

THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF SECONDARY CHRISTIAN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS  
AS THEY WORK TO FOSTER AN ENVIRONMENT CONDUCIVE TO STUDENT  
BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW DEVELOPMENT:  
A QUALITATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

Margaret E. Pope

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Liberty University

2024

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APPROVED BY:

Roger C. S. Erdvig, EdD, Committee Chair

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this hermeneutical phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of Christian school secondary administrators as they foster an environment conducive to student biblical worldview development. The theory guiding this study is Leithwood's iteration of transformational leadership, as it recognizes the influential role school leaders play in the motivation and growth of teachers. Additional consideration of Erdvig's model of biblical worldview development in evangelical Christian emerging adults was used as the conceptual framework recognizing that the faith elements of worldview formation are unique and relevant to the topic of the study. The central research question was: What are the lived experiences of Christian school secondary administrators as they foster an environment conducive to biblical worldview development? This qualitative, hermeneutic phenomenological study included 12 study participants who were secondary school administrators serving at ACSI-accredited Christian schools in the United States and who held a role of influence with teachers of Grades 6–12. The research was conducted virtually through interviews, focus groups, and document analysis. An iterative thematic coding approach revealed that administrators support institutional ideals, build relationships and develop people, consider the program framework, and provide instructional support while navigating their emotional considerations related to the task. Administrators fill a multifaceted role vital to fostering an environment conducive to students' biblical worldview formation.

*Keywords:* Biblical worldview, Christian education, transformational leadership, faith development, K-12 education

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## Dedication

To my patient husband and teammate Brian: This would have been impossible without your support. Your patience and partnership in helping me reach my dreams and goals reflect your selfless heart. Thank you for all the cups of coffee and the endless love and encouragement. I am forever grateful. Don't worry, no more degrees!

To my children: May you always see the world through God's lens of truth, acknowledging His faithfulness, mercy, love, and power poured out on you and around you. I pray that through the ups and downs of having your mom in school, you have learned determination, grit, discipline, and, above all, that God is worthy of your best in whatever He calls you to do. A life committed to following Him is a life well lived.

To the memory of Dr. Smith: I am forever grateful that years ago, during my master's program, you encouraged me to pursue my doctorate. You saw things in me that I did not see in myself. You spoke things over me that gave me the confidence to start this new chapter of life. I am grateful for your influence and ministry. I hope to walk it out in a way that honors your investment in me.

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I thank my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. I am undeserving of the unmeasurable grace and undeserved blessings that you have poured on me. Time and again, you patiently allowed me to come to the end of myself so that I could better see you and be blessed by it. All I have done or may do is because of you.

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**the Study details page. Finally, click Initial under Submission Type and choose the Letters tab toward the bottom of the Submission Details page. Your information sheet and final versions of your study documents can also be found on the same page under the Attachments tab.**

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Sincerely,

**G. Michele Baker, PhD, CIP**  
*Administrative Chair*  
**Research Ethics Office**

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### **List of Abbreviations**

Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI)

Christian Philosophy of Education (CPoE)

Professional Learning Community (PLC)



## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### Overview

The purpose of formalized education has been debated over time, constantly affected by the ever-changing influences and demands of current culture, popular ideologies, and dominant philosophical trends (Beckham, 2020; Potgieter, 2016). Similarly, Christian education has been subject to an evolution of its purpose. Charged by changes in culture, schools have more recently adjusted their purpose to focus on the development of biblical worldview or promotion of faith ownership in students (Beckham, 2020; Horan, 2017; Schultz & Swezey, 2013; Setran & Wilhoit, 2020; Swaner & Wolfe, 2021). Some schools are now so deeply committed to these aims that they emphasize the significance of biblical worldview development to their program, reflected in the adoption of mission and vision statements articulating such a purpose. Though the goal is noble, the reality is that the effectiveness is not evident in the current trends of faith ownership among younger generations in the United States (Brandes, 2018; Horan, 2017; Pew Research, 2019; Sire, 2020; Worsley, 2021). Rather than an upward trend in a commitment to the faith, there is an increasing number of young adults who claim that, although they believe in God, they disagree with many tenets of Christianity, questioning or openly rejecting the validity of Christianity's core truth claims (Barna, 2023; Pew Research, 2019). This dichotomy between Christian educational institutions' ideals and young adults' biblical worldview is central to this study. This chapter provides an overview of the historical nature of biblical worldview development within the K-12 Christian school setting, the social impact of biblical worldview development, and the exploration of the applied theoretical and conceptual frameworks. The chapter also maps out the problem, purpose, and research questions, building the rationale and significance of this study.

## **Background**

In a society increasingly disenchanted with religious values and absolute truth, the role of Christian schools in developing faith through effective biblical worldview development is of immense importance to the future of Western Christianity and society in general (Barna, 2023; Esqueda, 2014; Pennings & Wiens, 2011; Pew Research, 2019; Setran & Wilhoit, 2020; Sire, 2020; Smith et al., 2021). Faith is ultimately a work of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, a Christian educator's job is to intentionally develop a student's biblical worldview, which is an act of obedience to biblical commands of training up a younger generation in the truth of who God is. In simple terms, the development of a biblical worldview involves helping students build a lens through which they view the world, resulting in a God-centered perspective that recognizes the supremacy and evidence of God and His truth in all aspects of life (Erdvig, 2021; Esqueda, 2014; Savarirajan & Fong, 2019; Sire, 2020). The background section of this paper will provide context for the development of a biblical worldview in Christian schools by providing an overview of the historical foundation and evolution of Christian education, the social impact of biblical worldview development, and the theoretical and conceptual frameworks driving this study.

### **Historical Context**

Throughout history, the intersection of faith development and education has been complex and dynamic (Esqueda, 2014; Kaak & LaPorte, 2022; Pennings & Wiens, 2011; Setran & Wilhoit, 2020). Far from a new concept, faith-based schooling emerged in the early 12<sup>th</sup> century with the creation of educational institutions in Europe designed to train clergypersons for service in the community (Esqueda, 2014; Richardson, 2019; Savarirajan & Fong, 2019; Setran & Wilhoit, 2020; Swaner & Wolfe, 2021; Wiens et al., 2022). Centuries later, as educational systems were being established in the British American colonies, the tradition of educating for

faith-motivated reasons continued and was evident in all levels of education. Educating young children took place both in homes and schoolhouses and was decidedly Christian, merging reading skills with biblical content using scripture and written prayers as textbooks (Scotchmer, 1984; Swaner & Wolfe, 2021). Through most of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, higher education institutions continued in the manner after their British counterparts, focusing on religious study and practices and helping to fill the demand for clergypersons in a society that had come to expect their presence and practices (Esqueda, 2014; Richardson, 2019; Scotchmer, 1984; Setran & Wilhoit, 2020; Swaner & Wolfe, 2021).

Secular influences began to impact and reshape religious education, changing the function and characteristics of schools. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, secularization altered the face of educational institutions in the United States by eroding many of the long-held spiritual goals and steering educational aims toward business and trade (Esqueda, 2014; Richardson, 2019; Savarirajan & Fong, 2019). The arrival of progressive theorists in education further deepened the rift between the Christian academic community and academia. These theorists introduced an educational approach that minimized the role of the Bible as a text and redefined the role of the student and teacher in the classroom, placing student interest and desire ahead of the previously used, more finite curriculum. The result was a surge of Christian leaders calling for and leading the return to core Christian tenets in educational settings (Scotchmer, 1984; Setran & Wilhoit, 2020). As the government gained control of educational institutions and progressive thought challenged long-held Christian values, institutions began to separate from the previous religious association, marking the birth of the clear division between secular and spiritual educational environments (Savarirajan & Fong, 2019; Setran & Wilhoit, 2020; Swaner & Wolfe, 2021). By the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the opening of Catholic and Protestant private schools was widespread. Many of

these schools were established in response to an increasingly secular American society and designed to fulfill the call to Christian discipleship through upholding the tradition of prayer and the Bible in the classroom. In addition, some Christian schools formed in response to the varying social issues of the decades. The desegregation of schools and the pervasive sex and drug culture of the '60s and '70s also catalyzed the formation of schools (Denig, 2004; Scotchmer, 1984; Swaner & Wolfe, 2021). Despite the adverse effects that postmodern thought has had on culture, specifically the eroding of Christian morals and principles, it also birthed an era focused on the intentionality of spiritual formation in the church and Christian education (Ford, 2020; Raeder, 2017; Setran & Wilhoit, 2020).

Despite the drastic cultural changes of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Christian schools experienced a revival of interest and enrollment (Lee & Price, 2022). The closing of public schools during the COVID-19 pandemic led many parents to look for in-person schooling options. At Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) schools, the change of trajectory initiated by the pandemic increased student enrollment by an average of 35% during the 2020–2021 school year (Lee & Price, 2022). The following year, the national enrollment trend continued in ACSI schools with an average 23% increase in enrollment. The surge of growth over the past three years is attributed in part to continued COVID-19 regulations and the attention brought to liberal philosophies such as critical race theory and gender identity being taught in schools and the polarizing views on both topics (Ford, 2020; Green, 2018; Keegan, 2021; Lee & Price, 2022). As parents fled public education, private Christian schools experienced an influx of students, breaking the stagnant enrollment trends of the decade prior (Barna Research Group, 2017; Green, 2018). The state of Florida alone showed that enrollment at private schools in Florida reached a record high in 2020–2021 (Florida Department of Education, 2022). The increased

enrollment in Christian schools during a time in Western civilization when the number of committed Christians continued to decline (Barna, 2023; Barna Research Group, 2019; Pew Research, 2019) rapidly offered an opportunity for reimagining an educational institution more intensely focused on an output that reflects the realization of the core goals of Christianity. The uniqueness of increased Christian school enrollment (Lee & Price, 2022) in a culture with a decreased interest in faith (Barna, 2023; Jones, 2022; Raeder, 2017; Savarirajan & Fong, 2019) has ushered in essential terms such as biblical worldview development, biblical or faith integration, and discipleship. Recognizing the sometimes indistinguishable but necessary terminology of the language of faith development is essential in realizing specific Christian school outcomes (Frye, 2019; Naugle, 2002; Wallace, 2021).

### **Social Context**

The decline in the number of practicing Christians, as well as the observable erosion of morals, has significant social implications for both secular and Christian worlds (Barna, 2023; Esqueda, 2014; Ford, 2020; Pennings & Wiens, 2011; Pew Research, 2019; Setran & Wilhoit, 2020; Sire, 2020). The position of postmodernism as a dominant social ideology has heavily influenced today's culture, declaring both a temporal and metaphysical war on Christianity (Ford, 2020; Setran & Wilhoit, 2020; Sire, 2020). Though difficult to define, postmodernism promotes the adoption of multiple philosophical approaches in place of the traditional Christian metanarrative. By promoting the absence of an objective reality, characteristic postmodern beliefs in self-truth and self-satisfaction have contributed to social unrest, conflict, divisiveness, and a decline in moral responsibility nationally (Ford, 2020; Raeder, 2017; Setran & Wilhoit, 2020; Sire, 2020). In the past decade, the number of individuals who say they believe in God has declined by 10%, while the number of professing atheists among Generation Z has increased to a

level that exceeds the sum of atheists in all other living generations (Jones, 2022; Raeder, 2017; Savarirajan & Fong, 2019). Countering the core beliefs of Christianity, postmodernism has contributed to a significant falling away from the faith in emerging adults (Barna, 2023; Erdvig, 2020; Ford, 2020) but has also promoted discussion and emphasis on spiritual formation (Barna, 2023; Setran & Wilhoit, 2020). Postmodernism is antithetical to a biblical worldview. Without a well-developed biblical worldview, Christians risk compartmentalizing their faith and adopting a “two-story” dualism that skews an individual’s worldview, which can result in abandoning one’s faith (Barna, 2023; Billingsley & Nassaji, 2020; Esqueda, 2014; Wallace, 2021). Christian schools should capitalize on the influx of Christian families choosing Christian school settings to instill values and morals in their children (Barna, 2023; Barna Research Group, 2017; Green, 2018).

This study on biblical worldview formation is vital for Christian school administrators who may benefit from utilizing research to seize the opportunity to connect Christ to all parts of academic life, acknowledging that “a biblical worldview is essential for complete understanding and living according to the Christian faith” (Esqueda, 2014, p. 93). However, the lack of a conceptual framework for biblical worldview development, as well as the uncertainty of the role an administrator plays in leading teachers and schools to meet these goals, has perpetuated a growing concern over the effectiveness of the Christian school model to impact student faith positively (Erdvig, 2020, 2021; Horan, 2017; Horner, 2020; Schultz & Swezey, 2013; Smith et al., 2021; Wallace, 2021; Wilkerson, 2022). With the challenge of forming a biblical worldview in students who are statistically less amicable to and familiar with Christianity, Christian school leaders and educators should look to research for areas of focus that will help produce graduates who not only contribute to society in meaningful ways but who, more importantly, develop a

life-long commitment to Christ (Barna, 2023; Erdvig, 2020; Horan, 2017; LeBlanc & Slaughter, 2012).

### **Theoretical Context**

Numerous attempts to develop a framework for faith and biblical worldview development have been made (Davis, 2021; Fowler, 1995; Horner, 2020; Parker, 2010; Worsley, 2021); however, it is the work of Roger Erdvig (2021) that has recently produced a conceptual framework that not only illustrates the complex and multi-faceted nature of biblical worldview development but also inadvertently confirms much of the recent literature on aspects of faith ownership in young adults. Erdvig's (2020) model of biblical worldview development in evangelical Christian emerging adults identifies three gears that align with Sire's (2020) three dispositions of worldview. Each of the three gears represents areas of life that contribute to the early foundation of a biblical worldview: *means*, *prompts*, and *past influences* (Erdvig, 2020). Recent research supports all three areas of the conceptual framework Erdvig outlines in his study. The importance of mentorship, an element of both the *means* and *past influences* gears, has continued to emerge in research as a valuable experience that helps develop a biblical worldview (Cohen-Malayev et al., 2014). Within a school setting, mentoring is typically a student–teacher relationship that provides a role model for a younger believer. Findings in K-12 and higher education settings and general discipleship research agree that promoting and encouraging meaningful relationships with mentors benefit faith development. However, the effectiveness and commitment to fostering relationships vary significantly from institution to institution (Allotta, 2013; Cohen-Malayev et al., 2014; Horan, 2017; Ramirez et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2021; Wilkerson, 2022; Yonker et al., 2019). Erdvig also recognized the role of training and education for worldview development and included it within the *past influences* gear of the

framework. Current research confirms that comprehensive teaching of God's sovereignty over all things in the academic curriculum, coupled with training for analysis and higher-order thinking, is a more effective approach to biblical worldview development than an annual Bible course (Barna, 2023; Horner, 2020; Kim, 2020; Richardson, 2019). This study looks to extend the research on worldview development by understanding the experiences of Christian school secondary administrators with biblical worldview development in students.

Transformational leadership theory asserts that a school administrator's influence can positively impact a student's school experience and the effectiveness of the classroom teacher (Bass, 1990; Berkovich & Eyal, 2021; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Liu, 2021). Transformational leadership theory recognizes the unique relationship between a leader's approach and the subordinate's resulting efficacy and motivation (Bass, 1990; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Liu, 2021). Likewise, the school administrator's leadership is the second most important factor for student success after the teacher's effectiveness (Bass, 1990; Berkovich & Eyal, 2021; Bluestein & Goldschmidt, 2021). Teacher Bible knowledge alone is not a determining factor in effective biblical worldview development; Christian educators must also be aware of the facets of life and the educational processes that contribute to effective biblical worldview development. This study looks to extend the transformational leadership theory by recognizing that although research confirms the primary influence of the classroom teacher in affecting a student's worldview (Esqueda, 2014; Idris et al., 2021; Valiandes & Neophytou, 2018), it is often site administrators that mitigate the emphasis and availability of professional development for teachers in this area (Clausen et al., 2022; Martin, 2018; Setran & Wilhoit, 2020). Considering the missional nature of Christian schools, transformational leaders are suited for moral and value-laden work, more easily evoking change and commitment through motivating followers to work towards a



common cause (Berkovich & Eyal, 2021; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Liu, 2021). With Christian education ascribing to the lofty ideal of educating for a higher moral purpose, this research seeks to add to the existing literature by examining the leader's role in biblical worldview development in K-12 schools.

### **Problem Statement**

The problem is that emerging adults are abandoning their faith or denying Christ at higher occurrences than ever before (Barna, 2023; Brandes, 2018; Erdvig, 2020; Horan, 2017; Pew Research, 2019; Sire, 2020; Worsley, 2021), suggesting a younger target age for intentional biblical worldview formation. K-12 Christian schools are presented with a greater need to implement and achieve effective biblical worldview development in students. Many private Christian schools stand on missional statements explicitly naming faith ownership through a biblical worldview as a foundational element of the institution (Erdvig, 2020, 2021; Horan, 2017; Horner, 2020; Schultz & Swezey, 2013; Smith et al., 2021; Wallace, 2021; Wilkerson, 2022), but survey data shows a continued decline in faith ownership among younger generations (Barna, 2023; Barna Research Group, 2019; Brandes, 2018; Horan, 2017; Pew Research, 2019; Sire, 2020; Worsley, 2021). Though the decline in faith ownership and biblical worldview (Barna, 2023) may be attributed to multiple causes, there is a question as to whether the expressed goals of Christian education are accurate claims and, if so, how schools are measuring their progress towards their goals (Dougherty et al., 2022; Erdvig, 2020; Pennings & Wiens, 2011). Minimal research has been completed investigating biblical worldview development in K-12 settings, with the majority of the existing research focusing on higher education settings (Dougherty et al., 2022; Erdvig, 2020; Kanitz, 2005; Riggers-Piehl & Sax, 2018; Smith et al., 2021; Yonker et al.,

2019). However, extending the nominal research on the topic is increasingly important for K-12 schools.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this hermeneutical phenomenological study is to understand the lived experiences of Christian school secondary administrators as they work to foster an environment conducive to student biblical worldview development. At this stage in the research, biblical worldview formation will be generally defined as the intentional development of the lens that an individual uses to view the world, its problems, culture, and morals, built upon a deep understanding of scripture and recognition of God’s sovereignty (Wallace, 2021). The transformational leadership theory guides this study (Burns, 1978; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). When applied to educational settings, this theory suggests that leaders who use specific strategies and adopt certain behaviors when interacting with stakeholders are linked with higher levels of student achievement, teacher growth, and institutional change (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Leithwood et al., 2020).

### **Significance of the Study**

This study is significant in both the area of transformational leadership and biblical worldview development. The theoretical significance related to transformational leadership considers the successful application of the theory to various contexts, evidenced by a well-established theoretical research base. The empirical significance links the study to K-12 Christian educators and students. In contrast, the practical significance offers relevance to all of Christianity by truly recognizing and focusing on the biblical command and promise to “train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not depart from it” (*English Standard Bible*, 2001/2007, Proverbs 22:6).

## Theoretical

This study is theoretically significant because it explores how the transformational leadership theory may play a role for Christian school administrators and their work to foster an environment conducive to student biblical worldview development. The literature on transformational leadership is well-established and demonstrates superiority over other forms of leadership. The defining characteristics of the transformational leadership theory suggest a meaningful connection and relevance to faith-based educational institutions (Bass, 1990; Bluestein & Goldschmidt, 2021; Goddard et al., 2019; Leithwood et al., 2020; Martin, 2018). Though teachers are often directly tasked with biblical integration when engaging in instructional design (Erdvig, 2021), school leaders who adopt a transformational leadership style are constantly involved in formation by assuming a leadership style that is associated with adding meaning to work and eliciting an emotional response that results in a better response from followers (Bass, 1990; Berkovich & Eyal, 2021; Bluestein & Goldschmidt, 2021; Burns, 1978; Serin & Akkaya, 2020). Christian education is often considered a moral imperative where educators are called to contribute to God-ordained work. Because of the moral nature of Christian education, there is reason to believe that the success of transformational leadership theory in other contexts—such as politics, business, and secular education—can be replicated when engaging in biblical worldview development in school settings (Bass, 1990; Berkovich & Eyal, 2021; Bluestein & Goldschmidt, 2021; Burns, 1978; Çetin et al., 2021; Goddard et al., 2019; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Leithwood et al., 2020; Liu, 2021; Prior, 2018; Swaner & Wolfe, 2021). Though this study does not comprehensively measure the effects of a transformational leader on outcomes, it does provide a foundation for further investigation by exploring leaders' experiences in this area of Christian education.

## **Empirical**

Historically, research regarding faith development has focused on students in institutions of higher education because the college years were believed to be the most pivotal point in which a student decides to leave or cleave to their faith (Dougherty et al., 2022; Erdvig, 2020; Kim, 2020; Parks, 2011; Richardson, 2019; Riggers-Piehl & Sax, 2018; Yonker et al., 2019). This study is empirically significant because it recognizes that the age at which young people disassociate with their faith is younger than ever before (Pew Research, 2019; Smith et al., 2021), creating a need for research to be extended to students before entering the college years. Waiting until early adulthood increases the likelihood that an individual's worldview is already well formed and will need more work to readdress misconceptions (Barna, 2023). However, there is little research on biblical worldview development in K-12 settings, let alone the effectiveness of these efforts (Smith et al., 2021). Exploring the experiences of secondary Christian school leaders as they work to foster an environment conducive to student biblical worldview development offers an opportunity for a solid foundation to be formed for much-needed future research in K-12 Christian school settings.

## **Practical**

The practical significance of this research related to developing a Biblical worldview is increasingly essential in a world growing more oppositional to biblical truth (Pennings & Wiens, 2011; Pew Research, 2019; Sire, 2020). Christian schools are not solely responsible for the deterioration of faith (Wilkerson, 2022); the dominant societal philosophy of postmodernism plays a role in challenging faith ownership in students. Postmodernism is directly opposed to many of the core values of Christianity (Ford, 2020; Raeder, 2017; Sire, 2020). With society, pop culture, and media all promoting incompatible messages, Christian schools have a greater

responsibility to instill a biblical worldview in students (Frye, 2019; Pennings & Wiens, 2011). Haphazard approaches to biblical integration have yet to be effective in the past and offer little substance for future change (Erdvig, 2021; Naugle, 2002; Swaner & Wolfe, 2021). This study looks to understand the experience of biblical worldview development efforts from the top down in Christian schools.

### **Research Questions**

The proposed research questions lean on leadership theory by exploring school leaders' influences, experiences, and understandings in promoting biblical worldview development in K-12 school settings. Transformational leaders heavily influence teacher efficacy and success in student learning through increasing motivation and placing emphasis on shared goals (Bluestein & Goldschmidt, 2021; Çetin et al., 2021; Goddard et al., 2019; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Leithwood et al., 2020; Liu, 2021; Martin, 2018; Swaner & Wolfe, 2021). In considering transformational leadership theory and Erdvig's conceptual framework of biblical worldview development, this study seeks to add meaningful data to aid in a deeper understanding of the actions and understandings of the intentional ways Christian school leaders work towards producing graduates with a well-developed biblical worldview.

#### **Central Research Question**

What are the lived experiences of Christian school secondary administrators as they foster an environment conducive to student biblical worldview development?

School leaders are critical to the “development of school climate, instructional effectiveness, and student achievement.” (Beckman et al., 2012, p. 104). They influence student success and achievement, second only to teachers (Bluestein & Goldschmidt, 2021), and can help shape conditions that promote meaningful interactions between students and teachers

(Riggers-Piehl & Sax, 2018). However, when it comes to biblical worldview development, little is known about the role of Christian school administrators. Research primarily focuses on higher education, but the emerging data indicate that students come to college with well-established worldviews that are difficult to change (Kanitz, 2005; Wallace, 2021; Wiens et al., 2022; Yonker et al., 2019), suggesting that there is a need to understand the biblical worldview efforts in K-12 settings (Schultz & Swezey, 2013).

### **Sub-Question One**

How do Christian school secondary administrators engage, equip, and motivate teachers and students to engage in biblical worldview development?

The heart of schools is learning and growth. Considerable research has focused on student growth and the influence of teachers (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Leithwood et al., 2020; White et al., 2017) and administrators (Bluestein & Goldschmidt, 2021; Leithwood et al., 2020; White et al., 2017) directly and indirectly on students. Literature supports growth trends for students and teachers, but little information considers areas specific to student biblical worldview development (Horan, 2017; Smith et al., 2021). Additionally, teachers coming into Christian schools have significant needs for spiritual growth (Buchanan, 2020).

### **Sub-Question Two**

What academic strategies and methods do Christian school secondary administrators promote for biblical worldview development?

Recent research on biblical worldview development suggests a strong correlation between formation and learning strategies and methods (Erdvig, 2020; Esqueda, 2014). Christian K-12 educational institutions often claim to have a well-integrated curriculum, but understanding

what is done and why it is done will help to assess the efforts accurately (Boerema, 2006; Esqueda, 2014; Horner, 2020; Kaak & LaPorte, 2022).

### **Sub-Question Three**

How do Christian school secondary administrators shape a school environment focused on opportunities for effective biblical worldview development?

Biblical worldview formation does not happen through biblical knowledge alone (Erdvig, 2020; Horan, 2017). Elements of formation consider a holistic approach that allows personal meaning and application (Setran & Wilhoit, 2020; Wallace, 2021). In school settings, Christian school administrators should align school missions with an environment conducive to biblical worldview development. However, more evidence is needed to comprehensively consider how biblical worldview shapes the K-12 school infrastructure (Horan, 2017; Martin, 2018; Schultz & Swezey, 2013).

### **Definitions**

The terms listed and defined below are relevant to understanding this study's core concepts.

1. *Biblical integration* – The joining of two distinct ideas together, often coordinating discipline-specific content and biblical content (Horner, 2020; Richardson, 2019).
2. *Biblical worldview* – A framework for viewing the world, its problems, culture, and morals built upon the orientation of an individual's heart and a deep understanding of scripture and its foundation for an adopted set of presuppositions (Sire, 2020; Wallace, 2021).
3. *Biblical worldview development* – The intentional process of shaping the primary lens through which an individual views the world, resulting in a God-centered perspective that

recognizes the supremacy and evidence of God and His truth in all aspects of life (Erdvig, 2021; Esqueda, 2014; Savarirajan & Fong, 2019).

4. *Discipleship* – The ongoing process of guiding a Christ-follower to grow in their faith practices and knowledge, focusing on total commitment to Christ and his teachings (Allotta, 2013; Frye, 2019).
5. *Orthodoxy* – The belief that the teaching and subsequent learning of correct doctrine are essential to strengthening faith (Setran & Wilhoit, 2020; Sorenson, 2014).  
*Orthopraxy* – The belief that practicing Christian disciplines is essential in strengthening faith (Setran & Wilhoit, 2020; Sorenson, 2014).
6. *Postmodernism* – A worldview that assumes the death of God and denies any universal standard for justice or truth in favor of self-determined values established outside of reason or science (Sire, 2020).
7. *Spiritual formation* – Habits and dispositions developed over a lifetime through instruction and repeated practice that shape morals and virtues that align individuals more closely with Christ (Horan, 2017; Setran & Wilhoit, 2020).
8. *Transformational leadership* – A theory of leadership that asserts that the leadership style of a dynamic leader results in a lasting change in individuals using motivation, an appeal to morality, or an attached meaning to work rather than directives (Bluestein & Goldschmidt, 2021; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Mitchell, 2019).

### **Summary**

In Romans 11:1-5, God promises that there will always be a remnant of believers in the world despite society's condition or the rejection of Christ and faith. This reminder does not excuse Christians from biblical commands to intentionally share the Gospel and love others.



Christian school educators can use education to carry out orders, disciple, and develop young Christian men and women. Though schools are not the sole factor influencing students' faith, their role as a support to the home and church offers significant value in developing Christians prepared to walk out their faith in a counter-Christ culture (Erdvig, 2021). "Integration of faith and learning shapes a Christian worldview, instills moral values" (Savarirajan & Fong, 2019, p. 2), and encourages Christians to minister to others. With alarming data indicating the rapid decline of believing and practicing Christians in the younger generation (Barna Research Group, 2019; Jones, 2022; Pew Research, 2019), the purpose of this hermeneutical phenomenological study is to understand the lived experiences of Christian school secondary administrators as they work to foster an environment conducive to student biblical worldview development. The problem is that emerging adults are abandoning their faith or denying Christ at higher occurrences than ever before (Brandes, 2018; Erdvig, 2020; Horan, 2017; Pew Research, 2019; Sire, 2020; Worsley, 2021), suggesting a younger target age for intentional biblical worldview formation.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Overview**

A systematic review of the literature was conducted to explore research related to the experiences of Christian school secondary administrators tasked to foster an environment conducive to student biblical worldview development and to explore literature related to the formation of a biblical worldview, particularly in Christian school settings. This chapter will review the current literature related to the topic of study. The first section will discuss two relevant frameworks: the transformational leadership theory and the model for biblical worldview development in emerging adults. Following will be a synthesis of the related literature on leadership theory, the role of faith frameworks in research, the historical role of Christian education, and the cultural conditions impacting biblical worldview. The synthesis will also focus on the language of faith development, critical understandings of the elements of biblical worldview development in schools, and specific components of the K-12 school setting.

### **Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks**

Two frameworks support this study: the theory of transformational leadership and the model for biblical worldview development in emerging adults. The transformational leadership theory provides a framework for understanding the role of school leaders in the school improvement process—specifically, the impact leaders can have on student achievement and improved teacher efficacy. Though the influence of school leaders on student learning and teacher efficacy is well-documented (Bass, 1990; Berkovich & Eyal, 2021; Bluestein & Goldschmidt, 2021; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Liu, 2021), the use of transformational leadership theory in faith-based educational settings is minimal in the scholarly literature (Prior, 2018). An established faith framework is also an essential consideration for Christian schools looking to

develop the biblical worldview of students (Erdvig, 2020; Fowler, 1995; Parker, 2010; Worsley, 2021). Erdvig's (2020) model for biblical worldview development in emerging adults provides a conceptual framework for the study by identifying themes that contribute to developing a student's worldview (Erdvig, 2020).

### **Theory of Transformational Leadership**

The transformational leadership theory recognizes that leaders who successfully motivate and unify a group of workers toward a worthwhile common cause will elicit better results than those who function as managers (Bass, 1990; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). Transformational leadership theory was introduced through the work of Burns (1978), who recognized that when vague definitions of leadership combined with an elitist mentality, the product was often an ineffective leader. Burns challenged the top-down transactional leadership style that was prominent at the time, noting that leaders who challenged the norm and employed strategies of motivation that included a moral or emotional appeal found loyalty and a more willing following (Berkovich & Eyal, 2021; Burns, 1978). Transformational leadership theory began in political arenas, moved to the business world, and, in the early 2000s, was applied to educational settings. Over time, research has shown positive correlations between transformational leadership behaviors and student success. At the root of the transformational leadership style is a challenge from leaders to employees to strive for a higher moral responsibility. In turn, Burns believed that the metric by which leaders are judged should not be the status or position held but rather the social change and the positive impact on individual needs that a leader is associated with (Berkovich & Eyal, 2021; Burns, 1978; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). The call to a higher moral standard is foundational to Christian education and suggests the suitable application of transformational leadership theory in these settings. As Christian school leaders engage in the

critical work of Christ-centered education, transformational leadership theory may provide insight into the decisions and strategies used to motivate, encourage, and direct teachers as they engage with students to educate and build a biblical worldview.

### **A Conceptual Framework for Biblical Worldview Development**

Many attempts have been made to provide a framework or theory for the complex process of faith development or biblical worldview formation (Erdvig, 2020). Even the concept of worldview is complex and has been explored by many philosophers and authors (Hand, 2012; Schaeffer, 1968). Sire (2020) described worldview as a commitment, a heart orientation, and a set of assumptions that shape an individual's world perspective. Independently, each identified worldview characteristic alone is complex, challenging to teach, and difficult to measure. When merged and considered as a whole, understanding the intricacies of worldview requires more than a casual consideration. The multiple facets of a worldview may explain why it remains difficult to fit worldview development into a formula or develop a tool to measure it.

Erdvig's (2020) research on developing a biblical worldview is a significant addition to the research on faith frameworks. Motivated by personal experience in Christian education in K-12 settings, Erdvig completed extensive research to develop a biblical worldview development framework in emerging adults. Emerging adults, or individuals between 18 and 24 years old, are at a stage considered crucial for worldview development (Erdvig, 2021; Fowler, 1995). Many have left the safety and guidance of home and headed off to college. Even at Christian higher learning institutions, the research showed that most students arriving as first-year students had a concerning deficit in understanding their beliefs and faith, resulting in a rocky biblical worldview (Wallace, 2021).

Erdvig (2020, 2021) considered Sire's (2020) definition of worldview and the associated

dimensions of worldview: an individual's heart orientation, truth propositions, and behavioral alignment and began to explore the development and formation of each component, focusing research on young adult participants, exploring the shaping elements of their biblical worldview. Erdvig's (2020, 2021) subsequent grounded research study focused on a group of emerging adults nominated by others as individuals who stood out among their peers because of the perceived strength of their biblical worldview. The reflective understanding and articulation of the process of worldview development by the emerging adults in the study can be used to consider experiences before the age of 18 that schools may guide students through. The data and resulting framework of Erdvig's study may provide meaningful insights into the key areas that K-12 Christian schools can intentionally address when working towards developing or supporting biblical worldview development in students.

### **Related Literature**

This section discusses the transformational leadership theory specific to education and related literature on the conceptual framework for biblical worldview development. Later, the current trends and foundational understandings of biblical worldview development will be explored. First is an overview of the language surrounding biblical worldview development, distinguishing the common vocabulary used to describe the terms used when describing faith development. Next, the critical understanding of biblical worldview development in K-12 schools will review the literature-related themes related to biblical worldview development based in part on the components of Erdvig's (2020, 2021) conceptual framework. An overview of educational settings will be presented, emphasizing the applied theoretical framework of transformational leadership theory and the role of school administrators in K-12 settings. Finally, this section will conclude with a synthesis of biblical worldview development in Christian

schools and the importance of this study.

### **Leadership Theory in Education**

The transformational leadership theory recognizes that leaders who successfully motivate and unify a group of workers towards a worthwhile common cause will see better results than those who function as managers (Bass, 1990; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). Burns' (1978) theory outlined important distinctions between transformational and well-known transactional leadership (Anderson, 2017; Schrik & Wasonga, 2019). Initial work on transformational leadership theory was applied to political arenas with a focus on leaders running for or holding positions in all branches of government (Berkovich & Eyal, 2021; Burns, 1978; Liu, 2021; Mitchell, 2019). Burns (1978) also extended the theory to religious sectors and examined the relationship between church leaders and outcomes (Berkovich & Eyal, 2021; Mitchell, 2019). He explored the leadership style of religious pastors, finding that those who demonstrated transformational leadership characteristics experienced better attendance from church members.

Bernard Bass (1990) expounded upon Burns' work, applying transformational leadership theory to the business world. Bass found that transformational leadership could increase employee performance, effort, commitment, and loyalty in workplace settings (Bass, 1990; Berkovich & Eyal, 2021; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Liu, 2021). His work also demonstrated how a leader's capacity for transformational leadership could be measured and improved through professional development and personal evaluation (Bass, 1990; Hail et al., 2011). Bass was careful not to over-apply transformational leadership, recognizing that a leader may sometimes need to utilize transactional behaviors as corrective or informative measures in scenarios that require directives. Successful leaders may primarily demonstrate transformational characteristics; however, many must also use transactional behaviors when intervention is

necessary (Bass, 1990; Burns, 1978). Bass's research primarily focused on business settings and the consistently favorable impact of transformational leaders on employee motivation, improved performance, commitment to workplace goals, social change, and overall organizational success.

Many examples of successful transformational leaders can be found throughout the business world. For example, Wilson, former chief executive officer of Boeing, was credited with the organization's turnaround in the early 1970s after an organizational crisis (Burns, 1978). He challenged the status quo of the organization's culture and raised standards and expectations. Despite being a demanding boss, his charisma, willingness to push toward advancement and greatness, and individual consideration of employee needs and growth helped catapult Boeing from a struggling company to a highly successful one (Burns, 1978). The early work of both Bass (1990) and Burns (1978) suggested applying transformational leadership to other fields (Liu, 2021).

Leithwood and associates (2005, 2020) were the first to apply the transformational leadership theory to educational leaders in school settings (Berkovich & Eyal, 2021; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). Leithwood's work on transformational educational leadership is extensive and is considered seminal in the field of education (Liu, 2021; Mitchell, 2019). Leithwood's iteration of the theory serves as a primary basis for this study. This theory has received increased attention in recent years as educators continue to address low student achievement by exploring influences both in and outside schools (Bass, 1990; Berkovich & Eyal, 2021; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Liu, 2021). Characteristically, the transformational leadership theory asserts that as leaders promote ethical behavior and elicit support for the institutional mission or vision, employee motivation and effectiveness increase (Bass, 1990; Berkovich & Eyal, 2021; Bluestein & Goldschmidt, 2021; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Liu, 2021).

The current study utilizes the theoretical framework of transformational leadership by recognizing the vital role that Christian school administrators play in creating meaningful classroom and campus change. Students are influenced by teachers, and teachers by school leaders, reiterating the crucial position of leadership (Çetin et al., 2021; Goddard et al., 2019; Idris et al., 2021; Lee & Swaner, 2023; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Leithwood et al., 2020; Liu, 2021; Valiandes & Neophytou, 2018). The transformational leadership theory is widely accepted as the most effective form of school leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, positively impacting student performance, school climate, teacher performance, and innovation (Berkovich & Eyal, 2021; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Liu, 2021). With an emphasis on creating a shared purpose rooted in common values or moral convictions, the theoretical framework aligns with the underlying goals of Christian education. Christian schools primarily exist to offer education from a Christian view based on Christ's redemptive and transformative power. A transformational leader who can build a shared vision will elicit higher motivation and effort among subordinates, resulting in institutional and human change (Bass, 1990; Berkovich & Eyal, 2021; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Liu, 2021; Martin, 2018). When this vision is based on the critical work of biblical worldview development in students, the potential for change is more significant. There is no greater calling for Christian educators than to “train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not depart from it” (*English Standard Bible*, 2001/2007, Proverbs 22:6). Biblical worldview training efforts under a transformational leader may have the potential to elicit an intentional and successful approach to this foundational purpose of Christian education by offering a valuable framework to view the role of Christian school leaders in developing the faith of students at their schools (Al-Husseini et al., 2021).

### **How Faith is Formed**



Understanding the complex development of an individual's faith has long been a subject of interest and research (Erdvig, 2021; Fowler, 1995; Parker, 2010; Worsley, 2021). Attempts to measure and evaluate both the formation and state of an individual's faith have gained little traction and are not generally widely applicable or transferrable. The cognitive, affective, and relational elements of faith and related constructs have made faith theories elusive (Parker, 2010; Sire, 2020). James Fowler's (1995) faith development theory is one of the most well-known. Though frequently quoted in the body of existing research, understanding the shortcomings of this theory is essential in the rationale behind the selection of Erdvig's (2021) framework for this study.

For nearly three decades, Fowler's (1995) faith development theory held strong promise as a theory to explain the faith formation process. Fowler presented his theory as the only empirically supported faith-related theory. His complex, nuanced theory melded developmental psychology with faith development, resulting in a staged theory acknowledging the influence of social and cognitive theories (Jones, 2023; Parker, 2010). Fowler (1995) believed that faith develops alongside cognitive development. As children mature and their capacity for cognitive understanding increases, they also progress through related stages of understanding in faith, making faith less of a religious experience and more of a meaning-making process of the natural and supernatural worlds (Erdvig, 2020; Parker, 2010). Borrowing from the work of Kohlberg, Piaget, and Erikson, Fowler identified seven stages that define a developmentally appropriate sequential progression through faith development (Davis, 2021; Worsley, 2021).

Stage zero, also called the primal faith stage, lacks descriptive structures due to the lack of verbal skills of infants and young toddlers in this category but is represented by hopelessness and discovery. During this stage, infants begin to understand the absence of caregivers and

develop a dependency, or faith, in them (Fowler, 1995; Parker, 2010; Worsley, 2021). Stage one, the intuitive–projective faith stage, is characterized by pre-operational and egocentric thinking often found in the early stages of child development. A sense of right or wrong emerges but is strictly governed by applying rewards and punishments. Considered relatively dynamic, this stage is marked by growing awareness of taboo topics while still heavily saturated with fantasy elements. Stage two is the mythic–literal faith stage. During this stage, individuals begin demonstrating concrete and basic thinking about faith. Young children start sorting out fantasy and reality, constructing a more linear, rational, and predictive reality. Grand stories illustrated as part of their faith now connect meaningfully to life. Stage three is the synthetic–conventional faith stage. Individuals typically arrive at this stage during adolescence and may stay through adulthood (Parker, 2010). By the time individuals come to this stage, they have had significant exposure to people from different backgrounds and opinions. The new perspectives result in an intertwining of interpersonal relationships with an individual’s held faith. Acceptance, guidance, and discipline are no longer found internally but outside of self through trusted adults, organizations, and God. Stage four is individuated–reflective faith, which can also occur in late adolescence and extend throughout life. During this stage, individuals begin questioning previously held beliefs about faith and the structures they were familiar with. The influences of politics and history become apparent and often act as an impetus for examining one’s faith. Conjunctive faith is the fifth stage. Though not often reached, when it is, it usually occurs in mid-life. This stage is characterized by divergent thought that evolves from earlier either–or relationships of beliefs and embraces multiple categories and perspectives. Universalizing faith is the final—and rare—stage. During this stage, an individual’s faith becomes inseparable from being. At this stage, the demonstration of individuals’ faith transforms the culture around them

(Fowler, 1995; Parker, 2010).

After years of showing promise in faith development, Fowler's (1995) work has been discredited by the lack of empirical evidence. Although the first three categories of Fowler's faith development theory have some empirical justification, these findings are primarily related to established face validity (Parker, 2010). The later stages of Fowler's theory have not been confirmed in research. The faith development theory is repeatedly used in research but is primarily referenced in doctoral dissertations (Parker, 2010; Worsley, 2021). Not only has Fowler's theory failed to be confirmed, but it also separates faith as a neutral construct from religious faith (Jones, 2023; Parker, 2010). Fowler (1995) addressed the opposition to the theory from secular and religious groups who expressed concern over using the term faith in the theory. Fowler asserted that faith was the most appropriate term and "distinguished faith from religion and belief while showing some of their relations" (Fowler, 1995, p. 92). Even though Christian educators and researchers have attempted to apply Fowler's faith development theory to Christian school settings, Fowler's acknowledgment that the theory is not religious, coupled with the theoretical roots in humanism (Jones, 2023; Parker, 2010; Worsley, 2021; Wyckoff, 1995), leaves reason to question Fowler's theory as a fit for faith development and specifically for developing a biblical worldview.

Many Christian educational institutions have abandoned the formulaic and humanistic approach to understanding faith development and focused on the concept of biblical worldview (Erdvig, 2020, 2021; Esqueda, 2014; Frye, 2019). The formation of a biblical worldview is complex. Every individual has a worldview uniquely shaped by multiple forces. These forces exist both outside an individual and internally through cognitive and emotional processing (Smith & Parker, 2020) and can be self-initiated or forced by an outside person or situation. All

individuals have negative, positive, and neutral life experiences that contribute to forming worldviews (Erdvig, 2021; Fowler, 1995). A worldview consists not only of the knowledge a person holds but also considers the desires and behaviors of the individual (Erdvig, 2021; Fowler, 1995; Sire, 2020).

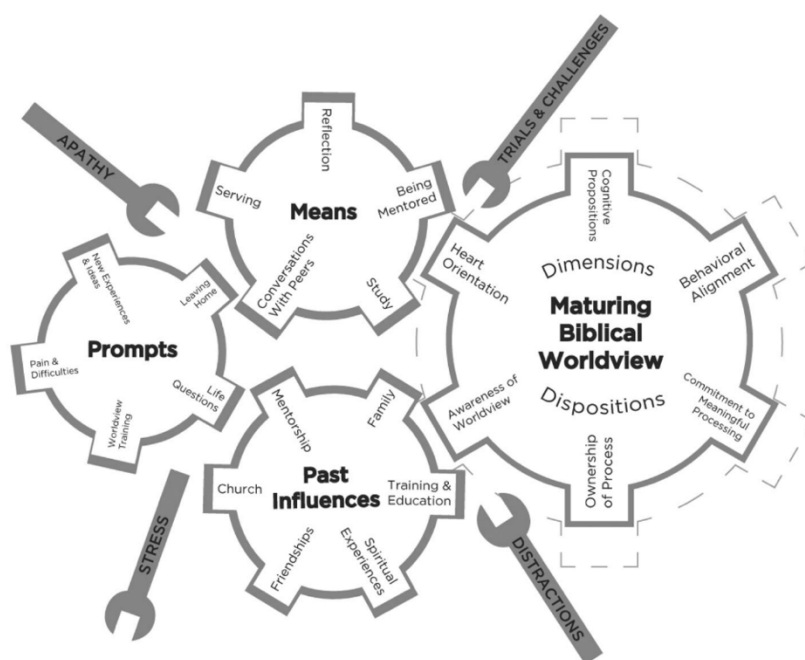
In a postmodern world, most areas of culture and secular academia are saturated in worldviews that are not only counter but are often hostile towards a Christian worldview (Ford, 2020; Raeder, 2017; Setran & Wilhoit, 2020; Sire, 2020). Postmodernism solidified the plurality of worldviews characteristic of the modern world by asserting the impossibility of knowing or defining absolute truth (Naugle, 2002; Sire, 2020). As a result, the absolute truth claims of Christianity are often viewed as narrow-minded and ignorant. In a postmodern world, any perspective that claims to be exclusively correct has been shunned and negatively labeled (Sire, 2020). Counter to many cultures' current norms, biblically-grounded Christianity dictates an absolute moral code set by God while refuting modern claims that morality, truth, and even existence are subjective. To set aside the absolutes of Christianity would mean a denial of the central tenets of the faith (Sire, 2020). With growing opposition in and out of academia, some predict that the claims of absolute truth within Christianity will one day be considered a subjective theoretical approach to knowing rather than a mainstream worldview (Ford, 2020; Raeder, 2017; Sire, 2020). Even today, qualifying a worldview as Christian would be immensely problematic because, within Christianity, there are many different beliefs, both doctrinally and related to Christian living (Sire, 2020; Smith & Parker, 2020).

Presented as four interlocking gears, the visual model of Erdvig's (2021) model of biblical worldview development in evangelical Christian emerging adults (Figure 1) illustrates the complexity of developing a biblical worldview and the myriad of individual life experiences

that can shape it. The complexity of the worldview construction process is reflected in the *maturing Biblical worldview* gear of the model. In addition to an individual's knowledge, desires, and behavior, the gear also recognizes the factors of awareness, personal ownership, and commitment to processing a worldview as characteristics indicative of positive development (Erdvig, 2021). Though this gear is the most predominant one, the model's remaining three gears are equally essential and examine the intentional and unintentional experiences that influence an individual and contribute to the unique journey of biblical worldview construction.

**Figure 1**

*Model of Biblical Worldview Development in Evangelical Christian Emerging Adults*



*Model of biblical worldview development in evangelical Christian emerging adults from Erdvig, R. C. S. (2021). Beyond biblical integration: Immersing you and your students in a biblical worldview. Reprinted with permission (see Appendix A).*

Outlined in the *past influences* gear of the framework are the identified experiences before adulthood that influenced a biblical worldview. These experiences were not universally

identical across all individuals with a well-formed biblical worldview. Still, they did follow a consistent pattern in the types of experiences that participants identified as impactful (Erdvig, 2020). The young adults generally recognized the experiences of being raised in a strong Christian home and consistent involvement in the church as significant, influential factors in developing a biblical worldview. Additionally, almost all participants experienced positive relationships with mentors and peers before adulthood. Formal training in biblical worldview thinking also consistently emerged as an element contributing to biblical worldview development. The conscious formation of one's worldview is a precursor to a strong worldview. Therefore, formal training in this area is a meaningful and essential influence (Erdvig, 2020, 2021; Naugle, 2002; Sire, 2020).

The framework also contains a gear designated for various life *prompts* that contribute to forming a biblical worldview. These prompts are new experiences an individual encounters that, when reflected upon and processed, can contribute meaningfully to forming a biblical worldview (Erdvig, 2021). As individuals mature and develop, new life experiences that may not have occurred in childhood begin to surface. For example, as high school graduates leave home for the first time and head to college, they may encounter new ideas in the collegiate setting that challenge childhood beliefs. Emerging adults must grapple with and analyze difficult questions about life and their previously-held beliefs (Erdvig, 2020; Fowler, 1995). Even before leaving for college or entering the workforce, many individuals have experienced pain, loss, divorce, and various other experiences. These experiences can shape an individual positively and negatively depending on how they are processed (Erdvig, 2021; Sire, 2020).

The *means* an individual uses to process their experiences significantly impact the shaping of a worldview (Erdvig, 2021). The life experiences and ideas presented in the world

require individuals to process, think through, and analyze. The *means* by which emerging adults do this are mentors, peer relationships, study, and serving others. The analysis is complex and requires practice and intentional, guided development. However, through engaging in analysis, individuals develop strong analytical skills that support the development of a robust biblical worldview (Erdvig, 2020, 2021; Sire, 2020). Students will eventually encounter new experiences in a new work, academic, or social setting, but practicing this behavior helps train students to evaluate ideas and experiences through a biblical lens (Erdvig, 2021).

As a non-linear, comprehensive framework for biblical worldview development, Erdvig's (2020) model provides a valuable reference point for components of biblical worldview development in K-12 Christian school settings. The grounded theory research study that led to the illustrated model focused on young adults who were "nominated as individuals with a well-developed Biblical worldview" (Erdvig, 2020, p. 291) and offered a conceptual model for Christian school educators and leaders to consider while designing curricular experiences in K-12 settings.

### **The Language of Faith Development**

Many terms are used interchangeably when discussing the growth and learning around faith development. Though some research has used the term *faith development* as a near relative to biblical worldview development (Mooney, 2018), faith development can be used in secular or spiritual contexts, but biblical worldview development is exclusively Christian (Erdvig, 2021; Fowler, 1995). Fowler's faith development theory illustrates the need to define faith before making distinctions in related terminology. For this study, *faith* is defined as a religious construct that implies an individual's belief and trust in a living God. *Faith development* is a broad term that describes the faith-based evolutionary process that contributes to an individual's growth in

knowing, serving, and sharing God (Derr, 2014). Faith formation, discipleship, biblical integration, and biblical worldview development fall under this umbrella term and are often used interchangeably despite having different meanings. Understanding the terminology can dictate an individual's action or inaction when engaging in practices that foster development.

Understanding the implications these terms have on program or curriculum design is a helpful precursor to understanding the goals of biblical worldview formation in school settings.

### ***Faith Formation***

*Faith formation* is a synonym for faith development. Although faith is primarily the work of the Holy Spirit, training young believers to recognize and value both the deity and the sovereignty of Christ is developed through faith formation (Derr, 2014; Horan, 2017; Wilkerson, 2022; Yount, 2019). Individuals engaging in faith formation focus on cultivating spirituality and faith growth by concentrating on multiple processes arranged uniquely (D'Oleo Ochoa, 2019; Sorenson, 2014). The faith formation process can look different at varying stages of life and in various settings, but the role of education and the church are consistently viewed as the primary contributing forces to faith formation outside of the home (Derr, 2014; Horan, 2017; Sorenson, 2014; Wilkerson, 2022).

Many processes, components, or experiences are believed to contribute to faith formation (Erdvig, 2020; Smith et al., 2021; Wallace, 2021). Although there are many components, two significant ones repeatedly emerge from faith formation research. Mentoring is one commonly agreed-upon component believed to be an essential part of faith formation, often used in church and school settings. Mentoring is a heavily collaborative process between a new or young believer and a more mature believer over a significant period (Cohen-Malayev et al., 2014; Erdvig, 2020, 2021; Sorenson, 2014). Mentors can come from various areas of a student's life



and serve as a sounding board and a source of Godly wisdom and insight (Erdvig, 2021). Mentor relationships are repeatedly found in faith formation processes and will be discussed in greater depth later in this study.

A second component of faith formation is personal ownership. The ability to process through one's faith and take personal ownership is believed to be possible and necessary as early as childhood (Derr, 2014; Sorenson, 2014). The end goal of the formation process is for an individual to become self-directing and self-monitoring in all aspects of faith without relying upon the church, school, or parents (Powell & Clark, 2011). Therefore, individuals must actively engage in the cognitive processing of faith. The depth of this processing can vary, but at some point, individuals become aware of their belief system and the existence of contrary belief systems in the world and must reconcile the two. This may result in a belief change, a merging of belief systems, or a departure from previously held beliefs (Fowler, 1995; Powell & Clark, 2011; Sorenson, 2014).

Faith ownership and mentoring are associated with orthopraxy or correct practices of faith-related development (Cohen-Malayev et al., 2014; Sorenson, 2014). Some of these practices are found directly in the Bible. For example, a model for mentoring can be found through Jesus' interactions with his small group of followers. His interactions illustrated the benefit of pouring into a few so they might go out and pour into others, exponentially increasing the occurrence of meaningful mentoring relationships (Allotta, 2013). This association with Christian practices distinguishes faith formation from biblical worldview development. Biblical worldview development includes some elements of orthopraxy. Still, the primary goal is orthodoxy, or establishing the correct beliefs about God as it relates to all things, given that all things stem from God as the Creator (Erdvig, 2020; Sire, 2020; Sorenson, 2014). Biblical

worldview development understands that knowledge of doctrine and faith practices in isolation fall short of providing a comprehensive view of God. If practice disassociates from the reason one practices, or doctrine associates with denomination or knowledge alone, individuals leave room for beliefs and thoughts to be taken captive by worldly viewpoints, fostering a two-story view of God (Billingsley & Nassaji, 2020; Erdvig, 2021; Horner, 2020; Richardson, 2019; Sire, 2020; Wallace, 2021).

### ***Discipleship***

*Discipleship* is a term that has suffered from an ambiguous definition and has been made more complicated by using the word in various settings. The many applications of discipleship in secular and Christian contexts make the task of narrowing it to a singular definition challenging. *Discipleship* has been defined as the process of growing individuals in spiritual maturity through reading scriptures, practicing spiritual disciplines, and discovering spiritual gifts (Allotta, 2013). Still, others claim that discipleship envelops much more, contending that it is one of the major themes of both the New and Old Testaments (Cox & Peck, 2018). Emerging from a biblical context, discipleship components include “comprehensive Bible knowledge, witnessing strategies, interpersonal relationships, apologetic skills, logical reasoning, world/life-view integration, parenting, teaching, personal integrity, spiritual warfare, faith-learning integration, stewardship of creation, sustained allegiance, [and] miracles” (Cox & Peck, 2018, p. 243).

Although there is no biblical mandate for the institution of Christian education, countless biblical commands for discipleship are explicitly addressed to Christians and parents. The topic has been particularly emphasized in church settings (Allotta, 2013; Frye, 2019), but this study will only focus on using the word in educational settings. Despite being associated with practices of faith, evidenced by the name discipleship alone, the goal of discipleship is for an individual to

understand the centrality of Jesus in life and to allow that understanding, coupled with God's word, to shape individual actions and desires.

Discipleship is challenging in school settings. Despite the topic being an interest in Christian schools and even promoted as an essential component of Christian education by ACSI in the past (Derr, 2014; LeBlanc & Slaughter, 2012), the lack of empirical evidence fails to support many schools' claims of disciple-making (Cox & Peck, 2018; Horan, 2017; Wilkerson, 2022). Many differing opinions exist on how discipleship is best executed in normal circumstances, but there are further complications when set in K-12 school settings. One approach is for a mentor believer to interact one-on-one with a new believer. This approach is challenging to implement with fidelity in schools where students far outnumber teachers. Another method adopts the model Jesus gave in the gospels by discipling 12 but focusing intently on three, suggesting larger discipleship groups. Recently, there has been an increase in discipleship or small groups in the Christian school model, specifically at the high school level. At many schools, personnel constraints can result in groups that are larger than 12 in size. These groups are often assigned, ignoring the individual student's personality or comfort level, with the adult placed in a mentor role over them (Allotta, 2013). No matter the approach, there is no empirically proven formula for discipleship since interactions with Christ are at the core of the process (Cox & Peck, 2018; Yount, 2019). Structuring the process, however, allows Christian educators to intentionally create opportunities for growth in areas. The most successful models for discipleship build upon the recognition that a precursor to discipleship is a commitment to a person's relationship with God. Later, the implementation of a plan that includes clearly defined roles for the disciple-maker and set end goals for the disciplined individual are characteristics consistently demonstrated in successful discipleship programs (Allotta, 2013; Cox & Peck, 2018;

Yount, 2019).

The focus and value that discipleship structures place on mentoring are supported by Erdvig's model for biblical worldview development in evangelical Christian emerging adults (Erdvig, 2020, 2021; Peterson, 2017). Students with well-developed biblical worldviews often cite relationships with mentors as having played a significant role in their development (Erdvig, 2020, 2021), which supports research elaborating on the specific characteristics of a mentor–mentee relationship (Cohen-Malayev et al., 2014). One important characteristic is that a mentor provides a living example of a person living out their worldview beliefs in day-to-day life (Peterson, 2017). This helps to confirm biblical worldview thinking.

### ***Biblical Integration***

Biblical integration joins together two distinct ideas: discipline-specific content and biblical content (Horner, 2020; Richardson, 2019). The *joining* alludes to a two-story relationship between life and God in which both ideas live in the same reality but in different proverbial boxes (Erdvig, 2021; Schaeffer, 1968; Wallace, 2021). Despite the prevalence of this term in Christian schools, this idea is incompatible with a biblical worldview. In his lectures at Princeton University, Abraham Kuyper's response to the separation of faith and learning is frequently quoted as "There is not one square inch of the entire creation about which Jesus Christ does not cry out, 'This is mine! This belongs to me!'" (Esqueda, 2014). Despite the efforts of educators who adopt a biblical integration approach to ensure that scholarship and faith are compatible and intertwine at points, the two-story nature of integration perpetuates the compartmentalizing of faith and academics into two different aspects of life (Billingsley & Nassaji, 2020). Even the approach used by educators for biblical integration is often disjointed. An isolated concept in the content is usually attached to a Bible verse at some point in the

planning or teaching process. Scholars suggest that educational institutions move from the language of biblical integration that fosters this disjointed relationship and instead move toward an approach emphasizing that the entire world should be God-centered, guiding information processing and providing a lens through which all scholarship is derived and gathered (Erdvig, 2021; Farbishel et al., 2020; Horner, 2020; Sire, 2020; Wallace, 2021). In a secular world dominated by worldviews incompatible with a biblical worldview, the biblical integration method falls short of providing an approach that truly reflects God's ownership over all things (Billingsley & Nassaji, 2020; Naugle, 2002; Sire, 2020).

### ***Biblical Worldview***

The consideration of a biblical worldview has been “one of the most significant developments in the recent history of the church” (Naugle, 2002, p. 4). It is also the central concept of this study. Derived from the German term *weltanschauung*, worldview refers to how an individual perceives, interprets, and values the world. The holistic framework formed by the intake and processing of external stimuli shapes subsequent desires, behaviors, actions, and beliefs in all areas of life (Erdvig, 2021; Naugle, 2002; Sire, 2020). Individual purpose, death, life, the nature of the world, and moral reasoning are all essential questions answered by a worldview (Sire, 2020). In postmodern culture, the answers to the fundamental questions of worldview and identity are responded to in ideological solutions that counter the Word of God (Horan, 2017; Naugle, 2002; Sire, 2020). As a result, many worldviews exist, allowing individuals to essentially shop for a system of beliefs that best fits their desires or shaping influences (Sire, 2020). However, an individual with a biblical worldview uses the Bible to guide their understanding of the world and provide direction in navigating life. A well-formed biblical worldview can answer the essential worldview questions in God's Word (Horan, 2017; Horner,

2020; Sire, 2020; Wallace, 2021).

Biblical worldview development is built not only upon factual knowledge of the Bible but also cognitive processes that, when combined with Bible knowledge, produce holistic biblical thinking about the world (Erdvig, 2021; Naugle, 2002; Sire, 2020). A worldview may begin with Bible knowledge, but must extend into processing and reflection upon the knowledge for a biblical worldview to be formed (Erdvig, 2021). In this way, a biblical worldview can be considered both a process and a product. Through constant intellectual and spiritual refinement, Christians experience a continual evolution of thought about the world and their experiences in it (Erdvig, 2020). As individuals learn to reason about truth claims, they work to develop a comprehensive set of presuppositions that make up their worldview. This process continually evolves and may never be considered complete, given the rapidly changing global issues that an individual must process. A biblical worldview is then marked, in part, by a rational mind and scholarly thought built upon biblical truth that can direct future thinking when an individual encounters new experiences in the world (Kim, 2020; Naugle, 2002; Yount, 2019).

### **Essential Understandings of Biblical Worldview Development in School Settings**

Both rapidly decreasing professions of faith in young adults and the church's apparent failure to connect with or reach the younger generation has led to more research focused on interventions positively associated with promoting faith ownership during earlier years of life (Barna, 2023; Barna Research Group, 2019; Brandes, 2018). Some research suggests there is very little change in the philosophical belief system of an individual once they reach adolescence, but especially by adulthood (Barna, 2023; Schultz & Swezey, 2013; Van Meter, 2010). With society's rapidly changing belief system and overall disposition, a clear understanding of the decline of faith—including the related role of biblical worldview

development—has yet to emerge (Barna, 2023; Hudson & Roberts, 2019). However, specific themes have repeatedly surfaced. This section explores those themes that contribute to the personal development of a biblical worldview relevant to educational institutions.

### ***Relationships with Others***

Many Christian young adults cite relationships with mentors as having a significant impact on their faith journey (Davis, 2021; Erdvig, 2020, 2021; Riggers-Piehl & Sax, 2018; Wallace, 2021; Worsley, 2021). Relationships can serve as an outlet for students to question, grasp, and eventually solidify aspects of their worldview with a peer or trusted adult. Verbal processing of life events and faith questions helps move students from textbook-type faith to applying faith to every part of life (Wallace, 2021). Research has shown a positive correlation between relationships and biblical worldview development at all stages of life (Riggers-Piehl & Sax, 2018; Worsley, 2021).

The potential impact of Christian role models spans from early childhood into the teenage years and through young adulthood. Students in college settings have repeatedly recognized the role of relationships with adults outside the home as substantially affecting their spiritual development as young adults (Riggers-Piehl & Sax, 2018; Wallace, 2021; Worsley, 2021). During this stage, relationships are vital as students begin moving from conformity to the faith of their upbringings to levels of personal ownership over their faith. A mentor or close relationship with a trusted advisor can help shape a student's worldview (Riggers-Piehl & Sax, 2018). Beyond one-on-one relationships, the larger community also significantly influences an individual's development (Fowler, 1995; Riggers-Piehl & Sax, 2018). In K-12 settings, younger students are positively impacted by the immersion in the Christian community and the resulting relationships with Christians (Davis, 2021). The value of relationships is a common point of

agreement amongst nearly all faith-related frameworks, including Parks (2011), Fowler (1995), and Erdvig (2020). It is an area that naturally occurs in many K-12 school settings and is relevant when considering worldview development in K-12 settings.

### ***Training and Education***

The academic program at Christian schools is expected to be distinctly Christian, educating students for educational and spiritual goals (Erdvig, 2021; Smith et al., 2021; Wilkerson, 2022). God has always made known the preeminence and importance of His Word in the lives of believers through copious reminders of the need to saturate believers with biblical truth.

And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (*English Standard Bible*, 2001/2007, Deuteronomy 6:6-8)

Hear, my son, and accept my words, that the years of your life may be many. I have taught you the way of wisdom; I have led you in the paths of uprightness. When you walk, your step will not be hampered, and if you run, you will not stumble. Keep hold of instruction; do not let go; guard her, for she is your life. Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of the evil. Avoid it; do not go on it; turn away from it and pass on. (*English Standard Bible*, 2001/2007, Proverbs 4:10-15)

Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not



endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. (*English Standard Bible*, 2001/2007, 2 Timothy 4:2-5)

It appears the world has taken note of these scriptural reminders of the importance of training and teaching and made a comprehensive effort to present a worldview counter to the Bible (Erdvig, 2021). The overt and subtle attempts to shape worldviews are evident at all ages. Anti-biblical teachings have been injected into schools, with the youngest believers being taught to celebrate things God calls sins. Hollywood continues producing movies and shows that ignore God's guidelines for Christian living, mocking what God calls good and promoting harmful behaviors and ideals. Social media fosters idolatry, division, and a distracted life that separates people from God. The world is saturated with examples of promoting agendas that do not align with God's teachings. Christian schools must counter the comprehensive efforts of secular media and institutions with a more zealous and complete effort in all areas (Erdvig, 2021).

Although most Christian schools include Bible and chapel in their programming, some research shows that the presence of faith elements throughout core subject areas may be more academically beneficial than having separate Bible classes to address religious aspects (Erdvig, 2021; Horner, 2020; Hudson & Roberts, 2019; Wallace, 2021). Programming that focuses on the biblical view of the subject-area content allows many opportunities for individual and communal knowledge processing in various educational contexts. Historically, Christian schools adopt a biblically integrated curriculum that assumes a relationship where two separate entities—the content and faith—come together like two different puzzle pieces temporarily adjoined. In many

schools, this means most of the day looks like secular educational systems, with a brief mention or application of a Bible verse (Horner, 2020). This approach fails to reinforce one of the core claims of Christianity that all things belong to Him as the creator and that his creation is preeminent in all things, driving all understanding (Erdvig, 2021; Naugle, 2002). Additionally, this approach limits the opportunities that students have to explore perspectives and process the information meaningfully under the guidance of a Christian educator (Van Meter, 2010).

Not only is curriculum content important, but research shows that a rigorous academic program is necessary to produce students who can think critically. Thinking critically about the information presented while considering the source and the message is critical to forming a worldview (Kim, 2020; Naugle, 2002; Wilkerson, 2022; Yount, 2019). Christian schools often promote academic excellence as a characteristic of the learning environment. An adequate tool for measuring the effectiveness of faith-related outcomes and specifically for measuring biblical worldview development in schools has yet to be used (Erdvig, 2020; Smith et al., 2021). Instead, many schools make parallel connections between academic performance and biblical worldview thinking (Horner, 2020; Smith et al., 2021). Indeed, findings show that most educational programs at Christian schools are more rigorous than national averages. Results on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) show that Christian school students typically perform better than public school students (Horner, 2020). Despite these positive results, the absence of assessment practices focused on measuring the effectiveness of Christian K-12 schools' claims of fostering a biblical worldview suggests increased accountability and progress monitoring (Boerema, 2006; Horner, 2020; Smith et al., 2021).

## *Pedagogy*

Biblical worldview development must extend beyond the curriculum and consider the pedagogical approach taken by Christian educators. The pedagogy reflects as much about Christian principles as content does (Cooling, 2010; Keiser & Parsons, 2013). Adopted pedagogy should not only focus on developing critical and higher-order thinking skills that promote inquiry and problem-solving skills in students (Kim, 2020; Naugle, 2002; Patandung, 2023; Wilkerson, 2022; Yount, 2019) but also reflect a recognition of a biblical worldview. It is insufficient to “fill students with fine ideas and deep thoughts, while secular cultural liturgies shape students’ habits, character, and way of life” (Keiser & Parsons, 2013, p. 7); the habits and teaching choices on display in the classroom are equally as important. Although attention has been given to the behaviors of instructors, the effect of the teaching methodology on a student’s faith or worldview has been given limited attention (Kim, 2020).

Within education, multiple pedagogical trends have been present over the years (Schunk, 2020), some more compatible and meaningful to the aims of biblical worldview development than others. The constructivist approach has historically been associated with relativism and the existence of multiple truths built upon the hypothesis that individuals construct their meaning and, therefore, their subjective truth (Davis, 2021; Kaak & LaPorte, 2022; Schunk, 2020). Despite these characteristics, constructivism offers Christian educators critical approaches to fostering student learning (Davis, 2021; Wilkerson, 2022). Learning occurs more frequently when participants are actively involved, constructing meaning as they learn rather than passively sitting and absorbing content (Bailey, 2012; Himmele & Himmele, 2012; Umpstead et al., 2024). Participation must extend beyond the student who is always willing to answer. Teachers must employ techniques that actively engage all students in the thinking needed to learn (Himmele &

Himmele, 2012; Umpstead et al., 2024). Training students to think for themselves meaningfully rather than memorize passively transmitted content results in higher proficiency levels in Christian and secular school settings (Patandung, 2023; Wilkerson, 2022). These active approaches can cause apprehension, particularly in traditional school settings, allowing students to actively participate and construct meanings while serving in the community and connecting with faith claims (Himmele & Himmele, 2012; Kaak & LaPorte, 2022). Despite the promise that these approaches can make, Christian educators must still actively guide students through the process and continually bring biblical truth into the moments where students are actively participating in working out their understanding of ideas in the light of God's Word (Davis, 2021; Kaak & LaPorte, 2022; Wilkerson, 2022; Yoder et al., 2021). The pedagogical approach of a classroom can provide meaningful opportunities for students to discover how biblical truth approaches every aspect of life and equips students with the ability to find meaning in everyday occurrences, distinguishing between truth and the conflicting messages of postmodern society (Cooling, 2010; Kim, 2020; Patandung, 2023; Wallace, 2021).

During adolescence, students undergo tremendous physical and cognitive developmental changes (Fowler, 1995). It is during the formative years of junior high and high school that adolescents typically grow in their ability to think critically and analytically, but the cultural pressures and ideologies offered to them at elevated levels of saturation in the world around them send conflicting messages about biblical truth claims (Horan, 2017; Sire, 2020). According to some researchers, biblical worldview development during the K-12 years is not developmentally possible due to a lack of cognitive or psychosocial ability to fully process (Fowler, 1995; Kohlberg, 1981; Riggers-Piehl & Sax, 2018). Stage-based development theories like Kohlberg (1981), Piaget, and Erikson claim that students can only perform or behave in ways they are

ready for based on their stage (Riggers-Piehl & Sax, 2018). Others argue that spiritual development is not compatible with the frameworks that cognitive, behavioral, or psycho-social theories posit. Despite conflicting thoughts, educators in K-12 settings must have a foundational understanding of strategies and pedagogical approaches that foster biblical worldview development, including developing higher-order thinking skills, so that students are exposed to these experiences before college. This task is practical and essential for K-12 institutions (Erdvig, 2020; Horan, 2017; Umpstead et al., 2024; Wallace, 2021).

### *Service*

Participation in purposeful service opportunities can help develop a biblical worldview (Brandes, 2018; Davis, 2021; Erdvig, 2020; Keiser & Parsons, 2013; Riggers-Piehl & Sax, 2018; Schultz & Swezey, 2013). Students who participate in service opportunities benefit from engagement with others outside their close community who may espouse a different worldview or whose life circumstances may look vastly different (Schultz & Swezey, 2013). Exposing students to conditions and individuals outside their daily sphere helps develop compassion, morality, and a sense of community consistent with biblical commands for Christian living (Fowler, 1995). Service opportunities then allow students to experience behaviors and develop habits that counter secular teachings and help solidify a biblical worldview in thought and action (Keiser & Parsons, 2013). Research suggests that these opportunities must be authentic experiences that require proximity to the problem or need rather than philanthropic gestures that allow students to remain in the comfortable confines of their own lives (Davis, 2021). When service opportunities are part of the academic program, they offer opportunities for students to connect with moral elements of faith, positively impacting their worldview development (Riggers-Piehl & Sax, 2018). Students who serve others are more capable of caring for and

loving themselves and others. This promotes selflessness, kindness, understanding, and other traits that mirror what Christ commands of believers and contributes positively to many lives (Brandes, 2018).

### **Biblical Worldview Development in Educational Institutions**

The issue of faith development has been a shared concern of both the church and Christian schools for many years, yet the research on biblical worldview development in educational institutions is still relatively new and incomplete (Erdvig, 2020; Kim, 2020; Richardson, 2019; Riggers-Piehl & Sax, 2018; Wallace, 2021). Higher education settings have been the primary focus in research on students' cognitive and emotional needs related to biblical worldview development (Erdvig, 2020; Kanitz, 2005; Kim, 2020; Richardson, 2019; Riggers-Piehl & Sax, 2018). However, students in K-12 settings have different and unique needs that are important when developing intentional development strategies. Data continue to point to the difficulty in changing or shaping belief systems in individuals as young adults. Growing evidence suggests that belief systems may be set as young as age 13 (Barna, 2023; Barna Research Group, 2019; Brandes, 2018).

#### ***Higher Education***

For many years, the ages of 18–23 were thought to be the most dynamic years in an individual's faith, resulting in a more significant concentration of research efforts at Christian colleges and universities than in K-12 school settings (Dougherty et al., 2022; Erdvig, 2020; Kanitz, 2005; Kim, 2020; Richardson, 2019; Riggers-Piehl & Sax, 2018; Wallace, 2021; Yonker et al., 2019). Like many areas of ministry in the current postmodern culture, many Christian universities have found that students are arriving at classes with varying degrees of understanding of Christianity's core doctrinal beliefs (Hudson & Roberts, 2019; Kim, 2020;

Wallace, 2021). University-level professors who were once focused only on integrating faith elements into lessons must also now address gaps in the fundamental doctrines of Christianity needed to build a lasting faith (Wallace, 2021). Research suggests that the key to building a solid foundation is professors who work to create opportunities in class to fuse biblical principles into all content areas, encouraging students to reflect upon and articulate how a biblical worldview informs all subject matter (Erdvig, 2021; Horner, 2020; Kanitz, 2005; Wallace, 2021). Christian universities should also work to increase authentic opportunities for students to interact with instructors outside of class, fostering mentoring relationships meaningful to student faith development (Dougherty et al., 2022; Kim, 2020; Riggers-Piehl & Sax, 2018). For example, Riggers-Piehl and Sax's (2018) research on the practices influencing the faith of college students at Christian universities showed that most students had few conversations of a spiritual nature outside of class. Students who expressed more confidence in their faith and purpose interacted with professors who engaged in discussions about matters beyond the class coursework. Though there is evidence that the discussions and relationships with professors outside of class positively affect students' spiritual growth, little is known about the specifics of those interactions to elicit a positive response (Riggers-Piehl & Sax, 2018). Future research should focus on how university leaders help guide teachers in building meaningful relationships with students and create support systems to balance academic and interpersonal demands that contribute to worldview development (Erdvig, 2020; Riggers-Piehl & Sax, 2018).

### ***K-12 Schools***

Biblical worldview development is possible and necessary much earlier than once believed (Davis, 2021; Erdvig, 2021; Horner, 2020; Wallace, 2021). Although there is wide use of mission statements focused on biblical worldview development, there is reason to question the

success of Christian schools in meeting that objective (Erdvig, 2020, 2021; Horan, 2017; Horner, 2020; Schultz & Swezey, 2013; Smith et al., 2021; Wallace, 2021; Wilkerson, 2022). Christian schools often claim to create an environment defined by faith integration. However, the consistent absence of accountability measures to track success leaves room to doubt the efficiency of living out the mission statements (Erdvig, 2020; Schultz & Swezey, 2013).

ACSI is a national accrediting agency providing teachers and administrators with coaching and professional development opportunities. As an organization, ACSI also includes worldview development as a missional goal and an expectation of member schools (Schultz & Swezey, 2013). Despite such an emphasis, there is reason to believe that biblical worldview development has become a phrase often used but less consistently executed (Erdvig, 2021). This is most evident in the lack of accountability measures or data related to the topic. Even within ACSI, there is an emphasis on using data for measurement and accountability through standardized testing such as IOWA, Terra Nova, and Stanford Achievement Tests, but there is no progress monitoring or assessment tool that helps schools measure faith development goals (Horner, 2020; Schultz & Swezey, 2013; Smith et al., 2021). The widespread absence of a measure of the efforts for biblical worldview development in school settings is a problem of credibility and sustainability (Erdvig, 2020, 2021; Smith et al., 2021). A continually emerging theme from the literature is the insufficient empirical evidence of either the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of biblical worldview formation efforts due to the absence of a metric measuring the short- and long-term success of biblical worldview development at the K-12 level (Erdvig, 2020; Smith et al., 2021). Despite the limited research focused on biblical worldview development specific to K-12 settings (Erdvig, 2020; Riggers-Piehl & Sax, 2018; Smith et al.,



2021), the research on young adults and their faith development may offer more implications for the early years of formation than previously believed (Davis, 2021; Erdvig, 2020).

### **Importance of Biblical Worldview Development**

The road to developing a solid biblical worldview is neither linear nor one-dimensional. An individual's biblical worldview is a critical area of faith in Christianity and often the expressed goal of Christian education (Horan, 2017; Schultz & Swezey, 2013). When well-formed, how an individual makes meaning, interprets events, and chooses actions is guided by the Bible and God's moral code (Erdvig, 2020; Fowler, 1995; Sire, 2020; Wallace, 2021). It is implied that individuals with a well-developed biblical worldview will likely retain their faith through early adulthood, a time often associated with a falling away from childhood faith (Mayhew et al., 2020; Wallace, 2021). Despite biblical worldview development being central to the Proverbs 22:6 command to "train up a child in the way he should go" (*English Standard Bible*, 2001/2007), research on the topic is not easily accessible for school leaders. School administrators lead Christian educators on the frontline who are equipped with a partial view of the goal and insufficient methods needed to foster the development of a biblical worldview (Erdvig, 2021; Horan, 2017). Minimal attention to this critical topic by researchers and educational leaders is inconsistent with research findings that parents who enroll their children in a Christian K-12 school prioritize spiritual formation (Erdvig, 2021; Horan, 2017; Smith et al., 2021). Understanding the complexities of biblical worldview development in individuals and within the confines of Christian educational institutions is essential in working toward future improvement.

### *Culture and Worldview*

In today's postmodern culture, spiritual formation and faith ownership are experiencing drastic negative changes (Barna, 2023; Pew Research, 2019; Sire, 2020). When compared to previous generations, millennials (born in 1980–2000) are 10% less likely to attend church (Brandes, 2018; Horan, 2017; Pew Research, 2019; Worsley, 2021), are disassociating themselves from organized religion earlier than ever, and are making fewer professions of faith (Horan, 2017; Pew Research, 2019). Some research has been completed to study 18–29-year-old students, typically in a college setting, in response to a national trend of students abandoning their faith practices during college years (Barna Research Group, 2019; Erdvig, 2020; Wallace, 2021). Twenty-first-century teenagers experience trauma and conflict at higher levels of incidence while also finding a shortage of adult mentors who can assist in navigating these challenges and point students toward biblical truth (Horan, 2017). Amid all of it, the public education system and the media are two areas students interact with most often. In both cases, postmodern thought dominates and reduces Christianity to ignorance or hate speech (Sire, 2020). Barna (2023) identified “seven cornerstones of a biblical worldview” (p. 1). His research showed that very few people have a consistent worldview unaffected by other belief systems, including professing Christians. If an individual does not hold even one of those seven cornerstones as true, they have little chance of having a biblical worldview. These cornerstones are not highly debated theological ideas; they encompass a basic understanding of God, man's nature, absolute moral truth, and the biblical truth of salvation. Barna (2023) summarized the survey results with the importance of developing a biblical worldview.

Reviewing the data made it clear that these principles, although simple, serve as a foundation on which you can build a more satisfying and influential life and one that

brings glory to God . . . Statistically, we see that if this base is not solid, a person's worldview will be an inconsistent and unpredictable mess. Since worldview is our decision-making filter, a person who has a weak foundation will be characterized by a life that is a constant struggle. (p. 7)

The Christian school has been referred to as a leg in the three-legged stool of Christian discipleship (Cox & Peck, 2018). Though not ecclesiastical from a biblical perspective, the Christian school can follow the many biblical commands regarding training, shaping, and addressing students' biblical worldview development to counter the decline in biblical thinking evident in today's world (Barna, 2023; Cox & Peck, 2018; Frye, 2019).

### **Summary**

Biblical worldview development is an area of emphasis and importance in Christian education at the K-12 level and higher education (Erdvig, 2020, 2021; Riggers-Piehl & Sax, 2018; Smith et al., 2021; Wallace, 2021). Despite the complex and nonlinear nature of biblical worldview development, multiple studies spanning numerous years have revealed themes contributing to an individual's faith formation (Erdvig, 2020). The themes of academics, relationships, and service provide elements of a model for developing a worldview that synthesizes development at the emerging adult level (Brandes, 2018; Davis, 2021; Erdvig, 2020; Riggers-Piehl & Sax, 2018; Smith et al., 2021; Wallace, 2021; Worsley, 2021). However, there is an absence of data that supports the effectiveness of instructional attempts at biblical worldview development in K-12 schools (Erdvig, 2021; Smith et al., 2021). This study uses the transformational leadership theory to understand the phenomenon surrounding the possible motivations, challenges, and successes of K-12 biblical worldview development. With growing literature supporting best practices, understanding what occurs at the secondary school level will

fill the gap in the literature between research and practice, providing practical information about biblical worldview development practices, how and if they are measured, and what may be hindering proper implementation.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODS**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this qualitative, hermeneutical phenomenological study is to understand the lived experiences of Christian school secondary administrators as they foster an environment conducive to students' biblical worldview development. Chapter Three begins with a rationale of the design type and general characteristics. After stating the research question and sub-questions, a description of the setting and participants is given, followed by details on the researcher's positionality. The chapter will end with the data collection and analysis procedures for all three data collection methods utilized in the study.

### **Research Design**

Qualitative research is a methodology based on constructivist theory. By focusing on the subjectivity of reality, qualitative research places a researcher in the field to observe, interpret, and make sense of phenomena based on the ascribed meaning of those directly involved in a particular phenomenon (Gall et al., 2007). Unlike quantitative methodology, which studies a sample representative of a more significant population, the qualitative method utilizes case studies of 10–12 individuals focused on extracting a depth of data that elicits a detailed description of the phenomenon. As such, qualitative research lacks widespread transferability of results but does offer some generalizability depending on study specifics (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Gall et al., 2007). Qualitative methodology focuses on obtaining a deep understanding of a social or human phenomenon through various research approaches (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The intimate and in-depth exploration of the phenomenon recognizes the variety of experiences and perceptions individuals may have when experiencing the phenomenon. Qualitative research is an appropriate methodology for this study given the lack of research specific to Christian school

administrators' role in fostering students' biblical worldview development in K-12 settings. Findings will provide direction for future studies, both quantitative and qualitative in design, that will assist researchers and educators in better understanding the critical phenomenon of biblical worldview development in students in Christian school settings.

Phenomenological research design, one of the most frequently used qualitative approaches, can be defined as the study of lived experiences shared by a group of individuals that produces a detailed description or essence of an experience and the associated meaning derived from it (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002; van Manen, 2016). Built on constructivist thinking, phenomenology values individuals' perceptions as meaningful data. By considering the constructs of realism and idealism, phenomenology offers a more complete scientific perspective than any other qualitative approach. Idealism promotes an objective way of knowing that recognizes the existence of a supernatural force through which predetermined absolutes are universal across time and place. Emphasis is placed on judgments based on a universal, generally accepted value. Realism, however, focuses on the natural world through which individual senses and abstract thoughts can obtain knowledge and understanding subjectively but rationally. Realists believe that rather than a common standard by which knowing and judgment should be guided, an individual may use deductive reasoning through observation of the natural world (Gutek, 2014). In recognizing that reality is individually constructed and objectively defined, phenomenology explores all aspects of an individual's reality (Moustakas, 1994). This complete approach to analyzing a phenomenon encourages broad exploration. It is a fitting design to explore the lived experiences of Christian school secondary administrators as they foster an environment conducive to students' biblical worldview development, acknowledging the idealist and realist assumptions that participants may embody and may influence their interpretation of

their experience.

Early work in phenomenology was built on the writings of German mathematician Edmund Husserl (Patton, 2002). Husserl believed that phenomenology should focus on how people experience and describe things through their senses. However, this broad application of the term has significantly changed compared to the definitions and execution of modern-day phenomenology. Subsequent papers and work from Moustakas (1994), van Manen (2016), and others applied phenomenological study to new contexts and expounded on the application and methodology of the inquiry paradigm (Patton, 2002). The approach has evolved and is widely accepted as a methodological approach focused on understanding the essence of a phenomenon through detailed inquiry that produces a rich description of individual experiences (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002). This description is built upon the complex interplay between an individual's subjective interpretations of experiences and the objective trends that emerge across a group of individuals' experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). Mimicking the Greek philosophical foundations that had once placed deep value on the search for wisdom apart from the natural world (Creswell & Poth, 2018), researchers focus on individuals' feelings and the subsequent meaning and definitions created as a product of the experience rather than factual elements alone. Although far from exclusive, objectivity and subjectivity coexist in phenomenological research's inquiry and analysis stages (Racher & Robinson, 2003). Group objectivity emerges from a small, heterogeneous group of participants during the inquiry process, and both inquiry and analysis methods are thorough, systematic, and well-analyzed (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002). An additional element of subjectivity arises when the researcher has some experience with the phenomenon being studied. When this occurs, the researcher should focus on hermeneutical phenomenological design. This variation of

phenomenology recognizes the likely influence of researcher bias by openly disclosing the relationship and taking steps to mitigate bias throughout the research process (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994).

Because so little research has been done exploring the administrator's role in biblical worldview development in K-12 settings, phenomenology offers a view into the realities administrators face when engaging with this phenomenon, establishing a rich description currently missing from the body of research. Despite little existing literature, biblical worldview development is often discussed in K-12 settings and, in some cases, referenced in institutional documents as a core point of emphasis (Horner, 2020; Schultz & Swezey, 2013; Smith et al., 2021; Swaner & Wolfe, 2021). With an increasing focus on biblical worldview development, there is a growing demand for research-based guidance. By engaging in phenomenological research, this study will offer foundational data to understand better the phenomenon of fostering biblical worldview development in K-12 settings, providing a foundation of understanding that could positively impact the effectiveness of biblical worldview development as a part of Christian education.

In this study of the lived experiences of Christian school secondary administrators as they foster an environment conducive to students' biblical worldview development, a hermeneutical phenomenological study is the most appropriate design. Many Christian schools place worldview development in a place of prominence among school objectives, but the shrinking population of professing Christians suggests a deficit in the ability to produce results in line with such expressed goals (Barna, 2023; Brandes, 2018; Horan, 2017; Pew Research, 2019; Sire, 2020; Worsley, 2021). Collecting data about school administrators' lived experiences as they build an environment conducive to students' biblical worldview development can allow a better



understanding of the phenomenon in the Christian school setting. Given my occupation as a Christian school administrator, hermeneutics is an appropriate design given the possible influence of researcher bias (Moustakas, 1994). Bias is human; therefore, interpretation and inquiry cannot be separated from the context and culture in which an event occurs. Hermeneutics acknowledges that the challenge to be unbiased is more significant when a researcher is a part of the studied culture (Dangal & Joshi, 2020; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002). It was sometimes difficult to completely set aside my personal experience as a Christian school leader and someone tasked with biblical worldview development on campus. Though every effort was made to separate from the research, a residual personal bias is likely present. Despite efforts to bracket and engage in the epoché process, my lived experiences as part of a context similar to that of the participants may have influenced the research at some stage. By adopting a hermeneutical design, researcher credibility is fostered, and transparency is emphasized through disclosure of the possible bias due to my proximity to the subject of the study. (Dangal & Joshi, 2020; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2016).

## **Research Questions**

### **Central Research Question**

What are the lived experiences of Christian school secondary administrators as they foster an environment conducive to student biblical worldview development?

### **Sub-Question One**

How do Christian school secondary administrators engage, equip, and motivate teachers and students to engage in biblical worldview development?

### **Sub-Question Two**

What academic strategies and methods do Christian school secondary administrators

promote for biblical worldview development?

### **Sub-Question Three**

How do Christian school secondary administrators shape a school environment focused on opportunities for effective biblical worldview development?

#### **Setting and Participants**

The setting and participants for a phenomenological study should be thoughtfully selected. Phenomenology focuses on the shared lived experiences of individuals, drawing on interviews with those individuals and developing themes from their experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Based on their experience with the phenomenon studied, participants become co-researchers, serving as equals during the research. Settings should be chosen to reflect an even distribution of power or make participants feel comfortable (Moustakas, 1994). This study aimed to engage with participants in ways and places that recognize the value of these phenomenological principles.

#### **Setting**

There were no physical sites for this study. Although participants were all school administrators at private Christian schools accredited by ACSI, research was conducted virtually, utilizing online platforms and digital communication channels to gather data and engage with participants. Though the sites were not the subject of study, the imposed limitation to only consider ACSI-accredited schools was intentional. ACSI is North America's largest international Christian school association, collectively educating over 5 million students (Swaner & Wolfe, 2021). Member schools are given resources and training to grow awareness of best practices operationally, educationally, and spiritually and must maintain specific requirements that provide a level of creditability and integrity. Despite ACSI schools in all 50 states and nearly 100

countries (Swaner & Wolfe, 2021), this study first considered my home state of Florida for potential school sites and administrators who met the criteria. In acknowledging the busy schedule of school administrators, the rationale behind first focusing on Florida was to capitalize on the local community of Christian schools to increase participation because of the brand familiarity associated with the school where I work. I made additional connections through recommendations from other administrators that extended recruitment to areas outside of Florida. The virtual setting removed physical boundaries, including participants from diverse geographical locations, backgrounds, and contexts.

The criteria related to the school site were minimal, given that the administrators were the focus of the study. Administrators must work at an ACSI-accredited K-12 school, but any additional consideration of features, like size, were not considered. The administrator's school website was reviewed upon submission of the interest form, ensuring evidence of biblical worldview development for students was evident. The ideas could be present in any part of the mission, vision, expected student outcomes, core value statements, or other front-facing communication.

### **Participants**

Multiple criteria were used for participant selection in this study. Participants were all state or ACSI-certified secondary administrators in their current Christian school. For this study, an administrator was defined as an individual in a position of authority and leadership over teachers and, subsequently, classroom instruction and culture. The school leader must interact with and influence teachers and classroom performance in the normal scope of their job. This means they evaluate, observe, coach, or supervise classroom teachers. The participants could hold leadership positions that placed them in regular interaction with students and teachers

within the secondary (Grades 6–12) classification, classifying them as instructional leaders and allowing for inclusion in the study. Instructional leaders are the second most significant factor in increasing student achievement based on their direct influence over teacher instruction and culture (Berkovich & Eyal, 2021; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Liu, 2021); therefore, understanding their experience of creating a culture of biblical worldview development is essential. Secondary administrators were the target participants given the unique challenges and opportunities in developing a biblical worldview within students' social, emotional, and cognitive developmental stages in Grades 6–12.

This study had 12 participants, which agrees with research recommendations for phenomenology (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). Each participant had to be in at least their third year of serving at their school. The length of time as an administrator at the school was critical to ensure that the participants knew the challenges and opportunities contributing to the phenomena at their school site. The requirement also allowed for adequate time for the individual to be immersed in the school culture, become familiar with the school's expectations for biblical worldview development, and build trust with the teachers and other stakeholders.

### **Recruitment Plan**

With almost 200 ACSI-accredited schools in Florida alone, the initial sample pool of secondary Christian school administrators in the state was considerable and provided a healthy starting point for recruitment. A list of K-12 schools within Florida was requested from the Southeastern Accreditation Department of ACSI. The provided list ensured that schools were in good standing with ACSI. Once the list was obtained, I previewed school websites looking for mission, vision, and expected student outcome statements explicitly mentioning biblical worldview development in one or more areas. I then compiled a list of administrators' emails in

qualifying positions at those schools. I started with this initial list with the intent to also utilize snowball recruitment and add possible participants from areas outside of Florida at the recommendation of other administrators.

Once a list of possible secondary administrators was collected, a recruitment email (see Appendix B) was sent directly to 15 secondary school administrators. This was a target number because it is the upper limitation for group size in phenomenology (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I chose to begin with a larger participant group because of the busy nature of K-12 school settings and the recognition that the research occurred during a part of the school year when administrators were exceptionally busy. I also targeted the upper threshold, anticipating that someone may withdraw from the study. The inquiry email was sent to potential participants with an outline of the purpose of the study. It also included a link to the questionnaire (see Appendix C) to help ensure candidates met the criterion set as part of the purposeful sampling process. Once a participant completed the questionnaire, I sent a follow-up email based on their submitted responses. If the screening revealed that a potential participant did not meet the criterion, an explanation was given as to why they would not be invited to participate. An expression of thanks was extended for their willingness to participate. For those individuals who met the requirement, the follow-up email confirmed their eligibility, explained the study further, and included a Calendly link for them to schedule a convenient time for the interview. I attached the informed consent form (see Appendix D) and requested that it be signed and returned before the interview. I also asked that participants send any school documents that were unavailable on the school website related to biblical worldview formation. A link to my Calendly was also sent, enabling participants to schedule an interview easily. I initially planned to approach only the number of administrators needed to fill spots to minimize rejection emails. I planned to email

additional possible participants if responses were not received within five school days. However, the response was low, and the turnaround was long, so I increased the number of emails and sent an initial inquiry email to all of the administrator names on the provided list and the received referrals.

I prepared for all data collection by establishing systems of management that aligned with data protection expectations and supported systematic organization. A password-protected file on my password-protected computer was created. In that file were subfolders with participant pseudonyms where I stored any files pertaining to research. This included the institutional documents that participants shared, the digital audio and video files created during the interviews through the online meeting software (Google Meet or Microsoft Teams), and the copy of the transcribed file downloaded from Otter.io. The transcripts were created by uploading the audio file into Otter.io so that an initial transcript would be created. I then edited the transcripts while listening to the audio to ensure that Otter.io had correctly transcribed the conversations. I also removed identifying names so that participant names, co-worker references, and school names were redacted and replaced with pseudonyms.

All data were uploaded to AtlasTi software once received and edited. The software was used as a management tool to organize and quickly access and navigate the data. I uploaded data as soon as it was received and cleaned to begin analysis. Initial coding using pre-identified codes and iterative coding cycles employing strategies of horizontalizing (Moustakas, 1994) were used. Memos were also created within the AtlasTi software for each participant and were employed after each interview and focus group and periodically throughout the data analysis process.

### **Researcher Positionality**

Hermeneutic phenomenology calls for researchers to position themselves in the research

process, conveying to the reader their individual experiences, history, and characteristics that may shape the qualitative approach (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). To build credibility, researchers should recognize that all aspects of the qualitative process can be influenced by cultural, educational, and life experiences and should be made clear to the reader during the qualitative process (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The interpretive framework, philosophical assumptions, and the researcher's role will all be discussed when conveying researcher positionality.

### **Interpretive Framework**

The adopted interpretive framework for this study is a constructivist paradigm. While qualitative research focuses on the natural occurrence of experiences or phenomena in everyday life, an interpretive framework influences how a phenomenon is viewed and interpreted (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2002). The constructivist framework emphasizes the value of individual, subjective perspectives while gathering a detailed description of the studied phenomenon. Constructivists understand that individuals who experience the same phenomenon will not necessarily have the same interpretation of the experience as interpretation is made in highly personal ways. Rather than leading with a theory, research methods of discussion and questioning between the researcher and participant result in a rich description of *what is*. The researcher then synthesizes and identifies commonalities in those experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

This study aims to gather a detailed description of how individual Christian school secondary administrators understand, promote, and mitigate issues related to biblical worldview formation in the school setting. Following a constructivist framework, the study recognizes the validity of all the participants' perspectives, given that biblical worldview formation is a

relatively new facet of Christian education and is often experienced and interpreted differently by administrators in different settings. The complexity of biblical worldview formation and the absence of an accessible method for measuring efforts may also contribute to a broader range of perspectives on the topic. Historically, Bible classes and chapel services have been the primary ways to address and grow student faith (Allotta, 2013), yet a tool for confirming faith growth has been missing. Little empirical evidence exists to support the schools' measures to address faith development through forming a biblical worldview (Horner, 2020; Schultz & Swezey, 2013; Smith et al., 2021). A better understanding of biblical worldview formation is emerging through recent research (Barna, 2023; Erdvig, 2021; Horner, 2020; Smith et al., 2021), but little is known about the experience of individuals involved in schools working to form students' biblical worldviews. Though work has been done to consider the role and experience of teachers (Frye, 2019; Kaul et al., 2017; Mooney, 2018) and even students (Davis, 2021; Erdvig, 2020), the experience of instructional leaders is missing. Measuring the short- and long-term success of biblical worldview development efforts is essential; however, this study looks to acquire a detailed description of the experience of Christian school administrators as a precursor to determining possible cause-and-effect relationships between the actions of biblical worldview development efforts and effectiveness.

### **Philosophical Assumptions**

Researchers carry deeply ingrained philosophical assumptions into their research through educational experiences, the influence of professors, and scholarly reading. When conducting qualitative work, a researcher must evaluate the impact of personal philosophical assumptions in the study and clarify their position to the reader. Philosophical beliefs shape how research is viewed and conducted and are often central to the approach of a study (Creswell & Poth, 2018;



Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher's ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions will be explained.

### ***Ontological Assumption***

An ontological assumption deals with an individual's view concerning the nature of reality or the nature of being (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Each of the four major philosophical frameworks interprets the nature of reality differently, offering a range of interpretations. Given the intent of acquiring a description of the lived experience of secondary Christian school administrators fostering environments conducive to biblical worldview development in students, there is potential for many different realities to be shared. The relativist approach, often associated with constructivism, follows that participants' individual and varied realities can be explored, made meaningful, and reconstructed through the research process (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Understanding the phenomenon of this study necessitates acknowledging that each perspective is valuable. Through dialogue and questioning, the reality is co-constructed through an interactive process between the researcher and the participant (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). The methodology's interactive and socially focused nature aligns with the ontological assumption about the nature of being in this study.

### ***Epistemological Assumption***

Knowledge can be defined through different epistemological assumptions that present varied approaches to reality. Research in the social sciences tends towards qualitative data collection methods, embracing the construction of meaning through the interaction of individuals with the world around them (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Panhwar et al., 2017). In the quest to obtain what is known, researchers are a part of the research and attempt to get as close as possible to the participants being studied. Constructivists believe reality is laden with personal interactions and

experiences that shape the knowledge and perspective of each participant, making subjectivity difficult (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this study, the individual experience of each Christian school secondary administrator working to foster an environment conducive to student biblical worldview development is valuable to gain knowledge of the phenomenon. Although some data collected from the review of the guiding documents set by the school will help in understanding the goals the school formed about the task of biblical worldview formation, it is the lived experience of a school administrator that will help to describe the reality of the complex task of biblical worldview development.

### ***Axiological Assumption***

Axiological assumptions address the role of values in research. A wide range of axiological frameworks offers varying views on whether the researcher's values should play a role in the study. Though it is widely accepted that researchers cannot entirely separate from their experience-driven values and biases, the different approaches dictate the role those values play (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2002). My axiological position aligns with a constructivist approach, requiring that my biases as a Christian school administrator be controlled and expressed to the reader. My research focuses on individual experiences and interpretations of how school leaders foster biblical worldview development. The assumption is that unique situational factors influence personal knowledge and should not be impacted by a researcher's thoughts, beliefs, or approaches; however, it is reasonable to believe that my experience as an administrator will inevitably influence parts of the research process (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Moustakas, 1994).

### **Researcher's Role**

As both a Christian and an educator, biblical worldview development as an impetus to

faith ownership is a topic of importance and relevance. I have served in a Christian school for over 11 years and have worked with children of all ages at all stages in their faith. Biblical worldview terminology is reserved for lesson planning and upper-level Bible classes. Yet, like many others, my school claims that biblical worldview development is central to the school's mission. While serving as a teacher and an administrator in Christian education, I have watched teachers and administrators struggle to articulate how biblical worldview formation is executed and what elements should be evident in effective implementation. Recognizing that my experiences may mirror the participants' experiences, epoching, bracketing, and memoing will all be essential for me to engage as a researcher (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002). Additionally, my role in the research is one of a participant observer. As the primary means of data collection, I am an essential part of the dialogue and conversation with the participants, which is part of the meaning-making process.

### **Procedures**

Approval was obtained from the Liberty Institutional Review Board (IRB) before beginning research (see Appendix E). While waiting for permission to be granted, I utilized an established relationship with ACSI's Eastern Division accreditation office to obtain a list of ACSI schools in Florida that are K-12 accredited. I intended to begin recruitment in Florida, utilizing connections and familiarity within the state where I live and serve at an ACSI school. With that list, a systematic screening of the school websites was completed, focusing on any evidence that lists biblical worldview development as a focus of the school. The head administrator's name and email were recorded for future contact, as well as the names of any secondary administrators or leaders who could meet the requirements to participate based on the job role. Once the list was formed and permission was granted from the IRB, contact was made

with the head administrators of all the schools through email to provide information about the study and solicit participation. The email also asked for recommendations of qualifying participants within the secondary department at the school site. Snowball recruitment was employed, adding administrators' recommendations outside Florida to the list of possible participants.

Once recommendations were received, I sent a recruitment letter to the recommended participants via email (see Appendix B), inviting them to participate in the study, emphasizing the criteria, and including a link to a questionnaire (see Appendix C). The Microsoft Forms questionnaire requested basic background information from potential participants. This information was used to screen participants according to the preset criterion. After a review of the questionnaire data, participants who met the criteria were selected and added to the list of participants for a focus group of 12–15 participants, supporting qualitative recommendations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I contacted qualifying potential participants via email, reiterated the aim of the study, provided informed consent (see Appendix D), and requested digital copies of the institutional documents for document analysis. The email also included a Calendly link, allowing participants to schedule the initial individual interview for a convenient time. Once the interview was scheduled, I scheduled an email reminder one week before the appointment to connect with the participant and follow up on any needed documents. Simultaneously, document analysis began. I began using pre-determined codes based on Erdvig's (2020) conceptual model for biblical worldview development in evangelical Christian emerging adults. Each document was analyzed in AtlasTi and saved for further analysis after completion of all data collection methods.

## **Data Collection**

Phenomenological data collection methods align with my study of understanding the lived experience of Christian school secondary administrators as they foster an environment conducive to student biblical worldview development. When choosing data collection methods, phenomenology focuses on procedures designed to discover the essence of a chosen phenomenon, primarily through dialogue and conversation with the co-researchers (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002). For this reason, the interview remains a core data collection process in phenomenology that has persisted among many recently introduced qualitative research methods. The interview is designed to capture participants' perspectives, understanding that each view is valuable, meaningful, and central to the research methodology (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002). The quality and completeness of the data collected are the defining characteristics of a good qualitative study and are highly dependent upon the interviewer's ability; therefore, intentional efforts have been made to design conditions that optimize data quality throughout (Ivey, 2022). Document analysis, individual interviews, and focus groups were used to explore how the phenomenon of fostering Biblical worldview development in Christian schools is experienced, eliciting data related to the context and situations surrounding those experiences for Christian school administrators (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

## **Document Analysis**

The first data collection approach was document analysis. Document analysis is often used with interviews or observations and involves systematically collecting personal, official, and popular cultural documents to investigate historical and contextual context (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Saldaña, 2021). Documents can give researchers insight into what is unspoken and unobservable about the institution's personality that created them (Cardno, 2018; Patton, 2002;

Saldaña, 2021). Some theorize that because “the products we create embody who we are, then the environments we establish for ourselves may also embody who we are” (Saldaña, 2021, p. 78). This study collected documents containing references to the school’s established environment specific to efforts toward biblical worldview development.

For this study, each participant was asked to submit school documents related to biblical worldview formation, such as the expected student outcomes, enrollment agreements, core values, and mission and vision statements. Although some items were available through the school website, I requested that each participant submit any institutional documents they have that guide their biblical worldview formation efforts. I gave examples but did not limit the documentation type. The focus was on any documentation related to biblical worldview development. As part of the agreement to gain access to the documents, I provided written notification (see Appendix D) to the participants, informing them that pseudonyms for the schools would be used throughout the study and that the documents would not be republished in any way that identifies the identity of the school or participant. The participants were asked to submit the relevant documents through email. Then, all documents were downloaded to a password-protected folder on a personal password-protected computer for proper storage (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Data collection was expected to occur primarily during the initial contact period with a participant. However, document submission was the first element collected and the last submitted. Many participants submitted additional documents after the initial interview after gaining clarification about which documents might be helpful. Therefore, document collection ran concurrently with the individual interviews and focus groups.

### **Individual Interviews**

The long interview is the foundation of phenomenological data collection, providing

meaningful data central to the rich description of the essence of a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994; Staller, 2022). Individual semi-structured interviews are the best fit for gathering a complete picture of the lived experience of fostering an environment conducive to biblical worldview development in students. A semi-structured approach allowed the researcher flexibility to follow a path of inquiry that occurred organically during the interviews (Moustakas, 1994). In addition, the semi-structured interview format allowed for broad questioning that extended beyond the planned interview questions, allowing responses that aided in describing the phenomenon through natural dialogue (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Staller, 2022). Each interview was conducted virtually and was video and audio recorded. To increase participant comfort, I engaged in conversation to get to know the participants and put them at ease (Moustakas, 1994).

The study followed Moustakas's (1994) structure for conducting phenomenological research. Hermeneutic characteristics state that bias cannot be removed, making the epoché process ineffective (Holloway, 2005; Moustakas, 1994). However, epoché attempts to establish subjectivity by eliminating all things can impose a biased approach to research and prevent a complete description of the phenomenon. It is understood that absolute subjectivity cannot be achieved (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002), but engaging in this process increases researcher transparency and context (Guillen, 2019; Holloway, 2005). Before each interview, I engaged in epoché by journaling any biases to suspend them. The following questions were formulated in advance to collect data. Still, I was free to adjust, eliminate, or change questions to keep the conversation with the participant going according to methodological guidelines. Each interview also began with a brief conversation to foster an environment of trust and camaraderie (Moustakas, 1994).

**Table 1***Individual Interview Questions*

1. Developing a biblical worldview in Christian school settings has been a topic of growing interest in today's landscape. Fostering students' biblical worldview development is complex and multi-faceted. When you think about the topic, what first comes to mind and why? CRQ #1
2. As Christian school administrators, we signed up to engage in a distinctly different educational program that focuses on critical goals for students – salvation, discipleship, etc. When you think about your role as an administrator in fostering biblical worldview development, what feelings and emotions are the most prominent? CRQ #1
3. In your estimation, how is biblical worldview development defined or understood among students, teachers, and other administrators in your department? SQ #1
4. How does your school or department prepare teachers to engage in biblical worldview development? What role do you have as an administrator in that? SQ #1
5. Some research has suggested that teachers' faith walks directly impact their effectiveness in biblical worldview development. What approaches have been successful, and what approaches have been challenging in growing and monitoring the spiritual growth of your faculty? SQ #1
6. With the many facets of being a school administrator, we are often asked to work in many different compartments (discipline, evaluation, supervision, academics, etc.). How frequently and in what ways is biblical worldview development a part of your typical day as an administrator? SQ #1



7. What methods have you attempted to use to motivate teachers and students to engage in the work of biblical worldview formation in your department? What was the outcome?  
SQ #1
8. Biblical worldview training focuses on developing the lens through which the world is viewed and thought about. It is different from learning Bible knowledge, though the Bible is the foundation for the worldview. How do you create opportunities for specific instruction in biblical worldview training? SQ #2
9. Educators often aim to teach students to think and process information critically. What academic strategies or methods do you promote that specifically support biblical worldview development in this way? SQ #2
10. What strategies or methods do teachers often use to foster biblical worldview development in the classroom? SQ #2
11. Service opportunities are often a part of the Christian school program. Please tell me about your department's service opportunities and expectations, why you focus on these opportunities, and how they relate to biblical worldview development. SQ #3
12. I want to ask you a question about the co-curriculum aspects of your program. For consistency purposes, I want to define co-curriculum as the elements of a school program outside of the classroom academics that still occur during the school day that support the school objectives. What planning (if any) has been done or executed to build elements of biblical worldview development in the intra-curriculum? SQ #3
13. What spiritual experiences do you plan in your program that are designed to foster biblical worldview development? SQ #3

14. Outlined in your school governing documents are different phrases that demonstrate a desire to develop a biblical worldview. (Give an example if needed). How are these tenants emphasized and explained to stakeholders? SQ #3
15. One goal of this study is to discover and describe the unique challenges to biblical worldview development in secondary school settings. What hurdles and challenges have you experienced at your school? CRQ #1

The questions included in the interview protocol were created to elicit a wide range of information from participants about the task of biblical worldview development. Questions 1, 2, and 15 addressed the overall experience of biblical worldview development. These questions fell into the experience or feeling categories that Patton (2002) described as common to interviews. Questions 3 through 7 focused on the administrator's interactions with the school's teaching staff to understand how the administrator influences the development process through leadership style. Research in transformational leadership theory suggests that an administrator's influence and leadership style can impact teacher and student growth. This is particularly true when motivating teachers toward a common goal that is not monetary (Al-Husseini et al., 2021; Anderson, 2017; Bass, 1990; Bluestein & Goldschmidt, 2021; Çetin et al., 2021; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Mitchell, 2019). Questions 8 through 10 were designed to explore school-related aspects of the contributing factors to the development of student's cognitive processing, such as training, studying, and addressing questions (Bailey, 2012; Bluestein & Goldschmidt, 2021; Çetin et al., 2021; Erdvig, 2020, 2021). Questions 11–14 aimed to explore aspects of the secondary school setting outside of teacher behavior and cognitive or academic factors. Sometimes referred to as intra-curricular experiences, these experiences can include

opportunities to serve, peer and mentor interactions, and stakeholder involvement, and often contribute to biblical worldview development (Brandes, 2018; Davis, 2021; Erdvig, 2020, 2021; Sites et al., 2009).

Attention was given to fine-tuning the interview questions to minimize confusion during the participant interviews. Dr. Erdvig, whose model for biblical worldview development in evangelical Christian emerging adults was used as a conceptual framework in this study, reviewed the questions as an expert and gave feedback. The questions were also piloted with three Christian school administrators outside of the study at the researcher's work site to ensure the questions were clear and understandable. All of the administrators who piloted the questions would have met the participant criteria aside from the fact they worked with me. This was an intentional parallel to align closely with the targeted participant profile. Some edits were made after the pilot to ensure the questions were straightforward and could elicit an appropriate answer. Additional attention was given during the first few interviews to fine-tune the questions as necessary, recognizing that an unknown participant may react differently to the questions than those who helped during the pilot.

### **Focus Groups**

The third data collection approach was focus groups. Focus groups tend to elicit responses during the social discussion of a phenomenon that might otherwise not emerge in one-on-one interviews (Patton, 2002). The nature of the group setting encouraged dialogue by hearing and responding to peers' comments, eliciting more data that participants did not share in one-on-one interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 202). Focus groups were approached thoughtfully to ensure they stayed focused (Patton, 2002). For this study, participants were grouped based on participant availability to meet; however, attempts were

made to separate administrators in close geographic proximity to minimize any discomfort a participant may have with a known peer (Patton, 2002). At the end of each one-on-one interview, the participants were sent a scheduling poll through Calendly, allowing them to select days and times for the focus group sessions. Three groups of up to five participants were organized as focus groups based on availability responses. Though there is debate on focus group size, there is agreement that groups were designed to be small enough to elicit participation from all attending (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2002). The smaller size was beneficial because online meetings can be difficult in group settings (Patton, 2002). Group norms were shared with participants when focus group times were confirmed via email. These norms included guidelines for having one person speak at a time. I also encouraged the participants to select a location with minimal background noise to help minimize distractions and difficulties in hearing and understanding the participants. The meeting software recorded the audio and video during the online focus groups, allowing me to facilitate the group actively and review the meeting later for analysis (Patton, 2002).

## **Table 2**

### *Focus Group Questions*

1. In our individual interviews, we touched on the nature of being a school administrator today and how the job's complexity impacts the charge of biblical worldview development in students. What suggestions would you make to new Christian school administrators beginning their journey to focus on Biblical worldview development?

CRQ #1

2. How would you respond if the same new administrator asked about the most challenging aspect of fostering biblical worldview development? CRQ #1
3. According to research, teachers are the greatest influencing factor in student achievement. The teacher–student relationship has also been documented to affect biblical worldview development. Can you discuss the challenges and successes you have experienced with coaching teachers in this area? SQ #1
4. What aspects of fostering biblical worldview development of students have you found most challenging or most successful, and why? SQ #2
5. What characteristics of a school program do you place a high value on when creating a culture conducive to the biblical worldview development of students? CRQ #1
6. When considering the social, emotional, and spiritual demands of your role in general and specific to biblical worldview development, where do you find support and/or growth as a leader? SQ #3
7. What else would you like to add to our discussion of your experiences with developing a biblical worldview in students that we have yet to discuss? CRQ #1

The questions included in the focus group protocol were created to elicit conversation with participants about the task of biblical worldview development. Questions 1, 2, 5, and 7 focused on eliciting information about the holistic description of the phenomena. This strategy strengthens the iterative process of phenomenological analysis by confirming and comparing the parts of the phenomenon with the whole (Patton, 2002). One focus group question was created in advance for each research sub-question. Question 3 addressed the influence of administrators on teachers, acknowledging the great potential teachers have on student growth academically and

spiritually (Al-Husseini et al., 2021; Anderson, 2017; Bass, 1990; Bluestein & Goldschmidt, 2021; Çetin et al., 2021; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Mitchell, 2019). Question 4 addressed the interaction and influence of administrators on students (Bluestein & Goldschmidt, 2021; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005), eliciting a description of the administrators' experiences with direct efforts toward students' biblical worldview development. Last, Question 6 addressed the administrators' relationship and actions as it relates to influencing the intra-curriculum areas of the school (Al-Husseini et al., 2021; Anderson, 2017; Çetin et al., 2021; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Mitchell, 2019).

### **Data Analysis**

The data analysis process is not comprised of clear sequential steps but is better represented by a circle, with certain parts happening repeatedly and simultaneously (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Saldaña, 2021). Though each aspect of the analysis plan is outlined, the process is iterative and involves repeated attention to the parts and the wholes of the data collected (Moustakas, 1994). The initial priority after data collection was proper storage. Qualitative data often proliferate and become overwhelming, so computer storage and qualitative data analysis software, AtlasTi, was used to mitigate this. As soon as data were received, actionable steps were taken for processing and storage.

Document analysis can provide a perspective on the culture or history of an establishment and offer insight into paths of inquiry during the interview that may help elicit a better description of what is (Patton, 2002); therefore, analysis began before the interview to help confirm the existence of what was or what was not based on the institutional documents created by the participants' schools (Cardno, 2018; Patton, 2002; Saldaña, 2021). When analyzing documents, the nature of the data type requires researchers to approach analysis with a set of pre-

determined codes built on the underlying theory and the research questions (Cardno, 2018; Saldaña, 2021). The codes were built from identifying elements in Erdvig's (2020) model for biblical worldview development in evangelical Christian emerging adults that might be found in schools or could address aspects of the research questions.

Interview and focus group data were handled slightly differently. Virtual meeting software (Microsoft Teams or Google Meet) was used to capture the audio and video from the interview. After each recorded interaction, I uploaded the recording into Otter.io transcription software. The software transcribed the audio file with relative accuracy. However, I compared the computer-generated text transcription with the video and audio file, making necessary edits for accuracy and changing any identifying information, such as names of individuals or the school site (Patton, 2002). After each transcription was completed and edited for accuracy and privacy by redacting identifying information, each participant was emailed a copy and given a window of time to review the transcript for optional member checking to improve accuracy (see Appendix F for sample transcript). After allowing the opportunity for a participant to review the transcript, it was uploaded into AtlasTi software for analysis. The original text and audio file were stored in a password-protected file on a password-protected computer.

During the entire data collection process, I engaged in memoing. Memoing is a flexible strategy utilized during all stages of data analysis. It assists the researcher in "making conceptual leaps from raw data to those abstractions that explain research phenomena in the context in which it is examined" (Birks et al., 2008). I utilized AtlasTi to record thoughts or emergent ideas as I listened to and read the transcript or read through the school documents (see Appendix G for sample memo), creating an audit trail (to help with credibility) and allowing for coding ideas to formulate (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). The memoing was also used to note body

language or facial expressions that participants used that could contribute to describing the essence of the studied phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994).

The data analysis approach for all three data types followed a hybrid deductive and inductive coding approach. Inductive and deductive coding is dialectical rather than mutually exclusive, but an initial inductive approach is primarily used in phenomenology (Saldaña, 2021). Analysis was completed using the AtlasTi software through a hybrid deductive and inductive coding approach. Initial codes were generated before analysis and were primarily related to Erdvig's conceptual model; however, some codes were also generated during the early analysis of institutional documents. The initial use of inductive coding during the first iteration of coding data allowed for an open-minded approach, forming codes as the data was analyzed, and I engaged in horizontalizing. Horizontalizing is a phenomenological approach that states that each time a phenomenon is experienced, the viewpoint is changed, illustrating that the range of views, or available horizons, is limitless (Moustakas, 1994). Horizontalizing helped prompt me to accept everything participants contributed during the interviews and focus groups as data. I reviewed each line of the transcript, identifying codes and placing them in line with the words of the participants (Moustakas, 1994; Saldaña, 2021). As analysis continued, a coding system was constructed, moving the coding system into a deductive system. Multiple coding cycles were completed before I engaged in thematic analysis (Patton, 2002; Saldaña, 2021). Once all the data were coded, I utilized multiple features within AtlasTi to connect the codes to the research questions and emerging themes by grouping them. After many cycles of reading, coding, and grouping, a list of themes was generated, representing a focused but exhaustive view of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Saldaña, 2021).



Synthesizing all three data sources and the researcher memos began with a review of the listing of generated codes in the data management tool AtlasTi. The codes were then converted to an analog system of notes. Through physical manipulation of the codes, I looked for common themes, merging codes, grouping them into families, and looking for their relationship to the research questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994; Saldaña, 2021). Eliminating codes and determining what is essential to the phenomenon must occur (Patton, 2002) for a narrowed list to be synthesized and clustered into themes (see Appendix H for coding list). These themes were the basis for developing and writing textual and structural descriptions of the phenomenon to describe the essence of fostering biblical worldview development at school sites (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A textual description of a phenomenon is an abstract description of the experience without direct inclusion of the experience. The structural description focuses on how the participants interpreted what was experienced with the phenomenon and the meaning-building that emerged from the group (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002). These descriptions were revised in the iterative fashion of hermeneutics by comparing the descriptions with the data collected (Moustakas, 1994). The synthesis of the textual and structural description produced a rich description of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002).

### **Trustworthiness**

Establishing the trustworthiness of a qualitative study involves addressing various areas of the study, which may suggest the work is valid and illustrates a level of research quality that evokes confidence (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Leko et al., 2021). Countering the heavy historical influence of quantitative analysis methods, researchers have worked to establish a vocabulary specific to the qualitative methodology that echoes measures of validity, reliability, and objectivity used in quantitative work to develop trustworthiness in

qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The ultimate determination of whether trustworthiness has been achieved rests on the reader or audience of the study; however, researchers should employ qualitative methods that are promoted as sound practices that build the different areas of trustworthiness (Leko et al., 2021; Shenton, 2004). Establishing trustworthiness is articulated through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Schwandt et al., 2007; Shenton, 2004).

### **Credibility**

Credibility is the belief that a study accurately portrays the phenomenon's essence. It is the most crucial aspect of developing trustworthiness in a study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). Steps used to increase the credibility of my research include (a) prolonged engagement, or time spent with participants; (b) triangulation of data; (c) memoing utilized throughout the research.

Triangulation involves synthesizing three or more aspects of the research process to corroborate the formation of a studied phenomenon and minimize researcher bias (Campbell et al., 2020; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2002). Triangulation gives more credibility to the identified trends and themes, adding depth to the data collected (Campbell et al., 2020; Fusch et al., 2018). In qualitative methods, researchers may use three methods, data sources, or theories to help minimize researcher bias and increase credibility (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Fusch et al., 2018; Patton, 2002). Triangulation can confirm data gathered to mitigate bias or misinterpretation but also “increases validity as the strengths of one approach can compensate for the weaknesses of another approach” (Patton, 2002, p. 306). To minimize bias and increase researcher credibility, this study used three data collection methods: document analysis, individual interviews, and focus groups.

Member checking is another strategy to increase credibility. Member checking is used in qualitative methodology as quality control between the researcher and participants, ensuring that the data collected is accurate. (Harper & Cole, 2012; Moustakas, 1994). Member checks can be used during the interview process, after the interviews, and after the research. These checks help avoid misinterpretation or interpretation of the data, ensuring the findings are accurate, authentic, and consistent (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Harper & Cole, 2012; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002). There are two points in the research process where member checks were used. The first was after transcribing the individual interviews, and the second was after transcribing the focus group session. Once complete, the transcripts were sent to the participants for review, allowing each person to clarify or adjust statements as needed. For the transcription of the focus group, the names of the other participants were redacted; participants only saw their and my names. I member-checked with co-researchers after the interviews and focus group.

### **Dependability and Confirmability**

Dependability and credibility overlap closely (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), but additional measures should be taken to build dependability within a study (Shenton, 2004). A careful audit trail was kept through memos, documenting the research process at each stage. The memoing included processes, procedures, and thoughts about the challenges and experiences.

Dependability was also built through overlapping methods such as triangulation, which was used in the study, building both dependability and credibility (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Fusch et al., 2018; Shenton, 2004). Liberty University also utilized inquiry audits to thoroughly review all aspects of the dissertation process through the dissertation committee.

Confirmability directly reflects the bias-free, objective position of the researcher (Shenton, 2004). Confirmability is evident throughout the study through a neutral voice or the

presence of the participants' voices, not my own (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). Two methods were employed to establish confirmability. The first was an audit trail that included memoing written thoughts and processes at every stage. In addition, the audit trail provided documentation for any potential researcher bias and evidence of epoché (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Shenton, 2004). My thoughts, approaches, questions, and core beliefs were recorded to reveal any biases (Leko et al., 2021; Moustakas, 1994).

### **Transferability**

It is widely recognized that a limitation of qualitative research is the degree of transferability to other settings (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002). Qualitative analysis aims to produce a rich, thick description of the lived experience by describing the findings, site, participants, and process (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Harper & Cole, 2012). However, purposeful sampling methods and smaller sample sizes associated with phenomenology limit the transferability of the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenology also recognizes and values individual perception as knowledge and understands that individuals' perceptions vary greatly even when experiencing similar things. For this reason, transferability is problematic to phenomenological research. A degree of transferability in phenomenology, described as fittingness, can be established based on the context and similarity between the study conditions and the environment (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002). This study aimed to foster transferability, or fittingness, by producing rich, detailed descriptions of all aspects of the phenomenon.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Before the research commenced, Liberty's IRB approval was obtained (see Appendix E), ensuring that this study maintained respect for persons, avoided any concern for welfare, and

ensured justice (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Once approval was granted, a recruitment letter (see Appendix B) was emailed to schools informing them of why they were being invited to join, the purpose of the study was, their right to withdraw at any time without consequence if they chose to participate, the methods for data collection, and the assurance that all participants and site names would remain confidential throughout the study. The accompanying informed consent form (see Appendix D) was signed by the participant and digitally stored by the researcher. The informed consent outlined the nature of the study. It reiterated the information in the initial email request. It also informed participants of the opportunity to review the transcript for the individual interview and the focus group and outlined the considerations for secure data storage.

During data collection, all original data files, such as audio and video files, were labeled with the pseudonym assigned to the participant and stored on a password-protected computer in a password-protected file. Organizational documents submitted were also stored in the file associated with the participants' pseudonyms. The data will be stored for a minimum of three years before destruction. During data analysis, every assurance was made to ensure that no identifying information (names, sites, or other incriminating information) was present in the transcript, ensuring the privacy of all participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

### ***Permissions***

Multiple levels of permissions were put in place to promote ethical practices and protect participants. Before any research began, an application was made, and approval was granted by Liberty's IRB (see Appendix E). Once recruitment began, potential participants were given informed consent (see Appendix D). I ensured each selected participant had returned a signed consent before the initial interview.

### **Summary**

Qualitative phenomenological research situates the researcher in the natural world, requiring interpretive skills to draw the essence of a phenomenon from the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002). Careful data collection involved document analysis, individual interviews, and focus groups with Christian school secondary administrators responsible for fostering an environment conducive to biblical worldview development. The data collection approach and processes were guided by hermeneutical phenomenological principles as outlined by Moustakas (1994). Analysis and data collection were iterative, but once saturation was reached, I utilized proven analysis methods to minimize bias and disaggregate the collected data (Saldaña, 2021). Phenomenological principles such as memoing, horizontalizing, and reduction techniques were utilized throughout the analysis portion of this study. I used the collection of empirical data from individual experiences to analyze and form a description of the essence of the experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994).

## **CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experiences of Christian school secondary administrators as they work to foster an environment conducive to student biblical worldview development. This chapter first describes the participants in the study by including relevant information about recruitment and a profile for each participant. Afterward, I present theme and sub-theme descriptions grounded in the three data sources: interviews, focus groups, and documents. Finally, the central research question and the three sub-questions are answered.

### **Participants**

The 12 participants in this study are all Christian school administrators who work with secondary departments and have a role in fostering biblical worldview formation in their school settings. A total of 65 individual recruitment emails went out to administrators. Most emails were sent to potential participants in Florida, where I live and work, but snowball recruitment occurred based on recommendations from ACSI contacts and other administrators. By the time active recruitment was concluded, emails were sent to every region except for the western region of the United States. The recruitment email outlined three requirements for participation:

1. Serve at an ACSI-accredited K-12 school
2. Hold a position of leadership at the school for at least three years
3. Work in some leadership capacity that involves mentoring, evaluating, or coaching teachers within the secondary department

Individuals who met the criteria and were willing to participate were directed to an interest screening survey that required entering data that allowed the researcher to confirm eligibility.

There was a 31% response rate to the screening survey, representing 20 possible candidates who

expressed interest. Based on the screening, only one individual did not qualify, leaving 19 possible candidates. Those individuals who met the parameters were sent a scheduling link for an interview. Two follow-up reminder emails were sent to participants to encourage them to submit a time for an interview. There were 12 participants who agreed to participate in the study, representing a 63% response rate from individuals who submitted an interest and an 18% participation rate overall from initial recruitment. School administrators tend to be very busy, which may have been one reason recruitment was challenging. In addition to the 12 participants, three others reached out at some point to express their discomfort with discussing the topic or sharing institutional documents and withdrew their names from the list of possible participants. Also, three other potential participants responded that the administrative team in the secondary department of their school was relatively new, explaining that no one qualified to participate in the study.

The study participants represented various roles in their respective school settings, as outlined in Table 4. Still, all were intimately involved in some portion of decision-making related to biblical worldview development at their sites. The variety of job roles represented in the participant sample reflects the challenges I had in recruitment. Initial recruitment focused on secondary principals, but after many emails and phone calls, many possible participants recruited due to snowball sampling filled other administrative roles. Though unanticipated, the alternative administrative roles still met the criteria of interacting and working with secondary students and teachers in the required capacity. When recruitment began, it quickly became apparent that recruiting an appropriate number of participants would be difficult. In response, I submitted a request for a minor revision to Liberty's IRB. The IRB granted changes to the geographical study area to recruit, expanding the initially limited profile for recruitment from Florida to the entire



United States.

### **Steve**

Steve is a veteran educator with 32 years in Christian education. He has been the head administrator at a Christian school in the southeast region of the United States for the last eight years. When Steve first arrived at the school, enrollment extended from kindergarten to eighth grade, but a high school division was opened under his leadership. The school now serves students from kindergarten to Grade 12 and has 450 students enrolled, with approximately 100 students in the secondary department. Steve has served in many capacities in Christian schools over his long tenure. Eight years were spent as a classroom teacher. Still, he has filled many leadership roles over his 24 years, building his capacity in many school program areas including technology, academics, strategic planning, and more. He is committed to meeting the needs on his campus by revisiting areas represented by his broad experience, demonstrating his commitment to staying connected with students and teachers. He can often be found driving buses, arranging for substitutes, handling technology issues, and performing many other roles that are often appropriated to other roles in larger schools. Steve is actively involved in ACSI events and was eager to collaborate, support other Christian school leaders, and learn from those around him.

### **Mark**

Mark has been in education for six years. He joined the education field after serving in the United States Marine Corps. During his time in the military, Mark came to know the Lord. Upon leaving the military, Mark knew he wanted to teach and work with kids. He sought out a position in Christian education. Mark was promoted to upper school principal three years ago after serving as a teacher at his current school. As a new leader, he returned to school and earned

his master's degree. Mark was reflective and open about his first year in the role, recognizing the challenges of being a new administrator during school growth and a transition in leadership at his school. Located in the southeast region of the United States, Mark's school has experienced significant growth since 2020, increasing K-12 enrollment to 540 students despite being situated in an area with a dense population of large Christian schools. Mark demonstrated a deep commitment and appreciation for the goals and aims of Christian education and the personal joy of serving alongside other believers.

### **Megan**

Megan has over 30 years of experience in the field of education. Though she currently serves as a middle school principal at a large (1,000 plus students) Christian school in the southeast region of the United States, Megan's career path has afforded her a wide range of opportunities, including teaching in elementary, middle, high school, and college settings. After earning her degree in Spanish education, Megan began teaching in the public sector, first as an adjunct professor at a nearby university and then in an elementary school. However, when her children were school-age, she left public education and moved to the Christian sector.

Megan accepted a job at her current Christian school, where she began teaching in the classroom, eventually teaching at all levels. Later, she moved into various administrative roles before becoming the middle school principal. Her administrative roles put her in positions to interact with teachers in all departments in a training and coaching capacity. Her range of experiences and more than 20 years of serving at the school allowed Megan to develop deep roots and form strong relationships with teachers, fellow administrators, and students. Her posture as a Christian school educator and her deep commitment to biblical worldview are shaped by her life experiences and her journey to understanding Christian education as an

immersive experience distinctly different from public education. It was evident throughout conversations that Megan had a deep personal drive to discover what biblical immersion should look like in Christian schools.

### **Alan**

Alan has been an educator for 21 years, spending 20 years in Christian education. He earned his degree in history education from a Christian university, intending to be a missionary in the public school system. Instead, he found teaching jobs scarce and returned to school to earn a master's degree. Not long after graduating, he found a job opportunity at a Christian school, which he took with some uncertainty because of his initial desire to be in public school. However, it didn't take him long to realize his love of Christian education and know it was a long-term fit. In addition to being a classroom teacher, Alan has 12 years of experience in Christian school leadership. At a previous school, Alan served on a leadership team at one school with two notable figures in today's Christian school movement. He attributes his time there as a season of professional development in many areas, specifically service learning and biblical worldview formation with students. His peers on the leadership team encouraged him to continue his leadership journey and pursue a head-of-school role.

Alan is currently serving as a co-superintendent of a school of 320 students in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Alan's school merged with another local Christian school two years ago to pool resources and efforts during economic hardship. Alan and his co-superintendent both run separate campuses, shouldering the additional responsibility of the campus principal. The unique structure has prompted several changes for the future that Alan is optimistic about for the two campuses and both superintendents. Alan's unwavering dedication to Christian education has strengthened him during numerous adversities, enabling him to assist

struggling schools in overcoming diverse challenges. He remains committed to the goals of Christian education.

### **Jake**

Jake is in his 11<sup>th</sup> year in education and is serving as the secondary principal in the southeast region. His Christian school enrolls 15 students, with approximately 140 in the secondary department. Education is a second career for Jake. Although he did not earn his bachelor's degree in education, Jake worked briefly in a classical Christian school after graduation. However, he later decided to continue his education, earning a master's degree in economics and eventually serving in the State Department. His love for learning pulled him back to the education field, and he returned to Christian education as a classroom teacher. After some time, he was promoted and became a secondary principal. His new role motivated him to continue his formal education, and he is currently a doctoral candidate at a major state university, seeking a degree in educational leadership. Jake's philosophy of Christian education is shaped by who he is and what he has experienced. Though all three of his degrees were earned through secular universities, Jake graduated from a Christian high school and spent some time in a Christian college. Both negative and positive interactions in those Christian settings underlie his commitment to authentic Christian modeling and living. Jake is a deep thinker, and his love for classics, rhetoric, and philosophy has shaped his approach as an educator and in developing his biblical worldview. He is "really curious about what makes people change," and his leadership approach reflects his valuing of meaningful processing and authentic living.

### **Cathy**

Cathy serves as the director of curriculum and instruction at a large Christian school in the southeastern region. Before beginning her career in education, Cathy served in the military.

After serving in the armed forces, she earned her elementary education degree and spent three years in public school. Even though Cathy and her husband worked in public schools as teachers, when it came time to enroll their children, they chose to enroll them at her current Christian school. However, when an opening for an elementary teacher became available at the school, Cathy jumped at the opportunity to move to the Christian sector and be with her children. Cathy later decided to return to school and earn her master's degree and then move directly into a doctoral program. Simultaneously, Cathy moved into her current role as director of curriculum and instruction. She is in her third year in the role after being a teacher at the school for three years. Cathy's position is unique in her school and is one of the only roles that works across all three departments.

### **Mia**

Mia is a young administrator serving as the principal at her school site in the southeastern region of the United States. Mia committed to Christian education while still in high school and earned her degree in secondary education through dual enrollment classes by the time she graduated from high school. She immediately began teaching in Christian schools. Over the next seven years, she went back to school for an additional bachelor's and a master's degree before finding herself interim principal at her school at the age of 25. Mia had opportunities to serve at numerous public and private Christian and charter schools over the next few years. She felt God was calling her to help open a school, so she waited and prayed for the opportunity while she sought her doctorate in education. The opportunity finally arose, and five years ago, she accepted her current role as site principal and helped open her current school. The school has grown annually and currently enrolls 500 students. As a part of a new and growing school, Mia is heavily involved in its daily academic program. However, Mia consistently demonstrated her

deeply reflective posture and dedication to authentic Christian education and living through rich knowledge, commitment to biblical habits, and practical professional development for her administrative and instructional teams.

### **Miles**

Miles is a veteran educator with 39 years of experience in K-12 schools. For the last 33 years he has served at his current school, located in the southwest region of the United States. The school has two campuses serving nearly 1,000 students, with just under 400 students enrolled in the high school department. After serving in various teaching and leadership roles, Miles moved to the director of faculty services position three years ago. The change resulted from the executive leadership team recognizing the need to devote attention to the changing landscape of the school due to COVID-19, the subsequent enrollment increases, and the change in culture at large. Miles is deeply vested in his school and has been present for changes of leadership and a reshaping of school identity that essentially redefined the institutional characteristics and practices of the school. Miles balanced an appreciation for fellow educators he has served beside for years from an era often marked by educators formally trained in Christian education programs with his desire to assist a new generation of teachers from public universities and public schools. His new position allows him to leverage his institutional knowledge and wide range of experience to help support principals at all levels in biblical worldview formation and school culture in general. He is also involved in other administrative tasks, often collaborating with the executive team to address school-wide trends and needs. Miles was transparent and reflective. He demonstrated transparency throughout the conversation by sharing his processing, honest appraisal of his work, and willingness to “refine some of the processes,” reflecting humility and his commitment to the mission.

**Jessica**

Jessica is the current K-12 principal at her school and an alumna. She returned to the school to teach 20 years ago before eventually moving into an administrative role seven years ago. Jessica was passionate about an authentic understanding of Jesus and the Christian walk, an essential fit for her school which is highly missional-minded in its enrollment approach. The school is geographically located in an area with an opportunity to be a light to the surrounding community. Accordingly, the school is open to enrolling students and families who do not have a faith background, including consistently accepting and enrolling foreign exchange students. It currently has nearly 800 students enrolled in kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Jessica attributes her deep commitment to ministering to students and addressing topics of hurt and confusion, regardless of age, to her own experience of brokenness in childhood.

Jessica was fearless in her approach to hard conversations with students and in her approach to teacher training. Though she is new to supervising upper school, she led the elementary department for many years and has fostered deeper levels of commitment to biblical worldview formation among her faculty members than she feels would be observable in high school. Her tenure and focus with the elementary department have helped in this way. Jessica's recent role redefinition as K-12 principal was designed to allow her to focus on academic alignment and improvement across all grade levels. She viewed this as a process deeply embedded with the work of biblical worldview formation for students.

**Brad**

Brad is the academic dean at a Christian school of 800 students in the southeast region of the United States. He has served at his school for 12 years, first as a teacher and then in an administrative capacity for the last five years. Though his job entails facilitating and planning

professional development campus-wide and overseeing curriculum adoption and implementation, he teaches multiple classes daily. He holds a Master of Divinity in Christian apologetics but previously worked in the retail industry for many years before shifting to Christian education. His passion for apologetics, his noticing the growing challenges of culture, and his love of working with young people contributed to his career change. While serving at his school, Brad followed his passion for learning by completing the Colson Fellows Program and then working with the Colson Educators program after completing the Fellows' program, making meaningful contributions to resources for educational professionals. Brad is deeply committed to forming a biblical worldview in students by helping with campus-wide initiatives to shape the school environment and personally engaging in the classroom with the students.

### **Kristy**

Kristy is deeply rooted in her Christian school in the United States' southeast region. She attended and graduated before returning years later to teach at the middle and high school levels. She has found the experience of "staying put" at one school for so many years to be a formative and positive experience. Whether recalling her time as a student, the opportunity to return and teach alongside some of her teachers, or having her children attend where she serves, she was unequivocally positive about her experiences. Kristy has been employed at her school for 27 years and was approached at different times by leadership to serve in administrative roles. The administrative team has been a source of encouragement and support, encouraging Kristy to further her education and explore her interests and giftings. She is now serving as the director of spiritual formation for her school, which enrolls 758 students from infants through Grade 12. Though she is passionate about the Christian education experience for even the youngest students on campus, her time is primarily focused on upper school and the nearly 200 students



enrolled in high school.

### **Brooke**

Brooke is the director of curriculum and instruction at her school in the southeast region of the United States. She has been in education for over 20 years in public and secular settings. Brooke earned her bachelor's degree in middle-grade education and her master's degree in school administration from secular universities. After graduation, she served in public school as a teacher and administrator for 15 years. After becoming discouraged by the public education system, she looked to leave the field. A friend previously serving on her administrative team encouraged her to talk with the leadership at a local private Christian school. After that conversation, Brooke switched to Christian education, accepting a job focused on serving the population of students with special needs at the school. Six years later, Brooke's role has expanded, allowing her to work in the curriculum and instruction areas. She has been dedicated to the work of Christian education. Her posture of reflection and humility is foundational to her desire to see her school improve in all areas, academically and spiritually.

**Table 3***School Administrator Participants*

| Participant | Highest Degree Earned | Title                                | State | Admissions Position               |
|-------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|-------|-----------------------------------|
| Steve       | master's              | head of school                       | FL    | missional                         |
| Mark        | master's              | secondary principal                  | FL    | missional                         |
| Megan       | master's              | middle school principal              | FL    | missional                         |
| Alan        | master's              | co-superintendent                    | PA    | missional                         |
| Jake        | master's              | secondary principal                  | FL    | covenantal                        |
| Cathy       | doctorate             | director of curriculum & instruction | FL    | missional                         |
| Mia         | doctorate             | school principal                     | FL    | covenantal                        |
| Miles       | master's              | director of K-12 faculty             | CO    | K-8 missional,<br>9-12 covenantal |
| Brad        | master's              | academic dean                        | NC    | missional                         |
| Kristy      | master's              | director of spiritual formation      | FL    | covenantal                        |
| Brooke      | master's              | director of curriculum & instruction | NC    | missional                         |
| Jessica     | master's              | school principal                     | FL    | missional                         |

**Special Note on Participant Schools**

Though the school sites were not the focus of this study, some discussion about the sites

is relevant to the study and the participants' profiles. Every administrator referenced or spoke of Christian schools near their school location. Also, the sites represented by the participants benefited from serving in states that currently have some form of a private school voucher program. The state provides some aid for families looking to enroll their children in private education, including Christian schools. These trends, along with the COVID-19 closure of schools, have contributed to increased Christian school enrollment (Lee & Price, 2022).

Another area to note is the admissions stance of each school. Christian schools typically fall into one of two categories of admissions positions when enrolling students. A missional or evangelistic approach means a school holds an open policy regarding enrollment. Neither the students nor the parents must have a profession of faith that aligns with the school; instead, they must agree to the teachings outlined in the school's statement of faith and agree to behavior that honors that set of beliefs. In these settings, there is typically a focus on gospel presentation since it is understood among teachers and administrators that there may be a higher incidence of unsaved students. The other admissions approach, covenant, requires that one or both parents attest to being personally aligned and committed to believing and living out the statement of faith articulated by the school. In environments where both parents are required to be personally aligned, the school's focus tends to be toward discipling and spiritual growth.

In this study, no consideration of the admission position of the school was given in recruitment, though the sample participants represent schools with various positions in admission policy (see Table 3). However, this topic came up organically in discussion during each focus group, each time brought up by the participants themselves. Though it appeared relevant to some participants as they discussed their experiences with peers, it was not a distinguishable characteristic in any interviews. It had no discernable impact on the lived experiences of the

administrators and is therefore not explored further in the study.

## **Results**

The role and significance of the school administrator in Christian school settings are relatively unexplored and significantly complex (Beckman et al., 2012; Çetin et al., 2021; LeBlanc & Slaughter, 2012). Christian school leaders share many of the same pressures as their counterparts in secular school settings. Still, they are also responsible for meeting institutional and biblical directives related to advancing the Christian faith and training the younger generation in biblical truth. An additional burden of the Christian school model is that unlike public school leaders with a district office to administrate budget, payroll, human resources, and more, Christian school administrators are most often responsible for all site operations. These tasks can represent significant time and pressures.

For some time, Christian schools have featured mission statements, core values, and expected student outcomes with claims of student faith development and persistence. These claims, though admirable, have been left unsubstantiated (Boerema, 2006; Schultz & Swezey, 2013; Swaner & Wolfe, 2021). Indeed, more attention needs to be given to Christian educational environments, and the complexity of reliably measuring a developing biblical worldview is problematic due to its highly personal and concealed nature.

The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experiences of Christian school secondary administrators as they work to foster an environment conducive to student biblical worldview development. The study results are represented by a broad data set that reflects the complexity and multifaceted nature of the experience. Evaluating the effectiveness of administrators' approaches or methods was not a part of the study's aims; therefore, results will not be evaluative. The substance of the research is attentive to the comprehensive considerations

and tasks that comprise the role of secondary Christian school administrators. The following section begins with a summary of the themes and associated sub-themes that emerged from the research (see Table 4), followed by a description and details about associated codes, also available in the Appendix (see Appendix H for coding list).

**Table 4**

*Themes & Sub-themes*

| Theme                                | Sub-theme 1                     | Sub-theme 2                        | Sub-theme 3                          | Sub-theme 4                     |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Support Institutional Ideals         | Finding the Right People        | Sharing Direction and Vision       | Promoting School Values & Practices  | Mitigating Diversions           |
| Build Relationships & Develop People | Growing Faculty                 | Seeing Individual Need and Posture | Fostering a Collaborative Culture    |                                 |
| Consider the Program Framework       | Training and Educating          | Building Relational Capacity       | Creating Service Opportunities       | Designing Spiritual Experiences |
| Provide Instructional Support        | Interacting with the Curriculum | Promoting Methods                  | Encouraging Content-Area Integration | Monitoring                      |
| Emotional Considerations             | Finding External Support        | Navigating Common Emotions         |                                      |                                 |

Five themes and 17 sub-themes emerged from the data that illustrate the core characteristics of the participants' shared experiences. The five themes are: support institutional

ideals, build relationships and develop people, consider the program framework, provide instructional support, and emotional considerations.

### **Support Institutional Ideals**

The most pervasive theme across the research dealt with the administrators' experiences comprehensively supporting the schools' institutional ideals. This theme explains the strategic work administrators engage in to uphold or promote ideals, or principles and desired outcomes, that the school sets. The institutional ideals of the school are encapsulated in institutional documents like mission and vision statements, expected student outcomes, core values, handbooks, statements of faith, and articulated philosophy of education statements. Every school represented by the participants had evidence of their aims expressed in these areas, and at least one area directly or indirectly referenced the formation of students' biblical worldviews, with the majority of direct references found in the expected student outcomes. In its mission statement, Megan's school articulates it this way: "nurturing a love for learning, striving for academic excellence, developing a Christian character, and instilling a biblical worldview." Miles' school expresses ideals for biblical worldview development in its expected student outcomes as, it "develops, articulates, and defends a biblical worldview." In the case of Jake's school, the ideals are reflected even through job descriptions that emphasize the responsibility and role of the principal as one who "contributes to the maintenance of a 'shalom community'—a community characterized by Biblical peace and wholeness."

In addition to institutional documents that articulate ideals, four sub-themes comprise and help illustrate the experience of this theme: finding the right people, sharing direction and vision, promoting school values and practices, and mitigating diversions. The sub-themes encompass 35% of all sub-theme occurrences in the study, representing the highest distribution across all

themes. Of 157 unique codes in the study, 51 were related to this theme, making it more prevalent than any other theme. It was represented in all three data collections and was the primary theme embodied in the document analysis. In addition, each of the 12 participants contributed to this theme, speaking of the general complexity they wrestle with and conveying their involvement in work related to one or more sub-themes. Megan recognized biblical worldview formation efforts as complex, saying, “It’s a complex task because we think at first that it’s just studying God’s Word, but it’s more than that.” During a focus group, Mark explained it this way, “Biblical worldview is such a broad picture of what you’re trying to achieve. It can be achieved many ways, you know, whether it’s like, the curriculum, whether it’s the professional development, [or even] the people that you hire.” Given the range of job roles represented by the participants, this is a significant finding, emphasizing the universal experience related to supporting the school’s ideals. Some participants spoke directly about school culture when explaining the nature of the strategic work of supporting institutional aims. In his interview, Mark summarized it this way: “I think just working on school culture has helped us have direction in where we want to go and really helped us with building biblical worldview within our school.” Brad reiterated the sentiment by sharing a question he grapples with often: “How do we develop even our non-teaching faculty members and our janitors? Because they’re all involved in the life of the school, and in creating a culture of worldview.” Other administrators indirectly discussed supporting the institutional ideals by referring to theme components. Jessica recognized the importance and centrality of the vision element of the theme on her campus this way: “What matters is that we’re all on the same page then to execute the vision our school has given us.” Regardless of whether implicitly or explicitly understood, the shared understanding of the personal responsibility in supporting the greater institutional goals of

the school remains a significant part of the Christian school administrator's experience in design and execution. Mia discussed the task in a way that shows the substantial and all-encompassing consideration that is given:

In the school, we really focus on biblical worldview, immersion, and how it needs to be in everything we do. From the moment people walk in the building, [we consider] how do they feel? You know, do they experience Jesus? How are the people talking to them? Are people valuing them and putting their attention on them? [We consider] the way our classroom is. Even the slogans and the posters on our walls [matter].

Like Mia, Megan identified aspects of institutional documents that articulate ideals but also hold a practical view of the execution at her school:

It's part of our mission statement, part of our vision. Is it realistic that that is happening? No, of course not. But the idea [is] the more we can purpose to make it happen, to make sure our teachers feel comfortable, that our teachers are loved and cared for and respected, [then], they can then create those types of classrooms where their students feel loved and cared for and respected. Then when they do, when this love of Jesus kind of spills out of them in their content, then it becomes this immersive experience.

The administrators oscillated between discussing an ideal school-wide ethos and referencing more tangible aspects of their role in supporting the institutional aims. The sub-themes for this theme reflect the dual nature of the experience.

### ***Finding the Right People***

All 12 participants articulated the necessity of finding the right people as an essential element of their experience of fostering an environment conducive to biblical worldview development. Primarily emerging from interview data, the sub-theme of finding the right people



represents administrators' need, desire, and responsibility to vet two major stakeholder groups— instructional staff and parents—who support and positively contribute to the institutional ideals. Of the 51 codes encompassed in the theme of supporting institutional ideals, 17 were related to this sub-theme, with 14 linked to finding the right instructional staff and three associated with finding the right parents. Steve concisely situates the task within the greater administrative experience by asserting, “[it] really comes down to finding the right teachers.” The essence of this sub-theme and the associated codes fall into five categories: requirements, actionable tasks, the desired posture, specific roles of focus, and the related challenges.

The requirements element for the sub-theme of finding the right people can be seen in administrators' experiences through the codes of “faith minimums” and “individual relationships with God.” Handbooks and job descriptions consistently outline faith minimum requirements, including church attendance, saving knowledge of Christ, and various Christian practices. Interview data also supported this characteristic of the experience for administrators, who typically have a role in interviewing potential teacher candidates. However, faith minimums were referred to both generally as a passing thought and specifically with varying perceptions of relevance and actualization. Jake spoke dubiously about the faith minimums, saying:

[Teachers] need to have some level of Christian formation, some level of Christian identity, and some openness to thinking biblically about their topic. We do have that requirement as a part of our contract—that you're an active member in a local church [but] we don't go back and double check that. We're not calling the pastor.

Mia's perception of the effectiveness of the minimums differed and was evident as she discussed the level of accountability required at her school. She shared the type of candid discussions she regularly holds with teachers about their faith:

We talk about their walk with the Lord; we talk about if they're tithing, and we talk about weekly church attendance. All those things are scriptural principles that they need to have a solid rock with the Lord . . . this is expected. And so, I think that has helped because I really think that biblical worldview development [must] start with us before we can teach it.

In addition to faith minimums, the other requirement is individual relationships with God.

Universally, the participants expressed that for biblical worldview development to happen effectively, the teachers' relationship with God must be healthy and prioritized. Megan spoke of the importance of this teacher characteristic, saying, "We need to know our content, but we also need to equally have our relationship with the Lord and . . . push [that] into the classroom."

Administrators consider this characteristic a foundational cornerstone.

When discussing the experience of finding the right people during interviews and focus groups, administrators referenced the desired posture of the right people. The codes of "spiritual maturity," "teacher fit," and "personal motivation for biblical worldview" contributed data to the code "desired posture." Jake summed up the idea of the desired posture this way:

I would say one of the things that we hire for is attitude. Do you have a teachable spirit?

Can you be someone who can be corrected? Or can you be wrong in front of your students and learn through that? But also, they need to have some level of Christian formation, some level of Christian identity and some openness to thinking biblically about their topic. So, we try to screen for that. That doesn't mean they have to do it [all] well or know all the answers. It just means they have to be willing to learn about doing it.

Represented by 46 occurrences in interviews and focus group data, participants frequently referenced the theme of finding the right people, discussing it generally and with specific

reference to traits of an individual who would be a good fit. Spiritual maturity is one such trait. During interviews and focus groups, administrators discussed the spiritual maturity of teachers as an important factor in the efforts of biblical worldview formation for students. However, many administrators expressed concern about the growing variation in spiritual maturity among applicants and current teaching staff. Megan explained, “We have people that we’ve hired that have only been Christians a year or two, so they’re in the baby steps of their developmental growth, and then we have people that have known the Lord for their entire life.” The administrators recognized that this variation made equipping and preparing teachers a challenge. Megan elaborated on this, saying, “They’re going to come to us at all kinds of different levels. We might hire that great government teacher—brand new who does not have the biblical worldview knowledge, so we have to get them caught up to speed as quickly as possible.” Although there was agreement that the variation in spiritual maturity was unavoidable and presented a challenge, administrators spoke about challenging or desirable backgrounds. Brad believed that younger teachers were more equipped for the work of biblical worldview development, saying, “I think younger teachers are getting it more now because they’re coming out of college, and they’re experiencing the mess that the world is and going—none of this is coherent.” However, Miles finds the opposite to be true, expressing confidence in the older generation of teachers, explaining how their time in Christian education has encouraged them time to work on their faith walk: “We have a band teacher and choir teacher, who are 25 and 30 years with us. And they have been working on that and refining that. And so that’s been, that’s been a strength of ours.”

Teacher fit was referenced when discussing the sub-theme of finding the right people. Administrators recognize many challenges associated with finding teachers who are a good fit or

demonstrate a commitment and alignment to institutional ideals. Miles discussed the intentionality given towards discerning teacher fit as early as the first interview for a potential teacher hire. He and his team focus on reflecting on questions like, “Is this going to work? Is this person spiritually mature? Do they have the training that they need? Did they understand who we are, or were they buying into this philosophy? Does this mesh with their own personal philosophy?” A few administrators spoke positively about the fit of alumni who had returned to teach at the school, and others referenced the relevance of formal teacher training that occurred at either religious or secular universities. Whether out of necessity or grace, administrators generally assert that hiring for teacher fit is less about procuring a master teacher and more about finding a teacher with a posture of willingness, teachability, and humility. Brad explained it this way:

We’re not expecting you to be seminary graduates, but your participation and willingness to go through it communicates to us a message about your belief in the mission and vision of the school, which at the same time communicates whether you’re gonna be here or not.

The codes of “intentional hiring process” and “firing, if not a good fit,” were both codes that illustrated administrators’ tasks related to finding the right people. All but three participants referenced being a part of an intentional hiring process aimed at promoting thorough hiring practices. Though more emphasis was placed on finding the right people at the hiring stage, five participants mentioned parting ways with someone if they were not the right fit for the school. Mia discussed the difficult but necessary part of her role of firing individuals who may not be a good fit because they did not align with the institutional ideals of the school. She explained it this way, “It’s a hard thing letting people go, but not because we don’t love them or the Lord doesn’t

love them. But if they're not fitting in our culture, it can totally change what we're doing." Jake also discussed a scenario where he had to fire a teacher who was strong in content but did not align with institutional ideals for teachers. He summed up his position in those scenarios this way, "I'm trying to develop the person, but if they're not going to be teachable, then that's not something that we're going to continue to move forward with."

In describing the experience of finding the right people, participants also shared the challenges of the task. In individual interviews and focus group discussions, the administrators discussed potential hires' changing profiles. The administrators shared that the current applicant hiring pool presents unique challenges to biblical worldview formation efforts. Participants found that more applicants to Christian schools either left a public school background or had been trained in a secular education program. There is also an increased number of applicants entering education as a second career from an unrelated area. Though these characteristics were not inherently perceived as unfavorable, there was an understanding that teachers from these backgrounds would likely require much support in viewing their content and practices from a uniquely Christian perspective, requiring more training and coaching from the administrators. Miles adds that in addition to ensuring teachers are prepared for biblical worldview formation efforts, teachers who are out-of-field present additional challenges:

They went into their career [and] became engineers. They know the math, but [then] they found that this isn't exactly what I want. I want to be involved with people, so they came [to] work through an alternative licensure but [have] no concept of a lesson plan, no concept of classroom management, no concept of any anything that just resembles [a traditional] teacher education.

Regarding finding the right people, participants emphasized two specific job roles in the school that are critical in biblical worldview formation efforts. The first is the Bible teacher. Administrators repeatedly stressed the importance of finding the right person as a Bible teacher. There were 20 occurrences related to the code “Bible teacher” found in many different contexts. Some referred to that position as an expert and expressed a desire for the Bible teachers to help lead formation efforts at the school. Others mentioned the posture of the Bible teacher as being crucial. One administrator spoke with concern about the experience of having the wrong person fill the role of Bible teacher in this way:

It’s the class that they’ve learned to just not feel comfortable, not feel loved, not feel safe [in]. Then to be told that with all their learning, they can’t possibly do well enough . . . that has been one of the most harmful things.

The other area where finding the right person was emphasized was the administrative team. Participants referenced a variety of peers serving on the administrative team in contexts of support and collaboration. Matt stresses the value of the team around him, saying, “There [are] individuals here on staff that just build me up and fill my cup, and I surround myself with those people.” Jake had a similar experience with his chaplain. “He and I worked so closely together when I was dean of students. We developed a good relationship and a friendship.” The dynamics and supportive culture within an administrative team were noteworthy aspects of the lived experience of the participants.

The final aspect of finding the right people pertains to the vetting of families during the admission process. Christian schools primarily adhere to one of two types of admissions philosophies. A missional approach allows students and parents to apply to the school regardless of their religious affiliation. At these schools, administrators emphasize conveying the school’s

beliefs, expectations, and direction during the interview process, looking for receptivity and support. A covenantal admissions philosophy requires at least one of the parents to be a Christian believer. In contrast, a missional approach accepts families without a profession of faith and approaches the opportunity in an evangelistic manner. Regardless of the admissions philosophy, some administrators believed new family interviews aligned with the admissions approach of the school offered a chance to emphasize the institutional ideals of the school. Mark articulated the importance of the right family this way:

Parents choose to send their kids to Christian schools for usually one of two reasons, either: (a) it's a safe, small setting, or (b) because it's a safe, small Christian setting. So, you have the parents who love the values behind what you're doing, but you have the parents that love the heart behind what you're doing.

Those administrators responsible for completing these interviews viewed it as a time to convey the school's mission and vision and provide an honest picture of its identity and expectations for parent partnership.

### ***Sharing Direction and Vision***

The second sub-theme of supporting the institutional ideals was sharing direction and vision. School administrators play a significant role in sharing the direction and vision of the school. This sub-theme addressed upholding institutional documents that express the school's vision and secondary elements, like course objectives, that require administrator involvement or oversight. This sub-theme contained 17 unique codes and was the most dependent on the documents used for analysis. Of the 17 codes, 11 were related to formal documentation commonly found in the institution.

Despite the overwhelming documentation of school ideals, participants rarely referenced

them in ways that indicated they held significant relevance to their day-to-day roles. Instead, administrators primarily focused on the practical experience of living out the expressed constructs of the institutional documents. This is illustrated clearly with half of all occurrences in this sub-theme generated from the codes of “Christ-like culture shaping,” “vision for the school,” and “parent partnership.” Every administrator spoke about promoting the vision of the school. However, the concept of doing so is elaborate and reaches into all facets of the school. Some explained their role by elaborating on tasks they are responsible for, such as professional development, creating special programs, onboarding teachers, interviewing students and parents, and supporting personnel in a coaching capacity. Others discussed the many stakeholders involved in executing the task thoroughly. Jessica explained her role in stewarding and promoting the vision:

We try really hard to constantly bring [students] back to who we are at school . . . It’s my job to convey what it is we’re doing as a school to reach that mission and vision. It’s my job to be able to give evidence that we’re actually doing that. As many times as we can talk to parents, and we have our students every morning, it’s [our job to] put [it] in front of them.

Participants all associated a significant part of promoting the school’s vision with the administrators’ needs to create an immersive culture that reflected Christ-like principles in all areas. Megan shared her thoughts about her role in culture-shaping this way:

The more we can purpose to make it happen, to make sure our teachers feel comfortable, that our teachers are loved and cared for and respected, they can then create those types of classrooms where their students feel loved and cared for and respected. Then, when they do, this love of Jesus kind of spills out of them in their content, and then it becomes



this immersive experience.

One stand-out element of culture shaping was developing a common language among faculty and staff. In interviews and focus groups, participants expressed their focus on developing a common language to create a baseline understanding for biblical worldview formation. Brad explained that developing a common language among teachers is essential “so we can speak the same language, and we know what everybody means when they say worldview and how that applies.” He extended the importance of creating this common language and understanding among stakeholders like parents, administrators, and students.

Participants discussed many facets of culture-shaping that mirrored an understanding of the complexity of biblical worldview formation, crossing over into areas of relationships, classroom practices, training, and even athletic extracurricular activities. Participants generally showed a universal understanding and valuing of thinking through plans and intentional implementation in many areas; many admitted that they need to be more actively engaged. Athletics was one of these areas, with very few administrators elaborating on their involvement or understanding of biblical formation opportunities within athletics. Alan’s experience reflected an immersive approach to promoting the school values and practices in athletics and all areas of the school:

When you look at our website, you won’t actually find athletics as a category. You won’t find music as a category. You have to click the discipleship link. So, for us, everything we do outside of the classroom, we do it for discipleship.

It is important to note that none of the administrators formally participated in the athletic program. However, four individuals could articulate distinguishing characteristics related to athletics that were explicitly Christian, reflecting either a personal interest in athletics or a

comprehensive school-wide approach to biblical worldview formation. Cathy discussed the opportunities for biblical worldview formation at her school this way:

It definitely needs to be more of a focus, especially within our sports programs, because we don't always play against other Christian schools. It's out in the world with other with other teams. And you know, I think it's easy to get caught up in the worldly behaviors when you're in that sort of environment. So, it is something that is on our radar.

In Miles's role, he uses the opportunity to collaborate with the athletic director to help foster biblical worldview formation by sharing direction and vision. He discussed the value of his collaboration with the athletic director this way:

He and I have worked together for about eight years now. He was a classroom teacher [and] became the athletic director, I was a classroom teacher [and] became a high school principal . . . So I've been involved in interviews with coaches.

Sharing the vision and direction also extends into parent partnership. Ten of the 12 participants spoke about the need for future exploration of parent partnership as a component of sharing direction and vision. Outside of expressing the school vision during the admissions process, most administrators had yet to engage in strategic partnerships with parents regarding biblical worldview formation. Megan's experience at her school was an anomaly and gave her a deep value for partnership. Under the leadership of a former head of school, parents were required to attend parenting classes related to training and supporting their children's worldview formation. Having had that experience, she expressed an interest in reinstating those classes in the future, given the growing need she sees:

The partnership between the family and the school is going to have to become more important, just because of the nature of how society is changing and how . . . much

influence is coming into our kids that our parents aren't understanding. So how can we be a resource not only to the students but to the families? I think [that need] is going to grow.

Some administrators identified parent partnership as a growing area of future focus. Some expressed skepticism about approaching the task with the level of commitment and time it would necessitate. All recognized their role in partnering with parents in some way to help facilitate sharing the school's direction and vision.

### ***Promoting School Values and Practices***

Administrators engage in a variety of internal and external behaviors that contribute to promoting school values and practices. Some aspects of this element are related to structural organization and consideration of the program, such as co-curricular efforts and chapel planning. Though only some administrators could point to specific efforts of intentionally shaping co-curricular activities and chapel for biblical worldview formation opportunities, many actively processed through the need to do so while in the interview. Other elements of promoting school values and practices were related to personal practices, such as prioritizing personal spiritual growth. Mia reflected deeply on the connection between her spiritual walk and her role as an administrator:

If I'm not being intentional about my walk and making sure I'm living it out, they're not going to do the same. So that's been what I feel like I've been held most responsible for, making sure that I'm right with the Lord. I'm being intentional about my daily time with him, you know, making sure I'm connected to him, and I'm implementing that in my personal life, as well as my professional life. And then from there, teaching it to our teachers, but also holding them accountable for it.

Like Mia, most administrators recognized that to effectively foster desired behaviors and expect certain practices from teachers and students, they must authentically model values and practices for their staff. This means aligning behaviors and beliefs to the core institutional ideals and documented outcomes. Administrators recognized a variety and combination of sources as prompts for these efforts. Some acknowledged that personal reflection serves as a prompt, while others recognized external prompts, like professional development, training, and expectations such as job descriptions. Jake's job description outlines the expectation that he "contributes to creating a Biblical ethos and esprit-de-corps amongst the faculty, staff, and students."

Administrators recognize they can better impact teachers and, subsequently, students when they lead by example and build relationships with the staff outside of a strictly operational need.

### *Mitigating Diversions*

Not surprisingly, the experience of a school administrator is filled with challenges and obstacles of all sizes and all types. The sub-theme of mitigating diversions refers to how administrators adapt, adjust, and flex in the face of a variety of diversions that can disrupt the trajectory and institutional ideals of the school. Represented by nine unique codes and 80 occurrences, the range of diversions that administrators mitigate come from internal and external sources. Internally, it is generally found that Christian school administrators must mitigate challenges like extensive job responsibilities, lack of time, facing many distractions, and struggling with role clarity. In smaller and larger schools alike, when administrators are tasked with a wide range of responsibilities, there is a general feeling of insufficiency in most areas.

Brad explained his experience this way:

I'll go home and go, "What all did I do today?" I did all of these things, and sometimes they're related, sometimes they're not. But my biggest fear is I don't want to get to the

point where I'm doing a whole lot of things . . . well, but I'm not doing anything excellently.

Brooke reiterates this idea with her experience. "I feel like I'm doing a lot of things but nothing well. I'll look and think, 'What did I do today? What was actually meaningful?'" Administrators referenced the need to be reflective to mitigate demands and prioritize tasks. There are equally as many diversions that are out of the control of administrators. Many spoke of the residual challenges of COVID-19, such as enrollment increases and culture shifts with the influx of stakeholders new to Christian education. Miles described the complexity and reach of the impact this way:

As soon as people found out we were open and everybody else was remote, we had people coming out of the woodwork. It was a little bit difficult because we had families who didn't really understand what Christian education was; they simply wanted to drop their kids off and resume a normal lifestyle. And that was an educational process for us and for parents.

All 12 administrators spent some time discussing their experiences with diversions. Some are mitigating them alone amid a season of transition in leadership or staffing. Still, all are aware of diversions that impact their everyday role, specifically the efforts of biblical worldview development.

### **Build Relationships and Develop People**

The school administrators in this study were all instructional leaders. As leaders, they build relationships and develop people, defined by actively shaping, growing, evaluating, or overseeing aspects of the school's academic program. One central area where shaping efforts are concentrated is building relationships and developing people. Administrators engage in focused

work with instructional staff to promote academic, spiritual, and institutional ideals. When working with other adults, administrators recognize the importance of building relationships based on mutual respect and trust as a precursor to effectively fostering faculty growth. This theme explored those principles through the sub-themes of “growing faculty,” “seeing individual needs and posture,” and “fostering a collaborative culture.” This theme contains 35 unique codes, with 327 occurrences of those codes occurring primarily in interview and focus group data and minimal data from the document analysis. The focus on developing people extended beyond typical professional growth associated with teachers. Administrators correlated growth with biblical worldview formation efforts. Mia emphasized it this way with staff at her school:

And that’s what we tell our teachers. We can’t really start talking about how to immerse our students in biblical worldview if you haven’t even looked at your own life and been like, every area of my life, have I surrendered to do this? And am I allowing him to transform me?

The essence of the experience of building relationships and developing people is undergirded by their understanding of its pertinence to student development of a biblical worldview.

### ***Growing Faculty***

Of all the sub-themes in building relationships and developing people, the sub-theme of “growing faculty” was overwhelmingly represented by the 19 unique codes and 194 occurrences in the data. Growing faculty is one of the primary tasks administrators in many roles engage in. Participants identified two primary areas of growth and development efforts in teachers and staff: professional and spiritual capacity.

Growing the spiritual capacity of teachers is a unique Christian school professional development task that is approached in a broad range of uncertainty. When engaging in spiritual

growth training, administrators often spoke of using book studies (16 occurrences) to expose teachers to learning related to biblical principles or worldview formation. A range of resources were mentioned, most often from authors not directly addressing the intersection of faith and the work in schools. The exception to this was the reference to Erdvig's book, *Beyond Biblical Integration* (six occurrences), by half of the participants in the study. No other book had more than one mention across participants.

Administrators also used ACSI's required Christian Philosophy of Education (CPoE) framework (nine occurrences) as a method of direct training of teachers in the sacred realm. Most schools referencing CPoE-related learning explained that they created their own version of the framework instead of using the one set by ACSI that they felt was ineffective. The ability to tailor the CPoE framework allowed schools to emphasize specific areas and use learning modalities reflective of their unique school environment.

Administrators used many ways to promote spiritual growth and knowledge. Devotions (eight occurrences) were often listed and associated with the requirements from ACSI (eight occurrences) for annual spiritual training and the development of teachers. Outside of meeting these requirements, participants also discussed the need for onboarding (17 occurrences) as a significant drive for teacher training. With the influx of teacher applicants unfamiliar with Christian education, many administrators sought guidance or resources to effectively onboard teachers more meaningfully and comprehensively than the current methods. This specific challenge is one that Miles is tackling at his school after they identified it as a great need. He has a thorough assessment of what is needed to address growing onboarding concerns:

The resources, both for teachers to use in the classroom, as well as administrators, to be able to use in induction and PD and stuff like that [are needed] . . . I'd love to be able to

find something like that or develop that with somebody to say when we're doing induction with new people, whether they're new to education, new to us, or they've been educators someplace else, but they're new Christian education, . . . here's the first thing you need to understand about biblical worldview, your own biblical worldview, and then [how to] start into the biblical immersion.

Administrators also partnered with outside organizations to promote spiritual learning and growth. The Colson Center (nine occurrences) was mentioned as one way to build teacher knowledge, though varying opinions were shared about the resource. All agreed the content Colson presented supports knowledge claims in the spiritual realm. Some questioned the mode of delivery and effectiveness for teachers. The Colson Center and *Beyond Biblical Integration* were the two specific resources listed when administrators addressed explicit worldview formation training for teachers. With 22 occurrences coded for "teacher worldview formation training," it was one of the most discussed areas of professional growth. Many discussed their deep commitment to creating meaningful growth opportunities in this area. When conveying this commitment, Jake said:

As long as I'm principal, I'm trying to build in professional development, group professional development, in a way that is actually not curriculum [focused], but it is some form of application in the classroom of how to live out being a Christian educator.

Administrators generally discussed their desire to make training in this area highly applicable and continual. Some have made it an annual professional development focus, while others are still uncertain how to approach it. Evidenced by the high occurrences of the code "fostering growth" (33), administrators felt the burden of growing faculty both as a personal aspect of their position and as a response to a need of their faculty, especially in the spiritual realm.



### *Seeing Individual Needs and Posture*

The second sub-theme of “seeing individual needs and posture” refers to the administrators’ ability to informally evaluate teacher strengths and weaknesses as a necessary precursor to determining potential growth needs. The sub-theme contains only six codes but includes 74 occurrences. Two codes, “teacher readiness” (24 occurrences) and “teacher variation” (31 occurrences) represented the significance of this area during participant interviews and focus groups related to building relationships and developing people. Christian school administrators’ experiences fostering an environment of biblical worldview formation is defined by their ability to recognize and work with the faculty’s wide range of skills and characteristics. The topic of teacher variation was tied to all aspects of administrator efforts for biblical worldview formation. Every administrator mentioned the variation in biblical worldview, even among teachers. Alan concisely defined variation, saying, “It is a little more difficult in that worldview formation [area] because we have to play in this spectrum of Christianity.” Administrators recognized that applications were coming from new Christians and veteran Christians. How they interpret and approach the variation through development took many different forms. Brooke says, “You kind of forget that some people still need basic one-on-one [support].” Cathy commented on the other end of the spectrum, saying, “We have a handful of teachers that are really great at it and have encouraged some really deep conversations in the classroom.”

A teacher’s posture is the attitude or approach teachers take when dealing with many aspects of teaching. Some references to posture specifically referred to professional development and the associated posture teachers in that area. Brad noted:

If [professional development] lines up with the mission and the vision and the purpose,

and ultimately, the essential outcomes of our school . . . we're going to do it. And most of them go through [it] joyfully, [but] some of them go through kicking and screaming.

Teacher posture is also referenced when discussing educational philosophy and relationships with students. All 12 participants recognized the need to determine teacher needs and posture to decide how to grow the individual most effectively. Similar to the concept of differentiation, administrators recognized that although the goal for each teacher was the same, the path to get there would vary.

### ***Fostering a Collaborative Culture***

The sub-theme of “fostering a collaborative culture” referred to the indirect and direct work administrators take on to grow the faculty. Of the 11 codes and 67 occurrences represented in this theme, three codes and 24 occurrences were related to fostering collaboration among teachers. This involves facilitating collaboration during meetings and planning, pushing teacher leaders to share and partner with peers, and administrators taking on the role of coaching with teachers rather than the role of evaluator. Kristy recognized the value of both facilitating collaboration and pushing teacher leaders when discussing the effortless way in which a particular middle school math teacher infuses her teaching with a biblical worldview, but recognizes the challenges in fostering these elements in the growth efforts on campus:

I'm talking to one of our other math teachers. “Heather does this! . . . You should see what she's doing.” . . . A lot of that happens informally. I think. If we're more thoughtful and have time, we could look at ways we could do it [more].

Three other administrators talked about their implementation of professional learning communities either by subject area or grade level. In all cases, the focus was on providing structure, but most admitted they did not see the teacher ownership levels they sought in the

results. Coaching between administrator and teacher appeared consistently. Nine of the 12 participants discussed their consistent experience with coaching teachers for individual growth. Coaching also occurs in many academic areas. Brad talked about how he works to build relationships and mutual respect as a part of his coaching work:

The one thing I know nothing about is how to teach kindergarten. But I can teach you biblical worldview stuff, and then you're the kindergarten expert. You show me how you can apply it. I'll be the worldview expert and equip you. And then once they get to that point in the relationship, it's really cool because they know you're trying to help them. Jessica approaches her coaching efforts by equipping teachers to engage in conversations with students that may be difficult during small group settings. "I have them kind of dialogue back and forth, then we practice it before I unleash them." Though there are variations in approach, a clear desire and need exists to partner with teachers in a coaching capacity.

The other aspect of building a collaborative culture that emerged was the administrators' experiences working within a culture of support and collaboration. This consistently emerged among all 12 participants when they discussed their role in fostering an environment conducive to biblical worldview formation. Eight unique codes and 43 occurrences were a part of this aspect of a collaborative culture. Administrators referenced various supportive sources: school counselors, spiritual positions such as chaplains and spiritual formation directors, other administrative team members, and even teachers. The role of the head of school as a source of support was mentioned the most, with 13 occurrences. The data illustrated a consistent valuing of partnership and role expertise among the participants in their administrative roles. The idea of working in a silo or isolation was not considered to be positive. When schools could allocate resources to create a role related to biblical worldview formation, the administrators at those

schools were more optimistic about the efforts and the impact on students school-wide. They were encouraged by having an individual lead the efforts. Two administrators felt they needed this level of collaborative structure, and both recognized a need and desire for a change in this area.

### **Consider an Immersive Program Framework for Student Biblical Worldview Development**

The third theme from participant data dealt with administrators' role in planning, supporting, and executing a comprehensive program framework designed to foster biblical worldview formation for students. Made up of 27 unique codes and 211 occurrences, this theme contains the lowest number of unique codes. It considers areas that administrators may not be directly responsible for depending on the organizational structure at their school. Most administrators understood that although training and direct education are essential components of biblical worldview formation, frequent references were made to the insufficiency of only teaching the Bible for formation. Jake synthesized the discussion in this area during the focus group in which he participated, saying, "[If] we're not connecting the Bible to their life . . . even if kids aren't explicitly harmed, I feel like they come away thinking like, well, this didn't have anything to do with me." This theme looks at the connections schools make to students' life experiences and is comprised of four sub-themes: "training and education," "building relational capacity," "creating service opportunities," and "designing spiritual experiences." Although all 12 participants spoke about their experiences with this theme, there was higher variation when considering the individual sub-themes and administrative involvement.

#### ***Training and Educating***

The sub-theme of "training and education" involves the explicit educational elements related to biblical worldview and aspects of life training with a biblical perspective. This sub-

theme contains 11 unique codes and 93 occurrences. “Formal education in biblical worldview training for students” (18 occurrences) was emphasized in discussions and was often included in the expected student outcomes drafted by the schools. There were various approaches to how administrators interpret education for biblical worldview formation. For some, it occurs directly through Bible class through purposefully selected textbooks. There may be an emphasis on learning about alternative worldviews or even doctrinal elements such as biblical inerrancy. For seven administrators, formal education is done through meaningful conversations between teachers and students. Addressing real-world or big questions arose frequently (38 total occurrences) as administrators discussed formal training. Some schools have implemented structures within the day to address topics teachers hear circulating among the students. Brad gives one example of such training after teachers presented concerns about relationship conversations. He explains that they “had a wellness panel on dating and relationships from a biblical worldview” to meaningfully connect biblical principles to students’ lives. Jessica discusses her school-wide emphasis on tackling students’ questions:

This year, I did something really different . . . We split the boys and girls up. I took the boys Ryan took the girls and we talked about real topics they want to hear about in chapel. What do they really want to know? What are their questions?

Other administrators discussed creating classes or integrating external resources that present current events from a biblical worldview, like World Vision. Outside the classroom, there are opportunities for training in leadership, behavior, and character education. This approach to biblical worldview emphasized living out principles aligned with the Bible. Administrators discussed strategic leadership programs saturated in biblical principles that allowed teachers and administrators to model for students and for older students to model for younger students. Other

schools addressed the need to implement an approach to discipline that reflected a desire for formation aligned with scripture. All administrators in the study are involved in some level of education and training for students in their role.

### ***Building Relational Capacity***

The sub-theme “building relational capacity” illuminates the role of administrators as intentional facilitators and trainers to foster teachers’ and students’ relational capacity and to navigate related experiences. This theme is made up of six codes and 50 occurrences. The two main focus areas are “relationships in small group settings” (16 occurrences) and “teacher relational capacity” (20 occurrences). When describing efforts and planning related to student experience in the school, administrators frequently mentioned intentionally creating a structure that allowed students and teachers to engage in smaller settings. They take on many different names, such as discipleship groups, mentor groups, influence groups, or advisory groups and are often integrated into secondary settings as a regular rotation related to or in place of chapel services. Some schools have a set weekly time outside of the standard chapel time. For some administrators, the purpose and implementation of small groups are outlined in institutional documents and are a core part of institutional ideals. Even in situations where that is not the case, most administrators are invested and involved in the purpose and execution of these small group settings, discussing the many considerations leading to successful implantation. Mark talked about the creative scheduling he was involved in that made it possible to hold small groups regularly:

We have made a schedule change, so now we’re working on a hybrid block schedule.

With that hybrid block schedule, I guess the intention is to have students work more closely with adult mentors and people who shine the light of Jesus. So, each week, we

have students meet for 45 minutes with a teacher mentor.

However, he follows with an overwhelmingly positive perspective on the structure, specifically for fostering relationships, saying, “Mentor groups are probably one of my favorite changes to the schedule . . . It’s another opportunity to break down those social barriers.” Mia’s school has also used small groups. She discussed the challenges and successes related to executing small groups at her school this way:

We’ve gone back and forth [with formats]. We’ve done influence groups before where we’ve met in small group settings with our students. The issue . . . is we don’t have a lot of guys on campus. So, we really don’t want our female teachers or leaders leading a group of young men for safety reasons . . . So that has been one challenge we’ve had. But we have had groups, and we’ve seen a lot of success with them in regards to really be able to get to [students’] hearts.

The other main area of building teacher relational capacity is related to the training and coaching of teachers to engage in meaningful relationships with students. There were three occurrences where institutional documents referenced teacher training and expectations to engage in mentoring and discipling students. All of the administrators in the study recognized the vital role teachers play in the lives of students and the ability to intentionally engage in mentoring or indirectly model behaviors and practices that support biblical worldview formation for students. Jake explained it this way:

Biblical worldview development grows out of a relationship where there is trust and where you are someone who’s worth listening to, right? And if you’re not someone who’s worth listening to, then your biblical worldview . . . your attempts at biblical worldview development may actually backfire because people don’t want to hear from

you.

Building relational capacity is also an internal behavior for administrators. They recognize that the posture they look to see in teachers should also be reflected in their interactions with students and teachers. Seven administrators in this study discussed ways they intentionally engage with students to build relationships. Steve shared how he often drives the bus for activities like athletic events and service opportunities. It allows him opportunities to stay engaged with the students. The other administrators taught a class, helped with a sport, or led a club or co-curricular activity. Co-curricular activities are often used as opportunities for teachers and administrators to engage with students in an informal context conducive to relationship building. Alan has organized a club time at his school. Though the clubs are not directly tied to worldview instruction, he speaks to the naturally occurring opportunities, saying, “We find more relation-building [opportunity] with middle school and high school where we can make more of an impact in the unscheduled, unplanned moments of life than the planned moments.” During the interviews, all of the administrators recognized elements of their school program that intentionally focus on opportunities for relationships to be built between teachers and students. Though the degree of an administrator’s involvement in planning and implementation varied, each recognized their role in building relational capacity at the school.

### ***Creating Service Opportunities***

Not surprisingly, service opportunities are a staple of Christian school secondary environments. The sub-theme of “creating service opportunities” considers the administrator’s experience creating direct service opportunities, where students are in the presence of the focus person or place they are serving, or indirect service opportunities, where they are not in direct contact with those they are serving. The sub-theme is made up of eight unique codes and 45



occurrences. School leaders recognized that when students participate in service opportunities, there is a lasting benefit related to a student's faith persistence. Mia articulated her experience with authentic service this way:

[For] those students who have the opportunity to serve . . . it affects them so deeply, and it impacts their walk with the Lord . . . Those students are less likely to walk away if they've served [and] had that experience . . . So we do service learning . . . very intentionally, to reach the heart of the students spiritually.

Schools engage in much of the service work with their community by partnering with local charities. Jake says these opportunities allow students to “see the world differently through their faith and really get a chance to practice grace in a way that they haven't before.” Four administrators also set up opportunities like food drives and Operation Christmas Child shoe box drives to offer opportunities that align with biblical principles of giving without leaving campus. Jessica spoke about her blended approach to service based on two factors common to most schools: finding places for students to serve and the logistics of leaving campus. She elaborated on the issue this way:

We collected shoes, or Toys for Tots, [that] kind of thing . . . And we have a nursing home that's literally right next door so our younger kids will go there different times of the year now . . . Before [COVID], we were able to do a lot more, but they just limited how many kids can come, which is hard for us when we're trying to plan field trip days.

Schools often incorporate service clubs, like Beta Club or National Honor Society, or general school service hour requirements as a part of programming. Some administrators are responsible for managing these requirements. In contrast, others serve at schools that have designated resources and funds to assign the planning and managing of service hours and opportunities to a

specific individual. This often resulted in a positive administrative perception of the effectiveness and intentionality of service opportunities and an appreciation that it is an area of focus for someone on the team.

### *Designing Spiritual Experiences*

The defining characteristics of a Christian school suggest the presence of some spiritual elements within the educational setting. The sub-theme of “spiritual experiences” refers to any planned event that directly or indirectly addresses students’ understanding of living their faith biblically and authentically. This sub-theme explores five types of spiritual experiences that emerged across all three data sources with all 12 participants. The codes of “chapel,” “spiritual emphasis week,” “spiritual special program,” “student retreats,” and “mission trips” represented 23 occurrences in all. During some conversations with administrators, their limited involvement in planning and facilitating these elements led to general referencing of these experiences. In general, the conversation was related to spiritual experiences connected to the desire to create opportunities to authentically interact with God in ways that mimic real life beyond school settings. Administrators who had a designated employee overseeing the spiritual elements of the school—like a chaplain, director of spiritual formation, or campus pastor—spoke more consistently about the spiritual experiences at school. Mia gave credit this way: “One of the things that we’ve seen have the greatest impact on our students has been our spiritual retreats. We’ve been very intentional in planning them. Our director of discipleship is really the one who does them.” Brooke also spoke of her school’s creation of intentional times of spiritual focus:

In upper school, we have a spiritual life renewal day, where it’s centered around devotional types of [activities], kind of like a little Windy Gap, on one day, during the school day, where we stop all academics and everything, and it’s just focused on that.

However, less than half of the administrators spoke about retreats or annual mission trips for their secondary students. The participants generally focused energy on small groups as spiritual opportunities for students. Brad explained using small groups as a primary mode for biblical worldview development at his school: “Chapels are monthly for us. But we’ve also built in weekly or every other week discipleship groups, to where they will talk about worldview, they’ll talk about Christianity and in the context of a missional school.” Evidence of the intentional use of small group settings for spiritual growth was also found in document analysis. Some schools, like Jessica’s, emphasize small group settings in their institutional documents, outlining purpose and goals:

Intentional relationships that are built within a smaller community of students help to narrow the focus on spiritual growth and accountability with one another. Small groups are more intimate groups, leading to discussions that are more relative to the age and situations of the students meeting. This is an opportunity for Bible study, prayer, and personal discussion of life challenges and issues while being mentored by adult leadership and direction.

Chapel was also discussed by administrators, who had varying impressions of effectiveness. Some participants respectfully alluded to the disconnect between speakers or topics and the student body. During a focus group, Megan explained her school’s challenges with making chapel effective this way: “For the longest time, chapel was almost like an addition. We all thought, we’re a Christian school, so we have to have chapel.” Other administrators, like Mia, found chapel to be an integral part of their formation efforts. She explained her school’s approach this way:

We do chapels . . . weekly. We have [one for] K through two and preschool, [then] three

through five, and then secondary chapel. That's just a given. But we are very intentional about our chapel services and what we do in them in regards to the content we're teaching.

Regardless of the administrators' perceived effectiveness of chapel, it was the spiritual experience referenced most often in institutional documents. Megan's school articulates its commitment to chapel and spiritual emphasis in its profile: "Every grade level participates in chapel. Chapel is weekly and includes worship and age appropriate topics. Spiritual emphasis week focuses on developing our students with a biblical worldview." Ten out of 12 schools held chapel weekly; the other two held it monthly but held small groups the other weeks. Chapel is consistently one part of the spiritual experience administrators foster, but many administrators look to other experiences to offer spiritually focused experiences.

### **Provide Instructional Support**

The participants in this study are all instructional leaders at their schools who coach, evaluate, or observe teachers. As a result, they all spend time providing instructional support for teachers. The theme represents work on processes, products, and tools of the instructional program while still considering the emphasis on promoting an environment focused on forming students' biblical worldviews. This definition directly paralleled aspects of the job description for one administrator:

Desires to provide an outstanding, Biblically-centered education, affirms a clear philosophy of Christian education; has clearly demonstrated a commitment to great teaching and student learning. [Demonstrates] willingness to work with faculty and administration in the continuous assessment and improvement of student progress, curriculum and teaching practices.

Instructional support is articulated through the sub-themes of “interacting with the curriculum,” “promoting methods,” “encouraging content-area integration,” and “monitoring.” The theme consists of 34 unique codes and 221 occurrences and is supported in all three data sources and some portion of data specific to each participant. Megan summarized some of her experience working to provide instructional support this way:

When we’re rewriting our curriculum maps and [looking at] . . . the resources that we want to use . . . [we ask] do they have resources available that meet our academic needs—priority number one, and then two, do they have teacher resources that help walk teachers through developing a biblical worldview within that content area?

Supporting teachers in instructional areas is vital to authentic biblical instructional content and methods. Administrators engage with teachers in different ways.

### ***Interacting with the Curriculum***

The sub-theme of “interacting with the curriculum” considers the administrator’s role in selecting and ensuring the effective implementation and alignment of resources, tools, and standards for authentically Christian instructional content to occur in classrooms. The construct of curriculum came up 91 times through 12 unique codes. The word was used in two separate ways. It was used when discussing Christian curriculum options, referring to the textbook options that Christian publishers have made available to schools in various subject areas. In this context, there were mixed feelings about the choices available. Some participants praised the options they had been selected for implementation in their schools. Matt spoke positively about the impact of adopting Christian textbooks on his teachers: “We’re finding curriculum, like Bob Jones, that gives [teachers] resources and tools and builds their capacity to help shape biblical worldview helpful.” While others felt similarly, there was equal skepticism about curriculum

options. Poor rigor and weak methodology were repeatedly used to describe the insufficiencies of textbook options from Christian publishers. The codes “Christian curriculum lacking” and “poor options” illustrate the sentiments of half of the participants who expressed this concern.

Cathy relayed her school’s position and sentiment reluctantly:

Historically, we used only Bible-based curriculum . . . Recently, from the data and things that we’re seeing in the classroom, SAT scores, PSAT, college entrance exams, and things like that, [we see] our students are sort of falling a little bit behind. So, it increased the need for us to introduce a more rigorous curriculum that isn’t necessarily Christian-based.

Even those administrators who were disappointed with the Christian curricular options were dismayed and desired to have better options. Christy and Jake discussed using alternative texts instead of textbooks to ensure resources did not contradict spiritual aims but to provide a rigor lacking from those Christian resources designed for classrooms.

The second way administrators discussed their involvement was related to curriculum support. This area comprises the codes: “adoption problems,” “integrating secular curriculum,” “Bible sequencing,” “curriculum maps,” and “balancing academics and a biblical worldview.” Many administrators are working to support curriculum areas, understanding the importance of a well-articulated scope and sequence. For those administrators working with secular textbook options, integration problems can arise with students, teachers, and parents. Cathy recounted a conversation with a parent concerned with using a secular textbook in the classroom. Cathy responded to the parent by explaining the process of integrating it into the curriculum:

We’re training our teachers on how to use the Bible and interject that biblical worldview. Not everything in the textbook is going to be covered. There are some things that we do

have to weed out, and we just don't cover because it [because it] doesn't align with our values. But please understand our teachers are being trained to do this.

In addition to the integration challenges, over half of the participants discussed the challenge of balancing academics with the formation of a biblical worldview. Mia gave an example of a discussion with a teacher about finding the balance between the two. She explained to that teacher, "I love that you want to talk about Jesus with them, but your whole class can't be about that; you'd miss the academic part of it. You need to mix the two, but both are equally important." Since Christian schools are inherently focused on aligning with biblical principles, the area of curriculum adoption is one that administrators engage with, even if not directly responsible for the adoption choice. A shared experience was interacting with the curriculum options and selecting the best fit for the classroom. Although there was a primary desire for a solid Christian option, many administrators did not feel such an option existed and looked to secular options. Miles succinctly summed up the challenges with curriculum this way:

No matter what curriculum you look at, there's always some type of reworking. There's a whole area we need to supplement; we need to add this, and we need to make sure that this part does not go into a classroom because that's not necessarily age-appropriate here.

The administrators expressed a desire and responsibility to partner and equip teachers in areas related to curriculum support. Most of that sense of responsibility came from discussing the components of available curriculum options administrators deemed sufficient or insufficient.

### ***Promoting Methods***

Administrators are involved in promoting instructional methods that help support biblical worldview formation. The sub-theme of promoting methods focused on methods of instruction that are promoted and used to encourage student biblical worldview formation. The sub-theme

did not contain elements of training or effective implementation. Instead, what is common is that nine of the 12 administrators were aware of the need to foster teacher capacity to implement methods that complement biblical worldview formation in students. There are nine unique codes and 44 occurrences, with the highest number of occurrences (10) related to critical thinking.

Administrators often articulated that students must be exposed to opportunities for critical thinking across all subject areas. When discussing practical methods to accomplish this, administrators responded in various ways. Some were very vague (seven occurrences) when asked to elaborate on what this looked like. Others were more specific and named “questioning,” “using a Socratic approach,” and “differentiation” as ways to encourage critical thinking in classrooms. Megan mentioned her school-wide efforts in the area, saying, “We train them to use a questioning technique a lot of the time.” Jessica had a similar experience, sharing, “We’re better at cultivating those critical thinking skills [by] asking the deep questions to where we don’t give an answer, we make them go to God’s Word.” There is a strong shared experience in promoting methods that support biblical worldview formation efforts. Still, the occurrence of the vague code and the absence of the universal shared experience with all participants suggests that this sub-theme is less consistently understood.

### ***Encouraging Content-Area Integration***

A notable characteristic of the curriculum conversations related to biblical worldview formation is the topic of content-area integration. Encouraging content-area integration reflects the administrators’ time spent coaching and teaching teachers to authentically integrate their subject areas with a biblical worldview, understanding that worldview impacts everything and is evident in all subjects. Eight unique codes and 56 occurrences were included in this sub-theme. The codes represented two main areas: experiences with effective integration and resources to



support efforts. Despite this sub-code representing a topic that has long been associated with Christian schools, administrators admitted to frequently observing lessons with inauthentic integration and ineffective methods for building students' worldviews in classroom settings.

Cathy explained the challenge for teachers:

They have been so accustomed to hearing you need to biblically integrate, which tended to mean, let's tack on a Bible verse or a biblical truth, and let's just touch on it, and then let's move on to the content.

When asked to elaborate on approaches to help with content-area integration, some administrators mentioned Curriculum Trak, a curriculum planning tool, and Christian textbooks. However, most administrators mentioned the need for more options and resources for biblical integration specific to different content areas for personal reference and to give to teachers.

Jessica expressed her frustration: "When I look for biblical worldview resources, especially in math and science or history, it's just not out there all the time." Math was an area of particular frustration for many administrators when discussing content-area integration.

Participants mentioned it six times as a problematic area for teachers to integrate and an area with limited resources to help with biblical integration. Jake explained how he emphasized math integration in professional learning community (PLC) groups, saying, "This last year, we used the subject of math, which is the bane of biblical worldview integration." Jessica reinforced the frustration, alluding to widespread attempts to connect math to the Bible this way, "Where I see the struggle the most is math. It's just, you can only say 'God is the God of order' so many times." Miles emphasized his role in math integration problems: "[The] math department looks at me and says, what do you want me to do?" Although other subject areas were discussed, math stood out as an area that even administrators struggled to articulate an approach that reflects

authentic formation efforts.

### ***Monitoring***

The last sub-theme of “monitoring” emerged in interview and focus group data and followed current educational trends emphasizing monitoring teachers or measuring student achievement. The sub-theme of monitoring refers to administrative approaches to elicit a change in teachers. Five codes emerged related to the experience of monitoring: “indirect monitoring of teachers,” “biblical worldview in evaluation,” “observing teachers,” “measurement tools,” and “supervision.” There were a total of 29 occurrences related to the sub-theme. Eight participants discussed elements of measuring areas in the program related to biblical worldviews. Some administrators commented on the challenges associated with evaluating overall school efforts related to student formation. Miles relayed his dilemma related to authentic measurement this way:

We write an assessment report that goes to the superintendent and to the board to say, here’s what we’re doing. We try to come up with as many measurable things as we can to say that a student has accepted Christ. Again, I can’t open up that chest and look inside and say, oh, yeah, there he is right there in your heart [though].

Other administrators referenced their efforts to measure and evaluate the efforts of classroom teachers to foster effective biblical worldview formation. Some pointed to changes in observation or evaluation forms used to help monitor teacher efforts for biblical worldview formation. Megan spoke of both the formal and informal methods she uses at her school, saying, “Our teachers know that when we go into to do a formal observation, we’re looking for biblical integration to be a part of the lesson that they are evaluated on, but it’s also a part of our everyday conversations.” Other administrators have not yet put on paper elements of monitoring

teacher efforts; instead, they informally monitor for growth and implementation through conversations and undocumented observations. Still, most administrators have shared experience monitoring and evaluating teachers' efforts and students' progress regarding biblical worldview formation.

### **Emotional Consideration**

Administrators expressed, in different ways, the emotional elements of their role, both related and unrelated to biblical worldview formation. The theme illustrates the reality of administrators' lived experience outside of the tasks and considerations that are inherently part of the job. It is defined by the emotions elicited from administrators specific to their role in the school. The theme comprises eight codes and 32 occurrences represented by two sub-themes: "navigating common emotions" and "finding external support." Many aspects of the role elicited emotions, but Jake talked about the heavy weight of reaching kids and serving them well this way:

When I go to that place and think about those students' experiences, I think, "Oh, we've totally failed; this is just not working." But then there are other classes that are not like that, and I know those kids are being blessed, and the teachers are a blessing to them, and they're being blessed him. Yeah, I guess sometimes we do, sometimes we don't, and I wish I had a systematic way to address it.

### ***Navigating Common Emotions***

Administrators face various demands of varying importance in their daily lives. Their roles require high levels of interaction and interdependence with the stakeholders in the school. Having outlined the breadth of responsibilities, as well as the challenges that accompany their role, it is of little surprise that administrators face a variety of strong emotions. This sub-theme is

represented by five consistently expressed emotions, primarily derived from individual interviews. The codes represent those emotions: “uncertainty,” “stress or anxiety,” “frustrations,” “ineffective,” and “rewarding.” One participant used the term “stress” seven times during the interview and spoke about the source of the stress this way:

Trying to build the capacity for the teachers to do [biblical worldview formation]. I think that’s probably one of the more stressful things for me. Whether it be accountability of doing it or [growing their] ability to do it, I think that probably stresses me out the most because we all know that we need to do it.

However, the code for “feelings of frustration” was most expressed and directed toward people, processes, or themselves due to their self-perceived inability to do their jobs. One participant expressed frustration with job performance, saying, “I’m not going as deep as I’d like. It’s just kind of scraping the surface, and it’s just—it’s frustrating.” There were varying levels of emotions among participants across the entire spectrum. What was consistent was that the role of an administrator elicits emotions, but when administrators understand the importance of biblical worldview formation, those emotions can become more intense.

### ***Finding External Support***

Although administrators expressed an appreciation and desire for a collaborative team of peer support in the school, many also referenced a different type of support. Finding external support emerged as a related sub-theme when understanding how administrators navigated the emotional aspects of their role. Mia recognized and expressed her administrative team’s value to her at work. Still, she named three individuals outside the organization, explaining how valuable it has been “to have someone who’s unbiased [and] who’s not involved in any of it to go to.” Mia also recognized her pastor’s wife as a source of wisdom and encouragement for her. Three other

administrators shared that their relationship with their pastor was a significant support for them outside of work. One administrator shared his intentional work to create a supportive network outside of work.

I've also maintained non-school-related things. I'm in a book club of other men, mostly at my church. I have maintained two friendships; specifically, both of them are older than I am: one's a doctor, and one's a lawyer. I keep those things separate because I need that balance. Having relationships outside of the school has definitely been something that has been emotionally supportive, and it keeps [work] from being such a lonely place.

This topic of support naturally surfaced during the focus groups. In those conversations, most participants shared the positive value the external support systems added to their lives. One other participant admitted the absence of that level of support and the desire to have that, discussing the difficult time at school without having that external support.

### **Outlier Data and Findings**

Many different types of outliers are possible, but only one outlier emerged in this study. Outlier data is often a part of research. An outlier is any result that falls outside the range of general results obtained during research.

### ***Extreme Environments***

One participant's experience stood out as an outlier compared to the peer group. The participant faced many challenges at school that negatively impacted the experience and elicited strong feelings of frustration. Unlike other schools in the study, this school had long-standing financial troubles that impacted available resources and staffing. As a result, the participant was navigating financial challenges related to resources, staffing, and enrollment. According to the administrator, the community was aware of financial mismanagement under the previous school

leader, but the school's reputation in the community had not been restored. Additional challenges in this school were related to location. The school was in a state that did not offer extensive funding through voucher programs, which was an outlier among the other school settings represented by the participants. This school site had other Christian schools nearby, adding to the stagnant growth trends. All these challenges contributed to the participant's discouragement and frustration with the situation. Though this frustration was evident in many areas, it was aimed primarily at the poor management of Christian schools by an earlier generation of school leaders. The participant's experience was more of an outlier when compared to the other participants in that many areas were not commented on directly or had to be directed differently. The participant was self-aware and realized his role was not ideal in function or leadership style.

### **Research Question Responses**

The data collected during interviews, focus groups, and document analysis answered the central research question and the sub-questions. The themes and sub-themes outlined throughout answer the questions but are summarized and categorized by the questions below.

### **Central Research Question**

What are the lived experiences of Christian school secondary administrators as they foster an environment conducive to biblical worldview development? The participants' experiences reflected a complex and broad experience that requires skills and knowledge that span many areas of understanding. The administrators expressed feelings reflective of the demands and importance of helping to create a fertile environment for biblical worldview growth. Still, the comprehensive approach to the task recognized the complex and, at times, nuanced characteristics related to institutional ideals. When asked to articulate the first thing that comes to mind about her experience of fostering an environment conducive to biblical

worldview formation in students, Megan said, “I think that it’s a complex task because we think that it’s just studying God’s Word, but it’s more than that.”

### **Sub-Question One**

How do Christian school secondary administrators equip, engage, and motivate teachers and students to engage in biblical worldview development? This question proved to be broad, producing extensive data. Separating the answer by the targeted area of focus, either teachers or students, is necessary. Administrators equip, engage, and motivate teachers by building relationships and developing people (theme two), and monitoring for implementation (theme four, sub-theme four). The equipping of teachers is answered in all areas of theme two, but sub-theme one, growing faculty, focuses on traditional preparation methods. Administrators focus on growing faculty through extensive professional development to equip them with the knowledge and methods needed to engage in direct and indirect biblical worldview formation efforts. Engaging teachers is done through building relationships by seeing individual needs and posture (theme two, sub-theme two). Teacher variation in needs and posture is widely recognized among administrators, and understanding where teachers are in their professional and spiritual journey is foundational to future decisions for support. Mia is one of many administrators who clearly articulated it this way, “It’s a process, and we’re all at different stages in that process of our biblical worldview development.” Lastly, administrators motivate teachers to engage in biblical worldview development by fostering a collaborative culture (theme two, sub-theme three) and monitoring (theme four, sub-theme four). Motivating efforts are made through interpersonal connections and formal evaluative measures.

Next, the question of how administrators equip, engage, and motivate students is answered in theme three: consider the program framework. Administrators equip students

through training and education (sub-theme one). This training is both direct, done primarily in the classroom setting, and indirectly, through real-world experiences and modeling that occurs outside the classroom. Administrators also engage students in biblical worldview formation by building relational capacity into the program (sub-theme two) and designing spiritual experiences (sub-theme four). Building relational capacity involves creating opportunities for students to connect with peers and mentors, which is a way to engage with students and is essential for forming a biblical worldview. Administrators also build the relational capacity of the adults in the school to prepare them for positive and fruitful mentoring relationships with schools. Spiritual experiences are also valued and part of the administrator experience but are explicitly sacred in nature to encourage a desire for God among students. When motivating students to engage in biblical worldview formation, administrators often focus on creating service opportunities (sub-theme three). Authentic service opportunities help instill an internal motivation in students, indirectly growing their motivation to develop a biblical worldview. Mia explained it this way:

Those students who have the opportunity to serve . . . [it] affects them so deeply, and it impacts their walk with the Lord. You know all the statistics regarding those students are less likely to walk away if they've served and had that experience. And really, I think it's really close to the heart of the Lord. And so we do service learning, which is another way, very intentionally, to reach the heart of the students spiritually.

### **Sub-Question Two**

What academic strategies and methods do Christian secondary school administrators promote for biblical worldview development? Theme four, provide instructional support, details four primary areas of associated strategies and methods: interacting with the curriculum,



promoting methods, encouraging content-area integration, and monitoring. Administrators find that active involvement in the selection of textbooks and guiding decisions related to the curriculum is essential, especially in areas pertaining to content-area integration. Modeling and teaching methods that promote higher-order thinking and student engagement are also important. Administrators engage with the appropriateness and methods of monitoring teachers, student progress, and program effectiveness. Most monitoring of biblical worldview formation is informal and undefined for administrators. Steve shared his thoughts: “How do you evaluate and assess [it]? It’s always a challenge.”

### **Sub-Question Three**

How do Christian school secondary administrators shape a school environment focused on opportunities for effective biblical worldview development? The themes of “build relationships and develop people,” “consider the program framework,” and “providing instructional support” help answer sub-question three by describing the administrators’ work with stakeholders in the school environment. However, the theme of “support institutional ideals” is entirely related to this research sub-question and addresses the strategic aspects of the role of Christian school leaders. The aims of Christian schools are related to biblical worldview formation. Theme one, “support institutional ideals,” outlines the administrator’s experience by describing four primary areas of strategic leadership: finding the right people, sharing direction and vision, promoting school values and practices, and mitigating diversions. Though administrators engage in practical daily shaping outlined in the themes “build relationships and develop people,” “consider the program framework,” and “provide instructional support,” they also recognize that working to support institutional ideals helps to create a shared vision and understanding that gives purpose for stakeholders. Brooke referenced this experience when

discussing the work pressures teachers juggle. She said, “I feel like teachers need to really understand the why and how all this [is] connected because they’re doing a lot of stuff!”

### **Summary**

The study investigated the experiences of Christian school secondary administrators in fostering an environment conducive to biblical worldview development. Data from interviews, focus groups, and document analysis addressed the central research question and sub-questions and were articulated in the themes and sub-themes that emerged. Five themes emerged and highlighted the comprehensive nature of the lived experience of administrators. Theme one, support institutional ideals, acknowledges that administrators engage in strategic planning and work to create an environment conducive to forming students’ biblical worldviews. However, administrators also engage in practical work with teachers, students, and program elements as outlined in the themes: “build relationships and develop people,” “consider the program framework,” and “provide instructional support.” The theme of “emotional considerations” emerged unexpectedly as administrators readily shared the emotional stressors and supports associated with their daily experience leading their areas of the school. Additionally, a focus on the sub-themes of “finding the right people” and “growing faculty” emerged as areas of great emphasis for administrators. The findings provided an introductory understanding of the complexities of the experience of a Christian secondary administrator specific to the work of fostering a school environment conducive to the formation of biblical worldviews.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of Christian school secondary administrators as they work to foster an environment conducive to student biblical worldview development. Chapter Five articulates my interpretations and ideas based on the data collected in the study, the theoretical and conceptual framework, and the related literature. The discussion begins with an interpretation of the findings, followed by implications for policy and practice. Then, the theoretical and conceptual implications, limitations and delimitations of the research methodology, and findings are discussed. Finally, the chapter concludes with recommendations for future research.

### **Discussion**

There is limited literature addressing the involvement of Christian school administrators in cultivating an environment conducive to fostering a Biblical worldview (Beckman et al., 2012; Çetin et al., 2021; LeBlanc & Slaughter, 2012). No empirical studies exist on this specific topic. Chapter Two considered parallel concepts within the body of literature. It introduced a theory and framework pertinent to the administrator's function and the factors influencing the development of a mature biblical worldview. Additionally, consideration was given to school settings and worldview development. While few related empirical studies shed light on worldview formation within K-12 educational settings, this section includes reviews of specific research studies from Chapter Two related to parallel topics in higher education and K-12 settings, analyzing their findings in light of the results obtained in this study.

### **Summary of Thematic Findings**

Through data collection and analysis utilizing interviews, focus groups, and document

analysis, five themes emerged: “support institutional ideals,” “build relationships and develop people,” “consider the program framework,” “provide instructional support,” and “emotional considerations.” These themes represent the comprehensive role of secondary school administrators in Christian settings and illustrate both the strategic demands and their role as educational practitioners. The range of responsibilities is broad and demanding. The experience is further illustrated through sub-themes: “finding the right people,” “sharing direction and vision,” “promoting school values and practices,” “mitigating diversions,” “growing faculty,” “seeing individual needs and posture,” “creating service opportunities,” “designing spiritual elements,” “interacting with the curriculum,” “promoting methods,” “encouraging content-area integration,” “monitoring,” “fostering a collaborative culture,” “navigating common emotions,” and “finding external support.”

### **Interpretation of Findings**

The pivotal role of Christian school secondary administrators in shaping an environment conducive to developing a Biblical worldview cannot be overstated. Educational leaders are responsible for nurturing the many contributing factors to students’ academic growth and spiritual formation. Research in biblical worldview formation, particularly in K-12 settings, is new and limited. When considering the related literature, the underlying theoretical and conceptual frameworks, and the data from the study, a series of noteworthy interpretations were deemed significant.

### ***Administrator Development***

The implication that is foundational to subsequent implications is that of administrator development. An administrator’s development primarily depends on personal desire and prioritization (Clarke & Dempster, 2020). The structure of Christian schools often places

administrators in siloed roles without the benefit of peer collaboration to serve as an impetus for growth and development. Department principals may not cross paths or find opportunities for collaboration with other department leaders at their site. In some cases, there are no other individuals working in a similar or related role. Additionally, job demands pull Christian school leaders in various directions, stretching them thin and leaving little time for the self-directed learning needed to feel adequately equipped to do their job well. This is true for many Christian schools operating outside a multi-school district structure. Depending on the available resources at the school, the Christian school administrator often feels pressured to become an expert in multiple areas. This is illustrated in the finding demonstrating the complexity of administrators' shared lived experiences regardless of their role. It was apparent that although administrators spent considerable time pouring into teachers and students, very few administrators had someone pouring into them.

The challenges presented by the unique Christian school structure and the associated limited resources for professional development can be illustrated by considering a hypothetical situation about releasing new state standards. In public schools, the school leaders throughout a district attend training sessions where they are handed updated standards, complete with a crosswalk analysis of the existing standards. An expert in the room, who has spent time synthesizing the changes and actionable steps needed for school-level leaders, gives them all the information they need to update and educate school leaders and prepare them for site implementation. During or after the training, there is typically a time for discussion and processing with other school leaders who similarly return and engage in standards rollout at their respective schools. The leaders leave informed, educated, and prepared to engage in the work of standards rollout. On the other hand, if Christian school administrators want to roll out new

standards, they must complete all the research, analysis, synthesis, action plans, and processing primarily alone. The level of work and expertise required of a Christian school administrator is significant. This leaves a great demand on leaders' time and necessitates that Christian school administrators serve as experts in various areas. The limited ability to specialize and focus on one area challenges school effectiveness in biblical worldview formation, academic endeavors, and administrator well-being.

Nearly every participant in the study was eager to discuss and learn from peers. Some expressed a deep appreciation for those members of their team who held a level of expertise that they did not. Others expressed a desire for partnership with their team members, which they perceived could offer expertise they did not have. In conversations related to biblical worldview development, the Bible teachers were often referenced in this way. Many administrators were tentative in their responses during the interviews, giving disclaimers about job roles or distractions that contributed to needing to learn more about the topic of biblical worldview formation of students. Two individuals had direct training and development with experts in biblical worldview development; they spoke with confidence about the subject and readily had examples of how they intentionally shaped the environment as a result. However, a personal internal drive was the apparent impetus for their growth, learning, and engagement in implementation. Although in conversation, it became clear that participants engaged in personally directed growth, what was never referenced was a support system in place designed to grow administrators' knowledge and practices in biblical worldview formation or other leadership areas. There was, however, an expressed desire to collaborate among the participants, even those whose personal drive could have been more obvious. Five of the administrators even reached out to me to seek further conversations outside of the research project in the future.

Administrators desire and need development to prepare them for their role in equipping others.

### *A Shared Understanding*

Central to the challenge of administrator development is the need for a shared understanding related to biblical worldview formation efforts. In general, administrators were aware of the importance of their involvement in emphasizing students' worldview formation. They also understood the teacher played a pivotal role. However, when asked to break down the task specific to their role, many struggled to articulate their understanding. This is not a judgment on the knowledge or ability of the administrators in the study; instead, I believe it reflects the lack of a shared understanding and language related to formation efforts. One administrator struggled with the language of development. Yet, he offered one of the most genuine understandings of the end goal, focusing students on adopting behaviors and thinking that more accurately reflect Christ. One administrator discussed biblical worldview formation with language borrowed from Bob Jones University Press and its worldview training. Still, it was evident the overall ability to articulate understanding was limited to this vocabulary. Another administrator's understanding was deeply rooted in Erdvig's work, resulting in a confident dialogue about the task. Although all three examples point to variation in understanding the concept as a whole, the more certain implication was the lack of a common language, which impacted the ability to articulate or discern the existence of a shared understanding upon which to build and collaborate.

In most cases, the level of understanding was rooted in their efforts to explore the topic more. Those who had not understood the topic were fighting the daily pull of administrator responsibilities and had yet to engage in development. Similar to the beliefs held by administrators about teacher development needing explicit training, expectations, and guidance,

there is an implication that administrators would benefit from the exact expectations and support systems to meet those goals.

### ***Administrators are Vital to Biblical Worldview Formation Efforts***

School administrators play a multifaceted and essential role in creating an environment conducive to holistic development and biblical worldview formation. Much of the work that school administrators engage in is critical to the success of biblical worldview formation efforts. These responsibilities are sometimes strategic. They are responsible for shaping and or communicating the overarching mission and vision of the school, ensuring that these fundamental ideals are communicated effectively to all stakeholders. Other times, administrators need to be immersed in the day-to-day activities of the school, specifically when it comes to staffing. Most administrators are pivotal in finding and hiring individuals aligned with the school's values and goals and then developing people to address individual growth areas. Administrators must work in and engage with a lengthy list of areas in the school. If an administrator does not have time to engage and address an area, there is a possibility that no one else will be thinking about it or working on it. A strong administrator can lead in ways that promote institutional growth in many areas. Yet, this study suggests administrators are stressed or frustrated by the lack of time and extensive job requirements. In Christian schools, school leaders and administrators support other educators in their journey. School administrators serve as catalysts for growth, leading initiatives to enhance academics and biblical worldview formation. Still, there is uncertainty about whether adequate preparation for school leaders is available and valuable. Based on my research, it would seem that much time, effort, and money go into developing teachers, but the same is not true of administrators. The success of the organizational aims can rest on whether the administrator is effective in their efforts. With such a



vital role in the school, consideration should be given to intentional continued development.

### ***Teacher Development is Essential***

Teacher development is an essential component of biblical worldview formation efforts in schools. Research supports that teachers significantly influence student growth (Çetin et al., 2021; Leithwood et al., 2020; White et al., 2017). Numerous studies have explored the relationship in higher education studies that support teachers' role in a student's formation of a biblical worldview (Dougherty et al., 2022; Esqueda, 2014; Richardson, 2019; Riggers-Piehl & Sax, 2018). The idea is further supported in the results of this study through the theme of "build relationships and develop people" and the applied theoretical framework. However, the responsibility of designing and implementing teacher development and training in Christian school settings falls primarily on the administrator. Two considerations related to teacher development and the role of the administrator are noteworthy.

When facilitating teacher development, the challenge is often expected but oversimplified. Most school leaders need to be trained in adult learning theory and practices. Many masters-level courses do not provide coursework related to adult learning theory and its practical application in school settings. For administrators to succeed in their attempts at teacher development, particular knowledge is required (Clausen et al., 2022). Most educators will tell you that useful and engaging professional development is rare. School leaders who have not been trained or do not naturally have the skills to train may stumble over implementing even the most valuable training ideas, perpetuating teacher perception of the uselessness of training. Administrators should be effective communicators who can convey information about practices that encourage teachers to implement new information in their classrooms. Some school administrators discuss engaging in coaching as a form of teacher development. The same

concerns about administrators' readiness and preparation to facilitate professional development training apply to coaching. Teachers can leave a coaching session unaffected if coaching practices are poorly executed. Most school leaders have backgrounds as teachers rather than in coaching adults. The implications from the study suggest formal training of administrators in areas central to their lived experiences and interactions with teachers.

The second component of teacher development is the consideration of explicit training in biblical worldview development. The data suggests that most administrators are looking for resources and training specific to fostering biblical worldview formation efforts school-wide. As instructional leaders, administrators would benefit from a deeper understanding of the task to better lead the charge of formation efforts within their schools. This knowledge extends beyond head knowledge and truth claims. All administrators recognized that biblical worldview formation efforts needed more than head knowledge. Yet, many schools find this form of development a low-hanging fruit that is more easily shared with teachers. Using devotions, Bible studies, or video series intended to build knowledge alone is valuable. Still, administrators articulated the need to support the teachers in instructional design, methods, and relational capacities within biblical worldview development. Because of the implications mentioned previously, most administrators will benefit from support in developing teachers in this area.

### ***Quality Resources as a Priority***

The availability of quality resources is a significant theme that has implications for Christian publishers and authors looking to support schools and biblical worldview formation efforts. Though there is little research about the effectiveness of Christian textbook publishers, the study offered qualitative data that implies a general dissatisfaction with current options. Trends related to textbook adoption emerged among the participants. Though there were some

exceptions to the dissatisfaction with certain publishers in certain areas, the general feeling was that a rigorous option with an authentic biblical worldview integration was not available.

Additionally, administrators mentioned the need for support for biblical worldview development specific to content areas. The implications from the study suggest that there may be a demand for new resources or improvement of current curricular resources to support Christian school aims.

With the growing variation of backgrounds in teacher applicants experienced by the administrators in this study, it is possible that as schools experience similar trends, administrators will give more attention to selecting materials that support spiritual and educational aims for students while offering teachers a vital resource no matter their level of understanding.

### **Implications for Policy or Practice**

The study's findings suggest two significant implications for policy and three for practice. The implications consider organizations, schools, administrators, and teachers, suggesting meaningful and actionable steps that address areas of need or development. All implications are related to the themes of the study and the related literature and directly impact the lived experience of secondary Christian school administrators in some way.

#### ***Implications for Policy***

One implication for policy is related to the development of site administrators. ACSI has made significant strides in supporting schools in meaningful ways. There are regional events that explore specific topics and allow school leaders to collaborate. These are primarily directed towards heads of schools but can include other administrators. Some leaders within the ACSI organization also host regional lunches for heads of schools. An implication for policy would be more stringent requirements from ACSI related to administrator growth. Many of their policies for teachers pertaining to CPoE and specific areas of professional development have been a

benefit in shaping Christian school environments. However, policies focused on preparing school administrators to engage in the many areas represented by the themes emerging from this study could benefit administrators individually and the greater Christian school movement.

Another implication for policy is related to the hiring practices at Christian schools. School leaders should work with human resources or individuals involved in the hiring process to design an approach for hiring that is more intentional in addressing the need to find the right people. This may be done through recruitment and vetting through the application and interview process, considering ways to support the institutional ideals of the school. Hiring practices and procedures are only sometimes immersed in a Christian approach to hiring. Instead, they follow a familiar pattern shared with all institutions but often tack on minor additions, like a signed commitment to adhere to faith-based expectations.

### ***Implications for Practice***

A significant implication for practice is the implementation of well-designed onboarding systems that consider the variation in backgrounds and understanding of new employees. Consideration of a well-developed onboarding program may help school administrators navigate the various levels of understanding of biblical worldview development among teachers. Onboarding allows new teachers to align with the school's mission, vision, and values. Through orientation programs and mentorship initiatives, incoming educators can better understand the school's commitment to biblical worldview development. This alignment ensures that all faculty members work towards a common goal, promoting consistency and coherence in teaching practices and culture-building efforts.

Another significant implication for practice for school administrators is to consider transformational leadership theory as a guiding framework for their leadership role at a Christian

school. Though many administrators articulated experiences that align with transformation practices, knowledge of the framework may significantly enhance school leaders' ability to lead, intentionally addressing areas related to preparing, inspiring, and motivating followers toward a shared vision of an environment conducive to biblical worldview formation. Knowing that a framework exists for a task can immensely benefit implementation by providing guidance, clarity, consistency, and efficiency. Considering the theory of transformational leadership and the relationship to the participant's experience in the study may be a valuable connection to explore.

The finding in the study suggests that specific components of the Christian school program (e.g., service, mission trips, chapel) are foundational in secondary school environments and yet are not adequately evaluated. The ubiquitous presence of these components implies that evaluation of their effectiveness may offer a helpful understanding of the efforts of administrators in these areas. With a granular approach to evaluating each component separately, administrators can identify strengths and weaknesses based on tangible data, not just perceived effectiveness. Administrators may also alleviate the growing pressure to measure components related to biblical worldview by evaluating the efficacy of singular components of the overall efforts to make informed decisions about program elements designed to foster a robust biblical worldview among students. All efforts at biblical worldview formation should have corresponding evaluation processes in place.

### **Empirical and Theoretical Implications**

This section aims to provide insights into how the findings from this study align and extend previous research in the body of literature. First, I will outline the interconnected nature of the research findings with the body of literature by confirming specific findings and

highlighting the significant ways the study contributes to new perspectives and understandings about students' biblical worldview formation in K-12 school settings. Next, I will address the study's theoretical implications by grounding the findings in the theoretical framework of transformational leadership theory and identifying areas where the findings do not align. Last, I will examine the conceptual framework of biblical worldview development in light of the study findings to explore alignment, trends in implementation, and the appropriateness of application to K-12 settings.

### ***Empirical Implications***

The empirical implications resulting from the study are firmly interlaced in the existing literature on biblical worldview formation. The relationship is so entangled that it is web-like, with connections in all areas and multiple ways. It is difficult to overstate the importance of biblical worldview formation to Christian school education. Christian education's nature, specifically in K-12 settings, is an environment ripe for formation efforts. This opportunity is not a new one. A look back to the design of early schools reiterates the indigenously sacred nature of educational institutions, an identity that has since been hijacked by secular thought. Although recent cultural conditions justify and promote K-12 Christian schools as an ideal training ground for the hearts, minds, and souls of young people today, the idea of Christian educational institutions for worldview formation has been introduced previously.

For some time, researchers have confirmed that next to the home, the school and the church are the primary contributing forces influencing faith and biblical worldview formation (Derr, 2014; Horan, 2017; Sorenson, 2014; Wilkerson, 2022). For well over 50 years, researchers and experts have affirmed the value of formation in schools. Palmer's (1993) classic text, *To Know as We Are Known*, Westerhoff's (1976) formational proposition in *Will Our Children*

*Have Faith?* and Garber's (2007) work in *The Fabric of Faithfulness* all identify the promise and appropriateness of Christian schooling for worldview development (Setran & Wilhoit, 2020), illustrating concepts that also emerged in the data from the administrator experience. Palmer (1993) endorsed the school environment as an opportunity for spiritual formation but recognized the essential condition that spiritual formation needed to occur first in teachers. Westerhoff (1976) focused on the culture of the school setting as an immersive experience reflective of authentic Christian living as the primary goal of Christian education, carefully demoting purely academic motives. Garber (2007) introduced the idea of mentoring relationships and fostering peer relationships in the Christian school environment. All these areas emerged as a part of the Christian school administrators' lived experience, but does that mean that schools have made meaningful steps towards a framework that supports potential areas of spiritual growth in the school? A related discussion exploring possible answers will follow. Still, the more significant implication is to recognize that the aims of Christian schools and the experiences and roles that school administrators play in growing schools to meet these areas of potential impact are evident in the emerging data and give validity to the appropriateness of the efforts in K-12 settings.

Numerous areas of the research align with the data from the study. However, it is essential to look for what connects the literature to the data that makes the results of this study valuable. The question to continually consider is, How does this happen? For example, consider the theme of discipleship in the body of literature. Discipleship has been primarily emphasized in church settings. Still, the practices of faith and the common goal shared by discipleship and biblical worldview have contributed to the high incidence of small groups, or discipleship groups, in secondary school settings (Allotta, 2013; Cox & Peck, 2018; Frye, 2019). Related to the theme of discipleship is the theme of mentoring relationships. Research repeatedly

emphasized the positive impact of relationships on biblical worldview formation (Davis, 2021; Erdvig, 2020, 2021; Riggers-Piehl & Sax, 2018; Wallace, 2021; Worsley, 2021). Strong relationships between a young person and a mentor anchor young people as they navigate life experiences and questions. Even in K-12 settings, students' daily interactions with adults in Christian environments positively impact faith formation. Relationships are common among all faith-related frameworks, whether secular or sacred in design (Davis, 2021; Erdvig, 2020; Fowler, 1995; Riggers-Piehl & Sax, 2018). The implications for school settings are significant. However, we must ask, How does this happen? Although discipleship and mentoring in K-12 settings require teacher involvement, there must first be an administrative focus to set the stage for these profitable relationships to occur. Implementing small discipling groups or mentor relationships involves planning, scheduling, and training. All three areas depend upon the school administrator's ability to see the need and formulate and enact an effective plan. Once the program framework is established to support these relationships, administrators must focus on training and preparing teachers to ensure that efforts to carve out time in the school day are fruitful. The literature clearly outlines the opportunity for biblical worldview formation through discipling groups or mentoring relationships. Still, the school administrator must take the idea and make it come to life.

The literature related to biblical worldview formation also focused on understanding the complexity of formation as alluded to in Sire's (2020) three dimensions of a worldview (Erdvig, 2021; Fowler, 1995; Parker, 2010; Worsley, 2021). Research often explores topics like biblical integration (Farbishel et al., 2020; Horner, 2020; Richardson, 2019; Wallace, 2021). There is ample evidence that the educator's ability to teach content that authentically integrates biblical principles can hurt or harm students' thinking, depending on how successful those attempts are.



If teachers inadvertently perpetuate society's ideological encouragement—if not demand—to separate fact from values or the sacred from secular, it can negatively impact students' biblical worldviews. Teachers must be confident and successful in immersing their content and practices with a biblical worldview to foster student growth. So, we must ask, How does this happen? To avoid fostering a two-story model of thinking (Schaeffer, 1968), school administrators spend time coaching and training teachers in methods and content integration. Illustrated by the data emerging from the study, the task requires a great deal of time, effort, and planning from administrators in their experiences (Billingsley & Nassaji, 2020).

### ***Theoretical Implications***

Transformational leadership theory looks at the behaviors and postures of leaders and the subsequent effect on followers. Leithwood et al. (2020) primarily examined leadership theory in school settings. They outlined the positive impact of this leadership approach on teacher change, specifically related to buying into philosophical changes and beliefs in purpose, not just completing required tasks, such as lesson plans or grading. This assertion is particularly relevant to educating students in Christian school settings. The application of transformational leadership theory to Christian school settings is minimal, so the purpose of applying this theoretical framework to this study was to consider the appropriateness of the application given the aims and goals of Christian educational settings. The implications related to the theoretical framework of transformational leadership theory are reflected in the school leadership domains and practices outlined by Leithwood et al. (2020) and articulated in Table 5. The table situates research findings in the specific practices of transformational school leaders.

**Table 5***School Leadership Domains and Practices & Emerging Themes and Sub-Themes*

| Domains of Practice                                   | Specific Practices   | Themes & Sub-themes  |
|---|--|--|
| Set Directions  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build a shared vision</li> <li>• Identify specific, shared, short-term goals</li> <li>• Create high-performance expectations</li> <li>• Communicate the vision and goals</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing direction and vision</li> </ul>   |
| Build Relationships and develop people                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stimulate growth in the professional capacities of staff</li> <li>• Provide support and demonstrate consideration for individual staff members</li> <li>• Model the school's values and practices</li> <li>• Build trusting relationships with and among staff, students, and parents</li> <li>• Establish productive working relationships with teacher federation representatives</li> </ul>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growing faculty</li> <li>• Seeing individual need &amp; posture</li> <li>• Building relational capacity</li> <li>• Promoting school values and practices</li> </ul> |
| Develop the organization to support desired practices | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build collaborative culture and distribute leadership</li> <li>• Structure the organization to facilitate collaboration</li> <li>• Build productive relationships with families and communities</li> <li>• Connect the school to its wider environment</li> <li>• Maintain a safe and healthy school environment</li> <li>• Allocate resources in support of the school's vision and goals</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fostering a collaborative culture</li> <li>• Creating service opportunities</li> <li>• Designing spiritual experiences</li> </ul>                                   |

| Domains of Practice               | Specific Practices   | Themes & Sub-themes   |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| Improve the instructional program | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff the instructional program</li> <li>• Provide instructional support</li> <li>• Monitor student learning and school improvement progress</li> <li>• Buffer staff from distractions to their instructional work</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finding the right people</li> <li>• Training and education</li> <li>• Interacting with the curriculum</li> <li>• Promoting methods</li> <li>• Encouraging content-area integration</li> <li>• Mitigating diversions</li> <li>• Monitoring</li> </ul> |

*Note.* First two columns from Leithwood et al., 2020, p. 573.

Numerous themes, sub-themes, and codes from the study mirrored the domains and practices outlined in transformational leadership theory. The only theme not represented in Table 5 is “emotional considerations.” Viewing the work and experiences of Christian school administrators through the lens of transformational leadership theory makes it apparent that the role is inherently conducive to and embedded in this leadership approach.

The evidence that fostering an environment conducive to student biblical worldview formation for a Christian school administrator is innately transformational in design supports the awareness and application of transformational leadership theory. In research, applying a theory helps provide a framework that guides thinking and processes for a researcher (Momand et al., 2022); the same usefulness in application and awareness applies to Christian school administrators. No mention of transformational leadership theory was directly discussed with the participants, yet the shared experience mirrors practices related to the leadership approach. However, the variation in understanding and engagement in transformational behaviors among participants suggests that knowledge of research-based practices and the potential impact on

change and growth in school settings could be valuable for Christian school leaders. For example, one area that repeatedly surfaced in interviews and focus groups was administrators' acknowledgment of the importance of finding the right people to bring on as instructional and non-instructional employees. Despite this being an area of focus, few administrators articulated intentional efforts in recruiting or vetting procedures designed to find the right people. Hiring practices can easily become subsumed in human resource processes or seem more like a checklist item for administrators to complete, so, unsurprisingly, efforts toward finding the right people were primarily rooted in contractual agreements and requirements. Some participants commented on the effectiveness of these requirements, like church attendance, and mentioned there was little accountability beyond signing a contract at the time of hiring. Suppose the experience and job requirement of finding the right people were framed within transformational leadership theory. In that case, administrators might adopt a more intentional, and possibly even biblical, approach to the entire process—recruiting, vetting, and hiring the right people.

The lived experience of Christian school secondary administrators fostering an environment conducive to biblical worldview formation parallels the goals and behaviors of transformational leadership. This connection underscores the importance of dynamic leadership and emphasizes its possible positive impact on fostering a supportive and nurturing atmosphere for students' biblical worldview development. Christian school leaders are tasked with leading initiatives and organizations that typically attract employees for intrinsic reasons, making the connection that much more relevant to their role as leaders.

### **Conceptual Implications**

Erdvig's (2021) model for biblical worldview development in evangelical Christian emerging adults is a conceptual framework illustrating the formation dynamic. Produced from

grounded study research, the model articulates the many prompts, influences, and means contributing to formation and delineates the common dispositions and dimensions of a maturing biblical worldview. The focus audience of the grounded research study was young adults aged 18–23. With limited research on formation at earlier ages and a growing suggestion that it is a needed area of focus, this study looked to consider Erdvig’s conceptual framework in light of programming and initiatives at the secondary level in Christian schools. During interviews and focus groups, four participants acknowledged reading Erdvig’s book and being familiar with the associated work and framework. It is uncertain whether more participants were familiar with it, as the question of whether participants were acquainted with it was not directly asked. Regardless, three primary implications emerged.

First, Christian school administrators work to implement certain aspects of the school program that are articulated in the model for biblical worldview development in Evangelical Christian emerging adults. The codes of “training and education” and “spiritual experiences” are part of the *past influences* gear of the model and were discussed as a part of the lived experiences of Christian school administrators for every participant in the study. Classroom instruction related to worldview formation was an area of responsibility and awareness; spiritual experiences were named as an area that helped create an environment conducive to biblical worldview formation. Still, in each case, the level of intentionality and awareness varied among administrators.

The service and relational capacity codes mirror the components of “serving,” “being mentored,” and “conversations with peers” from the *means* gear of the model. Building relational capacity as a part of the experience of Christian school administrators involves direct mentoring of students and preparing teachers for opportunities to mentor students effectively.

Administrators are often responsible for creating designated time and opportunities for these relationships to form within the school day. Relational capacity codes also alluded to building opportunities for students to form relationships with peers in a scaffolded environment to mirror relationships that reflect an understanding of the relational dynamic of the body of Christ articulated in I Corinthians 12 and Romans 12. Some administrators also recognized areas from the model's *prompts* gear related to worldview training, life questions, and new experiences and questions, but it was not universal like the other areas.

The second implication is the level of intentionality and understanding demonstrated by administrators is widely different. In all the areas mentioned above connecting the administrators' experiences and duties to the model for biblical worldview development, it is difficult to determine whether the administrator's role or involvement is spurred by a personal understanding of the profound impact that a particular element can have on the formation of students' biblical worldviews, or whether their involvement was part of routine responsibilities resulting from a long-standing Christian school program framework. One strong example of these areas of implementation occasionally lacking intentionality is service-learning. Most administrators in the study spoke about the service opportunities students were a part of in ways that recognized confusion on how to effectively get students to serve while also ensuring meaningful learning and growth was occurring. Swaner and Erdvig (2018) wrote extensively about the relationship between the pervasive nod to service in Christian schools and the broad range of effective implementation. All four areas of confusion outlined in their work were present in the descriptions of service from all but two of the participants:

1. Community service or outreach with no linkage to the curriculum (including required community service hours);

2. Service that does not take students into the community outside of the school (e.g., clean-up projects around the school grounds, or peer tutoring at the school);
3. Active learning without a direct service component, or that has no significant contact with those being served; and
4. A one-time event, as opposed to sustained, multiple contacts with those being served (e.g., Christmas caroling at an assisted living facility). (p. 19)

The two administrators who demonstrated an understanding of meaningful service and discussed the intentionality behind the design of the experiences also mentioned their familiarity with Swaner and Erdvig's (2018) work on service-learning. Some other administrators admitted they had not intentionally thought through service opportunities in light of biblical worldview formation, and four discussed service solely in the context of clubs (e.g., Beta Club, National Honor Society) or graduation requirements.

The disparity between implementation and intentional design was alluded to in other areas of programming. However, it is essential to note that it was certain that deficits in this area were not a result of a lack of desire in administrators. Instead, numerous challenges likely contributing to the problem were discussed directly due to conversations related to service opportunities and in general. When talking about service in particular, administrators mentioned the challenge of re-engaging in service in the community after COVID-19. For some, the current school year was the first time some organizations were beginning to open back up to partnership opportunities with schools. Additionally, finding placements for students was difficult for larger schools looking to involve entire grade levels or departments. Administrators also recognized two major contributing factors that impacted their experience as leaders. First, their posture of readiness to lead was primarily influenced by their drive and design. Administrators recognized

that when leading as an academic leader or in areas of faith, they needed to be whole first. The process of being ready was primarily an independent one. Less than a quarter of the administrators named their peers or heads of school as a source of promoting personal growth. Coupled with that, nearly all administrators discussed the challenge of time constraints in focusing on the many vital aspects of their role, particularly those related to leading biblical worldview formation efforts.

The third implication is the appropriateness of applying the model for biblical worldview development in evangelical Christian emerging adults to formation efforts in K-12 settings. Although many believe the crucial age for worldview development is 18–23 (Erdvig, 2020, Mayhew et al., 2020), the model implies that young adults undergo many experiences before age 18, which are the means, prompts, and past influences contributing to shaping their worldview. This is also corroborated by findings from research in higher education settings (Kim, 2020; Wallace, 2021).

The study's conclusions indicate that areas of Christian school programming align well with the model. Programming might be more intentionally addressed with greater meaning placed on the activities because of the conceptual framework. For example, "conversations with peers" contributes to a biblical worldview. Though many people may assume this element requires little to no training, the reality of today's culture is that positive and respectful conversation is not celebrated and modeled in the public arena. Schools have a role in training students to learn the conversation skills necessary to elicit meaningful thoughts and feedback, including the way to honor a speaker when there is a disagreement in ideas. Although Christian schools often default to focusing on biblical knowledge claims as a comfortable way to focus on worldview development, educators who understand the implications of the model for biblical



worldview development in the K-12 setting can foster opportunities that contribute to worldview formation in numerous ways. Limited research data and resources specific to biblical worldview formation in K-12 settings can make school leaders feel uncertain about approaches and methods to confidently support teacher and school-wide efforts. Administrators may find that familiarizing the instructional leadership team, teaching faculty, and even noninstructional staff may give the confidence and understanding that can result in school-wide intentional and systemic efforts of biblical worldview formation.

The conceptual model for biblical worldview development in evangelical Christian emerging adults connects meaningfully to the role of the school administrator and the efforts towards fostering an environment conducive to student biblical worldview development. Administrators are tasked with promoting and meeting their schools' mission, and most Christian schools make claims of student biblical worldview formation (Erdvig, 2020; Schultz & Swezey, 2013; Swaner & Wolfe, 2021). The model provides meaningful connections between school programming and students' biblical worldview development, allowing administrators to plan for these opportunities in the school environment strategically.

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

Research limitations refer to factors or drawbacks that may hinder or constrain the study's findings, often beyond the researcher's control. These limitations can include unforeseen circumstances that may affect the study's outcomes. On the other hand, delimitations are intentional decisions made by the researcher to set boundaries or parameters for the study. These decisions define the scope of the research, specifying what will and will not be included or considered. Delimitations are intentional decisions made to help focus the study and clarify its objectives, ensuring that the research remains manageable and relevant.

### ***Limitations***

The limitations of the study were related to the participant sample. Administrator participation was a challenge both in the recruitment stage and during the research stage. The recruitment of participants required significant effort, taking almost three months from the initial email to the final submission of interest for the last participant. It is uncertain what may have been a factor in this challenge. Recruitment may have been a challenge due to timing, as it occurred over November and December, which are busy times in school. I anticipated more department principals would respond, but very few did, and there were a lot of other roles represented by participants. The issue of time may have played into that trend. The topic may also have contributed to the response and willingness to participate. Even among those individuals who participated, multiple disclaimers were given about knowledge on the subject before participating.

Another possible limitation of the study is the consideration of the institution's overall health. Though there were shared experiences across school size, location, and admissions approach, the outlier data and findings suggest that school administrators experiencing extreme situations related to transition or finances may be in a season that is not conducive to reflective practices and proactive leadership behaviors that are focused in a way they might typically be if those extreme conditions and pressures were not present.

### ***Delimitations***

This study does not explore the effectiveness of the efforts of Christian school administrators when related to biblical worldview formation. The purpose was strictly to explore the experiences and look at possible commonalities in that experience. From the onset, it was understood that this study would only provide a baseline understanding and an initial launching

place for future research. The task of biblical worldview formation is of great importance to the work and purpose of Christian schools. First, in the spiritual sense, it considers the condition of the hearts and souls of the students and focuses on biblical commands of sharing the gospel (Matthew 28:19–20), training children biblically (Proverbs 22:6), and reflecting a Christ-like posture as a witness to God’s glory (Matthew 5:16). It is also noticeable that most Christian schools make lofty promises in this area of biblical worldview formation outlined in institutional documents and on outward-facing marketing elements. After evaluating numerous tools and quantitative options for assessing effectiveness and considering the multiple areas related to biblical worldview formation that could easily be measured and those less easily measured, a purposeful decision was made to limit the study. No evaluation of effectiveness is made. It was understood that the results would better reveal the shared realities of secondary school administrators as a precursor to more intentional research-based approaches to methods and evaluation.

An additional delimitation of the study was the design. The hermeneutic phenomenological nature and design were purposefully selected. First, as previously mentioned, although there is great interest in measuring the success of biblical worldview formation attempts in Christian schools, careful consideration of the challenges and nuances of evaluating such efforts requires additional understanding. The complexity of measuring biblical worldview formation requires a greater understanding of the topic in K-12 school settings if successful measuring outside of knowledge claims is possible. A qualitative approach through phenomenology is aligned to consider the complexity of the efforts comprehensively and claims Christian schools make. The hermeneutic approach also considers the reality of the researcher’s proximity to the participants’ lived experiences. Though methods to mitigate prejudices during

the research process were employed, the approach also helps interpret administrators' lived experiences given the researcher's and participants' shared reality.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

There is a growing interest and demand for a tool to quantify and measure the success of biblical worldview formation efforts. The initial findings in this study illustrate the complexity of the issue. The conceptual framework presented in Erdvig's model, combined with the unique and often wide-reaching demands placed on Christian school administrators, presents challenges to what and how to measure the many elements needed to produce a reliable quantification of worldview development. Future research considerations will likely continue to seek a way to measure Christian schools' faith-based goals and claims quantitatively. Stakeholders in schools are drawn to scores that report effectiveness, so for future research to provide meaningful, quantifiable data, a study would have to consider specific stakeholder groups and further explore constructs that connect worldview formation and schools. For example, this study, like others before it, recognizes the presence and perceived value of small-group settings in Christian schools. However, the primary data source related to perceived value is not the actual student but the administrator. Future research can explore metrics associated with success as defined in small-group settings and construct a reliable and valid tool used with students to accurately measure success rather than school leaders perceive it as valuable. The research focused on small groups or any other aspect of the school program that aligns with the model for biblical worldview development in evangelical Christian emerging adults.

Additional research could also focus on transformational leadership theory and Christian school leaders. Some research has focused on professors in higher education settings, but more research would be valuable to provide Christian school leaders with more support in their roles.

Some ideas would be to explore the effectiveness of applying transformational leadership theory in Christian school settings. This may include exploring specific behaviors, like teacher training, specifically in areas of mentoring. Since small groups and mentoring are valuable, looking at how teachers are prepared would be valuable. This would also apply to any area of teacher development. In Christian schools, teacher growth rests primarily in the hands of the school leaders. Christian schools allow for a broader range of certifications that minimize state regulations for preparation. Christian schools are also limited by a lack of district-provided training, leaving the direction of efforts to grow teachers in the hands of administrators.

### **Conclusion**

The lived experience of Christian school secondary administrators working to foster an environment conducive to students' biblical worldview is defined by complexity. It encompasses a wide range of tasks that are vital to successful efforts. Administrators' experiences are, in part, strategic, engaging to promote school aims and goals and facilitate alignment to the school's mission and values. Administrators also work alongside educators, supporting their academic efforts in the classroom through methods, curriculum support, evaluation, and more. This positions them to see the needs of teachers and look for opportunities to grow them spiritually and professionally. Administrators serve as linchpins in the growth and development of teachers within a Christian school environment. They typically play a significant role in teachers' professional and spiritual development. Moreover, administrators play a pivotal role in fostering meaningful relationships among faculty and staff, facilitating opportunities for collaboration, mentorship, and ongoing learning.

Given the essential role of school administrators in stewarding a program that fosters biblical worldview formation and addresses institutional ideals, administrators must have

intentional growth opportunities to engage in for themselves. It may be beneficial for administrators to be aware of the principles of transformational leadership theory. The core behaviors of the theory align with the data that emerged from the study of the lived experiences of Christian school secondary administrators. It would also benefit administrators to utilize the conceptual framework in the model for biblical worldview development in evangelical Christian emerging adults. Both offer a framework that could increase effectiveness and intentionality.

Overall, the results of this study point to the central role that administrators play in biblical worldview formation efforts in Christian school secondary departments and the challenging nature of this role. The strong connections between the data collected, the body of literature, and the strong relationship the lived experiences of administrators have with the theoretical and conceptual frameworks suggest more investment and attention be given to Christian school administrators. They often shoulder tremendous responsibility to direct the school without an organized support system. For Christian schools to address claims related to biblical worldview formation with fidelity, the readiness and posture of the administrators must be a priority.

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## Appendix A - Permission to Use Graphic

Permission to use graphic 😊 ↩️ ⏪ ⏩


 **Erdvig, Roger C.S. (Doctor of Education) <rerdvig@liberty.edu>** Today at 9:53 AM

To:  Pope, Margaret (LUOA Curriculum Development)

Maggie,

You have my permission to use my graphic, a "Model for Biblical Worldview Development in Evangelical Emerging Adults" in your dissertation.

**Dr. Roger C. S. Erdvig**  
*Qualitative Research Methodologist*  
**School of Education**

  
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## **Appendix B - Participant Recruitment Email**

Dear Potential Participant,

As a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University and a fellow Christian school administrator, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy degree. The purpose of my study is to explore the experiences of Christian school secondary administrators as they foster an environment conducive to biblical worldview development in students. This task is central to our aims in Christian education, but understanding the job's challenges and successes still needs clarification. This study aims to build a foundational understanding of the experience of Christian school secondary administrators to understand better the challenges, techniques, needs, and all other aspects of this vital work. Participating in this study will provide a voice to Christian school administrators and help direct future research endeavors in this area. Will you participate in this important study?

Participants must be secondary administrators in a K-12 Christian school accredited by ACSI in the United States. In addition, participants should be serving in an administrative position that directly influences teachers and classrooms through observation, evaluation, coaching, or supervision. Participants can serve in many capacities if that role meets one of the characteristics above and is associated with teachers and students in grades 6 through 12. Participants must be in at least their third year serving in an administrative role at the school. Participants will be asked to submit institutional documents related to biblical worldview development, participate in an audio- and video-recorded online/virtual one-on-one interview and an audio- and video-recorded online/virtual focus group with other participants. It should take approximately 60 minutes to complete each listed procedure. After each conversation, you will receive a copy of your transcript to check for accuracy, confirm agreement, and clarify any statements. Names and

other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

If you want to participate, please complete the screening survey . If you meet my participant criteria, you will be emailed a consent document and a Calendly link to schedule an interview.

The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you must sign the consent document and return it to me at the time of the interview.

I appreciate your consideration,

Maggie Pope

PhD Candidate / Liberty University



## Appendix C - Initial Questionnaire

### Participant Screening

Thank you for being so willing to participate in this research. Please answer the following questions below. Your submission will only be used for screening to ensure you meet all participation requirements.

1. Full Name:
2. Job Title:
3. Are you a secondary administrator in a K-12 Christian school accredited by ACSI in the United States?
  - Yes
  - No
4. Which grades do you work with regularly? (Click all that apply).
  - 6<sup>th</sup>
  - 7<sup>th</sup>
  - 8<sup>th</sup>
  - 9<sup>th</sup>
  - 10<sup>th</sup>
  - 11<sup>th</sup>
  - 12<sup>th</sup>
5. School Name:
6. How long have you served in your current role?
7. What types of interactions do you have with teachers in your department that allow you to influence behaviors and thinking? (Click all that apply).
  - Evaluating

- Training
- Coaching
- Observing
- Supervising
- Other:

**8.** Email:

## Appendix D - Informed Consent

**Title of the Project:** The Lived Experiences of Christian School Secondary Administrators  
Fostering an Environment Conducive to Biblical Worldview Development

**Principal Investigator:** Margaret Pope, Doctoral Candidate, School of Education, Liberty  
University

### Invitation to be part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be a K-12 Christian school administrator who works in a secondary environment in a Christian school accredited by ACSI in the United States. You must serve in an administrative position that directly influences teachers and classrooms through evaluation, observation, coaching, or training. Participants must have served in their role for at least three years. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to participate in this research.

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

The purpose of the study is to understand the experience Christian school secondary administrators have as they navigate the challenges, techniques, needs, and all other aspects of the biblical worldview development of students.

**What will happen if you take part in this study?**

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

1. First task: Provide institutional documents (mission/vision, expected student outcomes, core values, enrollment agreement, and any other documents that reference biblical worldview) from your school that are related to the biblical worldview development of students.
2. Second task: Participate in a virtual, one-on-one, audio- and video-recorded interview that will take approximately an hour.
3. Third task: Participate in a virtual, audio-, and video-recorded focus group that will take approximately an hour.
4. Fourth task: Review a copy of the interview and focus group transcript to check for accuracy, confirm the agreement, and clarify any statements you made.

**How could you or others benefit from this study?**

The direct benefits participants should expect from participating in this study include being a part of a discussion with peers that may confirm, challenge, or support them as a professional tasked with fostering an environment meant to develop the biblical worldview of students.

Benefits to society: In today's postmodern culture, spiritual formation and faith ownership are experiencing drastic negative changes. Compared to previous generations, millennials (born 1983-2000) are 10% less likely to attend church, disassociate themselves from organized

religion, and have fewer professions of faith. Now, many are raising the current school-age generation of children. The Christian school has been referred to as a leg in the three-legged stool of Christian discipleship. Though not ecclesiastical from a biblical perspective, the Christian school can follow the many biblical commands regarding training and shaping and addressing the biblical worldview development of students to counter the decline in biblical thinking evident in today's world.

**What risks might you experience from being in this study?**

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

I am a mandated reporter. During this study, if I receive information about child abuse, child neglect, elder abuse, or intent to harm self or others, I will be required to report it to the appropriate authorities.

**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 responses will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.



- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other focus group members may share what was discussed with people outside the group.
- Your collected data may be used in future research studies or shared with other researchers. If data collected from you is reused or shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed beforehand.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted, and all hardcopy records will be shredded.
- Recordings will be stored on a password-protected computer for three years and then deleted. After that, the researcher and members of her doctoral committee will have access to these recordings.

### **Is study participation voluntary?**

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

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

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data

collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

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

The researcher conducting this study is Maggie Pope. You may ask any questions you have now.

If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [REDACTED] or

[REDACTED] You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Roger Erdvig, at [REDACTED]

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

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515; our phone number is 434-592-5530, and our email address is [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

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

**Your Consent**

By signing this document, you agree 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 participate in the study.*

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

---

Printed Subject Name

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Signature & Date

## Appendix E- IRB Approval

**Subject:** [External] IRB-FY23-24-406 - Initial: Initial - Exempt  
**Date:** Monday, November 13, 2023 at 3:59:47 PM Eastern Standard Time  
**From:** do-not-reply@cayuse.com  
**To:** Pope, Margaret (LUOA Curriculum Development), Erdvig, Roger C.S. (Doctor of Education)  
**Attachments:** ATT00001.png

[ EXTERNAL EMAIL: Do not click any links or open attachments unless you know the sender and trust the content. ]

# LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

## INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

November 13, 2023

Maggie Pope  
 Roger Erdvig

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY23-24-406 The Lived Experiences of Christian School Secondary Administrators as they Foster an Environment Conducive to Student Biblical Worldview Development: A Qualitative Study

Dear Maggie Pope, Roger Erdvig,

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

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

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

**For a PDF of your exemption letter, click on your study number in the My Studies card on your Cayuse dashboard. Next, click the Submissions bar beside the Study Details bar on**

**the Study details page. Finally, click Initial under Submission Type and choose the Letters tab toward the bottom of the Submission Details page. Your information sheet and final versions of your study documents can also be found on the same page under the Attachments tab.**

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

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

Sincerely,

**G. Michele Baker, PhD, CIP**  
*Administrative Chair*  
**Research Ethics Office**

## Appendix F - Sample Transcript Excerpt

### Participant #2

I have a bachelor's degree in [REDACTED] education and a Masters in [REDACTED] and education. My specialist work is in [REDACTED]. I did start my doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction. So, through all of those different areas, I had . . . you know, I used to joke I was a morning person in college. I was getting a secondary degree basically, but for all of my elective classes, I chose the 8:00 classes, which happened to all be elementary ed. classes, which I thought I would never use. But lo and behold, God had a had a different plan. And so I had all those credits that were in those different areas, so.

### Maggie

Wow, that's awesome. And so are you currently working on your doctorate?

### Participant #2

I have put it on hold. My parents passed away, both of them right after I started, so I got about 1/3 of the way through and then put it on hold while I'm dealing with, you know, all of those things and working through that with my sisters.

### Maggie

I'm sorry to hear about that. That's tough, but very wise of you to just allow your life to unfold and then go back to that because it's pretty consuming.

That was just kind of bonus information, but you probably answered some of the questions that I had. At times, I may just fall back on asking the questions verbatim. It's not my intention to sound robotic, but just for the integrity of the research, I may do that so that I'm not rewording things and then being interpreted differently, but at any time, if you need me to clarify, reword whatever, just let me know.

OK, so developing a biblical worldview in Christian School settings has been a topic of growing interest in today's educational landscape. However, the task of fostering student biblical worldview development is very complex and very multifaceted. When you first think about it, and you hear it come up, what's the first thing that comes to mind and why?

### Participant #2

So the first thing that I think is that it's a complex task because we think at first that it's just studying God's Word, but it's more than that. It's helping them to see how it relates to so many different things. When we do the training and help our teachers see it, it's a very difficult task because it's so complex, and we want it to be simple. We want it for them. The gift of salvation is simple for us to explain sometimes, but getting them to translate how their worldview impacts everything is a pretty complex task.

### Maggie

Absolutely. You've done a lot of work with teachers over the years, and I understand that there's typically a range of responses and abilities, but in your estimation and your experience, how is

biblical worldview development understood by your teachers versus your administrators?

**Participant #2**

Well, sometimes, the teachers may understand it more than administrators. Sometimes, you know we've hired- Sometimes, our administrators come in new, and if they come in with a public-school background, it takes them a while to understand that as well. So, the learning curve is, I think, just as great for administration as is for teachers because there's still that divide that sometimes they don't even realize they have until they start having to try to integrate it within the community that we live in.

**Maggie**

Do your administrators have to go through this same programming that you guys have developed?

**Participant #2**

Yes. Uh-huh. So even our umm, so even our director of admissions and finance, those people go through it as well down.

**Maggie**

That's phenomenal. So it's very whole-school driven. OK, so I know you sent me some things, and I know I can tell that you have a role in some of the things, but can you just articulate how your school prepares teachers to engage in biblical worldview development and then your particular role with that as well?

**Participant #2**

So, we have a pretty specific plan that we go through. Part of that is developed out of ACSI, helping them to get their certification within ACSI and to do that biblical component- the philosophy component of the ACSI certification. So, in our minds, we wanted them to do something that was productive to help get their certification, but the biblical integration was so important. So we kind of combine the two to make the program. We do have we have a book study every year that our teachers go through. There's a primary one that they all have to do, to begin with, *Walking with God in the Classroom*, to give kind of a foundational aspect of what that means. Then we do live training on not only what a worldview is and what some of the other worldviews are but also how to specifically integrate that and create a Lesson plan that not only hits academics but integrates the biblical worldview components into it as well. We do those live trainings. We have one that every brand new teacher that comes, whether they're brand new to educational or just to our school, they all have to go through the initial three hour one, and then every year we have at back-to-school week at pre-training week we have a three-hour session that all teachers go through kind of just a refresher every year. And then we have the book studies that we do.

**Maggie**

And that three-hour kind of intensive training, what does that consist of for your new people?

**Participant #2**

We look at what a worldview is. What are the world views that are not necessarily biblical, and

what other worldviews are out there? We look at some of the things that are influencing our students and some of the worldviews that they're coming to us with, and how we can begin to combat some of those mistaken thoughts that they've been trained in with worldview. And then, we look at what components we want our students to know when they graduate from SCHOOL #2- and what we want them to be able to do when they go out into the community. And so that's what we train on.

### **Maggie**

And how do you motivate your teachers beyond your annual reminder? How do you motivate them to engage in the practice of this throughout the year?

### **Participant #2**

So, it is part of our evaluation process as well. Our teachers know that when we go into to do a formal observation, so to speak, we're looking for biblical integration to be a part of the lesson that they are evaluated on, but it's also a part of our everyday conversations. We have faculty meetings once a week, and as part of our faculty meetings, there's a component where we do some teacher training. Biblical Worldview training is just as important to us as classroom management training and those kinds of things. It's kind of on the same rotation as everything else, as it comes through when we do continual PD.

### **Maggie**

That's great. You probably have found in your own studies, that teachers' individual faith walk directly impacts their effectiveness in biblical worldview development with students. I know you mentioned some studies, and maybe that's related or not, but what approaches have been successful, or what challenges have you had in growing and monitoring spiritual growth for faculty?

### **Participant #2**

That's a tough one because so much of it is the personal relationship, and it's hard to see, you know, to really interact with that because it's so personal. But we do consider it to be part of who you are if you teach here- that you have a growing relationship with the Lord. Honestly, everybody's at a different level. You know, some people are coming in, brand new Christians. We have people that we've hired that have only been Christians a year or two, so they're in there, baby steps of their developmental growth, and then we have people that have known the Lord for their entire life. And then we have others who felt like they knew the Lord but might have been Catholic or something else and have recently come to understand a new understanding of their faith. They're all kind of at a different level. We try to give them as many resources as we can so that they have some concrete things to look up. There are several biblical truth books that we give them that have specific biblical truths listed. So if they're, for example, a math teacher and they're struggling with this because it's either completely a new concept to them or because their faith is still rather young, this gives them some tools that they can go to and say, oh, that makes sense to me. I didn't have to come up with it all on my own. I can use some things that someone else has already done. We also have lesson plans that previous teachers have used that have been successful, and we share those with teachers so that they have some resources. It's not a foolproof system by any means, obviously, but anything that we can give them as a resource is



helpful.

**Maggie**

I think that's amazing that you guys are narrowing in on the content area truth claims for them to support them. As you mentioned, having different abilities in staff is going just to provide challenges of support, but it sounds like you guys have ready-to-go pieces, which is great. You mentioned observations and that being an intentional part of your process. Are there certain strategies or methods that you guys see teachers gravitate towards most often when it comes to fostering biblical worldview development in classrooms?

**Participant #2**

One part of it is kind of the way we train them, you know? We train them to use a questioning technique a lot of the time. When they're talking about a subject, say a science lesson and they're talking about plants, we teach them to use questions as they're leading their discussions so that they anticipate what they want the students to say and ask leading questions to help them self-discover, so to speak, the biblical worldview truth that they're trying to get them to understand. That helps it be less of an object lesson and more of a biblical integration lesson. We don't want them in a lesson about fish talking about, you know, Jesus multiplied the fish and because that's an easy thing to do or, you know, to put—I saw one that had was doing a lesson in elementary school on horses. And they had a biblical Bible verse about the four Horsemen in the book of Revelations on I'm like—that's not integration. Let's talk through what that means and how to use appropriate questioning to get the students to understand where they're going.

**Maggie**

And what about specific students? Are they trained on biblical worldview development, and if so, how?

**Participant #2**

It's part of our Bible curriculum- part of our chapel curriculum as well, a little bit. It's going to depend on the teacher. Some teachers are stronger. Some of our Bible teachers are stronger at the biblical worldview integration portion of it, and others are much stronger on the actual biblical content. So, it does depend on the teacher, but that would be where it's mostly focused on the actual student's understanding of it.

**Maggie**

What curriculum decisions have you made that support worldview development?

**Participant #2**

We've really focused on our sixth, seventh, and eighth-grade curriculum, in particular, which is heavy on worldview. We use Summit Publishers for sixth, seventh, and eighth grade, and they have a pretty strong biblical worldview integration component to all of their three levels. Our 12th-grade course is a biblical worldview course, so the entire year is nothing but biblical worldview. They have four or five different units—history is one of them, and social media and things, and talking about how to understand and how to integrate a biblical worldview within the life that's going to be involved in as soon as they finish and graduate. So that's it. Our elementary curriculum is a

## Appendix G - Sample Memos

11.20.23

I feel that some of the questions are too complex and possibly leading. The concern was that participants might feel uncomfortable by not knowing how to answer or being unfamiliar with the topic or concept. The following changes were made:

- Changed Question 9 and eliminated the lead-up to the question so as not to appear to insert bias or expectation into the question. It was too wordy.
- I eliminated the second sentence in Question 10, changed department to school, and eliminated “What related aspect do you feel is the most underdeveloped?” Again, it was asking too many things in one question. Also, asking them to identify the weaknesses formally could put administrators in an uncomfortable position. Allowing the information to emerge unsolicited would be much better.
- Adjusted Question 11 to eliminate “expectations, why you focus on these opportunities, and.” It helped to simplify the question without being overly wordy.

11.27.23

Megan was such a passionate and articulate example of a school leader vested personally in the growth of BWV development. However, it made me question whether I should expand my questioning to extract more information on what is being done from a BWV development standpoint. I met with my chair and received great counsel that would redirect my focus on the research question, not my general curiosity. This was immensely helpful. At this time, I will not adjust or add to questions beyond what has been done so far. However, we did discuss adding a question for the topic of CPoE that repeatedly seems to be coming up. Though it’s early, this element is central to and required by ACSI schools. It would be fitting for this study, given the participant profile.

12.4.23

A question about the approach and impact of ACSI CPoE and Biblical CEU requirements was added. This seemed to be an area consistently measured and/or indicative of the state of BWV development. Even administrators and schools with a lesser-developed approach to PD related to BWV could comment and show familiarity with these elements. An interesting trend that may be emerging is an administrator’s tendency to share (without specifically eliciting) the weaknesses or failures of the school/admin team to address certain areas. There is a difference between recognizing a challenge that there is no control over and recognizing a challenge that IS within their control.

Not sure the questions are eliciting enough information to answer SQ#2. Also think that SQ#1 should have been split up more—combining students and teachers does not seem to be effective. Should there be a sub-question specific to challenges? (I need to discuss this with Roger and then

possibly adjust). SQ#2 seems to be the biggest challenge at this point. It may be I am just not looking at the data well enough. I think I may develop make some pre-determined codes and then see if I can find evidence in the data that way.

#### 1.15.24 - First Focus group

In general, this was such a fruitful focus group. I felt the two individuals quickly became comfortable and even asked each other questions about what they do at their school and how they do it. The natural conversation between them elicited rich data. I would like to find ways to set the stage for this even more. I recognize that the two individuals who participated in this focus group were most likely to engage in this manner given their personalities and expressed passions. I would like to work on facilitating a more natural conversation where I direct the discussion a bit less. I also believe the focus group introduced new ideas that emerged and that they lingered on, such as the unintentional damage we do to students' biblical worldview and the role of parent education/coaching for the school as an element of creating a culture conducive to biblical worldview development. The participants both represented a slightly different model for Christian School (evangelistic and covenant), but they shared similar uncertainty or skepticism as to whether schools could or should take on this role with parents.

#### 1.18.24

I've adjusted the focus group questions slightly. For the second focus group, I had only two participants show. One struggles to articulate thoughts and can become nervous quickly. The other one is the least experienced educator and is only in his third year as an administrator. I changed the wording so that instead of asking them what they do or emphasize, I asked what they would stress to a new administrator as the most important thing to emphasize. I think these small changes seemed to put them at ease. I also added one additional question related to their lived experiences—the SQ1. I added it because of the response I saw and the eagerness they had to hear from other school administrators and how they're doing things. The question is: Where do you find support and/or mentoring for you in your leadership role, both generally and specific to BWV development?

#### 1.31.24

It seems like there are some trends emerging and I'm not exactly sure how to code them. Here are the thoughts: administrators what to know what it "looks like" in a practical level (or they can't articulate it or want their teachers to get it), there's uncertainty about whether the efforts are effective, there is a possible feeling there should be a Bible expert leading the charge?, there's a personal profile that may be emerging of school leaders that get it (personal conviction on the matter), head vs. heart may be the biggest battle, a comprehensive view of the matter has not emerged, those that are thinking about it more appear to present deeper thoughts without as many occurrences (how a leader was led is meaningful, ESE and social emotional aspects live in a two-story model for Christian educators, parent involvement/training seems insignificant, teacher turnover/onboarding is a considerable concern).

Coding – initial coding was a combination of in vivo coding, value coding, and holistic coding. This blended approach for the first round of coding was appropriate for the phenomenological design of the study and the associated premise of horizontalizing (Saldana, Moustakas). Once about 2/3 of the coding was complete, I began readjusting some codes, combining some that were closely related, and grouping some that could hold different meaning in different contexts. Some were placed in groups in Atlas\_Ti and some were assigned a prefix to the code. Then when all coding was complete, I printed and cut out all 301 original codes. The codes were organized first by research question and then analyzed for themes. As themes emerged, I went back into the coding software for additional coding cycles with these predetermined themes. I cleaned codes (combining like/similar codes), grouped them according to theme, and grouped them according to the concepts of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks.

## Appendix H - Coding Lists

| Code Name                          | Occurance | Codegroup 1                   | Codegroup 2           |
|------------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Growth                             | 2         | Mitigate Challenges           |                       |
| Chall_Lack of control              | 3         | Mitigate Challenges           |                       |
| Chall_undefined role admin         | 5         | Mitigate Challenges           |                       |
| Admin_reflective                   | 7         | Mitigate Challenges           |                       |
| Chall_transition                   | 7         | Mitigate Challenges           |                       |
| Extensive job responsibilities     | 7         | Mitigate Challenges           |                       |
| Chall_Lack of time                 | 9         | Mitigate Challenges           |                       |
| Chall_Busy/distratctions           | 14        | Mitigate Challenges           |                       |
| Challenges_social influence        | 15        | Mitigate Challenges           |                       |
| Fine arts                          | 1         | Promote Values & Practices    |                       |
| ID_statement of faith              | 1         | Promote Values & Practices    |                       |
| Admin role_idrshp styles           | 2         | Promote Values & Practices    |                       |
| admin role_support school ID       | 4         | Promote Values & Practices    |                       |
| ID_handbook                        | 4         | Promote Values & Practices    |                       |
| ID_Philosophy of Ed                | 4         | Promote Values & Practices    |                       |
| admin role_relationship with staff | 5         | Promote Values & Practices    |                       |
| ID_core values                     | 5         | Promote Values & Practices    |                       |
| Co-curricular efforts              | 6         | Promote Values & Practices    |                       |
| ID_mission                         | 8         | Promote Values & Practices    |                       |
| ID_ESO                             | 10        | Promote Values & Practices    |                       |
| Personal growth_admin              | 11        | Promote Values & Practices    |                       |
| Admin modeling values & practices  | 13        | Promote Values & Practices    |                       |
| regular chapel                     | 13        | Promote Values & Practices    |                       |
| Parent partnership                 | 17        | Promote Values & Practices    | Spiritual Experiences |
| Christ-like culture shaping        | 21        | Promote Values & Practices    |                       |
| chall_men for mentoring            | 1         | Right People                  |                       |
| covenant model school              | 3         | Right People                  |                       |
| missional school                   | 4         | Right People                  |                       |
| Spiritual maturity                 | 4         | Right People                  |                       |
| Admin role_firing bc of fit        | 5         | Right People                  |                       |
| Faith minimums                     | 5         | Right People                  |                       |
| Teacher turnover                   | 5         | Right People                  |                       |
| Chall_Public school background     | 7         | Right People                  |                       |
| admin support_admin team           | 8         | Right People                  | Collaborative Culture |
| Chall_hiring pool                  | 9         | Right People                  |                       |
| Individual relationship with God   | 10        | Right People                  |                       |
| Admin variation                    | 11        | Right People                  |                       |
| Personally motivated for BWV       | 12        | Right People                  |                       |
| Admissions                         | 14        | Right People                  |                       |
| Intentional hiring process         | 17        | Right People                  |                       |
| Bible teachers                     | 20        | Right People                  |                       |
| Teacher fit/ desire                | 30        | Right People                  | T & E                 |
| ID_BWV reference                   | 1         | Set a Shared Direction/Vision |                       |
| ID_general                         | 1         | Set a Shared Direction/Vision |                       |
| ID_course objectives               | 2         | Set a Shared Direction/Vision |                       |
| ID_vision                          | 5         | Set a Shared Direction/Vision |                       |
| Understand_complexity              | 5         | Set a Shared Direction/Vision |                       |
| website                            | 6         | Set a Shared Direction/Vision |                       |
| Extracurricular_athletics          | 8         | Set a Shared Direction/Vision |                       |
| Common language                    | 11        | Set a Shared Direction/Vision |                       |
| Vision for school                  | 32        | Set a Shared Direction/Vision |                       |
| feelings_rewarding                 | 2         | Emotional Experience          |                       |
| feelings_uncertainty               | 2         | Emotional Experience          |                       |
| feelings_not reaching kids         | 4         | Emotional Experience          |                       |
| feelings_stress or anxiety         | 4         | Emotional Experience          |                       |
| feelings_frustrations              | 9         | Emotional Experience          |                       |
| admin support_other schools        | 2         | External Supportive Space     |                       |
| admin support_outside sources      | 4         | External Supportive Space     |                       |
| admin support_pastor/church        | 5         | External Supportive Space     |                       |
| Chall_contrived integration        | 3         | Content area BWV              |                       |
| ER_curriculum trak as BWV          | 3         | Content area BWV              |                       |
| Worldview impacts everything       | 5         | Content area BWV              |                       |
| Chall_ineffective efforts          | 6         | Content area BWV              |                       |
| Math struggles                     | 6         | Content area BWV              |                       |
| BWV resources by content           | 8         | Content area BWV              |                       |



|                                     |    |                                    |
|-------------------------------------|----|------------------------------------|
| Coaching teachers                   | 15 | Collaborative Culture              |
| PD_Peer Collab Effective            | 3  | Faculty Growth                     |
| Admin role_T awareness of own BWV   | 4  | Faculty Growth                     |
| pd_staff                            | 4  | Faculty Growth                     |
| PD_Uncertainty of approach          | 5  | Faculty Growth                     |
| Beyond Biblical Integration         | 6  | Faculty Growth                     |
| PD_Bible studies                    | 6  | Faculty Growth                     |
| PD_annual teacher BWV               | 7  | Faculty Growth                     |
| PD_provided externally              | 7  | Faculty Growth                     |
| CEUs meet ACSI requirements         | 8  | Faculty Growth                     |
| PD_devotions                        | 8  | Faculty Growth                     |
| Colson Center                       | 9  | Faculty Growth                     |
| PD_continual                        | 9  | Faculty Growth                     |
| PD_CPoE                             | 9  | Faculty Growth                     |
| PD_highly applicable                | 10 | Faculty Growth                     |
| Lesson planning support             | 11 | Faculty Growth                     |
| PD_Book Studies                     | 16 | Faculty Growth                     |
| Onboarding                          | 17 | Faculty Growth                     |
| PD_BWV Training                     | 22 | Faculty Growth                     |
| admin role_fostering teacher growth | 33 | Faculty Growth                     |
| Understand_Life-long journey        | 3  | Individual Support & Consideration |
| Lack of teacher confidence          | 4  | Individual Support & Consideration |
| PD_burden on teachers               | 5  | Individual Support & Consideration |
| Change is hard                      | 7  | Individual Support & Consideration |
| Teacher readiness posture           | 24 | Individual Support & Consideration |
| Teacher variation                   | 31 | Individual Support & Consideration |