LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

THE RELATIONAL FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IN YOUTH MINISTERS:

DO YOUTH MINISTERS DISPLAY PATIENCE, KINDNESS, AND GOODNESS?

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

by

Mary Ann Ridgley-Thornton

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

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ABSTRACT

Youth ministry is a crucial part of the church that can help teenagers strengthen their godly beliefs and spiritual formation. Youth ministers' actions, characters, and behavior should reflect the fruit of the Spirit. This qualitative case study explored whether and how youth leaders displayed the fruit of the Spirit at seven Bible-based, baptistic Christian churches in southeast Georgia. Although seven was the goal, only five churches agreed to participate. A Christian church was defined as one with no more than 500 members that accept the Bible as the sole source and authority of genuine Christian faith. The fruit of the Spirit was defined as the nine specific behaviors Paul lists in Galatians 5:22-23 (Noyes, 2019): love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These can be developed through the work of the Holy Spirit in a Christian's life (Noyes, 2019). Little research has been done into the fruit of the Spirit and whether it is displayed by youth ministers or other leaders. In this study, the researcher attempted to contribute to the leadership knowledge base. The study used interviews and observations to investigate whether youth ministers' behaviors demonstrated the fruit of the Spirit. A within-case analysis was conducted on the first case and then replicated on the subsequent four. A cross-case analysis was used to compare the findings, and conclusions were drawn about the connections between the youth pastors and the relational fruit of the Spirit: patience, kindness, and goodness. The youth pastors in this study demonstrated these relational fruit of the Spirit. Although the youth pastors were not perfect, their demonstration of the fruit made a difference in their ministry.

Keywords: the fruit of the Spirit, patience, kindness, goodness, Christian church youth, youth ministry

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my Jesus, who saved me from a sin-filled life for a mighty work. Without my Triune God, nothing in my life would be possible. I also dedicate this work to my husband, Derek Thornton, who has supported and encouraged me and has never given up on me through this process. Additionally, to my three greatest blessings, Jason, Sabrina, and Madelynne, you brighten my world and make me always want to be my best and do my best. I love you to infinity and beyond. Finally, I dedicate this dissertation to my mom, dad, and younger brother, who always encouraged me to soar above adversity.

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First, this would not be possible without my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He is my strength in times of weakness and my motivation in times of doubt and discouragement. All honor, glory, and acknowledgment go to Him first and foremost.

To my dissertation chair, Dr. Bredfeldt, thank you for putting up with my many emails and questions. You were always encouraging and helpful.

To my editor, Derek Thornton, thank you for always being in my corner and supporting me through all my endeavors.

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CHAPTER ONE: RESEARCH CONCERN

Introduction

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is crucial because He helps reveal who is a believer in Christ and aids in the living out of the fruit of the Spirit, which are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Cunningham, 2011). Although it takes time to develop all the areas that make up the fruit of the Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit affects the purpose of one's life and God's role in a leader's life. The fruit connects the leader to the Holy Spirit through God's grace, shows maturity and growth, and transforms a leader's spiritual walk. A leader can perform good works through the Holy Spirit and live out the fruit of the Spirit; a leader cannot do this without help (Fuller, 2001).

Youth ministry is a crucial part of the church that can help teenagers strengthen their godly beliefs and spiritual formation. Youth ministers are church leaders who work with teenagers who need to learn about Jesus and how God works. They desire to "facilitate and empower young people in developing a deep and meaningful relationship with God" (Aziz, 2019, p. 4). The objective is to develop young people who are mature enough in their faith that they can use their belief to distinguish and implement faithful Christian actions as disciples of Christ (Dean, 2001; Strong, 2015). Youth ministers' actions, character qualities, and behaviors must reflect the Spirit's fruit. Little research has investigated the fruit of the Spirit and whether it is displayed by youth leaders. In this work, the researcher attempted to contribute to this knowledge base. Chapter one includes background information, the problem statement, the purpose statement, research questions, assumptions, delimitations, definitions of terms, the study's significance, and the design summary.

Background to the Problem

Paul used the term "fruit" to help the Galatians understand that the product of the Holy Spirit is the characteristics of Christ that are demonstrated in believers' lives (Wright, 2017). As disciples of Christ allow the Holy Spirit to guide them, they grow to look and act more like Jesus, the perfect example. They begin to display God's fruit.

The fruit of the Spirit is not easy to master. The fruit "grows together within a Christian's life. All the pieces of one fruit work together and strengthen each other" (Wright, 2017, p. 156). Youth ministers must allow the spirit of the living God to come alive. This is not an easy process: it takes time to become competent, and it only happens through God's grace as ministers grow in His word and absorb and apply what they learn (Krejcir, 2000).

When a youth minister chooses to engage with the fruit of the Spirit, God blesses the work and the worker because He blesses those who seek to honor Him (*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011, Ps. 128). Youth ministers need to pray every day for God to infuse them with the fruit of the Spirit *(New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011, James 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8). In Matthew 7, Jesus states that healthy trees bear good fruit and that people will recognize believers by their good fruit (*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011). The fruit is essential for God's holy work to be completed.

Youth ministry is a crucial part of the church. Youth pastors need to display specific characteristics to connect with teenagers. These characteristics should include the fruit of the Spirit. There needs to be more research into the fruit of the Spirit and whether youth leaders display it, and in this work, the researcher attempts to contribute to this knowledge base. This section discusses the background of youth ministers and whether and how they portray the fruit of the Spirit in relation to the study's theological, thematic, and theoretical contexts.

Theological Context

Forming the character of Jesus is accomplished by developing the fruit of the Spirit. Being led by the Spirit means receiving instruction from God and fulfilling His will like Jesus (Zoschak, 1991). In Matthew 7:16-20, Jesus noted that good trees bear good fruit and that people in Him, His disciples, will be known by their fruit (*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011). According to Sproul (n.d.), the fruit that Jesus referred to is the same that Paul discusses: "They are genuine marks of godliness and can be seen eminently and vividly in the lives of mature Christians" (Sproul, n.d., p. 5). Paul noted that the fruit of the Spirit stands in contrast to the work of the flesh, and they are the virtues Jesus wants us to cultivate and grow (Sproul, n.d.).

The fruit of the Spirit consists of nine traits: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011, Galatians 5:22-23). These traits work together as one package to guide a believer in Christ-like living. A Christian with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit must live by these standards. The fruit of the Spirit are not produced naturally because they are contrary to the flesh. Besides, they are not easy to live out in daily life. The fruit grows when a Christian submits to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and uses their God-given ability to make it happen (Krejcir, 2000; Mazzalongo, 2018).

The fruit of the Spirit reflects values and behaviors that leaders can demonstrate in their leadership (Crowther, 2017). These values aid leaders in working with their constituents. The fruit can be divided into three categories. The first three, love, joy, and peace, develop from a relationship with God. Love creates a focus on others' needs and their best interests. Joy demonstrates confidence in positive and negative situations, and peace allows a leader to handle conflict. The next three, which will be emphasized in this study, are patience, kindness, and

goodness, which are ways leaders treat those under their charge. They involve using moral ethics, encouraging others, treating others with appreciation, and listening to their concerns. The final three traits, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, show that leaders are composed and trustworthy and can accomplish goals.

According to Crowther (2017), leaders can use these Bible-based values to focus on those around them. Because there are few studies, Crowther (2017) emphasized that churches be at the forefront when using the fruit of the Spirit to lead and guide their congregants (p. 32). He further stated that the churches "become the leader instead of following cultural norms" (p. 32).

In one study, Rasmussen (2018) focused on the fruit of the Spirit and on teaching the nine fruits to student leaders. From this study, he learned that more emphasis must be placed on teaching about the Holy Spirit. He also found a strong connection between a person's psychological outlook and their spiritual life: "One of the most important implications of this project was realizing that leaders are not fully grasping the scripture" (Rasmussen, 2018, p. 133). Rasmussen concluded that leadership instruction for future leaders should have biblical roots and a crucial character-development course. A leader should have a growing relationship with God and demonstrate Spirit-filled characteristics (Rasmussen, 2018).

Further support for leading a Spirit-filled life is found in Strong's "Effective Youth Ministry: Theology-Driven in a Cultural Context" (2015). Strong found that if youth ministers want to lead youths to Christ and have a theological youth ministry, their priority should be a personal relationship with God: "Effective youth ministry should be all about connecting with God and having a God-actualized approach rather than a self-actualized approach to ministry. Ministry should be theologically driven and teach youth about a personal relationship with the triune God, His Word, and His Kingdom" (p. 4). This relationship should be deepened daily by

study of God's word and prayers. This relationship would embrace the triune God and allow the Spirit's fruit to grow in the ministers.

Theoretical Literature

One of the main types of behavioral leadership theory is rooted in behaviorism and focuses on leaders' actions and behaviors (Vaskinn et al., 2020). This behavioral leadership theory considers how a leader's behaviors can be identified and how their behaviors and actions enhance others' experiences (Fuller, 2019). Another of the main types of behavioral leadership theory is people-oriented or relationship-oriented, emphasizing interpersonal relationships. Relationship-oriented leaders focus on others' well-being by putting those they work with first (Breevaart & DeVries, 2019). Relationship-oriented leaders show love and compassion. They are committed to being available to listen, friendly, and respectful to everyone they encounter. According to Bredfeldt (2016), genuine attention and consideration are crucial for a leader.

Youth ministers must be relationship-oriented. Youth ministry is a service-oriented field for the church, communities, families, and youths. Encouragement, support, understanding, and motivation are vital components of people-oriented leaders (Rajbhandari et al., 2016). Youth ministers want to build relationships with the youths they work with and help them enter into life-changing relationships with God. Youth ministers should partner with teenagers and bring them into the presence of Jesus Christ through His holy word. This ministry should be purposeful and relational. It demands that youth ministers continue learning, changing, and growing (Heflin, (2006).

Heflin (2006) believed that two of a youth minister's roles are being compassionate and focusing on relationships. Youth pastors listen to those around them and serve their needs by being compassionate. They take time to communicate with youths and develop genuine

connections that help teens feel secure. When teens feel loved, safe, and protected, they are more willing to listen to adults and open their hearts to a life-changing relationship with Christ. Ji and Tameifuna (2011) interviewed youths and investigated their attitudes toward the church based on their experiences with youth pastors: "Caring pastorship is more dominant than meaningful programs and the mere presence of youth pastors in a church in shaping youth attitude toward the denomination" (p. 318). The youths showed elevated satisfaction and support when they perceived their pastors as friendly and approachable. The authors further noted how vital relationships are in youth ministry. Teenagers value relationships and want their youth pastors to invest in them and spend time getting to know them (p. 318).

This belief was collaborated by Szymanski (2010). He found that today's youths are greatly affected by the media, drawing their worldviews from friends and social media. Youths need social interaction with other youths and with youth ministers. Genuine relationships are crucial to youths (Choi, 2012; Szymanski, 2010). Choi found that youths want to be surrounded by leaders who provide supervision, inspiration, reassurance, forgiveness, and gentle correction. Relationships take time to develop but are crucial for youths. Teenagers want youth leaders who are caring and filled with faith. They need to feel like they have a voice and that their issues, desires, and difficulties will be understood.

Further, Szymanski (2010) acknowledged that youth ministers must demonstrate the characteristics of Jesus, the fruit of the Spirit. They need to see love, joy, and peace in practice. Youths need to be shown kindness, patience, and forgiveness, just like Jesus showed to everyone when they made a poor choice. Youths need to observe leaders who demonstrate gentleness and self-control. Youth leaders need to remain close to Christ and carry themselves as children of God because the youths they work with are always watching and learning.

Youth leaders must be examples of Christ (Muir, 2004). They need to demonstrate how Christians grow in their spirituality. Youth leaders must have patience and know that growth in any person takes time. Further, they have to enjoy working with teenagers and love them unconditionally.

Thematic Literature

God is a God of relationships (*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011, Rev. 3:20; John 15:13; 1 John 4:19). He wants his people to be in relationships with Him and each other (*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011, Gen. 2:18; Prov. 17:17; John 14:23). Church leaders must be called by God to their role. They must be honest, truthful, and open when promoting relationships (Breedt & Niemandt, 2013). God wants church leaders to show a love for people that the Holy Spirit drives. Leadership based on the Holy Spirit, according to Breedt and Niemandt, must display the fruit of the Spirit and be compelling, active, and inspired.

Church leaders need specific characteristics to lead a successful ministry, according to Rotaru (2019). He found that a strong relationship with Jesus produces spiritual effectiveness: "Every leader needs the guidance of the Holy Spirit" (p. 40). This effectiveness helps leaders disciple those to whom they minister. Rotaru also contented that ministers need a spiritual calling in their life to be ministers because they must live by the standards set in the Bible. Further, Rotaru found that Christian leaders must be "faithful to God and His calling in every circumstance" (p. 146). This spiritual effectiveness and faithfulness to God produce a minister who loves God and can emphasize the spiritual growth of those under his charge.

Spiritual coaches use centering prayer to help managers grow closer to God by finding their connection to the Spirit (Ollendieck, 2016). Although there has been no direct research on youth pastors and the fruit of the Spirit, Ollendieck found a connection between the process of

coaching leaders and the fruit of the Spirit. The study showed that managers grew in their professional lives through individual coaching. They found deeper connections to God and increased their demonstration of the fruit of the Spirit to those around them. This study implied that believers could grow in their faith and grow closer to God through prayer, alone time with God, and other believers' relational motivation. Further, it showed that people desire a deeper connection with the Holy Spirit and a desire to reflect the fruit of the Spirit in their lives.

Researcher's Relationship to the Problem

The researcher's interest in youths and youth ministry started six years ago when the researcher's daughter expressed an interest in a girl's youth ministry called Becoming the Crown Jewel Ministry. This ministry works with teenage girls, emphasizing loyalty, royalty, and purity in Jesus Christ. The researcher's work with the youths led to a campaign to promote Jesus's word to all youths who would listen. In early 2019, the researcher started working directly with the youth ministry at an area church and felt that working with teenagers was where God had called her to work.

Paul's reference to the fruit of the Spirit became a prominent scripture in the researcher's life when she began her doctoral studies at Liberty University. She has been researching them and delving deeper into what they mean for herself and those around her. They opened the word of God into her life in a way she had not experienced before. Hence the researcher combined two of her great passions to create a study combining youth ministers and the fruit of the Spirit. The previous section provided information that confirmed the value of a study of youth ministers and the fruit of the Spirit. In the literature, the researcher found no direct studies of the fruit of the Spirit and youth ministers. This study helps to close that gap. This study was needed to explore whether youth ministers display the fruit of the Spirit.

Statement of the Problem

Youth ministers should display the fruit of the Spirit. No literature has connected the attitudes and behaviors of youth ministers to the fruit of the Spirit. Research has revealed the characteristics that ministers should have. In this study, the researcher reviews whether youth ministers display the fruit of the Spirit.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this multi-case study was to explore whether and how youth leaders displayed the fruit of the Spirit at five Bible-based, baptistic Christian churches with no more than 500 members in southeast Georgia. A Christian church was defined as one accepting the Bible as the sole source and authority of genuine Christian faith. The fruit of the Spirit was defined as the nine specific behaviors Paul listed in Galatians 5:22-23 (Noyes, 2019): love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. The fruit of the Spirit can be developed through the work of the Holy Spirit in a Christian's life (Noyes, 2019).

Research Questions

RQ1. How were the attributes that focus on patience displayed by youth ministers?

RQ2. How were the attributes that focus on kindness displayed by youth ministers?

RQ3. How were the attributes that focus on goodness displayed by youth ministers?

RQ4. How were the fruit of the Spirit that focus on relationships displayed by youth ministers?

RQ5. How did the fruit of the Spirit (patience, goodness, and kindness) displayed by the youth ministers affect the relationships between the youth ministers and the students?

Using these research questions, the researcher attempted to show whether youth ministers demonstrated the fruit of the Spirit. They were divided into three groups based on their attributes. Questions 1, 2, and 3 were included because they separate the fruit of the Spirit into distinct

attributes. These distinct attributes helped the researcher focus on the specific comprehensive behavior demonstrated by the youth ministers. Question 4 addresses all the attributes to see which the youth ministers showed. Question 5 examines how the youth ministers' behaviors affected their relationships with the youths.

Assumptions and Delimitations

Research Assumptions

Assumptions provide a starting point for research. Three assumptions governed this study. They are as follows:

1. It was assumed that all youth ministers engaged in this study were followers of Christ and had relationships with him.

2. It was assumed that all youth ministers engaged in this study were knowledgeable about the fruit of the Spirit.

3. It was assumed that the ministers' actions and behaviors could be used to detect evidence of the fruit of the Spirit.

Delimitations of the Research Design

All research has limits and particular work that will not be performed. Delimitations are the boundaries of the research. They were as follows:

1. This research was limited to youth ministers. It did not include all types of pastors and ministers.

2. This research was further limited to youth ministers of high-school-age students at seven Christian churches in southeast Georgia with no more than 500 members. It did not include any specific denominations.

3. This research was limited to paid youth ministers rather than volunteers.

4. This research was limited to three relational fruit of the Spirit: patience, kindness, and goodness.

5. This research was limited to Christian churches that accepted the Bible as the sole source and authority of true Christian faith and that practice baptism by immersion.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions informed this research:

1. *Bible-based, baptistic, Christian church:* For this study, a Christian church is defined as a church with no more than 500 members, and whose membership accepts the Bible as the sole source and authority of genuine Christian faith.

2. *Fruit of the Spirit:* The fruit of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things (*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011, Galatians 5:22-23).

3. *Goodness:* Goodness is the ability to show integrity, honesty, and compassion to others. It involves doing the right thing even when one does not feel like it (Krejcir, 2000).

4. *Kindness:* This is a virtue of grace. It is a person's willingness to be thoughtful regardless of their position or authority (Sproul, n.d.).

5. *Patience:* Patience is a state of calmness while going through a disconcerting time or a waiting period (Bocarena et al., 2018).

6. *Youth*: For this study, a youth was anyone between the ages of 15 and 18 (Singleton et al. 2004). They would be in high school.

7. *Youth minister:* A youth minister or youth pastor is a paid staff member of a non-denominational church whose primary duties are to further the mission of the church by overseeing and developing programs, ministry strategies, and service opportunities for a dynamic student ministry (Compassion Christian Church, 2021).

Significance of the Study

Youths are in a critical developmental period. According to Erik Erickson, they are at a stage where identity and role confusion can occur (McLeod, 2018). At this stage, self-esteem plays a significant role in identifying oneself. A teenager's self-worth and identity are interwoven (Resch & Sevecke, 2018). Physical characteristics and social interactions become essential during adolescence to identifying one's self-image. According to Barna Trends (2017), 76% of teens view their friends as necessary to their sense of self (p. 106). People with positive self-esteem feel good, look good, are productive, and think positively about themselves and others (Clark, 1978).

On the other hand, low self-esteem develops when an individual views themselves as inadequate or unlovable. Once formed, this negative view permeates every thought, producing defective beliefs and self-defeating behavior (Neuman, 2014). That behavior can lead to self-harm, such as smoking and drinking alcohol, and even self-mutilation, such as cutting. Further, destructive behavior can become an addiction that is hard to break. When teenagers engage in these behaviors, they tend to withdraw from other activities they enjoy, including sports, school, hanging out with friends, and church attendance (Schoenberg, 2020). The youth population can benefit only from pastors who display the fruit of the Spirit.

Church leadership needs to respond. Youths need church programming that is designed to help build them spiritually, emotionally, socially, and mentally. Youth ministry is a crucial part of the church that can help youths strengthen their godly beliefs and spiritual formation. This ministry is designed to work with teenagers who need to learn about Jesus and God's works. It is intended to "facilitate and empower young people in developing a deep and meaningful relationship with God" (Aziz, 2019, p. 4). The objective is to help young people mature enough in their faith that they can use their faith to distinguish and implement faithful Christian actions as disciples of Christ (Dean, 2001; Strong, 2015).

Believers must open their hearts to a deeper connection with God. Believers are active partakers with God, who is always inviting them into a stronger relationship with Him. Zhang and Tan (2010) found that increased church engagement increases spirituality in youths. Their study will help youth ministers evaluate their actions and judge whether they are fruitful in the Lord. When the faith community works together with youths, the result is mutual edification and mutual transformation into Christ's fullness, individually and collectively (Lowe, 2018).

Spiritual growth in a believer helps the Christian community fulfill God's great

commission (*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011, Matt. 28:19-20). Worley (2014), in

his study of adult church leaders, found that the direct teaching of the fruit of the Spirit changed

some leaders' attitudes and spiritual walks. The leaders focused less on their titles and became

more open and receptive to the people in the church. In addition, they became more Christ-

focused. According to Howard (2016), the goal is for the believer to become more Christ-like.

Pettit (2008) pointed out that "God desires us to draw close to Him in relationship so that He can

mold us into the likeness of His Son" (p. 208). As a believer grows in Christ, their thoughts and

behaviors should begin to mirror those of Christ. Christians are called to live, act, and think like

Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit. When this happens, a believer should display the fruit

of the Spirit.

The fruit of the Spirit consists of nine traits: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness,

goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011,

Gal. 5:25). The fruit is the critical foundation of moral character (Krejcir, 2000). God uses this

fruit to help believers grow in faith and transform spiritually: "Each of the fruit of the Spirit

enables the individual believer to better cope with adverse situations that arise in his or her life"

(Zoschak, 1991, p. 22). According to Ollendieck (2016), the fruit of the Spirit helps believers

solve conflicts, develop leadership qualities, and build character. The fruit of the Spirit has

personal benefits, and Christians are called to know the fruits of the Spirit, internalize them, and

implement them in their daily lives.

This study is intended to help church and youth leaders investigate their roles by looking

at the fruit of the Spirit. It is intended to determine whether they are in relationships with Christ,

and how those relationships are portrayed to the youths. The goal is to help youth pastors

evaluate their effectiveness by God's standards, leading to an improved work environment for

the youths who matter the most.

Summary of the Design

For this qualitative case study, data were collected through interviews and observations to investigate whether youth ministers' behaviors demonstrated the fruit of the Spirit. The research population was meant to include seven youth ministers and seven youths from seven Christian churches in Southeast Georgia, each with no more than 500 members. However, only five churches were used in the study. In addition to the interviews and observations of youth ministers, students age 18 and older who were involved in the youth program and randomly selected by church leadership were interviewed to determine whether they saw fruit-of-the-Spirit behaviors displayed by the youth ministers. The researcher created the questionnaire for the interviews and the observation protocols. The qualitative data were coded and analyzed on the basis of emerging themes.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is crucial because He helps reveal who a believer is in Christ and aids in the living out of the fruit of the Spirit, which are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Cunningham, 2011). Although it takes time to develop all the areas that make up the fruit of the Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit affects the purpose in one's life and God's role in that life. The fruit connects the believer to the Holy Spirit through God's grace, shows maturity and growth, and transforms a person's spiritual walk. Through the Holy Spirit, a person can perform good works and live out the fruit of the Spirit (Fuller, 2001). Youth pastors must display the fruit of the Spirit because their job is to engage with youths and make them disciples of Christ.

This chapter presents an overview of research and literature on the fruit of the Spirit and youth ministers. It provides information to establish a foundation and purpose for the research. The researcher divided the chapter into five parts: (1) theological framework for the study, (2) theoretical framework for the study, (3) related literature, (4) rationale for the study and the gap in the literature, and (5) profile of the study.

Theological Framework for the Study

A study of the fruit of the Spirit and youth ministry leadership begins with a theological foundation. This section presents information on the Holy Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit. Biblical leadership and the relationship between leader and follower are presented. In addition, the theological importance of youth ministry is investigated. Finally, biblical relationships are reviewed. Each area contributes to the development of the theological framework that formed and informed the topic of this qualitative study.

The Holy Spirit

Because the fruit of the Spirit is the outcome of the Holy Spirit's presence in a person's life, the Holy Spirit is crucial to this study. The Holy Spirit is completely God and has been present since before creation (Koulianos, 2017). He was there throughout the Old Testament with God's people. In 2 Samuel 23:2, David claimed that the Spirit of the Lord spoke to him (*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011). The prophets Micah and Ezekiel also claimed that they were filled with the Spirit (*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011, Ezek. 2:2; Mic. 3:8).

In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit was present with Christ throughout His ministry (Horton. 2019). Jesus, the embodiment of the fruit of the Spirit, displayed fruit every time He dealt with His people. He was patient and faithful and demonstrated goodness and mercy. During His ministry, Jesus put others first, performed miracles, and exemplified the fruit of the Spirit while being led by the Holy Spirit (Patterson, 2013).

The apostles and disciples followed Jesus's example on the day of Pentecost and throughout the New Testament because they were filled with the Holy Spirit. Through His power, the apostles and disciples boldly preached salvation through Jesus Christ (Chan, 2009; Peerbolte, 2015). Moreover, their outward actions and behaviors toward others displayed the fruit of the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the advocate, comforter, and counselor sent to believers in Christ (McMartin, 2015). When a person admits that they are a sinner and believe in Jesus, the Holy Spirit begins to dwell in them (*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011, Acts 2:38). The person becomes a Christian, a temple of the Holy Spirit, and a believer in the most high God. As the Spirit takes root in a person's life, the person should grow closer to Christ, and others should

visibly notice the changes (Chan, 2009). These changes happen through God's grace as the person engages in God's word, prays, and allows the Holy Spirit to lead and guide. A believer must learn God's word, absorb it, and then apply what was learned. This process is how Christians grow and mature in their walk with Jesus. The fruit of the Spirit represents the outward signs that a Christian is growing in maturity in Christ (Krejcir, 2000).

The Fruit of the Spirit

The word "fruit" refers to the natural products of living things (Wright, 2017). When a person plants a tree, and it bears fruit, they know the tree has life. Paul used the term "fruit" to help others understand the product of the Holy Spirit, who lives inside every believer. The fruit of the Spirit consists of the characteristics of Christ that are demonstrated in believers' lives. This fruit does not grow immediately, and it takes time to ripen. A Christian must work at developing the fruit and can never do it without the Spirit's indwelling (Chan, 2009; Polk, 2007). The power of the Holy Spirit gives believers the ability to reject sin and, if they do, the ability to seek forgiveness (Jennings, 2013). As followers allow the Holy Spirit to guide them, they grow to look and act more like Jesus, the perfect example (Chan, 2009; Jennings, 2013). They begin to display God's fruit.

The fruit of the Spirit comprises nine traits: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011, Gal. 5:22-23). The fruit comes when one submits to the guidance of the Spirit and uses their God-given ability to make it happen (Krejcir, 2000; Mazzalongo, 2018). This is not easy to live out and does not come naturally, but each Christian should live a life that reveals these Christ-like characteristics (Wright, 2017).

The fruit can be divided into three groups: relationships to God, to oneself, and to others

(Bocarnea et al., 2018; Sanders, 2020). They will be presented in three subsections. Following

them will be a subsection on the fruit and leadership.

Relationship to God

The first three fruit are attributes given by God (Smith, 2016). Romans 5:3-5 described

the love of God being decanted through the Holy Spirit (*New International Version Bible*,

1973/2011). Until the Holy Spirit dominates a person's life, the person does not have the power

to love like Christ (Smith, 2016). In addition, joy and peace are outpourings of God, according to

Romans 15:13 (*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011).

Love, the first fruit, is patient, kind, protecting, trusting, hopeful, enduring, selfless, and

modest (*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011, 1 Cor. 13:4-7). It is a command from God.

Jesus said, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must

love one another. By this, all men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another"

(*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011, John 13:34-35). This is love that is given even

when undeserved. Love is the outward sign of God's agape love that we show to those around us

because God first showed us love (Franzen, 2016; Sanders, 2020). When Christians love each

other, it shows to whom they belong. Their love reaches out and draws people in; it points to

Jesus (Smith, 2016).

Joy comes from a relationship with God (Crowther, 2017). It is not based on

circumstances and will present itself no matter the situation. According to Pazmino (2007), joy is

pleasure in God's presence. This delight can be found when Christians abide in Christ every day.

It is the awareness of God's favor and grace in a Christian's life. Habakkuk declared, "I will

rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior" (*New International Version Bible*,

1973/2011, Habakkuk 3:18). Joy comes from the Holy Spirit living inside a Christian (Smith,

2016).

Peace is not the absence of trouble but a calmness that comes over people when they are troubled (Zoschak, 1991). In Romans 12:18, God commanded all Christians to live peacefully with everyone (*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011). Peace is confidence in God (Smith, 2016). A mind focused on God and free of worry, anxiety, and panic helps people deal with conflict. God told His believers to bring their worries, fears, and concerns to Him. When people find peace with God, they can discover peace with others.

Relationship of Oneself to God

God wants His people to live in Him. Believers must make a daily choice to follow the Spirit (Haverly, 2008). Faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control enable the believer to live a life that exemplifies God.

Crowther (2017) asserted, "Faithfulness refers to those led by the Spirit that is loyal and dependable; it demands honoring our commitment to God and standing firm in gospel values" (p. 30). Faithful people are honest, demonstrate integrity, and follow through on promises. Believers who have a resolute faithfulness in God are obedient to God's Spirit and follow His directions.

Gentleness means knowing that others are humans with feelings even when their actions are unkind. Gentleness is strength under control, according to Wright (2017). It is the ability to treat others with tenderheartedness, hold one's temper, and refrain from accusation and blame.

Self-control is the ability to restrict the sinful nature that exists in Christians through the Holy Spirit (Smith, 2016). Jesus, who was fully man and fully human, exercised self-control with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Self-control, like Jesus displayed is the ability to override the sins of the flesh, including physical and mental sins such as drunkenness, gluttony, greed, and envy (Wright, 2017). Christians must exercise self-control daily to move closer to Christ and

away from those sins that would destroy their lives. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul says,

> Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. (*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011, Gal. 5:16-17)

Relationships with Others

The focal point of this study is the three fruit that are focused on relationships with others: patience, kindness, and goodness. These fruit are exemplified by an active love of one's friends, one's neighbors, and even one's enemies (Harverly, 2008).

Patience is based on love. Bocarena et al. (2018) found that patience is a state of serenity while going through troubling times or waiting for an outcome. For a Christ follower, it is engrained in the knowledge that goals are not earthly but eternal for Jesus Christ (Smith, 2016). Patience is long-suffering and can hold back anger or other negative outbursts (Crowther, 2017). In Ephesians 4, Paul reminds believers to be patient, bearing with everyone in love (*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011). James tells believers to stand firm and be patient while waiting on God (*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011, James 5:8). Christians are to display endurance, perseverance, and unwavering obedience to God. They are to display patience just as Christ patiently waits for the lost to come to Him. When leaders display patience, it shows courtesy and sensitivity to others (Bocarena et al., 2018). Patient leaders demonstrate self-control and composure during difficult times to help their followers feel safe and confident.

Kindness is acting with love (Smith, 2016). It is showing appreciation for others: "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" (*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011, Eph. 4:32). When a person shows kindness, they imitate Christ. According to Wright (2017), kindness is considering others before oneself. Kindness is helping, encouraging, and serving others (Bocarena et al., 2018; Wright,

2017). When believers show kindness, they reveal God's love for others and draw people to Christ. When a leader shows kindness, they can affect the cheerfulness and welfare of those they touch (Bocarena et al., 2018).

Goodness means choosing to do the right thing (Krejcir, 2002). It is directed toward the well-being of others (Bocarena, 2018). Showing goodness is an act of worship and gratitude toward Jesus Christ. Romans 12:21 tells believers to repay evil with good (*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011). In Luke 6:35, the scriptures tell Christians to do good (*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011). Displaying goodness reveals integrity, uprightness, and consideration for others. It is the quality of being righteous and generous. Goodness can be achieved only when people strive to live by God's standards.

The fruit of the Spirit do not operate independently; they work together to provide spiritual morality. They are one package that works together to guide believers in their Christ-like living: "The fruit of the Spirit grows together within a Christian's life. All the pieces of one fruit work together and strengthen each other" (Wright, 2017, p. 156). Believers need to allow the Spirit to direct the course of their life (Chan, 2009). It is not by anything a believer can do but by the Holy Spirit's power that a person can grow and be transformed. A person must allow the Spirit to lead the way and fulfill His purpose: "The fruit of the Spirit, God's love and working in us, need to be known and then applied to be effective and real to us and those around us" (Krejcir, 2000, p. 4).

The Fruit and Leadership

The fruit of the Spirit reflects values and behaviors that leaders can demonstrate in their leadership (Crowther, 2017). According to Breedt and Niemandt (2013), people value honesty, openness, truthfulness, and integrity in their leaders. Leaders led by the Spirit allow their fruit to

be modeled in their lives. Soto (2017) found that when leaders demonstrated trust and honesty, more people were prone to trust and want to work and conduct business with them. Further, when people start learning the details of the values and implementing them, they begin to experience transformation within themselves. The positive influence of the leaders caused an increase in morale and productivity. Soto noted, "The influence of religion and spirituality is important in order to create a proper corporate culture for bringing together individual and organizational interests" (p. 48).

Biblical Leadership

Because this study researches youth leadership, discussing the biblical relevance of leadership is essential. According to Canales (2014), leadership can be defined as a "process that influences an individual or a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (p. 26). Christian leaders aim at commissioning, inspiring, and motivating people to move closer to God. Christian leaders' mission is clear: to reconcile all things to God (Blanchard & Hodges, 2005; Christian Reformed Church, 2005). Everything belongs to him, and everything that a Christian does should be to bring God the glory: "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters" (*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011, Col. 2:23).

The most profound example of someone who exemplified and carried out this mission was Jesus. In Ephesians 5:1-2, Paul called believers to imitate God in His self-giving actions: "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011). By today's standards, Jesus was a perfect example of leadership (Blanchard & Hodges, 2005; Mattera, 2019). He loved others, served others, and was humble, sympathetic, compassionate, and forgiving. His leadership must be the basis of Christian leadership (Mattera,

2019). Jesus served as a role model, had a strong prayer life, and always looked past sin and saw the good in others. He looked past the flesh and saw people through the eyes of God (Mattera, 2019). Jesus could discern God's will, believed in God's authority, and continually spent time in prayer and meditation. The character of Christ in the Christian leader should produce particular morals that are crucial to the leader's effectiveness: honesty, integrity, fairness, compassion, service to others, a life of prayer, and total dependence upon God for strength and guidance (Christian Reformed Church, 2005, p. 13).

Leadership in the Christian community should look different because Christ should be the focus: "Leadership in Christ's church must be different from the Gentiles' 'lording it over' approach to leadership" (Christian Reformed Church, 2005, p. 11); "True influence should increase throughout the lives of those we pour into, even after we pass away" (Mattera, 2019, p. XIX). We should continually strive to be more like our heavenly Father in our leadership: "The Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving the wickedness, rebellion, and sin" (*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011, Ex. 34:6-7).

Finally, leaders should submit themselves to training. 1 Timothy 4:8 said, "For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come" (*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011). In a study conducted by Ollendieck (2016), the participants reported increased work productivity due to studying the Bible, praying, spending time quietly with God, and conceding to the Holy Spirit. Rasmussen (2018) focused on the fruit of the Spirit and on teaching the nine fruit to leaders. From his study, he learned that more emphasis must be placed on teaching about the Holy Spirit. He concluded that leadership instruction for future leaders should have biblical roots and a

crucial character-development course. A leader should have a growing relationship with God and demonstrate Spirit-filled characteristics. Further, Rasmussen found a strong connection between a person's psychological outlook and their spiritual life.

Leader and Follower Relationship

Just as God loves us enough that He sent us His only begotten Son, church leaders led by the Holy Spirit are called to love their members: "If God loves the world, then the church must love the world" (Breedt & Niemandt, 2013, p. 2). Disciples of Christ are not to function as rulers after the pattern of this world but to focus on others through godly love: "Greatness comes from service, not dominance" (Patterson, 2013, p. 13). Leaders are called to serve others and use the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to be kind, gentle, patient, and loving to those in their charge. Showing concern and genuine care for others is a primary method for leaders to incorporate: "Spiritual values such as integrity, honesty, and humility have been repeatedly found to be key elements of leadership success" (Reave, 2005, p. 657). Leadership practices such as treating others with love, compassion, respect, and fairness also affect the employee–employer relationship.

According to Patterson (2017), the community of leaders and followers should be driven by love: "The leaders lead lovingly, and the followers serve respectfully to honor the ones placed in authority and demonstrate solidarity with the freely associated community of faith that remains connected by the bonds of love" (p. 82). Leaders and followers must immerse themselves in God's word and fill their lives with the Holy Spirit. If followers are immersed in God's word, they will bear fruit and emulate the fruit of the Spirit.

Believers "must look at the leaders' lifestyle and character over time for evidence of kingdom inner heart values, since words and ministry activities cannot guarantee a genuine

disciple" (Issler, 2010, p. 373). Followers of Christ must pray, watch, and discern the leaders in authority positions. They must ask, Are they producing fruit? Are they living Christ-like examples? Are they doing Jesus's transformational ministry in their church, home, and community? If the answer to these questions is yes, the leader is worth following and can be respected and trusted.

Youth Ministry

Youths are "spiritual seekers longing for real and meaningful experiences that help them find ultimate meaning, a sense of belonging, and wholeness in their lives" (Hryniuk, 2005, p. 146). God wants everyone, even adolescents, to have meaningful relationships with Him (Aziz, 2019; Strong, 2014). According to some of the literature on spiritual development, only Christ can provide them with meaning, a sense of belonging, and wholeness (Schweitzer, 2014). Youths must be exposed to Christ at church, which can happen through youth ministry.

Youth ministries should partner with teenagers and bring them into the presence of Jesus Christ through His Holy Word (Strong, 2014). This ministry should be purposeful and relational. It should seek to impart that salvation is found in Jesus, help the students understand and show grace, and provide them with hope. Spiritual development will likely occur when a youth ministry actively engages with youths (Choi, 2012). Choi demonstrated that an active youth ministry had an impact on the faith maturity of the students. In addition, when the students felt cared about and relevant, they attended church more often. This study demonstrates the need for a high-quality, spiritually driven youth ministry where youths can grow in their faith.

Biblical Relationships

The triune God is God in three persons: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; each is God (Ballanger, 2018). One essential truth the Trinity teaches youths is about relationships (Strong,

2015). The Trinity demonstrates that unity and love must continuously go together: "The oneness of God and the love between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not separate. God's love unifies, and because the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are perfectly one, they can love each other perfectly" (Ballanger, 2018, para. 12). God loves each person and created humanity from that perfect love. His ideal desire is to love and communicate with His followers (Edrington, 2016). God does not exist alone and does not want humans to live independently but in relation to Him and each other (Riser 2004: Heflin, 2006). God uses the relationships between people to reveal Himself to His children (Cloete, 2015). According to Bruce and Cockreham (2004), adolescent girls can develop greater self-awareness through relationships with others. Relationships help them discover their identities and talents.

Youths crave to enter into relationships with adults and walk with them through discipleship (Hryniuk, 2005). They yearn to learn about God from adults they trust and have relationships with (Belsterling, 2009; McGarry, 2019; Whitley, 2015). Youths desire to learn from people they know care about them. In the words of Theodore Roosevelt (n.d.), "Nobody cares how much you know until they know how much you care."

Theological Review

There is a theological basis for this qualitative study. The fruit of the Spirit is based upon Paul's biblical reference in Galatians, and it cannot exist without the Holy Spirit. Through the Holy Spirit, God is embodied in the fruit of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit reflects values and behaviors that leaders can demonstrate in their leadership (Crowther, 2017). These values help leaders work with their constituents. Love, joy, and peace develop from a relationship with God. Love creates a focus on others' needs and interests. Joy demonstrates confidence in positive and negative situations, and peace allows a leader to handle conflict. Leaders treat those under their

charge with patience, kindness, and goodness. They use morality and ethics, encourage others, treat others with appreciation, and listen to their concerns. The final three traits, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, show that leaders are composed, trustworthy, and can accomplish goals. According to Crowther, leaders can use these Bible-based values to focus on those around them. Because there are few studies of the subject, Crowther emphasized that churches be at the forefront when using the fruit of the Spirit to lead and guide their congregants.

Further support for leading a Spirit-filled life is provided by Strong (2015). Strong found that if youth ministers want to lead youths to Christ and have theological youth ministries, their priority should be a personal relationship with God. This relationship should be deepened daily by study of God's word and prayer. This relationship would embrace the triune God and allow the spirit's fruit to grow in the ministers.

Theoretical Framework for the Study

In the previous section, the researcher identified and described the theological basis of this study of the fruit of the Spirit and youth leadership. However, the study must also consider a theoretical foundation. The following section investigates behavior leadership theory and its relevance to youth leadership.

Behavior Leadership Theory

Leadership has been characterized in multiple ways (Gumus et al., 2018; Sampayo & Maranga, 2015). First, it is the ability to communicate with people about the values and promises they can see within themselves (Covey, 2004; Scroggins,2017). Second, it is a process of influence that motivates people (Blanchard & Hodges, 2005): "Anytime you seek to influence the thinking, behavior, or development of people in their personal or professional lives, you are taking on the role of a leader" (p. 4). Leaders can also orchestrate change by focusing the group

on a shared vision (Covey, 2004; Ledbetter et al., 2016), which establishes direction and purpose.

There are also a variety of leadership theories. The earliest was the "great man" theory (Gumus et al., 2018; Harrison, 2019). This theory states that leaders are born with leadership qualities. It attributes distinctive characteristics to people. This theory led to a long list of traits that evolved into the trait theory. The trait theory focuses on identifying leadership and non-leadership factors. It further implied that people were born with leadership abilities. Criticism of the trait theory led to the development of the behavioral leadership theory (Northouse, 2019).

The behavioral approach emphasizes the behavior of leaders, what they do, and how they act (Northouse, 2019). In shifting the study of leadership to leaders' behaviors, the behavioral approach expanded the research on leadership to include the actions of leaders toward followers in various contexts. For example, leaders need to be more task-oriented in some situations and more relationship-oriented in others.

The behavioral leadership theory is relevant to this study because it relates to actions that indicate effective leadership. The theory is rooted in behaviorism and focuses on leaders' actions and practices (Gumus et al., 2018; Vaskinn et al., 2020). These actions and practices can be learned and are vital because they affect the effectiveness of an organization (Fuller, 2019). Behavioral leadership theory considers how a leader's behaviors can be identified, how they affect productivity, and how they enhance team members' experiences.

Ohio State University and University of Michigan Leadership Studies

In 1945, Stogdill and his research team at Ohio State University tried to determine what leadership behaviors could be observed (Rajbhandari et al., 2016). They used a leader behavior description questionnaire to measure nine distinct behavioral leadership elements (Northouse,

2019). The study found two main areas of leadership behaviors: task-oriented and people-oriented behaviors. Similar results were found by the University of Michigan study.

In 1947, Rensis Likert and his team of researchers wanted to find an effective method of studying human approaches and the factors influencing them (Northouse, 2019). They wanted to discover types of leadership that led to greater productivity and satisfaction among workers. The team found three qualities of influential leaders: task-oriented behaviors, relationship- (people-) oriented behaviors, and participative leadership (Rajbhandari et al., 2016).

Although leadership qualities differ, a leader can implement leadership behaviors depending on the situation (Goff, 2003). Task-oriented leaders issue clear deadlines, delegate, and achieve success for their team (Wroblewski, 2019). They motivate others by setting high but obtainable goals and helping others reach them (Breevaart & de Vries, 2019). A leader must decide what behavior is appropriate to demonstrate (Henkel et al., 2019; Wroblewski, 2019). Although various leadership types are influential and have value in youth ministry, only people-oriented leadership will be discussed in detail in this study because it is directly related to the relational fruit of the Spirit: patience, kindness, and goodness.

People-Oriented Leadership

People-oriented leaders know the tasks that need to be completed but emphasize interpersonal relationships. They focus on others' well-being by putting those they work with first (Breevaart & DeVries, 2019). With team members, people-oriented leaders show trust, listen, and communicate. According to Bredfeldt (2016), genuine attention and consideration are crucial for a leader. Relationship-oriented leaders show love and compassion. They are committed to being available to listen and are friendly and respectful to everyone they encounter.

Hybels (2009) identified people skills as the third quality influential leaders need, after

influence and character. He was convinced that people matter. He noted people skills such as empathizing with, caring for, listening to, and genuinely hearing what others say. He found that leaders must be able to relate to people with various personalities. He believed, "If I honor people and treat them graciously, God will show favor to me and to those I lead" (Hybels, 2009, p. 165).

Yankovsky et al. (2014) studied leadership team behaviors and subordinate employee attitudes in a hospital to discover their influence over an organization. They found that interpersonal behaviors are significantly related to workplace perceptions. Having courteous and respectful behaviors and respecting differences led to strong relationships. Thus respectful, warm interactions are crucial in an organization and lead to successful teamwork.

People- and relationship-oriented leadership makes a difference. Vaskinn et al. (2020) studied residential youth care providers and successful leadership behaviors. The research team interviewed 16 youth providers who worked directly with children. They found that leadership behaviors were crucial inner-organizational factors in the success of performance. Everyone interviewed found that relationship-oriented behaviors were essential to their job. The researchers found that leaders' support, communication, encouragement, and recognition increased youth care providers' trust, cooperation, and commitment. As a result, youth care providers felt more confident doing their jobs and could serve and engage their youth clients better.

Breevaart and de Vries (2019) conducted a study of honesty, humility, emotionality, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness in relationship-oriented and task-oriented leaders. They provided an online survey to 272 first-year psychology student participants. 54.4% of the participants preferred a relationship-oriented leader. The participants

described a relationship-oriented leader as someone concerned about their well-being, friendly, listens, and treats followers with kindness, respect, and consideration. Finally, a relationship-oriented leader was described as someone who recognizes a follower's contributions and can be trusted.

Relationship-oriented leaders were crucial to this study. They can effectively and efficiently demonstrate kindness, patience, and goodness. They are concerned for those under their care and are intent on building relationships.

People-Oriented Leadership and God's Word

The people-oriented leadership theory takes others into account. Leaders are to encourage their group members and put their needs above their own. They do their best work when interacting with others. They thrive when relating to people, cooperating to accomplish tasks, and building relationships. Because this study is Bible-based, it is necessary to show that God's Word supports the need for people-oriented leadership.

In God's Word, Nehemiah was a relationship-oriented leader. He gained people's trust and motivated them to rebuild Jerusalem's walls (*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011, Neh. 2:17). He laid out a vision, shared a plan, and reassured God's people that God was with them. In Nehemiah 4, Nehemiah listened to the people of Judah and heard their concerns (*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011). He listened and addressed their needs while fulfilling God's divine plan.

Jesus was the most excellent leader and the best example of a relational leader. He knew the power of relationships and knew precisely how to build them. Jesus frequently gathered with His twelve apostles to explain parables to them (*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011, Luke 8:9). These parables explained the Gospel's message so that the disciples would come to

understand Jesus' ministry. He wanted them to preach and carry on His ministry after He ascended into heaven (*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011, Mark 3:14).

On His journey to Calvary, Jesus Christ continued to be people-oriented. He was conscious of people and deeply concerned for them (Mattera, 2019). He met people's essential needs and set examples for other leaders by demonstrating love and compassion. In Matthew 23:2-4, Jesus encouraged leaders to help others and not place burdens on them *(New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011). In Matthew 11:28-30, Jesus said,

> Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. *(New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011)

Jesus felt compassion for the widow whose only son died and brought him back to life (*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011, Luke 7:11-15). Jesus also felt compassion for people with physical and spiritual needs (*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011, Mark 6:34; Matt. 14:14).

Like Jesus, the Holy Spirit is a people-oriented leader, especially in a Christian's life. First, Christ invites people to accept Him as their Lord and Savior (*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011, John 3:16). Then, through the power of the Holy Spirit, God dwells in each Christian and wants them to live a life dedicated to Him. God wants His people to grow in relationships with Him each day. He is always there to listen to requests through prayer and help those who pray according to His will (*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011, Phil. 4:6). Jesus never leaves His believers and is always there and willing to build a relationship with them.

Nehemiah and Jesus exemplified leadership from the Christian perspective. They demonstrated service to others, communication, encouragement, and relationship building.

Youth Ministry's Purpose

Youth ministry is designed to reach youths for Jesus (Cole & Nielson, 2016; Grant, 2009). Youths need God to save, renew, and re-create them as they repent of sin and entrust their lives to Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior (Cole & Nielson, 2016). They need strong leaders who can welcome, share, and communicate God's message.

Youth ministry is "not merely a ministry in which adults create programs for youth. It is a process of working with youth to help them grow and aid them in working towards the church's mission" (Muir, 2004, p. 27). Youth ministry begins with relationships. It should be purposeful and relational. Youths need adults to be present in their lives (Cole & Nielson, 2016). Youth ministers need to partner with teenagers and bring them into the presence of Jesus Christ through his holy word (Heflin, 2006).

Youth Ministry and People-Oriented Leadership

Youth leaders must be relationship-oriented. Their profession is a service-oriented field for communities, families, and students. A youth leader wants to build relationships with students and improve their relationships with God. Relationship-oriented leaders are vital components of encouragement, support, understanding, and motivation (Rajbhandari et al., 2016).

Heflin (2006) believed that the two roles of youth ministers are being compassionate and focusing on relationships. Youth pastors listen to those around them and serve their needs compassionately. They take time to communicate with youths and develop genuine relationships that help teens feel secure. When teens feel loved, safe, and secure, they are more willing to listen to adults and open their hearts to a life-changing relationship with Christ.

Anderson (2017) studied the leadership traits of long-tenured youth ministers in Churches

of Christ to identify leadership practices and strategies they employed and recommended. The participants were 12 full-time youth ministers who had served in their churches for a minimum of ten years. The researchers employed an interview design to obtain information. Eleven participants directly or indirectly emphasized a relational orientation or mindset as a critical component of their approach to leadership. In addition, there was an emphasis on the importance of building relationships with teens, parents, volunteers, staff members, and other church leaders. Further, a critical type of relationship referenced numerous times in the study was the relationships many youth ministers had with their interns.

Anderson (2017) also found that youth ministers should be intentionally relational. Eleven participants indicated that being intentionally relational was the most vital counsel they would offer others on youth ministry leadership. Listening, pouring into others, and always trying to improve relationships were also mentioned. One participant noted, "I am listening to people all the time. I am constantly in everybody's office and trying to be everyone's best friend on the staff—not to be political, but because I genuinely enjoy friendships with everyone" (personal communication, January 3, 2017). Another participant offered additional insights on how the relational components can be experienced personally and spiritually. He suggested that youth ministers listen first to God and also to their elders, parents, other youth ministers, and new or veteran ministers.

Finally, three of the twelve top leadership traits, practices, and strategies that emerged were related to relationships (Anderson, 2017). Long-tenured youth ministers in Churches of Christ placed significant importance on growing deeply into relationships with God and other people. When asked to describe themselves as leaders, 11 (73.3%) used phrases indicative of relational orientations. Although the relational approach is consistent with expressions of various

models presented in the literature, perhaps the most critical literature in the minds of study participants, the Bible, summarized the ethos of the relational finding best. In Jesus's words, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another" (*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011, John 13:35).

In another study of youth ministers, Temple (2007) sought to identify the character qualities and leadership competencies that local church youth ministers needed to be effective. Three hundred eight full-time youth ministers from the National Network of Youth Ministries database were surveyed, and Temple found that communication skills were ranked as the top leadership characteristics. Communication skills in various environments were identified as a primary character quality. Communication is critical for effective leadership of youth ministries because it leads others to deeper relationships with God and others. The youth minister must develop the ability to communicate effectively through conversations, small group meetings, Bible studies, or Sunday school teaching. In addition, youth ministers must effectively connect with youths, parents, volunteers, and church staff members.

Theoretical Review

The behavior theory is relevant to this study because youth leaders must be relationship-oriented and demonstrate patience, kindness, and goodness. Their profession is a service-oriented field for communities, families, and students. As relationship- and people-oriented leaders, they must care about those around them. In addition, they need proficient interpersonal skills, which allow them to motivate and inspire others. Encouragement, support, understanding, and motivation are vital components of relationship-oriented youth leaders (Rajbhandari et al., 2016).

Youth leaders must be examples of Christ (Muir, 2004). They must demonstrate how Christians grow in their spirituality. They should demonstrate patience, kindness, and goodness,

knowing that growth in any person takes time. Further, they have to enjoy working with teenagers and love them unconditionally.

<div align="center">**Related Literature**</div>

In the previous sections, the researcher identified and described this study's theological and theoretical bases of the fruit of the Spirit and youth leadership. This portion provides a critical review of various subtopics relevant to the subject. It investigates current world events, recent church information, present-day youth culture, youth, the church, and youth leadership characteristics.

Current World Happenings

Because this research took place after 2020, including a small section on the coronavirus pandemic seemed necessary. Covid-19 is an infectious disease caused by a virus discovered in December 2019 in Wuhan, China (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2021). It is highly contagious and spread quickly around the world (World Health Organization, n.d.). The virus spreads primarily through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Due to the rapid spread, the world entered a pandemic. Covid-19 caused many people to be quarantined in their houses, and many businesses, including churches, had to close for the majority of the year.

The pandemic was complex, and it caused other problems. Unemployment soared, and isolation hurt many families (Perry, 2021). Fortunately, many churches could provide online support and hold services, small meetings, and Bible studies. In early 2021, due to the creation of a vaccine and covid cases declining, people slowly returned to the church and daily life activities (Smith, 2021). The researcher felt this information was crucial to her research because it changed the dynamics of church activities and the lives of many churchgoers, including the youths.

Current Church Information

Because this study concerned youth ministers, the current conditions in the church need to be discussed briefly. Before the pandemic, several significant trends were noteworthy. First, according to Barna Group (2020a), two out of five churchgoers attended multiple churches, showing a decline in church loyalty. In addition, although 82% of practicing Christians enjoyed church, 9% said they went out of obligation, and another 9% because it was a habit. Further, 94% of Christians said that the church positively affects the community, while 57% of non-Christians said it did not affect their community. Finally, 52% of non-Christians said they had an unfavorable impression of Christianity and that the church was no longer relevant in society (Barna Group, 2020a). Based on this study, the Barna Group felt that the church's reputation was in question and that church leaders must listen to the younger generations.

Early in the pandemic, in May 2020, Barna Group (2020b) reported that 50% of millennials did not view online church services. Finally, Christians who had stopped attending church virtually or had switched churches noted that they needed prayer, emotional support, and a Bible-centered message of hope and encouragement. This information is vital to the study because it shows a need for relational leadership.

In March 2021, Gregory Smith and his research team found that only 39% of Christians planned to go to Easter services, contrasting with the 62% that would usually go (Smith, 2021). In addition, Smith found that 31% had grown stronger in their faith during the pandemic, only 5% had grown weaker, and 59% had remained unchanged. Finally, he found that among those who returned to the church, 67% had some restrictions, such as masks and social distancing. These churchgoers felt safe with these limits and were returning to the church in person rather than online. Thus the church was slowly returning, but not without challenges.

As society slowly returned to a post-covid normal, Perry (2021) noted that millennials were drifting away from the church and faith practices. In addition, he found that mental illness, depression, and abuse cases had risen. Hurt people, he claimed, needed to be connected with pastors who could care for them and connect them with mental health professionals. Perry's information further shows the need for connection and communication.

Warren (2021) noted that young adults leave the church due to religious disagreements, political disagreements, or artificiality among members. Despite this news, Warren raised a voice of hope for the church: the Holy Spirit. Warren believed that prayer should be a focus while the church continues to plan and train ministers because God has invested in the church's people. Christians need to seek God's will in everything they do because the Holy Spirit works in and through the church's people (Warren, 2021).

The researcher included this section because youth ministers are a part of the church staff, so church trends affect their ministries. Although church trends are dismal, the information presented shows the need for relationships between church members and leaders. Further, it confirms that church leaders must demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit.

Current Youth Culture

Although church culture is vital to this study, youths are equally important. For this study, it is crucial to understand the population of students that youth ministers will encounter. According to Barna Group (2018) and White (2017), "Generation Z" makes up 25.9% of the population and consists of those born between 1999 and 2015 (Barna Group, 2018). This generation has constantly been exposed to the internet, wi-fi, social media, and cell phones. As a result, they have quick access to large amounts of information and spend more than nine hours a day exploring media (White, 2017). This information was corroborated by Szymanski (2010). He

found that media dramatically affect today's youth, who draw their worldviews from friends and social media. According to Landrum (2019), one member of Generation Z described the group as individualistic, lonely, and sexually fluid. She claimed that they want individual freedom and want to make a difference, but they focus more on their well-being than anyone else.

Youths are in a critical developmental period. According to Erik Erickson, they are at a stage in which identity and role confusion occur (McLeod, 2018). They try to make sense of their lives and the world to create an identity (Borgman, 2013). At this stage, self-esteem plays a significant role in identifying oneself: "Self-esteem is constructed from the inside of a person through interacting with others and the environment" (Aldridge, 1993, p. 33). It takes into consideration behaviors, feelings, and motivations. A teenager's self-worth and identity are interwoven (Resch & Sevecke, 2018). Physical characteristics and social interactions become essential during adolescence when one is identifying one's self-image. According to Barna Group (2018), 35% of teens view their friends as necessary to their sense of self. People with positive self-esteem feel good, look good, are productive, and think positively about themselves and others (Clark, 1978). Conversely, low self-esteem develops when individuals view themselves as inadequate or unlovable. Once formed, this negative view permeates every thought, producing defective beliefs and self-defeating behavior (Neuman, 2014).

Low self-esteem and low self-confidence are severe problems that can substantially affect a youth's life. As positive and negative messages bombard teenagers, research has demonstrated that adolescents are socially, physically, cognitively, and morally in danger (Brittian, 2012; Bruce & Cockreham, 2004; Daughtery, 2011). Smith et al. (2011) believed that young people are excessively exposed to substance abuse, consumerism, and sexual promiscuity. Due to this, many teens engage in negative behaviors, such as smoking, drinking, cutting, and disordered

eating.

One addictive behavior that teenagers engage in is smoking. According to the CDC (2019), teenagers smoke to look cool in front of peers, to lose weight, or because they have low self-image or self-esteem. This unhealthy habit is on the rise with the increased use of electronic cigarettes, according to the CDC (2019). More than one of every four high school students reported using e-cigarettes (CDC, 2019). Smoking can lead to health problems such as cancer, lung disease, and heart disease (Ben-Joseph, 2019). In addition, it can cause youths to have trouble keeping up in sports, leading to a greater risk of injury, slower healing time, and increased risk of illness.

Another potentially self-destructive behavior is the consumption of alcohol, one of the most frequently used drugs by teenagers in the United States (Dryden-Edwards, n.d.). About half of high school students drink alcohol monthly, 14% of teens have been intoxicated at least once in the past year, and 12% reported binge drinking in the past 30 days. Alcohol and self-esteem also influence one another (Smith, 2020). Low self-esteem can contribute to alcohol abuse and dependence. Conversely, alcohol characteristically creates lower self-esteem over the long term (Smith, 2020).

Another behavior that harms the physical body is cutting. Cutting is a type of self-harm in which teens intentionally cut or scratch themselves with knives, razor blades, or other sharp objects (Iannelli, 2020). Cutting is a way to regulate feelings because it provides a sense of control and relief (Hemmen, 2012). It is also very addictive. According to recent statistics, "an estimated 17.6% of teens admit to trying to harm themselves" (Iannelli, 2020, para. 3).

Another type of self-harm behavior is eating disorders. This type of self-harm affects mainly girls. In the U.S., as many as one in ten young women suffers from an eating disorder

(American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 2018). Croll et al. (2002) found that 73% of girls with eating disorders reported having concerns about their bodies. Other experts have connected eating disorders to factors such as family relationships and psychological problems (Bhandari, 2021). Further, the teen may have low self-esteem and be preoccupied with having a perfect body.

Other self-harm behaviors include head-banging, branding or burning skin, overdosing on medications, and strangulation. According to Davis (2005), adolescents who engage in self-harm behaviors struggle with self-identity. All forms of self-harm destroy teens' ability to deal with reality and lower their self-esteem.

"I can't" and "I'm not good enough" are negative expressions that can lead young people into destructive behavior (Resch & Sevecke, 2018), which can become an addiction that is hard to break. Agam et al. (2015) and Esnaola et al. (2018) found that because many youths are involved in risky behavior, interventions, education, and programs are warranted to help teens with their identity and self-esteem. Teenagers who engage in these behaviors tend to withdraw from activities they enjoy, including sports, school, engagement with friends, and church attendance (Schoenberg, 2020; Smith et al., 2011).

This information is vital to the present research because it shows that youths need a lot of support. Youths are at a crucial stage. Their self-identity and self-esteem need to be bolstered. Youth ministers filled with the Holy Spirit must display the fruit of the Spirit to bring youths closer to Christ because only in Him can they find their true identities (*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011, Psalm 139:13-14).

Youth and the Church

While understanding the youth population is essential, how youths view the church is

crucial. Barna Group (2018) found that education, hobbies, friends, and sexuality rank higher than family and religion. In addition, only 9% of teens aged 13–18 are engaged in churches. 16% of unchurched Christians believe they can find God elsewhere (Barna Group, 2018). Further, 34% of Generation Z members have no religious affiliation. They have found that Christians are hypocrites, call religion a fairy tale, and believe that the church is unimportant (Barna Group, 2018). Borgman (2013) noted that young people leave the church because of its stiffness and refusal to change. They also found that churches are adult-focused. White (2017) believed that Generation Z members were just spiritually illiterate. He found that they did not know the Bible or the basics of Christian beliefs. Finally, they did not understand the meaning Christians attribute to Christ's death or what it means to their worship.

A low percentage of youths are involved in church, and attendance is declining. Jones (2020) identified factors in the decline of youth church attendance at Christ Missionary Baptist Church, focusing on youth ministry. The study relied on two primary data collection procedures: interviews and surveys. Five youth members were interviewed, and 45 youths were surveyed. One theme that emerged in response to most of the interview questions was leadership influence. The youths were not represented in any leadership programs. The report noted that when youth programs were prepared in the church, the youths were not involved or even asked about their views on designing a program tailored to them.

Furthermore, church leaders were viewed as lousy role models, causing the youths to see church attendance negatively (Jones, 2020). Finally, church leaders were not open to new ideas or trends. Most youths think that older adults consider them evil even when they are not, and that those old ways of worship do not reflect their current needs and preferences. Consequently, young people have begun withdrawing from churches due to differences between them and

adults.

Ji and Tameifuna (2011) also interviewed youths and investigated their attitudes toward the church based on their experiences with youth pastors. They found a positive relationship between caring pastors and youths. The youths showed elevated satisfaction and support when they perceived pastors as friendly and approachable. The authors further noted how vital relationships are to youth ministry. Teenagers value relationships and want their youth pastors to invest in them and spend time getting to know them.

Belsterling (2009) attempted to discover whether there was a connection between how often a youth worker teaches from the Bible and the relationships between teens and youth workers. Four hundred twenty-five college-age participants completed a survey. The results indicated that 382 attended youth ministries; of those, 380 had at least one relationship with an adult worker. Among these, 254 attended Bible studies at least once a week. This research suggested that youth workers who engage teens in Bible study can develop relationships. This research is critical because it provides information for youth ministries about studying the Bible with teenagers. Teaching from the Bible can help one foster relationships with adolescents, and youth workers need to incorporate it when meeting with them.

Genuine relationships are crucial to youth (Choi, 2012; Szymanski, 2010). Choi found that youths wanted to be surrounded by leaders who would provide supervision, inspiration, reassurance, forgiveness, and gentle correction. According to Powell et al. (2016), youths want to be relational with people who know them by name and model lives of faith by demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit. Relationships take time to develop but are crucial for youths. Teenagers want youth leaders who are caring and filled with faith. They need to feel like they have a voice and that their issues, desires, and difficulties will be understood.

Youth Leadership Characteristics

For youths, identity in Christ is vital. Youths need to be in relationships with adults who care about them. At the same time, youth workers, pastors, and youth ministers have a voice in youth leaders' characteristics. For example, Grant (2009) met with youth workers, senior pastors, and parent volunteers in her local church to ascertain what characteristics youth ministers should possess. According to her research, youth ministers' chief characteristics are integrity, honesty, authenticity, humility, responsibility, and trustworthiness. The next characteristics are love of people and relationality. The third group was loving and obeying God. Other characteristics included commitment, loyalty, dedication, patience, godly examples, and moral purity.

Building relationships with teenagers should be a priority in youth ministry (Nel, 2015; Ruffenach, 2017). Ruffenach found that the goal of youth ministry should be to make disciples of the teenagers in the church and the church's community. According to Nel and Ruffenach, leaders in youth ministry should have two primary goals in making disciples. The first is to create relationships, and the second is to vary the circumstances of these relationships: "When teaching is not relational, it has almost no place in youth ministry" (Nel, 2015, p. 8). These relationships must be of great depth, which often takes more time. Youth leaders require love, patience, kindness, goodness, and stamina. The fruit will be borne when the discipleship relationships begin to multiply a few years down the road.

In agreement with this, Szymanski (2010) acknowledged that youth ministers must demonstrate the characteristics of Jesus, the fruit of the Spirit. They need to see love, joy, and peace in practice. Youths need to be shown kindness, patience, and forgiveness, just like Jesus showed to everyone when they made poor choices. Youths need to observe leaders who demonstrate gentleness, goodness, and self-control. Finally, youth leaders must remain close to

Christ and carry themselves as children of God because the youths they work with are always watching and learning.

The perfect maturity of the fruit of the Spirit is a lifetime process. Rasmussen (2018) contended that "spiritual fruit and the development of leadership qualities only come as individuals intentionally focus on the spiritual formation process" (p. 103). This project reaffirmed the need for a biblical grasp of godly character and the Holy Spirit's empowerment. For Christian leaders to be Christ-like, they must possess the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit, who causes the growth of the fruit of the Spirit and gives leaders the ability to instruct with powerful effectiveness. According to Awad (2011) and Gabriel (2016), the Holy Spirit's work should never be absent from the work of Jesus Christ. Therefore, a Christian leader must be empowered by the Holy Spirit to live out the fruit of the Spirit.

John Paul II noted that the Holy Spirit's presence affects all activities of a worker in Christ (Awad, 2011). Leaders should welcome the Holy Spirit. According to Wright (2017), Awad, and Worley (2014), fruits of the Spirit are characteristics that one needs to live a life closer to God. Every youth leader should strive to grow closer to God, and the only way to achieve this is through the Holy Spirit, by cultivating the fruit of the Spirit. Ministers must consider their dispositions, attitudes, and actions toward others. They must continually strive to reach Christ's level of perfection by displaying the fruit of the Spirit in every area of their lives. These lives come from "submitting to Christ by faith and living your life under the power and guidance of his Spirit" (Wright, 2017, p. 155).

In summary, youth ministers must remember that God aspires to lure others closer to Him. His desire is for everyone to know Jesus and become more like Him through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. For this to happen, ministers need to display the fruit of the Spirit and follow

Paul's advice:

> So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things, there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other. (*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011, Gal. 5:16-26)

Rationale for Study and Gap in the Literature

The previous section reviewed the literature related to this study. Unfortunately, research is scarce on youth ministers and the fruit of the Spirit. Therefore, the following section provides a rationale for the study.

Even though there were few studies, the researcher found two that measured the fruit of the Spirit after training. However, there was no connection to youth leadership. The first study was by Ollendieck (2016). He found a link between the process of coaching leaders and the fruit of the Spirit. Spiritual coaches use centering prayer to help managers grow closer to God by finding their connection to the Spirit. The study showed that managers grew in their professional lives through individual coaching. They found a deeper connection to God and increased their demonstration of the fruit of the Spirit to those around them. This study implied that believers could grow in their faith and grow closer to God through prayer, alone time with God, and relational motivation from other believers. Further, it showed that people desire a deeper connection with the Holy Spirit and want to reflect the fruit of the Spirit in their lives.

Another study was conducted by Mercurio (2007), who evaluated the extent to which discipleship training contributes to the potency of the Holy Spirit in the lives of participants, as

measured by the fruit of the Spirit, and explored the extent to which power change or existing strength may relate to an incarnational missional impact on people outside the church (Mercurio, 2007). This study used church participants, who were provided with pre- and post-surveys to determine the fruit of the Spirit before and after their training. The training included learning through sermons, memorizing scripture, and participating in a small group community. The study showed an increase in the potency of the fruit and a potentially positive response to the discipleship training.

Mercurio's (2007) research stemmed from an interest in the church figuring out how to make God known to the world. The church is an extension of Jesus. When people look at the church, they need to see a reflection of Jesus (*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011, John 17:21; 26). Others see Jesus' reflection through the spiritual fruit Christians display (*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011, John 15:8; 16; Matt. 5:16). The church's challenge is measuring and evaluating the presence of this fruit. According to Mercurio, churches are unaccustomed to measuring spiritual growth through the fruit of the Spirit.

Although there is no research on the fruit of the Spirit being displayed by youth ministers, several studies provided information on church leadership's characteristics. Church leaders need specific characteristics for a successful ministry, according to Rotaru (2019). First, he found that a strong relationship with Jesus produced spiritual effectiveness. This effectiveness helps leaders disciple those to whom they minister. Rotaru also contended that a minister needs a spiritual calling to be a minister. Further, Rotaru found that ministers must be faithful to God in every circumstance. This spiritual effectiveness and faithfulness to God produce a minister who can be joyful and at peace while demonstrating goodness, kindness, and patience.

Cochran (2020) examined the worship leader's role in relational development with the

congregation to promote congregant engagement. Twenty worship leaders were interviewed in this study. The study found that character, capability, commitment, and chemistry were crucial for a worship leader. For this study, the area of character is relevant. A person of character displays transparency and encouragement in relationships with others. Cochran found that character represented one's spiritual walk, which exhibits integrity through actions and attitudes.

In conjunction with this study, Cole (2006) investigated the characteristics of influential pastors in the Tulsa District of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (C.M.E.). From the questionnaires that ten ministers completed, he found that the number-one characteristic an influential pastor must have is a relationship with God and others through love, faith, and trust. Second, there must be knowledge of God's word. Third, there must be a commitment to ministry with a willingness to be a servant.

Polk (2007) investigated the characteristics of church pastors. He found that pastors should be above reproach, have sound minds, and be genial when dealing with others. Further, he discovered that pastors should live a life under the control of the Spirit of God and demonstrate self-control and goodness.

According to the literature presented here, ministers need to be measured against God's principles, the fruit of the Spirit. Christian ministers should love people, exhibit joy, be peaceful, and demonstrate courage (Perera, 2009). In addition, they should keep their commitments, be gentle, and demonstrate self-control. Finally, concerning others, ministers should be patient, caring, and understanding, honor their commitments, and want what is best for others.

God is a God of relationships (*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011, John 15:13; Zeph. 3:17; 1 John 4:19). He wants His people to be in relationships with Him and each other. Wheelington (2005) noted that relationships are the conduit through which ministry flows, and it

takes time to build relationships. Students need to see youth ministers living out their faiths and setting examples for spiritual growth.

Church leaders, including youth ministers, must be honest, truthful, and open when promoting relationships (Breedt & Niemandt, 2013). God wants church leaders to show a love for people that the Holy Spirit drives. Leadership based on the Holy Spirit, according to Breedt and Niemandt, must display the fruit of the Spirit and be compelling, active, and inspired.

Ministry is the example of the Gospel lived out in the lives of believers as they show genuine empathy for others (Krejcir, 2000). If ministers are not living out the Gospel, they are not doing ministry. Ministers must show that they care in deeds through love and the fruit of the Spirit. In the same way, Christian leaders show God's love and genuine concern by being willing and able to help. This study investigates how youth ministers display the relational fruits of kindness, goodness, and patience. It provides critical information to youth ministers and church leaders.

Youth leaders must be people-oriented and relational. Further, they must manifest the fruit of the Spirit. Rasmussen (2018), Ruffenach (2017), and Szymanski (2010) all proved in various ways that Christian leaders must display the fruit of the Spirit. Christian leaders must reflect the love of Christ. They must display love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Although there are occasional sources about the fruit of the Spirit, like Ollendieck (2016) and Mercurio (2007), no previous studies connected the fruit of the Spirit to the youth ministers. Consequently, a gap exists in research on youth ministers displaying the fruit of the Spirit. This study closes that gap.

Profile of the Current Study

The literature review offered a comprehensive synthesis of the literature. First, there was the theological basis for this qualitative study. Through the Holy Spirit, God is embodied in the fruit of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit cannot exist without the Holy Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit reflects the values and behaviors that youth ministers demonstrate in their leadership. These values aid youth ministers in working with youths and making disciples of Christ.

Next, there was the theoretical basis for this research. Youth leaders must be relationship-oriented and demonstrate patience, kindness, and goodness. Relationship- and people-oriented leaders care about those around them and live their lives as examples of Christ.

Further, from related literature by Choi (2012), Ji and Tameifuna (2011), Jones (2020), Powell et al. (2016), Warren (2021), and White (2017), it is clear that Christian leaders play an essential role in developing teenagers' relationships with Christ. Bruce and Cockreham (2004) suggested that youths need to be encouraged and supported in making meaning in their lives. Further, youths need trusted adults to converse with them about life issues. Finally, youths need church leaders to be present and aid them during this time in their lives. They require relationships, guidance, and spiritual instruction, which church leaders can and should provide through the fruits of the Spirit: kindness, goodness, and patience.

In this study of the fruit of the Spirit and youth ministers, the researcher has attempted to fill a gap in the literature on the vital area of youth leadership. The study explores the relationship between patience, kindness, goodness, and youth pastors. A qualitative, multiple case study design was used, comparing findings from seven Christian churches. The following chapter describes the data collection and analysis methods.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Youth ministry is a crucial part of the church that can help teenagers strengthen their

godly beliefs and spiritual formation. Youth ministry is designed to work with teenagers who

need to learn about Jesus and about how God works in the world. Its purpose is to "facilitate and

empower young people in developing a deep and meaningful relationship with God" (Aziz,

2019, p. 4). Unfortunately, there is no research on the fruit of the Spirit and whether it is

displayed by youth leaders. In this work, the researcher has attempted to contribute to the

knowledge base. This chapter describes the qualitative research design, the setting, the

participants, the role of the researcher, ethical considerations, data collection, and analysis.

Research Design Synopsis

Problem

The fruit of the Spirit consists of nine traits: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness,

goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011,

Gal 5:22-23). These traits work together as a package to guide a believer in Christ-like living.

With the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, a youth minister needs to live by these standards. The

fruit of the Spirit do not come naturally because they are contrary to the flesh. In addition, they

are not easy to live out in one's daily life. The fruit grows when a Christian submits to the

guidance of the Holy Spirit and uses their God-given ability to make it happen.

Church leaders need specific characteristics to lead a successful ministry, according to

Rotaru (2019). The focal point of this study was the three fruit that focuses on relationships with

others: patience, kindness, and goodness. These are exemplified by an active love of one's

friends, one's neighbors, and even one's enemies (Harverly, 2008). He found that a strong

relationship with Jesus produced spiritual effectiveness. This spiritual effectiveness helps leaders

minister to those they disciple.

Although there has been no direct research on youth pastors and the fruit of the Spirit, Ollendieck (2016) found a connection between the process of coaching leaders and the fruit of the Spirit. The study showed that managers grew spiritually and professionally through individual coaching. They found deeper connections to God and increased their demonstration of the fruit of the Spirit to those around them.

Youth ministers must demonstrate patience, kindness, and goodness because they want to build relationships with the youths they work with and help them enter into life-changing relationships with God. Youth ministers should partner with teenagers and bring them into the presence of Jesus Christ through his holy word. This ministry should be purposeful and relational and reflect the fruit of the Spirit. Research has revealed the characteristics that ministers should have. No literature has connected the attitudes and behaviors of youth ministers to the fruit of the Spirit. This study reviews whether youth ministers demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this multi-case study was to explore whether and how youth ministers displayed the fruit of the Spirit at five Bible-based, baptistic Christian churches with no more than 500 members in southeast Georgia. A Christian church was defined as one accepting the Bible as the sole source and authority of true Christian faith. The fruit of the Spirit was defined as the nine behaviors Paul listed in Galatians 5:22-23 (Noyes, 2019): love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These can be developed through the work of the Holy Spirit in a Christian's life (Noyes, 2019).

Research Questions

RQ1. How were the attributes that focus on patience displayed by youth ministers?

RQ2. How were the attributes that focus on kindness displayed by youth ministers?

RQ3. How were the attributes that focus on goodness displayed by youth ministers?

RQ4. How were the fruit of the Spirit that focus on relationships displayed by youth ministers?

RQ5. How did the fruit of the Spirit (patience, goodness, and kindness) displayed by the youth ministers affect their relationships with students?

The research questions aimed to reveal whether youth ministers demonstrated the fruit of the Spirit. They were divided into three groups based on their attributes. Questions 1, 2, and 3 were included because they separated the fruit of the Spirit into smaller sections, which helped the researcher focus on the specific and comprehensive behaviors demonstrated by the youth ministers. Question 4 addressed all the attributes again to see what the youth ministers revealed. Finally, question 5 looked at how demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit affected the relationships between the youth ministers and the students.

Research Design and Methodology

Qualitative research involves data collection on variables over a period of time in a natural setting (Gay & Airasian, 2000). It can provide significant information about a phenomenon or a group of people and can be used to develop an initial understanding of an issue or problem or to determine and theorize about significant issues (Creswell, 2014; Jamshed, 2014). According to Patton (2002), "Qualitative methods facilitate the study of issues in depth and detail. Approaching fieldwork without being constrained by predetermined categories of analysis contributes to the depth, openness, and detail of qualitative inquiry" (p. 14). Qualitative research helps researchers explain emotions and ideas and understand different perspectives between people. In addition, the researcher can position themselves in the research and collaborate with the participants.

The general purpose of a case study is to describe an individual situation, event, or person in detail. A case study can identify the critical issues of the case and analyze it using relevant theoretical concepts. The case study approach lends itself to gathering information to answer how, why, and what questions (Crowe et al., 2011). It can offer insights into gaps or describe why one implementation strategy might be chosen.

Case study designs can be used in studies to answer how or why questions. According to Baxter and Jack (2009), there are different case studies, including exploratory, descriptive, collective, intrinsic, and instrumental. Case studies involve a close collaboration between the researcher and the participants, but the researcher cannot manipulate the participants' behavior (Merriam, 2009). A case can be about a person, program, event, activity, or process. Research takes place over an extended time, and data can be collected from multiple sources, such as interviews, observations, and documents, including public records and audiovisual materials. According to Williams (2007), the researcher must spend significant time interacting with the people studied and should report on lessons learned and patterns found. Case studies can be approached differently depending on the reason for the study (Busetto et al., 2020). They can be helpful when a researcher wants to gain factual information about a real-world event because the researcher can then explore essential characteristics, meanings, and implications.

This multi-case study was aimed at revealing how youth ministers demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit. The study design was particularistic in that it focused on a particular group of people. It looked specifically at attributes that focused on outward relationships to help the researcher focus on the specific comprehensive behaviors the youth ministers showed.

For this qualitative case study, data were collected through interviews and observations to investigate how youth ministers' behaviors demonstrated the fruit of the Spirit, patience,

kindness, and goodness. The researcher used an informal interview with open-ended questions for each interviewee. The researcher created the questions centered around the fruit of the Spirit, and the behaviors demonstrated when a person is patient, kind, and good to others. The questions started with background information. They then explored the pastors' knowledge of the Holy Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit. There were also questions about years of experience and behavioral characteristics. The interviewee had the freedom to answer the questions as necessary. The interviews were recorded with the interviewees' permission.

The researcher used structured observations to observe youth ministers' behaviors related to patience, kindness, and goodness. These observations occurred during weekly youth nights at the various church locations. The physical setting was observed, and the activities, actions, and conversations were noted.

Setting

Although the study was planned for seven Bible-based, baptistic Christian churches, only five were used. The setting of the study was these five churches, which had no more than 500 members each and had made their mission to lead people to Jesus. These churches were chosen through an internet search examining their missions, visions, and beliefs. It also considered whether a full-time youth pastor was on staff who oversaw a youth program of students ages 13–18. The churches in southeast Georgia that met the criteria were emailed, asking them to consider participating in the study. If the church's mission was to reach the unchurched for Christ, then its youth ministers should demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit.

Although the settings of the churches were not fully known, they were researched on the internet, and further questions were asked at the interview as needed. The researcher investigated the church's denomination, population, mission, and leadership structure. Any identifying

information was kept confidential, and pseudonyms are used to identify the churches.

Participants

Qualitative case study research does not prescribe a sample size (Busetto et al., 2020; Malterud et al., 2016; Patton, 2002). According to Busetto et al., the sample size should be predetermined. The sample for this study was narrow to allow the researcher time to investigate the behaviors in detail. This sample reflected all the participants whose information was relevant to the study.

The research population for this study included the youth pastors from the five churches and five youths from each church who were 18 or older (high school seniors or recent graduates) and involved in the youth programs.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher was familiar with youth programming because she was a volunteer leader at her local church. However, she was unfamiliar with other churches and youth pastors. She recruited participants who met the study's criteria. She was not biased toward any churches and attempted to avoid bias and report the data truthfully.

Qualitative research allows researchers to understand an individual's lived experiences (Leedy & Ormond, 2018). The role of the researcher in qualitative research includes planning the study, coordinating the observations or interviews, conducting interviews, recording and evaluating responses, interpreting answers, and writing the report. Case studies involve close collaboration between the researcher and the participants, but the researcher must not manipulate the participants' behavior (Merriam, 2009). The researcher was this study's primary data collection instrument (Creswell, 2013).

Case studies allow researchers to learn about a specific topic and require them to attend

when data are collected. The researcher conducted interviews using open-ended questions and observed the participants in a friendly, non-threatening way to understand their perceptions of the youth ministers' behaviors related to patience, kindness, and goodness. The researcher created the interview questions and had them reviewed by two youth pastors who were uninvolved in the study.

The researcher sought permission from each church's senior pastor via email before contacting the youth pastors. After the pastor's approval, the researcher emailed the youth pastors to conduct the interviews and observations. The youth and adult pastors provided lists of youths 18 years and older for the researcher to consider for interviews. When the youth pastors and students granted the researcher permission, the researcher interviewed them in person or through an online meeting site. The interviews were recorded, and the researcher drafted transcripts of the responses. Once the transcripts were completed, they were emailed to the respective participants to review for accuracy. After the transcripts were approved, the researcher organized, coded, and analyzed the data.

The researcher also observed the youth ministry settings to see the interactions between the ministers and students. The observation notes were organized, coded, and analyzed as well.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical consideration must be given to research involving human subjects. Universities are legally bound to use an institutional review board (IRB) to ensure ethical research practices and to protect research participants. According to the Liberty University Institutional Review Board Handbook, when research involves human subjects, the rights and welfare of participants are protected (Appendix A).

Informed consent is integral to ethics research (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018). All

participants were provided with an informed consent form that clearly described the research

(Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018; National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of

Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). This document (Appendices B and C) provided the

participants with a detailed explanation of the following:

- who the researcher was

- what the research intended to investigate

- what the role of the participants was

- how the data were to be collected, used, and reported

- what consequences or potential risks were involved.

It also contained the researcher's contact information, a statement that participation was

voluntary and that the participant was free to withdraw at any time, and a place for the

participant's signature and date (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016, p. 103).

Because case studies involve close collaboration between the researcher and the

participants, interaction during interviews can evolve unexpectedly. The researcher knew the

participants' identities, but they were not identified in any part of the dissertation. The youth

pastors and youths involved in the research were assured in writing of the confidentiality that

was extended to them. Further, the researcher notified the participants of any potential harm,

including loss of time and emotional responses to the interview. Finally, the research was

submitted to the IRB board for approval before data collection (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016).

Data Collection Methods and Instruments

Qualitative methods can be used to answer how and why questions (Merriam, 2009). This

multi-case study focused on a particular group, youth pastors, and involved close collaboration

between the researcher and the participants (Merriam, 2009). This research was intended to

contribute to the knowledge base through interviews with youth pastors and youths and through observations. The use of multiple data collection methods supported the results. This section details the methods that were employed. The research did not begin until approved by the Liberty University IRB.

Collection Methods

Interviewing and observing are "two data collection strategies designed to gather data that specifically address the research question" (Merriam, 2009, p. 139). Interviews and observations were used to gather data in this study. Case study research uses words as its data (Bredfeldt, 2017a). Protocols for interview questions and for recording them were established because the data collected was plentiful (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Consent from the participants was received before the interview process began.

Observations were used in this research. These involved the researcher collecting first-hand information about what was witnessed (Creswell, 2014). The field notes from observations included impressions, settings, behaviors, and non-verbal cues. Finally, reviewing the interviews and observations allowed the researcher to obtain authentic details about events and situations.

Data were collected from the youth pastors and youths. The primary methods were interviews and observations of the churches' youth programs. The interviews were conducted first. After the interviews and observations were finished, the data were analyzed. This process was repeated for each church in the study.

Instruments and Protocols

Consistently with case study requirements, the researcher collected data from multiple sources, including interviews and observations (Patton, 2002). The use of the two methods strengthened the validity of the research. However, the interviews were a significant part of the

research. Because the research questions asked whether youth pastors demonstrated the fruit of

the Spirit, all the forms of data collection were designed to address these questions.

Interviews

The interview followed guidelines established by Leedy and Ormond (2016). First, the

questions were developed in advance. According to Leedy and Ormond, "Novice researchers

typically have greater success when they prepare their general interview questions in advance"

(p. 264). Next, the questions were limited to a small number to encourage the participants to talk.

Two youth pastors who were not involved in the study reviewed the interview questions and

helped the researcher determine whether they could help answer the research questions.

The interviews were conducted at the church or wherever the participant was most

comfortable. The researcher kept her reactions to herself and obtained the information needed to

answer the research questions. In addition, the researcher followed the steps suggested by Leedy

and Ormond (2016) to obtain a productive interview:

1. Set up the interview beforehand, confirm the date and time, and send a reminder notice.

2. Obtain permission to record the interview.

3. Send the list of questions to the interviewee before the interview.

4. Afterward, send the transcript to the participant to confirm its accuracy.

Interviews allow for personal interaction between the researcher and the participant

(Merriam, 2009). This helps researchers determine feelings, behaviors, and reactions to events

when they cannot be observed. There are three types of interview questions; this study used

semi-structured questions (Merriam, 2009). The questions included an interview guide and more

and less structured open-ended questions. The questions were used to acquire specific

information from all respondents. The participants, as needed, were asked to elaborate on their

answers. Interview protocols (see Appendices F and G) were developed for both the youth

pastors and the youths. They included opening statements and questions, a space for answers,

and closing remarks. The date, time, and place of each interview were recorded. According to

Creswell and Clark (2007), an interview protocol helps the researcher stay organized and

provides a written record of the information collected.

The researcher developed two sets of guide questions based on the four main research

questions, one set for the pastors and one for the youths. The first few questions in each set were

used to obtain demographic information. These were asked to develop a rapport with the

interviewee. The next batch asked about the participant's experience with the fruit of the Spirit.

The final questions were explicitly related to the fruits studied in this research—patience,

kindness, goodness—and the youth pastors' behaviors and actions.

Expert Panel and Pilot Study

Two youth pastors not involved in the study served as an expert panel and reviewed the

questions for clarity, logic, appropriateness, and relevance. Following the critique, one pilot was

run with non-participants to practice using the questions and to gain feedback.

Observations

The observations involved watching and recording the participants' behavior in their

natural environment (Morgan et al., 2017). They allowed for firsthand encounters with the

activities, behaviors, and events studied. When completing observations, the researcher can be a

participant or not. In this study, the researcher was only an observer. She was not actively

involved in any of the churches' youth programs and was only conducting research. The youth

pastors and church leaders knew the data were being collected for her analysis. All names and

identities were kept confidential.

Written accounts of observations are called field notes (Merriam, 2009). Such notes are highly descriptive and can include direct quotations and setting diagrams. They should include details about the physical environment, participants, activities, interactions, and conversations (Merriam, 2009). They should also describe the researcher's role and how it might affect the environment and the behavior of the participants. Field notes must also include a reflective component containing the observer's comments, feelings, reactions, impressions, thoughts, questions, and interpretations. These are supplementary to the factual descriptions. According to Merriam (2009), the joint collection of descriptive and reflective field notes is essential to qualitative research.

This research used a research observation protocol (see Appendix C) to provide space for both descriptive and reflective notes. The notes were reviewed immediately after each youth program observation. These observations occurred during one youth night at each church location and lasted for the duration of the youth activity. After all the observations were complete, they were coded and analyzed. Each handwritten data point was scanned and stored on the researcher's computer. All data material was typed, and backup copies were made. All material that could identify anyone was kept confidential.

Procedures

IRB approval was obtained before the research began (see Appendix A) for all materials, such as the recruitment materials, the informed consent forms, the interview questions, and the observation protocols. After consent was received, the researcher contacted church pastors to communicate the details of the study and request participation from youth pastors and youths. Once approval from the pastor and youth pastor were received, the researcher sought youth participants 18 years and older. Once all permissions were collected, the interviews and the

observations were conducted. All information that could reveal the participants' identities remained confidential. While the data were being collected, they were analyzed. The case studies were written out to detail each case or church. Once this process was complete, conclusions were drawn.

Data Analysis

Once the data were collected, they were managed and analyzed. The analysis occurred during the data collection and was interwoven with it. Busetto et al. (2020), Creswell (2014), and Leedy and Ormrod (2016) recommended going back and forth between data collection and analysis to improve the research and help it attain saturation.

According to Creswell (2014), the researcher should follow some basic procedures for the analysis:

1. Transcribe all the data.

2. Read and organize the data.

3. Code the data by topic and by similarities and differences uncovered in the research, using open coding, focused coding, and thematic coding.
    a. This is a lengthy process.
    b. It can be completed by hand or through a computer program.

4. Use the coding to generate a description of the event, setting, or situation.

5. Write a narrative to convey the finding of the analysis.

6. Interpret the findings or results.

Although these steps seem easy, they were time-consuming, though they yielded a great deal of information. While the research was being done, validity and reliability were also considered.

Analysis Methods

Two types of data were analyzed: interviews and observations. The interviews and observations were completed and analyzed at one church, then repeated at the following

churches.

Case Study Description

A case study follows the same analysis guidelines as all qualitative data studies, except for a few steps. According to Patton (2002), the raw data must be assembled and written up in a case study narrative: "Regardless of the unit of analysis, a qualitative case study seeks to describe that unit in depth and detail, holistically, and in context (p. 55). For this method, the case study must provide a descriptive picture of the matter being studied. Likewise, the writing must explain the case and vividly depict it for the reader. This study's detailed written description was created after all the interviews and observations at each church site.

Interview Analysis

The data from each interview were transcribed and sent to the interviewees to check for errors. Once approved, they were coded based on the data received. The researcher followed the analysis model from Creswell (2014). The interviews were coded using a computer program and by hand by the researcher, using inductive coding based on the data. The initial open coding helped the researcher understand and become familiar with the data. The open coding began with reading the transcripts and applying the initial set of codes. The identified data became more focused and helped to answer the research questions. The next stage, focused coding, included detailed line-by-line coding to reveal themes and topics and organize the analysis (Patton, 2002). The goal of the focused coding was to refine the data further. This step narrowed the focus to relatively few codes. The final coding, thematic coding, allowed for the themes to be refined enough for use in the analysis and conclusion.

Observation Analysis

The observation protocol included thoughts, comments, and insights from the researcher.

Each observation was typed up immediately after it took place. They were scanned into the computer, and copies were made for coding and marking. The observations were coded using the Dedoose computer program and by hand, using inductive coding based on the data. The information was coded for themes and topics to complete the analysis. The coding followed the same process as described in the observation analysis.

The data from the interviews and observations were combined. They generated a description of the youth pastors and their actions. This revealed whether they displayed the fruit of the Spirit, patience, goodness, and kindness. Finally, the themes helped the researcher write a narrative to convey the findings of the analysis. Before being added to the report, these findings were sent to the participants.

Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, the standard is trustworthiness: thoroughness of the study and level of confidence in the data, interpretation, and methods used to ensure quality (Connelly, 2016). This is one way researchers can persuade themselves and their readers that their research findings are attention-worthy. In this study, the researcher intended to produce high-quality research. She also intended to produce a work that resonated with the participants and the readers to stimulate further research on the subject of the fruit of the Spirit. She addressed four components: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability.

Credibility

Credibility involves how accurately the findings describe the study (Connelly, 2016; Nowell et al., 2017) and how the study investigates its subject (Gibbert et al., 2008). Triangulation increases the credibility of case study research (Baskarada, 2013; Crowe et al., 2011). Triangulation combines methods to explain the situation, event, or person by studying it

from more than one standpoint (Patton, 2002). To avoid threats to credibility, the researcher used

multiple sources of evidence, interviews, and observations, had the informants review the case

study report, and included the interviews and observation protocols to trace the chain of

evidence.

Dependability

Dependability is to the stability of the data over time (Connelly, 2016; Nowell et al.,

2017) and the process by which it is made logical, traceable, and documented. To ensure

dependability, the researcher provided a clear research framework. The research implemented

the articulated methodology, data collection techniques, and procedures.

Confirmability

Confirmability consists of the steps taken to ensure that the data and findings are not due

to participant or researcher bias. According to Nowell et al. (2017), an audit trail or detailed

notes can be used to provide readers with details about the decisions and choices made by the

researcher. The researcher kept detailed notes about the data collection and analysis. She had the

participants check the interview transcripts and findings for accuracy. She also stated that she

would make the data available for review by other researchers upon request. Further, the

interview and observation protocols were added to the appendices.

Transferability

Transferability refers to how the results can be applied to another setting, group, or

phenomenon (Connelly, 2017). The primary purpose is to ensure that the results can be

generalized to other situations. Transferability can be improved through careful

documentation and clarification of the research procedures. The transferability of this study

was achieved by including detailed case study notes, documents, and the narratives collected

during the study.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this multi-case study was to explore whether and how youth leaders displayed the fruit of the Spirit at five Christian churches in southeast Georgia with no more than 500 members each. There was limited information on this topic. Thus this chapter explains the details and strategies needed to complete this study. Because the case study method helped the researcher understand a group of people and answer how questions, this chapter demonstrates why and how the multi-case study method was used.

This chapter covered specific details of the data collection and analysis. The researcher used interviews with open-ended questions and observations as data-collection tools. The coding method described in Creswell (2014) was used for the data analysis. Ethical considerations, the researcher's role, and trustworthiness were discussed to emphasize and ensure a valid, reliable, and professional research plan.

This research has demonstrated the need to study the fruit of the Spirit and leadership. Youth ministry is a crucial part of the church that can help teenagers strengthen their godly beliefs and spiritual formation. Unfortunately, no research has investigated the fruit of the Spirit and whether it is displayed by youth leaders. This research contributes to knowledge about the fruit of the Spirit and youth leadership.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of chapter four is to present the results of the data analysis. A compilation of the protocols and measures used is included. Demographic and sample data are also described. Finally, the data analysis and findings are discussed, along with an evaluation of the research design.

The purpose of this study was to use multiple case studies to analyze whether and how youth leaders displayed the fruit of the Spirit. The following research questions guided the study:

RQ1. How were the attributes that focus on patience displayed by youth ministers?

RQ2. How were the attributes that focus on kindness displayed by youth ministers?

RQ3. How were the attributes that focus on goodness displayed by youth ministers?

RQ4. How were the fruit of the Spirit that focus on relationships displayed by youth ministers?

RQ5. How did the fruit of the Spirit (patience, goodness, and kindness) displayed by the youth ministers affect their relationships with the students?

Compilation Protocol and Measures

The researcher set out to use seven churches for this study but ended up with only five because many pastors were not interested in having their churches participate. Some said that they did not have large youth populations. Others did not want a stranger coming into their church. Still, other pastors did not like the researcher's university, and some did not approve of women furthering their education to lead a ministry.

The researcher collected data from the five churches. The youth ministers interviewed were church youth pastors. The youth pastors and youth members 18 years or older were interviewed. The youth pastors were observed interacting with youths at each of the five

churches.

The youth pastor interviews, youth interviews, and youth pastor observations were conducted at one church. The researcher employed a semi-structured approach with 14 questions for the youth pastors and 11 for the youths (see Appendices F and G). These interviews were then summarized and sent to the participants to check for accuracy. The interviews provided the most meaningful data.

Observations were conducted during youth nights at the five churches. These observations occurred during youth social times and primarily examined the interactions between the youth pastors and the youths. In addition, observational data were gathered concerning the physical environment, activities, interactions, attitudes, and reactions.

Data compilation began with a transcription of each interview and observation. Printed interview and observation protocols were coded. Coding was done in consideration of the research questions and using patterns from the interviews and observations. The researcher organized and tracked the codes across the cases using Dedoose software.

A case analysis was conducted at the first church, and the study was then replicated for the other four churches. The researcher followed the analysis model of Creswell (2014). The initial coding helped the researcher understand and become familiar with the data. This coding was completed by hand. Open coding began with the researcher reading the transcripts and applying the initial set of codes. The data were entered into the Dedoose program. A line-by-line detailed coding helped reveal themes and topics to organize the analysis (Patton, 2002). The goal of the focused coding was to refine the data enough for use in the analysis and conclusion. Finally, a cross-analysis was conducted to compare the findings for all five churches, and conclusions were drawn.

Demographic and Sample Data

The researcher initially selected ten churches in southeast Georgia that had youth pastors who were paid staff and which were Bible-based, baptistic Christian churches. The pastors of these churches were each sent an email invitation (see Appendix E) to get approval for the research. The researcher expected to work with seven churches, but only one church responded to the initial email. A follow-up phone call was made to all ten churches, and only two more agreed.

The researcher then reached out through email to another ten churches in southeast Georgia. This process procured two more churches. The five church pastors who agreed to have their churches participate emailed the names of their youth pastors to the researcher, who emailed the youth pastors for scheduling information. The researcher also received a list of possible youth members who were 18 or older. The five churches were used for the five cases, and one youth pastor and one youth were interviewed from each. A total of ten participants, five youth pastors and five youths were interviewed. Participants' demographic information can be found in Table 1.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant Name	Gender	Ethnicity	Church Type
Youth Pastor A	Male	Caucasian	Southern Baptist
Youth A	Male	Caucasian	Southern Baptist
Youth Pastor B	Male	Caucasian	Southern Baptist
Youth B	Female	Caucasian	Southern Baptist
Youth Pastor C	Male	Caucasian	Non-denominational
Youth C	Male	Caucasian	Non-denominational
Youth Pastor D	Male	Caucasian	Non-denominational evangelical
Youth D	Female	Caucasian	Non-denominational evangelical
Youth Pastor E	Male	Caucasian	Non-denominational
Youth E	Female	Caucasian	Non-denominational

Case One Interview Participants

Case one is a Southern Baptist church in southeast Georgia. The average Sunday attendance is around 250 people. Their goal is to be a visible body of believers in their community. They believe in one true God and that men divinely inspired by God wrote the Holy Bible. They believe people should love God first and others second (church pastor, personal communication, October 5, 2022). Further, Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Church A Youth Pastor

Youth Pastor A has been in youth ministry for ten years. He has served as the youth pastor of this church for two years. He has always felt a connection with students and feels that God has called him into the youth ministry. He cannot imagine working in any other area of ministry.

Church A Youth

Youth A is 18. He was home-schooled and graduated in May. He started coming to this church with his parents. He has been at the church for four years and with the current pastor for two.

Case Two Interview Participants

Case two is a Southern Baptist church in southeast Georgia. The average Sunday attendance is between 450 and 500 people. Their goal is to be present in the community and have a place for people of every gender, culture, and generation. They believe the Holy Bible is God's authoritative word, the church is the body of Christ, and every person born of the Spirit is an integral part of the body of believers. Further, Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Church B Youth Pastor

Youth Pastor B has been in youth ministry for sixteen years. He has served as the youth pastor of this church for four years. His degree is in marriage counseling, but he feels God has blessed him with the ability to speak to students honestly and openly. He also feels that God has blessed him with the gift of taking complex biblical concepts and making them clear to understand.

Church B Youth

Youth B has been at the church and with the current youth pastor for four years. She attends this church because her previous church closed, and she had family at this church. She is 18 years old, attends public high school, and will graduate in May 2023.

Case Three Interview Participants

Case three is a non-denominational Christian church in southeast Georgia. The average

Sunday attendance is between 300 and 350 people. They aim to invest in and invite people into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ. They believe that God is the creator and ruler of the universe and exists eternally in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They believe that the Bible is God's Word for all humanity and is the supreme source of truth for Christian beliefs and living. A Christian is a person who accepts Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, submits to full immersion baptism, and strives to live an obedient life through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Church C Youth Pastor

Youth Pastor C has been in youth ministry for ten years. He has served as the youth pastor of this church for two years. He credits his success with youths first to God, then to the guides and teachers who helped him along the way. He believes that God called him to work with youths, and he was obedient to the calling.

Church C Youth

Youth C is 18 and has been with the current youth pastor at the church for three years. He previously attended this church when he was a young child. His family left for another church and then returned three years ago. Youth C said that he felt that being here now is like being home with his extended family: "Attending this church feels like home" (Youth C, personal communication, October 12, 2022).

Case Four Interview Participants

Case four is a non-denominational evangelical church in southeast Georgia. The average Sunday attendance is between 100 and 150 people. Their goal is to grow together in their relationship with Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. They desire to reveal the glory of God to their community and the world. They believe Jesus Christ is the head of His body, the church, and that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God: absolute in authority, complete

in revelation, final in content, and infallible in its statements. The Bible is their source of preaching and teaching. They strive to live in peace and unity according to the Holy Spirit. Further, the church seeks to know the Lord through prayer.

Church D Youth Pastor

Youth Pastor D has been in youth ministry for four years. Although he volunteered with youths at his previous church, this was his first appointment. He interned for one year at this church before becoming the youth pastor. His goal is to speak to teenagers so they know that God loves them and is real and that the gospel is true.

Church D Youth

Youth D is 19 and graduated from high school two years ago. She serves in the youth program with her parents as volunteers. She has been at this church since she was four. She always wanted to be a part of the youth program, especially as a little girl, because she wanted to be like the big kids at church.

Case Five Interview Participants

Case five is a non-denominational Christian church in southeast Georgia. The average Sunday attendance is between 450 and 500 people. Their goal is to lead people to a transformative relationship with Jesus. They believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, the written record of His supernatural revelation of Himself to man, absolute in its authority, complete in its revelation, final in its content, and without error in its teachings. They believe the local church is an autonomous body that cooperates with many Christian agencies but is regulated or dominated by none. They believe in the power of the Holy Spirit, the triune God, and the substitutionary death of Jesus to save humanity from their sinful life.

Church E Youth Pastor

Youth Pastor E has been in youth ministry for 23 years and has served for seven years at this church. He entered youth ministry because of his youth minister's impact on his life. He wanted to influence youths and help them grow closer to God.

Church E Youth

Youth E is 18 and will graduate from high school in May 2023. She has gone to this church since she moved here from out of state. She felt at home at this church because everyone was friendly and welcoming.

Data Analysis and Findings

The researcher spent two evenings at each church conducting the interviews and observing the large group interactions on youth nights. The data from each case were treated independently of the others. There was no emphasis during the first step on finding commonalities across cases. The coding of each case was completed using Dedoose software. After the individual cases were completed, the researcher synthesized across cases, grouping the data by research questions.

The following section first reviews each youth pastor's general knowledge of the fruit of the Spirit. Then the data for each research question are presented by case. After each case is considered, the themes that emerged for each research question are discussed. Occurrences of the themes for each research question can be found in Table 2.

Table 2

Occurrences of themes within each research question

Theme	Occurrences in Youth Pastors	Occurrences in Youths
General Knowledge about the Fruit of the Spirit		
Patience is the least recognizable	3	Not Applicable
Gentleness is the most recognizable	2	Not Applicable
Familiarity with the fruit	5	4
Patience in Youth Leaders (RQ1)		
Human examples	2	0
Parental contact and work with other adults	3	1
Sense of calm	2	3
Kindness in Youth Leaders (RQ2)		
Youth ministry is a calling	3	0
Others come first	5	5
Goodness in Youth Leaders (RQ3)		
Doing what is right	3	1
Goodness relates to God	4	3
Relational Fruit of the Spirit in Youth Leaders (RQ4)		
Listening	2	2
Time	3	3
Relational Fruit of the Spirit: Impact on Relationships (RQ5)		
Close relationships	0	5
Being an example	4	1

General Knowledge about the Fruit of the Spirit

Case One

When asked about his knowledge of the fruit of the Spirit, Youth Pastor A said that he

was familiar with the nine traits. When asked which fruit he recognized the most in himself, he

initially said hospitality. After a short discussion of the difference between the gifts and fruit of

the Spirit, he said that he recognized the fruit of gentleness most in himself. He said, "I don't

want to hurt somebody else's feelings. You know, I'm very conscious of what I say. Of course, I

screw it up all the time because my mouth speaks before my brain thinks about it. But

gentleness." On the other hand, patience is the fruit he struggles with the most.

When asked about his knowledge of the fruit of the Spirit, Youth A was familiar with the nine traits because his mother had taught him about them. He said that they were traits Christians should put on every day.

Case Two

When asked about her knowledge of the fruit of the Spirit, Youth B could name the nine traits. Like her, Youth Pastor B was familiar with the nine traits, saying that they were a broad subject. However, when asked about specifics, he mentioned the gifts of the spirit, not the fruit of the Spirit. He said, "I'm a self-aware person, but I'm not a very self-centered person. So I would go by what people share with me, which is that one of my gifts is teaching." When reminded about the fruit of the Spirit, Youth Pastor B recanted and said self-control is the fruit he sees the most in himself. He believes that either a person controls his emotions or the emotions control the person. He said,

> There's always going to be problems. What's your solution for the problem? How are you going to view that problem? Anybody can get emotional and react quickly. It's way better to act than to react, because reaction comes from circumstances around you.

The fruit he recognized the least in himself was gentleness, because as he said, "I'm very black and white. I'm very right or wrong. And if I'm wrong, I'd rather you just tell me, 'Hey, bro, you're wrong.' So I figured that somebody else wants to be told." According to Youth Pastor B, his family has to tell him when he is slightly rough with his words and that he "could have said that differently." He always responds, "Yes, I could have, but now you get the point."

Case Three

When asked about his knowledge of the fruit of the Spirit, Youth Pastor C said that if someone wants to pursue God, the fruit is a perfect place to start:

They have to do with attitudes, the fruit are reflections and attributes of God's character that we should show through our own lives. It is something that every person who claims to be a child of God should demonstrate in their own lives.

The fruit Youth Pastor C recognized the most in himself was joy, because "Everything's gonna be okay because the battles have already been fought and won by God. He's gone before me. It doesn't matter. Whatever happens in these earthly situations, I know what's going to be." The fruit he had the most trouble identifying in himself was patience. He said,

I isolate some incidents in my life and say, "Okay, this is why you were having some serious problems right here. You were not demonstrating patience whatsoever." Like it's not a constant problem, but I have to be cognizant of and work at it because I don't feel like I am where I need to be.

When asked about his knowledge of the fruit of the Spirit, Youth C admitted that he was not the most biblically knowledgeable. He said that the fruit of the Spirit comes when a person trusts in Jesus as their Lord and Savior. A Christian would experience and bear the fruit of the Spirit instead of living in sin.

Case Four

When asked about her familiarity with the fruit of the Spirit, Youth D was able to recite the fruit through song. Youth Pastor D said that the fruit of the Spirit was not individual fruits but whole fruit, a gift from the Holy Spirit. He noted, "I kind of view it as a pomegranate. It's one fruit with many seeds." He demonstrated the fruit of patience the most and gentleness the least. He said,

I'm not trying to sound arrogant when I say that, but I just went through a lot and so like when things happen that are out of my control, I don't really freak out like most people would. But at the same time, the gentleness aspect was probably my weakest because sometimes I have a hard time seeing people's perspectives. After all, some things are not a big deal to me, because I've been seeing much worse things happen.

Case Five

Youth Pastor E said that he was familiar with the fruit of the Spirit. He said that he knew

what the fruit were and had preached about them but had never written a dissertation about them. Youth E said she was familiar with the fruit of the Spirit but could only recite eight of the nine. She missed kindness.

Youth Pastor E said that he most recognized the fruit of love in himself because "It's pretty easy for me to genuinely just love people." The first fruit he had trouble seeing in himself was self-control. The other was patience because he was "always on the go, and patience is tough."

Summary and Themes

The interview participants demonstrated knowledge of the fruit of the Spirit. All the youths were familiar with the fruit. Only one attempted to list them, and she missed only one. When initially asked, two of the five youth pastors did not mention a fruit of the Spirit but a gift. However, when this was brought to their attention, they could name the fruit of the Spirit they recognized the most and the least in themselves.

Three themes emerged in this section. The first was that three youth pastors identified patience as the fruit they saw the least in themselves: Youth Pastors A, C, and E. Youth Pastor E noted that patience was tough for him, and Youth Pastor C said it was something he was aware of and attempted to improve.

The second theme was that two youth pastors identified gentleness as their most challenging fruit. Youth Pastor B said that he had difficulty because he was straightforward when sharing information. Youth Pastor D said that he had trouble seeing other people's perspectives.

The third theme was familiarity with the fruit. Although all the youth pastors knew the fruit of the Sprit, Youth Pastor C and Youth C knew that they reflected God's character. Youths

B and D could recite them, and Youth A knew they were something a person must put on daily.

Youth Pastor D viewed them as a pomegranate, one fruit with many seeds.

Patience in Youth Leaders

Case One

When asked about patience, Youth Pastor A cited several examples of pastors who had demonstrated patience with him over the years. He noted that they had constantly given him second chances. Youth Pastor A had never seen these pastors aggravated or agitated. He said, "A huge part of patience is always looking at the bigger picture. Mistakes are just shortcomings of a small moment compared to the bigger goal we aim for."

Youth A reported that he had heard his youth pastor raise his voice only once. He noted that his pastor could endure a lot of nonsense from the kids because he was just a "roll-with-the-punches kind of guy." The observation confirmed the youth pastor's ability to tolerate silliness from students and to answer question after question from them, no matter how big or small.

Case Two

Youth B named understanding, forgiveness, and mercy when asked about behaviors demonstrating patience. She said that Youth Pastor B pulled students aside and spoke to them privately when they were having difficulties. Youth Pastor B confirmed that kids and parents need a youth pastor with a lot of patience. He believed in allowing a person to "rage and get out all their negativity" before he has a conversation with them. He believed that students showed increasing mental health problems and difficulty with deep conversations. They wanted to keep everything light and easy, but that is not always possible when discussing Jesus and being a follower of Jesus. Youth Pastor B believed in keeping calm and discussing those challenging issues by looking at biblical truth. He believed in addressing issues "head-on," and "not

sugarcoating any information."

Case Three

Youth Pastor C brought attention to a person's whole body when discussing patience. He said,

> If I believe that your body language says. I'm not tense, I'm not upset, and I believe your tone says, I care, that puts me at ease to receive things from you. If it's the opposite of that, I'm not ready. I'm not willing to receive because I don't think you're at ease. And your sound makes me nervous.

Youth Pastor C wanted to demonstrate patience to youths because he was there to love the students, help them see things they had not seen before, and hear from God. He said, "Without patience, it is tough for everyone. It's about the heart of the manner, the reason you do what you do, and that reason is to spread the love of Jesus."

Youth C expected to have a youth pastor who was not hasty to give advice or answer every question. He wanted someone who would answer questions with God's Word. He reported that a youth pastor needs patience because working with youths is challenging. A patient youth pastor needs to handle conflicts and irritation calmly and smoothly but with a sternness that shows they are serious.

Case Four

Youth Pastor D cited examples in which leaders did not handle youths well, because not all youths are churched or in church. They come from various backgrounds and do not always know how to act in church environments. He said that trying and see things from others' perspectives is essential.

Youth D declared that a youth pastor who demonstrated patience would "not [let] their emotions get the best of them." A patient pastor would take action at the correct times, not rush into things or make hasty decisions without first checking with their team.

Case Five

Youth Pastor E said that patience is a willingness to work with other church leaders. A youth pastor is not the foremost authority in the church. He submits to the church's overall direction, which comes from the pastor. Further, he noted that a church leader must have a soft heart and thick skin.

Youth E described patience as gentle. She said that youth pastors who demonstrate patience are not mean to youths. She said that she had never seen her youth pastor angry.

Summary and Themes

Youth pastors and youths confirmed that youth leaders need patience. According to the interviews and observations, youth leaders can demonstrate patience by showing forgiveness and remaining calm even when it is difficult. Further, patience can be demonstrated through body language and demeanor.

Youths need to know that they can be given chances and that the youth pastors care about them in word and deed. One recurring theme across the cases was human examples. Youth Pastor A cited positive adult examples, and Youth Pastor D cited negative adult examples he had witnessed. Youth D cited her pastor as someone who demonstrated patience even in the worst situations.

Another theme was parental contact and working with other adult leaders. Youth Pastor B noted that youth pastors need to know how they speak to others. Youth Pastor C said that patience must be shown with volunteers. Youth Pastor E and Youth D discussed how patience must be shown to other church leaders.

The final theme was a sense of calm. Youth A and Youth Pastor B said that youth pastors do not need to lose their cool; they need to keep a cool head. Youth Pastor B also said that a

youth pastor should never talk to someone without being calm. Youth Pastor C said that a patient person is "not tense or upset; they appear at ease." Youth D commented that youth pastors should "not let emotions get the best of them." Youth E summarized everything by saying that a youth pastor who demonstrates patience is gentle.

Kindness in Youth Leaders

Case One

Youth Pastor A noted that all the fruit are intertwined for pastors who display kindness. He cited examples of pastors who knew the importance of kindness because it demonstrated the life of Jesus. He said that his pastor's examples always looked at the bigger picture: "doing Jesus' ministry." Further, Youth Pastor A said that a leader who displays kindness always looks at others first because that is what ministry is all about.

Youth A said that being kind is being focused on Jesus. He reported that his youth pastor constantly says, "he wants to make much of Jesus and less of himself."

Case Two

Youth Pastor B noted that a youth pastor must exude kindness because many people do not know how to show it. He described three ways that kindness can be shown. The first was not holding back the truth; being willing to say hard things that a person might not want to hear: "But it takes kindness to be like, [I've] got to talk to you about something that's really difficult. I've got to call you out on stuff that you're ignorant about, and that's kindness."

His second view of kindness as a leader was giving credit to his team. He used words like "You guys crushed it, y'all are amazing, you did a great job." He said that he never takes credit; instead, he attributes all success to his team while also being willing to help his team members succeed. If they need anything, he says he is willing to be there to help.

Finally, he said that kindness is sacrifice. It is the willingness to put others before oneself. Kindness is looking for ways to lift other people's spirits. Youth Pastor B's attitude and willingness to sacrifice were verified by Youth B, who said that her youth pastor "puts others before himself." She said that kindness is generosity, forgiveness, and openness, which her youth pastor demonstrated to others around him.

Case Three

Youth Pastor C described kindness as "when a person is able to clearly set their own needs aside to fulfill a need of someone else. It's being willing to sacrifice something for another and put their needs first." He admitted that he did not always get it right when it came to sacrifice, but he acknowledged that sacrificing oneself was part of his calling as a youth pastor. He mentioned that this could involve helping with financial needs, but the most significant needs he saw in students were time and support. He said that "[the] time that you give them is just invaluable because to a student, it means I'm worth something." According to Youth Pastor C, time for youths is valuable because it means a leader has chosen them over everything else. Spending time with youths is one way to show kindness.

Youth C believes that kindness is important and feels that his youth pastor "is really focused on, definitely more so, everyone else and how they can go through their day." Further, he said that relationships matter to God, and that having personal relationships with youths is essential. He said that his youth pastor "does everything he can to have personal relationships with a lot of the youth and a lot of the volunteers, especially the older teenage guys and gals that hang around." He believes his youth pastor focuses on others and is willing to share his past experiences to help others along the way.

Case Four

Youth Pastor D believed it was essential to take care of others first. He said, "Kindness is taking the time just to, you know, recognize a student's needs or, you know, parents' needs and just being nice in general." He further commented that even when a Christian encounters someone from a different walk of life or people who believe in different values, "there's a way to love people or be nice to them without subjecting yourself to their belief system."

Youth D had observed her youth pastor outside the church and noted that he was inclusive of all people. She noted that he attempted to put others first. Sometimes he forgot to consider his adult volunteers when organizing events, but Youth D said that though he was not perfect, he continued to learn and make changes. Further, he invested time in the youths' lives because "building relationships comes with just being kind to these kids."

Case Five

Youth Pastor E said that his work as a youth pastor was more than a job; it was a calling. He felt that his attention in this role was focused on others. He commented that kindness is

> someone who is going to be genuinely kind because you're seen as a shepherd; someone who has a flock of people that we're working with, whether they are middle schoolers or high schoolers or leaders or parents, and if you're a complete jerk, you're going to lose influence. People see you as a teacher in the world as a communicator, but you need to be openly kind to the people you're trying to witness to, or that's going to be void.

According to Youth E, Youth Pastor E showed kindness to "everybody who walks through the door." He focused his attention on others and put them in front of himself.

Summary and Themes

Youth leaders can demonstrate kindness to everyone, believer or non-believer, adult or youth. This can take the form of difficult honesty, self-sacrifice, or intentional relationship building. One recurring theme in the interviews and observations was that youth ministry is a

calling. Youth Pastor A noted that working with youths is a ministry, and Youth Pastor C said that youth ministry is more than a job; he called it a "calling." Youth Pastor E called youth ministers shepherds and said that he focused mainly on others because that is how a person in leadership should live.

Another major theme throughout the discussion of kindness was that others come first. All the youth pastors expressed this philosophy. Youths B and E said that their youth pastors put others first. Youth A said that his youth pastor continually wants to see more of Jesus and less of himself. Youth C said his youth pastor took time to build relationships. Youth D noted that her youth pastor considered others, but that he was not perfect and sometimes made errors in considering the other adult volunteers with whom he works.

Goodness in Youth Leaders

Case One

Youth Pastor A said that goodness starts with "diving into God's Word." He said that a youth pastor must first have a relationship with God to be good to others. He also noted that displaying goodness means looking for the best in others and seeing their potential to serve God in the church. Further, he cited an example of a student he currently mentors whom he can see doing great things for Christ.

Youth A described goodness as "putting on patience and kindness and doing what's right." He noted that his youth pastor was always optimistic and spent time hanging out with him and his friends. They had recently gotten back from a hike in the Appalachian Mountains.

Case Two

Youth Pastor B said that goodness includes being selfless and understanding. It also involves being sacrificial and showing humility. Finally, being good is something that one must

do regardless of the situation. Youth Pastor B said,

> Goodness means you gotta be good all the time. If you are only good when someone deserves it, you haven't goodness. Regardless, you have to be good when people hate you, you have to be good when someone disrespects you, and you have to be good when someone takes advantage of you.

Youth B described goodness as showing forgiveness, understanding people, and being charitable. She said that she felt her youth pastor showed goodness to others and wanted others to have growing relationships with God, who helps show others how to demonstrate goodness.

Case Three

According to Youth Pastor C, "Goodness [is] any behavior that is reflective of the character of God." He also said, "As their leader, any behavior that I would put out there towards a student or a volunteer should reflect the nature of God." He noted that goodness encompasses kindness and generosity. He called goodness a placeholder for the other fruit because "goodness contains everything that God is, because you know God is good. Goodness does not define God; God defines goodness." Youth C reiterated this thought.

Youth C said that "anything that is the absence of God is not good." He said that he would expect a youth pastor to "strive for Christ in a way that is inspiring kids on a simple level, on a level that prepares them to leave their household and know that being tied to God's goodness is so powerful because you cannot have good without God." Further, he said that his youth pastor loved everyone, showed them goodness, and wanted to see God in others because God had called him to do that in youth ministry.

Case Four

Youth Pastor D asserted that when a youth pastor shows goodness, he tries to live above reproach. Leaders who try to live out goodness in their lives display godliness and truth to others. He said,

> We're all made in God's image, even though the image is distorted because James says, With the same tongue you bless God and curse people who are made in the image of God. Trying to see those attributes in other people and the potential that people have is part of goodness.

Youth D acknowledged that no person could be perfect, but goodness can be shown in taking responsibility for one's actions. To her, a good youth pastor learned not only from his mistakes but from the students. She said that her youth pastor was inclusive of all people; if he knew someone was not saved, he would share the Gospel with them. His heart hurt for others, and he wanted everyone to find salvation through Jesus Christ. Sharing the gospel was her idea of goodness displayed by her youth pastor.

Case Five

Youth Pastor E said that goodness is showing integrity. A person who demonstrates goodness can be counted on; he is willing to listen to someone who shares what is in their heart and mind. If someone shows goodness, "they are there for the long haul."

According to Youth Pastor E, "A youth pastor who demonstrates goodness wants to see people grow closer in their relationship with Christ, which is our student ministry's goal." Youth E confirmed this statement and said that her youth pastor wanted everyone to know who Jesus was and what He had done for them. Further, she noted that her youth pastor displayed goodness through his kindness and love.

Summary and Themes

Youth pastors display goodness. Goodness is shown in various actions, including seeing the best in others, having integrity, and being selfless and understanding. It also involves living above reproach, doing what is right, and demonstrating behavior that emulates God.

Two themes became apparent for this research question: doing what is right, and how goodness relates to God. Youth A noted that youth pastors demonstrating goodness should do

what is right. Youth Pastor B noted that goodness is doing what is right even when it is not easy, and when people are hateful and show mistreatment. Youth Pastor B called it "a life above reproach."

The most prevalent theme of goodness was its relation to God. Youth Pastor A and Youth B claimed that a relationship with God is essential when considering goodness. Youth Pastor C and Youth C said that God is good and anything apart from God is not good. Youth Pastor C noted that goodness reflects the character of God. Youth Pastor D said that people are made in the image of God, and leaders should try to see that in others. Youth D noted that leaders who demonstrate goodness are not afraid to share the Gospel with others. They want everyone to know the Gospel and live through Christ's salvation.

Relational Fruit of the Spirit in Youth Leaders

Case One

Youth Pastor A recalled his last trip to youth camp. He believed that he had demonstrated patience, kindness, and goodness to the youths he took, because three of them were completely unchurched, and another four did not know Jesus. These students were playing and sleeping through the service. He kept the week going, showed patience and restraint, and used kind words like, "Hey, I know you overslept, but can you try to be on time tomorrow." He also tried to help the students connect with activities and jobs outside the church. He believed that investing in the students who attend church is crucial. Even when it is difficult, showing patience and kindness tells kids that a person cares.

This demonstration of kindness and goodness was echoed by Youth A. Youth A said that Youth Pastor A listened well, was always kind, and was a great confidant. He also attended special events like birthday parties in the youths' lives. During the observation, Youth Pastor A

talked with the students about upcoming activities and planned youth events. He also talked with

a student who had not been in church for a while. He said that the youth had been missed and

that he was glad to see him.

Case Two

Youth Pastor B noted that scheduling youth events takes much patience. He said that the

teenagers at his church were involved in so many activities that most could not attend scheduled

events. He always tried to schedule events to help the youths connect, but because they were so

busy, he constantly disappointed some because no night was perfect. Then he would receive calls

and emails from parents because their child had been excluded. He said that youth ministry was

not for the faint of heart.

Youth Pastor B noted that mission trips were another time he had to demonstrate

patience, because it took a few days for the kids to realize what they were genuinely doing.

Mission trips are a time when youths can grow closer to God. He noted "the patience it takes to

watch them break down, accept it, and love it. You just have to have the patience to have God

work on each of them differently."

Youth B recollected a time when Youth Pastor B was there for her. She said, "He took

time to listen to me when I was going through some problems. He was very understanding, and

he took time to listen." When Youth Pastor B was observed, it was apparent that he loved the

students he worked with. He greeted each one and took the time to ask about their week. He then

listened to what they had to say. One student said that his week was not so good. Youth Pastor B

said he would meet with him after the youth service, and the youth started to smile.

Case Three

Youth Pastor C mentioned that the way he greets students could reflect his level of

goodness. However, he focused his answer on the patience a youth leader needs with young teenage boys. He said that patience is a must, and even if the boys seem not to be paying attention, they probably are. Young teenage boys like to be silly, so a leader needs to have patience, take deep breaths, and deliver the information they need to know quickly and calmly. But, he said, "the things that you say and the way you treat them—it does make a difference. Even though sometimes you may feel that it's not getting through, more is getting through to them than a leader realizes."

Youth Pastor C also discussed the power and benefits of delegation among adult leaders. He had two adult leaders working with the young teenage boys because they understood and had good relationships with the boys. They could connect with the boys.

Youth Pastor C also noted he wanted other adults to deliver the youth message because he wanted the youths to hear other people. He wanted them to realize that it is more than just him who "says and believes these things about Jesus." Further, he believed that youth ministry is about "tell and show." He said,

> A really good student ministry, a good student worker is "tell and show." Telling them about what God's Word, telling them the attributes of God, and telling them the fruit of the Spirit is wonderful. But where it's going to make the biggest difference for me and the leaders is to demonstrate or show those to them. It's like, I'm not doing this for you, it's for my benefit. I'm telling you these things because they will change your life. Because I think you need to hear it. I'm not playing. I'm not messing around. I'm serious about the goodness of God. And I don't think you can take someone serious if you just say something's good. Did you show it in like things we talked about, the way you speak, how you look? Do you look like someone with joy? Do you like doing what your doing? You should look like a person who believes that the battle is won. It's hard to believe that if you look defeated all the time. Student ministry is tell, yes, but the show is way more important, and that happens more so outside of preaching and teaching.

Youth Pastor C further said that his goal was to reach the youths for Christ. He wanted the examples that he and the youth leaders set to motivate the students to try life with Christ. Youth C confirmed that Youth Pastor C displayed kindness and goodness. Further, he declared that

Youth Pastor C displayed patience with him, because he could be a difficult student.

The observation showed that the youth leaders were involved with their students. Upon entering the church, every student was greeted and could decide to hang out or play games. There were youth leaders in every area waiting to interact with the students.

Case Four

When asked about displaying kindness, goodness, and patience, Youth Pastor D recited a story about a young girl who was a pathological liar. She went to the youth leaders and other students and told them that her father was abusing her. The police got involved, and it turned out not to be true. The student just wanted attention, and she needed help. Youth Pastor C thought many people would not handle this situation properly. He felt that some people would take it to the extreme and say that the student was not welcome back. However, after praying and meeting with his youth leaders, they decided to sit down with the student and her family and work through it with them. The student has since graduated but occasionally comes back to the church to see the youth pastor.

Youth D said that her youth pastor was very encouraging and supportive. He helped her with job references and asked her about her schooling. He was always willing to help her, and she recalled a time that he paid for a couple of the students to go to summer camp. The youth leaders tried to figure out a way to cut costs, but in the end, her youth pastor was burdened and wanted them to go, so he paid for them.

Case Five

Youth Pastor E found that kindness and goodness are displayed in the way a leader responds to various situations. Youth Pastor E explained,

> With students in particular, you need a whole lot of patience, because every student has what they think is their emergency. There will be texts and phone calls at eleven o'clock

at night, when they need a pastor to talk to, but it's only because they just broke up with their girlfriend or boyfriend. So there's definitely patience with that.

He also revealed that a youth pastor must have patience with leaders because every leader has an idea of how something should go and needs to be heard. Parents and youths want to know that the youth pastor has their best interests at heart. He said, "There's going to be natural criticism about you as a person and how you do ministry, but how you respond, how you interact, how you hear people will decide if they can trust you."

Youth E recalled a time when her youth pastor showed her kindness. She told the researcher that her youth pastor prayed for her when she found out she had heart issues. Additionally, her youth pastor took her aside the night before her procedure and prayed for her. She felt these acts were acts of goodness and kindness.

Summary and Themes

The youth pastors displayed the fruit of the Spirit that focus on relationships. Some demonstrated patience with youths, parents, and other leaders. Some demonstrated kindness through financial giving and by helping students with difficulties. Others displayed goodness by attending special events or greeting the students when they arrived at the youth group.

Within this research question, two themes emerged: listening and time. Listening helps one demonstrate the relational fruit of the Spirit. An essential ingredient to being relational for Youths A and B was when their youth pastor listened to their problems. Youth Pastor B attempted to listen to his youths when scheduling events. Youth Pastor E talked about listening to his students, parents, and other leaders.

The theme of time was also evident. Youth A spoke about his youth pastor's time with him outside the church. Youth Pastor B noted that time outside church helps youths connect with each other and with him. Youth D recounted her youth pastor always being there for her and

giving his time. Youth Pastor E gave time to youths to listen when they had problems.

Relational Fruit of the Spirit: Impact on Relationships

Case One

Youth Pastor A believed that goodness, kindness, and patience affected his relationships with youths. He believed that he always had to show grace and patience. He said, "A burden that pastors carry is to demonstrate behaviors that others should want to emulate. I want to show the patience that was shown to me."

Youth A believed that goodness, kindness, and patience affected his relationship with his youth pastor. He called his youth pastor his friend, "a guy he can joke around with because he is his friend." He felt that his pastor had helped him become more like Christ. He said that his heart had changed since he was saved, making him a different person. He quoted his mother, who was astonished at his change. She said his change "was like night and day."

During the observation, the youths were excited to be at church. They were comfortable with their youth pastor yet respectful. They joked and laughed with Youth Pastor A.

Case Two

Youth Pastor B did not think that goodness, kindness, and patience affected his relationships with his youths. He said, "I don't think they even realize those attributes exist in the world. They live in a world of instantaneous gratification. So they don't understand patience, because they've never had to have it for anything ever." He said that the students did not even know what goodness was:

> What they consider good is still atrocious. Just listen to their language, listen to the music that they listen to. They don't even care about curse words, violence, sex, drugs, alcohol, abuse, or any of that stuff in the music they listen to, or the video games they play, or any of that stuff. Girls have no decorum for their bodies. So they don't understand goodness or patience or any of those attributes. They just don't even know they exist. I don't think that's a relevant section of their life until someone shows them.

Youth Pastor B said that he tries to be an example so the students can learn about goodness, kindness, and patience.

Youth B considered Youth Pastor B a father figure. She believed he displayed goodness, kindness, and patience, qualities that make good leaders and friends. Those were the qualities that he demonstrated during the observation. He was laughing and having conversations with his youth leaders and his youths. He gave students high fives, fist pumps, hugs, and handshakes. He lost a game with one student, and at the end, he shook the student's hand and said, "Good game."

Case Three

Youth Pastor C believed that goodness, kindness, and patience affect relationships. He said that it is "where solid connections are going to happen. It goes beyond an understanding of what we're trying to say, like there's no way for them to clearly understand the fruit of the Spirit without them experiencing it through us." His goal is for them to understand the fruit through interactions with him and the other youth leaders: "Let's say they couldn't articulate joy per se. They couldn't go through the list, but they understood that they have experienced it and they know it, because you don't have to know the list to have the experience."

Youth C thought he had a close relationship with his youth pastor. He believed that others were always observing his youth pastor, and that his actions affected how others saw him. He believed that others watched his youth pastor to determine whether he was genuine and authentic and displayed the fruit of the Spirit.

Case Four

Youth Pastor D said that living a patient, good, and kind life would affect his relationship with his students. He said, "I'm not living in a way that would hinder their willingness to listen to what I have to say. People don't care how much you know until they know how much you

care."

Youth D believed a person should be patient, kind, and good in any relationship. She said, "You're not going to have a good relationship if you don't have any of those things." Further, "those are really important for maintaining a healthy, honest Christ-like relationship. You know, the Lord calls us to be kind and have that relationship with each other. So there's no difference if the relationship is between you and your youth pastors, your parents, or your siblings." She described her experience at summer camp and noted that she was comfortable ministering to students and sharing the Gospel because of her experience in the youth group. She further said that she had a close relationship with her youth pastor.

The youth pastor interacted and talked with the youths during the observation. He asked youths about their week, school, and life at home. One student responded that his week was not going so well. Youth Pastor D gave some encouraging advice followed by scripture, and the student seemed to perk up and thanked him.

Case Five

Youth Pastor E believed the fruit ultimately affects how relationships are formed. He said, "More than anything, high school students can see right through adults, and they just want somebody who's authentic, and that is definitely a part of kindness and goodness, it's just being an authentic person." Youth E said that her youth pastor was like a part of her family and believed that goodness, patience, and kindness affected her relationship with him. She said he had "always shown all of these characteristics, and he, like, talks to everybody."

Youth Pastor E actively walked around and interacted with the youths and other youth leaders during the observation. He would periodically stop and have a longer conversation with some of the youths. He patted them on the back when he greeted them and was always smiling

and spreading cheer.

Summary and Themes

Youth Pastor B said that youths today are bombarded with information and negative attributes. He was the only pastor who believed that patience, kindness, and goodness did not affect relationships with the youths. He said this because he felt that youths were exposed to information that taught them the opposite of these traits.

The two themes most evident in this research were close relationships and living life in accordance with the fruit. It became clear from the youth pastors that they must display the fruit of goodness, patience, and kindness. Youth pastors should live out what they say. All the youths interviewed felt close to their youth pastors and enjoyed being close to them.

Close relationships were essential to the youths. Youths C and D felt they had close relationships with their youth pastors. Youth A called his youth pastor his friend, and youth B considered hers a father figure. Youth E felt that her youth pastor was a part of her family.

Being an example for youths is essential. Youth Pastors A and D wanted to be models for others. They wanted to live in ways that help others. Youth Pastor C wanted his youths to experience the fruit through his interactions with them. Youth Pastor E wanted to be authentic for his youths because that is what youths need.

Evaluation of the Research Design

The researcher provided research that sets a basis for further study of the fruit of the Spirit. The process, the data collection tools, the data collection itself, and the analysis were strengths.

This study had weaknesses. It could have included a larger sample if time were not a factor. More churches and more youth participants per church would have been included. In

addition, parents of the youths in the youth programs could have been included in this study.

Although there were both strengths and weaknesses, the study appeared to resonate with the participants. They asked about the research and were excited to help the researcher with her dissertation. They responded to emails quickly and inquired about the final version.

In this study, credibility was established through triangulation. The researcher interviewed one youth pastor and one youth from each church and completed an observation at each church. The use of multiple data sources, the youth pastors and the youths, and the methods, observations, and interviews helped create triangulation.

The triangulation was also an area of significant weakness. It could have been better determined if more youths had been interviewed at each church, because a single individual cannot speak for an entire youth group. More youth interviews per church would have strengthened the data from the youth participants. Using more youth interviews to describe the youth pastors' actions would have helped the researcher better answer the research questions.

The researcher used interviews and observations to collect data. Two youth pastors reviewed the interview protocols. They found the questions fair and confirmed that they would develop answers to the research questions. Finally, the researcher had the informants review their transcripts after the interviews and review the case study report. Each participant responded within two days, and no problems were noted.

The researcher also addressed dependability in the research. She provided a clear research framework, explained the data collection techniques and procedures, and articulated the methodology. One challenge area was getting the pastors to respond to emails. Most required a follow-up phone call to explain the research further and obtain approval.

Further, the researcher addressed confirmability. She kept detailed notes and recorded the

interviews on two devices to ensure correct information. She had the participants check the interview transcripts, and none disputed their accuracy.

The researcher addressed transferability. There was careful documentation, and the research procedures were clarified. The researcher retained detailed case study notes and documents. One possible weakness was research participation. Although the researcher sought seven church sites, only five could be found.

If the researcher were to replicate this study, some changes would be made. The first would be to include more churches of different denominations. Further, the researcher would include more students per church. Finally, the researcher would include a questionnaire for the youth's parents.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

This section discusses the study's findings in relation to the empirical and theoretical literature reviewed in chapter two. It begins with a restatement of the research purpose and questions. The results are then discussed. Further, the study's theoretical, empirical, and practical implications are considered. It concludes with research limitations, further research, and a summary.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this multi-case study was to explore whether and how youth ministers displayed the fruit of the Spirit at seven Christian churches with no more than 500 members each in southeast Georgia. A Christian church was defined as one accepting the Bible as the sole source and authority of true Christian faith and practicing baptism by immersion. The fruit of the Spirit was defined the nine behaviors Paul listed in Galatians 5:22-23 (Noyes, 2019): love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These can be developed through the work of the Holy Spirit in a Christian's life (Noyes, 2019).

Research Questions

The research questions addressed how youth ministers demonstrated the fruit of the Spirit. They looked specifically at attributes that focused on outward relationships to help the researcher focus on the specific comprehensive behaviors demonstrated by the youth ministers.

RQ1. How were the attributes that focus on patience displayed by youth ministers?

RQ2. How were the attributes that focus on kindness displayed by youth ministers?

RQ3. How were the attributes that focus on goodness displayed by youth ministers?

RQ4. How were the fruit of the Spirit that focus on relationships displayed by youth ministers?

RQ5. How did the fruit of the Spirit (patience, goodness, and kindness) displayed by the youth ministers affect their relationships with the students?

Conclusions, Implications, and Applications

The fruit of the Spirit that focus on relationships are patience, kindness, and goodness. This study revealed that youth pastors know the fruit of the Spirit. They are even aware of their own strengths and weaknesses regarding them. Further, the observations and youth interviews showed that the youth pastors displayed the fruit to the youth and others they interacted with during the observations. The answers to the research questions are addressed below, and then the theoretical, empirical, and practical implications are reviewed.

Conclusions to RQ1: Patience in Youth Ministers

In Ephesians 4, Paul reminded believers to be patient (*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011). Patience is defined by Bocarena et al. (2018) as a state of calmness during a rough time or while waiting. This study showed that youth pastors demonstrated patience. They demonstrated it by showing forgiveness. Youth pastors gave youths chances to make improvements and remain calm even when the youths were challenging, acting silly, or had difficulty showing respect. Some knew this was a problem area and continually worked to improve it.

Conclusions to RQ2: Kindness in Youth Ministers

Sproul (n.d.) defined kindness as a willingness to be unselfish. According to this study, kindness took the form of self-sacrifice, generosity, difficult honesty, and time used to build relationships. This study found that youth pastors demonstrated kindness by putting others' needs above their own. They showed kindness to all people of all ages, not just believers. When a person shows kindness, he imitates Jesus. This study showed that youth pastors showed

kindness to youths and other adults.

Conclusions to RQ3: Goodness in Youth Ministers

Goodness is directed toward others (Bocarena, 2018) and involves choosing to do the right thing (Krejcir, 2002). The youth pastors interviewed in this study showed goodness to others. According to the study, goodness means wanting to see others have a life with Jesus. It is a fruit that is demonstrated in listening to others, taking responsibility for one's actions, sharing the gospel, and demonstrating behavior that imitates God.

Conclusions to RQ4: Relational Fruit of the Spirit in Youth Ministers

Relationships are important to youths. The youth pastors in this study demonstrated the relational fruit of the Spirit. They gave financially, attended birthday parties, and listened to their youths. They helped the youths and their families who needed help.

The study found that the youth pastors knew it was vital to be an example for youths. One called the ministry a time for tell and show, saying it was excellent to tell students about Christ, but youth leaders must be examples to watch and follow. Further, this study found that youth pastors prayed with their youths further to demonstrate the relational fruit and their love for Jesus.

Conclusions to RQ5: Relational Fruit of the Spirit: Impact on Relationships

This was the central research question of the study. This study showed that the youth pastors' behaviors affected their relationships with their youths, and the youths wanted close relationships with their youth pastors. The youth pastors invested time and connected with the youths they ministered to. The youths believed that youth pastors must demonstrate patience, kindness, and goodness.

Theoretical Implications

The behavior theory was relevant to this study because youth leaders must be relationship-oriented and demonstrate patience, kindness, and goodness. Their profession is a service-oriented field for communities, families, and students. Youth pastors must enjoy working with youths. The following section discusses the findings in comparison to the theoretical implications of relationships.

God is a God of relationships (*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011, John 15:13; Zeph. 3:17; 1 John 4:19). Wheelington (2005) noted that relationships are conduits through which ministry flows, and it takes time to build them. This study demonstrated that youths desire relationships with their youth pastors and pay attention to how they walk through life and interact with others. The youths need to see their youth ministers live out their faith, setting an example for spiritual growth.

Youth pastors are leaders who seek to influence the youths they work with. They are charged with demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit. The five youth pastors in this study were people-oriented leaders, in Breevaart and DeVries' (2019) terms. They focused on others' well-being and demonstrated goodness. They demonstrated courteous and respectful behaviors, confirming what Yankovsky et al. (2014) found in their study of leadership teams. The youth pastors also demonstrated empathy for the youths, listened to them, and interacted with them. They displayed positive behaviors and tried to live the lives they talked about to the students.

According to Heflin (2006), youth ministers must be compassionate and focus on relationships. The youth ministers in this study demonstrated kindness and goodness to the youths around them. They took the time to listen and interact with them. They took time outside scheduled youth activities to get to know their students by attending birthday parties and meeting

with them to talk. They even displayed patience when working with the youths and with other adults.

Because youths need positive role models, the youth leaders knew that it is imperative to be examples for them. Youth leaders must be examples of Christ (Muir, 2004). They must show encouragement, understanding, and support (Rajbhandari et al., 2016). The youth leaders set an example to motivate the unsaved students to try life with Christ, and for those who were saved to stay with Christ.

This study adds information to the research on youth pastors and their demonstration of the relational fruit of the Spirit. Youth pastors can demonstrate goodness, kindness, and patience while knowing their strengths and weaknesses. They can do what is right even when no one else is. They can effectively have a ministry that connects with youths and bring them into a life-changing relationship with God.

Empirical Implications

This study has empirical implications for youths because the church needs youth pastors who can model patience, kindness, and goodness. In addition, youths want youth pastors who can demonstrate Christ to them. Finally, youths desire relationships with their leaders.

Youth Pastor B said that youths have no idea that goodness, kindness, and patience exist. He claimed that the music youths listen to and the video games they play all have atrocious language, violence, and information about sex, abuse, and drugs. This pastor's claim agrees with what Perry (2021), White (2017), and Szymanski (2010) reported in their research: Today's youths are bombarded with media and draw their views from these venues. Further, Pastor B confirmed what White (2017) claimed: that youths are spiritually illiterate. The data make it clear that youth pastors have a challenge before them.

The relational fruit of the Spirit has an impact on relationships. Ji and Tameifuna (2011) found that youths benefit from caring, friendly, and approachable pastors. The five youth pastors in this study demonstrated that by showing the relational fruit of the Spirit: they could be caring, friendly, and approachable.

Szymanski (2010) found that youth ministers must demonstrate the characteristics of Jesus. This study confirms Symanski's findings. Several youth pastors said that goodness is related to God. They claimed that a person cannot have good without God. The relational fruit of the Spirit reflects the characteristics of God. The youth pastors demonstrated the fruit through patience in difficult times, financial generosity, greeting and talking with students, and spreading the love and goodness of God.

Finally, youths want adults to have relationships with them, according to Powell et al. (2016). They realize that relationships are vital and can help them in their relationship with God. All the youths in this study felt they had close relationships with their youth pastors. Some even felt their youth pastors were like family.

God is a God of relationships. According to Rotaru (2019), church leaders need the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the fruit is the outward sign of the Holy Spirit. This study demonstrates that the fruit of the Spirit can affect relationships with youth. The study can help youth leaders evaluate their effectiveness by God's standards, the fruit of the Spirit.

Practical Implications

This study has practical implications for church leaders, families, and other Christian youth leaders. It is beneficial to everyone involved in ministry. Working in ministry is a calling (Rotaru, 2019). Three youth pastors in this study noted that youth ministry is more than a job. It is a calling in which the person is called to consider others before themselves. This study can

help pastors and other ministerial leaders find qualified staff who believe they have been called into the ministry and desire to emulate the characteristics of God through the fruit of the Spirit.

This study is also beneficial to parents who are searching for new churches for their families. They should look for pastoral staff members who are relational. Finally, this study demonstrates the importance of church leaders and youths. Youths need to be a vital component of any church and must have church leaders who will put the youths first, have patience, and help them develop their relationships with God.

Finally, churches are unaccustomed to measuring spiritual growth through the fruit of the Spirit (Mercurio, 2007). Christian leaders can benefit from this study because all Christian leaders should walk by the Spirit, keep in step with the Spirit, and live by the Spirit (*New International Version Bible*, 1973/2011, Gal 5:16-26). These youth pastors attempt to live by the Spirit, knowing their strengths and weaknesses. They want to be models for others to emulate and to help others experience the fruit through their interactions. According to Mercurio (2007), modeling is essential because the church is an extension of Jesus.

Research Limitations

Research limitations are potential weaknesses of a study that cannot be controlled. The main limitation of this study is the generalizability of its findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). The small sample makes the findings difficult to generalize to larger populations (Yin, 2018). The study was limited to five youth pastors. Another limitation is that all the youth pastors interviewed were white males.

Only two denominations of one religion were represented: Southern Baptist and non-denominational Christian. Although the researcher attempted to involve seven churches in the study, only five agreed to participate. These limitations were out of the researcher's control and

may have influenced the findings.

Further Research

Suggestions for other types of research were considered using the study's findings and limitations. The following are recommendations for future research related to this topic:

- A quantitative study could be developed to consider relational fruit in a larger group of youth pastors and in various areas of the United States, not just southeast Georgia.

- This study explored the relational fruit of the Spirit: patience, goodness, and kindness. Another study could be developed to examine the fruit that demonstrates a relationship to God: love, joy, and peace; or those that demonstrate the relationship of oneself to God: faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

- This study explored the relational fruit in youth pastors. Another could be used to examine the fruit in other pastoral or church leadership roles.

- Parents and other pastoral staff could have been interviewed with the youth pastors and students to determine whether the pastors exhibited the relational fruit of the Spirit.

- A quantitative survey-based follow-up study could be undertaken with other youths of the churches involved to consider the behaviors they observe in their youth pastors.

- A quantitative survey-based study involving the youths of various churches could be conducted to consider the relational fruit of patience, kindness, and goodness.

- This study included only two denominations of Christianity. It could be recreated to include various other denominations.

- The study could be re-created to include both women and men youth pastors.

Summary

The findings of this multiple-case study were summarized in the responses to each

research question and then discussed in light of their relationship, extension, or contribution to the empirical and theoretical literature. Next, the practical implications and the study's limitations were outlined. Lastly, recommendations were made for future research.

In conclusion, youths need relational pastors who take the time to invest in their lives. The youth pastors in this study demonstrated the relational fruit of the Spirit patience, kindness, and goodness. Although they were not perfect, their demonstration of the fruit made a difference in their ministry. The youth pastors were connecting their students to Christ.

Youth ministry should help students become who God has called them to be. This life with Jesus is all about becoming. Becoming happens: each person becomes something between yesterday and today and will become something between today and tomorrow. The question is, what is the person becoming? A person can become more like God or less like God. The attributes of the Spirit can be reflected to show Christ, or the person can reflect God less and display fleshly desires. The youth pastors in this study demonstrated the relational fruit of the Spirit, which reflects Christ. Through these fruit, the youth pastors helped students develop relationships with them and mirrored how to grow closer to Christ.

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Appendix A IRB Approval

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

September 9, 2022

Mary Thornton
Gary Bredfeldt

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY22-23-46 The Relational Fruit of the Spirit in Youth Ministers: Do Youth Ministers Display Patience, Kindness, and Goodness?

Dear Mary Thornton, Gary Bredfeldt,

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

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

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

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

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

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

Appendix B Consent Form

Title of the Project: The Relational Fruit of the Spirit in Youth Ministers: Do Youth Ministers Display Patience, Kindness, and Goodness?

Principal Investigator: Mary Ann Ridgley-Thornton, Liberty University, John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study examining the relational fruit of the Spirit in youth ministers. To participate, you must either be a youth minister or a youth ministry student who is 18 years of age or older. The youth minister is someone who oversees a youth program of students ages 13 to 18 from a Christian church located in the Southeast part of Georgia. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

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

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

The purpose of this case study is to explore if and how youth leaders display the relational fruit of the Spirit at seven Christian churches in southeast Georgia. The relational fruit of the Spirit are patience, kindness, and goodness.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

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

1. Participate in a 60-minute in-person or video conference semi-structured interview with open-ended questions designed to understand your perspective about the relational fruit of the Spirit. The interview will be digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. Personally identifiable information, including your name and position title, will not be published and will be kept confidential.
2. Review the completed interview transcript for accuracy and to ensure that your perspective is accurately reflected. This process will take approximately 30 minutes, and personally identifiable information, including your name and position title, will not be published.
3. Attest to the accuracy of the transcript or, if necessary, provide a clarification statement. This process will take approximately 15-45 minutes, and your statement will be included within the research. Personally identifiable information, including your name and position title, will not be published.

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 would include learning more about the fruit of the Spirit in a person's life.

Benefits to society include understanding how the fruit of the Spirit can be produced in a youth pastor's relationship with youth. Youth ministry is a crucial part of the church that can help teenagers strengthen their godly beliefs and spiritual formation.

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. In any report, I might
publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. I may share the data I collect from you for use in future research studies or with other researchers; if I share the data that I collect about you, I will remove any information that could identify you, if applicable, before I share the data. I will share the results of this study with the institution upon request; however, the results will not include personally identifiable information.

- Participants will be assigned a pseudonym that they will be referred to in an effort to protect confidentially. Participant names will not be included in the published findings.
- Data will be stored on a private password-locked computer, and/or in a lockable drawer within a private residence, and may be used in future research. Three years from the date of the study's completion all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed verbatim by the researcher, or by a private transcription service. Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher, private transcription service, and, upon request, the doctoral program director and committee members, will have access to these recordings. The recordings will be transferred to a secure private computer from a digital recorder. The researcher's notes will be stored in a private residence inside of a lockable drawer. Three years from the date of the study's completion the data, and digital recorder, will be destroyed.

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

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study. Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any questions or withdraw at any time

Is study participation voluntary?

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

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 Mary Ann Ridgley-Thornton. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Gary Bredfeldt.

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.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects' research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand what the study is about. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. If you have any questions about the study later, you can contact the researcher using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

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

_____
Printed Subject Name

_____
Signature & Date

Appendix C Recruitment Email Youth

Dear [Recipient]:

As a graduate student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to explore if and how youth leaders display the relational fruit of the Spirit at seven Christian churches in southeast Georgia, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older and a participant in the youth program. Participants, if willing, will be asked to participate in a recorded in-person interview. In addition, you will be asked to review the verbatim interview transcript to ensure the transcript reflects an accurate depiction of your answers and experience. It should take approximately 1.5 hours for you to complete the procedures listed. Your name will be requested as part of your participation, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please reply to this email with your phone number. I will contact you via phone within five days of your response to schedule an interview should you be selected to serve.

A consent document is attached to this message. Please review and sign the consent document and return it to me prior to our interview should you be scheduled to participate. You may return the consent document by scanning and emailing the signed document to me. or by mailing it to the address listed below. Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Mary Ann Ridgley Thornton
Doctoral Candidate

Appendix D Recruitment Email Youth Pastor

Dear [Recipient]:

As a graduate student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to explore if and how youth leaders display the relational fruit of the Spirit at seven Christian churches in southeast Georgia, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be youth pastors who are 18 years of age or older from Christian churches in the Southeastern part of Georgia who oversees a youth program of students ages 13 to 18. Participants, if willing, will be asked to participate in a recorded in-person interview and observation during youth night. In addition, you will be asked to review the verbatim interview transcript to ensure the transcript reflects an accurate depiction of your answers and experience. It should take approximately 1.5 hours for you to complete the procedures listed. Your name and other information will be requested as part of your participation, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please reply to this email with your phone number. I will contact you via phone within five days of your response to schedule an interview should you be selected to serve.

A consent document is attached to this message. Please review and sign the consent document and return it to me prior to our interview should you be scheduled to participate. You may return the consent document by scanning and emailing the signed document to me.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Mary Ann Ridgley Thornton
Doctoral Candidate

Appendix E Permission Request Template

Dear [Recipient],

As a graduate student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The title of my research project is "The Relational Fruit of the Spirit in Youth Ministers: Do Youth Ministers Display Patience, Kindness, and Goodness?" The purpose of this case study is to explore if and how youth leaders display the relational fruit of the Spirit at seven Christian churches in southeast Georgia. The relational fruit of the Spirit are patience, kindness, and goodness.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research at your church. I would like to contact your youth pastor and one member of your youth program who is 18 years of age or older to invite them to participate in my research study. I would also like to observe a youth meeting night.

For this study, information will be collected through interviews and observations. Youth ministers will be interviewed in person or via video conferencing. In addition, students who are 18 years are older (high school seniors or those who have recently graduated high school) involved in the youth program and selected by Church Leadership will be interviewed. Additionally, the youth ministers will be observed interacting with the youth population during their weekly youth meetings.

I plan to send a recruitment email to your youth pastor and a youth member of your choice. Participants will be asked to contact me to schedule an interview. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time. Further, confidentiality and anonymity will be utilized to protect the identity of all participants. Participants will not be identified by campus to protect their identity.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please respond by email.

Sincerely,

Mary Ann Ridgley Thornton
Doctoral Candidate

Appendix F
Interview Protocol for Youth Pastors

Church	Participant	Date/Time

Welcome, and thank you for your participation today. My name is Mary Ann Ridgley Thornton, and I am a graduate student at Liberty University conducting my study in partial fulfillment of the requirements for my doctoral degree in ministry leadership.

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. I want your permission to tape-record this interview, so I may accurately document the information you convey. If you wish to discontinue the use of the recorder or the interview itself at any time during the interview, please feel free to let me know.

All of your responses are confidential. Your responses will remain confidential and will be used to better understand how the Spirit's fruit that focuses on relationships (patience, kindness, and goodness) is displayed by youth leaders.

At this time, I would like to remind you of your consent to participate in this study. Your participation in this interview is entirely voluntary. If at any time you need to stop, take a break, or return to a previous question, please let me know. You may also withdraw your participation at any time without consequence.

Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin? Then with your permission, we will begin the interview.

Questions	Notes
Demographic information 1. How many years have you been in youth ministry? 2. How long have you served at this church as a full-time youth pastor? 3. What made you decide to work in youth ministry?	
General knowledge questions about the fruit 4. How familiar are you with the fruit of the Spirit? 5. What fruit do you recognize the most in yourself? Why? 6. What fruit do you have most trouble seeing in yourself?	

RQ1. *How are the attributes that focus on patience displayed by youth ministers?* 7. What kinds of behaviors would you expect to see in a youth pastor who displays patience? 8. When things go wrong or people irritate you, how do you handle that?	
RQ2. *How are the attributes that focus on kindness displayed by youth ministers?* 9. What kinds of behaviors would you expect to see in a youth pastor who displays kindness? 10. Do you focus your attention on others or on your own needs, desires, and problems?	
RQ3. *How are the attributes that focus on goodness displayed by youth ministers?* 11. What kinds of behaviors would you expect to see in a youth pastor who displays goodness? 12. Do you desire to see God in others? Why or why not?	

RQ4. *How are the fruit of the Spirit that focus on relationships displayed by youth ministers?* 13. Can you provide any examples where you displayed patience, kindness, and/or goodness to the youth?	
RQ5. *How does the fruit of the Spirit (patience, goodness, and kindness) displayed by the youth pastors impact the relationship between the youth pastors and the students?* 14. Do you find that the fruit of patience, goodness, and kindness impact the relationship between you and the students? Why or why not?	

Thank you for your time today. I appreciate your openness and honesty. I will send you a copy of the confidential digitized version of your responses so you can identify any mistakes that I need to correct. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you again for your time.

Appendix G
Interview Protocol for Youth

Church	Participant	Date/Time

Welcome, and thank you for your participation today. My name is Mary Ann Ridgley Thornton, and I am a graduate student at Liberty University conducting my study in partial fulfillment of the requirements for my doctoral degree in ministry leadership.

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. I want your permission to tape-record this interview, so I may accurately document the information you convey. If you wish to discontinue the use of the recorder or the interview itself at any time during the interview, please feel free to let me know.

All of your responses are confidential. Your responses will remain confidential and will be used to better understand how the Spirit's fruit that focuses on relationships (patience, kindness, and goodness) are displayed by youth leaders.

At this time, I would like to remind you of your consent to participate in this study. Your participation in this interview is entirely voluntary. If at any time you need to stop, take a break, or return to a previous question, please let me know. You may also withdraw your participation at any time without consequence.

Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin? Then with your permission, we will begin the interview.

Questions	Notes
Demographic information 1. How many years have you attended the youth program? 2. What made you decide to attend this program?	
General knowledge questions about the fruit 3. How familiar are you with the fruit of the Spirit?	

RQ1. *How are the attributes that focus on patience displayed by youth ministers?* 4. What kinds of behaviors would you expect to see in a youth pastor who displays patience? 5. When things go wrong or people irritate your youth pastor, how does he handle that?	
RQ2. *How are the attributes that focus on kindness displayed by youth ministers?* 6. What kinds of behaviors would you expect to see in a youth pastor who displays kindness? 7. Does your youth pastor focus his/her attention on others or on his/her own needs, desires, and problems?	
RQ3. *How are the attributes that focus on goodness displayed by youth ministers?* 8. What kinds of behaviors would you expect to see in a youth pastor who displays goodness? 9. Does your youth pastor desire to see God in others? Why or why not?	

RQ4. *How are the fruit of the Spirit that focus on relationships displayed by youth ministers?* 9. Can you provide any examples where your youth pastor displayed patience, kindness, and/or goodness to you?	
RQ5. *How does the fruit of the Spirit (patience, goodness, and kindness) displayed by the youth pastors impact the relationship between the youth pastors and the students?* 10. Do you find that the fruit of patience, goodness, and kindness impact the relationship between you and the youth the? Why or why not? 11. What kind of relationship do you have with your youth pastor?	

Thank you for your time today. I appreciate your openness and honesty. I will send you a copy of the confidential digitized version of your responses so you can identify any mistakes that I need to correct. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you again for your time.

Appendix H
Youth Ministry Observation Protocol

Date:	Time:	Campus:	
Observational data concerning the physical environment, participants, activities, interactions, dialogue, attitudes, and reactions		Personal Reflections	