Um, overall I felt the students in my grade were good Christians. There were a few, obviously, that I wouldn't trust, but the ones that I did influenced my faith journey."

Lifelong fellowship. For many participants, the constant interaction with their peers eventually led to lifelong friendships built upon mutual faith and interests. Julia noted, "The thing I enjoyed most was probably, I made lifelong friends there. So I have friends that I still keep in contact with." Jason concurred, "I enjoyed all the friends I made there. Jimmy and Hank are still two of my best friends. The friends I made there are really great." Like his peers, Matt is grateful for the friends he made at CLSS, stating, "There were friends that I made that I'm going to have for a life time and never not be in touch with." Chris observed, "I started CLSS in kindergarten and I still have friends that were in my kindergarten class today, and that I'm still pretty close with." He added, "There's a couple of us that will talk all the time about spiritual stuff, uplift each other, and encourage each other." Although each participant acknowledged their peer group was extremely influential in their spiritual growth and development, most of the participants overwhelmingly agreed that their single most influential source of spiritual growth were the teachers.

The Teachers

Most students, parents, and administrators will acknowledge that the heart of any effective school is the teachers. These are the people who spend most of the time with the

students, in the classroom, and sometimes in extra-curricular activities as well. This is particularly true of a Christian school. As Neff (2016) noted, "The best biblical worldview happens when there is a living convergence in a teacher of a love for God, a love for subject, and a love for student" (p. 45). It is of no surprise then that each participant had much to say about the teachers. The teachers, and in some instances coaches, had more impact, for good and for bad, on the participants' spiritual walk, understanding of the Bible, growth in their faith, and by consequence, their biblical worldview, than any other single influence concerning their time at CLSS.

Caring. The most frequently used word by the participants to describe the teachers at CLSS was caring. Caring was used to describe each participant's interaction with most if not all of the teachers. Neff (2016) stated that "students don't care to learn until they know the teacher cares" (p. 49). How much the teachers cared laid the foundation for all the faith and worldview development that was achieved during each participant's time at CLSS. Matt remembered, "The teachers and coach, they were better than I could ever have hoped for." Dave added, "I mean, for the most part, most of them seemed extremely genuine about it. It goes beyond the typical prayer at the beginning or end of class, or the beginning or end of practice or whatever." Mary concurred, "The teachers, obviously you spend every day with. They really cared about you. I never had a teacher who was like, my gosh, you're only here to teach a course, you don't really care about your students at all."

For many of the participants, it was clear that caring went beyond the curriculum and well beyond the classroom. For Megan, she felt that "the biggest factors that strengthened my Christian worldview were the caring teachers, the opportunity to ask questions, biblical integration in all classes, and debates in Bible class." Mary added that the teachers "really cared

about you as a person as well as your walk with Christ; that was always number one. Then like, your wellbeing, how you're doing, how's your family, things like that." She added, "I think all aspects, everyone genuinely cared about your relationship with the Lord and other people." Susan remembered that for her, it was

> helpful to go to someone who you know is a stronger Christian and should be guiding you on that path, and should be helping you and watching over you. Someone with good morals, and good faith, and good worldview, and helping to form your worldview in a better direction.

Matt felt as though CLSS had "become a home away from home. To have teachers that actually care about you. Makes you feel like you actually have a family." One factor that contributed to a close teacher/student relationship was the teacher accessibility. As Abby noted, "The one on one teacher connections were also very nice." Nick agreed, sharing, "It was one on one, sometimes it didn't feel like they were teachers, they were a parent or older person trying to help me with something."

The fact that the teachers cared as a direct result of each teacher's individual faith journey was not lost on the students. Susan commented, "It was very helpful to have teachers who believe the same things you believe. So you know that the material and what you're learning comes from your faith worldview." Dave added, "You know, some people were, you know, integrated the Bible into everything they did. You know, whether it be in class or at practice." Additionally, Lucy saw the mission and beliefs of CLSS being reflected in "the teachers as well. The way they handled their classes and they taught the material." Nick explained how the teachers had an impact on his faith:

Yes, 100%. That was the best experience. I only had one of teachers that I wasn't a fan

of. Other than that, all of them were genuine people who seemed to care about me and

wanted me to actually thrive as a person. It seemed like if I was going through something

they would be there for me, or if I had a question about Christianity in general they would

be there to answer it for me, and I never felt pressured by them.

Abby found that the teachers "really helped me in my faith, certain teachers taught me a lot about

myself and God."

For some, as Nick noted, not all of the participants felt as though all of their teachers

cared for them. While it is understandable that, for a variety of reasons, every student will not

connect with the personality of every teacher, some students felt singled out or targeted by

teachers. Chris, when reflecting upon the positive Christian influence of his teachers noted that,

"Not all of the teachers did, um, and that's fine. There were a couple in particular that really

did." For most of the participants, there was one or a select few teachers who were more

influential than the others. Abby described her experience with a few specific teachers: "Every

teacher had a role but there was definitely two or three that really challenged what I believe.

They really influenced, they helped me to figure out why I believe what I believe." Like Abby,

it was a select few teachers that really impacted Chris:

I would say that the strongest factors that helped me develop and strengthen my

worldview perspective were certain teachers at CLSS. I was significantly impacted by a

few teachers, specifically, who really challenged my thinking and in turn made me think

about what I believed in my personal worldview.

For the participants, the fact that their teachers cared was an important stepping stone towards

the next important factor in any successful teacher/student relationship.

Relatability. Another important factor that contributed to the close teacher/student relationship and helped foster spiritual growth and changes was how well the participants related to their teachers. Relatability means that the participants not only felt that the teachers cared about them but that the teachers were willing to share their lives with the students. The teachers become fellow sojourners who had experienced hardship, struggles, joy, and grief, and could help the participants navigate through these issues in their own lives.

Although, generally speaking, participants felt as though their teachers cared about them, each of the participants experienced varying degrees of relatability to each teacher, with some more popular than others. Relationship building was usually done beyond the classroom, as Matt explained:

> The strongest factor for helping me develop and strengthen my worldview perspectives at CLSS was the teacher and student interaction. To have the ability to meet after classes and discuss topics with different teachers. Or discuss personally in class with teachers about their particular beliefs, where they derived them, and what scripture supported it helped me more than anything to grow in my understandings of a Biblical worldview.

Mary further explained, "The teachers who were the most real were [Mr. Black, Mr. Brown, Mr. Yellow, and Mrs. Red]. These were teachers that taught me real life things . . . concepts that I could use in my day to day life." Julia recalled, "I still remember some of the things that my Bible teacher said, or that orchestra teacher said. Um, the ones that, especially of course took the time to build relationships, are the ones that I remember the most." Megan remembered, "Certain teachers, I felt comfortable asking questions. I think [Mr. Black] probably the most. [Mrs. Orange and Mrs. Red] about relationship advice and stuff." Like Megan, Matt had certain teachers that guided him spiritually. He specifically recalled, "People like [Mr. Brown, Mr.

Green] is another big one, [Mr. Black], who all helped me in my faith walk and helped me to grow and become a better person." These closer relationships helped students develop a more authentic faith, as Abby detailed:

> I was closer to them. They were like, intentionality, they were able to see when I was off or like, when they could see that I was genuinely struggling with a topic or just something in life. They were able to be like, hey, what's wrong? They would sit me down, and, I don't know, being intentional taking time to like, work through things with me. So they created a comfortable environment where I could actually, like, ask them questions and not feel like, my gosh am I going to hell because I am doubting this or whatever. That really helped, and they were not judgmental.

Noah described the relationships he had with certain teachers as helping him "form my faith and stuff." He added, "It was more of the relationship with the teachers. Cause, I mean like, at the end of the day, I feel like it's relationship that bring you closer to God. So I feel like that played a big role."

For many of the participants, these relationships have grown into friendships beyond high school. As Mary explained, "For me, I can meet up with [former] teachers, I can meet up with friends, when I get back from school, and I'm like super close with them. And I grew so much in my faith." Some of the participants described still meeting regularly with one or more of their high school teachers for mentoring or advice. One participant even used one of the former teachers for pre-marital counseling.

Biblical integration. The single most important distinction between Christian and secular education is biblical integration. As Hull (2003) noted, without effective biblical integration, "Christian education" is more simply described as "Christians educating," which

merely embraces "a Christianity-enhanced public school brand of education" (p. 204). Effective biblical integration is the cornerstone to any form of effective Christian education.

Unsurprisingly, the classes that every participant enjoyed or remembered most were those in which the teacher's faith and the Bible was effectively integrated into his or her curriculum. Jenny reflected that most of the teachers "were extremely personable, who really, genuinely cared about the students, and cared about our lives and not just our grades. Yes, they definitely influenced my faith journey, especially in the classes where teachers cared a lot about biblical integration." Lucy recalled many of her teachers teaching with purpose:

> The teachers, the way that they conducted each class was like, I don't know, just the mindset that they had. It wasn't just that you were doing the work, but that you were doing the work for a purpose, as you're getting to an end goal which is to be more like Christ. So you overall glorify him with what you do in life. There was more of an overall mission rather than let's get to work and just finish this.

Matt shared similar sentiments as Lucy, reflecting that he liked "how everything served its purpose towards bettering you as a Christian, not just a person. And so, like [Mr. Brown's] history class, it had biblical integration. You'd go to science, and learn how science supports God." Like Matt, Jason remembered, "[Mr. Brown] and a few of the other teachers did a great job of tying the things we were learning back into why we're here. You're taking religion and making it all click and make sense."

Like many of the other participants, Lucy felt that "the strongest factors that helped develop/strengthen my world perspective through CLSS was having strong mentors and teachers, biblical integration throughout academics," further commenting that, having "biblical integration throughout academic classes allowed me to develop a biblical lens through which I view

content." For Julia, biblical integration was most enjoyable in classes which "made me think critically, more like history, or English, because I felt like teachers maybe had an easier time, um, biblically integrating I guess you could say." As Julia observed, and some of the other participants noted, it was harder to have effective biblical integration in some classes than others. Matt remembered:

> I appreciated but also never understood the biblical integration into math. That one was always a stretch for me. Where you would have [Ms. Silver], she'd talk about the Fibonacci sequence, and how it's, how it's God's hand in creation. You'd hear that every single year. It was like, ok, I get it, I get it.

Like Matt, Julia reflected on her math experience, noted, "I don't remember the Bible being anywhere in that which, I mean, I learned math, I definitely learned math. I had great math teachers. I just don't remember the more sciencey, math [subjects] as being as integrated as the others." Chris felt that "certain teachers can try a little bit too hard to incorporate biblical things in places that they don't belong."

One theme that clearly came through, however, was not how well a certain subject lent itself to biblical integration, but how well a teacher incorporated it into the content. While Julia did not recall much, if any, biblical integration in her own science class, Susan remembers her science classes as being "very helpful. Whenever I got to science classes it always strengthens my faith." Susan added, "Going to a science class with [Mr. Purple], you know that what you're getting comes from a Christian perspective or a Christian worldview." Similarly, Megan noted that "[Mrs. Violet] had me do this project that showed proof of a creator, stuff like that just kind of reinforced or reaffirmed my faith and helped me grow." In contrast, however, Jason recalled a different science teacher saying, "'This is the chapter where I tell you guys about evolution.' But

since we don't believe in evolution we only spent like one chapter on it and it only lasted like one or two days." Steve had a similar experience with the same science teacher, observing "we weren't taught evolution. Like, if something came up in the book that didn't align with faith, it was dismissed . . . maybe looking into stuff that didn't align with our faith more. I think that would be better for people."

Some students lamented the lack of biblical integration in some classes. In some instances, the participants even observed that, despite learning at a Christian school, the subject material was clearly more important than the development of their faith or a biblical worldview. Upon reflection, Jenny questioned how to more effectively "integrate a biblical worldview, and also the point that a biblical worldview is more important than the subject we're teaching. Because right now I feel like there's a lot more emphasis on the subject itself."

Christian modeling. A biblical worldview is not just a way of thinking, it also requires action. James 2:18 defines this, stating, "But someone will say, 'You have faith, and I have works.' Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works." When Sire (2015) described faith as best being analyzed through the lens of heart, mind, and actions, this is exactly what he meant. An individual's worldview becomes a cognitive understanding in the mind, which then manifests itself into a conviction of the heart, which is then expressed through the actions of the body. For many of the participants, the teachers themselves became a source of biblical integration. Within education as a whole, this is commonly referred to as the hidden curriculum. The hidden curriculum can be defined as "the unspoken or implicit values, behaviors, and norms that exist in the educational setting" (Alsubaie, 2015, p. 125). Within CLSS, many teachers modeled their faith through their

teaching, and as a consequence, integrated a biblical worldview into their classroom without necessarily being consciously aware of it.

For Nick, Christian modeling was one of the most influential factors in the development of his own biblical worldview. He observed:

> The strongest factors at CLSS that helped me develop my worldview perspective were the interaction from teachers, the examples set by staff, and the overall environment the school had. Almost all the teachers I had genuinely cared for students and wanted to see them succeed. The staff were excellent role models.

Steve found role models in certain teachers as he grew closer to them over time. "The teachers, like [Mr. Brown, Mr. Black], stuff like that, if you got close with a teacher. Like [Mr. Brown] was my coach and history teacher for like five years. I guess it helps to have people to look up to." For Steve, the smaller setting at Charlie campus helped facilitate his experience, as he noted, "The closeness because it's such a small environment. It helps to have people, even if they aren't mentors, but to see as examples or how to act."

Noah described the Christian modeling by the teachers as "the most important factor." He continued, "I feel as if the most important factor was the teachers and their relationship with us. The teachers lived out the walk of faith and they as people played a much bigger role than chapel or Bible class." Even a lack of intentional biblical integration in the classroom could be compensated for by a teacher who genuinely modeled their faith. Jenny experienced this in her math class, noting, "But then I also had a teacher in math. I never really felt like I learned about Jesus in math, but her herself was like a really incredible person and influenced me a lot." Many of the participants echoed similar sentiments, like Nick, who described the Christian modeling by the teachers, stating, "It made me decide that I wanted to 100% be my own, have my own

belief in being a Christian because I saw the interaction and genuine care of the teachers shown to the students."

 Coaches. Like the teachers, many coaches were extremely influential in the development of a biblical worldview in their athletes. Mary found it hard to be "Christian minded" when competing; however, she felt the coaches did "a good job of really pointing everything back to Christ." In contrast, Chris acknowledged that there was "definitely an aspect of it [Christianity], but for the most part I would say it was mainly focused on sports." Most of the participants who were athletes viewed their coaches more as role models, viewing them as examples of how to be a Christian, competitive, and how to handle success or failure. Steve, who was a two-sport athlete, gleaned aspects of Christian modeling from all the coaches he had: he "liked how blunt" [Coach Brown] was, but also how he "integrated the book Bible study throughout the season. Kind of helped us learn both soccer and something more important." On the other hand, [Coach White] impacted Steve in a different way:

> He didn't do that as much, but he was kind of like a lead by example type person. He
> was a pastor so he talked about faith and stuff like that a lot. You drew how to act and
> how to be a man from that.

Meanwhile, Steve noted that [Coach Pink] "kind of helped like a buddy is the best way to put it. Someone to talk to about stuff. Spur you on in valleys and stuff like that, when you get down on yourself." For Noah, concerning [Coach Maroon], he simply declared he was "a real big role model for me."

 Relevant teaching. Effective biblical integration is not just talking about Jesus or the Bible in class. As Hull (2003) noted, this would merely be "Christians educating." Effective Christian education requires planning and intentionality. However, this planning needs to be

beyond the scope of the curriculum and move into the realm of practical application. As Sire

(2015) noted, from mind, to heart, to action, or more practically for students, a philosophy that

resembles, "I understand this," "I believe this," now "I want to practice this." Beerens, Cook,

and Wiens (2019) described effective biblical integration as focusing on "understanding and

emulating the character of Christ" in order to "seek to teach students what it might mean to be

like Christ in contemporary society" (p. 31). Effective biblical integration is the most important

facet of Christian education because it helps students practically understand and apply their faith.

For many of the participants, effective biblical integration had a profound and long-lasting

impact on their faith and their biblical worldview.

Susan appreciated biblical integration because it "helped to have teachers who share your

worldview, and that the material that is being presented to you comes from a Christian

background." For Mary, the biblical integration was intensely practical:

> The teachers were very real and didn't sugar coat things. Bible class was driven through
>
> debates which has prepared me so well for college. I have had so many talks with
>
> teammates, friends, trainers, and many more about topics and was able to talk with them
>
> and tell them truth.

Jenny recalled, "I had to know why I believed what I believed – always. Because of teachers

who would ask probing questions and would say, you can believe whatever you want, but you

have to justify it using scripture." As a consequence of her teachers constantly pushing her,

Jenny acknowledged, "I learned that scripture was the basis of truth."

For many of the participants, their philosophical and theological understanding of the

Bible became intensely practical once they started college. Susan, like every CLSS student, had

Bible class every year of high school. However, she recognized that her senior year Bible class

"was probably the one that stood out the most." In senior Bible, the class "did debates, and those debates really helped strengthen my worldview and strengthen my faith." Once in college, Susan began to see "what we were talking about. I saw what we were debating about. I was facing that now in the real." Similarly, Mary used both her debating skills and the knowledge she learned in senior Bible class to be a witness for her faith. Mary observed, "I had, quote unquote debates with basketball trainers, with guys on the basketball team, just because I spend a lot of time in the facilities. It's just cool that I was prepared when I got to college." As a result of effective biblical integration, many of the participants felt equipped to defend their faith once they transitioned into higher education or the workforce.

Most influential classes. When describing the development of their own worldview, all of the participants tended to use vague generalities. However, as the interview questioning process began to unpack their experiences at CLSS, many of the participants began to make more specific references to the teachers and subjects that had the most influence on the development of their worldview. As the participants themselves vary in life experience and background, so too did the influences within CLSS that impacted the development of their worldviews.

Nick recalled that his worldview "was definitely shaped most after I took World History, 9th, 11th and 12th grade English, and [Mr. Black's] apologetics course. These classes especially helped me answer my personal worldview questions and allowed me to think on my own." For Mary, "Senior Bible, chapels, and band class were the times I felt that I was able to learn about the world and talk about how to handle certain things." Jason simply observed, "Bible classes helped. Chapel helped." Concurring with Jason, Noah acknowledged, "I believe some of the factors that helped shape my worldview at CLSS included, Bible class and Chapel. Here I was

taught valuable lessons about life and Christianity." For Nick, many of life's questions began circulating inside his mind as he began high school:

> I went to Christian Academy my entire life pre-K through 12th grade. I'd say 9th grade is when I started to question because I don't know if I was really . . . if I was just going along with it until 9th grade. But then I started to question "is this really true?" "Do I believe this?" "Why should I?" And then 9th grade, during World History, is when I was asking these questions. It felt like after that class I was more confident being able to say what I believed and actually believe that. And then further on the classes that I took helped me benefit from that mindset. I can say I believe this because of this, it's not just "I believe this;" I have evidence.

For many of the participants, Bible class generally, and certain teachers specifically, helped them reconcile many philosophical and theological questions surrounding their faith, specifically during their junior and senior years.

Dave remembered, "My junior and senior Bible classes were a big factor. During the classes, I learned about other religions and attacks on Christianity, which forced me to consider them." When pondering the classes that most influenced her, Lucy recalled, "I think senior Bible class for sure. That was one that challenged my personal beliefs; what I believed and not what my parents or my teachers or whoever believed." At Bravo campus, Julia noted, "[Mrs. Blue] taught that [Bible] my senior year and that was really impactful. Just talking about how can you resolve conflict with others. Different issues that come up in the world. Those things really impacted me." For Chris, Bible class was important because "I had a couple of Bible teachers that I was pretty close with, that impacted my worldview a lot."

One of the reasons Bible class was impactful for many of the participants was it forced them to own their opinions, if not their faith. As Dave observed, "But then, junior and senior year, like diving into arguments against Christianity, you know, having to defend it. Or, go against it one way or the other. Having to look into other religions. That helped me a lot." Lucy remembered, "It was something I had to research, I had to figure out. It was definitely difficult and maybe in the moment I didn't enjoy it, but now that I'm looking back that was really good and really useful."

Julia realized the importance of her senior Bible class through the proactive teaching style of Mrs. Blue. "I took an apologetics course which I thought was really interesting. But um, I remember the teacher had a few students at college come back. They use to be students, and they would say, yeah I actually used this." For Megan, she found out first-hand the importance of her senior Bible class, specifically, learning more than one side of an argument. Megan used her knowledge from Bible class to help her find common ground and a point to witness from once she reached college. "Going to a non-Christian school people have their own ideas. [The Bible] helped to know how to find a point of agreement and go off from there. So we weren't always arguing about stuff. Trying to think other things." Abby stated, "I would say having Bible classes and debates in those classes really helped."

There were a variety of classes and activities that impacted each participant's worldview. Two classes, however, were consistently mentioned by the students of Charlie campus in their personal responses. This may be, in part, because of the smaller size of the campus. These classes were mandatory for all high school students to take. Consequently, each participant was forced to have interaction with these teachers. These two classes were found to have had an

overly large impact on the development of the participants' worldviews who graduated from Charlie campus. These two classes were 12th grade Bible and World History.

12th grade Bible. The 12th grade Bible class on Charlie Campus was taught by Mr. Black. As many of the participants will attest, this class was taught, although not exclusively, predominantly through debates and other forms of assessment heavy on student interaction and contribution. Mary recalled, "So, I always think of Bible, my senior year. I know everyone always talks about that. But that definitely prepared me for college most I would say." Mary, and many of the participants' affinity for this class were captured by Mary's statement: "One, because it was one of the last courses I took before going to college, so that was helpful to remember more. But also just the hard questions, I think that really pushed me." Like Mary, Susan agreed, remembering of her senior Bible class, "We did debates where our worldview was tested. We had to hear opinions and thoughts that differ from our own and argue against what we believe. I found that to be very helpful strengthening what I already believed." Echoing Susan, Steve described:

> One factor that helped me develop my current worldview is the debates in [Mr. Black's] class. It helped me with listening to other people's views and instead of getting mad like everyone else does now, it helped in considering all of the opinions that people have when developing my faith and eventually defending it.

Chris added, the debates were "on a lot of different topics, a lot of controversial stuff. There were times when I was confused about what I actually believed, or what I thought I believed, and questioned whether it was right or wrong." Chris added further, describing his own worldview development during class debates, "They were where I really thought about what I actually

believed, and started trying to figure out things on my own, instead of what I had been taught my whole life."

Part of the reason for the growth by the participants during this class could be attributed to the emotional and spiritual vulnerability and trust the students had for Mr. Black. As an advantage of the smaller campus size of Charlie campus, many of the students had been taught by Mr. Black multiple years before reaching 12th grade Bible class. As Jenny noted,

> I had a Bible teacher who I had my 9th, 10th, and 12th grade year who was extremely specific about answering questions or helping us in our faith journey. I learned so much from him. He was the kind of person that was personable, wanted to help the students, and you could tell that what he was teaching he actually believed. He was specific about, in that he was not just saying it because that's what the school had told him to say, but because he actually believed it or had looked it up.

Like Jenny, Matt had expressed a growing comfort level the more he was in Mr. Black's class. Matt stated,

> [The] second strongest factor that helped me were Bible classes, but more specifically my sophomore, junior, and senior year Bible classes. My teachers were passionate about what they were teaching. He was always willing to go the extra mile to help me understand [how] a true Biblical worldview impacted me more than any words could explain.

Steve appreciated the debates in class because "they kind of opened the tunnel vision a little bit. To where we had to defend a side which we would easily encounter once we got out. Look at different perspectives on things and faith and all that." Susan recalled one of these debate topics that was particularly impacted. "I remember a debate over suicide, whether someone who

committed suicide went to heaven or not, and it was a very divisive point in our class that went on for a long time." For Mary, talking about suicide and many other debate topics "was the main one for me where I felt prepared and pushed in my faith."

World history. Like senior Bible, World History was frequently mentioned by Charlie campus participants when recounting the growth and development of their own individual worldview. At Charlie campus, World History is a mandatory social studies class taken by all students to satisfy state requirements for graduation. World History can be taken any year during high school, depending upon schedule availability; however, most students take it during their freshman year. Unlike senior Bible, where the debates were universally mentioned in reference to that class, there were a variety of participant recollections concerning the impact World History had on their worldview development.

In a generic sense, Chris recalled, "There were teachers that I had my freshman year on that really helped me as far as biblical integration and worldview goes. I had a history teacher that was pretty good, he helped me a lot." More specifically, Susan noted, "[Mr. Brown's] history class, when we went back into history in Mesopotamia, the very early stages of history where it's very biblically based and biblically centered. That was also very helpful to me." Jenny, appreciated the overarching cause-and-effect theme of history, specifically with biblical integration. Jenny described,

> I learned a lot about like, why things happened in the world because of the fallen nature of man. And I had a teacher who was very specific about integrating scripture and a biblical worldview into the classroom even if it wasn't necessarily that time period of history. I learned a ton in that classroom.

Like Jenny, Nick remembered different recurring themes that challenged his own perceptions and worldview. He observed, "World History helped me grow especially because it made me question my own beliefs and made me strengthen in what I actually believe and not just adopt my parents ideas."

Upon reflection, Jason realized one of the benefits of taking World History that he had not considered while taking the class. He remembers it being helpful in college, "especially in the writing aspect. I felt like I really didn't struggle at all, when I had other peers who needed my help. They were struggling and I could easily help them." Similarly, Steve appreciated the benefits of the class while taking it, but also the intended consequences of having his worldview strengthened by the time he graduated:

> Another thing that helped me strengthen my worldview is just being around [Mr. Brown] for all those years. I think I kind of took after his personality and worldview a little and it has helped me come back to my faith. He was always supportive of asking hard questions and not lying down in defeat. I feel that he has helped craft my mind to research and really ask any questions that puzzle me to find real answers about Christianity, and if something is brought up that I don't understand or that shakes my faith, I should dive into it and see what I can find instead of just giving up or letting it shake my worldview.

Nick succinctly describes what many of the Charlie campus participants expressed about senior Bible and World History, stating,

> The classes I enjoyed the most were the ones that challenged you and pushed you. I didn't like easy classes. I really enjoyed those two classes because they made you think

for yourself, and it was more about testing you about what you thought, not just

memorizing material. It was interaction and I enjoyed that best about those classes.

Three Parts of Worldview

In his book, *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept*, Sire (2004) defined a

biblical worldview as follows:

> A worldview is a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be
>
> expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true,
>
> partially true or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously,
>
> consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the
>
> foundation on which we live and move and have our being. (p. 141)

This definition expressly identifies the heart, mind, and an individual's actions as the core

ingredients commensurate to their worldview (Sire, 2015). When choosing to examine an

individual's faith, two factors need to be considered: both how and when. Sire (2015) concludes

that faith should best be analyzed through the lens of heart, mind, and actions. Fowler (1981),

through his stages of faith theory, concludes that the best time to examine an individual's faith is

between Stages 3 and 4, often defined as beginning in late adolescence and usually ending with

young adulthood. Stages 3 and 4 can also be defined as the transition from belief to conviction

(McDowell & Hostetler, 2002), or movement beyond "the self and awareness of self, which can

lead to a growing clarity and commitment to beliefs, values, and purpose" (King et al., 2014).

Sire's (2015) identification of the mind, the heart, and an individual's actions as the core

ingredients of a worldview equates to what individuals know, what they believe, and then how

they live their belief system out. For the former students of CLSS, these three ingredients could

be equated in three different synonyms. The mind would equate to each student's cognitive

understanding of the Bible and the truths it exposes. The heart is revealed through the beliefs

espoused through each participant's worldview, whether they are biblical or otherwise. Finally,

an individual's actions are revealed through one's goals, both achieved and in motion.

The mind. The survey questions for the online blog forum were designed to measure

basic biblical principles. These basic biblical principles are consistent with fundamental moral

behaviors and fundamental characteristics of God, congruent with the teaching of the Bible.

These basic biblical principles include "attitudes and behaviors related to practical matters like

lying, cheating, stealing, pornography, the nature of God, and the consequences of unresolved

sin" (ACFI, 2017). The data collected through the online blog forum provided a benchmark

understanding of cognitive positions held by the participants relative to their understanding of

basic biblical principles.

Question 1 asked, "How would you respond to the notion that all people are basically

good?" and addressed the notion of humanity's fallen nature and the need for salvation. As an

open-ended question, this question elicited a variety of responses, most of which were consistent

with the biblical principles that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;

who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9) and that, "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"

(Romans 3:23).

Participant responses varied in length and complexity, with Noah simply noting, "They

are not," while Susan added, "People are not basically good because humans are inherently evil."

There were more complex answers given, like Megan's: "I would say that no one is good.

Anyone can try to be a 'good' person but we are all inherently evil by nature. Therefore, I would

say that only God is good." Jenny, who citing scripture, articulated,

Man is not basically good because of the fall. Therefore, every person is born with a sinful nature. It even says in Romans 3:23 that all men have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. If everyone has sinned, then no one is basically good.

The only outlier to this general theme in answers was from Jason, the only confessed atheist among the participants, who believes "people are basically good, but their goodness can be altered by what life throws at them."

Question 2 asked the participants to select an answer from a drop down menu to "explain which is the single, most important factor you consider that determines success in life." Almost unanimously every participant identified the option, "Commitment and obedience to God" as their preferred answer to the question. In one of the few exceptions, Chris chose "other" as his answer, then explained, "To me being successful in life is being able to support my family and care for them, while making them proud by what I choose to do with my life and my relationship with God." Jason also chose "other" as his option and instead described success as "validation in making those around me happy. Taking each day as it comes and spreading positivity with others is very satisfying to me. Our time is limited on Earth, it's important to influence others as much as you can."

Question 3 addressed personal spiritual disciplines including daily Bible reading, church attendance, confession of sins, personal devotion time, and evangelism. Every participant, including Jason, felt that these personal disciplines were important for spiritual growth and development, even though most of the participants confessed to not practicing them as much as they should.

Questions 4, 5 and 6 addressed issues of morality and absolute truth. Given the option for open-ended responses to questions that addressed lying, pornography, cheating, stealing,

abortion and same-sex marriage, among others, every participant, except Jason, addressed each answer from a biblical perspective and through a framework of absolute truth. For example, concerning same-sex marriage, Megan responded, "God made a bond between men and women and it is sacred in that way." Mary described viewing pornography as "a sin and you need to stop," while Jenny simply stated, "I think telling a lie is wrong no matter what." Despite a strong adherence to biblical orthodoxy concerning morality and moral absolutes, it was interesting to note a strong measure of grace in many of the participants' answers, particularly concerning abortion and same-sex marriage.

When addressing the issue of abortion, every participant viewed abortion as a sin, usually explicitly defining it as murder. However, many of the participants added additional comments. For example, Susan explained, "I would thank them that they trust me enough to come talk to me about this. . . . I would advise them against it and tell them about the many resources that are available to help women." Chris conceded that "this is a very sensitive matter it is hard to tell someone what to do, but I would encourage them to consider other alternatives such as adoption, as I believe that abortion is murder." He finished with, "It is really difficult though when it comes to rape and incest for example." Jenny shared a very personal story when addressing the issue of abortion. She wrote,

> I also told her that I thought it was wrong. She told me she would do it anyway. In the end, I made it clear that I didn't support her decision, but that I would love her anyway. I visited her two days after in her apartment, and we had dinner together. She had some pain and it was difficult for her to get around, so I brought food. She told me that her family had stopped speaking to her as a result, and that the Christians that she knew were saying unkind things to her. I just told her that I loved her. She later told me that she had

never believed in unconditional love until my actions following the abortion. She said

that because of what I did, it changed her perspective on the love of Christ. Long answer,

but true story.

Like abortion, same-sex marriage was another topic that elicited a number of detailed

responses. Matt was very diplomatic in his answer, stating, "I would tell them that what they are

doing is not Biblical but still show them the love of Christ and not ostracize them for their

decision." Steve was equally sympathetic but more succinct: "I don't agree with it but I'm not

going to treat you any different." Jenny was, again, much more detailed in her answer:

> It's hard to answer this question because we cannot hold non-Christians to the same
>
> standard as Christians. I suppose if I had a Christian friend who wanted to marry
>
> someone of the same sex, and they came to me to ask if I approve of their future spouse, I
>
> would let them know that I love them, and I probably love their spouse, but that I don't
>
> think it is right for them to get married.

Nick was very absolute about his stance towards same-sex relationships, however, he was

equally concerned about the grace afforded to us all, sharing, "It is a sin and I don't agree with it

but that doesn't mean I hate you or despise you or think you're going to hell. I can still love you

while not agreeing." Other cultural issues, such as divorce and or drug use, also received more

detailed responses, but more as a justification for absolutism, rather than a weighing of both

sides of an issue.

Questions 7–12 addressed purely theological rather than cultural issues such as the

infallibility of scripture, creation, the nature and character of God, and sin. Every participant,

except Jason, agreed nearly unanimously with each of the following answers. All except one

other agreed that the Bible "is the inspired word of God and has no errors, although some verses

are meant to be symbolic rather than literal." The sole outlier believed that "the Bible is the actual, true word of God and should be taken literally, word for word." Every participant believed in creation as the origins and development of human life. Interestingly, not only did every participant agree with creation but believed in six literal days of creation. Every participant agreed that "God is the all-powerful, all-knowing, perfect creator of the universe who rules the world today," and that "God is aware of everything happening in your life and is actively involved in your life every day." Finally, every participant agreed with the biblical principle, "Everyone is a sinner, which is rebellion against God and His laws; the only solution is to be saved from eternal punishment through personal repentance and God's forgiveness." Jason, who does not presently confess faith in Christ, is also not anti-Christian. He shared in his interview,

> Just because I'm not a Christian right now doesn't mean I'm against it. I still want CLSS to do well, I still want great things to happen. I'm simply in a state now where I don't really know what I want and what I believe yet.

Jason reflected this in his online blog forum answers, stating, "We could very well have a god or a creator; we could also very well NOT have a god or a creator." He added, "There is no way to truly confirm whether the things that happen in your life are pre-destined by a deity or just random chance." For Jason, right now, he believes, "There are guesses and faiths that attempt to explain why the world is the way it is, but no one truly knows for certain."

The heart. What individuals believe in their heart is a direct reflection of what they understand in their mind. In order for a believer to live out a biblical worldview, there has to be a recognition of the greatness of God (Sire, 2009). For Sire (2009), the greatness of God is defined as recognition of what God has done for a person, and as a consequence, a willingness to

allow God to perform his transforming work in and through that person. This recognition first takes place in the mind (Romans 10:14), is then decided upon in the heart, before manifesting itself through one's actions.

This concept is reflected in Proverbs 4:23, which states, "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life." Jesus then builds upon this concept, explaining to His hearers, "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" (Matthew 15:18, 19). Jeremiah 17:9 describes the heart as "deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" God, being cognizant of this fact, gives each believer a new heart through the process of salvation. As God declares through Ezekiel, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh" (36:26).

For the participants of this study, and any believer, the desires of the heart occur when knowledge in the mind becomes a belief or idea that is held to be true. As such, a participant's worldview can be a direct reflection of how biblical knowledge has been acquired, synthesized, and then received as truth. For the participants of this study, the condition of the heart is very strong evidence of both a biblical worldview and the impact CLSS had in growing and developing that worldview.

CLSS influence. Every participant, except Jason, affirmed the impact that CLSS had on the development of his or her worldview. Mary acknowledged, "My worldview was definitely influenced at CLSS. I was taught truth and also what beliefs there were out in the world, so I knew how to combat them." Chris also recognized the wide-ranging impact CLSS had on the development of his worldview, noting, "My time at CLSS developed my worldview in many

different ways. Having each class tie in spiritual connections and principles really impacted the

way I saw the world and understood God's intervention in every aspect of it." Lucy was highly

appreciative of the biblical integration and how CLSS helped shape her worldview:

> As a student of the CLSS, my worldview was greatly impacted. I was taught to view the
>
> world through a Biblical perspective. This has shaped how I perceive things in my life
>
> and how I develop my beliefs, making sure that they align with scripture. Constantly
>
> having Biblical integration in my everyday life in throughout elementary to high school
>
> truly shaped who I am as a person. Without it, my spiritual and personal development
>
> would not be where it is today.

Like Lucy, Jenny felt, "the real thing was having a biblical worldview in the classroom too."

For some participants, CLSS helped to reinforce the teachings and lessons taught at

home. Susan stated, "I think my worldview was reinforced while attending CLSS. A lot of my

worldview was fostered by my parents and CLSS helped to reinforce our beliefs and

worldview." Similarly, Jenny was appreciative of CLSS for the same reason, noting "I think it

[her worldview] was strongly influenced, because what I was learning at home and at church was

reinforced at school." Dave was appreciative of the fact that CLSS affirmed "everything I had

been taught growing up. I was surrounded by like-minded people 180 days a year, and I believe

any chance I had of changing my mind about Christianity was lessened significantly because of

CLSS."

Some participants recognized that their worldview development was shaped by not only

what the Bible says on different topics, but how to critically think about different topics in

general. Abby explained, "It really influenced the way I believe some controversial biblical

topics, and also helped me to know what I believe and why." Nick added, "My worldview was

influenced by CLSS because it taught me critical thinking, taught me to think for myself, and taught me ways to research what I believe all while teaching the bible and how to be spiritual." He continued, "The school sets an excellent role model to all students and pushes them to be the best they can and is a unique experience." Noah acknowledged his indebtedness to CLSS: "My worldview was influenced greatly by attending CLSS. It was here that I learned what it meant to be a true follower of Christ. And attending CLSS allowed me to grow in my faith." Ultimately, any impact that CLSS had on a participant's worldview had to be tested, as Dave described, in "a real-world environment."

Worldview manifestation. For many participants, the impact CLSS had on their worldview helped them evaluate options moving forward, like if and which college to attend, and evaluating good personal choices once they got there. For example, Susan shared, "My worldview has shaped every choice I have made after high school." Jenny acknowledged, "After CLSS, I chose to go to a college that I felt was where God was leading me, even though I initially didn't want to go there." As a consequence of a strong biblical worldview, Abby said, "It influenced my decision to go to a private Christian college. It also has influenced the choices I've made in and out of college." Like Abby, Megan's biblical worldview dictated her college choices, helping her to decide "to go to a Christian university."

Once at college, Julia explained, "My worldview helped me choose a college ministry to join. I knew that the kind of people I surrounded myself with would make a big impact on my life, just like at CLSS." Like Julia, Mary found her worldview helped her "make smart decisions once I got to college." Jenny recognized that her worldview enabled her not only to have good choices, but when she failed, it gave her the grace of God to get back up and keep going. She wrote, "Sometimes I made good choices, and sometimes I made mistakes. However, because I

had a Christian foundation and environment as my guide, I was taught how to recover from those mistakes using a Christian worldview."

For many participants, however, much of their biblical worldview evolved around making good moral choices. To many, this seemed to be the high water mark of Christian living, confronting moral decisions and choosing the right option. As Matt shared, "There have been countless times where I've had to stop and make conscious decisions to be different from the people around me who are living in sin." Consequently, Matt continued, "I have refrained from premarital sex, underage drinking in college, drugs, and anything that may become a habit that would hurt my ministry to those around me." Lucy also recognized that her "morals were strengthened," while Megan concurred, acknowledging her worldview kept her from not participating "in sex and drugs and drinking at college, and to avoid certain relationships based on disagreements of faith."

Noah stated, "The worldview that CLSS helped shape is still the one I hold today. I would say that it helps me make essentially all of my decisions in life." Noah added, "Without the morals or lessons that I obtained I would certainly be a different person," recognizing his worldview as a moral framework. Lucy added some depth and clarity:

> The worldview I developed from CLSS greatly influenced my choices after I graduated and entered college. I had great discernment for what my beliefs were and what Biblical truth was. I was able to keep my morals and evaluate them as they were challenged from opposing opinions. As a result, my morals were strengthened, and I realized them to truly be my own and not simply my parent's or school's beliefs. But I would not have had that realization if I did not have the influence of attending CLSS.

Like some of the other participants, Chris viewed his worldview as having helped him "to differentiate between what was right and wrong." He added, "Without this worldview I am certain that I could have had a much different experience and possibly fallen into the temptations of the world."

Christianity does provide a moral framework for believers to live by. As the Apostle Paul stated in Romans 6:1, 2, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?" However, Paul hangs more than just a moral framework on the Christian life. To the Galatians, Paul wrote, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (2:20). Then he added, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). The Christian's walk involves living for, and if necessary, dying for one's faith. Christians complete the works set before them until Christ's return or they are called home.

Some participants recognized the overarching impact of a biblical worldview on their life. Megan shared, "CLSS has made me think about everything with a Christian view. Most Christians only think about biblical problems at church. I was different because I had to think about these things seven days a week." Jenny freely acknowledged, "I want to do what God wants me to do, because He always knows better than I do. I'm just here trying to figure out what He wants me to do and then try and do it." Mary described her faith action steps as follows: "I am able to give back to local high schools and get to mentor young girls through church. This wouldn't have been possible without CLSS and the principles they taught me from such a young age." Jenny succinctly described what should be the end result of a biblical worldview as "a strong belief in the importance of listening to God's call on my life, and also

because I know that his plans are always better than our own plans." For many participants, however, this was neither the thought process nor the outcome.

Faith in action. For many of the participants in this study, their motivations and their desires aligned more with worldly ambitions than the purposes and plans of God. This is not to say the intended outcomes were ungodly but rather the means or motivation to get there were not for God's glory. The Apostle Paul experienced this problem during his ministry; noting the preaching of the Gospel for selfish gain, he wrote, "But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice" (Philippians 1:18, New International Version). Unfortunately, such motivations or misunderstandings can have a detrimental effect on an individual's character, their relationships, their ministry, and perhaps ultimately their relationship with God for His glory. This compartmentalization of faith has become increasingly common within American Christian culture (Stackhouse, 2014). Compartmentalization, or dualism, encourages students to hold certain cognitive beliefs or principles but act differently if inconvenient (Greene, 1990). As American culture and society become increasingly more secular it is imperative for Christian schools to develop a biblical worldview in their students before they graduate high school, rather than lapse into a dualistic perspective.

Grades. Almost universally each participant's level of effort and achievement evolved around individual accolades and accomplishments. For some it was parental expectations. As Susan admitted, "My motivation was the wrath of my parents and just the fact that I wanted to do well." Steve also acknowledged his efforts were mostly out of "the fear of what my parents would do if I didn't get good grades. So I did that because of that." Although, for Steve, "sports helped keep me in it as well because we had to have a minimum grade point average to play."

Some participants drew the desire to succeed from within. Megan confessed, "My grades were excellent because I'm a perfectionist and I refuse to give up." Nick admitted, "I just wanted to get As for myself. My mom didn't check my grades, I just, I wanted to do good for me because I really wanted that A." For Noah, it was a mixture of motivation: "I dunno, I like getting good grades. . . . I'm a people pleaser. I like pleasing people." For Mary, she readily recognized, "I'm just really self-motivated. Like, in elementary school I use to ground myself from my phone when I would get a bad grade. I was very self-motivated and like, if I don't do well I'm mad at myself." Likewise, Julia philosophically agreed, "I always had As, because I wanted to prove to myself. I really didn't have pressure from my parents at all."

For others it was a sense of competition. Lucy recognized, "We all wanted to try our best, and because of everyone around me wanting to try their best, I definitely pushed myself." Now that Lucy is no longer driven by the competitiveness of herself and her friends, she admitted, "I've noticed that as I've gone through college my grades have decreased because of a lack of environment, of standards that they had. At CLSS the standards were so high and people had a goal for that." In addition to personal satisfaction, Julia also acknowledged a competitiveness among herself and her friends to do well. She recalled, "I wanted to prove to myself, to my teachers and to my friends, who were very competitive. I wanted to prove to them that I could be on their level I guess."

Still, for other participants it was a mixed bag of motivations, in many ways dictated by their home life or socioeconomic situation. For Jason, due to life's circumstances, his motivation was singular focused. "My motivation was to get a good scholarship because I knew I wasn't going to get into school any other way. I was very fortunately and lucky to go to CLSS." He added that although he wanted "to make my mom proud, this whole educational journey has

been one of me wanting to make something of myself." Chris acknowledged that his motivation was "to get into a good school or to just try to make the most of the time where I was at because my family was sacrificing for me to be here and pay for it and everything."

Both Dave and Abby experienced a decided lack of motivation. Dave shared, "The motivation was nearly non-existent. I'm not sure I can pinpoint one specific reason why I wasn't super motivated in high school. It didn't have anything to do with the teachers." Abby, too, was at a loss of words concerning her lack of motivation. "My motivation, was just, I don't know. I wasn't as driven as I am in college now. I was like, as long as I can get a B. As and Bs, I'll be fine." Like Dave and Abby, Chris realized he could have done better in school. With pride Chris reflected, "I was always goofing around. I thought not too long ago actually, if I wasn't trying to make everyone laugh all the time I could have had even better grades than I did. I don't have any regrets though."

In many ways, Mary's motivation encapsulated most participants' drive to succeed at CLSS. She summarized, "For, myself, my parents, college. Like I knew that I wanted to go to college." One single participant, Jenny, found her motivation at CLSS to reach beyond the focus of herself or her immediate family. Jenny shared, "My motivation was that I had these talents and gifts and it would be poor stewardship to be wasting them," reflecting Matthew 25:14–30.

Life goals. For many participants, their lack of stewardship concerning their talents at CLSS was reflected in their chosen vocations or life callings. While none of the participants' career paths were antithetical to the Gospel or their ability to share it, there was a distinct lack of awareness concerning the spiritual opportunities presented vocationally. Noah's plans consisted of either becoming a doctor "after I get my master's degree, or I want to play sports professionally at some point." Noah's desire to play professional sports was to earn "a good

amount of money and live off of [it]. I would do that before anything honestly." Similarly, Mary wants to play sports professionally "with the USA team, whatever permits itself. Presents itself." Then she planned to "get married. Have a family at some point. Wherever that happens to be, I don't know." Dave wants to either write or do sports management "just because that's truly what I'm passionate about." For Megan, "the main thing I want to do is get married and start a family, and then I want to start my own business. But, what that business is I'm not completely sure yet."

For some participants, there are echoes of calling. For example, although Abby is presently undecided whether to do psychology or stick with communications, she wants to "impact people's lives and use my story to, um, to help people who are struggling with the same thing." Chris shared,

> As long as I physically can, I would say, still continue my education and everything, trying to better myself. Eventually have a family, that's the main thing I want to do. The reason why I wanted to be a public servant is because I wanted to help people and that's kind of my passion.

Other participants saw God's will and purpose in their lives, but more as something to be attained, rather than then and there in the present. Mary noted that after sports and starting a family, her "long-term goal, [is] I want to start an orphanage." Julia, although still shrouded in confusion and uncertainty, realized, "Right now, I am continuing to teach because I believe that's where the Lord wants me right now. I don't know if the Lord wants me to do that forever." Likewise Susan, who went on a final mission trip the summer after graduation and realized her calling, resolved, "I want to be a missionary to China. I lived there for six months because God called me there." Although Susan aspired to be a missionary to China, she did not

view her present work in college as an equally important ministry. In many respects, Mary's synopsis of her own spiritual and vocational journey captures the struggle between both. Mary confessed,

> I know that when those accolades stop coming in, I have a creator who still loves me and sees me as chosen. Being committed and obedient to God is definitely a big part of my success, but sadly I think sports and academic successes feel more important sometimes.

Christian Education

For many of the participants, there is a fundamental disconnect between what they both know and confess, in their minds and in the hearts, and the actions they have taken to live out their lives. Many of the participants have either practically or philosophically separated the calling God has placed on their life and the work they are currently doing. This included a distinctly unbiblical view of their work as students while at CLSS. Paul admonishes every believer that, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving" (Colossians 3:23–24). This disconnection between many of the participants' understanding of a biblical worldview as a moral compass, rather than a life mantra, can be traced back to a fundamental misunderstanding behind the purpose of Christian education.

When asked to define Christian education, a majority of the participants essentially equated it with secular education but also learning about Jesus or the Bible. Jason described Christian education as "prepar[ing] them with knowledge for the real world in all aspects. That knowledge, however, would be grounded in Christianity." He continued, "It's a faith-based platform that you build your education upon top of. So, the purpose would just be to install

knowledge in students, just with faith." Susan, who is training to be an educator, described Christian education as "similar to that of education in general. You're forming kids to grow. You're helping parents too in a way. You're also looking to install, not just Christian values in their life, but also to help grow their faith." Mary, who is also training to be an educator, described Christian education as follows: "So, like, you're being equipped to, um, like in your knowledge, your whatever, like your education, learning those things that you need to learn to move on. But also being equipped in your faith." Dave defined Christian education: "I think it's mostly the same as regular education, with that added element of teaching students to do their work well in a Christ like manner," adding, "Those two go together in a sense but I don't think I have too much more to add on that."

Some participants knew that Christian education should permeate beyond more than just the four walls of the classroom. They reasoned that somehow it should impact an individual's life but could not articulate how. Megan suggested, "If education is to grow for the next step, I would say Christian education is to grow kids for the next step but in a biblical way." Megan further added that Christian education should be "to show them how Jesus grew up, to show them different ways to integrate their faith into different parts of life. Instead of its just Bible class, or its church, but in all aspects." Steve suggested the purpose of Christian education was

> I guess to, um, help mold young minds, um, mold and develop young minds in a way that
> not only teaches them how to grow up and be a man and learn stuff from history and
> science and all that. But also, teach them the intangibles like, faith, honesty, friendship
> and all that stuff. I think it's a more deeper level of education that goes below the surface
> level of state requirements or federal requirements or whatever. The goal is to invest

more in students, individually, so that they can, once they get out, kind of spread

Christianity too.

Abby offered, "I think it's to show you that God is in everything, and can be incorporated into

any subject you are learning, and, he's always with us. So, yeah."

Some of the participants felt that Christian education was really important, but could not

really define why or give a specific reason. Lucy hypothesized, "The purpose of Christian

education is to really install that biblical worldview within your life, whether that be in

education, in your personal life, just all aspects of life, just integrating scripture and that mindset

of beliefs." Noah was adamant that Christian education was important but struggled to define

why. He stated, "So Christian education . . . I dunno. I think it's really important because . . . So,

I don't think I could define it, but I know that it is very, very important, Christian education is,

because . . . I dunno . . . So I think Christian education is really important." Matt offered a very

secular, liberal arts interpretation of Christian education, saying, "To be able to be a more

functioning member of society, and also so you can better serve God down the road. So, you go

to school; you want to better yourself." After reciting the CLSS mission statement, Chris

defined Christian education as "showing people what God says about things. Encouraging

relationships with Him, and trying to make a difference as far as they interpret the world."

After pausing and reflecting on her own experiences, Susan gave a more succinct

definition of Christian education. She defined Christian education as "not just about education

anymore, now it's more about their life, faith, and where they're going to end up for the rest of

their life. For the rest of eternity." She added, "I think Christian education is a bit more personal

because they care about you . . . when it's a Christian educator in a Christian school where

they're coming from is more God driven and it's more faith driven." Jenny, who is a Christian

educator, described Christian education as "less about the standards and more about building people who are becoming more like Christ every day. Ultimately, you're sending your kids to a Christian school because you want them to have that Christian worldview and that Christian perspective."

In truth, Christian education is about imparting a biblical worldview to students, a worldview that should, in turn, lead and guide all of their life decisions, not just their moral decisions. By definition, a worldview guides the way an individual views the world, not just certain parts or segments of the world. If students are not taught and do not understand that everything in life, including their education, is a gift or talent that requires stewardship to advance the kingdom of God, then how can Christian educators expect their students to make worldview decisions that encompass every facet of their lives?

Research Questions

The research questions which guided my inquiry into worldview development at CLSS were largely answered through the views of the participants above. However, to provide clarity to these questions more succinct answers are provided below.

Purpose

The purpose of this multiple case study was to understand how the Christian education offered by Country Lakes School System influenced its graduates' worldviews. The tool used to measure a graduate's biblical worldview was Sire's (2015) three-dimensional concept of worldview, which encompasses the dimensions of proposition, heart-orientation, and behavior as a true measure of worldview. This research viewed propositional thought as a cognitive understanding of basic biblical principles that are consistent with fundamental moral behaviors and the characteristics of God, congruent with the teaching of the Bible. Heart orientation was

viewed through the prism of an individual's moral and theological beliefs, specifically, in reflection and recognition of the greatness of God. The greatness of God is a recognition of an individual's belief in what God has done for them, and as a consequence, a willingness to allow God to perform his transforming work in them and through them (Sire, 2009). Finally, an individual's behavior or actions are the best reflection of an individual's cognitive understanding of an issue, and its subsequent acceptance or belief by that same individual. An individual's actions reflect their convictions more than their words, since they have to live with the consequences of their actions.

For all of the participants in this study, there was a clear connection between their cognitive understandings and the beliefs in their heart. Every participant, except Jason, demonstrated an orthodox understanding of biblical doctrine and confessed an adherence to it through their heart felt beliefs. It is worth noting that Jason also demonstrated a basic understanding of orthodox Christian doctrine even though he deviated in his level of belief concerning those doctrines. Through the analysis of each individual's intentions or actions, the conviction of each individual's beliefs fell sharply. Most participants expressed little or no desire to live a life that promoted and reflected the greatness of God, which Sire (2009) said occurs when a believer, "consciously accepts and acts on it," as the "central conception" and "the rock, the transcendent reference point, that gives life meaning" (p. 46). For most participants, meaning was reflected through vocational success and having a family, the chief ends to which were happiness and wealth.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asked, How do graduates of the CLSS describe a biblical worldview? The participants in this study were aware that a biblical worldview was rooted

firmly in the teachings of the Bible. All of the participants referenced the Bible as the source of a biblical worldview. Some of the key concepts that reflected these beliefs included absolute truth, moral conviction, grace, the inerrancy of scripture, the Trinitarian relationship of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and Jesus' death and forgiveness of sin as the only means of going to heaven. Matt described the importance of the Bible when defining a biblical worldview, stating, "Scripture gives us many absolute truths from which we can derive our worldview. Without a moral absolute truth a person or society cannot find any foundation from which to stand." Each participant also mentioned or described the concept of biblical integration as the practice of learning about academic topics while simultaneously being infused with biblical truth. Jason summarized biblical integration as preparing students with "knowledge for the real world in all aspects. That knowledge, however, would be grounded in Christianity. It's a faith-based platform that you build your education upon top of." All of the participants also acknowledged that a biblical worldview should influence the way an individual lives their life. Lucy reflected on this, describing the Bible as "reliable and true, guiding believers through life."

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked, How do graduates of the CLSS describe the influence of their school experience on the development of their worldview? Every single participant described CLSS as incredibly influential or the single biggest influencer on their own worldview. For every participant, there was a combination of factors through which CLSS influenced their worldview, the most common of which were the teachers, the coaches, biblical integration, specific classes, chapel, and the other students. Megan expressed a combination of these factors when she stated, "The biggest factors that strengthened my Christian worldview were the caring teachers, the opportunity to ask questions, biblical integration in all classes, and debates in Bible

class." Without a doubt, the single most important and influential factor was the teachers. An example of this was Chris who recalled, "That the strongest factors that helped me develop and strengthen my worldview perspective were certain teachers . . . who really challenged my thinking and in turn made me think about what I believed in my personal worldview." Many of the participants formed close relationships with one or more of their teachers. These relationships eventually led to more of a discipleship-based relationship, through which modeling and mentoring became the intended, and sometimes unintended, focus. Matt acknowledged, "To have the ability to meet after classes and discuss topics with different teachers or discuss personally in class with teachers about their particular beliefs . . . it helped me more than anything to grow in my understandings of a Biblical worldview." These close relationships were usually formed despite the teacher's curriculum field, and sometimes, in spite of the curriculum being taught. Four of the participants described the influence of CLSS on their worldview as reinforcing or being similar to what was already being taught at home.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 asked, How do graduates describe the influence of a biblical worldview on their decisions after graduation? Three of the participants described the effect of their own biblical worldview as influential behind the choice they made to attend a Christian university rather than a secular university. One participant even disclosed the influence of her own biblical worldview as the reasoning behind her own decision to attend a university she did not want to attend. She felt that was where God was calling her to be and wanted to be obedient to His will. Almost all of the participants, however, reflected upon the influence of their worldview as the rationale behind only the moral decisions they made after graduation. This was reflected in Megan's testimony when she acknowledged, "My worldview has influenced my

decision to go to a Christian university, not participate in sex and drugs and drinking at college, and to avoid certain relationships based on disagreements of faith." Similarly, Matt expressed his faith as more of a moral compass, stating, "There have been countless times where I've had to stop and make conscious decisions to be different from the people around me who are living in sin. I have refrained from premarital sex, underage drinking in college [and] drugs." This included the only non-Christian participant, who described his own moral choices, regardless of his own moral convictions, in terms of biblical morality. Simply stated, all of the participants except one described the influence of their worldview as the moral driving force behind their decisions, rather than the practical driving force for their life choices, both in the present and the future.

Summary

This chapter provided a detailed account of the influence CLSS had on the development of graduates' biblical worldviews. First, all of the participants were described in detail, including their home life, spiritual history, and current circumstances in life. Next, through data analysis and the use of coding, 16 themes were identified. These themes were in turn categorized into three main themes, each with numerous sub-themes. The influence of these three themes, the school system, the participant's peer groups, and the teachers, along with their sub-themes were all addressed through the personal testimonies of the participants themselves. This was followed by a detailed analysis of the influence CLSS had on the participants' propositional understanding, heart-orientation, and behavior relative to a biblical worldview. This was interpreted as each student's understanding of biblical truths, belief in those truths, and then finally, their actions undertaken as a result of those truths. Finally, the three research

questions were reviewed with answers provided that briefly summarized the impact of CLSS on

its graduates.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this multiple case study was to understand how Christian education has influenced former students' worldviews from the CLSS. Chapter Five provides a summary of the study's findings in relation to Sire's (2015) three-dimensional concept of worldview. Next is a discussion of the findings in light of relative theories and research from the literature review in Chapter Two. This will be followed by the theoretical and practical implications of this study's findings, followed by an examination of the limitations of this study. Finally, I will conclude with recommendations for future research and a final summary of the study.

Summary of Findings

The purpose of this multiple case study was to understand how the Christian education offered by Country Lakes School System influenced CLSS graduates' worldviews. The participant criteria for this study was graduates who had been graduated for more than a year, but not longer than five years, and had attended the school system continuously between Grades K–12. Data collection was conducted using an online blog forum, a written personal testimony, and one-on-one interviews. Through the collection and analysis of the data a number of conclusions were derived.

Sire's (2015) three-dimensional concept of worldview encompasses the dimensions of proposition, heart-orientation, and behavior. This research examined propositional thought through the cognitive understanding of basic biblical principles, consistent with orthodox biblical moral and theological teachings. Heart orientation was viewed in light of an individual's moral and theological beliefs, relative to the greatness of God. Finally, an individual's behavior was examined through their actions.

According to the results of this study, graduates from CLSS possess a very strong cognitive understanding of the Bible which is consistent with the school system's moral and theological teachings. The best explanation for these beliefs is most participant's belief in the Bible's over-arching claim to absolute truth. Slight variations from accepted orthodoxy were usually nuanced with explanations that usually amplified, rather than contradicted accepted orthodoxy.

Sub-Question One asked, "How do graduates of the CLSS describe a biblical worldview?" All of the participants used the Bible as their point of orientation when describing a biblical worldview. Many of the participants used common biblical terms or phrases such as, love, grace, faith, and joy to explain a biblical worldview. All of the participants acknowledged that a biblical worldview should influence the way an individual lives their life, specifically the choices or decisions that they make.

Sub-Question Two asked, "How do graduates of the CLSS describe the influence of their school experience on the development of their worldview?" Every single participant described CLSS as incredibly influential or the single biggest influencer on their own worldview. The ways in which each participant was influenced by CLSS varied from participant to participant. Common factors included the teachers, the coaches, biblical integration, specific classes, chapel, and the other students. The teachers were the single most influential factor, usually with a close bond developing between a student and a teacher. This bond could be because of a shared experience, common interests, or similar personalities, among other reasons. CLSS's influence was also magnified in some instances because it reinforced values and principles taught at home.

Sub-Question Three asked, "How do graduates describe the influence of a biblical worldview on their decisions after graduation?" Three of the participants described the effect of

their own biblical worldview, shaped by CLSS, as influential behind the choice they made to attend a Christian university. All of the participants, except one, almost purely viewed the purpose of a biblical worldview from a moral perspective. All of the participants described their moral decisions, either good or bad, from a biblical perspective. Apart from one, none of the participants used a biblical worldview as a guide for decisions made in the present or as a central conception through which all life's decisions should be made, including the purpose behind each decision. Two participants felt called by God to follow certain directions in their lives, however, both of them were entering into fulltime ministry. Succinctly stated, there was a distinct lack of coherency between nearly all of the participant's beliefs concerning the theory behind a biblical worldview and their practice of it.

Discussion

Research concerning the development of a biblical worldview, particularly at the secondary education or high school level, is very scarce. This is surprising considering it is during these formative years that worldview development is affirmed and solidified (Ham & Beemer, 2009). There are, however, a number of theories and studies outlined in Chapter Two that are useful when examining worldview development generally, and a biblical worldview specifically.

Sire's Three-Dimensional Concept of Worldview

According to Sire (2009), the culmination of a biblical worldview is found in the answer to the question, "What personal, life-orienting core commitments are consistent with this worldview?" (p. 23). Sire (2009) defines a personal, life-orienting, core commitment to a worldview as something that serves as "the focus for the ultimate meaning of life, not just the meaning of human history or human existence in the abstract, but the meaning of life for each

Christian" (p. 44). Sire (2009) further adds that, "As God himself is the really real, the ultimate ground of being and the creator of all being other than himself, so devoted Christians live not for themselves but for God" (p. 45).

To this end, Sire (2015) defines the core ingredients of a biblical worldview as the mind, the heart, and an individual's actions. When examining the responses of each participant in light of both Sire's core ingredients of a biblical worldview, and the purpose of a biblical worldview, most of the participants did not possess an entirely biblical worldview. While all of the participants who confessed to be Christians possessed a strong biblical worldview concerning both the mind and the heart, there was a distinct lack of understanding or conviction of its influence when it came to each participant's actions.

The practical outworking of Sire's (2009) description of a biblical worldview would be something that provides the foundation on which Christians live and move and have their being. Only one of the participants demonstrated a worldview that resembled a desire to find their identity and their purpose for living, not in themselves, but God. Two of the participants expressed demonstrated aspects of such devotion to God by indicating their decision to attend a Christian college rather than a secular college, mostly based upon their worldview. Such decisions, however, could be rooted more in moral persuasion than purely living for God for most of the participants.

Two other participants, through extenuating circumstances, found themselves repurposing their lives to seek God's will and glory, rather than their own. These two participants, one through marriage, the other through a mission trip, expressed a desire or an openness to lay aside what they had previously envisioned for their own lives. The willingness

of both of the participants to seek God's will and glory could not have been possible without a biblical worldview that impacted both the mind and heart.

It is clear that through this research many, if not all, of the participants that possessed a biblical worldview in their mind and heart were open to, even desired, to live a life that glorified God. However, this research also found there was an unintentional disconnect within CLSS's biblical worldview development between the mind and the heart, and the desired outcomes reflected through the actions and motivations of CLSS's graduates. This would be in contrast to the Schultz's (2015) purpose for Christian education, which is to help lay a firm foundation, from which a student will develop a heart for God, seek first God and His righteousness, and build God's kingdom through whatever vocation or calling they feel God is leading them to.

Fowler's Stages of Faith

The development of an individual's faith is a distinctly personal and individual phenomenon. Fowler's (1981) stages of faith theory divides faith development into six different stages of faith. Fowler's (1981) stages of faith theory describes the transition from stages 3 to 4 as moving from Synthetic-Conventional Faith to Individuative-Reflective Faith. This occurs from the beginning of adolescence and usually ends with young adulthood and encompasses a number of features. From a biblical perspective, this transition Fowler (1981) describes would be what theologians define as the transition from belief to conviction (McDowell & Hostetler, 2002).

Fowler (1981) describes Stage 3 as a period during which an individual examines the multitude of influences found in one's life, looking for coherency, synthesizing values and information, in order to provide a basis for personal identity and future outlook. At the outset of Stage 3, Fowler (1981) describes an individual's beliefs as being tacitly held, rooted in tradition,

and often with little or no opportunity to reflect or examine them explicitly or systematically. For many of the participants, the coherency of values and information, and the opportunity for reflection and examination, was found through both the curriculum and their relationships with the teachers. All of the participants expressed gratitude, and at times frustration, when confronted with difficult questions or inconsistencies with their faith. This was particularly evident with Bible debates where each individual had to defend their beliefs, even those contrary to their own perspective. Other classes integrated a strong biblical worldview which also forced the participants to provide substance to their beliefs beyond assumptions and guesses. Many found that some of their strongly held beliefs were more aligned with tradition than the teachings of the Bible.

The strongest factor that influenced the coherency of each participant's faith more than any other factor was teachers. Many of the teachers were able to give succinct, logical, Bible based answers for the questions many of the participant's had been struggling with. Sometimes the answers were intentionally injected within the course curriculum, while at other times, many students were grateful for the opportunity to be able to ask hard questions as class conversations and the content naturally drew them out. Some participant's even noted the way in which some teachers lived their lives, or modelled their faith, as a strong validation of the Bible and a biblical worldview. Ultimately, for many of the participants, it became a combination of both the logical coherency of a biblical worldview and the teacher's modeling that swayed and affirmed many of the participants to continue in their faith. This occurred as deeper teacher/student relationships were established beyond the level of the classroom content and the classroom bell times.

Stage 4 occurs with the emergence of two essential features, which are "the critical distancing from one's previous assumptive value system and the emergence of an executive ego"

(Fowler, 1981, p. 179). Although Fowler (1981) notes that not everyone makes the transition

from Stage 3 to Stage 4 in early adulthood, all of the participants in this survey clearly did. As

the participant's distanced themselves from their prior value systems, usually in the form of

attending college, the executive ego or decision making process had to begin, grow, and mature.

Every participant acknowledged the pains or difficultly involved in the decision making process.

For some, it was the lure of temptations that were clearly immoral in nature, to which the

individual participant fell back on their biblical worldview for wisdom and discernment. For

other participants, it was the pain of trial and error in some form of indulged sin, that all, except

one, returned to their biblical worldview for guidance and stability.

Fowler (1981) describes Stage 4 as a time when a new identity is formed and an

individual takes ownership of their faith, which results in the shaping of lifestyle choices or

personal worldview. Schultz (2015) describes the ownership of a biblical worldview as one of

the fundamental goals of Christian education (Schultz, 2015). Unfortunately, for many of the

participants, it seemed that their biblical worldview was more of a reflection upon lifestyle

choices than an all-inclusive biblical worldview conviction. All of the participants except one

equated the value of their biblical worldview as a way to discern moral decisions, rather than the

foundation on which they lived, moved, and defined their being.

Moralistic Therapeutic Deism

Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is a term coined by Smith and Denton (2009) in their book,

Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers. Smith and Denton

(2009) state that they found "a significant part of Christianity in the United States is actually only

tenuously Christian in any sense that is seriously connected to the actual historical Christian

tradition" (p. 171). Some of the tenants of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism include a god, which

merely watches over human life on earth, expects people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, wants people to be happy and to feel good about one's self, is not involved in people's lives, and, in the end, will allow all good people go to heaven when they die.

This synopsis of God described by Smith and Denton (2009) does not reflect the God described by any of the participants in this study. Every participant described God as an all-powerful, all-knowing, perfect creator of the universe who rules the world today, is actively involved in every day life, views all people as sinners, and, that without personal repentance and God's forgiveness, individuals cannot enter heaven. However, as Thomson (2012) describes, a biblical worldview is the answer to the wellspring of life's essential questions, including purpose. Most of the participants in this study viewed their worldview as a form of moral guidance rather than defining their being and purpose.

This moralistic tendency was reflected in two different ways. First, there was a frequent use of the term *legalism* to define the practices of the school system. Usually, legalism was used to express a dissatisfaction with the perceived overabundance of rules. However, for some participants, the rules or legalism began to define both themselves and Christianity. Being a good person, even in the eyes of God, was equated with obedience to the rules, while disobedience was considered sinful.

The second way this moralistic tendency manifested itself in each participant's worldview was the way they expressed living a biblical worldview. Most of the participants defined the value of a biblical worldview as a way to avoid sinful behaviors. These behaviors included, not indulging in certain activities in college, who they chose to spend time with, and whether they engaged in spiritual disciplines like reading their Bible or going to church

frequently. Only one participant viewed a biblical worldview as a defining purpose for life

rather than the definition of one's actions.

A Holistic Biblical Worldview

It is impossible to accurately measure a person's beliefs merely through intellectual

examination. This is why Sire (2015) defines the core ingredients of a biblical worldview as the

mind, the heart, and an individual's actions. The American Culture and Faith Institute (2017)

warns that any time you attempt to measure an individual's worldview or spiritual standing, you

have to tread carefully. Any conclusion is an estimate, not an absolute. With this is mind,

George Barna, who directed the ACFI (2017) study noted that "It's very important to know how

many people have a biblical worldview because peoples' behavior is driven by their beliefs – we

do what we believe" (p. 1). A biblical worldview is not merely the understanding of

presuppositions, or a collection of tightly held beliefs. Instead, a worldview is manifested

through the actions that an individual makes.

To this end, a biblical worldview should be the driving force behind all of life's decisions

(Huffman, 2011). Dockery and Thornbury (2002) define a biblical worldview as something that

provides a comprehensive understanding of "all areas of life and thought" (p. 4). For Christians,

the foundation upon which we live, move, and have being, should be the good works to which

we are called, prepared before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 2:10). These good works

are not merely defined by the moral decisions we make, but also by the life decisions we make,

including preaching the Gospel, baptizing new believers, and the utilization of spiritual gifts,

among other reasons, all for the purpose of doing God's will here on earth. As such, the biblical

worldview currently taught within CLSS lacks a clear correlation or connection between the

knowledge of the mind, the beliefs of the heart, and their application through the actions and intentions of the believer.

Implications

The most pressing theoretical perspective that this study may help to address is the disturbing trend found within the church and Christian education. Barna Group (2000) research has found that two-thirds of all high school aged students will leave the church by their mid-20s, while a survey undertaken by the American Culture and Faith Institute (2017) revealed only 4% of 18 to 29-year-olds had a biblical worldview. If Christian education is going to help arrest this problem, then more intentional actions need to be taken upon its behalf. Christian schools need to become more intentional about how they educate their students, what they educate their students about, and why they choose the methods and the content they do. Christian schools also need to be more intentional when addressing both foundational and controversial topics within Christianity specifically, and the wider culture in general. Finally, Christian education needs to be very intentional about what a biblical worldview is, why it is important, and how they explicitly convey this information to their students.

Theoretical

The theoretical implications of this study emphasize that three key components are critical to help aid in the effective development of a biblical worldview. These three key areas, the curriculum, the teachers, and, the parents and church, each perform a necessary and important role within the life transforming functions of a biblical worldview, first through the mind, then the heart, and then ultimately manifesting itself through one's actions.

The curriculum. Over the last three decades Christian education has become decidedly more secular in focus. Like many public and private schools, within Christian education there has grown an unhealthy emphasis on test scores, athletic prowess, and other secular achievements, to the detriment of developing a coherent biblical worldview within its students. Secular teacher training institutes and state standards have driven the content Christian schools have taught, defining what must be taught, how it must be taught, and why it must be taught. Even many tertiary Christian schools of education adhere to the rigidity of secular education in terms of the purpose behind the content, content delivery, and an adherence to state standards. If Christian schools want to distinctly define themselves and their practices as Christian education, rather than Christians educating (Hull, 2003), they need to fundamentally change the way they practice education.

Christian education needs to place a greater emphasis on biblical integration rather than on content or test scores. This emphasis would necessitate two intentional paradigm shifts within the classroom. First, biblical integration needs to be the driving force behind content, not content driving biblical integration. Teachers need to define what specific themes of biblical integration they want to integrate throughout the school year and then design their content around those themes. Although this would look different for different classes, they could center on important biblical themes like the fallen-ness of humanity, redemption, or some of the characteristics of God. Other classes may focus on repeatedly addressing contentious issues like evolution in science or stewardship and purpose in economics. By turning the curriculum upside-down, Christian education would return to its origins of strengthening the Christian mind rather than accommodating a secular, utilitarian emphasis. The second paradigm shift would focus on the teachers.

Teachers. Like secular schools, many Christian educators are evaluated on how effective they are at equipping their students to achieve high scores on standardized tests. Because a Christian school exists for the purpose of education, this cannot be dismissed, however, more flexibility needs to be accommodated towards *teachable moments*. A teachable moment is that point within the course of classroom learning when a student asks a question, or the content lends itself to a clear segue in learning of spiritual significance that was unplanned on the part of the teacher. Christian educators need to be taught to both identify and then take advantage of such situations as a form of spiritual growth. Students learn through connections, often referred to in education as scaffolding.

When a student scaffolds to a spiritual question or conclusion, the teacher needs to utilize this opportunity for spiritual growth, because it is most likely going to be a learning opportunity the student is going to remember. At this point in the learning, the teacher must learn to remove the emphasis from the curriculum and content, and redirect their efforts to the spiritual opportunity at hand. This would include getting behind on pacing, and perhaps, ultimately, not working through every curriculum unit. By placing an emphasis on pacing or the curriculum, the teacher and the school places a clear priority and emphasis on worldly knowledge over spiritual growth.

Parents and church. It is difficult for a Christian school to emphasize certain values and morals when they are not being reinforced at home. The role of Christian education is to come alongside the parents first, and then the church, and partner in the growth and development of each individual student. Unfortunately, more and more students are not being discipled by either their parents or the church. As such, Christian education has become, for many students, the sole source of spiritual growth to fill that vacuum. Many Christian educators have become role

models for many students, and the source of answers for many hard questions. This is an unsustainable model based on the teacher/student ratio, with many students likely to fall through the cracks, and as a consequence, fall away from their faith.

Christian parents play a foundational role in the development of a biblical worldview (Erdvig, 2016). In order to promote and grow a biblical worldview within their own children, Christian parents need to "ensure that they themselves are intentionally and consistently pursuing maturity in their own Biblical worldview" (Erdvig, 2016, p. 184). A number of participants in this study reflected on the fact that the development and strength of their own biblical worldview was, in part, because what was being taught at school reflected what they were also being taught at home.

Additionally, the church needs to become more intentional when dealing with controversial issues and the development of a biblical worldview. Youth group and young adult ministry leaders fulfill a unique and biblically mandated role for discipleship within the Body of Christ. As such, these leaders need to develop ways to "evaluate their priorities to be sure that they are ministering to emerging adults in ways that assist them to respond positively to the worldview development prompts they are experiencing" (Erdvig, 2016, p. 187). Without the support of parents and the local church it is very difficult for Christian schools to effectively shape a biblical worldview within their students.

Empirical

From an empirical perspective, this research helps contribute to the small but growing body of research currently available on the development and effectiveness of a biblical worldview as a result of primary and secondary school Christian education. Most research on the development of a biblical worldview has focused on the tertiary level of education, and the

effectiveness of Christian colleges in developing a biblical worldview in their students. This research helps reveal both the successes and limitations of biblical worldview development within CLSS. Of broader help are the effective practices and limitations found within CLSS. Some of the most effective practices include, hiring teachers that can teach with a biblical worldview and live it through their lifestyle, the relationship building qualities of the faculty, a biblically integrated curriculum, and, the opportunity to ask and answer difficult biblical and moral worldview questions relevant to the lives of the students.

Two limitations were clearly identified through this study. The first was the unintended consequences of the many rules, especially those considered trivial or petty by the students. These rules, for some participants, produced an attitude of legalism through which they began equating Christianity. For other students, it created an attitude of indifference towards rules, even those considered major violations of the disciplinary policy at CLSS. The second and most important limitation was the lack of a repetitive emphasis on a clear and intentional purpose behind a biblical worldview. That is, a biblical worldview should be the driving force behind all of life's goals and decisions, not just moral choices.

Practical

Most Christian schools boldly promote and declare as a part of their philosophical beliefs the teaching and impartation of a biblical worldview. However, little research has been done to determine the effectiveness of this claim (Boerema, 2011). As a school system, CLSS espouses teaching through a biblical worldview, and as such, their alumni should have graduated with a biblical worldview. From the perspective of Sire's (2015) three-dimensional concept of worldview, this is a mostly true claim.

Currently, CLSS is effective at equipping its students intellectually with biblical truth, knowledge, and sound doctrine. Similarly, when gauged through the confessed beliefs of its alumni, CLSS does an equally effective job of helping students affirm their beliefs in their hearts. However, when examining their alumni's actions, many former students placed a far greater emphasis of a biblical worldview as the moral outworking of their faith, rather than the practical outworking. CLSS needs to place a greater emphasis on the practical application of a biblical worldview. This application needs to be repetitive, clear, intentional, and emphasize that a biblical worldview should be the driving force behind all life's goals and decisions, not just moral choices. As Matthew 6:33 states, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." Unfortunately, many participants of this study are seeking *these things*, and then hoping that their seeking will help them to build the kingdom of God and grow in His righteousness.

Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations

Delimitations help define and narrow the scope of a study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For this study the sample used was a purposeful, criterion sample (Yin, 2016). The sample criteria included graduates who had graduated from CLSS more than a year ago but not longer than five years. The sample participants also needed to have attended CLSS continuously between the Grades K–12. There were a number of important reasons for defining and limiting the scope of the sample criteria. Limiting the sample to graduates who attended CLSS for all Grades K–12 was to minimize the influence of competing worldviews through other avenues of formal education. Another limiting factor was requiring potential participants to have graduated at least one year ago. This was to allow for each participant's worldview to be practically tested,

including temptation, the possibility of succumbing to temptation, and then if applicable, any actions, such as repentance, to be taken. The final reason was to allow for the transition between Fowler's (1981) Stage 3: Synthetic-Conventional Faith and Stage 4: Individuative-Reflective Faith, to occur. The transition from Stage 3 to Stage 4 cannot occur until students can begin to reflect upon their personal experiences beyond the family, including school. This provides the basis for identity, future prospects, competing value and other influences to be synthesized into a coherent personal identity and faith.

Limitations

For various reasons, all qualitative research is subject to limitations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The first and obvious is the delimitation criteria. Another limitation included the diversity of the participants. This diversity could include the gender, age, race, and the spiritual journey of each participant. Diversity is limited by the willingness of those who fall within the criterion sample to participate in the study. Consequently, this study was limited in ethnic diversity with only one racial minority participating. The percentage of the school system's minority population is greater than the percentage of minority participants in this study. Another limitation was the willingness of those who are not Christians to participate in this study. Although all but one of the participants in this study confessed to being Christians, statistics and research suggest that the percentage of a sample size of graduates from a Christian school confessing not to be Christian is usually much higher (ACFI, 2017; Barna Group, 2000, 2009, 2017; Ham & Beemer, 2009). Another limitation is the dependence of the researcher on all the participants answering each question honestly. Researcher bias is always a potential problem in qualitative studies. In this study, the researcher knew approximately half of the participants to varying degrees. Consequently, the researcher had to consciously guard against assumptions,

leading questions, drawing conclusions, and data choices, specifically what to leave in and what to leave out. Finally, this study was limited to one school system. The findings from this study may not be readily transferable to other Christian schools or school systems because one of the uncontrollable variables that influenced participant experiences within this study was teacher familiarity. Within the smaller high school (Charlie), many students had many of the teachers more than once during their middle and high school years. As such, they were able to form stronger and deep relationships with these teachers, even just in the classroom environment. Larger schools may not see the same results. One final limitation is the acknowledgement that only God truly knows a person's heart.

Recommendations for Future Research

The examination of the development of a biblical worldview within high school students is incredibly important and under-examined. Given the likelihood or probability of students at a Christian school falling away from their faith once they graduate, this fact necessitates and requires greater investigation. If Christian parents, churches, and schools want to alleviate the flow of Christian educated young adults from leaving their faith, greater inquiry needs to be made in this field. The purpose of this multiple case study was to understand how Christian education has influenced former students' worldviews from the CLSS. The reason for examining CLSS was because of its size. Today, CLSS serves over 3,000 students across four campuses and two states, making it one of the largest ASCI-accredited Christian school systems in the United States. Many smaller Christian school systems and schools could benefit from the research results of this study. Future recommendations would be to examine both smaller Christian schools and Christian school systems to look for common problems, which may in turn generate common solutions. Further research could also reveal unique problems organic to

specific Christian schools or school systems. In future studies, a greater emphasis should be placed or even uniquely focused on the experiences and challenges of minority students. Given the prevailing influence of Caucasians represented in Christian education in the United States, there are unknown blind spots and experiences unique to minority students and their families.

It is recommended that any future research be conducted using Sire's (2015) three-dimensional concept of worldview, which encompasses the dimensions of proposition, heart-orientation, and behavior. This is recommended for two reasons. First, the three-dimensional concept of worldview is recommended for continuity purposes. To better compare similar results from different Christian schools and school systems, a common research tool should be used. Second, the three-dimensional concept of worldview was chosen specifically because it addresses three distinct facets of the human experience: the mind, the heart, and one's actions. Without examining these three facets together, to the best of our ability, it does not give us a complete picture of the whole student.

Summary

The purpose of this multiple case study was to understand how Christian education has influenced former students' worldviews from the CLSS. This study was conducted using an online blog forum, a written personal faith journey, and a semi-structured one-on-one interview. Each of the participants was a graduate of CLSS who continuously attended the school system between the Grades K–12. Through the use of Sire's (2015) three-dimensional concept of worldview, which encompasses the dimensions of proposition, heart-orientation, and behavior, this study measured how influential CLSS was towards contributing to a biblical worldview in its graduating students. The combined factors of a biblically integrated curriculum, strong peer relationships, and the teachers were all significant factors in developing the worldview of

students at CLSS. In both the cognitive understanding of the mind and beliefs held in the heart, CLSS did an excellent job of imparting biblical truth and knowledge. However, when examining a biblical worldview from the perspective of one's actions, most of the participants exhibited strong moral beliefs and convictions but very little indication of proactively building God's kingdom through their vocational choices.

There were two areas of concern that CLSS could address to help remedy this problem. The first is re-orientating the curriculum with an emphasis on biblical integration as the impetus behind the content within the school system. Biblical integration needs to be the driving force behind content, not content driving biblical integration. If a Christian school desires to produce graduates who are strong in their faith, this needs to be reflected in the priorities reflected within school itself and the curriculum. Strong biblical integration, with the accommodation of teachable moments, needs to be emphasized above content and test results. The second area of concern is the need to repetitively, clearly, and intentionally emphasize the purpose of a biblical worldview. A biblical worldview should be the driving force behind any believer's life goals and decisions, not just moral choices. A believer's goals should aligned with God's ultimate goal of reconciling the world to Himself (Colossians 1:19–22). Christian education is not merely the practice of Christians educating, but infusing biblical truth throughout all areas of a school's culture, teaching that a biblical worldview should impact all areas of one's life, not just moral decisions. The importance of Christian education was succinctly summed up by Jenny:

> Christian education is less about the standards and more about building people who are becoming more like Christ every day. Which I guess that's why the mission statement is to develop students who are like Jesus. Ultimately, you're sending your kids to a Christian school because you want them to have that Christian worldview and that

Christian perspective. . . . What is important is, can you justify what you believe and why

you believe? Can you explain to other people what you believe? Can you look within

yourself and say, I am a Christian because that is something that I truly want for myself

because I believe that it's the truth. And then can you use that truth to guide you in the

future?

A biblical worldview is not one of many goals concerning Christian education—it is *the* goal.

For a believer, athletics, academics, tests, grades, and one's vocation, among other things, are a

means to an end, not *the* end. A biblical worldview, like sanctification, is a life-long process that

helps a believer become more and more transformed into the image of Jesus. This is the end

goal of all believers.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Participant Recruitment Email

Date

Dear ████████████ School System Graduate:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to assess how well the ████████████ School System imparts a biblical worldview into their graduates, and I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

The participant criteria is two-fold: You need to have attended the ████████████ School System for your entire primary and secondary school career (K-12) and graduated from ██SS at least a year ago but not more than five years ago. It should take approximately 3 hours for you to complete the research procedures, which include a consent form and demographic survey, an online blog forum, an individually written personal faith journey (testimony), and an individual one-on-one interview. Your name will be requested as part of your participation, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, click here ████████████████████████████

Consent information is provided as the first page you will see after you click on the survey link. The consent document contains additional information about my research, please click on the survey link at the end of the consent information to indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the survey.

Sincerely,

William Lorigan
Doctoral Candidate
Liberty University

Appendix B: Liberty University's IRB Approval Letter

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

October 8, 2019

William Lorigan
IRB Exemption 3940.100819: A Multiple Case Study Examining How Christian Education Has
Influenced High School Graduate's Worldview

Dear William Lorigan,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance
with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration
(FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you
may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved
application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101(b)(2), which identifies specific situations in
which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:101(b):

> (2) Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude,
> achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual
> or auditory recording) if…the following criteria is met:
>
> > (iii) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of
> > the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects,
> > and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any
changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued
exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a
new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether
possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at
irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

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

LIBERTY
UNIVERSITY.
Liberty University | Training Champions for Christ since 1971

Appendix C: Informed Consent

CONSENT FORM
A Multiple Case Study Examining How Christian Education Has Influenced High School
Graduate's Worldview
William Lorigan
Liberty University
School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study to understand how Christian education has influenced former students' worldviews from the ████████████ School System. You were selected as a possible participant because you attended the ████████████ School System for your entire primary and secondary school career (K-12), and graduated from ████ at least a year ago but not more than five years ago. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

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

Background Information: The purpose of this study is assess how well ████████████ School System imparts a biblical worldview into their graduates.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:
1. Complete this online consent form, including demographic information; 10 minutes.
2. An online blog forum. The forum questions are designed to measure basic biblical principles, not complex theological theories, and should take no more than 30 minutes.
3. Personal faith journey (testimony). This document is not designed to assess whether an individual is a Christian, rather it is designed to analyze your own spiritual walk. This should not take more than 60 minutes to complete.
4. A one-on-one interview. This is an informal interview conducted in a neutral setting. The interview will be approximately 45 minutes in length and audio recorded to ensure accuracy when transcribed for information. Participants will be asked to review their interview answers to ensure accuracy and clarity.

Risks: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

Benefits: Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include transferable results concerning biblical worldview and Christian education that can help other Christian schools improve their impartation of a biblical worldview to their students. This would allow many Christian schools to better achieve their vision or mission statements.

Compensation: Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. To ensure honesty and accuracy all participants, their schools, and other personnel will be referred to using pseudonyms throughout the duration of the study. I will conduct the interviews in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation. Data will be stored on a password locked computer that requires biometric recognition to access. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer that requires biometric recognition to access for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

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/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is William Lorigan. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him at ███████████████. You may also contact the researcher's faculty chair, Dr. James Fyock, at ███████████.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information 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.

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

_____

Signature of Participant   Date

_____

Signature of Investigator   Date

Appendix D: Online Blog Forum Questions

1. How would you respond to the notion that all people are basically good?

2. There are many things that contribute to feeling successful in life. From the options below, explain which is the single, most important factor you consider that determines success in life?

- Making the people you care about happy

- Reaching your goals

- Being a good spouse/parent

- Commitment and obedience to God

- Experiencing personal happiness or freedom

- Living a healthy, productive and safe life

- Having positive and fulfilling relationships

- Being a good citizen

- Other

3. Describe your personal beliefs on the following topics and how you personally practice them in your life.

- read from the Bible, not including when you are at a church

- consciously worship God other than at church services or events

- confess your sins and seek God's forgiveness

- devote time to better understanding the story and principles of your faith

- share your religious beliefs with someone who believes differently than you, to persuade them to adopt your beliefs

4. If someone came to you for advice on a moral decision they face, for each of the situations below, describe the advice you would give them.

- telling a lie in order to protect their own personal best interests or reputation

- using potentially-addictive drugs that have not been prescribed by a medical doctor, for recreational purposes

- looking at pictures or videos that display nudity or explicit sexual behavior

- using a small tax deduction you are not eligible for, but will not be discovered by the IRS, to lower your tax bill

- having an abortion

- filing for divorce because your spouse consistently makes you unhappy

- not repaying money you borrowed from a relative because the relative doesn't need the money

- marrying someone of the same sex

5. Which of the following statement(s) do you most identify with and why?

- there are moral absolutes that are unchanging

- moral truth always depends upon the circumstances and perspectives

- not sure

6. What of the following statement(s) do you believe is the primary, most reliable source of absolute moral truth and why?

- How you feel about it, personally

- Teachings in the Bible

- Consensus of society

- Government laws

- Traditional values

- Whatever works most effectively in a situation

- Teachings in religious literature, other than the Bible

- Religious instruction from your church or religious media

- Not sure

7. Pick one of the following statement(s) and describe why it most aligns with your personal beliefs.

- the Bible is the actual, true word of God and should be taken literally, word for word

- the Bible is the inspired word of God and has no errors, although some verses are meant to be symbolic rather than literal

- the Bible is the inspired word of God but has some factual or historical errors

- the Bible was not inspired by God but tells how its authors understood the ways and principles of God

- the Bible is a book of fables and myths that have little basis in reality

- the Bible is just one of the many holy books that provide religious teaching from various faiths; it is neither more nor less valid than any other sacred literature

8. How do you describe the origins and development of human life?

9. Briefly describe whether you personally agree or disagree with each of these statements and why.

- the Bible is totally accurate in all that it teaches

- you have a personal responsibility to share your religious beliefs with people who believe

- your religious faith is very important to you and how you live

- a person who is generally good, or does enough good things for others, will earn a place in Heaven

- the main purpose of life is to know, love, and serve God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength

- when He lived on earth, Jesus Christ was fully human and therefore committed sins, like other people

- Satan does not exist; he is just a symbol of evil

- the Holy Spirit is not a living entity but is a symbol of God's presence or purity

10. Which of the following statement(s) most closely aligns with your personal beliefs and why?

- Everyone is god

- God is the all-powerful, all-knowing, perfect creator of the universe who rules the world today

- God refers to the total realization of personal, human potential

- There are many gods, each with different power and authority

- God represents a state of higher consciousness that a person may reach

- There is no such thing as God

- Not sure

11. Which of these statement(s) comes closest to describing your belief about God's involvement in people's lives these days and why?

- God is aware of everything happening in your life and is actively involved in your life every day

- God is aware of everything happening in your life but intervenes only in special circumstances that have dramatic, far-ranging implications

- God created the world and humanity but is not involved in people's lives these days

- There is no God, so God is not involved in your life

12. Which of these statement(s) comes closest to describing your beliefs about the idea of sin and why?

- Everyone is a sinner, which is rebellion against God and His laws; the only solution is to be saved from eternal punishment through personal repentance and God's forgiveness

- Sin is an outdated idea that is no longer relevant in the contemporary world

- Sin happens, there are natural consequences, and life goes on; it is not a big deal

- Sin is basically making mistakes, and we should learn from our mistakes

- Sins are unfortunate choices that create bad karma or negative vibes; we should try to be good and do good so that we can experience good karma/positive vibes

Appendix E: Personal Faith Journey Questions

Questions that were included in the Personal Faith Journey prompt:

1.   Describe your family's spiritual background – including none at all.

2.   When and why did you choose to, or choose not, to become a Christian?

3.   How do you believe your worldview was influenced by attending CLSS?

4.   What were the strongest factors at CLSS that helped you develop or strengthen your worldview perspective?

5.   How did your worldview influence your choices after CLSS?

Appendix F: Interview Questions

1.   What did you enjoy most about your experience "at this school"? Why?

2.   What did you enjoy least about your experience "at this school"? Why?

3.   What were the students like? Did they influence your personal faith journey?

4.   What were the teachers/coaches etc. like? Did they influence your personal faith journey?

5.   How did the curriculum as a whole or individual subjects specifically help you grow in your faith?

6.   How were you challenged in your faith during your years in the CLSS? If so, how did you resolve this?

7.   What recommendations or changes would you make about "this school"?

8.   How would you describe your spiritual walk?

9.   What is the purpose of education?

10. What were your grades likes at school and what was your motivation?

11. What do you want to do with your life?

12. What is the purpose of Christian education?

Appendix G: Sample Interview Transcript

"Lucy" Interview Transcript

Q1
Let's see. I think that I enjoyed was just the atmosphere, the students to the teachers. The way that everyone just respected each other, that everyone had the same mindset. Like, you know, you could tell there was a difference. We treated each other differently. You saw that from the teachers as well. The way they handled their classes and they taught the material.

Q2
That's hard to say. I had a good experience, but um, I think the thing that was probably least favorite now that I'm, like, going through college is that I relied on other people for my faith and not myself. So getting into it for myself outside of everybody else is probably the least thing.

Q3
There's always a little bit of both. I feel like there was a lot who definitely had the right intentions, the right mindset, everything else, but there was a few, you know, questionable are you really a Christian? Are you a believer? Are you putting on a show or are you believing this or are you doing this because your parents put you here? I don't know there's kind of both, but more of the good than the bad. I never personally experienced anything too bad, but I heard things that people were doing. Like doing drugs, or drinking, or whatever it might be, and you're just like, what? That doesn't line up. But I never saw it happen or anything so it's hard to actually say.

Q4
Absolutely. The teachers, the way that they conducted each class was like, I don't know, just the mindset that they had. It wasn't just that you were doing the work, but that you were doing the work for a purpose, as you're getting to an end goal which is to be more like Christ. So you overall glorify him with what you do in life. There was more of an overall mission rather than let's get to work and just finish this.

Q5
I think senior Bible class for sure. That was one that challenged my personal beliefs; what I believed and not what my parents or my teachers or whoever believed. It was something I had to research, I had to figure out. It was definitely difficult and maybe in the moment I didn't enjoy it, but not that I'm looking back that was really good and really useful. Something that I should have taken a hold of.

Q6
There were definitely times where it just didn't seem like, is this real? Am just believing this stuff? That was my sophomore year but it had a lot more to do with anxiety and other stuff. The way that it helped me was that ███████████ pushed me to do more, with opportunities, like to go on a mission trip. It just really opened my eyes to see things in a different light. Seeing how God worked in different ways that just seeing it in the classroom or just every day. So just

through opportunities and there's a lot of different outlets. Whether you do sports, or whether you do theatre, whatever you do, there's outlets for you to realize other things.

Q7

Oh goodness, um . . . I don't know. Um. (pause). There's so many things, not that I would change but, um, I don't know. Is that ok?

Q8

Now I would say really strong. I'm really interested in my faith personally and making it my own. Researching and just trying to find out what the Lord has for me and my life.

Q9

To gain knowledge . . . education is to become knowledgeable so that you can be, you know, useful in the workforce, and life, and, you know, just know things I guess.

Q10

My grades were really good and I think that was because of the expectations that everybody had at ███████████. We all wanted to try our best, and because of everyone around me wanting to try their best, I definitely pushed myself. I've noticed that as I've gone through college my grades have decreased because of a lack of environment, of standards that they had. At ███████████ the standards were so high and people had a goal for that, something that made you motivated and you wanted to keep them high.

Q11

Whether I decide to do psychology or decide to stick with communications I want to just impact people's lives and use my story to, um, to help people who are struggling with the same thing.

Q12

The purpose of Christian education is to really install that biblical worldview within your life, whether that be in education, in your personal life, just all aspects of life, just integrating scripture and that mindset of beliefs.