LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

RE-IMAGINING CHRISTIAN EDUCATION FOR MILLENNIALS IN AN AFRICAN

AMERICAN PENTECOSTAL ASSEMBLIES CONTEXT

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

by

Kevin Louis Campbell

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

2021

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April 16, 2021

APPROVED BY:

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Mary E. Lowe, Ph.D., Dissertation Supervisor

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Stephen D. Lowe Ph.D., Second Reader

ABSTRACT

It seems many Christian Pentecostal churches are struggling to disciple and retain a millennial population. According to a recent Gallup Poll, 57% of religious millennials have church membership, and this represents the lowest percentage among current generations as overall church membership and participation trends downward from 76% in 1948 to 52% in 2018 (Jones, 2019). The factors contributing to the poll must be explored both from outside and inside of the church. One may wonder if the church is providing the proper education and training to attract and retain millennials. The purpose of this qualitative exploratory case study research design will be to explore current pedagogical methodologies and ICT use in Christian education among pastors and teachers in the Gates of Heaven Assembly of Churches (GOHAOC) and to assess the current level of satisfaction with and participation in Christian education ministry activities of the GOHAOC among the millennial members of the church community. At this stage in the research, ICT is defined as a "diverse set of technological tools and resources used to communicate and to create, disseminate, store, and manage information. These technologies include computers, the Internet, broadcasting technologies (radio and television), and telephony" (Amin, 2018, p.2).

Pastors, Christian educators, and millennials will be interviewed and surveyed to explore contributing factors to the target group's discipleship practices. The qualitative methodology was chosen to analyze the practices surrounding the research problem. Research findings and recommendations from this research will contribute to the body of literature on discipling millennials.

Keywords: Technology, Christian education, Modern Learning, Millennials, Discipleship

Dedication

This project is dedicated to the Only Wise God our Savior Jesus Christ; without You, I am nothing. At the beginning of this work, You directed me to Philippians 1:6, and You have certainly kept that promise to the very end. To God be ALL the glory! I am forever indebted to my wife Consuelo for your love and support, especially over the last three and a half years. To my son Tajee, you have inspired me to improve myself to be a better role model for you. To my Mom, I have always said I want to make you proud of me, and you always respond how I already have made you proud. I am your only son, and I am grateful God allowed you to see this come to pass. Finally, to those who are not here to see the finished work but have shaped me into who I am today: Lillie Campbell (Grandmother), L. C. Howard (Father), Elder Otis T. Massey Jr. (Pastor, Mentor, and Spiritual Father), Reverend James L. Ballard Sr. (Pastor), Doris Fowler (Aunt), and Joanne Armstrong (Mentor).

Acknowledgments

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Abbreviations

Direct Message (DM)

Evangelical Training Association (ETA)

Gates of Heaven Assembly of Churches (GOHAOC)

Information Communication Technology (ICT)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Modern Learning Environment (MLE)

Research Question (RQ)

Urban Ministries Incorporated (UMI)

CHAPTER ONE: RESEARCH CONCERN
Re-imagining Christian Education for Millennials in an African American Pentecostal Assemblies Context

Introduction

The church has a responsibility to fulfill the impetus to make disciples. Disciples comprise peoples from every nation, creed, ethnicity, gender, and age. Such diversity means that the discipler must be well-versed in the proper way to communicate the gospel message to those being discipled; otherwise, the rate of successful conversions and spiritual formation diminishes. The discipling of young adults is critical to the future of the church. Christianity is seeing a steady migration of young adults away from the traditional means of church attendance, education, and participation. Are traditional instructional methodologies unable to effectively disciple millennials? Research is needed to understand the inability of the church to retain young adults.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) benefits must be underscored, primarily related to educating millennials. These benefits can extend into the arena of Christian education in the local ministry context, but churches often fail to take advantage of the opportunity. As a result, there is a perception that churches are out of touch with millennials as they are only engaged in the traditional model of Christian education. This study seeks to determine what is hindering the church's reach to its young adults immersed in a world of ICT.

Background to the Problem

The Great Commission serves as an impetus for churches to foster a culture of evangelism and discipleship (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, Matthew 28:18-20). Yet, research indicates that most churches are not doing a great job in these areas. The Pew Research Forum study revealed a significant decline in religious composition among millennials in the U.S.;

Protestant Christians declined from 43% in 2007 to 33% in 2019 (Pew Research Center, 2019). The Connected Generation Study revealed nearly half of Christians say church attendance is not an essential part of their faith (Barna Group, 2019). According to Brackens (2013), African American Christians are "significantly less likely to be able to (a) name all four Gospels, (b) name Jesus' birthplace, (c) identify the Protestant message of salvation through faith, and (d) identify which choice wasn't one of the Ten Commandments than were their White counterparts" (p. 634). The report also describes how African Americans, though deeply religious, lack the knowledge pertinent to their faith. According to the Barna Group (2017), only 17% of adults attend Sunday school. These findings are staggering and similarly reflect Christian education at the Open Door Mission True Light Church (ODMTLC) in Philadelphia, PA. ODMTLC is one of many churches that collectively form the Gates of Heaven Assembly of Churches (GOHAOC).

Theological Literature

There is a biblical precedent for Christian education. One of the most often-quoted passages is the Great Commission which comes from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, Matthew 28:19-20). Christ's command is for the disciples to teach all nations what Jesus taught them. The commission to Jesus' disciples is timeless. Christian leaders are called upon to continue Christian education until Christ's return.

Parrett, Kang & Packer (2013) contribute to the theological literature germane to Christian education; they offer a biblical vision for education in the church. Their work outlines the Purpose, Proclamation, People, and Practices of teaching and church formation. The authors cite several biblical passages that appeal to Christian education. First, one understands that the Torah places particular emphasis on how teachers guide people in the Way of the Lord (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, Isaiah 30:20-21). Human teachers are needed to help others find the

Way (Parrett, Kang & Packer, 2013). Secondly, citing the early church practice located in Acts 2:42 of *King James Bible* (1769/2017), the authors generate a list of essentials for teaching and formation (Parrett, Kang & Packer, 2013). Finally, they appeal to Hebrews 5:11-6:3 in the *King James Bible* (1769/2017), where the writer "rebukes his readers for their lack of maturity" (Parrett, Kang & Packer, 2013, p. 82).

Canaday and Galindo (2010) contribute to the body of literature concerning Christian education. Their work begins with sharp criticism of the effectiveness of Christian education. According to Canaday and Galindo (2010), "the unspoken truth of Christian education today is that the educational practices of the past have not served us well in shaping persons in 'Christlikeness' because they run counter to the way people need to be educated in faith" (p. 6). In their study, Canaday and Galindo (2010) found that Christian education is "the most important practice within congregational life for helping people grow in their faith" (p. 7). Christian education operates in the context of the Christian community of believers. The efficacy of a communal contribution by all members is to aid and assist in individual and community formation. The Scriptures say believers should "grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ" (*English Standard Version Bible,* 2001, Ephesians 4:15). The learning outcome is more about developing relationships than gaining knowledge; these relationships are dialogical (Canaday & Galindo, 2010). Canaday and Galindo (2010) clarify, "dialogical methods – friendships, mentoring, apprenticeships, discipleship – are those that promote deep sharing, mutual accountability, vulnerable transparency and self-revelation" (p. 9).

Theoretical Literature

Theoretical literature is the body of literature that creates a background for the research. Key elements to this research effort focused on the educational effectiveness, tools, and techniques provided to millennials in an African American Pentecostal Assembly of churches.

One of the critical works that contribute to the theoretical literature on Christian education in the African American Church comes from Johns (1994), who draws from the educational paradigms of world-renowned educator Paulo Freire. Johns challenges Freire's application of church relevancy outside of history and maintains the importance of Christian education, especially in Pentecostalism in the African American community. Johns (1994) sees theological education as the "intellectual work of a theological community is seen as part of a larger vision of mature discipleship" (p. 14). Johns (1994) argues for three distinct dimensions that form theological education: enculturation, education, and instruction. Enculturation deals with the role of the local church community in the spiritual formation of an individual. Education differs from instruction in that the former involves "analyzing, forming judgments, discovering, and criticizing" while the latter is the "formation of the individual through helping him or her acquire knowledge and skills" (Johns, 1994, p. 15). The research investigates whether the church provides the necessary tools and techniques to help millennials grow most familiarly. Too much instruction and too little education will widen the gap in converting and retaining young people in today's church.

Puffer (2018) continues the conversation where Johns (1994) leaves off. When the church fails to provide opportunities for education vs. instruction for its young adults, it contributes to their unwillingness to remain a part of the local church; it contributes to their doubts about the very faith that nurtured them. Puffer (2018) says, "unwise responses by local church leaders to the doubting habits of these young parishioners is a significant reason for their departure" (p. 1). The widespread amount of doubt among millennials is frightening and should cause the church to take notice. Citing a study by Smith and Snell, Puffer (2018) reveals that the level of doubt among mainline Protestant millennials is 52%.

Church leaders and educators must understand the impact of technology and its relationship with millennials today. The church must recognize the cultural and technological

changes shaping the young people they are trying so desperately to retain. According to Bright (2018), "students of the millennial generation have grown up in a diverse, rapidly-changing, digital culture" (p. 4). Since millennials have grown up in digital culture, technology impacts how they learn (Prensky, 2010; Small & Vorgan, 2009).

The use of ICT for Christian education has both benefits and limitations. Proponents find great value in the extended reach of the gospel to peoples beyond one's city, state, or country. Opponents acknowledge the weight of cultural immersion and mass media and their added burden to change behavior. Diaz (2021) summarizes:

> the integration of digital technology in Christian religious education is to contribute to evangelization and forming God's people for mission, particularly as Christians are to integrate the gospel message of liberation into the new culture created by modern communications. However, the use of mass media is complicated by the reality that culture also derives from the content expressed by mass media and by the very fact that new ways of communicating, languages, and techniques exist. Therefore, there is a need to be attentive to the new patterns of behavior that social communication and mass media promote (p. 12).

Further support for the use of digital technology, especially for millennials, comes from Linhart (2016), who argues that the skillful teaching of God's truths using digital technology provides meaning and methods craved by the next generation. Therefore, teachers who are well-qualified using ICT can provide optimal learning experiences for the millennial generation. Students will have the "knowledge, convictions, and character needed to live as dual citizens in the kingdom of earth and the kingdom of God" (Linhart, 2016, p. 235).

Statement of the Problem

Churches face the challenge of retaining their young adult population. One may point the finger at outside influences. In contrast, others reluctantly point the finger inside the church at those who fail to engage a younger generation with elements like technology and relevancy. There is concern that there is a loss of appeal and its possible connection to the decline in the

number of millennial church engagement. Another less direct connection impacts the ability to communicate the relevancy of scripture to millennials' issues. Christian leaders' influence directly affects the spiritual formation of all the members of the local church, especially impressionable millennials. There is a confluence between issues that millennials face and the medium by which they engage the culture around them. It seems that technology use and how millennials engage the world around them are inextricably connected.

To effectively integrate ICT into the church's educational life, leaders must provide the necessary equipment and technological infrastructure, which all come with a cost. Additionally, church leadership should be aware of the role ICT plays in their younger members' lives and seek ways to support this, whether financially or socially. Omotayo (2017) highlighted some of these challenges in a recent study on ICT use in a Pentecostal church and found:

> The majority of the pastors and administrators agreed that ICT adoption has its challenges. Some of the challenges mentioned were the cost of acquiring and maintaining the ICTs, cost of Internet bandwidth, which is very high in Nigeria, the occasional unavailability of Internet access, digital divides between the ICT skilled and unskilled, cost of hiring IT personnel to operate and maintain the ICTs, erosion of personal relationships, among others (p. 231).

Despite the challenges of obtaining and maintaining an ICT infrastructure, modern church leaders must engage in discipleship with terms and practices easily recognizable to today's millennials. When Jesus discipled fishermen, He was relevant and spoke about fish (King James Bible, 1769/2017, Matthew 4:19). When Jesus discipled farmers, He was relevant and talked about farming (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, Luke 12:16-21). The unwillingness to use modern tools in Christian education among millennials may ultimately prove detrimental to the church's future. A study by Wyche, Haynes, Havel & Grinter (2006) suggests, "the use of technology for spiritual formation simultaneously incorporates unique and familiar patterns of interaction" (p. 207).

While much of the attention of understanding the technological effects on learning for millennials centers on higher education, little attention is given to Christian education in the local ministry context, particularly in African American Pentecostal churches. More focused research is needed to understand the contributing factors to the millennial generation of African American Pentecostal churches' declining attendance.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory case study research design will be to explore current pedagogical methodologies and ICT use in Christian education among pastors and teachers in the Gates of Heaven Assembly of Churches (GOHAOC) and to assess the current level of satisfaction with and participation in Christian education ministry activities of the GOHAOC among the millennial members of the church community. At this stage in the research, ICT is defined as a "diverse set of technological tools and resources used to communicate and to create, disseminate, store, and manage information. These technologies include computers, the Internet, broadcasting technologies (radio and television), and telephony" (Amin, 2018, p.2).

Research Questions

RQ1. What are the most common instructional methodologies used for Christian education for the target group in the local church among the GOHAOC?

RQ2. How do the pastors and Christian educators of the GOHAOC describe their current level of effectiveness in Christian education in the local church?

RQ3. How do the millennials of the GOHAOC describe their current level of satisfaction in Christian education in the local church?

RQ4. To what extent is Christian education among the GOHAOC impacting millennials' participation within their local church?

Assumptions and Delimitations

Research Assumptions

The current study was based on several assumptions. First, it is assumed that most if not all the participants (identified in this study as millennials) have or have access to ICT due to the ubiquity of computers, smartphones, and other mobile devices. This study's second assumption is a willingness by pastors, Christian educators, and millennials in the GOHAOC to participate in this study.

Delimitations of the Research Design

The research is delimited to the Gates of Heaven Assembly of Churches located in the northeastern section of the United States of America. It does not include any other Pentecostal denomination. The study does not include the churches in the Assembly located outside of the United States.

The current research is also delimited to the pastors, Christian educators, and millennials actively involved in Christian education in this denomination. It does not include church leaders who are not directly involved with discipling millennials or young adults not engaged in discipleship opportunities in the local church.

The study is delimited to members of the GOHAOC and is 24-39 years old at the time of the survey. Although some supplemental material statistics include teenagers 13-17, the researcher was careful to only reference material associated with those born 1981 through 1996. This research is delimited by examining the pedagogical methodologies currently being applied to the group above.

Definition of Terms

1. *African American:* African Americans are an ethnic group of Americans with total or partial ancestry from Africa's black racial groups. The term African American generally denotes descendants of enslaved black people who are from the United States.

2. *Assembly of Churches:* A group of autonomous self-governing churches that together form the Gates of Heaven Assembly of Churches

3. *Church Leaders:* In most cases, these are pastors and Christian educators who have a direct impact on discipleship.

4. *Discipleship:* The process of training individuals in a discipline or set of beliefs.

5. *Information and Communication Technology (ICT):* Any technology used in transferring, processing, and storing digital data.

6. *Millennials*: those who were generally born between 1981-96.

7. *Pentecostalism:* a Protestant Christian movement that emphasizes God's direct personal experience through baptism with the Holy Spirit. The term "Pentecostal" is derived from Pentecost, the Greek name for the Jewish Feast of Weeks.

8. *Spiritual Formation:* "the actualization in the lives of believers in the attitudes and actions exemplified in Christ in his incarnation, life and death/resurrection so that the character of the believer is aligned with or conformed to the character of Christ" (Samra, 2006, p. 3).

Significance of the Study

Digital discipleship is an overarching theme of the study. The church is operating in a digital age and must consider how it impacts effectiveness today. St. John (2013) conducted a study with college-aged Christian millennials to understand how technology could impact spiritual disciplines. Millennials have grown up with technology having a significant impact on their life. After uniquely identifying this generation from others, St. John concluded that technology clearly distinguished this generation from others.

St. John (2013) provided the following findings after researching the effectiveness of digital discipleship among millennials:

- The practice of spiritual disciplines can be effectively propagated through technology.
- Millennials preferred immediacy and convenience in the technology they use.
- Millennials were not as dependent on technology as culture portrayed them.
- Technology amplified accountability (p. 178).

These findings garner support for church leaders to offer more effective methods in reaching a declining population in the church.

One of the most overlooked aspects of Christian education is the learning environment. One must notice the significant difference in the learning environment for secular schools and the local church. Francis (2011) noted, "most church congregations in America are under 200 members, so classrooms often do not have desks, whiteboards, projectors, speakers, or screens" (p. 6). Francis (2011) helps churches understand how important the learning environment is to Christian education. Because of technology, limitations from these inadequacies can be advanced and extended outside the local church walls. In addition to the limits of the typical classrooms concerning technology, one must also define any obstacles. One of the research questions offered by Francis (2011) addresses this concern. The Christian educator's attitude was one of the debilitating factors for technology use in the local church. According to Francis (2011), "some of the laity, referred to as elders in the church, do not possess computer devices themselves and believe it is useless to grasp information from websites, DVDs, or PowerPoint presentations" (p. 77). Therefore, future studies must consider local church leaders' attitudes and their impact on technology use in the church for Christian education.

The millennials who have grown up with technology as a primary means of communicating have also developed many skills to aid and assist in their learning experience; herein lies yet another reason to engage millennials as active participators. Sharpe and Beetham conclude: "Many learners have extensive skills in the use of social software, in networking and in sharing information online. Some even host their websites and create their content, including podcasts" (as cited by Sharpe, Beetham & de Freitas, 2010, p. 88). Christian educators can engage the learner more effectively when suited to learner needs and abilities. Also, Sharpe and Beetham (2010) add "the users who are more technologically adept incorporate their favorite

technologies alongside the more formal technologies being offered" (as cited by Sharpe,

Beetham & de Freitas, 2010, p. 88).

Summary of the Design

This study will collect data in a qualitative form concerning pastors, elders, and Christian

educators' attitudes regarding ICT use. This study will examine the degree to which ICT is

engaged in church-based education. The researcher will analyze data to determine the

relationship between the pedagogical methods used for Christian education in the local church

and discipleship for congregants 24-39 years old at the time of the study.

Chapter Summary

The goal of this chapter was to provide foundational arguments that would guide the

entire study. The Background of the Problem established the context out of which the study was

born. The chapter provided a Purpose Statement that defined the research design type along with

Research Questions. The research design operates under a series of assumptions and

delimitations. The next chapter will offer the historical and current scholarship to support the

research effort.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This study explores the impact of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) use in Christian education for millennials. There are no commonly agreed-on ranges for birth years, and often the years are on a sliding scale, causing overlap. Millennials are generally born in 1981-96 (Dimock, 2019). According to a 2014 study, 64% of older millennials (35-39 years old) seldom or never participate in scripture study or religious education (Pew Research Center, 2014). A more recent poll found 57% of religious millennials have church membership, representing the lowest percentage among current generations as overall church membership and participation trends downward from 76% in 1948 to 52% in 2018 (Jones, 2019). The study's goal is to understand if the instructional methods for discipleship and educational opportunities offered at the local ministry context serve as a contributing factor to the non-participation and involvement seen in the target group. The Literature Review highlights the theological, theoretical, and related literature pertinent to the study.

Theological Framework for the Study

The theological framework is divided into two significant sections. First, the topics include a look into Christian education and its importance. Secondly, the research will examine a biblical foundation for teaching and Christian discipleship.

What is Christian Education?

There are two possible ways to look at this inquiry. First, one can ask, "What is Christian education?" or one can ask, "What makes education Christian?" In either case, an answer is framed to distinguish Christian education from other forms. Two distinctions are germane to Christian education – approach and reflection. A Christian education system is distinctly Christian and reflects Christian beliefs and convictions (Estep, Anthony & Allison, 2008).

Unlike other forms of education, Christian education uses the corpus of Scripture (Holy Bible) as the foundational source of knowledge and understanding about topics including God, anthropology, origin, morality, meaning, and destiny.

A biblical passage that can help answer the previous questions about Christian education comes from the Apostle Paul. In his writings to his son in the gospel Timothy, the Apostle Paul explains, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, 2 Timothy 3:16). The passage presents the idea that the whole of Scripture is profitable for Christian living with education included. Christian education was never intended for one generation. The intention has always existed for passing the teachings of Scripture to succeeding generations. According to Anthony and Benson (2003), "God provided us with guidance and direction about how we could nurture our ongoing relationship with Him. God's desire has always been to see His children mature in their faith and pass that faith on to subsequent generations" (p. 17). Therefore, Christian education is communicating biblical principles for Christian living and understanding current and future generations. The study will explore the importance of Christian education in the next section.

Importance of Christian Education

Christian education is important for many reasons. First, a simple search of the word "teach" in the King James Version of the Bible occurs over one hundred times with thirteen mentions in the Book of Deuteronomy alone (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, Deuteronomy 4:1, 4:9, 4:10, 4:14, 5:31, 6:1, 6:7, 11:19, 17:11, 20:18, 24:8, 31:19, 33:10). Similarly, a search for the word "learn" yielded over thirty matches; the Book of Deuteronomy has the most occurrences at seven (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, Deuteronomy 4:10, 5:1, 14:23, 17:19, 18:9, 31:12, 31:13). Secondly, the writer sees Christian education as the means through which we

understand God in His Eternality and His interaction with our past, present, and future. We also understand through Christian education how we are to interact with believers and non-believers. Citing a study by the Search Institute determined the most important practice within congregational life for helping people grow in their faith is Christian education (Canaday & Galindo, 2010). Parrett, Kang, and Packer (2013) argue:

> God creates and forms by means of his word. By his word he created the heavens and the earth. By his word he sanctifies his people. And by his word he furnishes the church and its members with all that is needed for salvation, maturity, and the good works God requires. If we would see God's people formed for life and ministry, we must faithfully teach God's word in substantive ways (p. 76).

Thirdly, Christian education is important because it is a mandate. The Lord Jesus Christ discipled His followers for three years. The Gospel of Matthew chronicles Jesus' interaction with those whom He selected to be His close followers. Jesus' invitation for each of them at the inception of the Book of Matthew to "Follow Me" concludes with a mandate to take what they were taught and teach it throughout the world. The Bible says,

> Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age (*New International Version*, 1978/2011, Matthew 28:18-20).

The Great Commission is often seen as a responsibility of church leaders to go and plant churches. However, there is an individual responsibility for believers to be instrumental in expanding the kingdom throughout the world. The Great Commission involves each Christian operating through the local church to make disciples, baptize, and teach (Leeman & Dever, 2016). Biblical support for Christian education's importance was explored and will continue in the following section.

Godhead as Teacher

The focus on who is responsible for modeling Christian education is often on human agents. These human agents, such as pastors and Christian educators, are gifted and called by the Spirit of God to carry out this work (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, Ephesians 4:11-14, 1 Corinthians 12:28). The research will bring attention to this later in the study. Still, the writer posits that it all begins with the Godhead when discussing who is responsible for modeling Christian education. The relational nature between the persons of the Trinity creates a dialogical element reflected in human beings and required for learning; education in the church fosters this relationship for fellowship and learning (Estep, Anthony & Allision, 2008). Throughout Scripture, there is a motif of the Godhead as a Teacher. A passage that pinpoints this concept is found in Psalm 25. Psalm 25 is rich with references to God as a Teacher (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, Psalm 25:4, 5, 8, 9, 12, 14). Abernathy (2015) summarizes his investigation of Psalm 25:

> While education certainly has its place in ancient Israel, with elders, parents, Levites, and priests providing instruction to form character, preserve their story, and promote regulations, Israel could also speak of God as teacher in the sense of him making himself known by acting on behalf of his people and showing them the path of salvation (p. 351).

Jesus Christ (the Second in the Godhead) was often referred to as Rabbi or Teacher during the span of His Public Ministry (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, John 1:38, 49, 3:2, 26, 6:25). Jesus Christ was more than "a great moral teacher" and today's Christian educators should model Jesus' ministry, message, and methods. Jesus is the Master Teacher and surpasses every other teacher in history regarding His method and message. According to Anthony and Benson (2003), "He has become the leading force in politics, religion, science, economics and philosophy…" (p. 99). Witherington (2012) comments, "Jesus' teaching, including his ethics, is

a Kingdom ethic, by which I meant that it is based on the premise that God is currently intervening in human history to save his people – indeed to save everyone" (p. 20).

Finally, one of the central roles of the Holy Spirit is that of a Teacher. Jesus and the Scriptures emphasize this role of the Third Person of the Godhead (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, Nehemiah 9:20, Matthew 10:19-20, Mark 13:11, Luke, 12:12, John 14:26, 1 John 2:27). The Holy Spirit – like Jesus – is a Teacher; His teaching involves providing a "reminder" of everything Jesus taught (Woodroof, 2010).

Teaching Throughout the Scriptures

The responsibility for religious education has shifted over the millennia. When taking a survey of the Scriptures, there have been people in various roles who have taken on teaching responsibility or training. Those in Scripture who were responsible for religious education ranged from patriarchal leaders, parents, priests, judges, prophets, synagogue leaders, and teachers in schools after the exile (Anthony & Benson, 2003). Religious education was a major parental role, especially since the writing of the Mosaic Law. The Old Testament provides support for parental training. The Bible says in the Book of Deuteronomy:

> And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shall talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shall write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, Deuteronomy 6:6-9).

In the New Testament, those chosen to be leaders had a responsibility to be a teacher. The role of a teacher in the early church was placed on bishops (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, 1 Timothy 3:2), faithful men (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, 2 Timothy 2:2), elders (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, 1 Timothy 5:17), and aged women (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, Titus 2:3-4).

Paul's Training Model

There is a biblical precedent for training. The Apostle Paul took the task of teaching, training, and mentoring very seriously. He established churches during his several missionary journeys. He also found leaders to oversee these churches. Paul would revisit these churches in person to check on their well-being whenever possible. However, there were times when Paul was unable to visit the pastors and churches he established. It may have been due to being redirected by the Holy Spirit, adversaries, or imprisonment. To circumvent these challenges, Paul would write letters or "epistles" to the churches or their pastor. Paul's letters were written by his "own hand" (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, 1 Corinthians 16:21, Galatians 6:11, Colossians 4:18, 2 Thessalonians 3:17, Philemon 19).

The churches' letters were to establish doctrine where needed (Galatians 3:1-3) or teach them how to live (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, Colossians 3:12-21). There are nine occurrences in the King James Version of the Bible where Paul says, "I write" (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, 1 Corinthians 4:14, 1 Corinthians 14:37, 2 Corinthians 2:9, 2 Corinthians 13:2, 2 Corinthians 13:10, Galatians 1:20. 1 Thessalonians 4:9, 1 Thessalonians 5:1, 2 Thessalonians 3:17).

Paul's training model is seen in his second letter to the church at Corinth. In the closing chapter of this letter, Paul calls for the church to "examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith," followed by several admonishments (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, 2 Corinthians 13:5). He then concludes the entire letter by saying, "therefore I write these things being absent…" (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, 2 Corinthians 13:10). These references substantiate how Paul used his day's technology to encourage, admonish, and build up the churches and pastors he had established when the opportunity to be physically present was unavailable.

Paul's use of training is also evident in his letter to the church in Rome. Forrest and Lamport (2013) note, "the Apostle Paul offered a spiritually formative education to the church

(es) at Rome. Paul's spiritual formation of the Roman Christians offers educators insight into how this process can be approached even from a distance" (p. 110). The book of Romans is rich with the doctrine of salvation, righteousness, faith, the law, and sin. Three critical elements of distance learning comprise this letter. First, Paul had a sincere desire to be physically present to educate them and mature them (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, Romans 1:11-12, 15:23). Secondly, the opportunity to see the church in person is not always available (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, Romans 1:13). Lastly, Paul used the next best thing to reach them: writing a letter as it was one form of technology in that day. There is evidence that Paul most likely dictated this letter to his secretary Tertius who penned the letter (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, Romans 16:22).

Discipleship

The final section of the theological framework focuses on the church's responsibility to provide opportunities for its members to grow, mature, and ultimately be conformed to the image of Christ. It has been previously established in this study that the responsibility to "teach" in the churches falls on those who the Holy Spirit has gifted to do so (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, Ephesians 4:11-12, 1 Corinthians 12:28).

The church is a community of believers responsible for the manifestation of Christ's body in the world – we are the body of Christ. A survey of the Apostle Paul's writings to the church at Corinth demonstrates his expectation for the church to play an important role in spiritual formation for the believers there. Paul expected the maturation process to be carried out in the local church (Samra, 2006). Samra (2006) also notes growth language in 1 Corinthians 3:1-4 *(King James Bible*, 1769/2017).

The responsibility to disciple takes many forms, such as formal educational opportunities, listening to a sermon, and fellowship, which can occur in small groups. Margaret Lawson makes

it clear by saying, "Jesus specifically commanded us to teach other believers the things He had commanded us. Teaching one another is the process by which the church builds itself up through its members" (as cited by Yount, 2008, p. 137). The following section will provide a theoretical framework for the study.

Theoretical Framework

The purpose of this section is to offer a theoretical framework for the current study. The underpinnings of educational theory must be examined. These underpinnings are due to the research's focus on exploring the impact of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) use in Christian education for millennials. The study seeks to understand the target group's educational needs and the proper pedagogical approaches to meet those needs.

The literature review provides a theoretical framework for the research and is divided into three significant sections. First, the research will explore prevailing theories on education and educational psychology. A subtopic includes the examination of views on cognitive development. Secondly, the study will shift to establishing a pedagogical approach to Christian education. Thirdly, empirical data is presented that is relevant to the current research.

Educational Psychology and Theory

Effective Christian education is a result of an understanding of both theological and theoretical frameworks. A biblical perspective of education was provided in the previous section. The study will now explore theoretical perspectives on education resulting from the work of well-known system thinkers.

Teaching is considered an art and a science. Artful for its often need of spontaneity and scientific for the widely used principles to shape behavior. The following section is an examination of educational psychology. Educational psychology studies development, learning, motivation, teaching, and assessment in and out of school (Woolfolk, 2013). Educational

psychology provides the scientific framework for the art of teaching (Yount, 2010). Therefore, educational psychology seeks to understand the learner, learning, motivation, cognitive development, and the teacher.

Educational Psychology and Learners

The teacher and the learner facilitate the learning experience. There is evidence that finds an association between the quality of teacher-child relationships and school performance (Woolfolk 2013). A myriad of components surfaces when the teacher places the learner in the spotlight. Educational psychology posits that a teacher must understand learner needs, language and culture diversity, physical, social, and cognitive development. The researcher will explore cognitive development later in the study. Collectively, these components contribute to what is known as human development. Woolfolk (2013) argues that human development (physical) changes due to growth and maturation; maturation is the change that occurs naturally and spontaneously. Conversely, "other changes are brought about through learning, as individuals interact with their environment. Such changes make up a large part of a person's social development" (Woolfolk, 2013, p. 30). What emerges from the research concerning the learner are the principles necessary to facilitate the ongoing evaluation of the learner's human development.

Educational Psychology and Learning

The research study seeks to understand, in part, the impact of Christian education on the millennial age group. The local church's educational opportunities for this target group are evaluated on their overall effectiveness whenever these opportunities occur. The learning process is central to the study. When there is an educational opportunity at the local church, the study will investigate such opportunities' efficacy. Students are often asked by their parents: "What did you learn today?" This inquiry requires an understanding of the learning process. Learning

implies that information is received, or an experience encountered, which results in a change in one's behavior. Learning occurs when experience causes a relatively permanent change in an individual's knowledge or behavior (Woolfolk, 2013).

An integral part of the learning process focuses on the value of the information or experience in the learner's mind. The learning experience will change behavior patterns where the learner finds value or meaningfulness in the content. While teachers can find various ways to make a subject attractive and relevant, there is a great responsibility for the learner to be active in the learning process. Wilhoit (1991) argues, "educators must realize that meaningfulness is ultimately the decision of the learner. The term meaningful is used to describe texts, lessons, and experiences that are judged by the student to be significantly life-related" (p. 132). Christian educators must understand this concept and provide as much as they can for their students; learning is a concerted effort on both teacher and learner. The following section explores how motivation affects the learning process.

Educational Psychology and Motivation

Motivation facilitates the learning process. Learning is less likely to occur where there is little or no motivation to learn. What is motivation? Motivation is the initiative, direction, intensity, and persistence of goal-oriented behavior; it is a force that energizes and directs behavior toward a goal (Yount, 2010). Motivation is an internal state that affects, arouses, directs, and maintains behavior (Woolfolk, 2013). Ambrose, Bridges, DiPietro, Lovett, and Norman (2010) add, "Students' motivation generates, directs, and sustains what they do to learn" (p. 68). Based on these definitions, one can surmise that motivation originates in the learner and the telos is permanently modified behavior. The learner's motivation ultimately plays a critical role in the learning process (Ambrose, Bridges, DiPietro, Lovett, & Norman, 2010).

Does the target group of millennials have a motivation for participating in Christian education? Motivation can come from various sources. The student can have intrinsic or extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is the natural tendency to seek and conquer challenges based on personal interests (Woolfolk, 2013). An example of intrinsic motivation is a person who studies a subject because they love it and not because it forces them. A musician may spend long hours in the studio because they love to produce music. Extrinsic motivation understands that there is a reward that originates outside of the learner (Yount, 2010). The musician scenario is understood extrinsically if the musician feels they need to be in the studio for long hours solely to pay a landlord who is threatening eviction.

Lastly, motivation is a driving force that encourages individuals to reach the desired goal; however, they will never reach their destination without perseverance. For example, when an individual is motivated to lose weight, improve grades, save money, or obtain a goal, they never reach the goal if they give up or drop out. The writer feels motivation accompanied by perseverance are the twin components that help individuals achieve a goal.

Educational Psychology, Cognitive Development, and the Brain

The researcher explored various types of development in an earlier section of this study. Human development is the joint development of an individual socially, physically, and cognitively. Maturation was the label for physical development – physical changes that occur naturally. Social development is the development of how an individual interacts with others. Cognitive development is the change in thinking, reasoning, and decision-making (Woolfolk, 2013). Robert Slavin sees cognitive development as the gradual and orderly process by which mental processes become more complex and sophisticated (as cited by Yount, 2010).

Cognitive development conversations often include discussing the thought process and its interaction with the brain and nervous system. The brain consists of various components,

including the cerebellum, hippocampus, amygdala, and thalamus. Woolfolk (2013) says, "the

cerebellum may also play a role in the higher cognitive functions such as learning" (p. 32). A

counterargument comes from Yount (2010) that "brain structures and functions are so complex

that specific connections to teaching strategies remain, at best, questionable, and at worst,

dangerous" (p. 382).

Cognitive development is important to the spiritual formation of the whole person –

socially, emotionally, spiritually, and morally. The Apostle Paul linked whole-person formation

elements to mind, body, soul, and spirit in his address to the church in Rome. Paul says:

> So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—
> your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God
> as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him.
> Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking.
> Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily
> recognize what he wants from you and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around
> you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you,
> develops well-formed maturity in you (*The Message Bible, 2002,* Romans 12:1-2).

The Pauline passage clearly articulates elements of spiritually forming the whole-person

with references which are social (going to work, walking around life), emotional (changed inside

out), physical (sleeping, eating), cognitive (thinking), and spiritual (life as an offering, develops

well-formed maturity). The understanding of cognitive development and whole-person formation

is critically important to those tasked with educating Christian millennials. Christian educators

are concerned about how immersed millennials are in a postmodern world with multiple ways of

knowing and understanding truth (Horan, 2017). A closer look at the role of cognitive

development is warranted. The research will explore two renowned psychologists who have

contributed to cognitive development study; they are Swiss theorists Jean Piaget and Russian

psychologist Lev Vygotsky.

Cognitive Development Theory: Jean Piaget

Jean Piaget's theory is known for unpacking the influences on development, basic tendencies in thinking, and the four stages of cognitive development. The writer believes that Piaget had ideas like those who Knight (2006) categorized as a Perennialist. Knight (2006) looks at education from a philosophical lens and deems Perennialist as those who stress the importance of mind, reason, and intellectual past works. According to Woolfolk (2013), "Piaget believed that our thinking changes radically from birth to maturity as we endeavor to make sense of the world" (p. 43). According to Yount (2010), "Piaget suggested that human intelligence develops – from innate reflexes of infants to abstract logical reasoning of adults" (p. 22).

Piaget's four stages of cognitive development are important to this study. The four stages are: Sensorimotor (ages 0-2), Preoperational Stage (ages 2-7), Concrete Operational (ages 7-11), and Formal Operation (ages 12 and above). The Formal Operation Stage is central to the current study as millennials and post-millennials comprise this stage. The Formal Operation Stage is characterized as a time when an individual "can think hypothetically and deductively. Thinking becomes more scientific. Solves abstract problems in logical fashion. Can consider multiple perspectives and develops concern about social issues, personal identity, and justice" (Woolfolk, 2013, p. 45).

The main criticism of Piaget's work revolves around the attention he gives to children and adolescents at adult development expense. Some of the specific complaints about Piaget were that his thinking about children is underestimated, children's thinking is cast in negative terms, and adolescent thinking is overestimated (Yount, 2010; Woolfolk, 2013; Sutherland, 1992). Sutherland (1992) notes:

> Many of his contemporaries did not accept his concept of different ways of thinking. They maintained that, as a child grows to adulthood, there is only quantitative and not qualitative progress. Many cognitive developmentalists (such

as the domain-specific school) have returned to this view, arguing that there is insufficient evidence to justify the idea of stages that operate in different domains (p. 2).

Cognitive Development Theory: Lev Vygotsky and Sociocultural Theory

Lev Vygotsky contributes an alternative theory to cognitive development from that of Piaget. Piaget's focus was rationality and human intelligence aspects of cognitive development. Vygotsky takes an entirely different approach. He was a proponent of the sociocultural theory that focused on the social part of cognitive development. According to Woolfolk (2013), Vygotsky believed human activities occur in cultural settings and cannot be understood apart from that; mental structures and processes are also traced to our interaction with others. Yount (2010) says, "for Vygotsky, social interaction is the primary source of cognitive development" (p.40). Knight (2006) adds, "education in schools should be seen in terms of how people are educated and learn in the larger world around them, because meaningful education is life itself and does not take on a distinct nature inside the walls of a school" (Kindle Location 2011).

A critical point from the theory of Vygotsky is his support for using cultural tools in cognitive development. Cultural tools include technical tools (mobile devices, Internet, search engines, digital organizers, and assistive technologies for students with learning challenges) and psychological tools (numbers and mathematical systems, Braille and sign language, maps, art, codes, and language) (Woolfolk 2013).

There are limitations to Vygotsky's theory. Piaget provided details of stages attributed to specific age groups, while Vygotsky's theory is primarily a generalization. According to Woolfolk (2013), "the major limitation of Vygotsky's theory, however, is that it consists mostly of general ideas" (p. 60).

Paulo Freire and Sociocultural Theory

A modern radical approach to the confluence of social-culture and education comes from Brazilian educator Paulo Freire. Freire's motivation for teaching was born from his lack of opportunity for education in his youth. According to Gadotti (1994), in Freire's own words,

> It wasn't a lack of interest; my social condition didn't allow me to have an education. Experience showed me once again the relationship between social class and knowledge…between the ages of fifteen and twenty-three, I discovered that teaching was my passion (p. 5).

As a result of his ongoing work and study in education, Freire emerges as a respected voice in education and adult literacy. Paulo Freire is recognized for his research on critical pedagogy. His work serves as a critique of traditional education and praxis, personified as an oppressor. He illustrates his point using a "banking concept" where the teacher's primary role is to deposit knowledge in the bank (students). "Banking" is oppressing in that it does not provide the proper environment for student engagement.

One of the central features of a modern learning experience is collaboration. Collaboration is a break from the traditional method of primarily lecturing students. Students need to be engaged in dialogue with the teacher and with each other. Freire (2005) offers his suggestion of dialogics. The axiology of discussion in education stems from the idea that dialogue imposes itself in achieving significance as human beings and becomes an existential necessity (Freire, 2005). Freire's argument advances by juxtaposing dialogue and human existence. According to Freire (2005), "to exist, humanly is to name the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new naming" (p. 88).

Implications of Theorists Piaget, Vygotsky, and Freire

One who subscribes to Piaget's theory on cognitive development will direct attention towards an individual's thought process. In other words, knowing how individuals think will better assist a teacher in providing the proper pedagogical approach for that student. Woolfolk (2013) notes, "Piaget has taught us that we can learn a great deal about how children think by listening carefully and paying close attention to their ways of solving problems" (p. 60). Yount (2010) argues, "Piaget underscores the fact that teaching must be more than talking to students. Teaching requires more than presenting a lesson to students if we hope to change the structure of thinking in students" (p. 33).

One who subscribes to Vygotsky's theory on cognitive development will direct attention to education's socio-cultural underpinnings. Vygotsky was concerned with learning through direct teaching or structuring experiences that encourage another's learning (Woolfolk, 2013). Yount (2010) notes that Vygotsky's goal was education, and his "views of culture, social interaction, language, and school were all anchored in this goal" (p. 125).

Freire sees education as the means that liberate individuals from oppression. According to Freire (2005), liberation from the dehumanization offered through conventional education forms is required. Too many Christian educators get stuck in the traditional model to the detriment of students who can exercise their freedom to learn, grow, and explore. Freire (2005) further argues that "banking theory and practice, as immobilizing and fixating forces, fail to acknowledge men and women as historical beings; problem-posing theory and practice take the people's historicity as their starting point" (p. 84).

There are alternating views on the work of Freire. Cooper (1995) says, "It seems to me possible that those Marxist or socialist educators who adopt Freire's philosophy miss one important element of it, namely the influence of Christianity; conversely, Christian educators

downplay his Marxism and simplify his Christianity" (p.66). According to Reddie (2018),

"Freire developed a philosophy of education that challenged poor and oppressed people to reflect

upon their individual and corporate experiences and begin to ask critical questions about the

nature of their existence" (p. 2). Reddie (2018) applauds Freire's effort to liberate the poor

through education and how it contributes to black theology. Freire also places great weight on his

belief as to what it means to be human. He speaks against the dehumanization of the poor at the

hands of traditional education. There is a potential match between Freire's ontological views

with that of Christian theology (Cooper, 1995). Freire's work engages themes of rebirth,

baptism, conversion, death, resurrection, and even Easter. The church's educators can use these

themes for educating believers and in the role of the church in the world (Cooper, 1995). Lastly,

Cavalier (2002) says, "Freire has always written out of a faith stance...at the heart of this faith

stance is the call to conversion, to action on behalf of Gods justice, the God who is especially

attentive to the cry of the poor" (p. 267).

Moore (1988) challenges what he sees as Freire's underlying association with Karl

Marx's views. Moore (1988) says of Freire, there exists a "divergence from a biblical approach to

Christian educational philosophy in his work" (p. 454). Freire also criticizes the church for two

reasons: encouraging its members to accept their lot in the hope of future rewards and improving

the lot of the poor through charity (Cooper, 1995). For some, the liberation theology promoted

by Freire seems to overshadow the underlying religious themes in his work. Ultimately,

Christians aspire to the freedom found only through the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Adult Learning Theory

The theories of Piaget apply to all age groups. However, this study will focus on the adult

millennial learner. Unlike educating children, the adult learning process is unique simply because

adults have more experiential reference points. The term often used to address adult learning

theory is andragogy. According to Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2015), "andragogy presents core principles of adult learning that in turn enable those designing and conducting adult learning to build a more effective learning process for adults" (p. 4). The core principles are: Need to know (why, what, how), Learner self-concept (autonomous, self-directing), Learner's experience (resource, mental models), Readiness to learn life-related, developmental task), Orientation to learning (problem-centered, contextual), and Motivation to learn (intrinsic value, personal payoff) (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2015). How do educational psychology and theory impact the Christian educator? The following section will explore the relationship between educational psychology and Christian education.

Educational Psychology and the Christian Teacher

The confluence of educational psychology and Christian education forms a unique paradigm. The educational theories of the secular world intertwine with the spiritual formation of the believer. Can they coexist? The writer believes that the work of Yount (2010), an Educational Psychologist, offers a resounding affirmation that the Christian teacher can employ educational psychology in a Christian context. Yount (2010) explains that "educational psychology provides us tangible evidence of God's design by means of decades of scientific discoveries" (p. 29). Yount (2010) is renowned for his work on the Discipler Model, which consists of several elements that model a structure with a foundation, pillars, and a capstone; the parts are Bible, Needs of the Learner, Thinking, Relating, Valuing, Growth, and Holy Spirit. The Bible and the Needs of the Learner are foundational yet separate. Thinking, Relating, and Valuing serve as pillars, and Growth is the capstone. Yount (2010) argues, "I have found the model to be an excellent bridge between secular psychologist theories and a biblical worldview" (p 6).

The contribution Yount (2010) makes to Christian education is highlighted as he draws a parallel between his Discipler Model and educational psychology. The writer will summarize these highlights by listing the Discipler Model element and its associated educational psychology component in parenthesis. The parallel emerges as follows: The Bible (Content Mastery), Needs of the Learner (Individual Differences), Thinking (Cognitive Development), Valuing (Affective Development), Relating (Social Context and Group Dynamics), Growth (Maturation), Holy Spirit (no counterpart). These are important to the Christian teacher whose goal is to maximize and facilitate the learning process that will be efficacious in conforming the learner to Christ's image.

Pedagogical Approach to Christian Education

Two components comprise Christian education. First, the theological piece seeks to provide a biblical perspective on who God is, along with His purpose and plan for one's life. Secondly, an educational component aims to provide the proper methodological approach to learning. The convergence of the theological community with the education community using technological resources can improve Christian education. Moore (1998) is a passionate contributor to educational pedagogy and argues for a confluence of theology and the educational method. According to Moore (1998), "the passion is for theology and education to stand in relationship, to speak to one another, and to be re-formed by one another" (p. 1).

Christian educators are challenged to demonstrate how to apply Scripture to one's modern context. Students seek answers to their problems and a biblical perspective on love, marriage, finances, origin, morality, meaning, and destiny. Moore (1998) includes a section in her work that focuses on an integrative method of teaching. The rationale is to incorporate more of human science in the theological discussion. Moore (1998) says, "theology in general and process theology, in particular, are so focused on macro theories of God and the world that

insights from psychology, sociology, and anthropology have little effect in shaping the theological response to ethical and other issues" (p. 59). Gestalt theorists affirm that learning takes place through problem-solving and critique the competing stimulus-response theory. Moore (1998) draws from the Gestalt Method. Gestalt's theory of perception and learning finds its basis in the ways people organize phenomena into a unity greater than the sum of its parts (Moore, 1998).

One of the study's goals is to explore the need to incorporate 21st-century tools and techniques into Christian education for millennials. The intersection of learning and technology creates what is known as modern learning. The work of Dr. Noeline Wright serves as both a model and a case study about modern learning. Her research includes a four-year study of a new school as it incorporated a modern learning environment (MLE). According to Slade & Griffith, "too many education systems, communities and schools use models designed to prepare young people for life in the middle of the last century," and we need to "broadly focus on the idea of education delivering a workforce to the economy" (as cited by Wright, 2018, p. 2). MLE is also encouraged by Randy Ziegenfuss, who suggests "teachers now 'must develop authentic activities that connect learning to what students do or will be doing outside the classroom'" (as cited by Wright, 2018, p. 28).

Study on ICT use in Christian Education

The precedent literature presented in this study on Christian education focused primarily on theories of educational psychology. The writer sees the need to add empirical data to the theoretical framework to support ideas related explicitly to ICT use in Christian education within a local ministry context. The work of Francis (2011) provides additional insight to help the current research. The present study will review various components from the work of Francis

(2011), including the Problem, Hypothesis, Research Questions, Research Methodology, and Findings.

Francis (2011) provides a case study of the Paprika Baptist Church's educational opportunities, which serves approximately eight hundred congregants. The church is set in the western United States and focuses on spiritual formation and global missions (Francis, 2011). The study by Francis (2011) is like the current research in that it seeks to understand the use of ICT in Christian education and its impact. Francis (2011) does not provide his readers with a direct hypothesis but has stated the purpose of the study.

Five research questions guided his study. Francis (2011) seeks to investigate:

1. What educational goals does the local church seek to attain, and what experiences are provided through ICT to achieve these purposes?
2. How do the learning experiences achieve those objectives, and how are they organized for effective instruction?
3. What obstacles and opportunities are present in the use of ICT?
4. How does the local ecclesia evaluate the effectiveness of the learning experiences?
5. What are the implications of the present study for the church and lay education?

The research questions used by Francis (2011) will provide insight into several key areas. First, the findings should reflect how ICT has contributed to the congregants' learning outcomes. Secondly, he then seeks to understand the correlation of practical learning experiences with the established educational goals. Thirdly, an open-ended question will help the researcher know if ICT has posed any challenges, and which opportunities, if any, have been realized. Fourthly, the researcher seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of the learning experience. This question is also essential to the current study concerning its target group. Lastly, the final research question suggests that the researcher is looking to add to the body of literature on ICT use for the local church's laity. The findings from the work of Francis (2011) will provide a springboard for the current study.

Francis (2011) chose to use the qualitative research methodology and specifically performed a case study. According to Creswell, "research adds to our current knowledge base, improves learning practices, informs policy debates, and builds student research skills" (as cited by Francis, 2011, p. 31). Roberts (2010) says, "the methodology chapter of a dissertation describes the design and the specific procedures used in conducting your study" (p. 148). The writer feels this is an appropriate approach and will adequately help investigate the research questions.

The study by Francis (2011) contributes to the overall body of literature on ICT use for Christian education in a local ministry context. There are several aspects of the findings that inform the current research. First, according to Francis (2011), "the use of technology for the purposes of lay education depended more on the pastor's style and congregational need than the location and size of the church" (p. 58). The current study will seek to understand the influence and impact of pastors' and educators' attitudes on ICT use. Secondly, Francis (2011) also found that teachers are not uniform in their use of ICT; "their ICT use is dependent upon how they believe the learner constructs knowledge. Some teachers use ICT when higher-order thinking is needed, while others revert to non-ICT use for lower-level thought. Thirdly, the church primarily used ICT to communicate church information and secondarily as a learning tool. Fourthly, the lines between the learning objectives and the educational experience were unclear (Francis 2011). Courses were offered, yet there was no precise alignment with a curriculum. Finally, Francis (2011) makes an essential distinction between secular and spiritual education. In secular education, planned outcomes exist based on policy, goals, and objectives derived from a curriculum; spiritual education is often watered-down facts, figures, names, and locations (Francis, 2011).

Related Literature

The Related Literature section of the literature review will focus on the literary works that support or argue topics peripheral to the central issue of Christian education and spiritual practices in discipleship. First, the related topics will explore the history of Christian education that spans the biblical Old Testament to the present. Secondly, related literature offers sources that discuss Christian education, particularly in the African American church. Thirdly, the writer also sees a need to explore Information and Communication Technology (ICT), which emphasizes the hypothesis that it has impacted the target group. Fourthly, the target group will be evaluated concerning their unique needs, patterns, and attitudes toward the church and their spiritual formation. Fifthly, prior studies offer empirical data to support the research. Lastly, sections for a rationale, a gap in the literature, and a profile are given for the present study.

History of Christian Education

Old Testament

The example of teaching biblical principles has its origins in the Hebrew tradition. Like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, the great patriarchs of the faith were the "living epistles" that provided the framework for understanding who God was during that time. Christian education begins to take shape as parents, serving as the first home-school teachers, provided religious training to their children (Anthony & Benson, 2003).

The framework for Christian education would further expand beyond the family as time progressed. Others would share a teacher's role with advanced training, dedication to study, and interpretation. Priests, Levites, and Prophets emerged as those selected by God to take education to a more formal level (Pazmino, 2008). Eventually, schools were established for training Jewish children.

When Moses became the leader of the children of Israel, he gave written instructions known as the Torah (Law) for God's chosen people to follow. Instead of a "textbook," the Torah served as the primary reference for the faith community of that day. The passage found in Deuteronomy 6:4-9 *(King James Bible*, 1769/2017) is known as the Shema; it served as an educational mandate for the people to obey, learn, love, fear, and serve God.

There is an undeniable central theme between education in the Old Testament and education in the New Testament – choose life. The chose-life-theme is in Deuteronomy 30:19, which says, "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessings and cursing; therefore, choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live" *(King James Bible*, 1769/2017). Pazmino (2008) emphasizes, "Christian educators are to make clear God's offer of life or death. Christian education is one of the church's ministries that seek to encourage persons of all ages to choose life" (p. 20). Jesus teaches His Disciples and the people who followed Him a message: He is Life (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, John 3:16, 10:10, 14:6, Romans 6:23).

New Testament

The New Testament builds upon the foundational principles of the Old Testament. Religious leaders of the first century taught Jewish families and proselytes with Old Testament traditions. During the public ministry of Jesus, He emerges as a Rabbi (Jewish Teacher) who threatens the status quo. According to Keith (2014), "the controversy narratives consist of the accounts in the Gospels where Jesus and the scribal elite interact in a hostile manner" (p. 132). Jesus' teaching seems on the surface to contradict and invalidate the Old Testament's foundational principles because He taught at a much deeper level. Jesus teaches the people and His disciples that He did not come to destroy the law but to fulfill it (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, Matthew 5:13). For example, Jesus draws from his Old Testament roots when He

proclaims that He is the Bread of Life which came down from heaven (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, John 6:41, 48-51).

Jesus passed the responsibility of teaching on to His disciples when His public ministry came to an end. The Great Commission serves as the biblical precedent for Christian education and discipleship. The passage occurs in Matthew 28:19-20 (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017):

> Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

A misunderstanding exists concerning the discipleship process for some Christians. Some believe that saying the sinner's prayer constitutes the making of a disciple in the contemporary church. However, the ongoing teaching necessary for spiritual formation is lost. Borthwick (2015) clarifies, "Our goal is not simply to make converts or to solicit evangelist decisions. Our goal is to work with people (and ourselves!) to produce wholehearted, integrated, obeying-all-things disciples of Jesus" (p. 36).

As the New Testament "Early Church" was developing, the responsibility for teaching was given by the Holy Spirit and was passed from the disciples to select individuals and leaders. According to Pazmino (2008), "Those leaders included apostles, prophets, bishops, deacons, elders, women, church members, and even children who were brought within Jesus' circle of teaching" (p. 26). Pazmino (2008) adequately describes the various roles for teachers; the roles can be verified with Scriptural references (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, 1 Timothy 3:2, 2 Timothy:2:2, 24, Titus 2:4).

The ascension of Jesus Christ marked the time when the Apostles were to spring into action in carrying out the Great Commission. During the first century, the disciples were committed to carrying out their mission to teach the Gospel to all nations despite the severe persecution they would face. The Bible records in Acts chapter five that the Jewish council

assembled to determine the punishment for Peter and John; they were effectively teaching the Gospel and winning the lost so much so that at one point, 5,000 souls were saved (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, Acts 4:4). The council decided to flog the disciples and command that they discontinue the mission. Anthony and Benson (2003) note, "in spite of the resulting persecution, the apostles continued to teach and preach the Scriptures to those who would listen. Acts 5 concludes with this summary statement: 'and every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right in teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ'" (p, 103). Christian education did not cease then; it has continued throughout the millennia, even to this day.

The Apostle Paul excelled in the role he played in teaching and mentoring. Paul taught in churches and wrote letters to the churches he established on his many missionary journeys; he also mentored young emerging church leaders who needed to understand ministry and handle its demands. The volume of information on Paul's work is extensive, but the most compelling summation of Paul's teaching comes from the Apostle himself. Paul wrote in his letter to the church at Philippi:

> Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you (*English Standard Version Bible,* 2001, Philippians 4:8-9).

Christian Education Through the Centuries

After the Apostolic Age, catechumenal schools had been a primary education source during the centuries after Christ's death. Anthony (2001) describes these schools by noting that "catechumenal schools were developed to prepare new converts for baptism. Candidates spent two to three years listening to sermons and being instructed in the basic interpretation of Bible doctrine and prayer" (p. 21). Simultaneously, the Early Church Fathers, apologists, and polemics'

voices were instrumental in providing education through their writings. Among the voices echoing biblical teaching was Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, Jerome, John Chrysostom, and Augustine. These men who are Early Church Fathers struggled with the same issues we face (Anthony, 2001).

The Middle Ages were between 500-1300 A.D., and Christian education was not silent during this time. A significant shift occurred as clergy began to adopt a more ascetic lifestyle. The Middle Ages spawned the establishment of monasteries where clergy and priest could go to learn and study. The late Middle Ages ushered in the time known as Scholasticism. Christian education was being shaped during this time to take on a higher level of thought. Students are developing the ability to argue points and use critical thinking. Believers would be better prepared to organize what they believe into a logical system and defend those systems against all arguments and opposition (Anthony, 2001).

The next notable period is the Renaissance, which is the centuries between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries. While the secular world was celebrating Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo Buonarroti's works, Christianity was influenced by John Wycliffe, who translated the Bible into English (Anthony, 2001). He was a professor of theology and philosophy at Oxford University. Wycliffe was among several voices who argued against the papacy in the Roman Catholic Church. He argued against its power, influence, and false teachings. Wycliffe argued against its central tenet of transubstantiation: the belief that the Holy Eucharist substances (bread and wine) are the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

Following the Renaissance was the Reformation, which lasted between the years 1500-1650. Due to the decline of the papacy in the Roman Catholic Church, the opportunity to get the church back to what it has been in the first century was ripe. Martin Luther emerges as the instrument that would cry out against the abuses of the Roman Catholic churches. Martin Luther

"prepared his arguments in the form of ninety-five statements that he nailed to the door of the

court church as an invitation to debate" (Anthony, 2001, p. 197). Luther contributed to Christian

education in several ways, including supporting parents to be involved in developing their

children along with his famous writings entitled *The Letters to Mayors and Alderman of all the*

Cities of Germany in Behalf of Christian Schools (1524) and *Sermon on the Duty of Sending*

Children to School (1530) (Anthony, 2001).

The Enlightenment period (1648-1789) serves as the era that ushered in what is now

understood to be modern education. In the secular world, the scientific method and preference

for facts were among the prevailing attitudes. The residual impact of this mentality challenged

the church. According to Anthony (2001), "the Enlightenment offered a serious challenge to the

theologians and Christian educators of its day as well. The Enlightenment philosophers were

highly critical of the church" (p. 233). What lessons are gleaned from the Enlightenment for

Christian education? Christian educators can learn the values of tolerance, freedom, liberty,

individual rights, and the importance of giving back to one's community (Anthony, 2001).

Christian Education and Sunday School Origin

The focus was mainly on the clergy and high-level thinkers and their Christian education

contributions in the previous section. This section draws attention to the commoner, the average

men, women, boys, and girls. One can easily be intimidated by the elite philosophies, theories,

and even movements that have impacted Christian education throughout the centuries. The

spotlight now shines on the effort to help the Gospel Message reach the ordinary person. What is

now called Sunday School began as an effort by one man who saw a need to share the Gospel

with children with reprehensible behavior (Anthony & Benson 2003).

The change agent for Christian education in the late 18th-century was not an educator at

all. Robert Raikes Jr. inherited a newspaper from his father, Robert Raikes Sr., named the

Gloucester Journal in London, England. The son was well-known in the community and had a passion for its improvement. At the heart of his passion was a need to help the juvenile delinquents he saw roaming the streets (especially on Sundays) and being taken advantage of in the absence of Child Labor laws. According to Charles Kingsley, this is what Raikes saw; "born and bred in abject poverty and sometimes the unhappy victims of a child labor situation, boys and girls roamed the streets, ragged, quarreling, undisciplined, fighting, cursing, mouthing the foulest and most obscene speech" (as cited by Anthony, 2001, p. 261).

Raikes did not turn the other way to this dismal situation. He obtained local women's services to teach the kids how to read and present the church catechism on Sundays from 10 am – 5 pm with an hour lunch break. While this plan's idea was noble, severe behavioral challenges made this effort discouraging in praxis. The women who Raikes used were "laypeople who simply had a love for children in need and a desire to see the Great Commission fulfilled in their own neighborhoods" (p. 263). The curriculum consisted of reading literacy and Bible readings to change and transform conduct. It worked! As a result of the efforts of these untrained individuals who only had a heart for God and the children, Raikes' program became an international success, and many model it to this day. Anthony (2001) summarizes the impact of Raikes' success:

> In spite of the church's effort to oppose Raikes' work, the Sunday school became a popular means of Christian education throughout England and Europe. Within four years of Raikes' newspaper article, enrollment grew to an estimated 250,000 children! By 1835 (after just fifty years, as many as 1,500,000 people reportedly attended Sunday schools in England alone. For many of these students, Sunday school was the only means of educational input in their lives. (p. 265).

The writer sees the history of Christian education as an integral part of the research concerning the continuance of the mandate to fulfill the Great Commission beyond the first century. Christian education's historicity provides a deeper understanding of the pedagogical, intellectual, and social components that shape and frame it today.

Christian Education in the African American Church

A vital component of the Literature Review is to include scholarship specifically focused on Christian education's African American perspective. Central to the research is understanding how to engage churches in the African American community with modern learning tools and techniques. An adage echoes the thrust for this section of the Literature Review – know your audience. Christian educators will be most effective in the African American community when they can reach into their students' hearts and souls with a relevant application of the Word of God to real life. Relevancy involves a biblical application to cultural, socio-economic, relational, anthropological, and spiritual issues. The writer will draw from Kenneth Hill as he includes a rich history of African Americans and the Bible's God. The primary motivation for his work was the absence of a volume "that explained the basics of the contemporary views about African American Christian Religious Education" (Hill, 2007, p. 1).

According to Hill (2007), "Among African American Christians, there has never been a doubt that the Bible is the basis of Christian belief and practice" (p. 27). Hill (2007) offers a historical point that "many African people enslaved in America, often unable to read the English Bible, began to memorize verses that spoke words of liberation and hope to their life experience" (p. 30). The plantation preachers helped others understand what the Bible was saying, and through that, African Americans came to understand theological content (Hill, 2007).

When one evaluates African Americans' culture, one will not have to look far to see the impact of the Bible and the Christian church. Hill (2007) points to Scripture's role in the breadth of African American culture. Hill (2007) says, "the various concerns related to the Bible as curriculum do not take into account that African American history, culture, and experience have played a significant part in the spiritual development of African Americans" (p. 34). Hill (2007)

suggests three primary sources for African American hermeneutics: The Bible, experience, and the black church.

Christian education in the African American community is unique. Researchers must investigate any distinctive that may be impactful in effectively communicating the Good News. Hill (2007) suggests six models of religious education in the black church. The models are Kerygmatic (education through preaching), Holiness (education by the Holy Spirit), Afrocentric (education through Black unity and cultural pride), Contemplative (education through a life of prayer), Confessional (education through church's beliefs and values), and Liberation (education through actions to transform society).

The attention given to educational pedagogy and Afrocentrism is warranted. However, one should note there is more specific attention to the confluence of pastors, educators, and millennials, who all play significant parts in Christian education in the African American church. In his book entitled *Beyond the Classroom: A New Approach to Christian Education,* Sandidge (2017) speaks to pastors and teachers and their role in Christian education. According to Sandidge (2017), "the African American Sunday school has always been a holistic and social education agency. It is holistic because learners are educated on how to help others spiritually, mentally, and emotionally" (p. 107). Sandidge (2017) says, "teachers need to be aware of these issues and the impact they have on the African American community. Knowing the environment in which learners live will prepare teachers for leading discussions about life issues that exist in these communities" (p.133).

The importance of effectively educating every age group in a church brings attention to a better understanding of educating millennials. Millennials have been leaving the church at high rates. Sandidge (2017) helps to understand their challenges by arguing, "millennials have a strong sense of community…on the other hand, technology has also caused millennials to display

high levels of individualism and a break away from authority and tradition in most aspects of life" (p. 295).

What does Christian education in an African American church during the 21st-century look like? The model must include the intentional discussion of topics that directly impact the community and local ministry context. Sandidge (2017) argues for the inclusion of issues often overlooked in Christian education and has poignantly uncovered several topics he feels can be added into the conversation. The issues referenced by Sandidge (2017) include spiritual warfare, death and life beyond, and rap music. His rationale is that "Christian education in the twenty-first century should begin addressing issues that beset learners of today" (Sandidge, 2017, p. 213).

A recent search of dissertations and books about Christian education in the African American community has uncovered a wealth of relevant material. The efficacy of education in the black church should be towards the development of the whole person. Reginald Blount serves as a pastor in an urban community and directly contacts the young people who live in the housing projects surrounding his church. Blount (2005) conducted a research study to investigate an education theory that would create a bridge between adolescence and adulthood. Blount (2005) says, "there is a need for an African American Christian education theory that African American churches can use with youth as a tool for 'whole-making'" (p. 15). The church's role should be to create a counterculture that would help the youth discover their purpose, meaning for life, and voice (Blount, 2005). Blount defines "whole-making' in the following terms:

> A theological, socio-cultural, and ecclesiological approach that takes seriously vocation, voice, and the role of the household of faith is essential in shaping an African American Christian education theory for youth that offers freedom to think and value and name and be named by an authority worthy of granting worth (p. 42).

Christians must be reminded of their personal spiritual growth in the community as they take the gospel into the world. Blount (2005) suggests, "Christian education in the

Black Church must engage in legitimate sectarian hermeneutic—critical, reflective

discourse behind the wall – to assist its community members in shaping a healthy and

whole identity" (p. 134). Blount (2005) means that the Black Church bears a

responsibility to shape its youth through dialogue in their language and not the dominant

culture's language. One can appreciate the contribution of Paulo Freire coming from a

secular perspective; however, Blount (2005) outlines his essay with the following

recommendation for a pedagogical approach in Christian education: Teaching to

Transmit (sharing the story), Teaching to Transform (finding identity and purpose),

Teaching to Transgress (transgress the boundaries) (p.136).

Blount's contribution to the Literature Review is invaluable as it provides a

personal perspective aided with historical support for pedagogical praxis in the African

American church. He creates a model of emancipatory pedagogy that uniquely brings

transformation in young African Americans' lives in their terms.

Spiritual Formation

A relationship exists between Christian education and spiritual formation. An objective of

Christian education is to assist the believer as they are in the process of being conformed to the

image of Christ. Several Scriptures elucidate how spiritual formation transforms or conforms the

believer into Christlikeness; among them are Romans 8:29, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Romans 12:2,

and Galatians 4:19 (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017).

Spiritual formation is the ongoing process of the triune God transforming the life and

character of the believer toward the life and nature of Christ; the ministry of the Spirit

accomplishes this in the context of biblical community (Pettit, 2008). Spiritual formation can be

understood as "the life-long transformational self-analytic and relational process where

individuals become more like Christ through the Holy Spirit and Biblical guidance resulting in a

relationship with God" (Marrah & Hall, 2011; Willard, 2002, as cited by Horan, 2017, p. 56).

According to Samra (2006), being conformed to Christ is "the actualization in the lives of

believers of the attitudes and actions exemplified by Christ in his incarnation, life and death, and

resurrection so that the character of believers is aligned with or conformed to the character of

Christ" (p. 3).

Information and Communication Technology

A key element to the current research is understanding Information and Communication

Technology (ICT) and its place in the Christian community. The study aims to understand the

impact of ICT use in Christian education for millennials in a local ministry context. A

fundamental understanding of ICT is necessary.

One can compile ICT's definition from various sources. ICT refers to the "range of

hardware (desktop and portable computers, projection technology, calculators, data logging and

digital recording equipment), software applications (generic software, multimedia resources) and

information systems (Intranet, Internet) available in the teaching Institutes." (Srivastava, 2016, p.

40). Srivastava (2016) offers an expansive definition. Yet, it is succinct in helping individuals

grasp what ICT entails. ICT is a "diverse set of technological tools and resources used to

communicate and to create, disseminate, store, and manage information. These technologies

include computers, the Internet, broadcasting technologies (radio and television), and telephony"

(Amin, 2018, p. 2). ICT covers Internet service, telecommunications equipment and services,

media and broadcasting, libraries, documentation centers, and network-based information

services (Nwokeafor, 2015). These definitions will enable the reader to understand the tools at

the educator's disposal to communicate with their students.

ICT was defined and explained, yet the question remains how can it be integrated into the

classroom experience? What pedagogical approaches can maximize student engagement and

support the learning environment? The preceding questions are addressed in a presentation by Randall Dunn, Associate Professor at Liberty University. Dunn (2007) provides several reasons for technology use in the classroom. The use of technology in the classroom improves student motivation and provides unique instructional capabilities (Dunn 2007). Technology offers a means to motivate the student to become more engaged and control the learning experience. The Internet also provides access to what seems to be limitless sources for information. ICT includes support for new instructional approaches and increased teacher productivity (Dunn, 2007). Millennials can cooperate and collaborate in a different way using ICT. The writer feels that students can expand access to course content and collaborative experiences using ICT. They are not limited to in-class time together but can meet virtually and accomplish learning goals and objectives. Teachers can provide more appealing materials to different learning styles that students may demonstrate rather than limiting those options. Finally, students are provided with opportunities to engage in requisite skills for the Information Age (Dunn, 2007). Today is a day where digital literacy is critically important. ICT use gives the student the resources to become technologically and informationally literate.

Some of the specific ICT tools teachers can incorporate in the learning experience include the Internet; students can use the Internet for class or personal use, blogging, research, and class communication (Dunn, 2007). These technology tools can be implemented in Christian education in the local ministry context as well. Secondly, students can engage in creating digital content due to the latest technologies in smartphones and computers. Thirdly, teachers can incorporate multimedia tools such as presentation, video, and audio software. These can be used in the classroom for recording class discussions for struggling students, recording synthetical activities, creating class-based podcasts for distribution (Dunn, 2007). These tools will enable teachers and students to enhance learning for visual and auditory learners, provide access to a

seemingly infinite number of supplemental resources, and engage students in a modern learning environment.

Millennials

Understanding Millennials

Millennials comprise the target group for the research. The study has established how millennials are generally born 1981-96. The research now seeks to understand the target group's attitudes and how to teach them. Pastors and teachers who wish to effectively disciple the target group must first seek to understand them. Understanding is especially true in a world where cultural and societal change seems to always be in flux. A closer look at the knowledge of the target group is warranted.

Palfrey and Gasser (2008) define Digital Natives as those "born after 1980, when social, digital technologies, such as Usenet and bulletin board systems came online. They all have access to networked digital technologies" (p. 1). Misconceptions exist about the target group and their preference for using digital technology. Palfrey and Gasser (2008) observe that Digital Natives often access much more information about a topic they are interested in than kids of previous generations ever could have" (p. 240). Digital Natives learn differently. It does not mean that they are not learning (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008). Pastors and educators must understand, "successful teaching requires an understanding and appreciation of the learner's needs, backgrounds, interests, and learning styles" (Roberts, Newman & Schwartzstein, 2012, p. 274). The following section will explore pedagogical methods geared toward millennials since a better understanding of the target group has now been established.

Teaching Millennials

The theoretical concepts previously discussed helped shape an understanding of what it means to teach effectively. Effective teachers endeavor to know and understand their students.

They must assess them intellectually, socially, and physically to meet their individual needs. Effective teaching of the target groups means moving away from teacher-centered methods (lecture only) to a more student-centered methodology. Educators need to learn how to use eLearning technologies when teaching millennials. Roberts, Newman, and Schwartzstein (2012) provide 12 essential steps to assist educators when teaching millennial learners:

1. Educate yourself about the concept of generational differences.
2. Recognize the environmental and cultural forces that affect the millennial learner.
3. Understand how potential intergenerational tension may impact learning.
4. Millennials need guidance and focus on their learning.
5. Identify your teaching or life philosophy.
6. Learn how to utilize current eLearning technologies.
7. Recognize that millennials value (and expect) aesthetically appealing educational presentations.
8. Emphasize opportunities for additional help and support.
9. Encourage modern forms of curiosity and exploration.
10. Recognize the importance of team dynamics and encourage collaboration.
11. Be fair and straightforward.
12. Identify the limits of multi-tasking (p. 274).

Feelings Towards Christianity

The following section on the target group explores their attitude towards Christianity. An understanding of these attitudes will inform the current study. The study has already explored ideas by biblical writers, psychologists, theorists, and contemporary authors on Christian education topics. It is equally important to listen to the voices of the target group themselves. The recent study by Pew Research provides some startling insight into the attitudes of the target group. First, among the generations surveyed, the older millennials between 35-39 years old (56%) felt that religion was either somewhat important, not too important, or not at all important in one's life. More concerning was that 62% of the younger millennials felt the same way (Pew Research Center, 2014). According to the same study, the older millennials had the highest rate of the infrequency of Scripture study or religious education at 64% compared to all other generations in the survey (Pew Research Center, 2014). The researcher appreciates Kinnaman

and Lyons (2007) scholarship, which has contributed to the current research. Kinnaman and

Lyons (2007) argue, "if you are interested in communicating and expressing Christ to new

generations, you must understand the intensity with which they hold these views" (p. 8).

Negative perceptions are coming from the target group about Christianity. Kinnaman and Lyons

(2007) offer several perceptions about the target group's attitudes based on their study. The list

includes:

- Christians say one thing but live something entirely different (hypocritical).
- Christians are insincere and concerned with only converting others.
- Christians show contempt for gays and lesbians.
- Christians are boring, unintelligent, old-fashioned, and out of touch with reality.
- Christians are primarily motivated by a political agenda and promote right-wing politics.
- Christians are prideful and quick to find faults in others (Kinnaman & Lyons, 2007).

Kinnaman and Lyons (2007) provide the readers with a sense of the target group's

sentiments, who were primarily unchurched. The current study will later investigate millennials'

attitudes in the Gates of Heaven Assembly of Churches.

Related Studies

Study of Millennials on ICT in Education

The research will now examine past studies that offer insight into ICT and education for

the target group. In a global project focused on the target group, a quantitative research study

found sixty percent of the respondents felt ICT improved the way they did their tasks and the

way they learn (Rapetti & Marshall, 2010). The research also found that just over 82% "agreed

'eLearning is an important element of my courses'" (Rapetti & Marshall, 2010 p. 77). These

findings and others in the survey imply that most of the target group has an affinity to

educational technology and learning using ICT for educational purposes.

Study on Discipleship in Online Environment

A study on discipleship in an online environment highlights the next part of the current study. James Thomas conducted a study like the current research. Thomas (2014) compared biblical discipleship with contemporary online discipleship practices. There is a dearth of research for online discipleship ministry (Thomas, 2014; Grayson, 2017). Two research questions guided the study. The first question was: How do leaders of selected online ministries describe their discipleship practices, and how their descriptions compare to the five discipleship principles suggested in Acts 2:41-47 (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017)? The second question was: What practices of discipleship might be most suitable for online environments due to such comparison?

The results of the study by Thomas (2014) found that online ministries were intentional in their pursuit of discipling online. According to Thomas (2014), "each of the ministries represented had current evangelistic presence online and was, first and foremost, devoted to the proclamation of the gospel through the Internet…connecting people in meaningful relationships with God and other Christians for spiritual growth" (p. 195). The efficacy of the online discipleship ministry was "each participant revealed that their ministry provided some type of resource for users to engage the Bible for the purpose of spiritual understanding and growth" (Thomas, 2014, p. 198).

Study on the Correlation Between Christian Education and Spiritual Formation

The current research goal was to understand the impact and effectiveness of Christian education in millennials' lives. Harris (2020) recently conducted a quantitative study to explore the relationship between Christian education and spiritual formation among adults in African American Baptist Churches in North Carolina. Harris (2020) analyzed Sunday school participation in conjunction with spiritual formation. According to Harris (2020), "those who

attended Sunday school have significantly higher mean scores than those who did not attend Sunday school" (p. 93). The work of Harris (2020) supports the efficacy of Christian education in an African American church.

Study on Attitudes of Christian Leaders and Educators on ICT use

The research seeks to advocate for the proper use of ICT for Christian education. Lowe (2002) serves as pastor of the Shiloh Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, NC, and offers insight into the proper use of technology in the Christian community. He also provides a theological foundation and rationale for cyberspace use; the old paradigm focuses on the past and present. According to Lowe (2002), "a theology of cyberspace will focus on the future and beyond. The rationale for its use by the church is for its future and the furtherance of the gospel message, 'Behold, I do a new thing.'" (p. 22).

Antiquated mindsets of pastors and educators are among the most significant obstacles to using technology in churches. Many of the opponents feel that tradition should overrule contemporary practice. The research carried out by Lowe (2002) was a project to provide cyberspace access to the Shiloh Baptist Church of Winston-Salem, NC. The church was steeped in tradition, so deploying technology became an enormous undertaking that challenged many parishioners' and leaders' mindsets. Lowe (2002) found the following insight after reflecting on a failed initial endeavor to start the project: "One of the lessons learned is that change is difficult even when it is desired. Leaders must take time to make careful evaluations of their context and then help people take ownership of their ministry decisions" (p. 4).

ICT use in churches should be tempered with precautionary measures (Grayson, 2017; Thomas, 2014). Technology experts should be hired so the church and its membership are safeguarded from cyberattacks, pornography, identity thieves, and other harmful acts that could penetrate the church network. While not siding with the opponents of ICT, Lowe (2002) does

offer a necessary caution gained from a recent conference he attended. Lowe (2002) says, "the use of this technology was encouraged but not without some concern and reservation" (p. 8). Shifting to the more accepting side of the debate, Lowe (2002) says,

> The church has always been the place where African Americans have been able to gain hope as well as access information. If this community is to have control of its own destiny, the proper use of cyberspace becomes one of the many important issues (p. 21).

The following conclusions can be drawn from the research of Lowe (2002):

> The Internet usage is only purposeful for the church if it fosters a sense of social and spiritual community. If this technology is to be used as a tool for the betterment of humankind, continued exploration and evaluation should take place (p. 16).

Rationale for Study and Gap in the Literature

The number of attendees in Christian churches is declining. Knowledge of this poses a problem for churches, pastors, educators, and, more importantly, the unsaved and the lost. One may say that the future of the church is in the hands of the youth. The declining attendance by the millennial and post-millennial generation places the church's future in dire straits. According to Pew Research, millennials have overtaken baby boomers as America's largest generation (Fry, 2020).

The constant and consistent changes in culture have decidedly impacted the church. More people are opting out of regular church attendance and fellowship; simultaneously, the number of non-believers and followers of other faiths is seemingly on the rise. The technological influence on the world's culture is very pronounced, and there is a degree to which those same factors influence current church practices. For some churches, the lack of computer or digital technology integration into church life may be contributing to this decline.

Literature is abundant in ICT use in education. One does not have to look far for research on ICT use in secular K-12, post-secondary, or higher education. There is also a corpus of literature on ICT use in theological education. There is a dearth of social science research about the Christian community concerning laity or lay education (Francis, 2011). According to Thomas (2014), "Upon reviewing the literature regarding religion and media, the author saw a gap in the research as it relates to discipleship and the correlation of online discipleship to an identified biblical concept" (p. 29). The current researcher sees a gap in the literature concerning Christian education in African American Pentecostal Churches and seeks to fill that gap.

Profile of the Current Study

The Gates of Heaven Assembly of Churches (GOHAOC) consists of 21 churches in the United States and Africa. There are 15 churches located in the northeastern part of the United States. The research population consists of millennials and post-millennials who participate in various Christian education opportunities offered by the Gates of Heaven Assembly of Churches. The GOHAOC provides multiple forms of Christian education that range from Sunday school classes to systematic Instructor-led courses. The criteria for selection will only include churches located in the United States.

Chapter Summary

The Literature Review has provided a look into the body of literature that explores theological and theoretical frameworks and related literature concerning ICT use for Christian education to the millennial and post-millennial generations. The theological portion provided insight into the telos of Christian education with a biblical backdrop for support. The theoretical section provided contributions from psychologists and theorists who specialized in secular and Christian educational models. Finally, the related literature reveals peripheral topics concerning

the history of Christian education, education in the African American church, ICT, and understanding the target group. The chapter closed with empirical data on studies related to the current research. The Literature Review has demonstrated that the mandate Jesus placed on His is still active. An effort is in place to reach and understand the target group, and the necessary tools and techniques to disciple them are being used in saving them and the church's future. The next chapter will provide details of the research design.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Overview

Technology use can be observed in almost every aspect of millennials' lives, yet it seems to be noticeably absent from classrooms in some Pentecostal churches. Studies and articles address Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for discipleship (Shirley, 2017; Francis, 2011; Flynn, 2013). Each work addresses the positive and negative aspects of using technology to help reach the lost and bring them to maturity in their faith. Most of the research concerning technology use in a theological setting focuses on higher learning. The writer's concern is that many Pentecostal churches are not utilizing the technological resources available for Christian education at the local church level. Pastors need to understand how the proper use of ICT can benefit all their members' spiritual practices when being discipled within the local church, especially millennials. Chapter Three will explain the research design for the study. The research design synopsis, data collection, and data analysis sections provide the research methodological approach framework.

Research Design Synopsis

The Problem

According to a Pew Research study (2010), "the number of Christians in the United States will decline from more than three-quarters of the population in 2010 to two-thirds in 2050" (Pew Research Center, 2015). Lipka and Hackett (2017) report Islam is seeing the fastest growth among major religions and, based on current trends, will nearly equal the global population of Christians. The recent research will evaluate what actors are behind this decline in adherents to Christianity and an increase in other religious groups.

The effects of these statistics are being seen at the local level. Churches see more and more empty seats, especially among the millennial population (Jones, 2019). The Great Commission admonishes the disciples to "go into all the world and teach all nations" (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, Matthew 28:19-20). However, there seems to be a great need to evaluate disciples' current needs in the local church and identify instructional effectiveness and student satisfaction. Are the current instructional methodologies effective and age-appropriate? Are the attitudes of church leaders who are opponents of ICT use and social networking sites (SNS) compounding the problem? A recent study by Benjamin (2019) suggests:

> Christianity also values the leadership of church elders and sees fellowship with believers as important to growth and faith in Christ. If smartphones and SNS encourage young adults to leave the church, pick their religious identity, and practice their form of spirituality, this will negatively affect the church, the practice of Christianity, and society. Therefore, the effects of these technologies on the faith of young adults and their relationship with the church needs to be studied (p. 17).

Instructional methodologies are constantly being evaluated and re-evaluated as newer research, technologies, and advances in cognitive learning come into play. What was once effective 20 years ago may be less effective today. The increased access to personal and academic technology means the same advancements seen in non-religious and higher education should be translated into the local church.

The Gates of Heaven Assembly of Churches (GOHAOC) is a religious organization consisting of 21 churches in the northeastern United States and Liberia, West Africa. The researcher is concerned that the most effective Christian education methods are not reaching churches in the African American community, specifically the GOHAOC. Children and adults are provided with modern tools and pedagogical approaches for secular education. Yet, a shortfall exists in adopting similar tools and techniques for Christian education within the local church. Christian post-secondary schools and higher learning institutions have readily

incorporated modern learning methods, including computer labs, mobile device access, current software, and Internet access for resource acquisition and distance learning. Researchers are embarking on understanding the efficacy of technological tools in Christian education.

Although ICT uses can be beneficial for millennials in a church context, the technology used for Christian education is not without its challenges for this population. Jones (2020) makes a point on both sides of the argument. According to Jones (2020), millennials are "disturbed by the fact that they can spend so much time in a church service when they can save that time and access religious teaching online and then do other things as well in the same amount of time" (p. 36). On the other hand, Dankasa notes, "technology can be an effective tool to attract many youths faithful into the church when it is used innovatively" (as cited by Jones, 2020, p. 37).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory case study research design will be to explore current pedagogical methodologies and ICT use in Christian education among pastors and teachers in the Gates of Heaven Assembly of Churches (GOHAOC) and to assess the current level of satisfaction with and participation in Christian education ministry activities of the GOHAOC among the millennial members of the church community. At this stage in the research, ICT is defined as a "diverse set of technological tools and resources used to communicate and to create, disseminate, store, and manage information. These technologies include computers, the Internet, broadcasting technologies (radio and television), and telephony" (Amin, 2018, p.2).

Research Questions

RQ1. What are the most common instructional methodologies used for Christian education for the target group in the local church among the GOHAOC?

RQ2. How do the pastors and Christian educators of the GOHAOC describe their current level of effectiveness in Christian education in the local church?

RQ3. How do the millennials of the GOHAOC describe their current level of satisfaction in Christian education in the local church?

RQ4. To what extent is Christian education among the GOHAOC impacting millennials' participation within their local church?

Research Design and Methodology

This research study will utilize a case study qualitative research design. Creswell and Creswell (2018) say, "qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 4). Roberts (2010) offers support for qualitative research when "the data are words that describe people's knowledge, opinions, perceptions and feelings as well as detailed descriptions of people's actions, behaviors, activities, and interpersonal interactions" (p. 143).

The researcher chose a case study qualitative research design to understand millennials' educational activities and ICT use in African American Pentecostal churches. The goal is to understand the correlation, if any, that exists between ICT use in Christian education in the local church and the diminishing number of millennials. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), a case study research design "explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information" (p. 96). Krau (2008) performed a comparative case study to assess adult Christian education's effectiveness in a congregation.

Krau (2008) used the qualitative case study theory approach to identify adult Christian education's principles and strategies. In her study titled *A Case Study of Congregational Design and Implementation of Adult Christian Education*, Krau (2008) assessed adults' participation in Christian education and its relation to mature faith development. Krau (2008) selected the Brentwood Methodist Church to include in the study. Purposeful theoretical sampling was used in the selection process to identify the church that met the established criteria. According to Krau

(2008), "This study was designed as a descriptive case study that is primarily of instrumental value in nature. While the case chosen is interesting in and of itself, the overarching interest in the case relates to an issue of significance to adult Christian education as a whole, not just to the case in the study" (p. 70).

Kraus's results yielded themes that identified participants' experiences, changes resulting from the River of Life Initiative, and whether the program's objectives were achieved. Krau (2008) produced a visual representation of the progression of experiences included in adult education. The study by Krau (2008) concluded:

> Several themes emerged from participants' descriptions of their experiences. These themes included growth and maturity, spiritual story, openness to differing perspectives, making meaning, and significant relationships. Participants also identified several shifts they have experienced since the congregation began its "River of Life" discipleship initiative (p. 114).

The current study will consist of a series of interviews and surveys that seek to understand how Christian education is operating among several churches that make up the GOHAOC. The research proceeded as follows: (1) permission for the study was requested from the Presiding Prelate of the GOHOAC, (2) several churches were selected to participate in the research, and approval was requested from the pastor of the local church, (3) surveys and interviews were scheduled, (4) data was analyzed, and findings were reported.

Setting

The GOHAOC was founded in 1955 by Bishop Lena Thomas and a few saints in the western section of Philadelphia, PA. The next decade would see the GOHAOC expand further in the West Philadelphia area. By 1960, a church mission in Philadelphia named Beulah Tabernacle was birthed; in 1966, a third church was established and called Open Door Mission True Light Church. The GOHAOC now consists of a total of 21 churches in the United States and Africa. There are 15 churches located in the northeastern part of the United States. A few churches

joined in recent years, and they were already established for more than 20-30 years under other fellowships. The older churches' pastors are mostly more senior in age (60+) and have been a part of their respective churches most if not all their lives. Christian education as Sunday School has been a staple at each of the churches that make up the GOHAOC. The research focuses on millennials who participate in various Christian education opportunities offered by their local church. Educational opportunities in the local church may include formal and informal Bible lessons, community outreach, evangelism, fellowships, and group discussions.

Participants

The researcher used purposive sampling to identify churches that met specific criteria. The researchers chose a purposive sample because "it uses a nonprobability sampling procedure in which elements are selected from the target population based on their fit with the purposes of the study and specific inclusion and exclusion criteria" (Daniel, 2012, p.88). The research population consists of all the adult students (24-39 at the time of the study) who actively participate in various Christian education opportunities offered by the local church. The participants who fall in the younger end of the spectrum are critically important; they provide a fresh perspective on the education process since many have been members since their youth. The study will only include the GOHAOC churches located in the United States.

Role of the Researcher

The writer currently teaches Computer Science at the Gloucester County Institute of Technology High School located in Sewell, NJ. Additionally, the researcher serves as an adjunct faculty member in the Computer Science Department at Rowan University. The writer currently serves as the lead elder of the discipleship ministry at the Open Door Mission True Light Church in Philadelphia, PA. The church recently celebrated its 55th church anniversary. The church is in a predominately African American residential area of West Philadelphia, PA., and its

membership is also predominately African American. What started as a small Sunday School of children has grown to a membership of nearly 1,000 on the roll. The researcher has been a member since 1995 and has been over the discipleship ministry for five years. The researcher is concerned about the declining millennial membership and has been wrestling with the impact the discipleship ministry may be having on that decline. There is a body of literature on ICT use in higher education. Yet, a gap exists when it comes to understanding ICT use for Christian education among millennials in a Pentecostal church. Therefore, the current study will be focusing on the effectiveness of ICT use in Christian education among the target group.

The researcher's role in a qualitative study is to collect data, observe behavior, and interview participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher is a church member in the GOHOAC and has the approval to conduct the study from the Presiding Prelate of the Assembly.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are a concern for this study. Creswell and Poth (2018) advise researchers to "have plans for addressing ethical issues related to three principles: respect for persons, concern for welfare, and justice" (p. 53). The researcher was careful to ensure that no harm was experienced by the participants or the churches they represent. The Federal Government and Liberty University have policies that enforce the protection of human subjects. The policy is outlined in the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) Handbook.

A consent form (Appendix A) was provided to each church's pastor that agreed to participate in the study. The researcher also ensured that all participants are duly informed that participation in the survey is voluntary and may opt out of the study once it has begun. A consent form (Appendix B) was provided for the millennials who agreed to participate in the survey. According to Roberts (2010), "all prospective participants must be fully informed about the procedures and risks involved in the research project before they agree to take part" (p. 33).

Adults under the age of 24 will not be asked to participate. The researcher exercised

confidentiality at the highest level possible. Participants are identified using pseudonyms, and the

names of the churches are unnamed in the research findings. The researcher abode by guidelines

set forth by Liberty University to protect human subjects during this study. The process for a full

review began with an application sent to the IRB. The application went through a preliminary

review followed by an approval determination. Approval was based on the criteria outlined in 45

CFR 46.111.

The researcher addressed one final ethical issue that needed attention – who will benefit

from the study? Creswell and Creswell (2018) advise, "identify a research problem that will

benefit the participants" (p. 89). All the churches in the GOHAOC can benefit from this study.

Because the study will draw attention to a declining millennial population, all churches can

benefit by retaining the target group members and attracting new disciples. The study will allow

all the pastors to understand the impact technology has on the local church, especially when it

comes to the millennials. In 2019, one of the pastors in the GOHOAC approached the researcher

about incorporating technology into Christian education for the church and asked to develop a

technology-based training program for the church's young adults; this further confirmed the need

to undertake the study.

Data Collection Methods and Instruments

A case study qualitative research design aims to provide an in-depth study of a case

(Creswell & Poth, 2018). The data collection methods utilized in this study included the constant

comparative method of data analysis. This method is the "process of taking information from

data collection and comparing it to emerging categories" (Creswell and Poth, 2018, p. 85).

Collection Methods

Data collection is an essential step in the research. The collection process is a series of interrelated activities that provide information to answer the research questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Creswell and Creswell (2018) summarize, "the data collection steps include setting the boundaries for the study through sampling and recruitment; collecting information through unstructured and semi-structured observations and interviews, documents, and visual materials; as well as establishing the protocol for recording information" (p. 185). The following data collection methods were employed in this study: interviews and an online survey. The data collection methods and instruments are covered in this section of the research.

According to Brinkmann and Kvale, interviews are "attempts to understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of their experience, to uncover their lived world" (as cited by Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 164). A benefit of performing interviews lies in the researcher's ability to control the line of questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Interviews were conducted with pastors, an elder of discipleship, and Christian educators.

Pastors are the gatekeepers of the local church. They are responsible for the oversight of the entire operation of the ministry, including discipleship. Pastors are ordained elders who oversee the whole ministry and serve as the local church's primary teacher (*New International Version*, 1978/2011, 1 Timothy 5:17). This study inquired into the pastor's tenure and their ministry philosophy to see any correlation between tenure and attitude toward ICT use. The researcher used an interview guide to facilitate the interview for pastors (Appendix C). The research questions provided insight into the pastor's attitude toward their discipleship ministry's current state and overall effectiveness. Pastors were asked to share their feeling about the millennial population of their congregation and precisely how they are discipled. The pastor was also asked about their position on ICT use in discipleship. Additional questions ascertained their

priority for ICT use (budget, current/future use, etc.). Each pastor conveyed their process for the selection of the discipleship ministry leaders and their qualifications.

The elder of discipleship or Sunday school superintendent is usually the local church person who directly oversees the local church's educational opportunities. They manage the Christian education staff and monitor activities that help to form members of all ages spiritually. The researcher used an interview guide to facilitate the elder of discipleship interview (Appendix D). They were asked about qualifications used in the selection of teachers and training materials. Like the pastor, the researcher inquired about their attitude concerning ICT use.

Teachers are the heartbeat of the discipleship ministry and have been gifted by God to share, interpret, and explain the truth of the Word of God to their respective age groups. An interview guide to facilitate the interview for Christian educators has been created (Appendix E). The researcher asked teachers to respond to a question about their teaching philosophy and the tools and techniques they currently use to instruct their students. Teachers were also asked how the current pandemic has changed their pedagogical methodology. The researcher questioned teachers about their attitude toward ICT use for millennials.

Interview protocols for asking questions and recording answers should be planned (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). According to McGrath, Palmgren, and Liljedahl (2019), "qualitative research interviews are preferable when the researcher strives to understand the interviewee's subjective perspective of a phenomenon rather than generating generalizable understandings of large groups of people" (p. 1002). This study's protocols were to use a survey and audio/video recordings to document participant responses. The researcher interviewed pastors, an elder of discipleship, and Christian educators virtually via Microsoft Teams. The interviews were recorded and saved to a secure server.

Questions for the interview guide are developed based on a Question-Topic-Statement (QTS) Chart. The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions recommended for qualitative research. The QTS Chart is a 3-column chart where column one has the RQ, column two has subtopics derived from the RQ, and column three has statements connected to the subtopics. The components of the QTS Chart will assist in the triangulation of the data.

The researcher administered a survey to the millennials of each local church selected for participation. The survey ascertained the target group's attitudes and their satisfaction with the current teaching model. A line of questions for millennials is found in Appendix F.

Procedures

Data collection procedures follow a seven-step series of activities as outlined by Creswell and Poth (2018). First, the organization chosen for the study is GOHAOC. The organization consists of 15 churches that span the northeastern United States. Secondly, the researcher gained access to the site or organization through rapport. The researcher has been a member of the GOHAOC for more than 25 years and served most of those years in a leadership capacity. The Presiding Prelate of the GOHAOC is the pastor where the researcher serves in ministry. The Presiding Prelate approved the study and provided the researcher with a directory of the churches that make up the Assembly. The researcher has served alongside all the pastors and has established a great rapport with them and their congregation.

Thirdly, purposeful sampling was the strategy used to select the churches best suited to inform the study. Churches are chosen based on a specific criterion. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), a criterion sample "seeks cases that meet some criterion; useful for quality assurance" (p. 159). The criterion for selection is only those churches that are in the northeastern United States. Fourthly, the primary means of collecting data was through interviews and an online survey. The churches are centrally located in the northeastern United States and are in

close relative proximity. Interviews were scheduled with church leaders and teachers at their

convenience. Core interview protocols were followed as recommended by Creswell and Poth

(2018). Creswell and Poth recommend "use five to seven open-ended questions and ample space

between the questions to write responses to the interviewee's comments" (p.165). The researcher

expanded this list to cover essential topics and subtopics from the RQs. Fifthly, recording

procedures followed observational protocols. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), "the

process of recording information through various forms, such as observational field notes,

interview write-ups, and documents as well as mapping, census-taking, photographing, and

sound recording" (p. 170). Sixth, the research must anticipate field issues during data collection.

Examples of field issues include unexpected participant behavior and hearing or seeing anything

uncomfortable (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Lastly, great care was taken concerning data storage and

security. One of the most critical aspects is having a backup procedure that is safe and secure.

The researcher placed his notes in Microsoft Word documents on a dedicated removable storage

device, and an additional copy will be maintained online.

Data Analysis

Analysis Methods

Creswell and Creswell (2018) recommend that data analysis is performed in the

following sequential steps:

1. Organize and prepare the data for analysis.
2. Read or look at all the data.
3. Start coding all the data.
4. Generate a description and themes.
5. Representing the description and themes (p. 193).

Data analysis can be structured or unstructured (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Structured

data analysis follows an iterative process for developing categories, returning to the participant,

and developing additional codes for a single category. The method of taking information and comparing it to emerging categories is called constant comparative (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The data analysis process followed the 5-step sequential procedure suggested previously by Creswell and Creswell (2018). First, data was organized by sorting, re-typing, cataloging, and transcribing. Second, the researcher then read through the data to get "a general sense of the information and an opportunity to reflect on its overall meaning" (Creswell and Creswell, 2018, p. 193).

Third, the data were coded to create categories; the process will ultimately yield a core phenomenon. Creswell and Creswell (2018) say, "coding is the process of organizing the material into chunks or segments of text and assigning a word or phrase to the segment to develop a general sense of it" (p. 247). During coding, the researcher observes situations and events and from them imposes specific meanings on them; conclusions are drawn from the codes (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). Creswell and Poth (2018) have formulated a Data Analysis Spiral which moves the researcher from Open Coding to Axial Coding to Selective Coding. Open coding is where the researcher will scrutinize the data to find commonalities (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). Axial coding makes a connection between a category and subcategories. Axial coding happens as the researcher identifies one open coding category to focus on, called the core phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Selective coding is how the researcher develops propositions that will lead to a proposed theory for discipling millennials.

The study's coding process moved from coding to theory based on Saldana's model (2016) (Appendix G). Fourth, from the coded data descriptions emerged, and these were noted and explored. The final step was to link categories together such that theoretical coding is possible.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness describes the aspect of qualitative research that ensures the validity of the study. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), "we consider 'validation' in qualitative research to be an attempt to assess the 'accuracy' of the findings, as best described by the researcher, the participants, and the readers (or reviewers)" (p. 259). Researchers must also convey how they will check their findings' accuracy and credibility (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Credibility

Credibility refers to the extent to which the findings accurately describe reality. Credibility can be established by prolonged engagement in the field and triangulation of data (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Prolonged engagement in the field allows the researcher to establish rapport and become familiar with the site and its surroundings. As the researcher begins to code the data, corroborating evidence from other sources provides the triangulation needed to establish credibility.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the detail of both the research context and your processes and procedures. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), a peer reviewer is "an individual who keeps the researcher honest; asks hard questions about methods, meanings, and interpretations; and provides the researcher with the catharsis by sympathetically listening to the researcher's feelings" (p. 263). The researcher plans to employ a reviewer familiar with the subject matter to perform an inquiry audit to increase the study's dependability. The study will outline the processes and procedures taking during the study such that the study can be replicated in a future study.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to whether one can track the processes and procedures used to collect and interpret the data. Confirmability is like dependability, except the "auditor" is usually a person who is unfamiliar with the study. The auditor examines whether the interpretations, findings, and conclusions are supported by the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The researcher will consider using an external auditor to confirm the findings in the study.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the possibility that results found in one context apply to other contexts. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), "a thick description means that the researcher provides details when describing the case or when writing about a theme" (p. 263). The purpose of the thick description is to allow another researcher to replicate the study in the future. Details of the survey will be taken from field notes and notations of any field issues. Future researchers will benefit from the field reports so that similar problems can be averted.

Researchers must actively incorporate validity strategies into the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). According to Leedy and Ormrod (2016), "good qualitative researchers, take certain precautions to enhance the validity and credibility of their findings" (p. 301). The goal of validity in a qualitative study is to strive for true objectivity. While this is not always possible due to researcher bias, values, and philosophical assumptions, true objectivity remains the goal. Leedy and Ormrod (2016) recommend three strategies for objectivity: strive for balance, fairness, and completeness in data analysis and interpretation; carefully document your analysis procedures and be upfront with your personal biases in your final report.

Member Checking is a recommended tool for ensuring validity. Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggest the researcher "take the final report or specific descriptions or themes back to participants and determining whether these participants feel that they are accurate" (p. 200). The researcher will send a link for the video interview or a transcribed copy of the discussions to each pastor, elder of discipleship, and Christian educator who participates in the research to increase the study's validity. A copy of the Member Checking Correspondence is in Appendix H. The trustworthiness of the study has both immediate and future implications.

Chapter Summary

The problem for the current research centers on the diminishing millennial population experienced in many churches. The researcher intended to understand the underlying causes of the problem and take a case study qualitative approach. The target group was a subgroup of purposefully selected churches of the Gates of Heaven Assembly of Churches. Several research questions for pastors, discipleship ministry leaders, Christian educators, and the target group helped ascertain what impact ICT use has contributed to the current state of discipleship for millennials at their church. The Liberty University Institutional Review Board Handbook guided the ethical consideration, data collection methods, and procedures. The data were analyzed using a conventional coding scheme. The study's trustworthiness is founded upon transferability, confirmability, dependability, credibility, and validity. Chapter Four provides a synopsis of the findings resulting from data collection and analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Overview

The preceding chapters support the current research study by underscoring three key

elements. First, the Research Concern section allowed the researcher to explore a problem of

declining millennial participation and involvement prevalent in the Gates of Heaven Assembly of

Churches (GOHAOC) and shared in many other Christian churches. Secondly, the Literature

Review section provided the historical and current scholarship that is relevant to the study.

Lastly, the Research Methodology section supplied the procedures for data collection and

analysis. The following section represents the findings resulting from the data collection and

analysis process.

Compilation Protocol and Measures

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory case study research design was to explore

current pedagogical methodologies and Information and Communication Technology use in

Christian education among pastors and teachers in the Gates of Heaven Assembly of Churches

(GOHAOC). The GOHAOC consists of 21 churches in the United States and Africa. Purposeful

sampling was the strategy used to select the churches best suited to inform the study. The

criterion for selection was only those churches that are in the northeastern United States. Only 15

churches met the standard for the study. The study was carried out in five distinct phases.

Phase 1 data collection began by asking the pastor at each of the 15 churches if they

would be willing to participate in the study. Phase 2 of the study was to schedule an interview

with each pastor via a recorded video conference using Microsoft Teams. Microsoft Teams

provides an interface where the interview could be scheduled, recorded, and securely stored

under password protection. An interview guide was used and consisted of a combination of

eleven open-ended/close-ended questions. Phase 3 of the study was to schedule an interview with

the elder of discipleship or Sunday school superintendent of each church. The goal was to interact with a person other than the pastor who could speak directly to the educational processes that took place at the church. The interview guide for this phase consisted of seven open-ended/close-ended questions.

Phase 4 of the study was to schedule an interview with an educator directly responsible for instructing millennials at the church. The researcher intended to understand the pedagogical methodologies employed and gauge their effectiveness. The interview guide for this phase consisted of seven open-ended/close-ended questions. Phase 5 provided a link to an online survey for the millennials to provide their feedback for the study. The link was given to each pastor who facilitated the link to only those between the ages of 24-39 at the time of the survey. It was agreed the link would exclusively be distributed to the target group so that the research's validity could be maintained. The online survey for the target group consisted of eight open-ended/close-ended questions.

Demographic and Sample Data

Seven churches among the GOHAOC were willing to participate in the study allowing the researcher to interview seven pastors (Pastor Lamb, Pastor Patrick, Pastor Fay, Pastor Swift, Pastor Fisher, Pastor Hatheway, and Pastor Glass). Of the seven churches, only one had a person who currently occupied the elder of discipleship/Sunday school superintendent (Elder Denzil). There were five educators (Sister Brewer, Brother Putnam, Sister Christopher, Sister Samuelson, and Sister Plaskett) among the seven churches who responded to the invitation before the study was closed. A total of 15 millennials provided complete responses to the online survey before it closed on January 31, 2021.

Data Analysis and Findings

The research findings are reported below for Phases 1-5. The researcher solicited church permission in Phase 1 for participation in the research. Phase 2 shows the results of the interviews with seven pastors. Phase 3 focuses on the interviews with the sole elder of discipleship who participated in the study. In Phase 4, the results were analyzed from the interviews with five educators. Lastly, Phase 5 shows the results of fifteen online survey responses from the millennial group.

Phase 1

Churches were approved for participation in the study only if the pastor granted permission. The researcher inquired by phone, and seven of the fifteen pastors agreed to participate. They provided a signed permission form to allow the researcher access to their church membership. The permission forms are stored securely so as not to reveal the identity of the participating churches. A protocol to digitally sign a consent form was established for all interviewees and survey participants. Each participant was sent a link to an online survey to read and download a copy of the consent form (Appendix A and Appendix B). The option was provided so a participant could opt out of the study by selecting "I do not want to participate."

Phase 2

Phase 2 consisted of recorded audio/video conferences held with seven pastors from the GOHAOC. Survey Item 1 of the interview guide asked how long the pastor had occupied their current position. The longest-tenured pastor was thirty years, and the shortest was one year. A more significant percentage of the pastors have a tenure of fewer than ten years, while the remaining pastors have been in place for sixteen years or more (see Table 1).

Table 1.

Length of Tenure

Length	Respondents Length of Tenure %
1-5 years	43%
6-10 years	14%
11-15 years	0%
16-20 years	14%
21-25 years	14%
26-30 years	14%

Survey Item 2 was an open-ended question that asked about the pastor's philosophy of ministry. Most pastors indicated that "Evangelism" was a high priority for how the church operates. There was consensus that "Service" and "Discipleship" played the second most significant role in how the ministry functions (see Table 2).

Table 2

Philosophy of Ministry

Theme	Frequency of Occurrences %
Evangelism	29%
Discipleship	21%
Service	21%
Fellowship	14%
Worship	14%

Survey Item 3 was another open-ended question that allowed the pastor to discuss their discipleship strategy. Based on the responses, the researcher was able to determine that the answers fell into a category of "Formal" or Informal." The formal responses indicated where opportunities to develop the congregants were more structured than those which were informal. Formal responses included discipleship opportunities such as New Members Class, Sunday School, Bible Study, a Bible Institute, and a Discipleship Training Program. Some informal

opportunities had small group discussions, evening teleconferences, peer tutoring, mentoring, food distribution, and teaching from a social media platform.

Survey Item 4 of the interview guide asked the pastor to provide an approximate percentage of millennials in their ministry. According to the data, three churches had a millennial population that amounted to less than 20% of their total population. Also, three churched approximated a millennial percentage between 21-40%. One church reported the millennial population made up more than 50% of the church population (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Percentage of Millennials
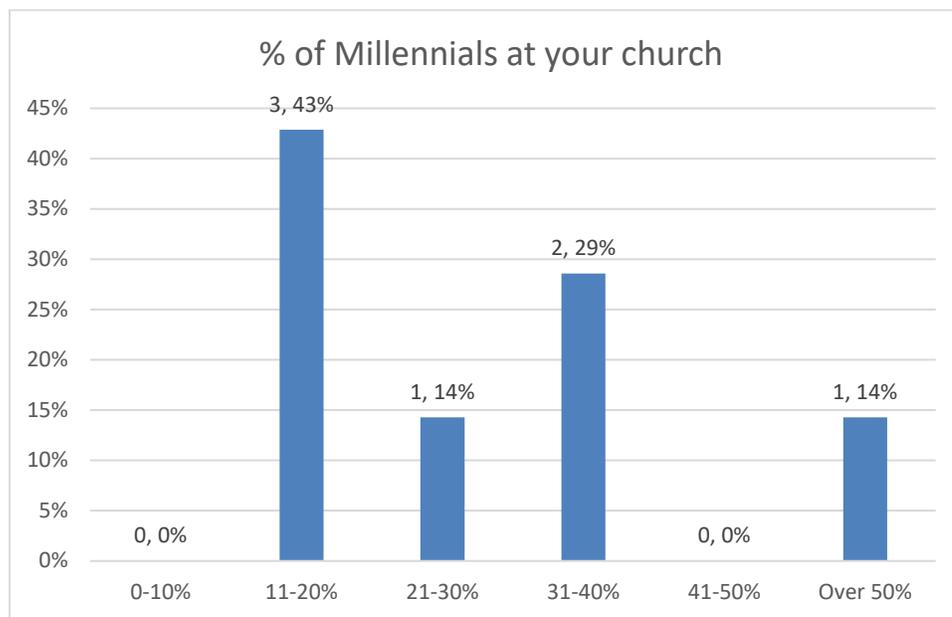
Survey Item 5 of the interview guide for pastors asked how the millennial parishioners are discipled. The results found a theme of involvement derived from several categories. The categories included Bible Study, Church Participation, Mentoring, Support Outside of Church, and Youth Ministry (see Table 3). Youth Ministry was the most frequent response and indicated that millennials have a place to interact within their affinity group.

Table 3

Millennial Involvement

Theme	% of responses
Youth Ministries	38%
Bible Study	15%
Church Service Participation	15%
Mentoring	15%
Support outside of Church	15%

In Survey Item 6, the researcher wanted to understand each church's level of effectiveness as it pertained to keeping millennials involved. Whereas churches have successfully provided discipleship targeting this group, pastors could evaluate whether they have been effective in these areas. Pastors were asked to gauge the effectiveness of keeping their millennial members plugged in based on a 10-point scale; the scale was set where one was the worst and ten was the best. According to the study, the lowest rating was three, and the best rating was seven. The seven pastors rated their effectiveness as follows: 5-7, 3, 6, 7, 3-4, 7, and 6. All the pastors felt there was room for improvement. Pastor Patrick, one of the pastors with the lowest score, explained: "things like Sunday School and Bible study for millennials have been devalued." Millennials feel like it is more important to make money. Pastor Swift was one of the pastors with the highest score and explained, "it was a challenge to keep them consistent and engaged," else the rating would be higher. Pastor Lamb commented her high score had to do with a higher level of commitment.

Survey Item 7 for pastors asked their feelings about using Information Communication Technologies (ICT) to disciple their members. A primary reason for the study from the outset in 2017 was to understand if there was a correlation between pastors' attitudes towards ICT and a declining millennial population. Pastor Fay was adamant about her disdain for ICT before the pandemic. She exclaimed, "before COVID-19, I hated it." Since the study began, the world

experienced a global pandemic that impacted the way ministries operate. Where ICT use was once seen as a secular tool and disdained by some pastors and educators, it has now found a prominent place in worship, fellowship, evangelism, and most importantly, discipleship. The responses for this interview question were categorized into positive or negative feelings. The pastors expressed an overwhelming consensus in favor of ICT use.

For Survey Item 8, the researcher was interested to see if the pandemic was responsible for the change in perception concerning ICT use in discipleship among the GOHAOC. A follow-up question was posed: Have your feelings about using Information and Communication Technology changed since the COVID-19 pandemic, and if so, how has it changed? Except for one pastor, each of the remaining pastors expressed that their feeling had changed. Pastor Patrick responded, "it has intensified…we need to invest financially into certain things." Pastor Fay added, "my attitude has changed because we are using technology for everything…Zoom, teleconference, Facebook, and email." Pastor Swift commented, "COVID has opened up the mind of the older saints." Pastor Glass added, "since the pandemic, I have come to love IT more." Pastor Hatheway responded to the question by saying, "I didn't feel as strongly that it was just an option, but now I know certainly that it is not an option." Pastor Lamb admitted that her feelings did not change because she was innovative and immersed in technology use, so her feelings remained the same.

The research has shown how the pandemic has contributed to the perception of ICT as several pastors in the GOHAOC began to rethink and plan how to incorporate ICT into their ministry. Survey Item 9 expanded on this inference by inviting each pastor to address whether they had any plans for integrating ICT specifically into their discipleship ministries. The following represents a list of responses from each of the seven pastors:

- There will be a significant priority for state-of-the-art classrooms. Sunday School classrooms will be equipped with technology. We cannot shut down what we have done virtually.
- The Bible Institute and Sunday school will have online access. We intend to begin podcasting.
- Continue discipleship classes online. Youth Bible study will be on Zoom.
- We need a re-entry plan.
- We have plans to recruit others and enhance our ICT. We want to get better at it. "These young people know this stuff upside down."
- Absolutely! We must get the needed training for pastors.
- We are migrating to Zoom and looking at other platforms. I need to be able to share screens.

Survey Item 10 of the pastor's interview guide allowed pastors to express their feeling about the criterion they use for selecting an elder of discipleship or Sunday school superintendent. Interestingly, two out of seven Pastors included Information Technology knowledge as an attribute. Interestingly, faithfulness and a background in education were mentioned most often.

Survey Item 11 on the pastor's interview guide asked, "Is there anything you feel can be done differently to better disciple today's millennials." This question's reasoning was to understand each pastor's strategic plans to address a declining millennial population many churches face. Six areas of concern emerged from this inquiry to pastors. First, training became an area of concern. Several pastors felt inept when it came to technology and expressed a desire to get the training needed to incorporate ICT into their ministry. In answering this final question, Pastor Patrick was direct in saying, "Training for us!" Pastor Glass remarked we need training for "the right way to be able to minister to them from this IT perspective."

Secondly, student engagement was cited often to reach millennials. According to Pastor Fay, "engage them where they can be empowered with boundaries. Give them boundaries but for some empowerment to be able to use the gifts that God has given them and use their knowledge and skills." Pastor Fisher said, "engage them" and understand "the things they would like to see

in the ministry." Thirdly, communication emerged as a critical component of reaching millennials. Pastor Fay recommended, "create a platform for them to be heard." A very concise statement came from Pastor Swift, who believed, "the only way we are going to get into the mind of the millennials is really to get into the mind of the millennials." Pastor Swift added that this could be done when we "talk to them and give them a voice." Pastor Lamb admitted, "we are not trying to do ministry without their ideas." Pastor Fisher recommends "give them an opportunity to share their voice."

The fourth area of concern centered on presentation. Pastor Patrick sees the need to make sure that information is presented in excellence and with substance. There must also be a clear presentation of the church and discipleship vision. Fifthly, the church must foster good relationships. Pastors must have a good relationship with millennials by building trust. According to Pastor Fisher, "once they feel they can trust you, then they can share." Additionally, millennials need to be able to establish good relationships with other millennials in that affinity group. Pastor Hatheway recommended "building community of the age group."

Lastly, balance emerged as a crucial component of relating to millennials. One pastor saw how a challenging schedule impacted how millennials are discipled. Many of the millennials find it challenging to balance church, work, and home. Due to the demands of these three essential aspects of a millennial's life, pastors need to understand "they are on a different schedule." "Millennials don't do well with rules…and too much structure…they are unpredictable," Pastor Swift noted.

In summary, Phase 2 was to identify the environmental, attitudinal, technical, and relational components that affect millennials' discipleship from a pastor's perspective. Pastors have provided insight into their attitudes and biases that may have correlated to how millennials

have perceived them. The following section will shift to Phase 3, which captured the elder of discipleship/Sunday school superintendent group's responses.

Phase 3

The purpose of Phase 3 was to understand the pedagogical methodologies directed towards millennials from educational leadership beyond the pastor. Seven churches agreed to participate in the research. At the time of the study, Elder Denzil was the only person who occupied this position. The interview guide for this group consists of seven questions (see Appendix D). A video conference was scheduled to capture responses.

Survey Item 1 invited the elder of discipleship to list and describe the church's educational opportunities. The church offers six educational programs, including Sunday School; one program was for kids and was not conducive for millennials. Survey Item 2 asked the respondent about the qualifications for selecting educators for the discipleship ministry. Elder Denzil answered, "a desire to teach," "interview with pastor and elder of discipleship," "completed classes," and "Evangelical Training Association (ETA) certification." The researcher has noted that the process for teaching does not explicitly require any technical knowledge for this ministry. Since millennials are technically inclined, the researcher wanted to explore whether a teacher must have technical expertise. A previous comment by a pastor participating in the research suggested that technical skills were not required but could be developed.

Survey Item 3 of the interview guide evaluated the training materials in use at the church. Elder Denzil informed the researcher of the use of coursework from ETA. The material from this organization is widely respected in Christian education and designed for Instructor-led classes. A variety of topics are covered, and new courses can be created after review by the ETA Board. Survey Item 4 asked the interviewee to describe the overall effectiveness of discipling millennials on a 10-point scale where one is the worst and ten is the best. Elder Denzil felt that 6-

7 adequately described where the church plotted on the scale. According to Elder Denzil, the rationale for the rating was to "learn more about their learning needs" for millennials. This answer is in line with the assessment of the pastor of the same church.

Survey Item 5 sought to understand the impact of COVID-19 on ICT use. Elder Denzil responded that their feelings had "absolutely changed." The change was based on the proliferation of web conferencing platforms such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom. Additionally, Elder Denzil commented, "you have to be open to learning." Survey Item 6 asked about any plans for ICT use for discipleship. Plans for ICT use in discipleship include using Zoom, yet there needs to be a balance as they encourage interaction with the congregation's elder members who may not be tech-savvy.

Survey Item 7 asked what can be done differently to better disciple millennials from an elder's perspective. Elder Denzil insisted that there must be a digit and virtual component and emphasized the need for interaction. Elder Denzil said ICT was necessary for "building relationship with instructor and class," which coincided with Pastor Fisher's response. "We have to help them build community to support one another," says Elder Denzil.

In summary, Phase 3 reveals the need to have structured educational opportunities where teachers are evaluated and qualified to teach. COVID-19 has impacted the educational process to the point where it must utilize new technologies such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom, particularly in engaging millennials. Phase 3 shows the need to build a better relationship with millennials. The research will now shift to Phase 4, where the responses will be analyzed from educators directly responsible for discipling millennials.

Phase 4

The final round of interviews was conducted with educators who are directly responsible for instructing millennials. Five educators participated in the study; they are recognized as Sister

Brewer, Brother Putnam, Sister Christopher, Sister Samuelson, and Sister Plaskett. An interview guide was used to ascertain the educator's effectiveness, teaching philosophy, instructional methodologies, and other data necessary to the study. Survey Item 1 was an open-ended question that allowed the educator the opportunity to discuss their teaching philosophy. Table 4 illustrates the major themes derived from educators concerning their teaching philosophy.

Table 4

Educator Teaching Philosophy

Theme	% of responses
Learning Experience	25%
Relevance	25%
Theological Skills	25%
Behavioral Skills	13%
Leadership	13%

Most educators indicated that their teaching philosophy centered around relevance, theological skills, and student learning experience. According to Sister Christopher, "my teaching philosophy at the foundation is based on ensuring that my students understand how to interpret the Word of God for themselves." Brother Putnam added how he teaches so millennials can "be mindful of their behaviors and it models Christian practices and principles." Relevance was the other area that garnered the most responses. Sister Samuelson felt her goal was to "try and make sure that whatever I'm teaching it can relate to our everyday lives."

Survey Item 2 of the interview guide for educators inquired into the instructional methodologies currently in use. The researcher divided the responses into two categories: technical and non-technical. The technical category included Videos, PowerPoints, YouTube, Zoom, projectors, Internet, and e-learning platforms. Non-technical instructional methodologies were textbooks, direct instruction, discussions, one-on-one, lecture, and writing. Sister

Christopher expressed how a sitting posture for all was necessary: "I like to engage it where we all are teachers, and we all are learners."

Survey Item 3 for educators was an extension of the previous question. Educators were asked if they currently incorporate ICT into their discipleship ministry. The responses included Internet resources such a YouTube and Bible study websites. The most common platform for video conferencing was Zoom; 4 out of 5 educators used Zoom to connect to their students.

Survey Item 4 asked if their feelings about using ICT changed since the COVID-19 pandemic. Most educators (3 out of 5) said their feelings about ICT use had changed since the pandemic. The remaining responses indicated that the pandemic had little effect on their feelings toward ICT since they were already in use before the pandemic.

Survey Item 5 inquired about plans for using ICT in discipleship. Two emergent themes came to light: fellowship and social media. Sister Brewer commented that ICT use would be "a great platform to keep them connected. Sister Christopher believed ICT would provide collaboration in discipleship and could "leverage the momentum that we have because of the pandemic...contribute to their conversation and their walk." Social media seemed to be part of the plans for educators. Brother Putnam commented, "social media is big for this generation." Sister Samuelson added how she wants young people to do more on social media. Social media is a tool that could be beneficial for discipleship and evangelism. According to Sis Samuelson, millennials can send daily posts to their friends and show their Christian walk.

Survey Item 6 asked each educator about their overall effectiveness in discipling millennials based on a 10-point scale where one is the worst and ten is the best. This question's goal was to gain the perspective of how well the educators felt they were succeeding in bringing millennials to spiritual maturity. The results were almost like those of the pastors and elders. Responses ranged from a low rating of five to the highest rating of eight. Educator effectiveness

seemed to center around three key themes: relevance, relationship, and reproduction. In terms of relevance Sister Brewer noted, millennials are "harder to convince, and you have to be on point when dealing with Millennials." "millennials are a no generation," said Brother Putnam. Sister Christopher commented, "They may not be ready to be accountable; that's when effectiveness takes a turn." Sister Samuelson challenges millennials to think about, "this is what I learned, and this is how I'm going to apply it with my walk in Christ."

In terms of relationship, Brother Putnam explained millennials' sentiments by saying, "personal relationship and authentic relationships is key. We don't want anybody fake around us. If I can't trust you, I don't want you near me!" Millennials need to interact with authentic and straightforward educators (Roberts, Newman, and Schwartzstein, 2012; Kinnaman and Lyons,2007). Communication is vital in any relationship, especially between educators and millennials. Sister Christopher believes "we need to learn their protocols. It has to be a two-way communication line. When we are not on the same wavelength, we need to have some sort of tool to be able to translate." Sister Plaskett was an educator with the highest effectiveness rating and attributed her effectiveness to her self-development. She felt that success was a result of a willingness to evolve with the needs of the learners. She commented, "I need room for growth, and I am ever-learning." The educator and millennial relationship are enhanced when the educator is willing to invest in their personal development.

Reproduction emerged as a theme as educators spoke of the responsibility of millennials to become disciplers themselves. Sister Christopher was encouraging reproduction when she said, "they can be teachers, they can be mentors, they can be someone that can be modeled." The research will expound on this thought later as it will directly relate to the Great Commission.

Survey Item 7 for the educator's group was to understand what can be done differently to better disciple today's millennials. Three categories are understood from the interviews

concerning this question. First, educator's overwhelmingly felt engagement and involvement were keys to better disciple millennials. According to Sister Plaskett, "they need engagement, and we're talking about reaching disciples…we're just letting them sit there, we're not engaging them." Sister Samuelson commented how millennials need to be engaged in their study of the Word and suggested that they are more likely to reach their age group better. Secondly, a relationship was cited as being integral to enhancing discipleship among millennials. Millennials need to be in constant fellowship with other millennials. An educator noted, "they need to be around people their age. Not only was relationship important among millennials horizontally – among each other, they need to have good relationships vertically with educators and pastor who are also responsible for their spiritual growth. Millennials should have "someone teaching who understands them," said Sister Brewer. Lastly, technology is a necessity when trying to enhance Christian education for millennials. Sister Samuelson suggested, "we need to be open-minded when they make suggestions for technology." The researcher felt more consensus for technology use; however, it is clear how vital technology is to this group. The pandemic has also caused technology to take a more prominent role in how millennials are disciples at all the churches which make up the GOHAOC. In summary, Phase 4 was an essential aspect of the research because it helped assess how millennials are currently being discipled from an educator's perspective.

Phase 5

The final phase adds to the research by providing insight into how millennials perceive their Christian education experience. Unlike the pastors, elders, and educators who participated in videotaped interviews, millennials were invited to participate in an online survey where they could respond to carefully selected survey questions. The online survey consisted of eight questions (see Appendix F). Pastors were sent an email with a link to the study and asked to

distribute the link to their millennials. The researcher stressed ensuring the link was sent exclusively to those congregants between the ages of 24-39 at the time of the study to maintain the study's validity. A total of fifteen millennials responded to the invitation to participate in the study. The following is a review of the responses from the millennial group.

Survey Item 1 was an open-ended question that asked what it meant to be a disciple. The purpose of this question was to explore the mindset of millennials as it relates to discipleship. The responses were categorized into three distinct areas: Follower (Hearer), Lifestyle (Doer), Evangelism (Witness). First, ten of fifteen respondents listed being a follower (hearer) of Jesus Christ. The Bible contains several Scriptures that stress the importance of being a hearer of the Word. The Apostle Paul wrote, "faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (Romans 10:17, *King James Bible*, 1769/2017). Jesus said, "He that hath ears to hear let him hear (Matthew 11:15, *King James Bible*, 1769/2017).

Secondly, seven out of the fifteen millennials surveyed felt that being a disciple was based on one's lifestyle or what they do. One respondent answered, "to live for God through the life that you live." Another millennial commented, "a disciple is a follower of Jesus Christ who submits to His teaching and is committed to growing to be more like Him daily." Thirdly, to be a disciple means to evangelize (witness). Respondents to the survey understood the importance of not only hearing and doing but also of reproducing. We are called to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ. One millennial wrote, "being a disciple means following Christ and leading others to Him as well." A respondent brought all the categories together with the comment, "One who journeys with Christ and actively practices the faith even if flawed but shares the learned revelations of the faith along the way to help inspire others to join the faith." These questions contribute to the research by exploring the millennials' concept of discipleship based on their expression.

Survey Item 2 was an open-ended question that invited the participants to share the various ways they have grown in their faith through discipleship. Table 5 reflects a wide variety of ways they engage in methods of discipleship.

Table 5

How Millennials Grow

| Theme	% of responses
Bible Study	22%
Prayer	20%
Fellowship	12%
Fasting	10%
Meditation	10%
Worship	8%
Praise	6%
Watching Religious Content on YouTube	6%
Testing God Personally	4%

The data show Bible study is the primary method for how the study participants believed that they grow in their faith. The results contribute to the research by confirming the importance of providing effective Christian education to the target group. Each ministry participating in the study provided some form of Bible study for millennials. Bible study was more formal in some organizations than others. Millennials expressed that prayer is another common way of growing in their faith. Prayer represented 20% among the variety of responses, followed by fellowship at 12%. Fellowship described the third most frequent method of how millennials grow in their faith. This response correlates to the Survey Item posed to educators about how to enhance Christian education for today's millennials. The answer was to engage them in an affinity group. All the churches that participated in the study provided some ministry type where millennials could fellowship. The researcher finds it fascinating that engagement with content on YouTube videos was among the least used of how millennials grow in their faith. YouTube watching represented only 6% of the responses and second least to how they understand their growth through personal

experiences. One respondent wrote, "Reading the Bible, fellowshipping with other faith believers, prayer and fasting, personal worship, listening to worship songs or the word to feed the soul, congregational worship, testimony, watching others in the faith, asking questions to gain perspective, testing God for myself."

Survey Item 3 was a closed-ended question that asked millennials how many hours they spent engaged in spiritual practices to grow their faith. Spiritual practices were defined for them in the survey as reading Scripture or Christian literature, prayer, listening to religious videos or podcasts, etc. Fifteen millennials responded to the study. Figure 2 provides a graph of the millennials' responses. Most of them spend less than one hour engaged in spiritual practices. Five responded that they spend 1-2 hours, while two said they spend three or more hours growing in their faith per day. The graph is encouraging as it demonstrates how more than half of the participants spend more than one hour each day engaged in spiritual practices. The results for this Survey Item can be cross-tabulated with Survey Item 2 and reveals how most participants spend less than 1 hour per day engaged in spiritual practices, with Bible study cited as the most frequent method of how they grow in faith development.

How Many Hours Per Day Engaged in Spiritual Practices
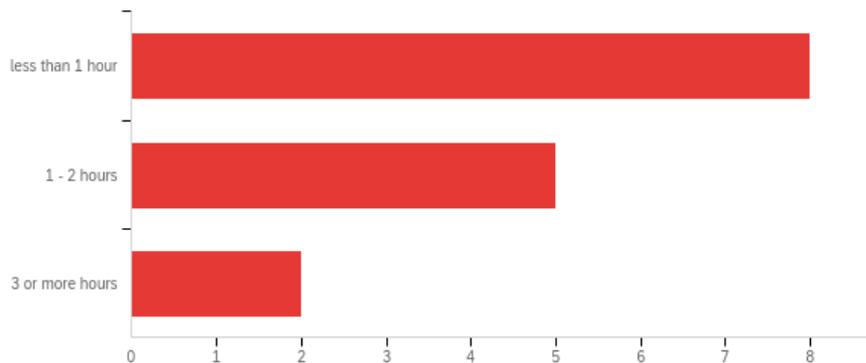
Survey Item 4 asked participants about communication with other millennials in their ministry outside of the times when they are in church, and if so, how do they communicate? Purposeful communication would be for prayer, fellowship, informal Bible study, and checking each other's general welfare. Thirteen responded that they do communicate with others outside of the church. Communication took place through various means, including text, social media, phone (Facetime), and Zoom. The research indicates that technology is one form of how millennials fellowship with one another. The results link back to understanding how millennials communicate (Roberts, Newman, and Schwartzstein, 2012; Lowe 2002). Three respondents said they did not communicate with other millennials outside their regular church time.

Survey Item 5 was a closed-ended question with multiple-choice selections. The researcher wanted to understand the type of instructional methods provided during educational ministries at their church. Based on the target group's responses, an overwhelming number responded that technology is their church's primary instructional method. Thirteen out of fifteen responded that technology is vital, while eleven answered that they received a lecture. The third most popular response was "audio/video." Three respondents chose "digital textbooks and

reading materials" as an instructional method. Figure 3 provides a visual representation of the responses.

Figure 3

Instructional methods
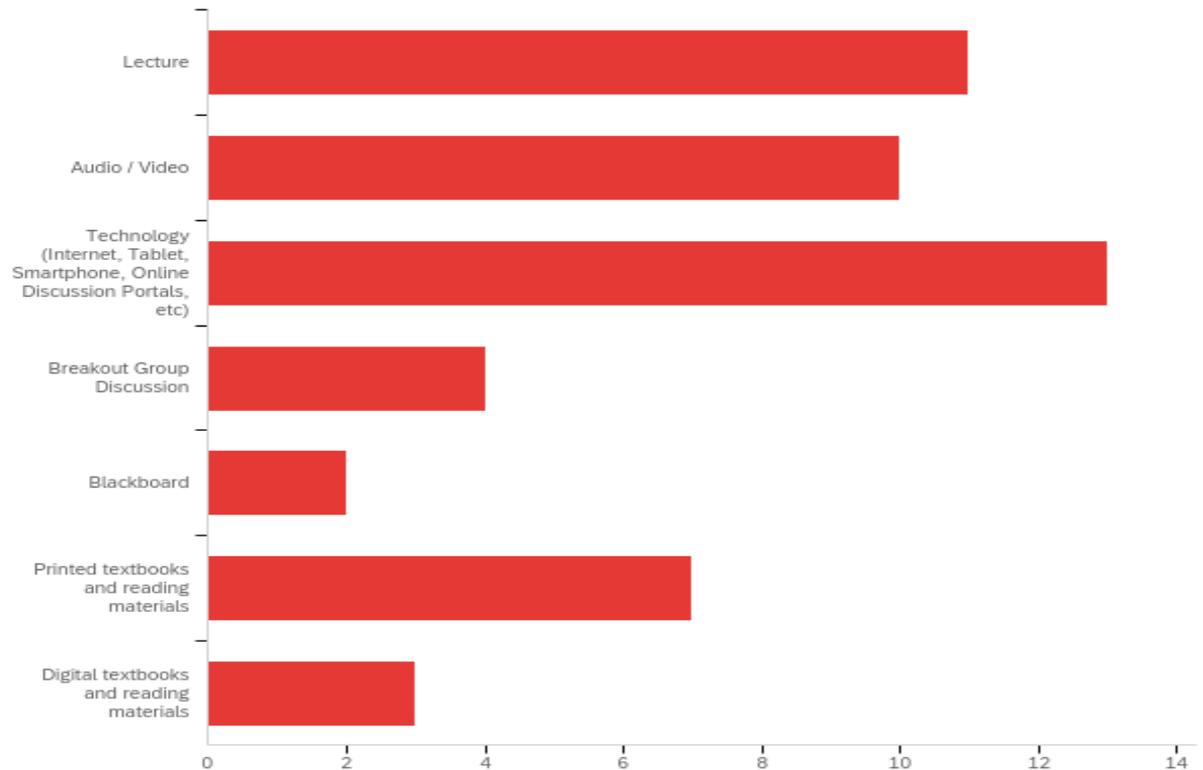
Survey Item 6 asked millennials to rate the current level of satisfaction with the instructional methods for discipleship at their church. This survey item aimed to understand whether millennials felt positively or negatively about their discipleship experience. A rating scale was used, and the selections were "Very Satisfied," "More Than Satisfied," "Satisfied," "Partly Satisfied," and "Not at all Satisfied." Figure 4 provides a graphical representation of the responses. The results show that 10 out of 15 study participants were satisfied with the instructional methods currently being utilized at their church. Three respondents were Very Satisfied, and two were Partly Satisfied. The survey posed a follow-up question to see if there was any correlation between the level of satisfaction and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The researcher began the study three years before the pandemic. It was essential to understand the pastors, elders, and educators' attitudes concerning ICT use. Additionally, the study's goal was to evaluate millennials' level of satisfaction and see any correlation existed between the discrepancies.

Figure 4

Current Level of Satisfaction
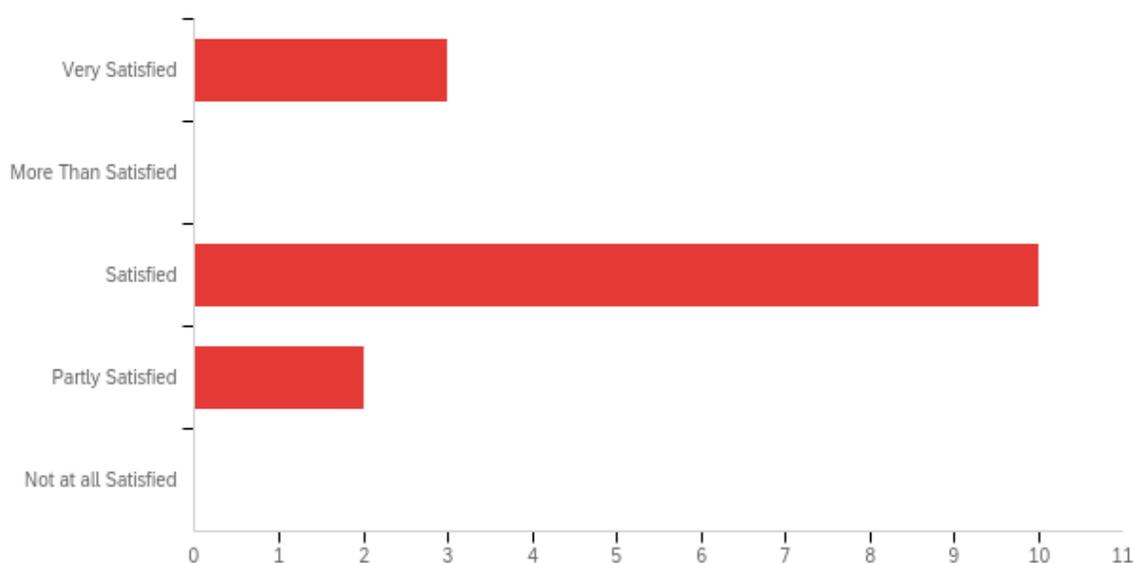
Survey Item 7 asked millennials how Christian education could be enhanced at their church. Responses that stemmed from this inquiry played a crucial role in shaping the recommendations in Chapter 5 of this study. Four themes emerged while coding and developing the thematic framework; Table 6 outlines the responses.

Table 6

Enhance Christian education – Millennials

Theme	% of responses
Differentiated Content	39%
Engagement	28%
New Media	28%
Transparency	6%

First, millennials felt differentiation of content is necessary to enhance Christian education for their age group. Differentiation of content may include aesthetically appealing educational presentations, content antithetical to millennials' attitude that Christians are boring, unintelligent, old-fashioned, out of touch with reality, prideful and judgmental (Kinnaman & Lyons, 2007). One millennial commented, "I believe the differentiation of content…would enhance Christian education." Another millennial added, "more in-depth explanation about doctrine because we have a lot of questions – probably more than our parents had, and no one really answers those questions because we are just told to believe." Millennials say they are looking for "modern life examples to apply biblical teaching."

The second theme derived from the responses focused on engagement. Millennials are tired of sitting back and watching things happen; they need to be actively involved in the church's operation and vision. A millennial noted how they needed "more engagement and age-specific teaching." Another millennial responded, "hitting the street more often, I think every member should be taught evangelism in every form." Millennials must be unchained from the 20th-century education model that was primarily teacher-centric. The boredom of lecture-only instructional methods seems to be driving millennials away. Again, the literature reviewed earlier in this study suggests that Christians are boring, unintelligent, old-fashioned, and out of touch with reality (Kinnaman & Lyons, 2007). The church can do more to engage millennials and keep the message relevant to their life and culture.

New media was the third theme derived from Survey Item 7. The ubiquity of smartphones and mobile devices coupled with a generation of digital natives have made the use of new media commonplace and, in some cases, a necessity. Millennials are asking "for a social media presence," to "continue to have virtual accessibility," and "continuing to utilize

technology." The researcher will offer recommendations and suggestions for integrating technology into the learning environment in new ways in the next chapter.

Transparency was the final theme that emerged from Survey Item 7. One respondent wrote, "those preaching and teaching to apply it more, just my experience, you are not exempt from God's standards, be transparent and willing to look in the mirror." This response reflects sentiments borne out of a previous study where millennials perceived Christians as insincere and hypocritical (Kinnaman and Lyons, 2007).

Survey Item 8 sought to understand the pandemic's impact on how Christian education is conducted among the GOHAOC. The COVID-19 pandemic has propelled all the churches into a virtual space. Pastors and educators had to pivot to a virtual learning experience in Spring 2020. Educators unfamiliar with a virtual learning environment were tasked with quickly moving from a traditional classroom to a virtual class. The GOHAOC migrated to virtual classrooms with zero-day preparation and training. The shift hurt many of the senior saints who could not utilize the necessary technologies to stay connected. However, the millennials experienced something drastically different. The change enabled them to learn and engage in a space more familiar to them.

Figure 5 provides a graphical visualization of millennials' responses concerning the pandemic's impact on how Christian education was offered at their church. The graphic clearly shows that the pandemic caused a "Moderate" to "Huge" impact on their Christian education experience. The responses indicated the pandemic had a significant effect on nine out of fifteen churches. The study also shows five of the churches were moderately impacted by the pandemic. One church reported a slight impact since they were currently using technology with the millennial group; therefore, the pandemic caused only a small change in their learning experience.

Figure 5

COVID-19 Impact on Christian education
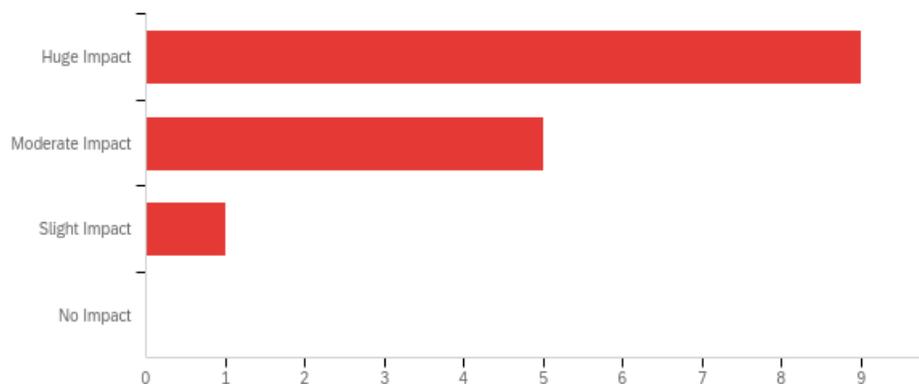
In summary, the responses from the millennial group significantly contributed to the research. Millennial responses informed the study by bringing their needs and the current learning experience into clear focus. The researcher now understands how millennials are discipled and communicate, which instructional methods are in use, and how they engage in spiritual formation practices. Additionally, the research shows the level of satisfaction millennials have with Christian education at their church, and the impact COVID-19 has had. Most importantly, the online survey results inform how Christian education can be enhanced from millennials' perspectives. The feedback provided by the millennials will serve an integral part in how to re-imagine Christian education for millennials in an African American Pentecostal Assemblies context.

Overarching Themes of the Findings

The study gathered data from multiple sources. Interviews were conducted with pastors, an elder, and educators from the GOHAOC. Also, an online survey allowed millennials an opportunity to provide feedback about their learning experience. The findings from the individual data sources have been analyzed and presented graphically. Once all data were aggregated, three emergent themes became very clear. The task to re-imagine Christian

education for millennials for the GOHAOC must be centered on RELEVANCE,

RELATIONSHIP, and REPRODUCTION interconnected with INFORMATION

COMMUNICATION TECHNOLGY. The overarching themes are illustrated in Figure 6. This

section will provide a more detailed explanation of these important themes.

Figure 6

Overarching Themes for Findings

Relevance is the first theme that is strikingly evident from the aggregated data. The

research shows millennials are asking for content that is easily relatable to them, particularly at

this juncture in their life. Millennials are asking for content that speaks to them now in the 21st

century. The current social, political, and economic climate may be causing them to re-think

their faith. Pastor Fisher understood the need for relevance as he commented, "their issues are

incomparable to many of our issues…they need a place to come and share." Older millennials

are also trying to find a balance between church obligations, family, and work. Pastor Swift

noted, "how do you find a balance? They are on different schedules." They need to understand

how biblical truths apply to their situations practically. Millennials appear to be challenging the content with statements such as "I believe that differentiation of content" and "teaching on other things that aren't holiness" can enhance Christian education. Again, one millennial commented that they desired more "age-specific teaching." Pastor Fisher expressed how his philosophy of ministry was to ensure that the congregation was "well-versed in what we believe." The expression from Pastor Fisher coincides with a millennial who felt they needed "more in-depth explanations about doctrine because we have a lot of questions." Another millennial asked for material that was more "attention-grabbing." The data revealed that some, but not all, are engaging technology to bring relevance into the classroom. Brother Putnam, an educator, spoke of how he used YouTube in his class but was not specific on its relevance. Digital textbooks were often cited as an instructional method by millennials; however, the subject matter was not stated.

Relationships were the second theme extracted from the data. Two types of relationships become apparent when all data were analyzed. A relationship exists between the church's leadership and the millennials; there is also a relationship among the Millennials themselves. Kinnaman and Lyons (2007) research attest to the often-strained relationship between church leaders and millennials. The current study shows a depletion of trust could be a contributing factor to the research problem. One millennial commented how "those preaching or teaching to apply it more, just my experience, you are not exempt from God's standards, be transparent and willing to look in the mirror." This bold statement reflects somewhat of a challenge to pastors and teachers to formulate a better relationship with millennials through transparency. Sister Christopher feels the relationship between leaders and millennials is strained due to devaluation. Sister Christopher says, "we don't value them until we need them." She went on to say, "if we don't value them, then they won't value us." Pastor Glass has the largest millennial population

and seems to have developed a strong relationship with them. Glass explained how millennials came to him asking for more intimate moments to discuss issues.

The current research uncovered the relationships among millennials as an essential theme. The goal of discipleship is to foster a sense of community among believers, especially within the millennial group. Millennials were asked if they communicated with each other outside of times when they are in church; the findings are fascinating. Of the fifteen responses, nine say they often communicate with other millennials. Three respondents reported how they communicated occasionally or rarely, and the remaining three respondents said they have no communication at all. These findings indicate that millennials' relationship is primarily positive; however, forty percent of the millennials felt they rarely communicated or not at all. Elder Denzil elucidated, "we have to help them build a community and support one another."

The final overarching theme is reproduction. The primary focus of the Great Commission is to reproduce. Jesus commanded His disciples to "go and make disciples of all nations" (*New International Version*, 1978/2011, Matthew 28:19). Millennials are not exempt from this command and must actively engage in discipling. The study finds that the GOHAOC provides several ways millennials can disciple others. Interactive Bible study was one of the means millennials could be a discipler. The educator's interviews provided evidence of the millennials' involvement in presenting Bible lessons, mentoring, church participation, and youth ministry. Each of these areas is mainly within the four walls of the church.

Many churches explained how they have activities outside of the church where millennials can make disciples. Pastor Fisher explained how his church has ministries such as foreign missions, food pantry, homeless, community outreach, hospice, and street evangelism. These ministries enable millennials to take their witness beyond the church's four walls and into a world that needs a Savior. Pastor Lamb commented how her focus was to develop leaders who

can develop leaders as a priority so that everyone is discipled. Pastor Swift's discipleship

strategy is much like the adage "each one reach one, and each one teach one." Speaking of

reproduction, Sister Christopher believed "they can even be teachers, that they can be mentors,

that they can be someone modeled after." Sister Samuelson also noted, "they reach their age

group better, older teaching the younger."

Information Communication Technology (ICT) is pertinent to the study's overarching

themes and binds them together. The research has shown the importance of ICT to millennials

and will catalyze the re-imagination of Christian education. The research shows how ICT is

currently used to access relevant material for Bible study. Educators are engaging millennials by

allowing them to be presenters, use Internet resources for Bible study and Scripture

interpretation. Pastor Swift communicates with her millennials via ICT to understand what topics

interest them; sermon and teaching series are also developed from these interactions.

The current study highlights how ICT is being used to foster relationships. Churches have

had to pivot to a virtual space due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While social and physical

distancing must be put into practice, ICT provided a means through which relationships can be

created and maintained. Leaders are maintaining their connection with millennials via Zoom,

Skype, Microsoft Teams, and conference calls. The study shows that millennials are in close

relationships with each other through phone calls, Facetime, chat, and texting. Social media

provides a place to foster not only current relationships but also spark new ones.

ICT was shown to provide a means for millennials to make disciples. As presenters,

millennials used ICT to teach their peers and serve as mentors to those who were younger than

they are. Millennials can make disciples through social media platforms to share a recorded

sermon or lesson and engage a non-believer. Furthermore, ICT extends the reach of making

disciples beyond the four walls of the church. Whereas millennials may not have the means to

travel around the world, by simply creating a public post of their testimony, a lesson learned, or what God is doing in their life, their reach potentially goes to the ends of the earth.

The findings uncover overarching themes of relevance, relationship, and reproduction. ICT is inextricably tied to the themes and is particularly useful for millennials. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted each church in some form. As a result, improvements and challenges to sustaining a healthy millennial population are visible. Chapter 5 will provide specific recommendations for re-imagining Christian education, considering these findings. The following section looks into the research design.

Evaluation of the Research Design

The research was a qualitative case study design on the pedagogical methods at the GOHAOC. The focus was to understand millennials' instructional methodologies and see if there is a correlation with declining millennial involvement and participation. The study was administered in five phases. During Phase 1, permission was granted by pastors of the Gates of Heaven Assembly of Churches to conduct the research. Fifteen pastors in the northeastern United States were invited to participate, with seven responding positively. Phases 2-4 consisted of recorded video interviews with pastors, an elder, and educators, respectively. Lastly, Phase 5 allowed millennials to provide feedback via an online survey. An evaluation of the strengths and challenges of the research design is provided in the next section.

Strengths

This study's biggest strength was the qualitative design, where participants can respond to a line of questions in their own words. The responses from pastors, elders, educators, and millennials provided invaluable information for understanding Christian education's current state for today's millennials. Also, the answers allowed the researcher to make specific recommendations to build upon what is already effective and improve less effective areas.

The second strength of the study was the emergence of the overarching themes. The themes align directly with the Great Commission. The passage is in Matthew 28:19-20 (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017): Go ye therefore, and teach all nations (REPRODUCTION), baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you (RELEVANCE): and, lo, I am with you always (RELATIONSHIP), even unto the end of the world. Amen. The research demonstrated how Information and Communication Technologies are interlaced within the overarching themes.

Weaknesses

The researcher is extremely grateful to all the participants. However, the scope could have been expanded through the participation of more churches. Less than half of the intended churches participated in the study. Fifteen churches met the requirements of the purposeful sampling criteria, but only seven participated.

The second weakness of the study is that a follow-up was not performed with the millennial group. While the online survey allowed millennials to express themselves in their own words, a follow-up could have provided more details to their answers. The reason this was not done was due to the anonymity of the millennial participants. The data collection procedure called for pastors to distribute the online survey link to their millennial population. A list of millennials from each church was not provided.

Conclusion

The study of seven churches of the Gates of Heaven Assembly of Churches provided a snapshot of the experiences of relevant parties involved in millennials' discipleship and spiritual practices leading to spiritual formation. The research uncovered a broad spectrum of areas that are doing well and areas that need improvement. The data collection and analysis goal were to

understand what is required to enhance Christian education for the millennial population among

the GOHAOC.

Chapter Summary

Chapter Four furnished the demographics and sample data involved in the research. Like

other studies, the current research was not without its strengths and weakness. The analysis was

robust in understanding the research problem from the participants in their own words, yet weak

in its ability to capture a broader range of participation from more churches that make up the

GOHAOC. Responses from the five phases of data collection uncovered critical overarching

themes highlighting the following section's recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS
Overview

The final section of the study will provide recommendations based on the research derived from Chapter Four. This section restates the Research Purpose and list of Research Questions used to guide the study. The chapter will then discuss the research conclusions, implications, and application. The chapter's final section will explain the Research Limitations and conclude with recommendations for areas to study further. The qualitative study emerged from a desire to understand a declining millennial population among the Gates of Heaven Assembly of Churches located in the northeastern United States of America. The researcher wanted to understand any correlation between the current pedagogical methods and why millennials were leaving the church. It must be noted that the impetus for the research began three years before a global pandemic began in 2020. Before the onset of the study, technology use in Christian education was not widespread within the GOHAOC.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory case study research design will be to explore current pedagogical methodologies and ICT use in Christian education among pastors and teachers in the Gates of Heaven Assembly of Churches (GOHAOC) and to assess the current level of satisfaction with and participation in Christian education ministry activities of the GOHAOC among the millennial members of the church community. At this stage in the research, ICT is defined as a "diverse set of technological tools and resources used to communicate and to create, disseminate, store, and manage information. These technologies include computers, the Internet, broadcasting technologies (radio and television), and telephony" (Amin, 2018, p.2).

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1. What are the most common instructional methodologies used for Christian Education for the target group in the local church among the GOHAOC?

RQ2. How do the pastors and Christian educators of the GOHAOC describe their current level of effectiveness in Christian education in the local church?

RQ3. How do the millennials of the GOHAOC describe their current level of satisfaction in Christian education in the local church?

RQ4. To what extent is Christian education among the GOHAOC impacting millennials' participation within their local church?

Research Conclusions, Implications, and Applications

Research Conclusions

The research has concluded that the problem of retaining African American millennials in the Gates of Heaven Assembly of Churches is not unique. Another recent study showed a decline from 43% in 2007 to 33% in 2019 (Pew Research Center, 2019). The literature review provided a synopsis of Christian education as a means of discipleship, especially for the African American community (Sandidge, 2017; Hill 2007; Blount, 2005). Emphasis was made on the role of Information Communication Technology use in Christian education.

RQ1 data was garnered from interviews with educators and an online survey completed by millennials; it asked about the current instructional methods. The result showed how instructional methods were either technical or non-technical. Technical methods included videos, PowerPoints, YouTube, digital textbooks, and zoom. Non-technical methods employed were textbooks, discussion, lecture or direct instruction, and writing. The interview guide for elders included a question about the future use of ICT for discipleship. The following conclusions can be drawn from research RQ1:

- A variety of instructional methods are currently in use when discipling millennials.

- ICT use is now prevalent among pastors and educators for Christian education and discipleship.
- ICT used will be retained and expanded even after the pandemic is over.

RQ2 data was taken from the interviews with pastors, elders, and educators and asked about their current level of effectiveness in Christian education in the local church. On a scale from 1-10, answers ranged from the lowest rating of 3 to the highest rating of 8. The following conclusions were drawn from **RQ2**:

- No one was satisfied with their evaluation. Each leader expressed the need to retain millennials at their church better.
- A lack of technical training impeded effectiveness.
- Ineffectiveness was due to their inability to keep millennials engaged.
- Educators are more effective as they develop themselves personally, professionally, spiritually.
- Christian education is most effective when millennials are actively engaged.

RQ3 data was taken from the online survey completed by the millennials. This question allowed millennials the opportunity to express their level of satisfaction with Christian education at their church. A satisfaction scale was employed where ratings from Very Dissatisfied to Very Satisfied could be selected. Responses were chosen from only three categories: Partly Satisfied, Satisfied, and Very Satisfied. Based on the results, the following conclusion could be drawn: thirteen out of fifteen millennials are mostly satisfied with Christian education at their church today.

RQ4 data was also taken from the online survey completed by the millennials. Millennials were asked to express the extent to which Christian education was impacting their spiritual growth. Several questions on the survey contributed to the conclusions that were drawn. Respondents were able to discuss how they are discipled, grow in their faith, communicate with other millennials, and provide recommendations they feel could enhance Christian education. Based on the results, the following conclusion could be drawn:

- Communication among millennials at the same church can be improved. Six out of fifteen millennials communicate with each other outside of regular church times.
- The content and approach to discipleship are vital to how they perceive growth.
- Engagement is essential to sustaining healthy Christian education participation.
- Technology is essential to how they communicate, learn, and grow. Social media was suggested to assist in these areas.
- Millennials are looking for more transparency from their leaders.

Research Implications

The implications represent what this means to the GOHAOC and beyond. Christian leaders can enhance Christian education through the application of the overarching themes derived from the data. Also, Christian education can be re-imagined for millennials. ICT traverses all aspects of Christian education for millennials. ICT impacts what is relevant to them, their relationships, and how they can reproduce. The implication of re-imagining Christian education for millennials is far-reaching. First, millennials will be discipled in a new way. As millennials engage in spiritual practices and are spiritually formed, they will be developing more into Christ-likeness. Secondly, the church can retain more millennials as they become actively engaged and involved in ministry. The world will be impacted as millennials carry out the Great Commission.

Research Application

The Research Application section of the study details what the researcher feels can be instituted to re-imagine Christian education for African American millennials in a Pentecostal Assemblies context. The global pandemic has affected all aspects of society; it has impacted schools, workplaces, business operations, and even the church. The current research has shown how the pandemic has altered Christian leadership's attitudes towards ICT use and discipleship. Whereas, in some cases, pastors who were opposed to ICT use began to see its benefits throughout the coronavirus spread. As many churches were forced to interrupt face-to-face meetings, ICT enables churches and Christian educators to pivot to a virtual learning platform to

survive. The Research Application will be presented under the umbrella of the overarching themes of relevance, relationship, and reproduction.

Relevance

The responses from the online survey for millennials uncovered a need for more relevant CONTENT. Relevancy of content can be addressed in several ways. First, millennials are asking for content that speaks to them now in 21st-century language. The issues relevant to this group include social injustice, marriage-family-career balance, and content beyond holiness. Hill (2007) adds:

> The issues are: Black Theology as the content for Christian education theory and practice; contemporary Christian education theory and practice in African and Christian communal understanding of God and humanity; the use of Black theology by educators/pastors to train clergy and laity and other leaders who in turn explain and defend it; the necessity of Christian education and Black theology to engage in dialogue to bridge the gap between theory and practice; and collaboration between Black theologians and Black church intellectuals to enlarge Black religious thought (p. 11).

Millennials want to know how Scripture and prayer factor into finding a job and choosing a mate. In other words, Christian education for the GOHOAC can find practical ways to apply Scripture and making it meaningful in a modern context. Scripture records something similar in the Book of Nehemiah. As Ezra began to read from the Law, Levites instructed the people as they stood and listened. The Bible says, "they read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving meaning so that the people understood what was being read" (*New International Version*, 1978/2011, Nehemiah 8:8). Yount (2010) says, "Effective teachers know their subjects well, yet plan activities that are relevant to students' lives, needs, and ministries" (p. 336). Scripture speaks to all aspects of our modern lives, and where the Bible may be silent on a specific issue, there are guiding principles millennials can glean from the Word of God.

Secondly, Christian leaders can ask millennials about important matters, thus providing a gateway to content. The researcher recently was invited to join a millennial group on Facebook

to observe the discussions and conversations millennials are having among themselves. Thirdly, content can be derived from social media platforms as one follows what and who is trending both religiously and secularly. A keen observer can gain content as they put a finger in the pulse of current events in the millennial community.

Fourthly, publishers like Urban Ministries Incorporated (UMI) offer content specifically designed for African American millennials. UMI has a publication entitled *Urban Faith* that targets ages 18-35 in urban and African American communities. Fifthly, millennials are creative and can create some of their digital content. Many applications such as Canva, Adobe Spark, and even PowerPoint are available to create digital content for sharing and presentations. Digital content can be graphical or audio. Millennials often listen to podcasts and YouTube videos for spiritual formation. Lessons can be saved and shared for cases where scheduling demands impede real-time participation.

Relationship

Healthy relationships are critical to re-imagining Christian education for millennials and must be underscored. It is all about CONNECTIONS. The study reveals that a two-pronged approach is needed. First, millennials must have a healthy relationship with their pastors and educators. Trust emerged as a critical component necessary to foster this relationship. Millennials responded to the survey with comments about their perception of how leaders need to be more transparent. Trust develops as both parties enter an exchange of trust. Pastors and educators can connect with millennials at a deeper level when they are not afraid or ashamed to share their mistakes and misgivings. However, there is undoubtedly a level of risk involved; this cannot be a one-way street where leaders are perceived as being without error and invincible. An argument from millennials was that "they want to find people to trust and confide in, but they

often find more transparent, authentic people outside the church" (Kinnaman & Lyons, 2007, p. 47).

Secondly, millennial-to-millennial engagement must be encouraged. The current study showed that six out of fifteen millennials had good connections with their counterparts outside the church. This number needs to improve. Churches can form internal social networks where millennials can engage more frequently outside of regular church times. Lowe and Lowe (2018) define social networks as "the connections people have with each other, the interactions that transpire across the connection, and the influence that results from these connective interactions" (p. 127). Millennials are keen on social media platforms. The researcher recommends that millennials connect (follow) each other on social media. Facebook allows for creating "pages" and exclusive groups, enabling millennials to communicate in more natural spaces, especially outside the church. Instagram is highly popular and can share one's life story via video, chat, and Direct Messages (DM). In this way, ICT becomes an excellent means through which millennials can develop and maintain inter-millennial connections. Microsoft Teams and Zoom have become popular ICT tools to connect people. Both offer video conferencing and screen-sharing capabilities. In this way, a relationship can move into a collaborative space for the digital context recommended in the previous section.

Reproduction

Reproduction is the final element under the research application umbrella. To reproduce is to fulfill the Great COMMISSION. Jesus commanded the disciples to go into all the world and make disciples. Millennials need to be actively involved in ministry. An adage says, "sheep begat sheep," which rings true for millennials who can draw other millennials to Christ. Christian education is enhanced as it encourages reproduction in theory and practice. When at church (inreach), millennials will learn how to reproduce and engage in mentoring, then in their

encounters outside the church (outreach), they will be better equipped to disciple non-believers. Millennials must be taught how to evangelize. The researcher recommends a book entitled *Contagious Christian* that offers a practical way to reach the lost. ICT opens a broad range of ways millennials can spread the gospel beyond the walls of the church. Not only can souls be reached beyond the walls, but they can also be reached worldwide.

ICT is a thread interwoven through the three overarching themes. There are three ways ICT use can assist in the efficacy of Christian education. First, when applied to relevance, ICT allows pastors, elders, and educators an opportunity to incorporate a vast array of internet resources into a lesson. The Internet provides access to everything from the archives of the Church Fathers up to what happened just a few minutes ago in real-time. Relevant material can also be widely distributed through the internet to social media platforms, email, and video conferencing. Millennials can also use ICT to collaborate and share materials that are relevant to their needs. Secondly, when applied to the area of relationship, social media platforms, Microsoft Teams, and Zoom offer great opportunities for millennials to connect and collaborate. Lastly, when applied to reproduction, ICT makes the command to go to all nations more literal. The proper application of ICT can impact millennials both near and far.

Research Limitations

The global pandemic that hit in 2020 resulted in a significant shift in the current research. The perceived attitudes of leaders who may have been widely opposed to ICT use for Christian education have been erased mainly out of necessity. However, the researcher was able to gain a sense of what it will take to re-imagine Christian education for millennials in an African American Pentecostal Assembly context. Another limitation of the study was the inability to have a follow-up interview with some millennial respondents. A follow-up to the online survey could have provided a more meaningful explanation for many of the responses. The final

limitation is in respect to the scope of the study. Only seven out of fifteen churches participated; this represents less than half of the churches in the northeastern United States.

Further Research

The study's goal was to understand the problem of a diminishing millennial population in African American churches from an educational perspective. Further research can take a quantitative approach to explore the millennial population, their involvement, and their ability to reproduce. A baseline can be established, and over a specified period, a re-evaluation can take place to understand any changes that may have occurred.

A study that widens the scope beyond the Gates of Heaven Assembly of Churches may uncover varying attitudes and deficiencies that churches are experiencing outside of a Pentecostal Assemblies context. A correlation may then be made to assist in re-imagining Christian education to a broader range of denominations. One final suggestion would be to engage a study that takes a deeper dive to examine the RELEVANCE, RELATIONSHIPS, and REPRODUCTION themes that emerged from the current research. A better understanding of the content, connections, and commission surrounding millennials will add to the body of literature needed to regain this population in our churches.

Chapter Summary

Chapter Five of the study restated the Research Purpose and Questions. The researcher presented the conclusions and implications unique to this study. The researcher offered practical recommendations to provided leaders with the tools needed to re-imagine Christian education in the 21st-Century. The emergence of the overarching themes from Chapter Four was foundational to the suggestions presented in Chapter Five. The research limitations were a result of the global pandemic and participation from fewer churches than anticipated. Finally, future research ideas were offered that can build on what was drawn from the current research.

Research Summation

Empirical data has shown the trending departure of Christians from church membership and involvement. The trend has been more pronounced over the last 20 years; these findings prompted the research. At the time of the study, reports of several prominent Christian leaders have left church and Christianity altogether. Millennials are the focus of this study, and the impact is far-reaching and extends past church walls and into future generations. The data fulfill biblical prophecy for a "falling away" (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, 2 Thessalonians 2:3). However, the current study has shown that there still exists a responsibility to make disciples.

The Great Commission is the impetus for today's church leaders and educators to operate under the Holy Spirit's power to disciple and evangelize the world. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost is foundational to Pentecostalism; it exemplifies the mandate to be filled with the Spirit and spread the gospel. Christ's command to make disciples has reverberated throughout the history of the church and must continue today.

The study highlights some of the components needed to reverse diminishing millennial membership and involvement in the local church, particularly in the African American Pentecostal church. Re-imaging Christian education for millennials in a Pentecostal assemblies context is possible. There must be a connection with the Holy Scriptures and learners' needs and experiences (Yount 2010). The necessary components needed for Christian leaders and educators are relevant content, deeper relationships between millennials and leadership, and tools required to reproduce. The researcher feels discoveries resulting from this study are not solely unique among African American Pentecostal churches but have broader implications and application throughout Christendom.

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APPENDIX A

Consent Form for Pastors, Elders, and Educators

Title of the Project: Re-imagining Christian Education for Millennials in an African American Pentecostal Assemblies Context
Principal Investigator: Kevin L. Campbell, Elder of Discipleship, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be a pastor, elder of discipleship, or Christian educator in the Gates of Heaven Assembly of Churches. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take the time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory case study research design will be to explore current pedagogical methodologies and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) use in Christian education among pastors and teachers in the Gates of Heaven Assembly of Churches (GOHAOC) located in the northeastern United States.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:
1. Participate in a one-on-one interview that will last for 45 minutes to 1 hour. The session will be recorded via an audio/video recorder.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect any direct benefits from participating in this study. The direct

Benefits to society include the spiritual formation of millennials who will be equipped and empowered to do their part in fulfilling the Great Commission in the world. Benefits participants should expect to receive from taking part in this study are enhanced Christian education experience for millennials among the Gates of Heaven Assemblies of Churches. Educators will have a better understanding of how millennials learn from a millennial's perspective. Instructional methods can be better utilized to educate the millennials. The findings and recommendations will be shared with the participating churches.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

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

How will personal information be protected?

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.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Does the researcher have any conflicts of interest?

The researcher serves as a member of the Christian Education Resource and Development Committee of the Gates of Heaven Assembly of Churches. To limit potential or perceived conflicts, this disclosure is being made in advance of any study procedures so that you can make an informed decision about whether this relationship will affect your willingness to participate in this study. No action will be taken against an individual based on his or her decision to participate in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision about whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or the Gates of Heaven Assembly of Churches. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide 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.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Elder Kevin L. Campbell. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at xxx-xxx-xxxx. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor.

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

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

Your Consent

By clicking on "Yes, I want to participate", and digitally signing this form on the next page, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you proceed. If desired, please save a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will

keep a copy of the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you complete this form, you can contact the study team using the information provided above. By proceeding you acknowledge that you have read and understood the above information. You have asked questions and have received answers, and consent to participate in the study.

The researcher has my permission to audio/video record me as part of my participation in this study. (YES/NO)

Please type your name and the date to digitally sign this consent form:

APPENDIX B
Online Survey Consent Form

Title of the Project: Re-imagining Christian Education for Millennials in an African American Pentecostal Assemblies Context

Principal Investigator: Kevin L. Campbell, Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be 24-39, actively participate in Christian education at the local church, and be a member of the Gates of Heaven Assembly of Churches. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take the time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory case study research design will be to explore current pedagogical methodologies and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) use in Christian education among pastors and teachers in the Gates of Heaven Assembly of Churches (GOHAOC) located in the northeastern United States.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following: Participate in an online survey that will last for approximately 15 minutes.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

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

Benefits to society include the spiritual formation of millennials who will be equipped and empowered to do their part in fulfilling the Great Commission in the world.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

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

How will personal information be protected?

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.

- Participant responses will be anonymous
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.

Does the researcher have any conflicts of interest?

The researcher serves as a member of the Christian Education Resource and Development Committee of the Gates of Heaven Assembly of Churches. To limit potential or perceived conflicts, the study will be anonymous among the millennials, so the researcher will not know who participated. This disclosure is made so that you can decide if this relationship will affect your willingness to participate in this study. No action will be taken against an individual based on his or her decision to participate in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision about whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or Gates of Heaven Assembly of Churches. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study prior to submitting the survey, please close your browser and do not submit the survey. Once the survey has been submitted, it will not be possible to withdraw, as the responses are anonymous.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Elder Kevin L. Campbell. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at xxx-xxx-xxxx. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor.

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

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

Your Consent

Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand what the study is about. If you have any questions about the study later, you can contact the researcher/study team using the information provided above.

Click the Survey Link

APPENDIX C

Interview Guide for Pastors

1. How long have you been the pastor of _____?

2. Tell me about your philosophy of ministry.

3. Does your ministry have a discipleship strategy? If so, what is it?

4. Approximately what percentage of persons in your ministry are millennials?

5. How are your millennial parishioners discipled?

6. How effective is your ministry in keeping millennial members plugged in?

7. What are your feelings about using Information and Communication Technology to disciple your members?

8. Have your feelings about using Information and Communication Technology changed since the COVID-19 pandemic? If so, how has it changed?

9. Do you have any plans for using Information and Communication Technology in discipleship?

10. What criterion do you have for selecting an elder of discipleship / Christian education director/Sunday school superintendent?

11. Is there anything you feel can be done differently to better discipled today's Millennials?

APPENDIX D

Interview Guide for Elder

1. List and describe the educational opportunities you currently offer.

2. What qualifications do you have for selecting educators for the discipleship ministry?

3. What is the process for selecting training material for your discipleship ministry?

4. Describe your overall level of effectiveness in discipling millennials.

5. Have your feelings about using Information and Communication Technology changed since the COVID-19 pandemic? If so, how has it changed?

6. Do you have any plans for using Information and Communication Technology in discipleship?

7. Is there anything you feel can be done differently to better disciple today's Millennials?

APPENDIX E

**Interview Guide for Educators**

1. Describe your teaching philosophy.

2. What instructional methods are currently being used in your classes?

3. Does your class currently incorporate Information and Communication Technology into your discipleship ministries? If so, how is it done?

4. Have your feelings about using Information and Communication Technology changed since the COVID-19 pandemic? If so, how has it changed?

5. Do you have any plans for using Information and Communication Technology in discipleship?

6. Describe your overall level of effectiveness in discipling Millennials.

7. Is there anything you feel can be done differently to better disciple today's Millennials?

APPENDIX F

Millennial Survey

1.   Describe in your own words what it means to be a disciple.

2.   What are some of the ways you use to grow in your faith?

3.   How hours per day do you spend engaged in spiritual formation (reading Scripture or

Christian literature, prayer, listening to religious content online like videos, podcasts, or music

4.   Do you communicate with other Millennials in your ministry outside of times when you

are in church? If so, how do you communicate?

5.   What type of instructional methods are used in the educational ministries at your church?

6.   Rate your level of satisfaction with the instructional methods for discipleship at your

church?

7.   What would you say could enhance Christian education at your church?

8.   How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted spiritual growth in your life?

APPENDIX G

Coding Scheme
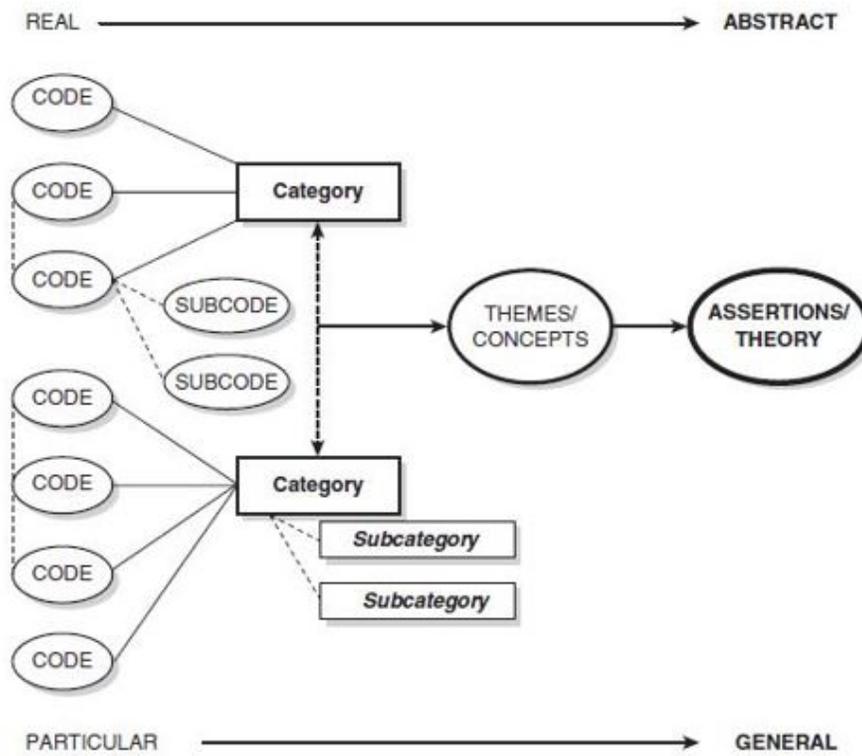
Coding Scheme. Saldana (2013, p. 13)

APPENDIX H
Member Checking

Dear Pastor,

Thank you again for taking the time to meet with me recently regarding my dissertation. I learned so much from our time together.

As part of my research process, I have provided a link to our interview. Please take the time to review the discussion and let me know if you notice any changes which need to be made. This step will help to ensure the reliability and trustworthiness of my study.

Again, thank you so very much for your time. I look forward to more opportunities to fellowship with you in the future.

Blessings,

Kevin L. Campbell