

Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

The Need for a Spiritual Reboot in the Youth of Great Commission Church

A Thesis Project Submitted to
the Faculty of Liberty University School of Divinity
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Doctor of Ministry

By

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Thesis Project Approval Sheet

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THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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The decline of the youth attendance is evident in many Protestant churches. This research paper examined forty-three young believers from three Haitian Baptist churches, respectively, located in Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx. These data results help develop a suitable spiritual program that includes the six key influencing factors for spiritual growth: discipleship, mentoring, parental influence, church attendance, personal devotion, and ministerial involvement. This spiritual program was tested on a small group of young people from Great Commission Church in Queens. This research uses a mixed-method methodology, which is a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to analyze the data. The results show that parental influence can help Haitian youth attend church, but it does not encourage discipleship, mentorship, and ministerial involvement in the church. Further studies should aim at understanding the extent of parental involvement needed to encourage Haitian youth to be involved in the church's ministries.

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Abbreviations (if needed)

DMIN *Doctor of Ministry*

LUSOD *Liberty University School of Divinity*

Chapter 1: Introduction

Great Commission Church (GCC) is a Haitian congregation currently established in two communities: Queens, NY and Brooklyn, NY. Their purpose is to establish ministries that will help the members to live a transformed life through the gospel of Jesus Christ. However, the young people of GCC in Queens struggle to establish youth ministries to help them thrive in Christ. Many of them do not regularly participate in Sunday services or Bible study. In addition, for more than a year the young people of GCC in Queens never had formal youth services or activities as a ministry.

The lack of regular attendance in church and youth services will not help the youth of GCC in Queens grow in their walk with God and their service for Him. Eventually, it may lead them to leave the church. Jaco Hamman referred to the work of Angie Thurston and Casper Kuile on the affiliation of young people to religious groups. In their analysis, they “give a picture of the unaffiliated millennium. As traditional religion struggles to attract young people, millennials are looking elsewhere with increasing urgency, they state.”¹ Young people seem to compete with values and principles that do not reflect the truth in God's word. Therefore, if GCC fails to keep young people in the church, they may be susceptible to being drawn more toward the world and embracing values and principles contrary to GCC's beliefs founded on the sixty-six books found in the Protestant Bible.

The decline in church attendance among young people is not unique to GCC in Queens. This decline has been a major priority for many evangelical churches. It remains a significant issue that requires a great deal of attention. Many researchers have addressed the problem of young people and their attendance in Protestant churches. Kenneth Moser and Malan Nel

¹ Jaco Hamman, “The Millennial Generation, and the Church: Doing it Differently,” *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 25, no. 3 (2015): 162.

recently published an article addressing the youth crisis leaving the evangelical churches in North America.² They seem to provide no answers to the situation. The Barna Group conducted research and published a five-year project about the breaking of the church and young people in America.³ However, these previous works failed to address the issue of young people leaving the church in the context of the Haitian Churches in the New York City and its surrounding boroughs. Therefore, current solutions to address the lack of attendance of young people in evangelical churches may be ill-defined and inadequate to address this issue, specifically in the context of a Christian Haitian Baptist church.

This research is an opportunity to explore and understand the perspectives of young people at GCC and other young Haitian believers in the state of New York. This research addresses the administration of the youth's church, their parents' involvement, personal spiritual discipline, and how these play a role in their spiritual growth. This research is also an opportunity to measure and test their perspectives and see how the church, parents, and personal spiritual responsibility contribute to their spiritual growth according to their age group. Ultimately, this research can be a blueprint that describes how to provide leadership within the church and to conduct youth ministry in the Haitian Baptist churches in Haitian communities other than New York to help them stay in their local churches and thrive in their walk with God.

This paper will investigate how to establish a transformational youth ministry at GCC in Queens to help retain young people in the church and enable them to experience spiritual growth. It is the intent of the author of this research to lead GCC into revitalization of the youth of GCC.

² Kenneth A. Moser and Malan Nel, "The Connection Between Youth Ministry's Division of Evangelism and Discipleship and the Lack of Retention of Youth in North American Churches," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 40, no. 1 (2019): 1.

³ George Barna, *Growing True Disciples: New Strategies for Producing Genuine Followers of Christ*, (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2001), 17.

Currently, the young people of GCC are not following a systematic spiritual program that can help them experience spiritual growth. Therefore, this paper aims to develop a specific and systemic program that helps to reboot their youth ministry. This program is not exhaustive. It will be executed in a particular time frame and evaluated for improvement. This evaluation will help the leaders of GCC and the youth ministry to remove any component of the program that is not efficient and to test and reinforce any part of the program that yields productive results.

In order to collect the data, the researcher will use a mixed-method methodology that uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. The researcher will use an inductive approach to explore the perceptions of some of the young people through interviews.⁴ In addition, the researcher will use a deductive approach to measure the relationships between the groups of age among young people and the differences between variables. The researcher will recruit forty-three young believers from three Haitian Baptist churches in Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx. He will collect interviews from five young people and two youth leaders. The age group of the young people participating in this research ranges from 10-30. The results of these data will help the researcher develop a suitable spiritual program for the young people of GCC. This program will be tested on a small group of young people from GCC. It will utilize six critical factors to help young people experience personal spiritual growth. The six critical influencing factors for spiritual growth are discipleship, mentoring, parental influence, church attendance, personal devotion, and ministerial involvement.

As a disclaimer, the researcher does not rely only on these six key factors to do the work of transformation in the lives of the young people of GCC in Queens. Therefore, the transformative outcome will not solely occur due to the program implemented in the youth

⁴ Some of these interviewees are minors. However, the IRB (Institutional Review Board) has approved their participation in this research.

ministry and significant parental involvement but, rather, through God's power. Even with an appealing curriculum with no divine intervention, it cannot produce the transformation of a group. Doug Fields agreed with the above assertion, and he said,

No youth ministry idea or program can compete with God's power working in and through you as he gives you a passion for students and you give him a pure heart. When you seek God, you will see supernatural elements within your youth ministry that no flashy idea could ever produce. By relying on God and trusting in his power, you leave room for him to do his work.⁵

There is always a need for supernatural intervention that occurs through divine reliance. When Christian leaders embrace their responsibility and allow God's power to work through them, the transformation will occur in the lives of young people.

This research will focus on specific things that can help GCC youth to reengage. In Chapter 1, the researcher will address the ministry context of GCC and its youth ministry. The problem that the young people of GCC face as a ministry will be presented and explored. The researcher will attempt to solve this by implementing a spiritual program to help address the problem facing young people leaving the church.⁶ The researcher knows that this spiritual program might not necessarily resolve the problem. However, he will make some bold predictions due to his study. He will present the delimitations, limitations, and some basic assumptions concerning the research, and he will give some basic definitions that will help the readers understand and navigate this study.

In Chapter 2, the researcher will present existing research on young people in the Christian church. He will synthesize the literature to show how they are relevant to his research. Furthermore, the researcher will present a solid theological foundation deeply rooted in the sixty-

⁵ Doug Fields, *Purpose-Driven Youth Ministry: 9 Essential Foundations for Healthy Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 1.

⁶ The researcher of this project is the lead and founding pastor of GCC.

six canonical books of the Protestant Bible to show biblical basis and precedence for the need for a transformational youth ministry in a local church. The researcher will present a theoretical foundation section to explore some youth programs that researchers and other Protestant churches have implemented in their youth ministries. He will also pinpoint lacking areas in these youth programs to validate his research concerning the young Haitian believers of GCC in Queens.

In Chapter 3, the researcher will show the intervention design, the data collection, the project design approach, and the data analysis methods. He will present a mixed-method methodology that will generate interviews with a youth leader and a few members, where they will all complete a survey of twenty-five questions. He will identify the population the research will focus on and the sample of this population. The research will outline the steps he must take to get his survey and questionnaires approved by the Institution Review Board (IRB). He will also outline the whole process of implementing that program among the young people of the Great Commission.

In Chapter 4, the researcher will present the data analysis and all the results of the attempt to solve the problem that the young people of GCC were facing. The intent is to compare the results of the intervention plan with the aim and the objective of the research question. The researcher will also use illustrative graphs to help the reader understand the results of the research's findings.

In Chapter 5, the researcher addresses the implications of these findings to the academia and other young Haitian believers in other churches. The researcher will report on what he has learned throughout the program's implementation in the youth ministry of GCC. He will discuss the opportunity that arises through this research for the Haitian protestant churches. He will

recommend further study and discuss improvements that can be made throughout that process. Finally, the researcher will show how these findings apply in other contexts.

Ministry Context

In this section, the researcher will cover the history of the origin of GCC. He will also discuss the vision and the mission of this church. This section aims to lead the young people of GCC toward a focus on re-engaging in the church.

History of the origin of GCC

Great Commission Church was founded on May 3, 2015, in the community of Springfield Gardens in Queens, NY. This neighborhood is in the Southeastern New York City borough of Queens. It is a densely urban neighborhood. People from Afro-Caribbean and Indo-Caribbean backgrounds predominantly populate it. There are also a few immigrants from Jamaica, Trinidad, and Haiti that live in this area.⁷ There are a variety of small businesses in this community. However, it is deemed more like a residential community. In Queens, it is extremely expensive to own or rent a building.

The process of planting GCC in this community started in April 2015. The gym and rehabilitation center owner heard about the initiative of planting a church in the community. He offered GCC to use his building temporarily. He allowed them to use it for a low price on Sundays and Wednesdays. On Sundays, the weekly schedule was 10:00 am–11:00 am Sunday school, 11:00–1:00 am Worship Service, and on Wednesdays, 7:30–9:00 pm Prayer and Bible study. These activities were in two languages: French and Creole. However, as GCC's members

⁷ <https://www.cityneighborhoods.nyc/springfield-gardens> accessed May 17, 2020.

started to invite people close to the church, a language barrier issue started to surface. Most of the residents in the area were not Creole speakers.

Moreover, even the young people of GCC were from Haitian families, but most were born in the United States. They were primarily fluent in English, not Creole or French, which are Haiti's official languages. The young people had a language barrier during the church services. They could not fully understand the words of the songs and focus on the preaching on Sunday mornings and in Bible Study. In addition, they could not participate in any ministry that the church was doing. The young people started to feel uncomfortable and unwelcome. They were not able to enjoy the content of the services. They felt distracted from their spiritual activities.

The church leaders of GCC decided to address the language barrier among the non-Creole speakers and the young people during the church services. Nearly forty percent of the church congregation was more fluent in English, and they could not fully understand the words of the worship songs, the preaching in Sunday morning services, or the teaching of the word during Sunday school and Bible study. There was a need to either have an English service or hire an English translator to help everyone understand the service.

Surprisingly, one of the new members, who fluently spoke English and Creole, volunteered to translate for the young people. As a result, GCC could minister to both English and Creole speakers with no hurdle. The worship service on Sunday mornings and the Bible Study on Wednesdays occurred in two languages: Creole and English. Inviting everyone in the community became easier than contacting only Creole speakers. As a result, many English speakers started to participate in worship services. Within nine months to a year and a half, the church grew to more than 60 members. In the meantime, the church started to develop many

ministries: women's ministry, children's ministries, youth ministries, prayer ministries, and small group ministries.

The Vision and the Mission of GCC

Great Commission Church is primarily a Haitian Creole-speaking congregation. Even if the church was predominantly Haitian, its goal was not to reach out to only the Haitian community but to all people and languages. Their vision is to love God and people, make disciples, and thrive in Christ. Their mission statement is to be a church that helps their members develop a high view of God according to His word and love Him above all things (Matt. 6:33, 22:37-38; Jer. 9:23-24; Rom. 11:33-36, 12:1-2). GCC focuses on studying and practicing the Word of God, which alone can transform people through the power of the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Eph. 6:17; John 16:13-15; Rom. 8:9-17; Ps. 19).

They are committed to loving and welcoming all people because people are all precious and valued in the eyes of God (Ps. 139:13-15; 1 Tim. 2: 3-4; John 3:16; Luke 12:7). They are committed to providing emotional, psychological, and spiritual support to their community (Gal. 6:10; Matt. 20:28; Eph. 2:10; James 2:14-26). They are also committed to spreading the gospel to their community and throughout the world and making disciples through small group ministries, using the practice of prayer, praise, worship both personal and corporately, and the teaching and preaching of the word of God (Matt. 28:19-20; Heb. 3:12-13, 10:25; Eph. 6: 18-19; Acts 13:1-5, 17:10-11; 1 Pet. 4:10-11; Rom. 12:3). They are also committed to helping their members discover and develop their spiritual gifts and train them to become strong leaders who will continue to promote the gospel of Christ and pass it on to others who will do the same (Eph. 4:10-13; 2 Tim. 2:2). GCC in Queens aims to help their members understand, grow, and thrive in

their identity in Christ and to daily change into the likeness of Jesus (Rom. 8:28-29; Eph. 1:3-14; Gal. 4:19; Phil. 2: 5-11).

Youth Ministry of GCC in crisis

The church has grown. The gym owner was amazed to see how GCC was growing. He proposed to help the church reach out to many young people in Springfield Gardens. He offered to extend the church's schedule in his facility without additional payments. Thus, on Saturdays, from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm, the church could use the facility to do youth outreach and youth services. However, the building owner received an offer to sell his building. He abruptly informed the church that he was in the process of selling the building, and he gave the church one month to leave. The relocation was rushed and unexpected. A congregation from another community close to Springfield Gardens was willing to share their building with GCC. The service hours had to be in the afternoon from 2:30 pm to 6:00 pm on Sundays. Bible study had to change from Wednesday to Tuesday from 7:30 pm to 9:00 pm.

The transition to moving the church to another location led to a rapid decline in weekly attendance. Nearly seventy percent of active members, including young people, could not adapt to the new schedule on Sunday afternoon. The church went from 60 to 20 members in less than a month. Most of these members were volunteers and leaders of the women, youth, and men ministries. In addition, the church was facing a significant financial crisis. The cost of the rent increased by more than double for the new location, which significantly exceeded the previous year.

Eventually, the remaining members had to adapt to the new schedule, reach out to new people interested in the afternoon worship service, and deal with the significant financial change. However, the youth ministry of GCC was not able to recover. Unfortunately, the member who

volunteered to interpret for the young people was no longer available due to some conflict with her schedule at work. Subsequently, the language barrier reemerged once again in the church activities.

Currently, the church is still having an afternoon worship service. Most of the ministries have survived by adapting to the new location and schedule. Providentially, GCC's attendance has increased to the same level as it was previously. In June 2018, GCC planted another church in a different borough in Brooklyn. The services are held from 8:00–10:00 am on Sundays and 7:00–9:00 pm on Wednesdays. These activities were done in both French and Creole because virtually all the members of the Brooklyn community are Creole-speakers.

Despite all the growth that occurred in the church, the youth ministries are still lagging. There is a language barrier, a lack of youth leadership, and a lack of engagement from the parents and the church members. Youth attendance has dropped considerably in Bible study and their regular activities. On the first Sunday of January 2020, the church launched an English ministry that would minister the gospel to English speakers and the GCC youth in Queens. However, March 15, 2020, was the last day of service because GCC officially stopped all in-person meetings and services. All activities started to occur remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. March 15, 2020, was also the date New York Governor Andrew Cuomo, due to the pandemic, by Executive Order 202.6, started to place some restrictions on many businesses. He published a list of essential businesses that could remain open throughout the pandemic. He also published another long list of non-essential businesses on which the state had imposed many restrictions. At that time, houses of worship were not necessarily ordered to stay closed,

but the recommendation was to stop congregating and practice social distancing.⁸

Great Commission Church chose to stop congregating altogether and meet via conference line and Zoom. During that time, many people participated in these virtual services. However, all the youth's activities and services stopped. The English-speaking ministry stopped because the church eventually lost the building in Queens during the pandemic. Since the birth of GCC in Queens six years ago, they had to relocate three times. Each time it happened, the youth ministry was considerably affected by it. Since the Pandemic, the youth as a ministry has not recovered.

Problem Presented

The problem is that the youth of Great Commission Church in Queens between the ages of 10-30 are not regularly attending church and cannot establish a stable youth ministry that will help them grow spiritually. The youth ministries of Great Commission Church started about a year after the church was founded in Queens, New York. They were vibrant, motivated to participate in Bible Study and prayer services, and involved in evangelism. At the genesis of that ministry, the youth were actively involved in the church's growth in that they invited their friends from school to participate in worship services and youth activities. However, the youth ministries started to decline due to the church's abrupt relocation. They attempted to reestablish the Bible study and prayer services and then reach out to others for Christ, but these activities did not successfully last. However, the leaders of the church remain optimistic about the youth ministry. They could revive spiritually and continue the work that they were doing for God in the community and the church.

⁸ Andrew Cuomo, "New York State on Pause," Executive Order 202.6, March 20, 2020, <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-issues-guidance-essential-services-under-new-york-state-pause-executive-order>.

The lack of regular attendance of young people inside the evangelical churches threatens the church's survival and growth. A growing body of research has investigated the actual decline in attendance among young evangelical believers in the recent past. However, these studies have traditionally focused on young Americans in evangelical churches. This body of theory fails to address the problem of young people leaving the church in the context of a culture different from the American culture. According to Michael Rackley, 60% of young people will stop attending church permanently or for a long time for various reasons. One of the reasons he mentioned was the low expectations of the church in youth ministry. The way the church displays these low expectations is by not showing tough love to the young. Showing tough love to young people creates the notion that the church truly cares about them, it provides a demonstrative means of concern within the church.⁹ David Kinnaman and Aly Hawkins address the youth's perception of the church and the culture. They published data from five years of research showing a significant disconnect between the church and young people. Their research highlighted six main themes that explain why the youth is disconnected from the church. The youth believe the church is overprotective, shallow, anti-science, repressive, exclusive, and doubtless.¹⁰

The church needs to be intentional in reaching young people. Ed Stetzer argues that a simple approach is needed to understand the phenomenon of young people leaving the church.

He stated:

Despite all the fear-driven presentations you've heard, not every young person walks out the church the moment they finish high school and never go[es?] back. Here's what you need to know. The young adults who drop out of church lack a first-hand faith- a faith of

⁹ Micheal Rackley, "Rethinking Discipleship in the Area of High School Ministry: Key Strategies for Transforming Urban Youth" (DMin diss., Liberty University, 2013), 7.

¹⁰ David Kinnaman and Aly Hawkins, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church ... and Rethinking Faith*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 8.

their own- and a relationship with Christ that matters deeply in their own personal life apart from their parent's pressure.¹¹

When young people drop out of the church, it shows more about the quality of their relationship with Jesus than about their culture's negative influence. They will eventually leave if their relationship with Jesus is weak and unsteady.

These previous works are significant because they show how the lack of accountability, the negative influence of the American culture, and the lack of a personal relationship with Christ can lead young people to drop out of the church. However, they failed to address this issue in the specific context of the young people of GCC. They failed to explore the problem of young people leaving a church in the context of facing language barriers during church services. They overlooked the context of young people born in the U.S., raised in a Haitian culture with their immigrant parents, and attending a Haitian Protestant church. Therefore, the solutions presented in these previous works concerning the lack of attendance of young people in evangelical churches may be ill-defined and inadequate to address this issue, specifically in the context of a Christian Haitian Baptist church. The researcher will consider the problem of the young people of GCC not regularly attending church and failing to establish a stable youth ministry that will help them grow in their relationship with God in their specific cultural context.

Thesis Statement

This DMIN research thesis aims to develop and implement strategies and approaches to help establish a stable and transformational youth ministry at Great Commission Church in Queens, which will help the young people remain in GCC and thrive in their spiritual lives. This paper is being written with the intent of leading young people into the future. Therefore, this

¹¹ <https://churchleaders.com/ed-stetzer>, access May 17 2020.

study also aims to implement a spiritual program that includes the six key influencing factors for spiritual growth: discipleship, mentoring, parental influence, church attendance, personal devotion, and ministerial involvement to help reboot and establish the youth ministry at GCC. Moreover, it considers the effectiveness of these key-influencing factors for spiritual growth in establishing this youth ministry at GCC. This study also compares these key influencing factors for spiritual growth in terms of their strengths and weaknesses in the context of young people of GCC. To address the issue of the language barrier among the young people of GCC, this spiritual program and the materials that will be part of it will be in English. Therefore, this action research sought to answer two questions:

- What are the key influencing factors for spiritual growth that will help reboot and establish a stable and transformational youth ministry at GCC?
- How effective are each of these key influencing factors for spiritual growth?

Purpose Statement

If the six critical influencing factors for spiritual growth, 1) discipleship, 2) mentoring, 3) parental influence, 4) church attendance, 5) personal devotion, and 6) ministerial involvement, are implemented in the spiritual program for young people of GCC, they will help young people to attend and remain at GCC. Furthermore, these key influencing factors for spiritual growth will urge the young people of GCC to establish personal spiritual practices that will help them thrive in their spiritual lives. They will also create a path for the young people of GCC to be more engaged in various ministries at CGG.

This study will contribute to the body of knowledge on addressing the decline of church attendance among young people in the context of Haitian evangelical churches. This research seeks to help address the current shortage of studies in this area, particularly in the Haitian

evangelical context. It also provides values that can help Haitian evangelical churches address the lack of attendance and spiritual growth among their young people.

Basic Assumptions

The researcher interviewed and collected surveys from participants of three Haitian Baptist churches in Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx. It is assumed that all participants provided sincere and objective feedback. The second assumption is that the researcher believes that youth ministries at a local church are vital to the church's effectiveness, growth, and future. The third assumption is that the researcher believes parental support is vital to helping the youth thrive in their walk with God. Parents play a role that no one else can substitute in their children's lives. God intended it this way, and the church must involve them to strengthen the youth. The fourth assumption is that Scripture is indispensable to spiritual transformation. The Bible is the ultimate authority to help the youth navigate life. The principles of Scripture must be at the center of youth ministries and used as the source of belief and conviction for each youth. The fifth assumption is that the church's attendance is vital to spiritual growth. Church attendance does not give one salvation. People can only receive it by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. However, they cannot grow effectively in their spiritual life in isolation. They need to prioritize regular church attendance to a local evangelical church, which will help them to grow spiritually. Finally, the researcher assumes that all the participants are born-again Christians.

Definitions

Youth ministry is part of a church's activities to help young people walk with God. It is not a mere academic program but primarily a theological enterprise requiring young people to

focus on God with their hearts and souls.¹² This study is a practical survey that does not make use of any pretentious terms. Rather, the context of this study is to intentionally interact with the youth so that their voice is heard. Thus, this research will involve people of the ages of 10-30.

Spiritual growth will be interchangeably used with spiritual formation. It is an ongoing journey of all believers that requires the study of God's word, the help of the church, and the assistance of the Holy Spirit. God's ultimate goal for all believers is to be transformed into the likeness of His son Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:28-29). Therefore, spiritual formation can be defined as "the holistic work of God in a believer's life whereby systemic change renders the individual continually closer to the image and actions of Jesus Christ."¹³

The church comprises all believers who are saved by grace through faith in Jesus worldwide. It also expresses itself locally in specific countries, cities, and towns. People can be members of a local church while they are not members of Christ's church. The church is the ultimate place that God uses to equip the believers for the work of ministries until they reach maturity, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:11-13). The Scripture is the ultimate authority that teaches people who God is and His plan for their lives. It comprises sixty-six books, broken down into the Old and New Testament.

¹² Duffy Robbins, *This Way to Youth Ministry: An Introduction to the Adventure* (El Cajon, CA: Youth Specialties Academic, 2004), 18.

¹³ Paul Pettit, *Foundations of Spiritual Formation: A Community Approach to Becoming Like Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2008), 19.

The Bible is the ultimate filter through which all perspectives are brought to determine the proper basis for Christian belief and living.¹⁴

Discipleship is a program to make disciples for Jesus. It requires reaching out to the lost through the gospel's message and teaching the Scriptures (Matt. 28:19-20). George Barna defines discipleship as "becoming a complete, competent follower of Jesus. It is about the intentional training of people who voluntarily submit to the lordship of Christ and who want to become imitators of Him in every thought, word, and deed."¹⁵ A mentor takes the process by which an experienced and trusted advisor guides or advises another in a particular skill or area.¹⁶ It can happen in the setting of family, work, and church.

Limitations

The participants of this research are a mixture of young Haitian immigrants and young Haitian Americans born in the United States. This study will mainly focus on the context of Haitian culture located in America. The youth of GCC is not composed of a large group of people. Perhaps this research may not reflect the target population: the young people in Haitian evangelical churches. The methodology of this research will originate from others research completed on the topic. There is no guarantee it will yield an effective result. The youth members are newly converted believers. Thus, they might take time to adjust to the program, change, and methods implemented. The church does not own a building. Youth activities will be taking place in several locations.

¹⁴ P. Adam McClendon, *Paul's Spirituality in Galatians: A Critique of Contemporary Christian Spiritualities* (City, UK: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2015), 7.

¹⁵ Barna, *Growing True Disciples*, 17.

¹⁶ Catherine McLaughlin, "Mentoring: What Is It? How Do We Do It, and How Do We Get More of It?" *Health Services Research* 45, no. 3 (2010): 871.

The COVID-19 pandemic may limit the effectiveness of attendance and teaching. Precaution will be taken to limit physical meetings and utilize virtual meetings if needed. When meeting in a physical location, the youth will practice social distancing and will wear masks if necessary. The lack of leadership in the church may play a role in the effectiveness of the expected results.

Delimitations

The researcher will impose specific restrictions on this project so that it may potentially produce the intended results. These outcomes aim to have adequate, specific, and accurate information applicable to youth and the church's growth. This research solely focuses on the youth ministry. The children's ministries and adult ministries will not be included. Their involvement will be part of the contribution of the youth ministry. This research involved youth ministries of only three Haitian Evangelical churches located in Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx. The main thrust that animated this research was spiritual transformation and growth. The church has another location in Brooklyn. Some youth activities take place there. None of the youths are professionals or married. They are high school students and freshmen in college. Finally, this project is not indefinite. It was conducted for a specific period. Evaluations and follow-ups were done regularly.

Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework

Introduction

This chapter will explore the youth ministry's biblical and theological foundation. It is essential to have biblical support and to set a firm foundation for how to understand the Bible. This is important for building a youth ministry. Believers are called to perceive everything based on how God perceives it.¹⁷ It becomes a noble task to discover God's purview about youth. This chapter will also explore the theoretical foundation of the topic. It will consider many views on youth ministries. This section will survey the literature that agrees with a biblical mandate of youth ministry and present models through which this ministry can be best executed. The researcher will consider a synthesis of these models that best fit the context of the youth of Great Commission Church in Queens, NY. The researcher will present a review of the literature on the topic.

Theological Foundations

This section will show precedence in Scripture to organize a transformational youth ministry at GCC in Queens. No specific passage of Scripture directly commands the church to meet with many young people in the church building, develop a curriculum relevant to them, and teach them the word of God. However, many principles in Scripture can help justify the need for a transformational and robust youth ministry in an evangelical church.¹⁸

The first principle that can justify the need for a transformational youth ministry at a church is related to the responsibility of parents. Parents need to be trained to teach the

¹⁷ Jonathan L. Walton, "Seeing as God Sees," *Harvard Divinity Bulletin*, Spring/Summer 2018, <https://bulletin.hds.harvard.edu/seeing-as-god-sees>.

¹⁸ Mike Kipp, "Is 'Youth Ministry' in the Bible?" Fuller Youth Institute, July 30, 2012, access May 17 2020, <https://fulleryouthinstitute.org/blog/is-youth-ministry-in-the-bible>.

commandments of God to their children. In Deuteronomy 4, Moses urged the people of Israel to listen and practice the teaching of the Law so that they may take possession of the Promised Land and continue keeping God's command after taking possession of it (Deut. 4:1-6). Moses also commanded them to diligently teach these commandments to their children and their children's children so that they may fear God and keep His word (Deut. 4:9-10). Moses was likely speaking with a group of young people under the age of twenty because God swore not to allow any of the men who came out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, to enter the Promised Land (Num. 32:11). The exception was only for two people: Joshua and Caleb (Num. 32:12). God let them all wander in the desert for forty years, apart from these two people, until they all expired (Num. 32:13). Thus, it is possible the crowd listening to Moses in Deuteronomy 4 consisted of primarily teenagers and young people under twenty.

Subsequently, in Deuteronomy 6, Moses taught the commandment known to Jewish tradition as the *Shema*, which means to hear (Deut. 6:4-5). The observant Jew recites this passage of Scripture at least twice a day.¹⁹ Moses reminded this new generation in Deuteronomy 6:7 to diligently teach this command to their children. By mentioning the need for the parents to intentionally teach their children multiple times (Deut. 4:9-10, 6:7; Exod. 10:2), Moses stressed the importance of the faithful transmission and application of God's commands from one generation to another.²⁰

After arriving at the Promised Land, Joshua exemplified the responsibility of parents to teach their children to serve God in front of all the tribes of Israel that gathered at Shechem (Josh. 24:1). He boldly chose for himself and his family to serve the Lord regardless of the

¹⁹ E. H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, vol. 4, (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishers, 1994), 163.

²⁰ D. M. Kjesbo and L. Y. Cha, "Family Ministry: Past, Present, Future," *Christian Education Journal* 17, no. 3 (2020): 488–505.

people's tendency to serve other gods (Josh. 24:15-16). D. M. Howard states, “Joshua stands as a good example of a leader willing to move ahead of his people and commit himself, regardless of the people's inclinations. His bold example undoubtedly encouraged many to follow what he pledged to do.”²¹

In the book of Joel, God asked the people of Israel to teach the next generation the word of God. In this context, the parents were to teach children the judgment of God upon the city of Jerusalem. The prophet Joel states, “Tell your children of it, and let your children tell their children and their children to another generation” (Joel 1:3, translation). D. A. Garret compares Joel 1:3 to the passage of Exodus 10:2, which showed how the people of Israel ought to teach their children and their grandchildren about how God dealt harshly with the Egyptians. Garret states, “The irony, of course, is that God is now showing the same severity to Jerusalem.” Still, the principle remains valid: Every generation must tell the next about what God has done.²² The Scripture does not assign the primary responsibility of teaching and equipping children to the prophet, priest, or king of Israel but instead assigns this task to the parents.²³

The scriptures support the initiative to teach young people the commands of God. Nevertheless, God intends youth ministry to start in a family context. Parents ought to be involved in instructing their children on God’s Law. Parents should be the first to be involved in teaching their children the word of God. God seems to give this responsibility directly to the parent to bring them in the training and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). God ordered the

²¹ D. M. Howard, *Joshua*, The New American Commentary, vol. 5 (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishers, 1998), 436.

²² D. A. Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, The New American Commentary, vol. 19A (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishers, 1997), 315.

²³ P. J Gentry, “Raising Children, the Christian Way,” *Journal of Discipleship and Family Ministry* 2, no. 2 (2012): 97.

people of Israel to teach their children to keep His commandments diligently (Deut. 6:7). In addition, parents were also called to practice the commandments of God so that they could be models for their children. Ken Ham states,

The home is the epicenter of spiritual development. Parents are called to teach, talk, and walk out their faith daily as they train up their children. Remember, truth is more often “caught” than “taught.” Your kids will learn more by watching you live out your faith and make decisions based on God's word than they will by what their Sunday school teacher says each week.²⁴

To organize a transformational youth ministry at GCC, the parents of young people must be fully involved in that process. In addition, they must be trained and instructed in the sound doctrines of the word of God for themselves and then diligently teaching them to their children. The parents must also model these truths in their lives for their children to see and imitate.²⁵

The Scripture indeed commands the parents to teach their children the word of God. However, the parent’s role in their children’s lives should not inhibit the church's involvement in building the faith of the young people.²⁶ The church needs to be involved in helping young people grow spiritually because the church of Jesus is like a huge family. There is evidence in Scripture to show that the church is considered the family of God (1 Tim. 3:15; Eph. 2:19). For example, Jesus deemed those who do the will of God as members of his own family (Matt. 12:46-50). The Apostle Paul showed that God adopts those in Christ to become part of His own family (Gal. 4:5; Rom. 8:15; Eph. 1:5). Paul also said in Ephesians 3:15: “For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name”

²⁴ Ken Ham, “Parents Must Start Teaching Their Kids to Stand on God’s Word,” Ken Ham blog, Jan. 25, 2016, <https://answersingenesis.org/blogs/ken-ham/2016/01/25/parents-must-start-teaching-their-kids-stand-gods-word>.

²⁵ P. Bell, “A Practical Strategy for Partnering with the Family,” *Family Ministry Journal* 2 (2017): 93.

²⁶ R. Rienow, “JDFM Forum: Inspiring Parents to Disciple their Families,” *Journal of Discipleship and Family Ministry* 3, no. 1 (2012): 72.

(translation). Andy Stirrup states, “Christian family members should go beyond identifying their family as a small church and instead suggest that it is, in fact, the first church.”²⁷ The family is not a mere metaphor for the church, but rather it seems to be the first church in the mind of God.

The church has a responsibility to families. Paul spoke to the believers at Corinth and reminded them that they might have many guardians in Christ, but they have only one spiritual Father (1 Cor. 4:15). The apostle Paul was referring to himself as their spiritual Father because he was the one who preached the gospel to them. Consequently, just as the parents are called to teach their young people, the church, which is the family of God, should do the same. Moreover, the Apostle Paul acknowledged the positive influence of Timothy’s mother and grandmother on Timothy’s faith in Christ.²⁸ However, that never stopped Paul from being a mentor and a spiritual father for Timothy (2 Tim. 1:2). He called Timothy a beloved son, showing how Paul deemed Timothy his spiritual son. A. B. Spencer states, “Beloved is a term that Paul has used to describe a father-son (or parent-child) relationship. A good father or parent ‘puts in (the) mind’ (*noutheteō*) of the child good content, teaches, warns, exhorts, admonishes, because the parent is genuinely concerned for the child, unlike a pedagogue, an enslaved instructor who has been ordered to teach the basics.”²⁹ Furthermore, Paul urged Timothy to treat the Church's people as a family. Paul told him to encourage the older men as he would encourage a father, young men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters (1 Tim. 5:1). Paul gave an instruction to Timothy that is similar to the order that Moses gave to the Israelites concerning diligently passing on the commandments of God to the next generation. In 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul

²⁷ A. Stirrup, “From Whom Every Family in Heaven and on Earth Is Named,” *Journal of Discipleship and Family Ministry* 1, no. 1 (2010): 28.

²⁸ W. F. Cook III, “When Only One Spouse Believes: Hope for Christian Women in Mixed Marriages,” *Journal of Discipleship and Family Ministry* 2, no. 2 (2012): 15.

²⁹ A. B. Spencer, *2 Timothy and Titus* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014), 79.

said to Timothy, “You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others” (translation). The biblical principle in this Scripture is that the church is responsible for transmitting the values of the word of God to the next generation. Hence, if the church is deemed as the family of God, they bear the responsibility to train and teach their young people the word of God, the same way God commanded the Israelite parents to diligently teach their children the laws of God.

In the contemporary context, the nuclear family system is no longer defined as a marriage between a man and a woman committed to bearing and raising children according to the word of God. The movement of sexual fluidity influences even the Christian tradition on marriage and threatens to create a division among evangelicals.³⁰ Some among the Christian circles are trying to reconcile theological arguments for the gay lifestyle in the Bible. These gay evangelicals³¹ promoted the idea of the Gay Christian Movement in the Protestant churches.³² This paper will focus on the context of the traditional nuclear family, the marriage between a man and woman as described in Scripture (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:3-6).

The church family must reach out to their young people. Jesus commanded the church to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19-20). The call to make disciples is for everyone, regardless of age, gender, and culture. G. E. Schaefer states:

The Great Commission necessitates taking the gospel message to “the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8), to “all nations” (Matthew 28:19). The Good News is to be shared with all peoples, for all are sinners, Jews, and Gentile alike, and need deliverance from sin (Romans 3). All peoples, by faith,

³⁰ D. Masci and M. Lipka, “Where Christian Churches, other Religions Stand on Gay Marriage,” Pew Research Center, December 2015, <http://pewrsr.ch/1RBp78z>.

³¹ M. Vines, *God and the Gay Christian* (New York, NY: Convergent Books, 2014).

³² N. Collins, *All but Invisible: Exploring Identity Questions at the Intersection of Faith, Gender and Sexuality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), 21.

can receive God's provision and are baptized into Christ. In Christ, all distinctions between Jew and Gentile disappear (Rom. 10:12–13; Gal. 3:28).³³

Jesus did not distinguish between the adult and the young when He reached out to them through the gospel. Jesus welcomed children to Himself and resembled them to His own Kingdom (Matt. 19:14; Mark 10:15). Jesus wants young people to be part of His kingdom. Therefore, in making disciples of all nations, people can intentionally make disciples of young people. In addition, the church should be the family that embraces all kinds of families regardless of their brokenness or their weakness.³⁴ In that sense, the church would function as an intergenerational family of all families.³⁵ In Matthew 12:46-50 Jesus defines his family as anyone who does the will of God and He said: “Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?” Then he pointed out to his disciples and said, ‘Look, these are my mother and my brothers. Anyone who does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother’ (verse, translation). Anyone here is also related to the children and youth who resemble the kingdom of God (Matt. 19:14).

Jesus taught His disciples a great principle. The church can use this principle when ministering to young people. Jesus taught: “But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave” (Matt. 20:26-27, translation). The principle is about being selfless when serving other people. The focus of ministry should be about serving others, not to be served. This is why Jesus came on earth, not to be served but to serve others and save them from their sins (Matt. 20:28). The church leaders

³³ G. E. Schaefer, “Great Commission, The,” *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 317.

³⁴ Diana R. Garland, *Family Ministry: A Comprehensive Guide*, 2nd ed. (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 12.

³⁵ H. C. Allen and C. Lawton, *Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community and Worship* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 26.

should seek to serve the youth in a way that can resonate with them and help them grow in their walk with God.

The Apostle Paul mentioned in 1 Corinthians 9, a strategy like Christ's principle. Paul encouraged the church at Corinth to be selfless when serving others. This ministerial strategy can also apply to making disciples of young people. Although Paul knew he was free in Christ, he still learned to become a servant to all to reach out to them for Christ. He learned to adjust his life to different cultures and circumstances to preach the gospel to people. He stressed: "He became like a Jew to the Jews, as one under the law to those who are under the law, as one outside of the law to those who are outside of the law, and as weak to those who are weak, for the sake of the gospel, to win them for Jesus" (1 Cor. 9:19-23, translation). Hence, Paul adopted a ministry style suitable to the context and environment of the people he was ministering. He was not focusing on the fact that he was free in Christ. However, Paul learned to deny himself of his right so that he may present the gospel to all people. Paul was able to find true fulfillment in the service of others (1 Cor. 9:18). When Paul stated that he became weak to those who were weak, he was referring to a particular subgroup in the church of Corinth that may have required special attention for them to grow in the gospel. Roy Ciampa and Brian Rosner state,

The weak, mentioned in v. 22, do not represent a generally recognized group of people like the others, but evidently do represent a subgroup within the church. The parallel between 9:19–22 and 10:32–33 leads to the possibility that Paul's categories here reflect those given in 10:32, where he appeals to the Corinthians to avoid giving offense to Jews, Greeks [Gentiles], or the church of God, with the weak, referred to in chapter 8 being the part of the church of God most likely to be offended by the rest of the Corinthians.³⁶

The church's young people can be considered a weak subgroup that deserves special attention in their walk with God. Just as Paul learned to understand the context of the weak and sympathized

³⁶ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2010), 424.

with them to reach out to them for Christ, the church needs to do the same for the young people. GCC needs to seek to know its young people in their context. The church needs to find out if the young people are more fluent in English or Creole and make every effort to resolve the language barriers that the young people are facing by hiring interpreters to translate the worship service into English. They need to ensure that the young people understand all the services in the church. They also need to find out the reason behind their lack of attendance and participation in ministry at the church. After being fully aware of the needs of young people, the church needs to create a suitable ministry to address them and help them grow and thrive in their spiritual lives. There is evidence in the scriptures to support a solid, spiritual, sensible youth ministry.

Theoretical Foundation

In this segment of the paper, the researcher will focus on the theoretical foundation for youth ministry. He will explore other research on youth ministry and how they can help inform the researcher's approach to youth ministry. The researcher will also examine other models of youth ministry, discuss their weaknesses and strengths, and how they justify the need to organize a transformational youth ministry at GCC.

There is a lot to consider concerning the Christian life of young people in America. Christian Smith and others attempted to address that lack of knowledge among young people by examining religious affiliation, religious attendance, and involvement in church youth groups. They also explored how gender, race, age, and region impacted the religion of young people.³⁷ One issue they pointed out is that there is no diversification and specialization among American youth in that some youth choose to participate only in church services while others are involved

³⁷ Christian A. Smith et al., "Mapping American Adolescent Religious Participation," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 41 (2002): 597.

only in youth ministry. They concluded, “American youth tend to do either, both or neither.”³⁸ In other words, the young people who choose to go to church tend to go to youth ministry. However, young people who do not go to youth groups do not go to church service.³⁹ Although this conclusion is significant in how American youth perceive youth ministry and church service, it may not apply to a Haitian church’s young people in America. The focus of this study was too broad in scope, and it failed to specifically address the relationship between how young Haitian Americans in a Haitian church engage in youth ministry and church services. In this study, the researcher will address this neglected area in youth ministry by exploring how young Haitian believers living in New York City respond to youth ministry and church services.

Another study shows the lack of youth retention in North American churches is related to friction between a good understanding of evangelism and discipleship. In their article on youth ministry in North America, Kenneth Moser and Malan Nel argue that the dichotomy between the church’s identity and mission leads to the lack of youth retention in North American churches. They put it as follows: “The crisis of youth leaving evangelical churches in North America is because of the dichotomy between mission and identity. Once this dichotomy is erased, the mission will be a natural outworking of identity in youth ministry.”⁴⁰ The problem in the friction between mission and identity is that the church embraced an attractional youth ministry model prioritizing non-Christians’ evangelism outside the church through culturally engaging activities like entertainment and games. They fail to focus on building the believers inside the church

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 609

³⁹ Kenneth Moser and Malan Nel, “The Connection Between Youth Ministry's Division of Evangelism and Discipleship, and the Lack of Retention of Youth in North American Churches,” *Verbum et Ecclesia* 40, no. 1 (2019): 1.

⁴⁰ Moser and Nel, “The Connection Between Youth Ministry's Division of Evangelism and Discipleship, and the Lack of Retention of Youth in North American Churches,” 2.

through practical Christian living, spiritual maturity, and spiritual disciplines such as prayer and Bible reading. They argued this youth ministry model would lead to a deficiency in the spiritual development of the members and a lack of retention in the youth program.⁴¹ This article's strength highlights the church's need to embrace its mission and identity. Once young people become more mature in their spiritual life, that will naturally lead to more evangelism of non-Christians. However, its weakness is revealed in not being specific in Christ-centered programs that will lead to spiritual growth. This article focuses only on the spiritual practices of prayer and Bible reading without centering these activities on Christ. Spiritual practices that are not Christ-centered may lead to legalism.⁴²

Another article points out that effective youth ministry depends on a theology-driven program that considers the cultural context of young people. Philippa Strong, a proponent of this approach, argues that the crisis of youth ministry has to do with the failure to lead young people to mature Christians. Youth ministry is more socially driven than theological or spiritually driven, leading them to make cultural relevance the foundation of ministry as opposed to theology.⁴³ The strength of this article is that it promotes a Christ-centric theological framework as the foundation of youth ministry. However, it fails to stress parents' involvement in youth ministry. The researcher will focus on a Christ-centered spiritual program, but he will also argue the need for parental involvement and mentorship in the youth ministry of GCC.

⁴¹ Ibid., 6.

⁴² Philippa Strong, "Effective Youth Ministry: Theology-driven in a Cultural Context," *In die Skriflig* 49, no. 3 (January 2015): 1.

⁴³ Philippa Strong, "Effective Youth Ministry: Theology-driven in a Cultural Context," 1.

There are many youth ministry programs evangelical churches have already adopted. One youth program is known as the purpose-driven youth ministry. The Saddleback Valley Community Church has adopted this youth ministry style. This youth ministry model has five purposes: evangelism, worship, fellowship, discipleship, and ministry. Hence, all the programs and activities of the youth ministry reflect these five purposes. In addition, there are nine essential components that the purpose-driven ministry needs to build a healthy youth ministry. The first component is the power of God. It has to do with passionate leaders with pure hearts. The second component is purpose. This component has to do with developing a ministry program based on the five purposes listed earlier. The third component is the potential audience. This component helps leaders identify all the commitments among young people in that ministry. The fourth component is called programs. It is the result of the purpose and the potential audience. The fifth component is the process. This involves utilizing the program to help young people move into spiritual maturity. The sixth component is planned values that strengthen the youth ministry. The seventh component is parents. Parent involvement could strengthen both the youth ministry and the church. The eighth component is participating leaders. It requires finding volunteers that help fulfill the purposes. The ninth component is perseverance which has to do with learning to adapt to difficult times.⁴⁴

The purpose-driven youth ministry model is significant because it is easy to follow, well-structured, and straightforward. However, it focuses heavily on spiritual activities rather than a personal relationship with Christ. It does not seem to promote Christ-centered living. It seems to fail to promote young people's need to know their identity in Christ and to grow in it. The researcher will not only aim at developing a well-structured youth program but also giving young

⁴⁴ Dough Fields, *Purpose-Driven Youth Ministry: 9 Essential Foundations for Healthy Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 17.

people tools that will help Christ to form in them at GCC (Gal. 4:19). It will focus on helping young people learn specific scriptures that relate to their identity in Christ and personalize these biblical passages in their context and apply them to their daily lives. Youth ministry was officially organized at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century.⁴⁵ Many views of youth ministry have been considered and used in the church. However, four views are deemed to be prominent. The first is called family-based youth ministry.

Another model of youth ministry is called family-based youth ministry. In his book, Mark DeVries shows many flaws in traditional youth ministry. Traditional youth ministry creates a crisis in the church in that it does not lead young people to mature Christian adulthood. The problem is when the church tries to keep young people from being bored with their faith. DeVries contends it “deprives them the opportunity to develop discipline and perseverance they need to live the Christian life.”⁴⁶ The family-based youth ministry is the combined effort of the nuclear family with the extended family, which is the church, to work together in helping young people to become mature in their faith. The strength of this approach is that it requires the extended family to help alleviate the biblical insufficiency found in nuclear families. The weakness of this approach is that it can potentially lead the extended family to become the primary source of spiritual growth for young people as opposed to the nuclear family. This research will promote the concerted efforts of the extended family to help young people grow spiritually. However, the researcher will urge parents to be the primary source for their children's spiritual growth. Parents can become the primary source for their children's spiritual growth

⁴⁵ Mark Senter, *Four Views of Youth Ministry and the Church: Inclusive Congregational, Preparatory, Missional, Strategic* (Grand Rapids, MI: Youth Specialties, 2001), x.

⁴⁶ Mark DeVries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 26.

when they equip themselves with the Word of God and model these biblical principles in front of their children.

There is yet another approach. Mark Yaconelli introduced an unusual model of youth ministry called contemplative youth ministry. He developed this model from insights from churches and exemplary leaders of different denominations, like conservative evangelical, liberal protestant, and Roman Catholic. The failure to reach out to the young people's hearts is due to the church's leadership that focuses on running their church's ministries while they are not spending time with God. When the church is unwilling to seek God, humble themselves before Him, and wait on the Holy Spirit to lead the way, they cannot share the gospel meaningfully with the young people.⁴⁷ This approach differs from the family-based and purpose-driven youth ministry models in that it focuses not on a particular structured program or activity but on being in the presence of God. The return to the presence of God in prayer, meditation, and dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit to lead, empower, and change young people.

When people are busy serving God, it does not mean they are being dependent on God. However, the weakness of the contemplative youth ministry model is the lack of being rooted in the principles of God. Young people are called to listen to God's word and personally figure out what God is telling them. The danger is that when listening to the word of God, people can miss the message from the Lord. Young people need to understand that God is trying to communicate with them. The devil is also distracting and inserting his lies in the minds of young people. Therefore, young people should not only listen to the voice inside them, but they need to confirm this voice with mature preaching and teaching based on the sound doctrine of God's word. The

⁴⁷ Mark Yaconelli, *Contemplative Youth Ministry: Practicing the Presence of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Books, 2006), 16.

researcher will focus on the need for young people to spend time with God in prayer and meditation to cultivate their relationship with God. However, young people need to be constantly rooted and grounded in the solid principles of God's word.

Another approach for providing guidance to youth ministry is offered by Wayne Rice. He felt called to reinvent youth ministry. His unique approach prioritizes parent involvement in their young people's spiritual lives instead of the church. Rice stressed the importance of the church and the family as the most potent and essential institutions.⁴⁸ However, the church will not be able to reinvent youth ministry without putting parents as the primary disciple-makers of their young people. In contrast to the family-based youth ministry, he provided a model that prioritized the extended family's role in the church and over the nuclear family. Rice argues for the prevalence of parents in the discipleship of their youth. In contrast to the purpose-driven youth ministry, Rice criticizes the program-driven youth ministries because they do not address the real issues that young people face. He opposes giving youth leaders the name of youth pastors while their central role is to keep the youth program up and running. Youth pastors should be deemed shepherds who actively nourish young people in God's word and help them to grow spiritually.⁴⁹

The previously mentioned youth ministry approaches mainly focused on strategies to help young people grow spiritually. However, Mark Senter primarily focuses on how young people can be involved in church ministry. He mentioned four views of youth ministry.⁵⁰ The first approach is the inclusive congregational approach. Malan Nel is one of the leading

⁴⁸ Wayne Rice, *Reinventing Youth Ministry (again): from Bells and Whistles to Flesh and Blood* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 10.

⁴⁹ Rice, *Reinventing Youth Ministry (again)*, 9.

⁵⁰ Senter, *Four Views of Youth Ministry*. 3

proponents of this approach. He argues that there should be no separation between the church and the youth ministry. The congregation must be seen as a whole, composed of youth and adults, and no one must be ignored or neglected. For that reason, young ministers should not serve only in the youth ministry. They can be involved in any ministry of the church. This principle is also true for older ministers. They do not have to only serve in the adult ministry. They can also be involved in the youth ministry.⁵¹ According to Sara Little, who is a proponent of the inclusive congregational view, the youth are part of the ministering body of Christ now, not when they become old.⁵² Senter put it this way: "Youth ministry is not about finding an extra place for yet another ministry, but about finding a place for youths within every ministry and among the people that the ministries are designed to reach and to serve the people to whom God comes by means of ministries."⁵³ The church does not need to create a youth department or age-specific ministries to help minister the gospel to their members. Youth ministry without including the whole congregation makes the congregational body incomplete.⁵⁴ The weakness of this approach is that it fails to acknowledge that a youth's level of understanding differs from that of an adult's comprehension. Developing a suitable spiritual program for youth should not be an issue, it should be viewed as an opportunity for discipleship. The apostle Paul learned to change his approach to ministry based on the group of people he was ministering.

The second view of youth ministry is the preparatory approach. Wesley Black is a major proponent of this view. This approach aims to train young people to spread and promote the Great Commission. It is defined as a specialized ministry to adolescents that prepares them to

⁵¹ Ibid., 4.

⁵² Sara Little, *Youth, World, and the Church* (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1968), 11.

⁵³ Senter, *Four Views of Youth Ministry*, 6.

⁵⁴ Senter, *Four Views of Youth Ministry*, 24.

participate as leaders, disciples, and evangelists.⁵⁵ Therefore, the youth are constantly training to promote the gospel at present and in the future. Unlike the congregational youth ministry model, the preparatory youth ministry approach argues that the youth must separate from and integrate with the church. There should not be division in the church's doctrine and what the youth profess and believe. Yet, there are things to be considered – the youth are developmentally, socially, and culturally different from the adults. There should be a specific strategy to address them at their level. The church needs to commit to addressing these differences as if they want to be faithful to the call of the Great Commission.⁵⁶ The weakness of this approach is that it may not create or help duplicate a church based on God's word. If the youth are only trained to perform and continue the church's traditions and duties while they are not trained to promote the sound doctrines of the Bible, it will not duplicate churches that advance God's agenda.

The third view is the missional approach to youth ministry. It is defined as “the community of faith corporately committed to caring for and reaching out into the adolescent world (of both church and unchurched young people) to meaningfully assimilate them into their fellowship.”⁵⁷ This view seeks to understand today's youth's culture and context. Chap Clark is a major proponent of this approach. In support of that thought, Clark states: “If youth ministry is more broadly defined within the context of the church's universal missional mandate, where every young person is our mission field, then it is essential to understand what is happening in the world of secular adolescents.”⁵⁸ The main goal is to reach out to young people so that they may come to church. As they come, they will encounter a pleasant and inviting environment. The

⁵⁵ Ibid., 40.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 44.

⁵⁷ Senter, *Four Views of Youth Ministry*, 80.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 88.

church's focus is not necessarily to go out and make disciples but to bring the people inside of the church to fellowship. The church may hire youth ministers to understand and relate to the context of youth non-believers and reach out to them. The weakness of this view is that it does not align with the Great Commission mandate, which is to go and make disciples worldwide instead of only trying to entice people to come to a particular location so they can hear the gospel.

The fourth view is the strategic approach to youth ministry. Mark H. Senter is a great proponent of his approach. This method is defined as an approach that “creates a community of leaders and youthful Christians that enables a parachurch or church-based youth ministry to establish a new church to maintain a theological continuity while expressing faith in a community relevant to Christ and culture.”⁵⁹ The main goal is not to duplicate a church like the host church's tradition. They seek to conform to the current culture and let go of the tradition. For that reason, young people are deemed as the people shaping the church, and youth pastors are deemed as pastors. The adult congregation must seek to make sacrifices to accommodate young people in their effort to grow and expand in ministry.⁶⁰ The church is focused on pleasing the youth and helping them advance at all costs. An example of a church that adapts the strategic youth ministry is the case of a non-English-speaking church that was established in the United States. The church can help prioritize the youth who already know the English language and the culture. They prefer to make sacrifices to help the next generation thrive in ministry.⁶¹ The weakness of that view is that they intentionally attempt to disconnect the old generation of the

⁵⁹ Ibid., 117.

⁶⁰ Senter, *Four Views of Youth Ministry*, 132.

⁶¹ Ibid., 133.

church from the new generation. Both generations need each other to build up one another in Christ and spread the gospel.

After exploring multiple views of youth ministry, it is evident that there is a need for a holistic approach that cannot be found in one specific youth ministry model. The researcher will attempt to construct a youth ministry model for the young people of GCC that will take into account the specific context of young people. This will call for the involvement of parents as primary disciple-makers of their children. This model will need to be a Christ-centered discipleship program that provides a strategy that will help young people to get involved in ministry. The purpose is to establish a mentorship program that will prompt the mature believer to help the young people to grow into mature adults and a firm reliance on the Holy Spirit to convict, lead, and transform the life into the likeness of Christ.

Review of Literature

This section aims to explore, analyze, and synthesize a list of existing literature on young people in the church. The researcher sought to identify gaps in these studies through the literature review. The results from this thesis may add to the body of knowledge concerning the youth ministry.

The purpose of this section is to survey current literature to establish what direction youth ministry is heading. “The Millennial Generation and the Church: Doing it Differently” is a short article by Jaco Hamman. It points out that the church’s decline is mainly due to young people leaving it.⁶² The church resembles its environment in that it produces the same kind of generation that belongs to a culture. All cultures have at least these three generations. The first generation is

⁶² Hamman, “The Millennial Generation, and the Church,” 161.

called the post-figurative generation, in which children learn primarily from their elders as role models for personhood. The second is the configurative generation, in which children and adults learn from each other. The last is the pre-figurative generation, where youth create a new culture. Youth have the potential to deconstruct, reconstruct, and create a new culture even inside the church.⁶³ This article seems to warn the church of how the pre-figurative generation, the youth, can help change the church. This argument may be valid in culture, but it is not necessarily true in the church. The reason for that is that the church follows biblical principles. While these principles can change people's lives, they cannot alter nor change (Isa. 40:8). Instead of allowing the young generation to influence the church, the church can be an agent of change to all generations through the power of the word. The researcher seeks to emphasize the importance of God's word as an agent of change in the lives of the young people of GCC.

There are positive activities that are occurring in youth ministry. In her article, "What Difference Does Youth Group Make?" Patricia Snell acknowledged religion's positive outcomes on young people. Religious service attendance and parental socialization are two significant factors that traditionally lead to positive life outcomes in young people.⁶⁴ She wanted to explore how much youth groups contributed to that positive impact. Snell hypothesized that adolescents participating in religious youth groups would demonstrate more outstanding adult support, connection to the church, and moral commitments.⁶⁵ The result of this research varied depending on the age of the young people. The younger the youth were, the more significant the youth group's impact on them morally. She concluded that more research needs to be done on this topic

⁶³ Ibid., 163.

⁶⁴ Patricia Snell, "What Difference Does Youth Group Make? A Longitudinal Analysis of Religious Youth Group Participation Outcomes," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 48, no. 3 (2009): 572.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 574.

as it relates to the effects on newcomers and lifetime participants and “the possibility of interaction effects between youth participation and friend networks.”⁶⁶ The problem with this article is that the details of the program the youth group was utilizing were not discussed. Perhaps the issue may not be the young people's age group but the youth program's style and content. The youth curriculum might not be effective enough to have a positive moral influence on young people. Therefore, the researcher will adopt a Christ-centered youth program for the young people of GCC.

There are articles that expose the notion that there are challenges within youth ministry. In their book *You Lost Me*, Kinnaman and Hawkins addressed the states of young people who were once believers and had since left the church due to their disconnection. The authors of this book were trying to understand why these young people left the church and Christianity. They wanted to voice their concerns, hopes, delusion, frustration, and disappointment. This research will address their perception of the church. The church can impact the youth positively. However, they felt the church had failed them because it did not correctly address their delusion and confusion.⁶⁷ This book also provided an area where the Church failed to connect with the young. The practical steps that need to be taken to resolve that problem will lead to their reconnection to God and the church.⁶⁸ This book has influenced the researcher by highlighting the need to explore the specific context of young people and better understand why they are leaving. The researcher examined if the dropouts of young Haitian believers who participated in

⁶⁶ Ibid., 586.

⁶⁷ David Kinnaman and Aly Hawkins, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church... and Rethinking Faith*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011). 8.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 145.

the research shared the same concerns as the young people who participated in this book's research.

Literature reveals that there is a need to teach sound theology within youth ministry. Dean Borgman is the author of the book entitled *Foundations for Youth Ministry*. He is an advocate who promotes the implementation of theology in the youth ministry. This book does not start with the youth ministry, but it begins with God Himself, who, in His grace, calls humans to participate in His redemptive works.⁶⁹ Youth leaders should present the word of God with a proper interpretation.⁷⁰ There are two significant contributions that this book brings to the paper. First, a healthy youth ministry requires leaders grounded in the sound doctrine of the Word of God. Second, youth ministry will not be fruitful apart from a Christ-centered approach. However, this approach was not fully developed.

Literature provides an awareness that there are ethnicity differences that need to be overcome. According to a Barna Group study, there is a difference between black, white, and Spanish teens. They have different perspectives and positions when it comes to their faith. Studies show that more black and Hispanic teenagers are impoverished than white teenagers.⁷¹ However, the same research shows that white teenagers are less interested in their faith than the other two groups. This finding shows some inconsistencies with Snell's conclusion that revealed youth in lack would be less likely to participate in a religious youth group.⁷² Understanding how

⁶⁹ Dean Borgman, *Foundations for Youth Ministry: Theological Engagement with Teen Life and Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 3.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁷¹ George Barna, *Real Teens: A Contemporary Snapshot of Youth Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001), 69.

⁷² Snell, "What Difference Does Youth Group Make," 572.

race plays a significant role in teenagers' beliefs, can help youth leaders take specific steps to reach out to each group accordingly.

There is not much research done on Christian athletes.⁷³ Many researchers advocate that Christians should not be involved in contemporary competitive sports because these games focus more on performance than health.⁷⁴ Jennifer Livingston is the author of the article “Competitive Youth Athletes: Are They Choosing between God and Sports?” She advocates that although competitive youth athletes often must skip church services, their lack of church attendance does not hinder them from growing in their faith. Thus, “church attendance does not make a difference in a child's measured level of religiosity and spirituality.”⁷⁵ Another study showed the more religious adolescents were not necessarily attending more church services but had a great understanding of the importance of faith in their lives.⁷⁶ Thus, So, Christian athletes are uniquely positioned to develop spiritual virtues as they practice and compete in their sports. According to M. W. Austin, “Sports actually provide Christian athletes with unique situations to practice spiritual disciplines, gain courage through risk-taking, increase in humility through failure, and grow in perseverance during losing seasons or games.”⁷⁷

⁷³ M. Hoven, “Faith Informing Competitive Youth Athletes in Christian Schooling,” *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 25, no. 3 (2016): 273, doi:10.1080/10656219.2016.1237909.

⁷⁴ J. L. Sinden, “The Elite Sport and Christianity Debate: Shifting Focus from Normative Values to the Conscious Disregard for Health,” *Journal of Religion and Health* 52 (2013): 335, doi:10.1007/s10943-012-9595-8.

⁷⁵ Jennifer Livingston, “Competitive Youth Athletes: Are They Choosing between God and Sports?” *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* 25, no. 1 (2020): 51.

⁷⁶ J. H. Hardie, L. D. Pearce, and M. L. Denton, “The Dynamics and Correlates of Religious Service Attendance in Adolescence,” *Youth & Society* 48, no. 2 (2016): 151.

⁷⁷ M. W. Austin, “Sports as Exercises in Spiritual Formation,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 3, no. 1 (2010): 66.

In addition, Christian athletes have the excellent opportunity to share their faith with a greater audience.⁷⁸ The church should encourage the youth to use their faith at church and in all aspects of life.⁷⁹ Youth parents should help the youth to maintain an unwavering faith in God regardless of the changing circumstances in family life.⁸⁰ Jennifer Livingston's findings concerning competitive youth athletes are significant in that even the apostle Paul repeatedly uses the metaphors of an athlete to illustrate the Christian life (1 Cor. 9:24; 2 Tim. 2:5; Phil. 3:14).⁸¹ However, this should not be an excuse for a Christian athlete to be inconsistent in church attendance. The word of God encourages the believers to be consistent in their church attendance to become mature in Christ and help other believers to do the same (Eph. 4:11-15; Heb. 10:25).

Another obstacle youth ministry has to overcome is the lack of both parents in the home. According to Hyunok Yi and Malan Nel, father-absent youth negatively affect their relationship with God as their heavenly Father and keep them from reaching their pastors at church.⁸² Adolescents without a father figure may struggle to understand the role of God as their heavenly Father. When the youth have a prior healthy experience with a good father figure or a mentor, it helps them experience the love and closeness of God.

⁷⁸ J. Bailey, "Christian Coaches Face off for Super Bowl XLI," *Christianity Today* February 2, 2007.

⁷⁹ J. Gale, "The Church that Is, Not Just the Place Where," *Missio Apostolica* 21, no. 1 (2013): 133.

⁸⁰ D. C. Dollahite et al., "Beyond Religious Rigidities: Religious Firmness and Religious Flexibility as Complementary Loyalties in Faith Transmission," *Religions* 10, no. 2 (2019): 111.

⁸¹ Jennifer Livingston, "Competitive Youth Athletes: Are They Choosing Between God and Sports?" *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* 25, no. 1 (2020): 51-63.

⁸² Hyunok Yi and Malan Nel, "Father Absence and Adolescents as a Challenge to Youth Ministry," *In Die Skriflig* 54, no. 1 (2020): 3.

However, abused adolescents will have difficulties experiencing God's tenderness.⁸³ According to Andrew Root, "Empathy is a feeling which touches relationships that give rise to people and a reflex to build new relationships."⁸⁴ The more the youth develop a strong relationship with their parents, the better they will be able to develop a strong relationship with others. In addition, there will be conflict between the parent and the youth, but the skill of conflict management can be developed in the quality of communication and the degree of closeness between the parents and the youth.⁸⁵ Thus, the spiritual support of parents to their children will strengthen the children's faith.⁸⁶ If the family of God, the church of Christ, is willing to help the young people, they will be able to find a safe place in the church of Christ and get the support that they need to grow in their walk with God because they are an integral part of the body of Christ.⁸⁷ The church becomes their new family, which testifies to their identity as children of God and believers within the faith community.⁸⁸ Therefore, the lack of parental support and a father figure allows the church to mentor these young people and significantly contribute to their spiritual development.⁸⁹

⁸³ J. Meyer, "Restructuring the Christian Fatherhood Model: A Practical Theological Investigation into the Male Problematic of Father Absence," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 74, no. 1 (2018): 48-70.

⁸⁴ Andrew Root, *The Relational Pastor: Sharing in Christ by Sharing Ourselves* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 91.

⁸⁵ K. R. Bush and G. W. Peterson, "Parent-child Relationships in Diverse Contexts," in *Handbook of Marriage and the Family*, 3rd ed. In G.W. Peterson and K. R. Bush (Eds), (New York, NY: Springer, 2013), 277.

⁸⁶ A. C. Schulze, "Key Factors of Faith Development: The Relationship between Family and Church Factors and Faith Development of Adolescents and Young Adults in German-speaking Europe" (PhD diss., Andrew University, School of Education, 2012), 92.

⁸⁷ M. Nel, "Youth Ministry: An Inclusive Missional Approach," *HTS Religion & Society* 1 (2018): 258.

⁸⁸ R. Stinson and T. P. Jones, eds., *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry on Theological, Historical and Practical Perspectives* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2011), 262.

⁸⁹ J. Lanker and K. Issler, "The Family of Faith: The Place of Natural Mentoring in the Church's Christian Formation of Adolescents," *Christian Education Journal* 7, no. 2 (2010): 269.

This article will contribute significantly to this paper in that it stresses the importance of mentoring young people even if their parents fail to do it.

Furthermore, there are other situations that are not favorable to the spiritual growth of young people. One of these predicaments is the case of the religiously heterogamous parents. According to Brian McPhail, young people who are raised with parents who are religiously heterogamous are likely to become less religious.⁹⁰ He stated that:

To explain the mechanism by which religious beliefs, values, and behaviors are transmitted, reinforced, and reproduced across generations, several major theoretical explanations exist in the literature on religious socialization: (1) Parents model religion that their children imitate, (2) parents channel their children into religious institutions, environments, and social networks where religion is reinforced, and (3) positive affective relationships between parents and children facilitate religious inheritance.⁹¹

Parents are the most significant authority in building up the spiritual lives of their children both during youth and adulthood.⁹² However, religious heterogamy can be a major obstacle to the spiritual growth of the whole family. Religious heterogamy occurs when one spouse does not identify with the same faith or religion as the other spouse. It is also the case when spouses practice two different Protestant denominations.⁹³

In comparing religiously homogamous spouses and parents, religiously heterogamous spouses and parents negatively impact their children's religiosity even more.⁹⁴ Pew study showed that religion is less likely to be promoted at home in heterogamous families and spiritual

⁹⁰ Brian L. McPhail, "Religious Heterogamy and the Intergenerational Transmission of Religion: A Cross-National Analysis," *Religions* 10, no. 2 (2019): 1.

⁹¹ McPhail, "Religious Heterogamy and the Intergenerational Transmission of Religion," 3.

⁹² Melinda Lundquist Denton and Julian Culver, "Family Disruption and Racial Variation in Adolescent and Emerging Adult Religiosity," *Sociology of Religion*; Washington 76 (2015): 223.

⁹³ Richard J. Petts and Chris Knoester, "Parents' Religious Heterogamy and Children's Well-Being," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 46 (2007): 375.

⁹⁴ Vern L. Bengtson, *Families and Faith: How Religion Is Passed down across Generations* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013), 175.

activities like prayer and Scripture reading are less likely to happen consistently. Even children are less likely to be sent to participate in religious education activities or school.⁹⁵ Interreligious couples are less likely to experience marital stability.⁹⁶ Parents who experience greater happiness tend to lead their children into greater spirituality and religiosity.⁹⁷ The above articles are significant for the current study because it will help the researcher be more aware of how to address heterogamous parents if he encounters them.

Literature shows that current youth ministry is different from years past. According to Jacob Dunlow, most churches use a form of online worship, but half of them questioned its effectiveness in reaching out to people for God.⁹⁸ Due to the recent COVID-19 pandemic, the church started to use technology to minister to their members. Most Protestant churches in the United States of America were attempting to adapt to digital and online services during this pandemic.⁹⁹ To reach out to young people, the churches and the youth ministry leaders started using platforms like Zoom, YouTube Premier, TikTok, and many other social media platforms.¹⁰⁰ During the pandemic, most people were forced to stay home, and they spent most of their time online. The church needed to be strategic in reaching out to these people.¹⁰¹ As a

⁹⁵ Pew Research Center, *One-in-Five U.S. Adults Were Raised in Interfaith Homes* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2016), 12.

⁹⁶ David M. Wright, Michael Rosato, and Dermot O'Reilly, "Influence of Heterogamy by Religion on Risk of Marital Dissolution: A Cohort Study of 20,000 Couples," *European Journal of Population* 33 (2017): 89.

⁹⁷ Casey Copen and Merrill Silverstein, "Transmission of Religious Beliefs Across Generations: Do Grandparents Matter?" *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 38 (2007): 497–510.

⁹⁸ J. Dunlow, "Digital Discipleship: A Study of How Churches in New York Used Technology for Adult Discipleship During the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Christian Education Journal* 18, no. 3 (2021): 460.

⁹⁹ A. Earls, "Few Churches Gathered, More Moved Online in April," *Facts and Trends*, May 2020.

¹⁰⁰ M. G. Brown, "Youth Ministry and Crisis," *Christian Education Journal* 18, no. 3 (2021): 445.

¹⁰¹ John Koetsier, "Global Online Content Consumption Doubled in 2020," *Forbes*, Sept. 26, 2020.

result, digital discipleship has become prominent in Protestant churches.¹⁰² Many believe the church should embrace the digital world and use it as a platform for spiritual formation.¹⁰³ Therefore, the digital platforms will be utilized to strictly share the gospel of Jesus with others, praying for one another, sharing thoughts and concerns, sending thoughtful posts that may encourage others in their walk with God, and modeling one's spiritual life in the digital realm.¹⁰⁴ It may be convenient to use digital technologies to reach out to young people for Christ, but as J. Smith points out, “Digital technologies are not a net neutral, and they do have a forming effect on the user.”¹⁰⁵ The truth is that Jesus Christ commissioned His church to make disciples (Matt. 28:18-20), which involves preaching, teaching, and mentoring people of all ages.¹⁰⁶ Therefore, despite the roadblocks of using digital technologies, the church can safely use them to create a healthy online community that fosters transformational relationships between students and teachers, students and content, and students and students.¹⁰⁷ The above articles on digital discipleship will contribute significantly to this research paper by informing the researcher about the importance of using digital technologies for the youth of Great Commission Church. Due to

¹⁰² M. Williams, “Community, Discipleship, and Social Media,” *Christian Education Journal* 12, no. 2 (2015): 375.

¹⁰³ H. Campbell and S. Garner, *Networked Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2016), 25.

¹⁰⁴ J. Hunt, “The Digital Way: Re-imagining Digital Discipleship in the Age of Social Media,” *Journal of Youth and Theology* 18, no. 2 (2019): 91–112.

¹⁰⁵ J. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2013), 40.

¹⁰⁶ W. Cox, Jr., and R. A. Peck, “Christian Education as Discipleship Formation,” *Christian Education Journal* 15, no. 2 (2018): 243–261.

¹⁰⁷ K. Ferguson, *Excellence in Online Education* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2020), 10.

the pandemic, the researcher will use an online platform, Zoom, to execute the youth spiritual program.

In summary, this literature review aimed to explore, analyze, and synthesize existing literature on youth ministry in the church. This review provided insight for approaching youth ministry from various perspectives. The researcher selected and utilized for this paper, sources that focused on the following subjects: the influence of the youth in the church, the impact of the youth group on younger youth, the failure of the church to address the youth and their confusion about the church effectively, the importance of sound doctrine in the spiritual growth of young people, the significance of ministering to the youth in their unique context, the powerful impact of parents in their children spiritual lives and the necessity to embrace digital discipleship for the youth ministry.

Young people will ultimately have a significant influence on the church because they are the ones who will replace the passing generation. The church needs to strategically and effectively pass on the baton of the gospel to the youth to guarantee a successful proclamation of the gospel from one generation to the other. Thus, if the youth are confused about the church's role, they will not be prepared to embrace its vision and objective. The church leaders must be willing to address the youth's confusion at all costs. Therefore, the youth need to be trained and well-equipped in the sound doctrine of Scripture. Youth leaders should not be responsible for running entertaining programs that cannot transform the youth's lives, but they must be ministers and promoters of the word of God. When the youth start to understand their identity in Christ Jesus and be grounded in it, they will become mature in Christ and be ready to make an impact for Him on others.

Moreover, church leaders must seek to understand the youth's unique context as they minister to the youth. A young person's interest tends to differ from an adults. Understanding youth, becomes a unique context that will open the door for the church to minister to them effectively. In addition, parents play a critical role in the growth of their children's spiritual lives. Parents should be their children's primary disciples and makers, teaching them how to live for God. Furthermore, digital discipleship must be at the forefront of the church's strategy to reach out and teach young people the word of God. Young people tend to be acquainted with technology.

Finally, the sources utilized in this review literature were intended to help the researcher focus on a Christ-centered approach to youth ministry. Some of these sources were not current existing literature on the topic. However, there is much current literature on youth ministries that the researcher did not use due to the length and the revolution of the research. By using this current piece of literature, future studies can be done on the topic of youth ministry to understand the Christ-centered approach to youth ministry in the context of the Haitian community.

In conclusion, all the sources will tremendously contribute to this research. These sources will help set the stage for this paper to focus on investing in a healthy youth ministry in Great Commission Church. Some articles address a secular understanding of the factors influencing youth religiosity, like sports. Others focus on how the frustration of the youth contributes to their disconnection from the church and how sound theology is indispensable for effective youth ministry. In addition, some sources relate to how parents, mentoring, fathers, church leaders, and the body of Christ can play a role in young people's faith. Only the redemptive work of Christ in the lives of youth and the power of the Holy Spirit can transform youth and, in turn, help them to become agents of transformation.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

In Chapter 1, the researcher presented the problem that needed to be addressed, the purpose of this research, and the objective for this research. In Chapter 2, the background of this research was explored. It was surveyed by reviewing a plethora of literature on the topic of young people within the church. In this chapter, the researcher explores how the problem presented is being addressed. This chapter attempts to thoroughly explain the researcher's framework and process for this study. The results of this research are discussed in detail at the end of this chapter. First, the researcher describes this study's intervention design, which addresses the ministry context problem of the youth at GCC, and the research questions mentioned previously in Chapter 1. Second, the researcher provides a narrative of the intervention design implementation and data collection.

Intervention Design

The researcher previously mentioned in chapter 1 that the youth of GCC in Queens, between the ages of 10-30 years old, do not regularly attend church nor are able to establish a stable youth ministry that will help them to grow in their spiritual life. Therefore, the researcher aimed to develop and implement strategies and approaches to help establish a stable and transformational youth ministry at GCC in Queens, which will help young people remain at GCC and thrive in their spiritual lives. Ultimately, the researcher will implement a spiritual program that includes six key influencing factors for spiritual growth: discipleship, mentoring, parental influence, church attendance, personal devotion, and ministerial involvement to help reboot and reestablish the youth ministry at GCC.

This study hypothesized that if the six influencing factors for spiritual growth are implemented in a spiritual program for young people of GCC, they will help them to attend and remain at church, urging them to develop personal spiritual disciplines that will help them to thrive in their spiritual lives and create a path for them to be more engaged in various ministries at GCC.

Ethical Issues

One of the tasks of this researcher is to be prepared to address the multiple ethical issues that may arise. One way that ethical issues develop is through a notion called person-centeredness. The concept of person-centeredness promotes an understanding that each individual is who they are and the need to respect others. It is by this notion that this research process will take place.¹⁰⁸ According to M. Ariel Cascio and Eric Racine, person-centeredness is the precursor of all person-oriented research.¹⁰⁹ One of the significant components of person-centeredness is respect for holistic personhood in that the participants have the right to make decisions for their lives as a whole: socially, spiritually, and psychologically.¹¹⁰ In addition, according to Judy Allen and Beverly McNamara, in common research ethic guidance, autonomous participants are those who make individual, independent, rational decisions.¹¹¹ The ethical premise of this research is that each participant has the freedom to be themselves.

¹⁰⁸ R. G. Kost et al., "Assessing Participant-centered Outcomes to Improve Clinical Research," *New England Journal of Medicine* 369, no. 23 (2013): 2179–2181.

¹⁰⁹ M. Ariel Cascio and Eric Racine, "Person-oriented Research Ethics: Integrating Relational and Everyday Ethics in Research," *Accountability in Research* 25, no. 3 (2018): 175.

¹¹⁰ S. Morgan and L. H. Yoder, "A Concept Analysis of Person-centered Care," *Journal of Holistic Nursing* 30, no. 1 (2012): 7.

¹¹¹ Judy Allen and Beverly McNamara, "Reconsidering the Value of Consent in Biobank Research," *Bioethics* 25, no. 3 (2011): 161.

The researcher wants to concede that the purpose of this project is to allow the participants' respond in a manner without stigmatizing their opinions.¹¹² Moreover, a significant focus on the side of the ethical issue is that this research will hopefully create a relationship between the researcher and the participants. Thoughtfulness to the relationship between the researcher and the participants involves building and maintaining trust throughout the research process.¹¹³ The researcher must empower the participants to make final decisions without manipulation. In choosing whether the person will participate in the research, the person should realize that the ultimate decision of the participants and the researcher must play a role in empowering it.¹¹⁴

Throughout the research process, the researcher will prioritize understanding the participants for who they are. Regardless of age, the research will pay attention to their context. No one will be forced or manipulated to participate in this study. Before seeking parental consent, even those who are minors must be willing to participate freely. If participants are not allowed to freely contribute, then this research is futile. But if the contributors are able to free contribute, then they will be able to take ownership of this research. After agreeing to be part of the study, participants will still have the right to continue or discontinue at any time during the research.

Intervention Process

¹¹² D. Khodyakov et al., "On Using Ethical Principles of Community-engaged Research in Translational Science," *Translational Research* 171, no. 52 (2016): .

¹¹³ G. Anderson and M. V. Rorty, "Key Points for Developing an International Declaration on Nursing, Human Rights, Human Genetics and Public Health Policy," *Nursing Ethics* 8, no. 3 (2001): 259.

¹¹⁴ K. Björnsdóttir, G. V. Stefánsdóttir, and Á. Stefánsdóttir, "'It's My Life': Autonomy and People with Intellectual Disabilities," *Journal of Intellectual Disabilities* 19, no. 1 (2014): 6.

The researcher used a mixed-method approach, a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches, to gather the data. In the qualitative approach, the researcher used interviews to gather the data while using a 25-question questionnaire. These questions are compiled to provide the quantitative aspect of this research. In addition, the researcher used a convenient sampling strategy to recruit young people to fill out the questionnaire. There were forty-three young people from GCC and two other Haitian Baptist churches who completed the questionnaire. The youth ministry program was designed only for the young people of GCC. Ten young people from GCC were part of the youth ministry program. In addition, seven young people consented to participate in an interview. The researcher invited two other youth ministries from two different Haitian Churches to understand better how young Haitian believers perceive the role of the church's attendance, the church leadership, and their parents in their spiritual life.

The youth ministry program will last for four weeks. The theme of this program is your identity in Christ. It is based on the book of Ephesians. There were six expectations that participants were to complete throughout the program:

- First, it involved a program of daily reading from the book of Ephesians.
- Second, a list of 30 Bible verses about the young person's identity in Christ from Ephesians 1-3 was included. The participants were to memorize and confess them daily.
- Third, participants had to create time to pray and journal what they learned from their daily reading for at least 15 minutes.
- Fourth, participants had to create three small groups. Thrice a week, they met on the phone and shared what they learned from their experience.
- Fifth, the parents were responsible for encouraging their children to complete the weekly activities, observe their spiritual progress, and give feedback on their children's progress.
- Sixth, the young people had to meet on a Zoom platform weekly to discuss the spiritual lessons they had learned from each week.

To move the study forward, the researcher recruited young people from three Haitian Baptist churches in Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx, three of the five boroughs of New York City. The researcher did not mention the names of the young people who participated in this research. All

the young people met the following criteria: they were part of the youth groups of these three Haitian Baptist churches and were 10-30 years old. A total of forty-three young people who participated were willing to answer the 25-question questionnaire. Five of them volunteered to be part of an interview. The youth of GCC are not numerous. The program was done with ten young people from GCC in Queens.

Qualitative Research

The researcher interviewed four youths from GCC and one from First Haitian Baptist Church of Canarsie. The questions of these interviews were open-ended to allow the participants to express their opinions and perspectives. The researcher recorded these interviews using an Android phone to support the accuracy and transcription of the data.

Interview Questions

- A. In your opinion, what should be the role of a youth ministry in a church?
- B. In what way should the church be involved in the youth ministry?
- C. In what way should the youth be involved in the church?
- D. In your opinion, why is the youth attendance declining in the church?
- E. What can the church do to help address and solve this decline?
- F. How can the leaders of the church contribute to the improvement of the youth ministry?
- G. Do you have any other recommendations to the leaders concerning the church's operation?
- H. What is your understanding of a modern and a traditional church?
- I. What should be the purpose of a church?

Quantitative Research

The questionnaire was composed of twenty-five questions with multiple choices. The questions were closed-ended and designed to help the researcher understand the degree of the commitment of the young people in church attendance, youth ministry attendance, and their relationship with God. These questions were also intended to measure the church's influence on their parents in their spiritual life. Forty-three young people willingly consented to fill out this survey. The researcher went to the First Haitian Baptist Church of Canarsie in Brooklyn and the Haitian Community Baptist Church in the Bronx to distribute and collect these surveys.

Questionnaire

1. Which of the following age group do you belong to?
 - a) 10-13
 - b) 14-18
 - c) 18-25
 - d) 25-30
2. Have you been raised in a Christian family?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
3. How long have you been attending church?
 - a) 0-6 months
 - b) 6 months-1 year
 - c) 1-2 years
 - d) 2-4 years
 - e) 4-6 years
 - f) 6-8 years
4. How regularly do you attend church service on Sundays?
 - a) Never
 - b) Seldom
 - c) Sometimes
 - d) Often
 - e) Always
5. How regularly do you attend youth activities?
 - a) Never
 - b) Seldom
 - c) Sometimes
 - d) Often
 - e) Always

6. The church services help you grow closer to God.
 - a) Strongly disagree
 - b) Disagree
 - c) Neutral
 - d) Agree
 - e) Strongly agree
7. The youth services help you grow closer to God.
 - a) Strongly disagree
 - b) Disagree
 - c) Neutral
 - d) Agree
 - e) Strongly agree
8. Did you take part in a discipleship class?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
9. Did you have a close mentor at the church?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
10. Do you consider yourself as the future of the church?
 - a) Strongly disagree
 - b) Disagree
 - c) Neutral
 - d) Agree
 - e) Strongly agree
11. Do you feel like the church is taking you seriously?
 - a) Strongly disagree
 - b) Disagree
 - c) Neutral
 - d) Agree
 - e) Strongly agree
12. How satisfied are you in the way the church is currently operating?
 - a) Strong dissatisfied
 - b) Dissatisfied
 - c) Neutral
 - d) Satisfied
 - e) Strongly satisfied
13. Do you feel like you belong in the church?
 - a) Strongly disagree
 - b) Disagree
 - c) Neutral
 - d) Agree
 - e) Strongly agree

14. Are you involved in a ministry of the church apart from the youth ministry?
a) Yes
b) No
15. Do you attend church to please your parents?
a) Yes
b) No
16. Do your parents impact you positively in your relationship with God?
a) Strongly disagree
b) Disagree
c) Neutral
d) Agree
e) Strongly agree
17. How satisfied are you with the church's service?
a) Strong dissatisfied
b) Dissatisfied
c) Neutral
d) Satisfied
e) Strongly satisfied
18. Do you understand everything that happens in the church's service?
a) Yes
b) No
19. Is the language barrier an obstacle from understanding the church's service?
a) Yes
b) No
20. Should the church have a separate service for the youth?
a) Strongly disagree
b) Disagree
c) Neutral
d) Agree
e) Strongly agree
21. Do you practice a daily personal devotion (Bible reading, prayer, meditation, and the like)?
a) Yes
b) No
22. If yes, how satisfied are you with it?
a) Strong dissatisfied
b) Dissatisfied
c) Neutral
d) Satisfied
e) Strongly satisfied
23. Which of the following can best describe your church?
a) Modern
b) Traditional

- c) Both Modern and traditional
24. Which of the following would you prefer your church to be?
- a) Modern
 - b) Traditional
 - c) Both Modern and traditional
25. How many times do you participate in church activities or ministry a week?
- a) None
 - b) Once a week
 - c) Twice a week
 - d) Thrice a week
 - e) Four times a week
 - f) Every day of the week

Before distributing the surveys, interview questions, permission request letters, and recruitment letters, the researcher sought the approval of all these documents from the Liberty University Institution Review Board (IRB). First, the researcher had to complete the required CITI training. The researcher had to select the type of Human Subjects Research for the School of Divinity, the Social and Behavioral Researchers. The IRB application was submitted on February 16, 2021. On the afternoon of March 9, 2021, the documents were approved, and the researcher was permitted to proceed with the research. Subsequently, the researcher contacted the pastors of the Haitian Baptist Church in Brooklyn and the Bronx. He verbally explained to them the purpose of the research and the content of the questionnaires that the youth of their congregation would fill out. The researcher also wrote a permission letter for both pastors.

The pastor of the Haitian Baptist church in the Bronx invited the researcher to a Sunday worship service to recruit young people who would volunteer to participate in this research. On March 21, 2021, the researcher participated in a Sunday morning service in the Bronx at Haitian Community Baptist Church. At the end of the service, the lead pastor of this church advised the young people who volunteered to stay at the congregation for a few minutes to fill out a questionnaire consisting of twenty-five questions. The researcher had a hard copy of the survey, and nineteen young people consented to fill out this survey on that day. The researcher sought

parental consent for minors less than 18 years old. The researcher also wrote and distributed a parental consent letter to the parents.

The pastor of the Haitian Baptist church in Brooklyn invited the researcher to address the youth of the First Haitian Baptist Church of Canarsie. On April 25, 2021, the researcher utilized the convenient sampling strategy to reach this church's young people. Fifteen young people volunteered to participate and fill out a survey of twenty-five questions. For those who were minors, the researcher sought parental consent.

The researcher is the church pastor in Queens, the Great Commission Church. He sought parental consent for those who were less than 18 years old. He also invited the young people of GCC to fill out a questionnaire of twenty-five questions. Thirteen young people were willing to fill out this questionnaire. On May 23, 2021, the researcher obtained these questionnaires.

The youth spiritual program was scheduled to start on June 6, 2021. However, due to some inconveniences, it was postponed. The new date was September 5, 2021, to October 4, 2021. Eventually, three young people from GCC could not be part of the spiritual program for personal reasons. Table 1 displays the timeline of tasks to accomplish in preparation for the youth spiritual program.

Timeline	Tasks to Accomplish
February 16 th 2021	The submission of the Institution Review Board IRB Application
March 9 th 2021	The Institution Review Board application was approved
March 21 th 2021	Collection of the survey hard copy survey at the Haitian Community Baptist Church in the Bronx
April 25 th 2021	Collection of the survey hard copy at the First Haitian Baptist of Canarsie in Brooklyn
May 23 th 2021	Collection of the survey hard copy at Great Commission Church in Queens
May 30 th 2021	The interviews of the selected participants were conducted

June 6 th 2021	Projected youth spiritual program postponed
September 5 th – October 4 th 2022	The implementation of the Youth spiritual program for Great Commission church young people

Table 1. Timeline of tasks to accomplish in preparation for youth spiritual program.

Selection of the Materials discussed throughout the Youth Spiritual Program

The researcher will utilize the book of Ephesians and will focus on the believer's identity in Christ. Rikard Roitto states, “Ephesians expresses the relation between identity as Christ-believer and behavior norms in a most elaborate way.”¹¹⁵ The youth spiritual program is designed to be a Christ-centered spiritual activity. The youth of GCC need to understand their identity in Christ and grow in it. The book of Ephesians is one of the books in the Bible to focus on the oneness of believers with Christ extensively, and the researcher was compelled to use it for the youth spiritual program. The message of the cross is the preaching that can set people free. The work of Jesus Christ on the cross needs to be promoted so that believers may know and be convinced of all the spiritual benefits that are theirs. C. J. Mahaney understood the significance of the message of the cross in the lives of young people. He states, “This is what I hold out to my young son as the hope of his life: that Jesus, God’s perfect, righteous Son, died in his place for his sins. Jesus took all the punishment; Jesus received all the wrath as he hung on the cross, so people like Chad and his sinful daddy could be completely forgiven.”¹¹⁶ Young people must be more aware, convinced, and transformed through their identity in Christ.

¹¹⁵ Rikard Roitto, *Behaving as a Christ-Believer: A Cognitive Perspective on Identity and Behavior Norms in Ephesians* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 2.

¹¹⁶ C. J. Mahaney, *Living the Cross-Centered Life: Keeping the Gospel the Main Thing* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2006), 29-30.

The book of the Ephesians could have been written for a modern church and may be the most significant document in history.¹¹⁷ The book of Ephesians has a message that can help a contemporary and modern church. It is also significant because the spiritual program is designed for young people. The spiritual lessons found in the book of Ephesians about the church and the identity of the believers are relevant to them. Furthermore, the epistle of Ephesians provides valuable lessons to help address fundamental questions concerning believers as Christians. Tony Merida stated to support this previous thought, “It is a mini theological book every Christian would benefit from studying. Non-Christians, particularly those interested enough to learn what Christians believe, would also benefit from a study of Ephesians.”¹¹⁸ Some young people attend church but do not understand the gospel's message and commit their lives to Christ as their Savior and Lord. Studying the book of Ephesians with the youth of GCC becomes an opportunity to explore the basics of the Christian life, with opportunities for them to commit their lives to Christ if it was not previously done.

Throughout the book of Ephesians, the apostle Paul has mentioned the phrase “in Christ” several times, which is deemed to be the critical thought of the book.¹¹⁹ This phrase is a reminder that the walk with God is not about becoming religious and following a particular list of rules and regulations or becoming a nice person but about becoming a new person that God already created for the believers in Christ.¹²⁰ One major part of the youth program is to help the young

¹¹⁷ Klyne Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 17.

¹¹⁸ Tony Merida, *Exalting Jesus in Ephesians*, ed. David Platt and Daniel L. Akin, (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2014), 9, ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

know and understand the meaning behind the verses in Ephesians that mention the phrase “in Christ.” A list of these verses is mentioned at the end of this chapter.

The researcher will use the book of Ephesians because it is not difficult to read. It will take someone about twenty minutes to orally read the book.¹²¹ The abundance of truths in the book of Ephesians can help reboot the spiritual lives of the youth of GCC in Christ. The book stressed the importance of understanding the believers as the body of Christ and God’s household. Thus, believers are not born again in isolation. They are born into the family of God. Merida states, “The church is a family, living life together on mission. Be careful not to treat the church as a hotel--visiting a place occasionally, giving tips if you are served well. Rather, see the church as part of your Christian identity and understand that we all have a role in God's household.”¹²² If the youth of GCC understand their true identity and the authentic definition of the church, it will help them create time to consistently attend church services and use them as an opportunity to grow in their identity in Christ and to influence others for Him positively.

Implementation of the Intervention Design

Spiritual program for youth of GCC September 5 – October 3, 2021

The Youth of Great Commission Church had a daily scripture reading and a spiritual activity to complete that consisted of two questions. These questions were related to their daily reading of Ephesians. The reading covers Ephesians 1:1 to Ephesians 4:16. The rundown of the Scripture reading for seven days is below. In addition, they must create time to pray for at least ten minutes.

Week 1

¹²¹ Merida, *Exalting Jesus in Ephesians*, 8.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 55.

Day 1 - Ephesians 1:1-14

Day 2 - Ephesians 1:15-23

Day 3 - Ephesians 2:1-10

Day 4 - Ephesians 2: 11-22

Day 5 - Ephesians 3: 1-13

Day 6 - Ephesians 3:14-21

Day 7 - Ephesians 4: 1-16

- Question 1 – How often is the expression "in Him" or "in Christ" repeated in chapters 1-4? Make a list for all four chapters.
- Question 2 – Identify a theme each time you see "in him" or "in Christ" and apply it in your life.

On September 11, from 8:00 pm-9:00 pm, in a Zoom meeting, the GCC youth gathered to ask questions on their scripture readings, share spiritual lessons they had learned from this week, and pray together. Three people in this youth group could not complete their spiritual activities for this week. They claimed to have forgotten to do it. Week 1's daily confessions are recorded in Table 2.

Scripture on Ephesians	Daily Personalized Confession
Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God. To the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus. (1:1)	I am a saint and faithful in Christ.
Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. (1:3)	I am blessed with every blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.

Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. (1:4)	I am chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world.
In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will. (1:5)	I am predestined to be adopted as children.
In him we have redemption through his blood, ... (1:7a)	I am redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ.
... the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace. (1:7b)	I am forgiven by the grace of God.
which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight (1:8)	I am a recipient of the wisdom and insight of God.

Table 2. Daily Confessions on Identity in Christ for Week 1.

Week 2

For the week of September 12 to September 18, the youth of GCC had a daily Scripture reading and a spiritual activity to complete that consisted of two questions to answer. These questions were related to their daily reading of Ephesians. This reading covers Ephesians 4:17 to Ephesians 6:24.

Day 8 - Ephesians 4:17-32

Day 9 - Ephesians 5:1-7

Day 10- Ephesians 5:8-21

Day 11- Ephesians 5:22-33

Day 12- Ephesians 6:1-9

Day 13- Ephesians 6:10-20

Day 14- Ephesians 6:21-24

- Question 1 – What are the things you are thinking about throughout your whole day? Are they positive, negative, harmful, or Christlike?
- Question 2 – Try to replace any negative or evil thoughts with the statement of your identity in Christ. Ask yourself which one applies to my current situation.

On September 18, from 8:00 pm-9:00 pm, in a Zoom meeting, the GCC youth gathered to ask questions on their Scripture readings, share spiritual lessons they had learned from this week, and pray together. This week, no one completed the entire reading. Most people claimed to do only half of their spiritual activities for this week. Two people in the youth group completed the whole activity.

Scripture on Ephesians	Daily Personalized Confession
Making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ. (1:9)	I have the knowledge of the mystery of God's will.
Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. (1:3)	I possess God's inheritance.
In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, (1:13)	I am sealed by the Holy Spirit.
And raised us up with him (2:6a)	I am raised up with Jesus by God's grace.
And seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. (2:6b)	I am seated with Christ in the heavenly places.
For by grace, you have been saved through faith.	I am saved by grace.

And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, (2:8)

For we are his workmanship, (2:10a)	I am God's workmanship.
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Table 3. Daily Confessions on Identity in Christ for Week 2.

Week 3

For the week of September 19 to September 25, 2021, the Great Commission Church youth completed Ephesians' book. Those who did not complete it had to focus on catching up. They also had to listen to the whole book of Ephesians all at once through Bible App software to have a big picture of the book. They also had to complete a spiritual activity that consisted of two questions. These questions were related to their daily reading of Ephesians chapter 6.

- Question 1 – Ephesians 6 lists the whole armor of God separately.
- Question 2 – List each topic related to each armor and see how you apply them in your life this week.

On September 25, 2021, from 8:00 pm-9:00 pm, in a Zoom meeting, the GCC youth gathered to ask questions on their Scripture readings, share spiritual lessons they had learned from this week, and pray together. This week, no one completed the entire reading. Most people claimed to do only half of their spiritual activities for this week. Two people in the youth group completed the whole activity.

Scripture on Ephesians

Daily Personalized Confession

Created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (2:10b)	I am created in Christ for good works.
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This mystery is that the	I am a partaker of the promises in Jesus Christ.
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Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. (3:6)	
in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. (3:12)	I have boldness and access with confidence through my faith in Him.
But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ (2:13)	I have been brought near by the blood of Jesus.
For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility (2:14)	I have full peace in Jesus Christ.
And might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. (2:16)	I am reconciled to God through the cross.
For through him, we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. (2:18)	I have access to God through Jesus.

Table 4. Daily Confessions on Identity in Christ for Week 3.

Week 4

From September 26 to October 2, 2021, GCC reached the last spiritual activities. Those who did not complete it had to focus on catching up. They also had to listen to the whole book of Ephesians all at once three times through Bible App Software to have a big picture of the book. They also had to complete a spiritual activity listing all the lessons they learned throughout this spiritual program. This last week, everyone could do all the work they needed to do for this last week.

Throughout this month, from September to October 2021, all the participants had to download the You Version Bible app on their cell phones. They also had to download the Book of Ephesians 10-day version. The researcher used these resources and the book of Ephesians to help build the youth spiritual program. Finally, the young people had to confess their identity in Christ daily.

Scripture on Ephesians	Daily Personalized Confession
So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints (2:19a)	I am a fellow citizen with the saints.
And members of the household of God, (2:19b)	I am a member of the household of God.
Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone (2:20)	I am built on the foundation of the apostle, and Jesus is my cornerstone.
In Him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (2:22)	I am a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.
so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith that you, being rooted and grounded in love (3:17)	I am rooted and grounded in the love of God.
And to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. (3:19)	I am filled with the fullness of God through the love of Christ.
Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or	I have the power of God working within me.

think, according to the
power at work within us
(2:10)

Table 5. Daily Confessions on Identity in Christ for Week 4.

The complete list of the daily-personalized identity in Christ is below from the book of Ephesians.

I am a saint and faithful in Christ (1:1).

I am blessed with every blessing in the heavenly places in Christ (1:3).

I am chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (1:4).

I am predestined to be adopted as a child (1:5).

I am redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ (1:7).

I am forgiven by the grace of God (1:7).

I am a recipient of the wisdom and insight of God (1:8).

I have the knowledge of the mystery of God's will (1:9).

I possess God's inheritance (1:11).

I am sealed by the Holy Spirit (1:13).

I am raised up with Jesus by God's grace (2:6).

I am seated with Christ in the heavenly places (2:6).

I am saved by grace (2:8).

I am God's workmanship (2:10).

I am created in Christ for good works (2:10).

I have boldness and access with confidence through my faith in Him (3:12).

I have been brought near by the blood of Jesus (2:13).

I have full peace in Jesus Christ (2:14).

I am reconciled to God through the cross (2:16).

I have access to God through Jesus (2:18).

I am a fellow citizen with the saints (2:19).

I am a member of the household of God (2:19).

I am built on the foundation of the apostle, and Jesus is my cornerstone (2:20).

I am a dwelling place for God by the Spirit (2:22).

I have boldness and access through faith in Christ (3:12).

I am a partaker of the promises in Jesus Christ (3:6).

I am rooted and grounded in the love of God (3:17).

I am filled with the fullness of God through the love of Christ (3:19).

I have the power of God working within me (3:20).

Chapter 4: Results

In this chapter, the researcher presents the data analysis of this research. A detailed account of the research project's intervention plan results is discussed. The results of this study are based on a mixed-method approach, which relates to qualitative and quantitative data analysis. This mixed-method research contributes to implementing a spiritual program for the young people of Great Commission Church in Queens, NY. This spiritual program includes six key influencing factors for spiritual growth: 1) discipleship, 2) mentoring, 3) parental influence, 4) church attendance, 5) personal devotion, and 6) ministerial involvement. This spiritual program will also aid in revitalizing and establishing GCC's youth ministry. The researcher collected data from questionnaires and interviews. Overall, forty-three participants completed the questionnaire, and five were interviewed. The researcher will also present the results of the spiritual program that was implemented for a month for the youth ministry of GCC. The results of this study are reported in separate sections. The qualitative data is analyzed in the first section. The quantitative data is analyzed in the second section, and the report on the implemented spiritual program for GCC's youth is presented in the last section.

Section A: Qualitative Data Analysis and Results

After collecting the informed consent from the participants, the interview was conducted with protocol guidelines, and the researcher conducted five one-on-one interviews. These interviews were recorded and transcribed. These transcriptions were analyzed using NVivo software with the help of the thematic data analysis technique. Relevant themes were merged, and subthemes and the coding process were performed. The results of the thematic data analysis are provided under relevant headings.

The Role of the Youth Ministry

When the study's participants were asked questions about the role of the youth ministry in the church, they gave responses that can be seen on three different levels. First, the role of the youth in the church is to build up each other in the word of God. One of the respondents replied: "they should see how we could be learning new topics about the Bible and how it could be beneficial to us." Second, they believe that the youth's role is positively influencing the church. One of the respondents stated, "The role of a youth ministry is probably to help out the church and be productive in the church." Third, the respondents also believe that the youth ministry should help build social bonds with each other. Another respondent argued, "I would say that helps us to build more friendships with people and come to better things and stuff. To promote building friendship with each other." From the participants' responses, most interviewees believe that youth ministry can play a beneficial role in the church and its productivity.

Youth Involvement

One of the questions was about how the youth should be involved in the church. In response to this question, most of the respondents believe that the youth should play a supporting role in the church's activities and decisions. One of the respondents argued, "We should participate in church events; give the church opinion on things." An almost similar response was observed in the statement of another respondent: "We should be involved in the church, make sure we participate in events that happened in the church." Another response emphasized the contribution of the youth in everything that the church is doing while stating the youth needs to learn separately in their context. This respondent argued, "The youth should be involved in all facets. I believe that the youth is not a close separate entity; I guess we need our development, and yes, we need to learn things separately from the older people of the church."

Youth Attendance Declining

Regarding the church's youth attendance declining, respondents were asked, "In your opinion, why is the youth attendance declining in the church?" In response to this question, the study participants gave different answers. One of the respondents replied, "I guess the children, some aren't paying attention. I guess that could affect that." Another respondent argued that different cultures and language barriers in a church could cause attendance decline among the youth:

I believe it's happening because of differences and ideologies, so particularly with my church, our church, I don't know what to call it anymore. With our church, you have that divide between the people born in America versus those who were not. And due to that being like different cultures we're all brought up, there is a conflict between understanding each other. It is a lot of misinterpretation of things, and there's a language barrier that causes communication problems, and with that, people do not feel heard.

Another respondent indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic is the cause of the decline in youth attendance in the church. He stated, "I feel that the reason why the youth is declining in the church is the pandemic that is happening right now." While another respondent replied, "Probably, we don't invite people as much." Therefore, from the above responses, it is apparent that there are multiple reasons for the youth decline in Church activities.

Solution for Youth Declining

To address the problem of the youth attendance declining, the respondents were, "What can the church do to help address and solve this decline?" To this question, one respondent replied, "They can start communicating to us more, more communication." Another went further to lay this responsibility on the church and said, "The church should invite other youth they know." In addition, with huge skepticism, another respondent called for a change of mindset that will lead the church to reach out more to the youth:

It takes a lot of [...] a real large effort to change the mindset of the people who are currently in the church. And on top of that, having them learn how to communicate with the left people. I am not sure what exactly can be done to address the decline as it is. I think they need to reach out to people who are still there and to get a better understanding of what everyone is going through and make efforts to make them feel they are part of that community.

Contrary to the responses above, one respondent gave a perplexing and critical response and said, "I wouldn't say there's any declining." This respondent was not of the view that youth attendance is decreasing in the church. In summary, it can be said that most of the respondents believe that the church should play its role by communicating and inviting the youth to church and its activities. In this way, they can enhance youth participation in the church.

Church Involvement in the Youth Ministry

Most participants believe the church must be actively and positively involved in the youth ministry. One area the church should be involved in with the youth is their spiritual growth. One of the respondents said, "They should help us understand how God can be a huge, I guess, role model in our life, a role model and how He can help us." The same kind of response was recorded from another participant who, during the interview, said, "I should say that we should learn more about Jesus Christ and stuff." Furthermore, one participant indicates that the Church should be involved in the youth ministry by helping the youth organize their ministry. To that end, this respondent said, "To help us, the youth, plan our activities. If we want to do something, the church should help us plan it." One respondent believed that the church needs to be socially involved in the youth ministry and said, "The church should be involved in the youth ministry by involving in the activity that the youth are doing, like [having] a party, and help out with the youth." One participant claimed that the church should not try to involve the youth. They are already naturally involved in the youth because they are not separated from the church.

This respondent believed the church needs to be “a safe haven” to foster youth support and development. To the above assertion, this respondent said,

Well, I would say the church facilitates and gives the youth a place to really meet, and that is why they need to [be] involve[d] in giving space for the interaction to occur for the development to take place and they give support. So, if you have people who aren't very spiritual and did not come from a spiritual background, the church is that community that allows the people to feel comfortable and to come there and give that safer space for people to come and feel welcomed.

After analyzing the data, the findings show that all participants deem the church as the primary source of guidance for the youth, and the church should be involved in the youth ministry spiritually and socially and become a safe space for comfort, support, and development.

Leaders Contribution to the Youth Improvement

One of the critical questions was how church leaders could contribute to improving the youth ministry. After analyzing the participants' responses, the data shows that leaders should contribute at many levels. First, leaders can be a source of ideas and wisdom for the youth. One respondent said, “Give us ideas on things we could do. Help us with things we want to create and ideas we want to do.” Second, leaders should learn to evolve with the youth and utilize any relevant tool that will help them reach out to the youth. One respondent argued that the leaders could improve the ministry by having youth ministry every Saturday: “We can have weekly service on Zoom.” Third, leaders should learn to lead by example and reach out to the youth in their context. One respondent argued,

If they can lead by example as leaders, they can lead by example by first learning how to cultivate those relationships with the youth, then, perhaps it'll help others to feel more comfortable to speak. That's one way that they can other leaders can sort of start lead that effort. Lead by example and then teach them through their examples teach the other members of the congregation how to interact with younger people and teach them in a different way things like that so that for example, the church can engage in conversations with the youth as instruments that help them gain a better understanding of what's going on in the world through the eyes of someone who's experiencing it.

Recommendation to the Leaders

To get additional feedback from the participants for the church leaders, the researcher asked them if they had any recommendations to the leaders concerning the church's operation. In response to this question, two out of five participants said no and did not have any suggestions or recommendations for the leaders, and two other participants hesitantly repeated previous responses, while the last one seemed to be perplexed. The last respondent stated, "I don't know how. Suppose there's anything I can say that you should do. I don't think I have anything. That's not that nothing should be done, but I am just not sure what can be done or what should be done." Out of the two that responded hesitantly, one respondent replied by giving recommendations to the church leaders: "Not really. I would probably say for us to like to build our group or make sure that there are other groups. Give us good advice." Thus, most of the respondents did not seem interested in giving their recommendations to the leaders concerning the church's operation.

Understanding a Modern Church versus a Traditional Church

To gain insight into the participants view of the modern church and traditional church, the researcher asked, "What is your understanding of modern and traditional church?" In reply to this question, one of the respondents said, "A traditional church is the teaching of past family members and modern church talks about more about the present. I don't know how to explain it." To the same question, another respondent stated, "I think a traditional church is a church that has a certain holiday, and they follow a tradition. A modern church is a church that does have a tradition." Two other respondents answered that they do not know the difference between traditional and modern churches. However, the last respondent gave a critical answer favorable to the traditional church. This participant said,

Nowadays, churches are running social media accounts. They are Live streaming is one thing that's just to get everyone to be able to participate. So traditional churches stick with traditions. While modern churches stick with the culture, traditional churches have a better grasp on biblical teaching than certain modern churches because I can see that with today's culture is really hard to teach the truth without some type of backlash.

Purpose of the Church

Study participants were also asked a question about the purpose of the church. One respondent responded, "Spreading the word of God." A similar response was observed in another individual's response: "The purpose of the church is to learn God, to know the purpose of the Bible." Another respondent also said, "To better your relationship with God and get closer to Him." Another respondent was also of the same view and replied, "For us to build up a better relationship with God if we already have one." The last individual critically responded to this question,

Church is a community. It's a place where people learn and are taught how to interpret the Bible or how to read the Bible. We don't have a proper understanding of things on our own. And we can say that we do, but we don't. So, we need a place for us to be able to bounce ideas off one another and receive teachings of those who are better informed than us and also, we can grow and develop these gifts that we've been given. So, it is a community for us to grow and to be developed.

Qualitative Data Findings

The significant findings of the qualitative data analysis are given below.

According to the participant's responses, most believe that youth ministry may significantly contribute to the church's life and productivity.

1. Most respondents believe that youth play an essential role in the activities of the church.
2. There is no consensus among the respondents concerning the cause of declining youth attendance in the church. The responses ranged from the pandemic, youth's lack of attention, lack of reaching out to the youth, language barrier, and non-existence.

3. All participants believe the church is the primary source of guidance and spiritual growth for the youth and should play a significant role in youth ministries.
4. Most people believe the church can be critical in developing youth ministry.
5. Most respondents think the church is responsible for reaching out to young people to bring them to church.
6. Most respondents did not make any recommendations to the church leaders.
7. Most respondents were unsure about the difference between a traditional and modern church. One respondent favors the traditional church over the modern church.
8. All respondents agree that the church's objective is to help people understand the word of God and develop a close relationship with God.

Section B: Quantitative Data Analysis and Results

For quantitative data, the respondents were given a 25-item questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed on different discontinuous and Likert scales. Overall, forty-three respondents completed the questionnaire. Demographic information of the respondents is shown in Tables 6-11 and Figures 1-3.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	10-13 Years	5	12.5
	14-18 Years	17	42.5
	18-25 Years	16	40.0
	25-30 Years	5	11.6
	Total	43	100.0

Table 6. Detail of Age Group of Participants.

Table 6 shows that, overall, forty-three participants completed the questionnaire. Among them, most respondents (42.5%) were from the age group 14-18 years, followed by the sixteen

participants (40%) with an age group of 18-25 years. The graphical representation of the data is shown in Figure 1.

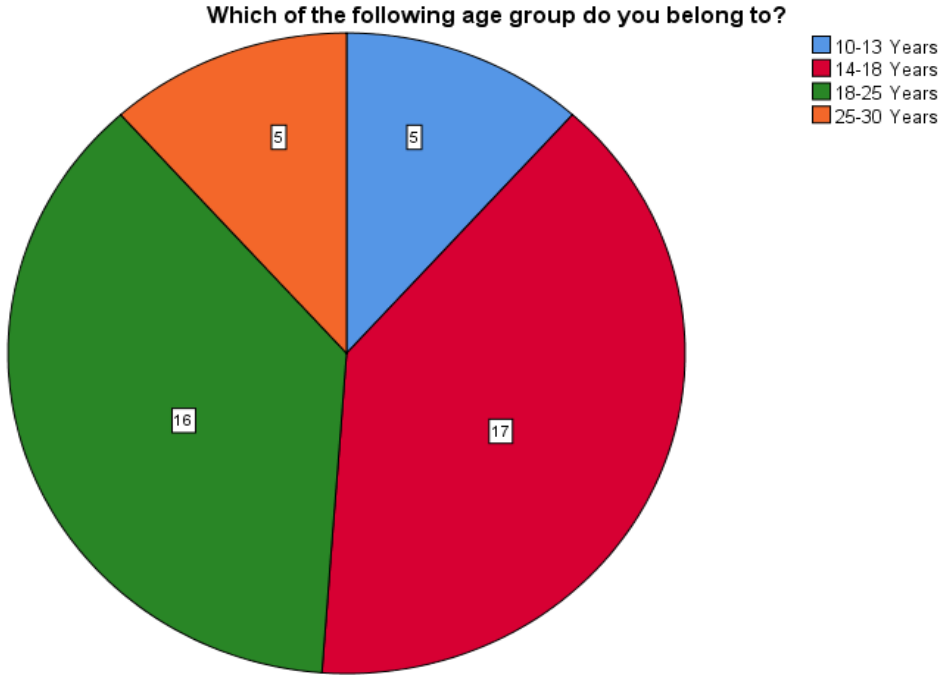


Figure 1. Detail of Age Group of Participants.

After that, the respondents were asked whether they were born in a Christian family. The details of the individuals are shown in Figure 2.

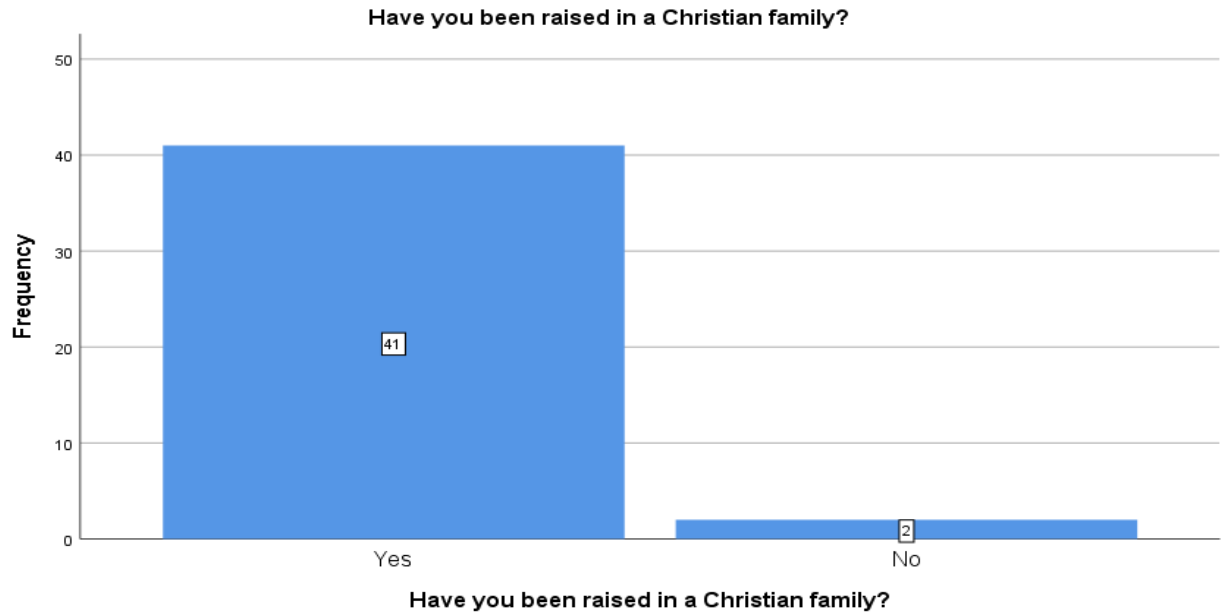


Figure 2: Christianity Status of Participants.

Figure 2 shows that most of the participants were raised in Christian families, while only two of them were not raised in Christian families.

Church Attendance of Participants

The study participants were asked how long you have been attending the church. Their responses are shown in Table 7.

	Frequency	Percent
Valid		
0-6 Months	2	4.6
6 Months - 1 Year	1	2.3
1-2 Year	3	6.9
2-4 Year	1	2.3
4-6 Year	6	13.9
6-8 Year	30	69.7
Total	43	100.0

Table 7. Detail of Church Attending Experience.

The above table shows that most of the respondents (69.7%) had the experience of attending church for 6-8 years, followed by 13.9% having 4-6 years of experience. It was also revealed that only 2.3% of participants attended for 2-4 years or less than one year. Additional information is also shown in Figure 3.

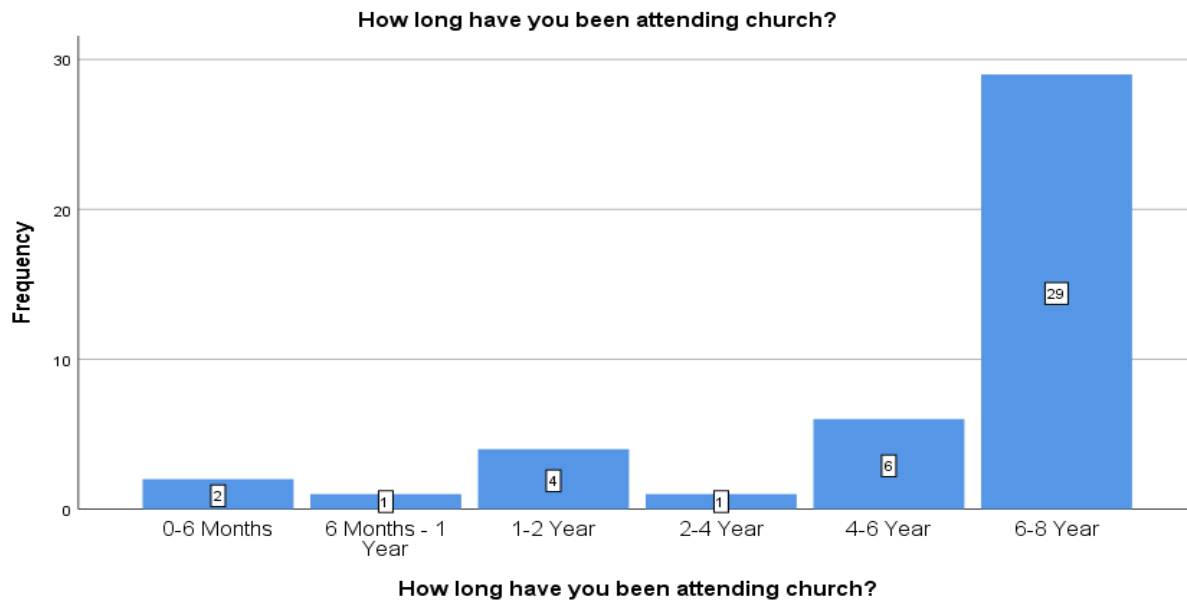


Figure 3: Detail of Church Attending Experience.

Church Attending and Youth Activities

Study participants were asked to respond to two statements on the five-point Likert scale ranging from never (1) to always (5). They were asked to give their responses about how regularly they attend church on Sunday and what they feel about attending the youth activities. Their responses are shown in Table 8.

Statements	Never (%)	Seldom (%)	Sometimes (%)	Often (%)	Always (%)	M	SD
How regularly do you attend Church service on Sunday	2.3	0	16.3	37.2	44.2	4.2	.88
How regularly do you attend youth activities	7	9.3	25.6	44.2	14	3.49	1.1

Table 8. *Church Attendance on Sunday and Youth Activities.*

Table 8 reveals that participants attend church service on Sunday (M = 4.2, SD = .88) more times than attending the youth activities (M = 3.5, SD = 1.1). It is also revealed that more than 81% of the participants attend church regularly on Sundays, with responses of “always” and “often.” In contrast, 58% of individuals attend youth activities “often,” followed by the 26% who “sometimes” attend these meetings. Participants attending church on Sunday were higher than participants attending youth activities.

Church Services

To understand the participants’ responses against the factor of church services, they were asked on the five-point Likert scale with options ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Analysis of the responses is shown in Table 9.

Statements	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	M	SD
The church services help you grow closer to God	2.3	2.3	20.9	46.5	27.9	3.95	.90

The youth services help you grow closer to God	2.3	2.3	23.3	46.5	25.6	3.91	.90
Do you consider yourself as the future of the church?	7	9.3	32.6	32.6	18.6	3.47	1.1
Do you feel like the church is taking you seriously	7	9.3	25.6	37.2	20.9	3.56	1.1
Do you feel like you belong in the church?	2.3	7	16.3	39.5	34.9	3.98	1.0
Do your parents impact you positively in your relationship with God	9.3	2.3	20.9	39.5	27.9	3.74	1.2
Should the church have a separate service for the youth?	0	9.3	41.9	32.6	14	3.52	.86

Table 9. Response Regarding the Church Services.

Table 9 reveals that respondents' score for church services for the item "do you feel like you belong in the Church" (M = 3.98, SD 1.0) is the highest in the table, and 75% of participants showed agreement to the fifth statement of this table. Followed by the first item (M = 3.95, SD = 90), where 75% of the individuals agreed to the statement "church services help you grow closer to God." In this table, the lowest score was attained by the statement item "Do you consider yourself as the future of the church?" (M = 3.47, SD = 1.1), where half of the respondents (52%) showed their agreement with this item. Overall, participants were happy with the church services, as every table statement got a mean score of around 3.5 or more.

Satisfaction Level

To identify respondents' satisfaction with church service, they were asked to respond to items developed on the five-point Likert scale with an option of strongly dissatisfied (1) to strongly satisfied (5). Results after applying analysis are shown in Table 10.

Statements	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	S (%)	SA (%)	M	SD
How satisfied are you in the way the church is currently operating	0	11.6	20.9	44.2	23.3	3.79	.94
How satisfied are you with the church's service?	2.3	4.7	18.6	53.5	20.9	3.86	.89
If yes, how satisfied are you with it?	0	0	34.9	20.9	27.9	3.92	.87

Table 10. Response Regarding the Church Services.

Table 10 reveals that participants score for the statement: “If yes, how satisfied are you with it” got the highest position in this table with a score of $M = 3.92$, $SD = .87$, where half of the respondents showed their satisfaction with this item. The second item followed this with a score of $M = 3.86$, $SD = .89$, in which 75% of the respondents showed satisfaction with the church services.

Dichotomous Responses

To get study participants' responses for different items, they were asked seven questions on dichotomous responses. Their analysis is shown below in Table 11.

Item	Yes (%)	No (%)
Did you take part in a discipleship class?	23.3	69.8
Did you have a close mentor at the church?	32.6	65.1
Are you involved in a church ministry apart from the youth ministry?	44.2	53.5
Do you attend church to please your parents?	27.9	69.8
Do you understand everything that happens in the church's service?	74.4	25.6
Is the language barrier an obstacle to understanding the church's service?	25.6	69.8
Do you practice a daily personal devotion (Bible reading, prayer, meditation, and the like)?	58.1	39.5

Table 11. Detail of Responses Against Dichotomous Items.

Table 11 reveals that 70% of participants did not participate in discipleship classes, and 65% did not have a close mentor at the church. More than half (53.5%) have not been involved in a church ministry besides the youth ministry. A significant finding was revealed: 69.8% of the respondents do not believe they attend church only to please their parents. An important finding was that 74% of the respondents believe that language barriers hinder their understanding of church services. It was also revealed that 58% of the respondents practice daily devotion to Bible reading and other prayers.

Findings

The significant findings of the quantitative data analysis are provided below.

1. Out of forty-three respondents, forty-one were raised in Christian families.
2. Most of the respondents (67.4%) had an experience of 6-8 years of attending church.
3. Most of the participants attend Church on Sundays and youth activities. At the same time, the number of participants attending Church on Sundays was higher than participants attending youth activities.
4. Overall, participants were pleased with the church services, with every table statement receiving a mean score of 3.5 or higher. However, 21% of them were neutral, and 9% disagreed.
5. Most respondents were satisfied with the church services.
6. Most participants believe that church services help them stay closer to God, while 19% were neutral and 5% disagreed.
7. Most participants believe the youth services help them stay closer to God, while 28% were neutral and 5% disagreed.

8. Half of the participants consider themselves the church's future, while 33% were neutral and 17% disagreed.
9. Most participants feel that the church has taken them seriously, while 28% stay neutral and 7% disagree.
10. Most respondents were satisfied with the church, while 23% were neutral, and 7% disagreed.
11. Most participants felt they belonged in the church, while 19 % were neutral and 7% disagreed.
12. Most respondents believe that their parents impact them positively in their relationship with God, while 23% were neutral and 11% disagreed.
13. Most respondents (69%) do not participate in a discipleship class.
14. Most respondents (65%) do not have any close mentors at the church.
15. Most respondents (53%) are not involved in a church ministry besides the youth ministry.
16. Most respondents (70%) do not attend church to please their parents.
17. Most respondents (74%) understand everything in the church's service.
18. Most respondents (41%) were neutral to having a separate service for the youth, while 35% agreed and 23% disagreed.
19. Most respondents (69%) do not think the language barrier hinders their understanding of the church's service.
20. Most respondents (58%) practice a daily personal devotion (Bible reading, prayer, meditation, and the like).
21. Half of the respondents stated they were satisfied with their daily personal devotion, while the other half stayed neutral.

22. Nine out of twelve participants claim to practice a personal daily devotion throughout the month of the spiritual program.
23. Two out of twelve parents claimed to help, supervise, and encourage their children throughout the month of the spiritual program. Most parents claimed to have forgotten or found no time due to work-related issues.
24. Five participants, who became believers, claimed they did not understand the gospel.

Youth Spiritual Program for Great Commission Church Participation

In Week 1, five out of twelve participants joined the Zoom meeting. The meeting was scheduled for one hour, from 8:00 pm – 9:00 pm. The researcher logged on to the Zoom meeting five minutes before 8:00 pm to encourage young people to join the platform. Only 42% of the expected attendees participated in the youth spiritual program in Week 1. The participants were punctual. The meeting started at 8:00 pm and ended at 9:00 pm.

In Week 2, there was an increase in the expected attendees from the previous week. Seven out of twelve participants joined the Zoom Bible study. The meeting was scheduled for one hour, from 8:00 pm – 9:00 pm. The researcher joined the Zoom platform five minutes before 8:00 p.m. to facilitate the participants to join the spiritual program. Fifty-eight percent of the expected attendees participated in the youth spiritual program in Week 2. From Week 1 to Week 2, there was an increase of 16% of the expected attendees who participated in the Zoom meeting. The participants were punctual. The meeting started at 8:00 pm and ended at 9:00 pm.

In Week 3, there was, once again, an increase in the amount of the expected attendees from the previous week. Nine out of twelve participants joined the Zoom Bible study. The meeting was scheduled to last for one hour from 8:00 pm – 9:00 pm. The researcher joined the Zoom platform five minutes before 8:00 pm to facilitate the participants joining the Zoom

meeting. Seventy-five percent of the expected attendees participated in the youth spiritual program in Week 3. From Week 2 to Week 3, there was an increase of 17% of the expected attendees who participated in the Zoom meeting. The participants were punctual. The meeting started at 8:00 pm and ended at 9:15 pm. In Week 3, the meeting was prolonged for fifteen minutes because many participants had biblical questions to address. Five participants accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord.

Finally, 9 out of 12 participants joined the Zoom Bible study in Week 4. There was no increase in the expected attendees in Week 4. The meeting was scheduled to last one hour from 8:00 pm – 9:00 pm. The researcher, as usual, joined the Zoom platform five minutes before 8:00 pm. The participants were punctual. The meeting started at 8:00 pm and ended at 9:00 pm. The table of participation during the month of the youth spiritual program is found in Table 12. A summary of the results is included below.

1. Nine out of twelve participants claimed to practice a personal daily devotion throughout the month of the spiritual program.
2. Two out of twelve parents claimed to help, supervise, and encourage their children throughout the month of the spiritual program. Most parents claimed to have forgotten or found no time due to work-related issues.
3. Five participants, who have become believers, claim that they did not understand the gospel previously.

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Participants	5 out of 12 participants	7 out of 12 participants	9 out of 12 participants	9 out of 12 participants

Percentage of participants	42 %	58%	75%	75%
The percentage of Participants increases weekly	-58% of the total attendees	16 % of week one total attendees	17% of week two total attendees	0% of week three total attendees
Punctuality	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 12. Table of Participation During the Month of Youth Spiritual Program.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Introduction

This chapter will conclude this DMIN action research by summarizing the key research findings of the aims and research questions. It shows the importance of this study and how it may contribute to the existing body of research on the youth ministry. It will also review the study's limitations and propose opportunities for future research on youth ministry.

Research Aim and Questions

This DMIN action research thesis aims to develop and implement strategies and approaches to help establish a stable and transformational youth ministry at Great Commission Church in Queens, NY, which will help the young people remain in GCC and thrive in their spiritual lives. This study also aims to implement a spiritual program that includes the six key influencing factors for spiritual growth: discipleship, mentoring, parental influence, church attendance, personal devotion, and ministerial involvement to help reboot and establish the youth ministry at GCC. Moreover, it evaluated the effectiveness of these key-influencing factors for spiritual growth in establishing this youth ministry at GCC. It will also compare these key influencing factors for spiritual growth in terms of their strengths and weaknesses in the context of young people of GCC. Therefore, this action research sought to answer these questions:

- What are the key influencing factors for spiritual growth that will help reboot and establish a stable and transformational youth ministry at GCC?
- How effective are each of these key influencing factors for spiritual growth?

Summary of Key Findings

Four critical themes emerged from the qualitative data analysis. The first theme is the transformative role of the church for the youth. The youth seem to have a good awareness and understanding of the transformative role of the church in their lives. God uses the church as a witness to His word,¹²³ and an agent of transformation in the lives of individuals and communities.¹²⁴ The church, as the body of Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, has the privilege to participate in God's ministry of healing in a shattered world.¹²⁵ Furthermore, "The Holy Spirit is always behind the inspiration and the sustaining power for the ministries the church exercises for God."¹²⁶ Thus, for the youth to deem the Church an agent of change is entirely accurate. The data analysis shows that, first, the youth know the church's objective to help them understand God's word and develop a close relationship with God. Second, the youth deem the church their primary source of spiritual guidance and growth. Third, they also believe that the church is essential in helping them organize their youth ministry. The youth seem to comprehend the transformative impact that the church can make in their lives.

The second theme is the youth's vital contribution to the church's growth. The youth also seem to be aware of the supportive role they can play at the church. Young people tend to be perceived as immature and ill-equipped, while they are created in God's likeness, and He can use

¹²³ Micheal M. Van Wyk, "Exploring the Role of the Church as a 'Reformation Agency' in Enhancing a Socially Transformative Agenda in South Africa," *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 73, no. 3 (2017): 2.

¹²⁴ Vhumani Magezi and Patrick Nanthambwe, "Development and the Role of the Church: Exploring Public Pastoral Care Positioning within Congregational Ministry," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 43, no. 1 (January 2022): 3.

¹²⁵ Nelus Niemandt, "A Missional Hermeneutic for the Transformation of Theological Education in Africa," *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 75, no. 4 (2019): 3.

¹²⁶ W. Ma and J. Ma, "Empowered by the Holy Spirit to Serve the Least: Hawaii's (Korean) Cedar Church," *International Bulletin of Mission Research* 46, no. 3 (2022): 384–395.

them as co-constructors in His field and as agents of change.¹²⁷ The youth claim in their responses that they know they can contribute to the spiritual and numerical growth of the church. The church can encourage the youth and help them discover their gifts by teaching them relatable and enjoyable techniques for ministry,¹²⁸ and allow the Holy Spirit to lead them every step of the way.¹²⁹

The third theme is the failure of the church leader to execute the transformative role that the youth expected from them. One research shows that Christian youth in the United States who are leaving the church are not necessarily losing their faith in God but are disappointed with organized religion.¹³⁰ It seems that the youth had a high expectation of the church to find grace and spiritual guidance. However, the church did not seem to make necessary efforts to meet this expectation by offering them the specific help in their context. One of the reasons the youth believe youth attendance is declining in the church is that church leaders do not reach out to them. Another research shows that the church is considered as a house of refuge and a place for potential healing for youth.¹³¹ With that understanding, the church must prioritize reaching out to youth and those on the margins of society.¹³² The youth are expecting the church to reach out to

¹²⁷ Nora E. Saneka and Anna L. Prest Talbot, "Engaging Children as 'Agents of Change': The Grahamstown Scout Group," *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 75, no. 1 (2019): 1.

¹²⁸ Tony Ryan, *The Next Generation: Preparing Today's Kids for an Extraordinary Future* (Melbourne, Australia: John Wiley & Sons, 2017), 11.

¹²⁹ Ron Bruner and Dudley Chancey, *Owning Faith: Reimagining the Role of Church and Family in the Faith Journey of Teenagers* (Abilene, TX: Leafwood Publishers, 2017), 75.

¹³⁰ Amy D. McDowell, "'Christian but Not Religious': Being Church as Christian Hardcore Punk," *Sociology of Religion* 79, no. 1 (Spring, 2018): 58.

¹³¹ R. G. Crosby et al., "Trauma-Informed Children's Ministry: A Qualitative Descriptive Study," *Journal of Child & Adolescent Trauma* 14 (2021): 493–505.

¹³² Kasebwe T. Kabongo, "A Missiological Approach to the Involvement of the Church in Handling School Dropouts in South Africa," *Verbum Et Ecclesia* 40, no. 1 (2019), 1.

them so that they can lead them to God. The youth hold the church's leaders to a high standard. Thus, the church needs to execute its role by reaching out to the youth, teaching them sound doctrines, modeling these truths for the youth to see and replicate.

The fourth theme is the lack of attention of the youth to stay in the church. Another reason the youth believe youth attendance is declining is the youth themselves. It seems that the youth are aware of their tendency to be distracted. Thus, the youth need to avoid distractions while at church. One way the youth can solve the problem of distraction is to let parents lead in that effort during religious services, by monitoring their children.¹³³ According to Leslie Francis, "it is neither surprising nor undocumented that there is a strong correlation between levels of church attendance among young people and levels of parental church attendance."¹³⁴ Therefore, when parents are attending religious service with their children, it not only helps the youth to avoid distraction but it also encourages them to be regular in church attendance. Furthermore, research shows that young people tend to be most religious when parents remain consistent in their beliefs and attendance at church.¹³⁵ Another study shows that "adulthood religiosity also mediated the relationship between frequent early-life religious attendance and health."¹³⁶ With that in mind, it is incumbent on parents to be consistent in their faith and church attendance because it significantly reduces distraction among youth impacts how consistently the youth will

¹³³ K. Malinakova, R. Trnka, L. Bartuskova, P. Glogar, N. Kascakova, M. Kalman, JP van Dijk, P Tavel, "Are Adolescent Religious Attendance/Spirituality Associated with Family Characteristics?" *Int J Environ Res Public Health* 16, no. 16 (2019): 2947.

¹³⁴ Leslie Francis, "Parental and Peer Influence on Church Attendance among Adolescent Anglicans in England and Wales," *Journal of Anglican Studies* 18, no. 1 (2020): 62.

¹³⁵ Christopher D. Bader and Scott A. Desmond, "Do as I Say and as I Do: The Effects of Consistent Parental Beliefs and Behaviors upon Religious Transmission," *Sociology of Religion* 67, no. 3 (2006), 313.

¹³⁶ Laura Upenieks and Markus H. Schafer, "Religious Attendance and Physical Health in Later Life: A Life Course Approach," *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 61, no. 4 (2020): 486.

attend church and embrace their faith. The earlier the parents start doing that, the greater the results later in the youth's life.

Another reason that could be part of the youth distraction is the language barrier. Whenever a Creole-speaking congregation accommodates English speakers in the church by having a bilingual service, most youth are reported to be satisfied with the church. The study shows that 70% of the participants claimed to be satisfied with the church service, and 69% also claimed that the language barrier is not an issue at their church. Hence, the data shows a possible close link between the satisfaction of the church service and the language barrier. When the church services are in a language that the youth can understand, it contributes significantly to their satisfaction with this service. However, the current research also shows that youth attendance is declining where there is a language barrier. One of the interview respondents stated that the language barrier is the main obstacle that keeps the youth away from the church. The language barrier must be addressed for young people born in the United States and those who migrated from Haiti to live in the U.S. A study shows that migrants with great attachment to their home country usually led to more frequent church attendance.¹³⁷ Thus, GCC must address the language barrier to facilitate both youth groups, those who are fluent in English and in Creole.

The data shows that most youth did not participate in a discipleship program or have no close mentors. This finding shows that the Haitian churches are not helping their young people enough to grow spiritually, and they are not training the youth to become future church leaders. Discipleship is essential to the growth of the church. The truth is that there is a significant

¹³⁷ Sergiu Gherghina and Aurelian Ploeanu, "Social Networks, Attachment and Integration: Understanding the Church Attendance of Romanian Migrants," *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 42, no. 1 (2021): 111.

discipleship issue in the body of Christ.¹³⁸ The data shows that young people who have an adult mentor demonstrated significant progress in their spiritual formation as believers.¹³⁹ When youth establish personal spiritual goals, it can help them grow in their walk with God.¹⁴⁰ One way is by writing in spiritual diaries daily, which are very effective for spiritual growth.¹⁴¹ The practice of writing in these diaries can help them to be sensitive to God's voice and reflect on their daily walk with God. These activities are not only helpful in buffering and shielding the youth from the effects of negative influences, but they also help the youth to internalize taught and modeled values.¹⁴² The truth is, mentoring has a powerful impact on the whole young person, gender, environment, culture, weakness, and strength.¹⁴³ However, some mentoring styles are more effective than others. For example, a study showed that a one-to-one mentoring program is even more compelling among youth with behavioral issues.¹⁴⁴ Thus, a mentorship program must consider the context and situation of the mentees to effectively support them.

The Haitian churches must prioritize one of the main purposes of the church of Jesus: to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19-20). If most of the Haitian youth do not have a close

¹³⁸ Scott Burns, "Embracing Weakness: An Investigation of the Role of Weakness in Spiritual Growth," *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 13, no. 2 (2020): 263.

¹³⁹ Richard R. Osmer and Katherine M. Douglass, *Cultivating Teen Faith: Insights from the Confirmation Project* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2018), 45.

¹⁴⁰ J. H. Patrick, A. K. Carney, and A. R. Ebert, "Religious and Spiritual Growth Goals: A Forgotten Outcome," *International Journal of Aging and Human Development* 94, no. 1 (2022): 41.

¹⁴¹ S. S. Kim et al., "The Benefits of Spiritual Diaries: A Mixed-Method Study in Korea," *Journal of Religion and Health* 60 (2021): 3978.

¹⁴² William Jeynes, *Wiley Handbook of Christianity and Education* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley & Sons, 2018), 264.

¹⁴³ Bernadine Brady, Pat Dolan, and Caroline McGregor, *Mentoring for Young People in Care and Leaving Care: Theory, Policy and Practice*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2019), 10.

¹⁴⁴ Nick Axford et al., "The Effectiveness of a Community-Based Mentoring Program for Children Aged 5-11 Years: Results from a Randomized Controlled Trial." *Prevention Science: The Official Journal of the Society for Prevention Research* 22, no. 1 (January 2021): 100.

mentor, they will not duplicate Haitian leaders for the next generation. To support this idea, Paul stated in 2 Timothy 2:2: “And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful man who will be able to teach others also.” One way a mentorship program can be used to make a significant impact on the youth's lives and the Church is during Sunday School. Young people can be taught the word of God and be trained to serve as teachers, making Sunday School a safe space for the youth to transform and be transformed by the body of Christ.¹⁴⁵

Only half of the youth consider themselves the future of the church. According to this finding, there should be a legitimate concern about the future of the Haitian church in New York, perhaps in America. If only half of the young people in the church believe that they are the church's future, what will happen to the other half who are hesitant to be perceived as the future of the Haitian church? Furthermore, if most youths did not participate in a discipleship program and had no mentor, while the current data shows that most are satisfied with the church, their satisfaction may relate to a misunderstanding of the church's mission. Perhaps the youth believe that organizing church services is the church's primary mission. If the church never makes disciples of the youth, the youth will never be aware of the importance of discipleship and mentorship. The youth claim to be satisfied with the church, perhaps based on their lack of information about the church's mission, which is to make disciples. Because the church failed to create discipleship classes for nearly 70% of the youth, they are likely to be misinformed about the church's mission.

Most youth are not involved in the church's ministry. According to the data, 53% of the respondents are not involved in a church ministry apart from the youth ministry. This finding

¹⁴⁵ K. E. Leal, ““All our Children may be Taught of God’: Sunday Schools and the Roles of Childhood and Youth in Creating Evangelical Benevolence,” *Church History* 87, no. 4 (2018): 1057.

indicates that the Haitian church is not training the youth to become future leaders. In addition, most participants (58%) practice a daily personal devotion (Bible reading, prayer, meditation, and the like). While half of them stated they were satisfied with their daily spiritual activity, the other half were not. Jacqui Wilkinson, Leslie Francis, and Ursula McKenna stress how personal prayer is a crucial factor in the formation of individual spirituality.¹⁴⁶ Personal prayer seems to be a much stronger predictor of spiritual growth than mere worship attendance.¹⁴⁷ However, prayer must be practiced in a way that will bring spiritual results in the life of an individual. The kind of prayer practice that brings spiritual growth connects one with the word of God and leads one to a deep relationship with Him.¹⁴⁸ With that in mind, a lack of prayer can result in a lack of understanding of God's plan for one's life. Thus, lack of personal, genuine, and biblical prayer may be a contributing factor that causes half of the youth not to see themselves as the future Haitian church.

The youth believe they play an essential role in how the church can grow numerically and spiritually. They also believe the church is their primary source of guidance and spiritual growth. The youth believe that the church is essential in helping them organize their youth ministry. In addition, they strongly favor a kind of church that is not influenced by modern views but rooted in the principles of God's word. They also understand that the church's objective is to help people understand the word of God and develop a close relationship with God. However, they stated

¹⁴⁶ Jacqui Wilkinson, Leslie J. Francis, and Ursula McKenna, "Personal Prayer, Worship Attendance and Spiritual Wellbeing: A Study among Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Class Students Attending Church of Ireland Schools in the Republic of Ireland," *Journal of Religious Education* 66 (2018): 206.

¹⁴⁷ Leslie J. Francis et al., "Modelling the Effect of Worship Attendance and Personal Prayer on Spiritual Well-being among 9- to 11-year-old Students attending Anglican Church Schools in Wales," *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* 23, no. 1(2018): 32.

¹⁴⁸ Karen L. Bray, "Contemplative Prayer and Meditation: Their Role in Spiritual Growth" (DMin diss., Asbury Theological Seminary, 2021), 3.

different reasons concerning the cause of declining youth attendance in the church: the pandemic, the lack of attention to the youth, the lack of reach out to youth, and language barriers.

Parents had a role during the implementation of the spiritual program to observe, encourage, and help. Most of them could not participate in the month of the youth spiritual program due to work-related issues. Thus, most youth did not receive help from their parents during the spiritual program. The current study shows that 94% of the youth were raised in a Christian family, yet most parents did not make sufficient effort to support their children in the youth spiritual program. Perhaps most participants did not have their parents as their mentors. The current study supported the above assertion that 65% of the youth did not have a mentor, yet 64% claimed to be influenced positively by their parents in their spiritual life. Most participants do not deem their parents as mentors, yet most claim to be influenced positively by their parents. Perhaps the kind of influence the participants are referring to is not related to having a mentor to teach them the word of God and guide them in their calling in ministry. The kind of positive influence the participants refer to is likely related to their attendance at church. Perhaps the Haitian parents successfully encourage their children to go to the church because 70% of the participants have attended church for 6-8 years, and 93% attend church weekly. However, the parents seem to fail to mentor their youth.

The data shows that while all twelve parents were willing to allow their children to participate in the youth spiritual program, only two of them (17%) created time to observe, encourage, and help their children throughout the months of this youth spiritual program. By attending church alone, people cannot help the youth to grow in their spiritual life. The youth must be mentored and trained by the church and the parents. The study shows that the more the youth create time to participate in a discipleship program, the better they grow in their

understanding of God and the Bible. The twelve youths participating in the youth spiritual program were assumed to be believers because they all attended church. However, during the spiritual program, as they were studying their identity in Christ according to the book of Ephesians, five young people realized that they never accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Parental involvement should not only mean bringing the youth to the church but also taking the responsibility to teach their children God's word at home and help them to be involved in church ministries.

Furthermore, a little more than half of the participants practice a personal devotion to God daily, meaning half of the youth do not practice a personal devotion to God. This result can be both perceived as good news and bad news. It is bad news because there may be a link between having a personal relationship with God and developing a good relationship with the church. Half of the youth who do not see themselves as part of the church could negatively affect their relationship with the church. However, the good news is related to the exact opposite of the bad news. Half of the participants who develop a personal devotion to God may urge them, in some ways, to see themselves as the church's future. Personal devotion is not the only factor that draws young people to the church. However, the data shows that personal devotion may play a significant factor in helping the church grow as a community.

Comparative Analysis with Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Many findings from the current study supported some of the previous literature and youth ministry programs. One supported model of youth ministry is the family-based youth ministry. Devries, who is the proponent of this model of youth ministries, claims that youth ministry does

not lead young people to mature adulthood. The church creates a youth curriculum that will only keep the youth from being bored without helping to develop discipline and perseverance they need to live the Christian life.¹⁴⁹ Another youth model is the theology-driven youth ministry program. Strong, one of the proponents of this model, claimed that today's youth ministry fails to lead young people to mature Christians. Today's youth ministry is more socially driven than theological or spiritual-driven.¹⁵⁰ Both articles show the need for a theologically based discipleship program in the church's youth ministry. The lack of such a program will not lead to a mature young Christian. The current study shows that most participants never participate in a discipleship class. Without having spiritual and biblical training for the young people, they will not grow to become mature Christians.

Rice presented a unique approach that stressed the importance of the church and the family as the most potent essential institutions. However, he argued for the need for parents to be primary disciple-makers.¹⁵¹ This current study's findings show that most parents tend to assign the responsibility of teaching the word of God to their kids in the church. Only two out of twelve parents participated for the whole month during the youth spiritual program of GCC. Parents must learn to play an active role in the spiritual growth of their kids.

As stated in the literature, the first principle that may be used to argue the need for a transformational youth ministry in a church is related to the obligation of parents to teach their children about God's commands. However, most respondents (70%) did not attend church to impress their parents, which was unexpected. This result contrasts with the literature in which

¹⁴⁹ DeVries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry*, 26.

¹⁵⁰ Strong, "Effective Youth Ministry," 5.

¹⁵¹ Rice, *Reinventing Youth Ministry (again)*, 84.

Snell acknowledged the positive effects of religion on young people. Religious attendance and parental socialization are two crucial factors that have historically led to positive life outcomes in children and adolescents.

One of the four views of youth ministry is the congregational view. The proponents of this view show the importance of allowing the youth to be part of the ministering body of the church. Young people need to be involved in all the ministries of the church. The current study's findings also show the need to involve the youth in ministry because most participants are not involved in the ministries of their respective churches. However, the missional approach to youth ministry deems the youth as a mission field. According to this view, the church's primary goal is to reach out to young people so that they may come to church. Thus, the church's focus is not necessarily to go out and make disciples but to bring the people inside the church to fellowship.¹⁵² The current study's findings show that most of the youth regularly go to church while they do not have the chance to participate in a discipleship class and have a mentor.

Christian Smith et al. explore the lack of knowledge among young people as they examine the religious group, religious attendance, and involvement in church. They concluded that American youth do both or either, in that the young people who attend church service tend to go to youth service, while the young people who do not attend church fail to attend youth service.¹⁵³ The current study also shows that Haitian youth attend church and youth services. However, the youth attendance in the church service was higher than in the youth service.

¹⁵² Senter, *Four Views of Youth Ministry and the Church*, 19.

¹⁵³ Christian Smith et al., "Mapping American Adolescent Religious Participation," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 41, no. 4 (2002): 605.

Furthermore, Hamman shows in her article that the youth have the potential to deconstruct, reconstruct, and create a new culture even inside the church.¹⁵⁴ However, the current study's findings revealed that the vast majority of the young people did not have a close mentor and did not participate in the discipleship class, and only half of the youth see themselves as the future of the church, and the vast majority of them are reluctant to advise their church leaders. The current study's findings show that Haitian youth are passive in impacting their church leadership. A lack of teaching on the understanding of church leadership and a lack of having church leaders who mentor the youth can cause such a situation.

Future Recommendations

Based on the discussions and conclusions, the researcher recommends continuing this discipleship program. However, the researcher envisages a spiritual program with greater parental involvement to make this mentorship program more effective and successful. Parents will be part of the program to encourage, supervise, and complete the spiritual program with their children. This youth spiritual program may encourage parents to mentor their youth. This mentorship program should be longer than a month. It should last at least a year, but there should be a week of evaluation every three months to monitor and measure spiritual growth and expected results. Instead of having a large group of ten people or young people, this mentorship program should focus on a small group of three to four people. Parents would have the opportunity to participate in the small group their children belong to them. Small groups are more manageable and can effectively give attention to each student according to his or her concerns. The curriculum selection should be based on a proper understanding of the spiritual needs of the participants. Prayerfully, the participants could be involved in the selection and the building of

¹⁵⁴ Hamman, "The Millennial Generation, and the Church," 163.

the curriculum that will be discussed for three months during the week of evaluation. One of the limitations of this study is that the discipleship program was done virtually through a Zoom platform. A mentorship program done in person could have a more significant impact on their spiritual growth. The research would suggest a hybrid program where the participants will meet on the Zoom platform weekly and meet in person monthly. Thus, monthly, there would be five meetings; four of them would be virtual meetings, and one would be an in-person meeting. Each meeting can still last an hour. In addition, more research should be conducted exploring why only half of the Haitian youth, even with high church attendance, see themselves as the church's future.

Conclusion

The study results help answer the research questions that discipleship, mentoring, parental influence, church attendance, and ministerial involvement play key influencing factors for spiritual growth. The effectiveness of these influencing factors in the youth's spiritual life depends on how well each factor can work to foster spiritual growth. While parental influence can help the Haitian youth attend church, it does not encourage discipleship, mentorship, and ministerial involvement in the church. Personal devotion can play a role in ministerial involvement because half of the young people who practice devotion can relate to the half who see themselves as the church's future. However, personal devotion alone still falls short in helping the Haitian young people be involved in the church because most are still not participating in the church's ministries. Discipleship and mentorship remain two significant missing pieces of the puzzle for spiritual growth. Most of the youth never participated in a discipleship class and never had a mentor.

Letters of Endorsement for this Project

Mauley Colas

[REDACTED]

11-07-23

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Mauley Colas. I am on the leadership board of Great Commission Church, where Pastor Jean Max B. St Louis is the lead pastor. I am writing to state I am aware that Pastor Jean Max B. St Louis is pursuing his doctorate in leadership ministry at Liberty University and he has my full approval on this endeavor.

I have known Pastor Jean Max B. St Louis for over 25 years. Since he was in Haiti, he has worked in children's ministry, youth ministry, and teaching and preaching ministry. When he moved to the United States, he continued to do these works zealously with the youth and children ministry, and God used him to positively impact the lives of many young people.

He was ordained as a pastor nine years ago. I have been a member of his church for the past seven years, and I can testify first-hand to his noble character as a leader, his Christ-centered and thought-provoking sermons, his dedication and commitment to the local church, his passion for spreading the Gospel in the community of Queens and Brooklyn, and his deep understanding of theology.

Pastor Jean Max B. St Louis is a kind, friendly, compassionate, and great leader for our church. And I believe he is an excellent asset to our community and the kingdom of God. I would be happy to testify to this if you would like. You can contact me for further information at my cell phone: [REDACTED]. Thank you

Sincerely

Mauley Colas

Nerlande Dorissaint

[REDACTED]

11-10-23

To Whom It May Concern,

I write this letter to acknowledge that I know that Pastor Jean Max B. St Louis is working on his doctorate in Leadership Ministry at Liberty University and I approve of it. I have known Pastor Jean Max B. St Louis for over five years. I had the privilege to work closely with him in the music and worship ministry at Great Commission Church. I have been a member of this church for well over five years. And I can testify about the passion of Pastor Jean Max for God and His people. His determination to know God deeply and serve the church effectively led him to pursue a doctorate in leadership ministry at Liberty University. Pastor Jean Max wrote and published several books, including "From Victory to Victory." He is the Senior Pastor of our church, Great Commission Church. He is also a great worship leader, pianist, preacher, and Bible teacher.

Pastor Jean Max is honest, a great man of God, and a wonderful husband and dad. The Kingdom of God needs more leaders like him. He is a blessing to anyone that meets him. He loves to spend time in God's word and find men and women of God to share the bible's truth.

I recommend Pastor Jean Max to your institution without reservation. With him, your school will have a great leader who is on fire for the Lord and demonstrates Christ-likeness daily. For further info, don't hesitate to contact me at [REDACTED]

Sincerely,

Nerlande Dorissaint

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APPENDIX A

Parental Consent

Title of the Project: The Need for a Spiritual Reboot in the Youth of Great Commission Church

Principal Investigator: Jean Max St Louis, Pastor of Great commission Church of Queens

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

Your child is invited to participate in a research study. Participants must be 10 years old or older part of a Christian youth group. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

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

What is the study about and why are we doing it?

The purpose of the study is to help the youth of Great Commission Church of Queens to grow and thrive in their personal relationship with God. It will also help them to know how to make a positive impact on their communities through the gospel

What will participants be asked to do in this study?

If you agree to allow your child be in this study, I would ask him or her to do the following things:

1. To be prepared to participate in a 15 to 30 minutes interview. This interview will be recorded
2. Fill out a questionnaire

How could participants or others benefit from this study?

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

What risks might participants experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study include. The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means that 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. Published reports 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.

- Participant's responses will be anonymous. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentation. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.

- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

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

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

What conflicts of interest exist in this study?

The researcher serves as Pastor at Great Commission Church in Queens. To limit potential or perceived conflicts the study will be anonymous, so the researcher will not know who participated. This disclosure is made so that you can decide if this relationship will affect your willingness to participate in this study. No action will be taken against an individual based on his or her decision to participate in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Great Commission Church. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time.

What should be done if a participant wishes to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please inform the researcher that you wish to discontinue your participation, and do not submit your study materials. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

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

The researcher conducting this study is Jean Max B. St Louis. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at [REDACTED]

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

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

Your Consent

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

By signing this document, you are agreeing to allow your child to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

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

The researcher has my permission to [audio-record/video-record/photograph] my child] as part of his/her participation in this study.

Printed Child's/Student's Name

Parent's Signature

Date

Minor's Signature

Date

APPENDIX B
Leadership Permission Request

10-13-20

First Haitian Baptist Church of Canarsie
9403 Ave L Brooklyn NY 11236

Dear Pastor Joseph Victor

As a graduate student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research to better understand youth ministries. The title of my research project is “The need for a spiritual reboot in the youth of Great Commission Church, and the purpose is to help the youth to grow in their personal relationship with God and to make a positive impact on their communities through the gospel.

I am writing to utilize your membership list to recruit participants for my research. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please email me to jeanmaxbsl@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Jean Max B. St Louis
Pastor

IRB Approval

March 9, 2021

Jean Max St Louis
Robert Baker Evans

Re: IRB Application - IRB-FY20-21-261 The Need for A Spiritual Reboot in The Youth of Great Commission Church

Dear Jean Max St Louis and Robert Baker Evans,

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 does not classify as human subjects research. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your IRB application.

Decision: No Human Subjects Research

Explanation: Your study is not considered human subjects research for the following reason:

Your project will consist of quality improvement activities, which are not "designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge" according to 45 CFR 46. 102(l).

Please note that this decision 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 non-human subjects research status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

Also, although you are welcome to use our recruitment and consent templates, you are not required to do so. If you choose to use our documents, please replace the word *research* with the word *project* throughout both documents.

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

Sincerely,

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

