

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

The Preeminent Biblical Role of the Father

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by

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THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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Fathers have a biblical role to teach their children commandments, statutes, judgments, and God's Law. The father's duty to teach his children should be handed down from generation to generation. The assumption is that fathers do not teach their children as God commanded. When fathers do not teach their children, they risk becoming an absentee father which leads to fatherlessness, ultimately ending in a broken home. To address this issue and offset this risk, a qualitative action research project was conducted. This intervention implemented two small group training sessions for fathers with children ages six and under. The sessions were applied in two six-week courses. Using a triangulation method, data was collected in six questionnaires, two surveys, and two interviews. A follow-up interview was completed one month after the course. Questionnaires discovered who, what, when, where, why, and how fathers taught. Surveys gathered background information on each participant's spiritual formation status. The triangulation method cross-checked and confirmed that prior to the course, fathers had not taught their children. The purpose educated fathers in their preeminent biblical role to teach their children God's Law. The goal for teaching fathers their role, duty, and responsibility helped them avoid the pitfalls of becoming an absentee father, fatherlessness, and a broken home. In fulfilling the thesis, children gained in spiritual formation, fathers became more spiritually mature, and families were strengthened in God's Law. This project is duplicable. Other churches or groups can follow this model to strengthen families in Christ.

Keywords: absentee father, biblical role of fathers, children, commandments, father's duty, God's Law, teach children

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Abbreviations

BC	<i>Before Christ</i>
CDC	<i>Centers of Disease Control and Prevention</i>
DMIN	<i>Doctor of Ministry</i>
FBCS	<i>First Baptist Church Sevierville</i>
IRB	<i>Institutional Review Board</i>
JFL	<i>Jerry Falwell Library</i>
KJV	<i>King James Version</i>
LXX	<i>Septuagint</i>
NASB	<i>New American Standard Bible 1995</i>
NT	<i>New Testament</i>
OT	<i>Old Testament</i>
SFSS	<i>Spiritual Formation Status Survey</i>
UPA	<i>Unwed Parents Anonymous</i>
VBS	<i>Vacation Bible School</i>
YHWH	<i>Yahweh, (God)</i>

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

God's command that fathers are to teach their children the commandments, statutes, and judgments of God has become blurred in the eyes of Christian fathers. With the rise of postmodern thinking, the role of the father in a Christian family has become ambiguous. Many fathers are not aware that they have a responsibility to teach their children God's Law or that they have a responsibility to God for performing the role of spiritual leader of the family. This project brings awareness to First Baptist Church Sevierville (FBCS) fathers by introducing the problem, explicating the purpose, and offering a resolution.

The process further offers the researcher's basic assumptions, commitments, and presuppositions that govern the approach to the problem presented and the purpose of the project. Definitions of key terms are covered, adding clarity to the sources used within the project. Limitations as boundaries are revealed. Situations in research arise whereby conclusions and directives are not within the control of the researcher, making boundaries necessary. Delimitations are the bridle of the researcher that constrains the researcher within the research process, thus enabling the focus on the necessities of the project research. These topics lead to the thesis statement, which begins the action research project on the role of the father.

Ministry Context

This DMIN action research project revolves around a historic Baptist church located in the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains National Forest in Sevierville, Tennessee. First Baptist Church Sevierville (FBCS) is a member of the Southern Baptist Convention with a senior pastor and fourteen other staff members, including six pastors responsible for various ministries

within the church. The church roots were planted in 1789 and have survived wars, fires, total destruction, and other calamities. With all the adversity over its 234-year history, God has granted this church body His blessing to continue serving Him by His grace.

Church Area Demographics

FBCS is located in the center of Sevierville, TN, approximately twenty-four miles east of Knoxville, TN, and ten miles north of the entrance to the most visited national park in America, The Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The park boasts some fifteen million visitors annually.¹ Often, park visitors attend one of the three Sunday worship services at FBCS. The National Park has a large visitor tally, yet the Sevier County population estimates as of July 1, 2021, is 99,517. The population is predominantly white, making up 94 percent of the population. Children under the age of eighteen make up 25 percent of the population, and adults over sixty-five make up 20 percent. There are approximately 36,817 households in the county, with the average size of the family being nearly three. The median household income is \$54,363, which is below the state average of \$74,709. Approximately 13 percent are living in poverty.² As far as work, there is a limited amount of industry. The primary source of income is tourism. Most residents serve the fifteen million annual visitors in the form of shows, two outdoor waterparks, one indoor water park, Dollywood, mountain coasters, go-cart tracks, an indoor all-year-round snow tubing facility, many more attractions, food, and shopping for any taste imaginable. Sevier County, TN, is a destination for many vacationers annually. Of the quaint population, FBCS has a membership of four thousand, with twelve hundred of them meeting weekly for Sunday Life

¹ Statista, “Number of recreational visitors to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in the United States from 2008 to 2021,” (accessed March 23, 2023), <https://www.statista.com/statistics/254012/number-of-visitors-to-the-great-smoky-mountains-national-park/>.

² United States Census Bureau, “Quick Facts: Sevier County, TN,” (accessed March 23, 2023), <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/seviercountytennessee>.

Groups or Sunday School. Approximately 4 percent of the county population are members of FBCS.

FBCS Historical Background

In the church's 234-year history, there have been a total of thirty-six senior pastors. The first church building was a rough-cut log structure built for worship. It burned to the ground in a fire in the early 1800s. It was rebuilt to be inadvertently dismantled during the Civil War as it was used for firewood by the soldiers. The congregation made a resolution to dissolve during the Civil War. A few families survived the war and maintained their ties, which resulted in the rebirth of the church in 1878. From that point on, FBCS has proliferated to what it is today. It has eleven buildings on the property, making it the largest church in the vicinity. The people are survivors and true volunteers, which is consistent with the motto of the state of Tennessee, "The Volunteer State." The majority of families of FBCS are socially conservative evangelical Christians with a traditional biblical family structure.

This family structure gives identity to the body of the church. It professes that the family, as designed by God, is important. In a dominantly secular society, which is complacent or indifferent to abortion, FBCS members support the right to life of the unborn. The church body has a pro-life stance and "changed the 'liberty of choice' into irresponsibility, and the 'rights of the unborn' into a family values mantra."³ But then, similar to secular society today, Christian families in FBCS are under spiritual attack as taught in Ephesians 6:12. From this spiritual attack, some families have succumbed to pressures and are suffering the consequences of absentee fathers, fatherlessness, and broken homes. The full armor of God at FBCS has chinks in

³ Jennifer L. Holland, *Tiny You: A Western History of the Anti-Abortion Movement* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2020), 183.

the armor as many fathers do not exercise the fatherly role of teaching their children the commandments, statutes, and judgments of God. In this battle, parts of the church are dealing with an unrighteous transformation that can be and needs to be reversed. This is the basis of this action research, to teach fathers that their God-commanded role is to teach their children the commandments of God, thus reinvigorating the family, FBCS, and the body of Christ.

FBCS Culture

FBCS is a large church with a diverse range of age groups, worship styles, and musical tastes. There are three different services on Sunday morning, and the senior pastor preaches the sermon in all three. The early service is the most traditional in accordance with Southern Baptist tradition. The middle service is primarily comprised of younger adults. The pastor changes clothes to be less formal, and the music is primarily contemporary. Some may think this to be an attractional church because the pastor changes clothes and the music changes for different audiences, but the pastor never changes, compromises, or waters down the message of Jesus as it is written in the Bible. Many seeker and attractional churches are neutral when talking about the blood of Jesus or the cross. The preachers preach in a way that keeps people happy or in a way that is not what they consider to be confrontational. Andy Stanley promotes an engaging message. Truth is inconsequential; Stanley believes the audience naturally assumes the message to be true. He believes that an engaging message and not the content will bring people back to the church.⁴ So, some do not preach on subjects that may offend some and thereby do not preach on the blood of Jesus or His crucifixion. Jared C. Wilson mentions that one church he was a part of took the cross off the wall “because it seemed too churchy.”⁵ Wilson further makes clear that

⁴ Andy Stanley, *Deep and Wide* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 176.

⁵ Jared C. Wilson, *The Prodigal Church: A Gentle Manifesto against the Status Quo* (Wheaton IL: Crossway, 2015), 27.

attractational churches do preach that Jesus died for the sins of humanity, but too often, Jesus' death is assumed and is built up to rather than focused on. Jesus becomes more of a tool for salvation rather than the blood-stained crucified Savior.⁶ The attractational and seeker model church is far from what FBCS is. The blood of Jesus and His sacrifice on the cross is central to FBCS's spiritual paradigm. Finally, the third service is a blend of the two earlier services, and the music is also a blend. Fathers with children of all ages attend all services. The number of fathers married, divorced, unwed, or single at FBCS is currently unknown, but it will be determined during the action research process.

FBCS Fathers

Fathers are the focus of the problem, purpose, and thesis of the action research project. The action research project is expected to show that fathers have not been teaching their children as commanded by God, and this behavior will continue until fathers are taught the scriptural role of the father to teach his children. The majority of fathers in FBCS exemplify Southern hospitality, charm, and friendliness, as well as willingness to go out of their way to help others. This is of good character. This attitude inspires fathers to willingly accept a call to receive pertinent instruction and act on behavior modification to start teaching their children at home when not in church.

FBCS Missions

FBCS is a mission-oriented church with the motto, "Helping people move from their point of need to hope in Christ." In 2023, mission plans include community, country, and continents. The mission trips planned are to Cleveland, OH, Denver, CO, Alaska, and disaster relief. Continental missions will visit Panama, Brazil, Kenya, Central Asia, the Philippines, and

⁶ Ibid.

the Middle East. Training is mandatory and freely offered to all who wish to take part in the mission's work. FBCS missions training sets the precedence in what God requires and expects in learning and teaching. Traditional events that men partake in are an annual wild game dinner attended by three hundred to four hundred men. Also, every fall, the church conducts a ministry corn maze for anyone to enjoy for free. It involves many activities, the gospel is preached, and people get saved. Therefore, fathers at FBCS have better genes for learning their roles, as the culture of teaching and learning is pervasive within the church.

FBCS Children's Outreach

Another cultural aspect of FBCS that will assist fathers in learning their role is the sports programs at the church. With an indoor gym, basketball is a ministry to children whose fathers can participate as coaches, referees, and helpers of the Upward Sports program. The children's ministry has a dedicated pastor, and the program facilities are conducive to successful spiritual formation starting at an early age. Upon starting action research in this project, this youth program will prove instrumental in teaching children what they can expect from their fathers at home during the week. Children will learn to gently nudge fathers to start performing their teaching role learned in the meetings. Teaching children signifies the teaching ministry within FBCS, which connects this researcher to the research.

FBCS Life Groups

On Sunday mornings, there is a vast array of teaching taking place in Life Group Bible Studies. In fact, currently, thirty-eight such classroom teaching sessions are taking place for all ages: male, female, coed, young adults, adults, senior adults, children, and college/university classes. This impressive ministry has about twelve hundred participants weekly. In addition, there are other such opportunities on Wednesday. In all, the culture at FBCS is conducive to

teaching fathers their role. There is ample opportunity for fathers to learn what their role is, to teach their children what God commanded in Deuteronomy 6:1-9. This researcher has been involved in Life Group Bible Studies. This experience will give fathers the confidence to join a study group.

FBCS Spirituality

The pastor, staff, and deacons adhere to the qualifications found in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 respectively. This group of men can be instrumental in teaching men their roles as fathers. The action research will bring this to light. This will be a change in the church culture for fathers as they become aware of their role as teachers in the family, affecting fathers, wives, sons, daughters, and friends.⁷ Not only will fathers learn their role in the family from a spiritual perspective, but fathers will also mature in their spiritual growth, which will enhance the children's spiritual formation as they begin their spiritual journey guided by God's commandments, statutes, and judgments.

Problem Presented

Most often, at the close of a sermon, the lead pastor completes his sermon with a closing prayer, an invitation, and a song for the invitation. Fathers close their Bible, zip it up in its carrying case, and it stays there until next week. Here is where fathers need to learn to unzip the carrying case when at home to teach their children what God commanded in Deuteronomy 6:1-7, the commandments, statutes, and judgments of God. It is vital that fathers are aware that not teaching as God commanded is disobedience to God. The fathers of Israel disobeyed, resulting in the northern kingdom (Israel) being scattered into exile (2 Kgs 17:6) and the southern kingdom

⁷ William Jeynes, *The Wiley Handbook of Christianity and Education* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley & Sons, 2018), 133.

(Judah) being conquered and taken into captivity to Babylon (2 Kgs 25). Father's disobedience today contributes to absentee fathers, fatherlessness, and dysfunctional or broken families.

Disobedience

The ramifications of disobedience correlate with fathers not dutifully obeying God's command. Israelite fathers followed Solomon's lead and disobeyed God. Iain W. Provan declares that Solomon was guilty of apostasy. Solomon loved Pharaoh's daughter against God's command, turning his heart to worship other gods, even building temples for them in Jerusalem, and Solomon took many wives. His reign was from about 970-931 BC. In that time, he became disobedient to God thereby exemplifying disobedience for future kings of Israel.⁸ About two hundred years later, 732-731 BC, Israel, the northern kingdom, was under the rule of King Hoshea. He was a wicked king. Under his reign, parents sent their children through the fire in the worship of Molech, and then parents would practice divination and enchantments as they would then sell their bodies for evil, provoking God to great anger (2 Kgs 17:17).

Since Solomon's reign, in lieu of obedience, the problem of disobedience has been perpetuated. John Walvoord and Roy Zuck bring to light that in the Ancient Near East, law codes were often laid aside or altogether ignored which could have happened to the Pentateuch.⁹ This could explain the disobedience of the father's neglect to teach their children God's Law, sending them through the fire instead. Today, a father's disobedience is similar to a Hebrew father's disobedience. Today, parents, and fathers in particular, have not paid attention to Deuteronomy 6:1-9, and thus have not learned to teach their children the commandments and statutes as God

⁸ Iain W. Provan, *1 & 2 Kings*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995), 76-77.

⁹ John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, *Deuteronomy*, The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Law (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2018), 34f.

commanded 3,500 years ago. Disobedience today is not purposeful negligence of one's volition or will. Yet, nonetheless, disobedience has become the norm. The intervention of this action research project has the purpose of reversing or eliminating this disobedient behavior by teaching fathers their role to teach their children as God commanded. In turn, children will realize spiritual knowledge, advancing their spiritual formation and proselytization.

Professionals teaching children spiritual awareness, as postulated by Diana Coholic, claim that in defining the terms spiritual and religious for clarity, they are concerned and even *fear* that children will be proselytized.¹⁰ From a Christian perspective, it is hard to imagine that society has come so far from God's will that professionals would fear that children might possibly be proselytized to follow God's Word. This supposed fear is conjured up in professional's thoughts while in the process of defining words like spiritual and religion for the purpose of clarity. Also, from a Christian perspective, to think that simply defining the words spiritual and religious brings on a fear that children will take notice and change their beliefs to follow God is alarming. What is being witnessed is a clear departure from traditional biblical spirituality and religion. Fathers need to take note of such instances for the sake of their children's spiritual formation and growth, which takes place during the children's early learning of God's Law.

This alarming example of disobedience signifies how important it is that fathers obey and teach their children the commandments, statutes, and judgments. God gave Moses and Israel the commandments on Mount Sinai. Walvoord and Zuck explain how the Law could have been put aside, giving reason for why fathers became disobedient in teaching teach their children as God

¹⁰ Diana Coholic, *Arts Activities for Children and Young People in Need: Helping Children to Develop Mindfulness, Spiritual Awareness and Self-Esteem* (Philadelphia, PA: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2010), 58.

commanded.¹¹ Fathers today are no different than fathers in Moses' day. The father's role to teach is ignored and has been neglected in disobedience. Fathers need to learn their role in obedience.

Obedience

Every church service is an opportunity to instruct fathers to teach their children at home. Fathers not teaching their children as commanded by God has become a problem of disobedience of fathers. God's response to disobedience is judgment. Judgment often has lasting ramifications and effects. The father should be obedient to God, teaching children in the home starting with the first commandment. Tyler Rowley asserts that fathers should teach boys masculinity because a real man is an obedient man of God who prays, entrusts himself to God, reads Scripture, and teaches the children to do the same.¹² The father, in obedience to God, should lead by example in a spiritually faithful manner and not just teach how to swing a golf club or throw a baseball. God commanded Moses that fathers have the role to teach their children. He did not simply give them the Law one time, and that was it. Moses reminded fathers often, such as in Deuteronomy 5, 6, and 11. This command for fathers to teach is pivotal¹³ as it goes beyond one generation and to all descendants. In obedience, fathers are to teach children when they are sitting around, walking along, awakening, and lying down to sleep.

Children are to grow spiritually in obedience to God. Children are to have God's commandments in their hearts, reflecting God's love towards one another. There should be reminders of the Law on the doorposts and on the body. Children are easily distracted and need

¹¹ Walvoord and Zuck, *Deuteronomy*, 34f.

¹² Tyler Rowley, *Because of our Fathers: Twenty-Three Catholics tell how their Fathers Led them to Christ* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2020), 99.

¹³ Deanna A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy: A Theological Commentary on the Bible* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 59 & 80.

constant reminders of God's Law from their fathers daily (Deut 6:7). Fathers should remember God and teach His commandments with all their might, meaning with all their passion, living in obedience to God the Father. However, since most fathers of Israel neglected God's command, disobedience rather than obedience was perpetuated. For 3,500 years, disobedience perpetuated in fathers. The ramifications of disobedience are prevalent in society. It may seem to be a secular issue, but occurrences of absentee fathers, fatherlessness, and broken homes are found in churches today, including FBCS. The problem is that most fathers at FBCS do not teach their children God's commandments and statutes as God commanded.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this DMIN action research project is to teach fathers of FBCS their role and duty of teaching their children God's Law. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob kept God's commandments and statutes, God's Law (Gen 26:5; 28:13-15). Notice how God always spoke to the men, the fathers, concerning the covenant. They have a role.

Roles

There is a twofold reason why God spoke to Abraham first. God created Adam first, and thus, the male's biological role is to carry the seed for procreation. Both males and females have specific roles. God made the male first, giving the male the responsibility and role of carrying the seed and the name of the father. The father, by God's example, carries the spiritual seed as in the incarnation of His Son Jesus (Matt 1:20-21; Luke 1:35). The Father, through His Holy Spirit, provided the seed for Mary to conceive and give birth to the Son of God with the Father's seed. Providing the seed in the flesh is the role of the father. The mother's role of carrying and giving birth to the child is followed by early child development. The female teaches caring and gentleness when nursing the children (1 Thess 2:7). The mother teaches that children should first

honor God and then the father. She teaches how to nourish and take care of the body and mind. Yes, both parents teach, but they have different roles in teaching.

The father is to teach the commandments as God commanded (Deut 6:1-9). Solomon reiterates what Moses commanded, that sons are to "observe the commandment of [their] father" (Prov 6:20, New American Standard Bible). The father teaches discipline or statutes, which is how to interact with other people. The father also teaches the instruction of the Lord, which is God's Law (Eph 6:4). God gave Adam this responsibility before God made the woman. God gave Adam the responsibility to name all the animals and care for the garden. God did not simply give this as work for Adam but also to teach and inform. Adam taught Eve what God commanded about the tree of life. It is, therefore, the father's role and duty, laden with owning the responsibility to God, to follow through on this role and duty. The father's role is to teach his children God's Law.

God's Law

The father is to plant and nourish the seed of God's Law in the minds of children, which encompasses discipline and instruction of the Lord (Eph 6:4). The female should also teach, but the father owns and owes this responsibility to God as the carrier of the seed. In teaching, the father plants the spiritual seed in the child's mind, thereby exemplifying Abraham, who left Haran in obedience to God (Gen 12:4). God saved His people from slavery in Egypt. God made a new covenant with the people of Israel on Mount Sinai. God gave them His statutes and commandments, God's Law. Along with the Law, God had a few stipulations for mankind to obey the commandments, statutes, and judgments of the Law. Teach them to the children to perpetuate God's name and glory throughout all time (Exod 19:5-6). So, it is the purpose to teach

fathers at FBCS their fatherly role to teach their children and perpetuate God's command, which is of utmost importance.

Teaching God's Law

The first step is to teach fathers their God-commanded role to be teachers of God's Law to their children. An intervention action research project will begin at FBCS, where the researcher will discuss the problem with fathers in the halls of the church who have young children. The purpose is to bring attention to fathers that they should have been taught by their fathers the fatherly role to teach their children the commandments, statutes, and judgments of God (Deut 6:7). This will epitomize the importance and expectations of the father's role. Men will learn that they should teach their children the commandments, statutes, and judgments of God, God's Law. These one-on-one meetings will set the precedence at FBCS of teaching fathers their role "so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged" (Deut 6:2, NASB). In today's society, this will strengthen families. Fathers will come closer to God as opposed to being distant, absentee fathers, creating fatherless children, or having broken homes.

Basic Assumptions

The problem of fathers not knowing their role is historical. When God commanded Moses to tell the fathers of Israel to teach their sons the commandments, statutes, and judgments (Deut 6:1-9), Moses duplicated God's command and assumed that this command should have been carried out. The role of the father should have spread throughout Israel and perpetuated from generation to generation into the present day. Israel knows the significance of God's command, labeling it the *Shema*, to hear. Israel also understood that it is not enough to simply

know the words; they must be transmitted to future generations.¹⁴ This action research project points out the issue Israel had with disobeying God's command to teach the children. The assumption is that Israel's disobedience has been duplicated throughout time, whereby fathers today are equally disobedient by not teaching their children God's Law as commanded by God. Because Israel as a whole did not obey God, they paid a steep price. The northern kingdom was exiled, and the southern kingdom temple was destroyed, with the people taken captive to Babylon. Today, people suffer from absentee fathers, fatherlessness, and broken homes, which can be witnessed at FBCS.

Based on Scripture, the fathers of Israel were commanded to teach their children. Fathers were responsible to God for acting on this role and duty. God never changes His mind, so fathers today are under the same command. Based on statistical data on fatherlessness and broken homes, it can be assumed that fathers are not performing their roles. Jesus' disciples and others called Him Teacher (Matt 22:36; John 13:13). He taught them the Shema. Likewise, fathers today are teachers, teaching their children the commandments, statutes, and judgments of God. Because of fatherlessness and broken homes at FBCS, the assumption is that the role of the father is not happening at FBCS. This research assumes a problem of non-conformity to God's command, which is predicated partially on the male's ego and pride as a primary determinant of absentee fathers, fatherless children, and broken homes. Many resources attest to and describe the symptoms of the societal issue of fatherlessness and broken homes. This action research, supported by FBCS, will recognize and point to the assumed culprit of fathers not teaching their children.

¹⁴ Jeffrey K. Salkin, *The JPS B'nai Mitzvah Torah Commentary* (Lincoln, NE: The Jewish Publication Society, 2017), 215.

The pastor and pertinent staff members at FBCS should support this research project as it will assume the involvement of its members and families. As a result of this action research, it is assumed that the fathers will accept their role, learn their duty, and put it into action. Men of FBCS are hungry to learn what God has in store for them. Therefore, it can be assumed that it is the reason why they come to church. It is also assumed that all fathers want the best for their children. Parents bring children to church to learn about God, but it starts with fathers.

This project will begin with the researcher inviting fathers with young children to take part in one of two small study groups, followed by two group classroom courses and a call to action. Based on knowing the volunteer attitude of fathers at FBCS, it is assumed that they will accept their role and take responsibility for teaching their children. As a roadblock, fathers rely on children's church and youth groups to teach their children what they need to know and have neglected or forgotten their role. Since fathers have not performed their role for an extended period of time, possibly generations, this may seem new to them. Regardless of their previous actions, fathers still have a responsibility to God. It is assumed that God's command was not handed down from generation to generation. Therefore, it is assumed that fathers today simply have not learned their role. Another assumption is that this problem originated in the time that God told Moses in Deuteronomy 6:1-9. The judgments Israel has suffered are evidence of their disobedience. The fathers of Israel were commanded to teach their children diligently. This is not blaming Israel, but the fathers of Israel did not obey God, and since the example they set was of disobedience, it is assumed that disobedience was perpetuated. God sent prophets to exhort Israel to be obedient to God. As a result, many prophets were killed for their righteous efforts (1 Kgs 18:13). So, the assumption is that fathers at FBCS have fallen into the same disobedient track that the fathers of Israel did.

Definitions

Historically, this project covers some 3,500 years. So, some terms need defining. The theme deals with the father, the family, God's Law, and the ramifications of the father not dutifully exercising the role.

Absentee Father. He is also called an "absent" father. It is a non-custodial parent obligated to pay partial child support, or he has abandoned his child altogether, failing to make any contact.¹⁵ But that only tells half the story. Often, the father is in the home showing little or no attention to the children, rendering him absent, "Most of the time, the father is present, but neither available, nor supportive or involved in his family."¹⁶

Commandment. God's Commandments are not "moral relativity."¹⁷ The Ten Commandments are God's boundaries for humanity or divine rules of human conduct towards God and to other human beings. Commandments are God's expression of love, so people can enjoy life from a moral and ethical point of view.¹⁸

Father. The father is first the biological male of the species that surpasses a mere title. Father is also a name of reverence and should only be used by children when naming their father. Children do not call their fathers by their names. Jesus called YHWH Father (John 10:29-30). God is the ultimate Father, and "this name, Father, is more than just an image or comparison to understand something about God. It *is* who God is to us. It denotes a relationship. It shows that

¹⁵ USLegal, "Absent Parent Law and Legal Definition," (accessed 3-31-2023), <https://definitions.uslegal.com/a/absent-parent/>.

¹⁶ Fazel E. Freeks, "Responses of adolescents regarding the indispensable role of the Christian father as mentor within the family: A qualitative study." *In die Skriflig*; 5, no 1, (2017).

¹⁷ Brian N. Winslade. *Boundaries: Rediscovering the Ten Commandments for the Twenty-First Century* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2018), xii.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

we know him and that He knows us. We belong to Him, and He to us.”¹⁹ A human father is defined as, “fathers should not only provide financial aid. Their value within the family should thus not be measured by material provision. It should rather be assessed by the love and attention which fathers provide to their family.”²⁰

Fatherlessness. Some fathers leave their family to start another family with a different woman, and different children from another marriage. Some fathers are incarcerated, others job or profession keeps them away at work. The children are abandoned by their father. The children become fatherless, “modern families remove the role of economic training from families and foster the male being removed from the family as he is breadwinning.”²¹

God’s Law. As stated in Deuteronomy 6:1, God’s Law is made up of His commandments and statutes and enforced with His judgments. Hence, the three make up His Law. “The phrase ‘statutes and ordinances,’ however, clearly refers to the laws of chapters 12-26. The literary effect of piling up these synonyms for Law (cf. vv. 2, 17, 20) is to increase urgency and incentive.”²²

Judgments. The ramifications for disobedience to God. Judgments in this project pertain to disobedience of God’s command to teach. In this context, it is important to let God decree His judgments, “because we are born in sin and therefore cannot live up to God’s righteous

¹⁹ Christina Fox, *Like Our Father: How God Parents Us and Why That Matters for Our Parenting* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2022), 29.

²⁰ Fazel E. Freeks, “Views of mothers on the fundamental role of the Christian father as mentor in a nuclear family environment,” *In die Skriflig*, 52 no 1 (2018): 1.

²¹ Jack O. Balswick, Judith K. Balswick, and Thomas V. Frederick, *The Family: A Christian Perspective on the Contemporary Home*, 5th ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021), 103.

²² Richard D. Nelson, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 88.

standards, condemnation (damnation, the older synonym, has other connotations today) hangs over our heads like the sword of Damocles.”²³

Phenomenology. A deeper understanding and meaning of everyday experiences are a phenomenological approach in an interview. “Phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences...this requires methodologically, carefully, and thoroughly capturing and describing how people experience some phenomenon-how they perceive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it with others.”²⁴

Role. A role is a duty attributed to a person dependent upon their position. The role of the father is to perform duties because "the role God gives all fathers is that of pastoring their families. It's our responsibility to teach our family how to know and be known by God. One of the best ways to do this is by showing them how to spend time with God. Teach them to pray. Teach them to listen. Show them how to use their Bible.”²⁵

Shema. The first word in Deuteronomy 6:4-5 is the word *Shema*, which means “hear.” The *Shema* is “the main statement of the Jewish law that says God is the one true God and His people are commanded to love and obey Him.”²⁶

Statute. Statutes are the rules, laws, or legal directives, “like the statute or by-laws of any organization, serves as a set of internal rules, standards, almost mini-policy statements that the Church uses to guide its life. The Statute also serves to bridge the gap from the ancient canons to

²³ Walter E. Ellwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), Judgment.

²⁴ Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods 4th ed.* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2015), 115.

²⁵ Eric Ballard, *God's Challenge for Dads: A 90-Day Devotional Experiencing God's Truths* (New York, NY: Good Books, 2018), 49.

²⁶ Ken Hindman, Landry Holmes, and Jana Magruder, *Every Age, Every Stage: Teaching God's Truth at Home and Church* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2021), 40.

the contemporary Church, and thus it forms part of the canonical tradition for our local Church.”²⁷

Limitations

Action research requires group members to come face-to-face with personal inadequacies. In this project, a limitation involves fathers not having taught their children as commanded by God. A potential weakness may be that one feels their volition is under scrutiny. Questioning could be seen as an attack on the male ego or pride, causing one to become defensive, which could possibly lead to abrasive emotional feelings or even violent behavior. As in sporting events, the male ego sees being questioned as an affront or a challenge, causing one to become defensive.²⁸ The limitation here is that fathers may hold back from admitting to their true actions and intentions of teaching their children, thus skewing the results of the data. Another aspect of this reasoning is that in order to save face, fathers may exaggerate or embellish the frequency of teaching their children. Another limitation involves fathers who have abandoned a family. These fathers are less likely to step forward due to embarrassment, guilt, or shame, which "hinder human beings from becoming fully human and functioning to their maximum potential.”²⁹ Men can become reserved and hide their good intentions for what they have done or not done. Both situations need to be handled delicately, letting fathers know their identity and information will be held in strict confidence. Fathers can count on anonymity in the action research project.

²⁷ Alexander Rentel, “Report on the Statute Revision for the Orthodox Church in America: The Commission on Canons and Statute,” *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 61 no 4 (2017): 454.

²⁸ Nick J. Watson and John White, “C. S. Lewis at the 2012 London Olympics: reflections on pride and humility,” *Practical Theology*, 5 no 2 (Aug 2012): 156.

²⁹ Joseph George, “Shame, guilt and the rites of reconciliation,” *Bangalore Theological Forum*, 35 no 2 (Dec 2003): 79.

Both aforementioned could become participants. Large groups would be favorable but could be limited by men's egos and pride. Another limit to the group sizes could be race. FBSC is predominantly caucasian. Nationally, statistics show that 57.6 percent of African American fathers are absentee fathers compared to 31.2 percent of Hispanic Americans and 20.7 percent of caucasian fathers.³⁰ Since there is little racial diversity at FBCS, a diverse racial group is not likely. Finally, as seasons change, people often consider themselves busy with vacations, golfing, baseball, fishing, cutting the grass, skiing, hiking, and other busy work of the season one is busy with. So, it may be difficult to assemble a viable sample of fathers for the training. The family should take priority over busy work for one to two hours per week, and this will be the approach to overcome this limitation. This needs to be a flexible boundary and needs to be discussed at the beginning during the face-to-face introduction. Then, prospective participants can plan ahead and work within the boundaries.

Delimitations

This research project is resolved to expose the problem and inform fathers that, at no fault of their own, they have not been effectively taught their roles to teach their children as God commanded. A one-on-one introduction with fathers of young children will expose and discuss the problem, and a target group of fathers will be selected, forming a group for further study. So, to optimize the impact of the project, any father with children under the age of six will be invited to take part in one of two small groups.

In conversation with a forty-something-year-old man who has an eighteen-month-old child and another one on the way, it was discovered this man was raised in a Christian home. His parents are the custodians and groundskeepers of a large local church in the area. He had been

³⁰ Jason Wise, "Fatherless Homes Statistics 2023: Risks & Repercussions," *Earthweb*, 15. (March 2023).

baptized at a young age, been in the youth group, been on mission trips, and had done what would seem to be normal for a Christian man growing up in that environment. Yet when asked if his father had ever taught him as commanded in Deuteronomy 6:1-9, his answer was “no.” His father never sat down with him to teach him God’s commandments, statutes, and judgments. He was thankful for learning God’s command that day and was interested in the research. This is a prime example that God’s command did not perpetuate, even among believers. Given that there may be some older fathers, this project will focus on the age of the children and not the fathers. Therefore, any father at FBCS will be admitted to the group based on the ages of his children. The focus group will remain as one group, so all the information is the same for all fathers.

The composition of fathers in the group will be diverse in the sense that some fathers have children that are not biologically theirs. They, too, can be included in the group so long as the children they are raising meet the age requirements. This researcher raised a non-biological daughter from the age of one, along with his biological son. Thus, there is familiarity with absentee fathers and fatherless children. The children's lives can be a model to the group.

Thesis Statement

Most fathers throughout time have not obeyed the command of God to teach their children the commandments, statutes, and judgments of God. Societal issues have arisen in every generation reflecting the important conditional principle of God, that *if* one obeys, *then* God will reward, but if one disobeys, then God will punish. This pattern began prior to the original sin event of Adam and Eve eating the forbidden fruit. God gave Adam boundaries, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely" (Gen 2:16, NASB). Then God gave Adam the conditions or consequences of God's boundary: "*but* from the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat" (Gen 2:17, NASB, *emphasis added*). God then tells Adam what the consequence of

disobedience is in the conditional pattern if/then, "[if], for in the day that you eat from it, [then], you shall surely die" (Gen 2:17, NASB). This conditional pattern set the precedence of how God would bless or punish humanity based on His commandments or Law, which was given to the people of Israel at Mount Sinai.

God knew that they could not live a sinless life and gave them statutes/rules by which to live. The statutes also taught them how to atone for their sin by sacrificing pure animals, such as a female goat without blemish (Lev 4:28), as a sacrifice, an atonement for their sin. This pattern started with Adam and Eve as God sacrificed animals to make clothes of hairy animal skin to clothe the naked sinners Adam and Eve. The caveat here is that mankind would continue to sin and always will. In God's mercy, He sent His Son Jesus to become the sacrifice once and for all for all humanity and for all sin. Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). Fathers need forgiveness for not teaching their children as God commanded. God's command to Adam not to eat the forbidden fruit is no different than the command God gives fathers to teach their children. A command is a command, disobedience is disobedience, and sin is sin that is in need of atonement (i.e., Jesus).

God informed Israel of the rewards of obedience and the judgments for disobedience to His Word, the Law. Be it goodness or suffering; there should never be a surprise; only rightful expectations based on God's truthful Word. Whatever God says can be counted on as truth. Based on Scripture, it is evident that no human can live a perfect life in accordance with God's Law, for all have sinned, meaning every human being is a sinner (Rom 3:23). The penalty for sin is death (Rom 6:23). Therefore, believers and unbelievers alike are subject to the penalty of disobedience to God's Law. Today, truth has become a relative interpretation by the postmodern individual where truth in one's mind no longer has absolute unquestionable validity as it once

had. Many church-goers have succumbed to a sensate worldview presented by the secular world where an idea is based on what one sees, hears, smells, feels, and tastes. These are the Platonic world of ideas³¹ which came full circle during the age of enlightenment where truth, God's Truth came under attack from sensate humanism. It will be important in this research to affirm that fathers have the understanding that God's Word is infallible truth. Truth is what fathers must teach their children and not a platonic idea based on one's senses.

Par Excellence

Of the many statutes, God told Israel that if they obeyed His voice and kept His commandments, then they would be His possession among all the people, and they would be a kingdom of priests, a holy nation (Exod 19:6). Israel would live and their days prolonged (Deut 6:20), meaning they will be in the care of the Lord benefitting from His many blessings, par excellence. If they do not obey, then there are numerous penalties, which are covered in Leviticus 26:14-39. Unfortunately, Israel was disobedient to God in many ways. This project centers on the disobedience of fathers not teaching their children the commandments and judgments of God. Thus, suffering the ramifications of disobedient behavior and actions has prevailed.

God's Command Stands

The father's role has not changed. The father is still the spiritual leader in the home and should teach the commandments and statutes of God; however, disobedience is what has perpetuated. Israel and Judah paid for their disobedience. The northern kingdom fell to the Assyrians and sent into exile. Judah was restored as a remnant to carry on the kingdom of priests

³¹ Enrique Martinez, "God as Highest Truth According to Aquinas," *Religions*, 12 no 6 (Jun 2021): 3.

as God intended. So, if fathers learn their role to teach God's Law, then teaching children strengthens families (Deut 5:33), thus reversing social problems of absentee fathers, fatherlessness, and broken homes. Thus, God's command stands.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter contains the building blocks and mortar forming the foundation upon which the thesis project will be built. The literature review synthesizes works that interact with the problem of fathers not teaching God's Law. Fathers not knowing their role is a major contributor to social ills. Fazel Freeks alertly posits that "father absence impedes children from receiving and giving love, and therefore, the manifest constant behavioural [sic] problems of children."¹ The family suffers because of absentee fathers, fatherlessness, and broken homes. The literature review synthesizes the various resources into a homogeneous project that teaches fathers that they have a role of teaching God's Law to their children based on theological truths found in Deuteronomy 6:1-9. The theoretical resources drawn upon herein interact with the problem critically, substantively, and analytically, supporting the thesis project that will guide and direct fathers to come to an understanding of their role and duty to teach. Both the theological and theoretical support a solid foundation for this action research project, which is designed to strengthen the father-child relationship in the name of Jesus, which will also strengthen the family for the glory of God.

The foundation is Jesus (Eph 2:20). Indubitable faith and belief in Jesus are the mortar that holds the foundation together. Jesus is the center of one's faith and beliefs as held by first century Christians.² In this action research project, fathers will progressively transition from teaching God's Law to teaching Jesus, the foundation for fulfilling the Law (Matt 5:17-20).

¹ Fazel Ebrihiam Freeks, "Transforming Fatherless Children through Faith as a Strength Perspective: Challenging Father-Absence as a Social ill in South African Society," *Pharos Journal of Theology*, 103 no 2 (2022): 1.

² Elizabeth B. Barnes, "Jesus Christ: The Church's One Foundation," *Perspectives in Religious Studies*, 25 no 2 (Sum 1998): 179.

Biblical principles for fathers to teach their children God's Law (Eph 6:4) are grounded in the facts regarding God's beliefs on the subject matter³ in (Deut 6:1-2). Because the biblical principles are grounded in God's beliefs, they are trustworthy and efficacious. This foundation justifies an intervention project to bring about ministry adjustment and change to fathers at FBCS.

Literature Review

The chosen people of God, Israel, had a calling from God to be a kingdom of priests of God for all humanity (Exod 19:6).⁴ When God rescued the people from slavery, they were given the commandments and statutes (Exod 20:1-17). The commandments, statutes, and judgments came to be known as the Law. Of the 613 commands in the Old Testament, the Ten Commandments are “the basic law of the covenant formed between God and Israel.”⁵ The statutes are rules for Israel in how to live morally and how to worship, honor, obey, and glorify God. God made clear that He is the one and only God with all power, authority, understanding, knowledge, and love.

God's Law

In the first two commandments, God makes abundantly clear that He is the One and only God (Exod 20:2; Deut 6:4). David Garland posits that God emphatically and subjectively says “I” in referring to Himself as Yahweh and that “All that Yahweh is, says, and does is embodied

³ Andrew Brenner, “How does God know that 2 + 2 = 4?,” *Religious Studies*, 57 no 2, (Jun 2021): 303.

⁴ Victor P. Hamilton, *Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 367.

⁵ Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary*, 1171.

in this one affirmation: ‘I am Yahweh.’”⁶ In Exodus 20:5, God reveals His jealousy. God told Israel, “for you shall not worship any other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God” (Exod 34:14, NASB). Among the many attributes of God, He shared with humanity His likeness of jealousy (Gen 1:26). Childs reiterates God’s warning to humanity that He will not tolerate the worship of another.⁷ Israel realized this by making the *Shema* priority number one, “it is the first sentence in Hebrew that a Jewish child learns.”⁸ God wants all children to learn and profess their unwavering faith in God. The first commandment is the “foremost commandment” (Mark 12:28) and should be the first thing any child learns. Fathers need to teach their children who God is in accordance with Scripture.

The Greatest Commandment

The first and greatest commandment reflects that He is the one and only God (Exod 20:1-4; Deut 5:6-9). God reiterated His Law to Moses, who should then remind fathers of Israel. Moses does as God commanded in Deuteronomy 5:1-21. The Israelite people acknowledged and confessed that they would hear the Lord and *do* what He told them (Deut 5:27). God forged a covenant with Israel's patriarchs, making Israel responsible to God for carrying out and living by His commands (Deut 6:10).⁹ God acknowledged this promise from the people and once again told Moses, "Stand here by Me, that I may speak to you all the commandments and the statutes and the judgments which you shall teach them, that they may observe them in the land which I give them to possess” (Deut 5:31, NASB). Thompson affirms that Jewish children first learn the

⁶ David E. Garland, *Genesis-Leviticus*, The Expositors Bible Commentary, Revised Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 574.

⁷ Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus (1974): A Critical, Theological Commentary*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1974), 613.

⁸ Salkin, *Torah Commentary*, 215.

⁹ Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, 59.

Shema. It is the basis of their faith. Thompson further explains that Jesus taught the same about the Greatest Commandment (Matt 22:36-37). Therefore, Christian fathers should teach their children the Greatest Commandment as stated in the *Shema*.

The *Shema*

The *Shema* is most important in the Jewish Torah. The *Shema* means to hear.¹⁰ Above all else, the people are “to hear” what God commands. Jeffrey K. Salkin extolls the six most important words, “*Shema Yisrael Adonai Eloheinu Adonai Echad* (Deut 6:4), Hear, O Israel! the LORD is our God, the LORD is One!”¹¹ Along with God repeating the Law to Moses (Deut 5:31), God unmistakably commands Moses to command the fathers of Israel to hear and teach the Law. His followers should teach His ways to all. Chandler, Griffin, and Wilkin posit that all of humanity should *hear* His word and diligently raise future generations to hear God’s voice.¹² God stipulates who, what, when, where, why, and how the Law should be taught (Deut 6:1-9).

Son or Children?

Based on sixty-nine different Bible interpretations, the word sons or children is used in Deuteronomy 6:7 for the recipient of the teaching. Over time, translators have used two meanings for the Hebrew word בן (*ben*), meaning *son* in the Hebrew Bible. According to James Strong, בן (*ben*) refers to son, grandson, and father as the builder of the family name.¹³ At some point, translators changed son to children (ילד, *yeled*: child, son, boy, youth; children). Children

¹⁰ Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, 60.

¹¹ Salkin, *Torah Commentary*, 215.

¹² Matt Chandler, Adam Griffin, Jen Wilkin, *Family Discipleship: Leading Your Home Through Time, Moments, and Milestones* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 98.

¹³ James Strong, *The New Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1990), Hebrew 21.

is used in the majority of Bible translations available today. But in either case, the father is responsible to God for teaching the Law.

As far as translations, the Bible comes in various degrees of translations ranging from paraphrase to word-for-word. In a more word-for-word literal translation, the New American Standard Bible (NASB) and Septuagint (LXX) (not on the figure below) use the word son, and in a somewhat word-for-word translation, the King James Version uses children (see Figure 1).

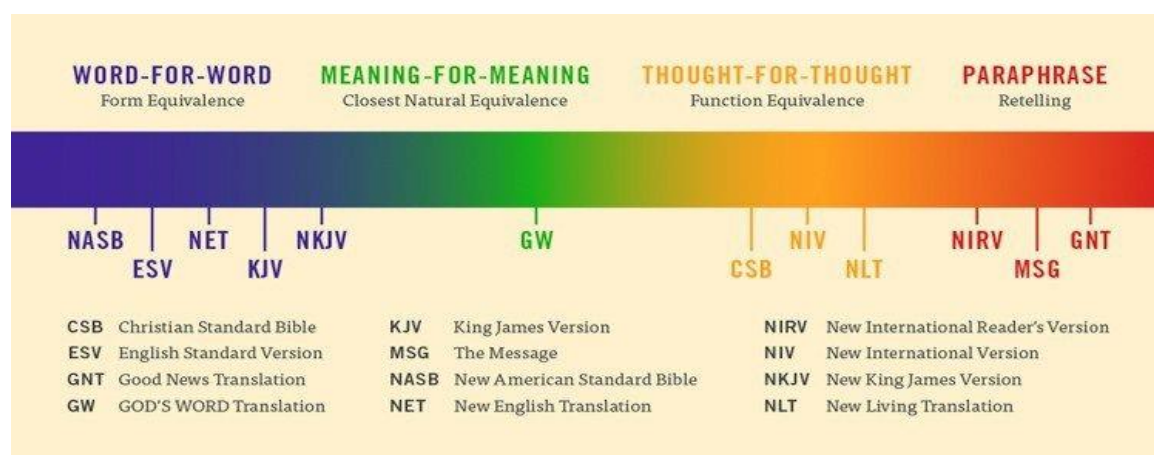


Figure 1: Bible Translation Illustration (faithfoundedonfact.com)

There may seem to be no significant difference in the definition of who receives the teaching, son or children. However, as will be revealed later, there is a difference in who does the spiritual teaching in the family. In a glimpse of this, Jack Balswick claims that “the decline of the father’s role as caregiver, moral educator, head of the family, and breadwinner has been enormous.”¹⁴ Yet, it can be seen that the decline of morality is related to the decline of the spiritual teaching of children.

¹⁴ Balswick, *The Family: A Christian Perspective*, 192.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Bible teaches the roles and responsibilities of the father. Gregory Lamb uses Scripture to demonstrate that the father is the spiritual leader in the home (Deut 6; Ps 78:1-8; Eph 5:21-33, 6:4).¹⁵ The role of the leader is obedience to God by teaching the Law to children. Rabbi Abraham Lbn Ezra refers to Psalms 78, emphatically stating that fathers are to teach the children God's Law to "thy children and thy children's children (Deut 4:9)."¹⁶ Eric Ballard asserts that God gives all fathers the role of pastoring their families, and it is the father's responsibility to teach children what knowing God and being known by God is all about. Ballard declares that "one of the best ways to do this is by showing them how to spend time with God. Teach them to pray. Teach them to listen. Show them how to use their Bible."¹⁷ God intended this fatherly role to perpetuate from generation to generation throughout time. But, the fathers of Israel, as seen in 2 Kings 17, were disobedient to God, setting the wrong example. Gregory Lamb accentuates a hindrance to the father's role, that due to the climb in divorce rates, fathers are becoming scarce, giving rise to fatherlessness and "volitional fatherless families."¹⁸ Fathers in America have become slaves to their jobs thus spending little quality time at home with their children who have become accustomed to counting on the mother for spiritual upbringing. The mother takes children to church while the father neglects his role to teach. Robert Wuthnow posits that boys and girls have developed different attitudes towards religion where girls would pray before bed

¹⁵ Gregory E. Lamb, "Fatherlessness: Implications for God's Word, Church, and the World" *Christian Education Journal*, 14 no 1 (Spr 2017): 103.

¹⁶ Norman Strickman, *Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra's Commentary on Books 3-5 of Psalms: Chapters 73-150: Chapters 73-150* (New York, NY: Academic Studies Press, 2016), 56.

¹⁷ Ballard, *God's Challenge for Dads*, 49.

¹⁸ Lamb, *Fatherlessness*, 103.

and boys would act embarrassed and not pray.¹⁹ This nonchalant volition of fathers allows for the demise of the family. A father's pride, ego, and selfishness are inconsistent with God's command, breeding disobedience. James Wright discusses the morals in contemporary American society, stating that "sinful pride is refusing to recognize God's sovereign role in everything."²⁰ Pride is a father's weakness and irresponsibility, neglecting children and responsibility to God.

Traditional Western Family

A weak stance of the father portrays irresponsibility, which derides a heteronormative²¹ traditional family structure, where heterosexuality aligns with truth and morality, supporting the role of the father. At the cusp of the Reformation, Luther and Calvin forged the way for Protestant teachings of a legal tradition of the family, where the marital family is a "fundamental public concern of the entire community."²² Witte posits that prior to the Reformation, the Catholic church taught that the family is private and in the jurisdiction of the church. The new Protestant conviction consigned family law primarily to the state. So, "protestant teachings insisted on a much broader state role, especially in the creation of public schools."²³ This may have been the impetus for redefining the father's role from teacher to a bystander, as today, many fathers are absentee fathers, leading to fatherless homes.

Many of the newly developed nuances of the family have been conveyed into the Western traditional family structure. About two hundred years after the Reformation, the term

¹⁹ Robert Wuthnow, *Growing up Religious: Christians and Jews and Their Journeys of Faith* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1999), 59.

²⁰ James D. Wright, *Lost Souls, Manners and Morals in Contemporary American Society: The Seven Deadly Sins in a Secular World* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2018), 137.

²¹ Maria McCabe, "Heteronormativity: The Bias Underlying Marriage, Gender Roles, Sex Discrimination, and Custody Determinations," *University of Toledo Law Review*, Vol. 53 Issue 1 (Fall 2021): 127.

²² John Witte, *Church, State, and Family: Reconciling Traditional Teachings and Modern Liberties* (Atlanta, GA: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 73.

²³ *Ibid.*, 72.

coverture (protecting or concealing the family for protection) arose, having its foundations in English common law. Maria McCabe posits that this doctrine was designed to identify what marriage is, as the husband would “subsume” or include the wife’s legal identity, followed by the doctrine of necessaries, where the husband has a duty to provide for his wife and family.²⁴ With the advent of industrialization, the Western family has a new character where the father works outside the home, providing the financial means while the mother raises the children and keeps the home in order. This is a self-sufficient, loving, and hierarchical family unit,²⁵ where the father is the working head of the family, and the wife is the mother; as defined, the "Supreme Court described a woman's paramount destiny and mission"²⁶ as a stay-at-home mom, and the children are sheltered and protected.²⁷ Everyone has a role; family members share a socially conservative worldview and are Christian.²⁸ The father should still be the teacher, but the state does not make it necessary. Teaching has become the job of the community or state as mentioned by Luther and Calvin. The western family is born and today is under attack.

The Battle Rages On

The Christian educational model, with its foundation in the New Testament and the Old Testament,²⁹ is under attack. This model has the father as the teacher of God's Law (Eph 5:22-6:4). The father’s role is embattled as feminists degrade the father, contributing to fatherlessness and strengthening a pervasive feminist hermeneutic in reading God’s Word. Lamb suggests that

²⁴ McCabe, *Heteronormativity*, 130-131.

²⁵ Holland, *Tiny You*, 183.

²⁶ McCabe, *Heteronormativity*, 131.

²⁷ Holland, *Tiny You*, 183.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 183.

²⁹ William Jeynes, *The Wiley Handbook of Christianity and Education* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley & Sons, 2018), 68.

“fatherlessness helped usher in pervasive popularity of a feminist hermeneutic in reading God’s Word.”³⁰ In this view, God the Father is cast in a negative light, raising God to be a feminist God or “Mother.”³¹ These ideals fuel the battle against the father, contributing to fathers being absent in the family. The father's role to teach his children is under attack as the battle rages on. As a counter, this action research project and intervention, will counter act this ungodly attrition.

A Counter-Offensive

As a counter-offensive, fathers will be called on to learn, accept, and perform their role. To gauge the viability of this project, this researcher asked some Christian fathers if they knew of their role in teaching their children God's Law. The responses most often are consistent with the aforementioned basic assumptions that, no, they do not. This then leads the researcher to question the level of understanding that fathers have about God's Law, thus influencing a portion of the questions in Appendix D, the Spiritual Formation Status Survey. Scholars Hindman, Holmes, and Magruder know and understand the Law.³² They encourage fathers to fulfill their roles by teaching their children the Law. These scholars go a step further holding children responsible for repeating and living what they learned. Most often, the formula of teaching and learning spiritual behavior is successful in training the children as well as the father.³³ This proper role-fulfillment action of teaching children can reduce the ever-growing number of absentee fathers and fatherlessness, thus strengthening homes in Christ. There can be success when the counter-offensive is engaged. The engagement action will be the intervention at FBCS in teaching fathers their role.

³⁰ Lamb, *Fatherless*, 103.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Hindman, *Every Age*, 40.

³³ Christian Smith, and Amy Adamczyk, *Handing down the Faith: How Parents Pass Their Religion on to the Next Generation* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2021), 43.

Absentee Father, Fatherlessness, and Broken Homes

The counter-offensive is encouraging, but some fathers think they cannot teach their children and simply give up before even trying, thus contributing to being absentee fathers. Yet the father's role has worth and value to children.³⁴ Isabella Crespi and Elisabetta Ruspini posit that some groups scrutinize fathers for accepting their role to teach, saying it cannot or should not be done as that is the role of the school system or community, as Luther and Calvin asserted earlier. It has been shown that in 1998, state institutions gradually took over the role of fathers through various organizations. The groups and organizations are "the teacher (working in compulsory and secular state schools), the judge for minors, the social worker, and later the psychiatrist."³⁵ Some scholars doubt that fatherlessness is a problem. Natalia Sarkisian and Naomi Gerstel argue that "marriage and the nuclear family miss a great deal of family life and denigrate poor and minority families, but it also facilitates social policies that discriminate against women, people of color, and the poor."³⁶ Doubters can be overcome by looking to Scripture. Ballard refers to Saul, who chose to listen to the voice of God rather than the voice of doubt.³⁷ Saul is an example for doubters of God's Law. Giving in to doubt is a losing proposition.

William Jeynes asserts that when parents abdicate their roles to teach morals and ethics, the children ultimately pay the price, as children's abilities and capacities to make wise decisions and meaningful plans are damaged immensely.³⁸ Fathers need to accept their role. When doubt creeps into the father's mind, it renders faith useless. Jesus tells the disciples to have faith and

³⁴ Ballard, *God's Challenge for Dads*, 93.

³⁵ Isabella Crespi and Elisabetta Ruspini, *Balancing Work and the Family in a Changing Society: The Fathers' Perspective* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 165.

³⁶ Natalia Sarkisian and Naomi Gerstel, *Nuclear Family Values, Extended Family Lives: The Power of Race, Class, and Gender* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2011), xii.

³⁷ Ballard, *God's Challenge for Dads*, 93.

³⁸ Jeynes, *The Wiley Handbook*, 172.

doubt not (Matt 21:21). The best way to understand doubt is to know its origins. In the Garden of Eden, the serpent put the notion of doubt into Eve's mind as he offered her the power to be like God. Eve doubted God as she freely ate the forbidden fruit. Thus, doubt gave birth to what is experienced today in absentee fathers: more doubt.

Absentee Fathers

There are various definitions of the absentee father. Some fathers live in the home, and for various reasons, they pay little attention to the children. The father's actions or inactions make him nonexistent. In South Africa, 60 percent of fathers are absent. They get young women, and in many cases, young girls, pregnant, and then the fathers leave to never take any responsibility. The mothers are unwed, thus leaving mothers and grandmothers to raise the children.³⁹ The fathers are absent. What is deceiving about statistical data is that it does not record these types of fatherlessness. Most statistics report on recorded fathers not living in the home who are divorced or incarcerated. According to 2020 US Census data, one in five children in America lived in a home without a father.⁴⁰ Balswick notes the enormity of the decline of fathers who do not exercise their roles as caregivers, heads of the family, moral educators, and breadwinners.⁴¹ This trend has consistently escalated. Add the small data pools, and a large flood of fatherlessness collapses the damn.

Another type of unreported absentee father is the one who does not go to church. What makes him absent is that he does not follow Jesus' teaching and, therefore, does not teach his

³⁹ Hyunok, Yi, and Nel, Malan, "Father absence and adolescents as a challenge to youth ministry," *In die Skriflig*, 54 no 1 (2020): 1.

⁴⁰ US Census Bureau, "America's Families and Living Arrangements: 2020, Table A3. Parents With Coresident Children Under 18, by Living Arrangement, Sex, and Selected Characteristics: 2020," <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2020/demo/families/cps-2020.html>.

⁴¹ Balswick, *The Family: A Christian Perspective*, 192.

children God's Law. This father most likely represents the largest fatherless group, the unchurched. It is difficult to put a statistical figure to the unchurched. There are various reasons why many answer a spiritual affiliation question with "none," and of those surveyed about their spiritual affiliation, the number has gradually been escalating over the last few decades. "In 1973, the General Social Survey found that 5% of the nation's adults answered 'none' when asked their religious affiliation. In 1983, this had inched up to 7%. In 1993, 9% said they had no religion. The survey in 2000 found 14% with no religion."⁴² In Stark, Hamberg, and Miller's study, they assert that the best estimate of the effectively unchurched American is one-third.⁴³ Many fathers are physically in the home, but their minds are absent in relation to godliness and teaching their children about God.

Some fathers are on the other extreme; they make praying, calling on God, or learning about God, based somewhat on fear. They see this way of teaching as the right way to teach when actually it is a misconception. It replaces love with a sense of fear and overzealous discipline, pushing children away from God.⁴⁴ This can be discouraging to the father as he thinks he is planting good seeds, but the fruit of his seeds is fear and doubt in their children's minds, creating a barrier for children to overcome in their spiritual awareness. Coholic asserts that for children, developing spirituality has three features: awareness, self-knowledge, and transcendence. These features assist the child in spiritual formation and healthy assimilation into society with the right frame of mind to understand the world and not just conform to it.⁴⁵ Without

⁴² Rodney Stark, Eva M. Hamberg, and Alan S. Miller, "Exploring Spirituality and Unchurched Religions in America, Sweden, and Japan," *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 20 no 1 (Jan 2005): 10.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁴⁴ Jefferson Bethke, *Take Back Your Family: From the Tyrants of Burnout, Busyness, Individualism, and the Nuclear Ideal* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Incorporated, 2021), 77.

⁴⁵ Coholic, *Arts Activities for Children*, 60.

positive teaching, children can develop doubt in themselves and see themselves as rotten fruit, thereby making spiritual formation an unpalatable challenge instead of joy in Jesus.

Sometimes the mother can contribute to the negligence of the absentee father. Smith and Adamczyk tell a story that happens frequently in fatherless homes. It is about a mother and daughter, the curious daughter asks the mother to talk about religion, and the mother retorts that religion is a personal thing and she does not want to talk about it. The mother does not know her responsibility to teach the children and the father is absent.⁴⁶ The absentee father is the beginning of all family problems.

The Fatherless

An absentee father does not show interest in teaching children the law and is susceptible to the temptation and strong draw of the devil. This draw is rooted in ego, pride, lawlessness, and self-absorption. Those factors create a rift in the family. Mary Eberstadt has an interesting depiction of such fathers calling their attitudes “intellectual hooliganism.”⁴⁷ This type of father has declining faith in authority, both carnal and spiritual. This decline often leads to dysfunction in the father, in the children, in the wife, and ultimately in the family, ending with the father leaving, creating a fatherless home. It seems so very sad, and that is because it is.

Many absentee fathers have large egos and pride. Crespi and Ruspini claim that they can gain a sense of “loss of influence, competence, and authority.”⁴⁸ Fatherlessness could be avoided if the father would humble himself and seek the face of God. Regardless of whether one is a man or woman, religious or secular, when the family breaks apart, the true victims are the children.

⁴⁶ Smith and Adamczyk, *Handing down Faith*, 173.

⁴⁷ Mary Eberstadt, "The Fury of the Fatherless" *First Things*, 308 (Dec 2020): 46.
<http://www.firstthings.com/>.

⁴⁸ Crespi and Ruspini, *Balancing Work and Family*, 165.

Rowley points to empirical evidence showing how the family experience has taught that the absence of a father causes psychological and moral imbalances.⁴⁹ The father is responsible to teach the Law and social skills needed by children to learn and adjust to society and how to live with others in a harmonious manner. The mother has already enacted her role and taught the children how to properly respect and use the body.⁵⁰ Without instruction of God's Law, it leads to many difficult ramifications for the fatherless. In John Sowers's book *Fatherless Generation*, 2010, he discusses the various problems children from broken homes become involved in. Sowers shares many stories that reflect children who become drug addicts, alcohol abusers, gang members, act out illicit sexual behavior, teen pregnancy, violence, and more. Many authors have similar findings, giving credence to the problem. Mary Eberstadt declares that "absent father predicts higher rates of truancy, psychiatric problems, criminality, promiscuity, drug use, rape, domestic violence, and other less-than-optimal outcomes."⁵¹

Sowers compiled statistical data that reveals the dire reality for children coming from fatherless homes. Trends have been revealed by the United States Census Bureau. Funding for studies is sparse, allowing studies every ten to fifteen years. The most recent studies are from 2020, and the results will be explicated later in the results chapter. For now, Sowers shows trends from 2003, citing *The Future: Set Adrift on a Sea of Fatherless Children*, *Idaho Observer*, July 2003. According to various sources, fatherlessness accounts for:

- 63 percent of youth suicides
- 71 percent of pregnant teenagers
- 90 percent of all homeless and runaway children

⁴⁹ Rowley, *Because of our Fathers*, 10.

⁵⁰ Luigi Zoja, *English translation by Henry Martin. The Father: Historical, Psychological and Cultural Perspectives* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2018), 2.

⁵¹ Eberstadt, *Fury of the Fatherless*, 42.

70 percent of juveniles in state-operated institutions
 85 percent of all youth who exhibit behavior disorders
 80 percent of rapists motivated by displaced anger
 71 percent of all high school dropouts
 75 percent of all adolescents in chemical abuse centers
 85 percent of all youths sitting in prison.⁵²

Sowers also notes that gangs are growing as thousands of fatherless boys join, looking for a father figure, peer recognition, and protection from enemies. Most, if not all, of these issues, could have been avoided if the fathers had been present in the home teaching their children God's Law.

Broken Homes

The most difficult part of the father's departure from the home is the effects it has on the children who have looked up to and depended on their fathers for love, guidance, protection, discipline, morals, rules of life, and more. Some of the effects on boys from single-parent homes lead them to look for their missing role models and fatherly support. In their search, they find comradery in gangs, which are made up of many equal fatherless peers. Jeynes declares that "about 90% of adolescents and pre-adolescents in gangs come from single-parent families."⁵³ Revolutionary studies of fatherless broken homes show a dramatic increase in children living apart from their fathers. Between 1960 and 1990, the number more than doubled, rising from 17 percent to 36 percent. Broken homes foster a drastic increase in poverty, crime, abortion, teen pregnancy, high school dropouts, teen suicide, child abuse, and child molestation.⁵⁴ Another

⁵² John A. Sowers, *Fatherless Generation: Redeeming the Story* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 20.

⁵³ Jeynes, *The Wiley Handbook*, 55.

⁵⁴ Lamb, *Fatherless*, 102.

example of a broken home is a home that never took root. This is where children are born to unwed mothers. A child is born and raised by the mother in a single-family home. In this case, the unwed pregnant mother can get support from her parents or grandparents. The CDC reveals a staggering statistic on unwed mothers in the United States of 40 percent.⁵⁵ It is staggering because, in essence, 40 percent of children born in America today start out life fatherless and from a broken home that was never built.

Jennifer Holland presents a helpful organization in Arizona called Unwed Parents Anonymous (UPA). UPA offers assistance to all that are touched or affected by an unwed pregnancy. UPA does note that some fathers take little interest in their children and do not show up to support them, and they go through great lengths to not pay child support. From the fatherless boy perspective, a generation of boys has risen with little or no respect or acknowledgment of authority.⁵⁶ This situation has become a mentoring ministry for men in some churches. Mentoring programs are needed to help children from broken homes, but they do not repair the broken homes.

Avoid Absentee Fathers, the Fatherless, and Broken Homes

The behavior of the father is paramount in keeping a family together as a loving, functional unit. The key is to lead the family as a God-fearing man willing, able, and ready to teach children the Laws of God. Balswick, Balswick, and Frederick offer a portrayal of a biblical model of the family based on Scripture. They discuss the many ethics and values derived from Scripture that a father should teach children. The model is based on the essence and nature of

⁵⁵ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Center for Health Statistics, “Unmarried Childbearing, Births” <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/unmarried-childbearing.htm>.

⁵⁶ Holland, *Tiny You*, 189.

God, love.⁵⁷ Love teaches children to respect, honor, and obey God, which is in contrast to the teaching out of fear and discipline that Bethke mentioned earlier. Love is the essence of God and is why God demands that humans observe and obey the two greatest commandments. Jesus was approached by a scribe who asked of Him:

What commandment is the foremost of all? Jesus answered, “The foremost is, ‘Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these (Mark 12:28-31, NASB).

Notice that Jesus first states the *Shema*, then adds to love your neighbor as yourself. By keeping God first and teaching one's children the love of God and how to love one another, God's commandments will take root in the children's hearts at a young age as they also learn the statutes to live by, thereby avoiding disciplinary judgments that God levies on the disobedient. Bethke asserts that "destruction and decay and loss and the fracturing of all human relationships happens because of our disobedience and pride."⁵⁸ Obedience to God helps humanity avoid detrimental paths of unrighteousness.

Avoid Being an Absentee Father

One role of the father as the head of the home is to assemble the children to teach in God's name. Crespi and Ruspini point out that getting together as a unit inspires teamwork, togetherness, love, and family. They note that many men are busy with work and, when coming home, do not know how to turn off the office and turn on the family. A good strategy for family improvement and spiritual maturity is for the father to come home a little earlier to spend time with the children talking about God. Let small, time-consuming tasks wait till the children are in

⁵⁷ Balswick, *The Family: A Christian Perspective*, 123.

⁵⁸ Bethke, *Take Back your Family*, 71.

bed. Say prayers with them as they get tucked in for the night.⁵⁹ Before there was radio, television, and video games, families would gather around the table or fireplace to read the Bible and share the life experiences of the day. Today, video games are partially responsible for absentee fathers. Mark Wolf discusses how video games have become advanced enough to garner and persuade children to pay most of their attention to video games.

One video game genre is the contemplative. In some games like “*Cyans’s Myst* (1993) and *Riven: The Sequel to Myst* (1997),”⁶⁰ the game invokes a religion that the gamers must be a part of to be successful in the game. Games can influence children for the good or ill.⁶¹ Granted, these types of games are not for children ages six and under, but children today are starting off by playing games on phones as soon as they can hold them and this is just a segue for future game playing habits. Fathers need to be proactive and involved with their children. To avoid losing children to video games early in life, Chandler, Griffin, and Wilkin suggest family activities should be an ordinary event and should “be one of your highest calendar priorities.”⁶² Teaching should be employed by all Christian fathers. Being obedient to God will resolve the absentee father situation.

Avoid Fatherlessness

Fathers are absent in the home. Fathers neglect their role to teach their children. In South Africa authors Yi and Nel posit that local churches neglect the father’s role relative to the youth in the local church.⁶³ In their study, one child participant said "that it was not easy for him to

⁵⁹ Crespi and Ruspini, *Balancing Work and Family*, 182.

⁶⁰ Mark J P Wolf, “Contemplation, Subcreation, and Video Games,” *Religions*, 9 no 5 (May 2018): 3.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁶² Chandler, Griffin, & Wilkin, *Family Discipleship*, 97.

⁶³ Li and Nel, “Father absence and adolescents,” 1.

have a father figure, because he does not know what a ‘father’ is and what the ‘father’s role’ should be.”⁶⁴ God commanded fathers to teach their children, yet most fathers have been living in disobedience by not teaching their children. This child’s response is evidence of not being taught by his father. This problem is immense in America. There were over 15 million children in America living with their mother alone in 2020.⁶⁵ The father was absent. A father’s most important job is the spiritual formation of the youth. Sure, children need food, but without learning Scripture and Jesus, there is no point.⁶⁶ Fathers are commanded by God to feed their minds with the gospel, which will equip them for life.

Sure, feeding the mind is time-consuming, but it needs to be done. Reimer points out that teaching children takes time, effort, and a desire on the father’s part. Children are like growing crops. One does not simply drop the seed, and poof, corn appears. Often, the seed does not land on fertile soil as in the parable Jesus teaches (Matt 13:18-23). Teaching children requires patience and understanding of the type of soil that they are. Many steps are involved in soil preparation alone. Transferring faith or spiritual formation of the children takes time and consistent activity of teaching and learning.⁶⁷ Swiss cartoonist Mihaela Precup questions what a good father is, and the list of fatherly roles and responsibilities are consistent with what a secular father would be expected to do. Precup says fathers in America focus their “attention on mundane everyday gestures and activities such as feeding, changing, playing, reading, telling

⁶⁴ Li and Nel, “Father absence and adolescents,” 6.

⁶⁵ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “Number of Children Living Only With Their Mothers Has Doubled in Past 50 Years,” <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/04/number-of-children-living-only-with-their-mothers-has-doubled-in-past-50-years.html>.

⁶⁶ Lamb, *Fatherless*, 103.

⁶⁷ Johannes Reimer, *Family in Mission Theology and Praxis* (Cumbria, CA: Langham Global Library, 2020), 188.

stories, doing household chores, and other educational moments.”⁶⁸ Precup sees what fathers are doing in America. They then try to emulate what they see. So, fathers in the church need to learn their God-given roles to avoid fatherlessness. Children’s spiritual formation begins with father’s teaching them God’s Law. This father child relationship is the key to avoiding fatherlessness.

Avoid a Broken Home

Many parents today are caught up in their work, mothers and fathers alike. With the exception of church groups like Mother’s Day Out, most young children are being taught life’s lessons “by secular daycare facilities, after-school programs, and often by grandparents, rather than by fathers and mothers teaching them the fear of the LORD (Deut 6:2; Ps 54:11; Prov 1:7).”⁶⁹ Unfortunately, children are often more likely to repeat their parents' mistakes, and the fatherless trend continues.⁷⁰ When children from broken homes get married, they have similar marital problems as their parents.⁷¹ Children at younger ages when parents divorce have greater negative effects. All children have a difficult time with divorce. The age group having the most difficult time is six to eight years old. They have an understanding of what is happening but tend to blame themselves for their parent's split up while "carrying a sense of guilt and frustration."⁷² Fathers can avoid a broken family by getting closer to God. Spend time with God, talking with Him, and reading His word. The more time a father spends with the Father, the more time

⁶⁸ Mihaela Precup, *The Graphic Lives of Fathers, Memory, Representation, and Fatherhood in North American Autobiographical Comics* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, Springer Nature Switzerland AG, 2020), 2.

⁶⁹ Lamb, *Fatherless*, 104

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Kathleen Pratt, “Divorce's effect on children: how the church can bring about healing,” *Christian Education Journal*, 6 no 2 (1985): 35.

children spend with their father, and the more they are alike in both cases.⁷³ The father should pastor his family.⁷⁴ Be the example in prayer, conduct, and worship of God by teaching God's Law. The father should also continue learning to grow in spiritual maturity and pass it down to the children. Avoid having a broken family and a broken home.

Honor God

If the father honors God, the children will recognize this honor and will learn to emulate their father. This teaches children how to reach "objective conclusions,"⁷⁵ which is a fatherly quality that children need to learn. They then can learn how to deal with problems they may encounter at school, where intervention from the Lord is needed. The intervention is honoring God's Law. The father honors God, and then the children learn and replicate honoring God.

Theological Foundations

God gave all fathers a duty that should be passed down from generation to generation. Allen Quist posits that Jesus intended His disciples to teach His commandments and to be models for living in Christ. Christ called them to intentionally develop the next generation in accordance with Jesus' commands.⁷⁶ Quist suggests that Jesus saw this as an intention. However, when God told Moses to teach the commandments, it was a command (Deut 6:1). This theological study will critically interact with three passages of Scripture, Deuteronomy 6:1-9, Psalms 78:3-7, and Ephesians 6:4, to identify and define the role which God gave to fathers so that God will always be remembered, praised, honored, and glorified. God bestowed upon

⁷³ Ballard, *God's Challenge for Dads*, 19.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁷⁵ Zoja and Martin, *The Father*, 62.

⁷⁶ Allen Quist, "Leadership Succession from Matthew's Gospel: Passing the Baton of Leadership to the Next Generation," *Great Commission Research Journal*, 1 no 1 (Sum 2009): 55, 50-57.

fathers, by command, to teach their children the commandments, statutes, and judgments from generation to generation in perpetuity.

The role of the father is not something that is only mentioned once but can be seen throughout Scripture. The three passages in this study interestingly are found near the beginning of the Old Testament, near the middle of the Bible, and in the middle of the New Testament or near the end of the Bible. It is safe to argue that these three texts cover three facets or dispensations. The first to be reviewed is Deuteronomy 6:1-9.

Deuteronomy 6:1-9

The setting is critical to the narrative. God rescued or saved the Hebrew people from slavery and the clutches of the Pharaoh of Egypt forty years prior to when this narrative commences (Deut 8:2; Josh 5:6). Grisanti, Longman III, and Garland review the "repeated faithfulness"⁷⁷ of God as the Hebrew people traverse the wilderness from Egypt. Israel should be thankful and obey all the commandments of God. These authors posit that Israel's time in the wilderness was a testing phase for God to test their covenantal obedience, at which they failed, and is the reason why Israel spent forty years in the desert, similar to Cain, who was a vagrant and wanderer (Gen 4:12). Their children would become the recipients of God's covenant with Abraham of the promised land because those that came out of Egypt angered the Lord so that God sent them away to wander the wilderness until all those of twenty years old and upward died (Num 14:29). The immediate setting of Deuteronomy 6 is around 1406 BC, forty years after

⁷⁷ Michael Alan Grisanti, Tremper Longman III, and David E. Garland, *Deuteronomy: The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Revised Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), 169.

Israel's wanderings in the wilderness,⁷⁸ on the east side of the Jordan River in the plains of Moab opposite Jericho (Num 36:13) just prior to their invasion and conquest of Canaan led by Joshua.

Israel's children, under twenty years old, with a few exceptions, Joshua and Caleb with their families, are the audience of Moses. Moses preaches to Israel before coming into the Promised Land. He gave them a message of expectations. They are to observe and teach God's commandments, statutes, and judgments, saying, "You shall walk in all the way which the Lord your God has commanded you" (Deut 5:33, NASB). After addressing all of Israel, Moses changes his focus to the fathers.

Fathers

Moses clearly states that God commands that the commandments, statutes, and judgments (Deut 6:1) are to be taught. Moses emphasizes that God's covenant is with the fathers of Israel and is mentioned twice in Deuteronomy 6:3-10. Fathers are responsible to God for their families. Ephesians 6:4 and Psalm 78:5 correlate with Deuteronomy 6:7, which states that fathers are to teach their children. Mark Roberts posits that "fathers" in Ephesians 6:4 does not include mothers as in Ephesians chapter six, verse one, which specifies "parents." There is a specific change to "fathers" in verse four. Therefore, "it's likely that male parents are addressed here (with implications for mothers)."⁷⁹ Trevor Grizzle comments that "positively, fathers must 'bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.'"⁸⁰ So, "you" in Deuteronomy 6:7 and "fathers" in Ephesians 6:4 share the same meaning: fathers. For more clarity about the use of "you" in Hebrew, James Hamilton Jr. posits:

⁷⁸ Ed Hindson and Gary Yates, *The Essence of the Old Testament: A Survey* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2012), 111.

⁷⁹ Mark D. Roberts, *Ephesians, The Story of God Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 221.

⁸⁰ Trevor Grizzle, *Ephesians: A Pentecostal Commentary* (Dorset, UK: Deo Publishing, 2013), 156.

The Hebrew verbs rendered "you shall repeat" and "you shall talk" are second-person masculine forms. Unlike English, which does not distinguish between feminine and masculine forms of the second pronoun "you," Hebrew has a masculine form for "you" and a feminine form for "you." The fact that these forms are masculine singular means that, as Moses addressed the nation of Israel, he directed the responsibility to teach the "sons" toward the fathers. The fact that the form is singular urges the conclusion that Moses did not give this responsibility to some abstract group of fathers in the community but to each individual father.⁸¹

Moses says you, meaning fathers, "shall teach them diligently to your sons" (Deut 6:7, NASB). The emphatic pronouncement here is *you*, meaning fathers, are responsible for teaching the children. God adamantly announces that He is a jealous God (Exod 20:5; Deut 5:9), and He has set boundaries that children must learn to avoid a life of volitional sin and chaos. Fathers have the role of teaching God's boundaries or commandments. Solomon, talking in the masculine sense, referring to "he," is to "train up the child in the way he should go" (Prov 22:6, NASB). Lindsay Wilson proclaims that this proverb is encouraging in knowing that training the children will have a lasting effect.⁸² Again, the responsibility for setting boundaries for a lasting effect on children lies in the lap of the father, "he."

Boundaries

Children need boundaries, which can be found in God's Law. The boundaries in Deuteronomy 6:2 connect fearing the Lord with keeping His commandments and statutes. God teaches throughout Scripture the boundaries He has set for humanity. Fox asserts that some think that the boundaries are too restrictive, but Fox also claims that boundaries protect people from going over the edge of what often cannot be seen until it is too late.⁸³ Both parents teach and set

⁸¹ Randy Stinson, *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective*. James M. Hamilton, Jr., "That the Coming Generation Might Praise the Lord: Family Discipleship in the Old Testament" (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2011) 37.

⁸² Lindsay Wilson, *Proverbs: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 17 (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2018), 243.

⁸³ Fox, *Like Our Father*, 51.

boundaries. Crespi and Ruspini proclaim that fathers have the role of disciplining and educating the children while mothers raise their children setting boundaries in emotional development of babies.⁸⁴ Zoja points out that most of early child development is taught by mothers. Mothers teach how they relate to their bodies and fathers teach the art of relating to society.⁸⁵ The father has the responsibility of disciplining and discipling children. Co-parenting is the proper model for children. Both parents set boundaries within God's commandments and statutes. A functional family involves both parents setting the example with a biblical perspective. Balswick posits that, inevitably, co-parenting is the ideal situation for parents, children, and society.⁸⁶ What fathers need to know and remember is that it is the father's responsibility to maintain God's boundaries for the spiritual well-being of his children and family.

Children

One scholar asserts that young children have primitive faith without viable age-restricted intellect. James Estep metaphorically presents the father as a farmer growing crops, in this case, children with primitive faith. The farmer nurtures the soil to accept a dormant seed. Once the seed germinates and grows, the farmer focuses on the crop and not the soil. Focusing on the soil after the seed has sprouted allows weeds to grow, thus stagnating crop growth. Estep clarifies that failing to nurture the soil prohibits the seed from germinating.⁸⁷ It is a delicate and complex cycle of growth. Similarly, children require the same delicate nurturing from the father to begin their spiritual formation. By learning God's Word, they gain trust and belief, rooting their faith and growing in spiritual formation. The commandments, statutes, and judgments that God

⁸⁴ Crespi and Ruspini, *Balancing Work and Family*, 167.

⁸⁵ Zoja, *The Father*, 2.

⁸⁶ Balswick, *The Family*, 167.

⁸⁷ James Riley Estep Jr. "Childhood transformation: toward an educational theology of childhood conversion & spiritual formation," *Stone-Campbell Journal*, 5 no 2 (Fall 2002): 202.

commands fathers to teach children, scholars Grisanti, Longman III, and Garland refer to as “the triad (*hammišwâ, haḥuqqîm, we hammišpāṭîm*, ‘the commandment, the statutes, and judgments’) possesses unusual technical and theological significance.”⁸⁸ This boundary revolves around what God commands, as expressed in the *Shema*, that Israel is to “love” Yahweh with their entire being.⁸⁹ Children are the recipients of God's message, so God will be remembered from generation to generation. One must keep in mind that this period of time when Israel came into the Promised Land was around 1406 BC. The role of the father will be reiterated seven hundred years later.

Psalms 78:3-7⁹⁰

Psalms 78 carries special weight. Frank-Lothar Hossfeld points out that this Psalm is the second longest Psalm of the Psalter and is in the middle of the entire Psalter. Psalm 78:38 is also the center of the Asaph psalms 73-83.⁹¹ Time wise, approximately seven hundred years have passed since the time that Israel entered the Promised Land in 1406 BC.⁹² Chapter Six of Deuteronomy was written at that time. Psalms 78 takes place around seven hundred years later, a short while before Israel, the northern kingdom, is conquered by the Assyrians. There is no specific year for when this Psalm was written, but John Barton and John Muddiman note that the destruction of the northern kingdom is not referenced and the temple was still present.⁹³ In a

⁸⁸ Grisanti, Longman III, and Garland, *Deuteronomy*, 144.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 146.

⁹⁰ Daniel J. Estes, *Psalms 73-150: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, vol. 13, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2019), lxiii.

⁹¹ Frank-Lothar Hossfeld, *Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51-100* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2005), 285

⁹² Hindson and Yates, *The Essence of the Old Testament*, 111.

⁹³ John Barton and John Muddiman, *The Oxford Bible Commentary, Psalm 78* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001) Psalm 78.

similar timeframe, Hossfeld asserts that “this could be a reference to the events around 701 B.C.E. Verse 66 is accordingly the last or most recent historical action reported in Psalm 78.”⁹⁴ This Psalm is significant as it is a narrative in poetic form with historical connotations.

Fathers were supposed to be teaching their children the Law as God commanded. However, throughout the foregone seven hundred years, Israel’s fathers have lived in disobedience and unfaithfulness to God. Daniel J. Estes posits that Bible history is not cyclical but rather linear, and from the inception of Israel becoming God’s chosen people, Israel was to express the rule of YHWH. Psalm 78 reiterates what God commanded seven hundred years ago, that fathers are to teach their children the commandments, statutes, and judgments. Estes affirms that Psalm 78 “is wisdom instruction that the father teaches his son; and the references to parental teaching.”⁹⁵ This is significant, because even though seven hundred years have passed, God’s command for fathers to teach their children the commandments should still be heeded. But, as mentioned in the assumptions, fathers have not been faithful to God in teaching their children which is evidenced by Estes who explicates that Psalm 78 expositively Israel’s history of unfaithfulness and their problem of disobedience.⁹⁶ It is disobedience because the role of the father in teaching the children is not an option.

When God gives a command, it becomes an immediate obligation. God commanded fathers to teach their children as expressed in Deuteronomy 6:1-9. Estes posits that teaching children from generation to generation is an obligatory duty. Psalm 78:3 shows that fathers of the past taught their children, and verse five states that current fathers have the same duty. For fathers, teaching children is a command. Marvin Tate sees God's command as an old tradition

⁹⁴ Hossfeld, *Psalms*, 292.

⁹⁵ Estes, *Psalms 73-150*, lxiii.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

that needs to be kept. This way, the present generation can avoid the same sinful disobedience exerted by many of the forefathers.⁹⁷ In ancient Israel, the family unit of four and five generations resided under one roof. Victor H. Matthews points out that the father had the responsibility to represent the entire family and household in matters of trade, commerce, and training the children.⁹⁸ This obligatory duty continued over the seven hundred years and should still continue today. This historical linear latitude that Estes mentioned is expressed in Deuteronomy 6:7. God commands fathers to teach children by saying, “you shall teach them diligently” (Deut 6:7, NASB).

Judgment of Israel

This period of Israel and Judah’s history concludes with Israel, the northern kingdom, being conquered by the Assyrians around 722-701 BC and Judah, the southern kingdom, being conquered by the Babylonians in 586 BC. Both instances were of God’s judgment for their disobedience to the covenant made at Mount Sinai seven hundred and fifty years prior. Although Israel was split into two kingdoms, Peter J. Leithart posits that both kingdoms should not be evaluated separately as they suffered the same fate for their disobedience in that they “did not believe in Yahweh their God” (2 Kgs 17:14).⁹⁹ A possible reason for Israel’s demise is that fathers neglected their obligation and duty to teach their children as God commanded. Leithart points out that Ahaz, king of Judah, replicated the kings of Israel by sending his son through the fire (2 Kgs 16:3) which is as the kings of Israel had done (2 Kgs 17:17). So, “from the time that

⁹⁷ Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, WBC 20 (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1990), 289.

⁹⁸ Jonathan S. Greer, John W. Hilber, and John H. Walton, *Behind the Scenes Of the Old Testament: Cultural, Social, and Cultural Contexts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018), 404-405.

⁹⁹ Peter J. Leithart, *1 and 2 Kings: Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006), 250.

Samaria falls to the Assyrians, Judah is doomed as well.”¹⁰⁰ In this narrative, a possible gap is revealed.

As Scripture focuses on idolatry and Israel’s disobedience, the author of 2 Kings 17:17 focuses on parents sending their children through the fire as a sacrifice to Molech. Yet a potential argument can be raised questioning the negligence of fathers about not teaching their children the commandments, statutes, and judgments as God commanded. Thus, what is not mentioned in Scripture is whether or not fathers diligently taught their children as God commanded. Leithart expressly lists the specific sins and abominations of Israel and Judah and concludes that “Israel becomes a harlot and is destroyed (like Jezebel the harlot); Judah is a junior whore and will suffer the same fate.”¹⁰¹ It makes sense that if fathers had been diligently teaching their children, they would not have been sending them through the fire.

Had fathers been teaching their children God's commandments and statutes, the story may have been different. Instead of the children accepting being sacrificed, children may have rebelled against their fathers because they would have known that sending them through the fire was idolatry and was not consistent with what the commandments and statutes teach. A reasonable assumption is that had fathers been teaching their children as God commanded, their society would have been obedient to God, and Israel would not have been conquered by the Assyrians. Because of their disobedience, God allowed Israel to be conquered and sent into exile. Approximately another seven hundred years later, the apostle Paul reiterates to the Ephesians what the fathers should have perpetually done: teach the children God's commandments, statutes, and judgments from generation to generation.

¹⁰⁰ Leithart, *1 and 2 Kings*, 251.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

Ephesians 6:1-4

Each member of the family has responsibilities of conduct to create and maintain a functional family atmosphere. After expressing wives' and husbands' accountability standards to one another (Eph 6:22-32), Paul explains children's familial responsibilities based on the fifth commandment, that children are to obey their parents by honoring their father and mother. Darrell Bock affirms that Ephesians 6:1 is "straightforward."¹⁰² Bock compares Ephesians 6:1 to Colossians 3:20, culminating in the obedience of children to their parents. Obedience is an extension of honoring parents, which is pleasing to the Lord.

Fathers Called for the Teaching of Children

On the grounds of teaching the children found in Ephesians 6:4, fathers are specifically mentioned. Bock utilizes seven different versions of the Bible in this commentary: ESV, NASB, NET, NIV, NLT, NRSV, and RSV.¹⁰³ Each version clearly states that “fathers” are to bring up children “in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Eph 6:4, NASB). Yet Bock asserts that the word “fathers” should be rendered as “parents.” His reasoning for this rendering is “due to the fact that most proverbs dealing with children’s relationship to their elders refer to both the father and the mother, with obedience applying to both.”¹⁰⁴ Bock’s assertion puts him in the minority of scholars on this point and what is also interesting is that every version of the Bible used in Bock’s commentary says “fathers” (Eph 6:4, NASB) and not “parents.”

¹⁰² Darrell L. Bock, *Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries; vol 10 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019), 187.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, xii-xiii.

¹⁰⁴ Bock, *Ephesians*, 190.

Many, if not most scholars, take the position that fathers are addressed in Ephesians 6:4. Stephen Fowl posits that “Paul only addresses fathers.”¹⁰⁵ Both Bock and Fowl point to the Greco-Roman household as patriarchal. Fowl states that in this situation, the father had “absolute authority.”¹⁰⁶ Care should be taken not to label Bock as hypocritical here, but given Bock’s rendering of “parents” in place of “fathers” in Ephesians 6:4, it could be seen as such. He initially states that Ephesians 6:1 is “straightforward”¹⁰⁷ when speaking of “parents” (Eph 6:1, NASB). Yet, Ephesians 6:4 “fathers” is seen by most scholars as straightforward, requiring no different rendering. Again, Bock's choices of seven different Bible versions in his commentary use the rendering “father,” yet, as mentioned above, his argument is that “Colossians 3:20 is very similar: ‘Obey your parents in everything, for this is pleasing in the Lord.’ Verse 2 will make it clear that obedience is an extension of honouring parents.”¹⁰⁸ This is Bock's primary reason for using the word parents as opposed to fathers, as written in the seven Bible translations he exclusively uses for his commentary. Additionally, scholars Stephen Fowl, Harold Hoehner, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Barbara E. Reid, Linda M. Maloney, Robert Rollock, and Casey Carmichael¹⁰⁹ all concur with Paul’s rendering of “father.” Hoehner states that “Paul makes it very clear that the father must take responsibility for raising his children.”¹¹⁰ Therefore, “Fathers” are who Paul intended to have the responsibility to teach the children. Paul is straightforward,

¹⁰⁵ Stephen E. Fowl, *Ephesians: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 194.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 194

¹⁰⁷ Bock, *Ephesians*, 187.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ See Robert Rollock and Casey Carmichael, *Commentary on Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2021), 206. See also Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Barbara E. Reid, and Linda M. Maloney, *Ephesians*, Wisdom Commentary, vol 50 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2017), 104.

¹¹⁰ Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 554.

writing, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Eph 6:4, NASB).

Discipline

In ancient Hebrew culture, discipline was of the essence. Hoehner asserts that although primitive societies and cultures were matriarchal, Israel was the opposite, being patriarchal. Hoehner parallels Fowl as he clarifies that fathers in Israel were in "absolute control over his children."¹¹¹ Roland de Vaux discovered that the father would even have absolute control over his sons who were married if they lived within the father's home.¹¹² The father's absolute control gave him broad latitudinal authority of which de Vaux includes the responsibility of the father to teach the children "(more particularly his sons) with respect to the Lord and his wonderful dealings with the nation Israel (Exod 10:2; 12:25– 27; 13:8; Deut 4:9; 6:7, 20– 21; 11:19; 32:7, 46)."¹¹³ Gottlob Schrenk sees the father's "absolute authority over his children, much like a king over his subjects."¹¹⁴ There should be little doubt that fathers had the responsibility to disciple and teach the children, as stated in Ephesians 6:4. Fathers also were responsible for the instruction of the children.

Instruction

Given the absolute patriarchal control that fathers of ancient Greek, Roman, and Deuteronomic Jewish culture had over their families, there was still tender loving care. Paul writes that fathers are not to provoke or anger their children (Eph 6:4). Hoehner points out that

¹¹¹ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 555

¹¹² Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*, trans. John McHugh (London, UK: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961), 19– 20.

¹¹³ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 555.

¹¹⁴ Gottlob Schrenk, "πατήρ" *TDNT* 5 (1968): 949.

Paul offers a new perspective, which is counter-cultural for fathers. In the training of their children, fathers should refrain from provoking their children to anger. The instruction should encourage children to learn (Col 3:21), as opposed to irritating instruction by fathers nagging and demeaning their children, which creates anger and discouragement in the children's learning. Hoehner further exhorts that Paul, in using the personal pronoun ὑμῶν (*humon*), indicates that children belong to the fathers and they are responsible for them.¹¹⁵ The fathers' new perspective of discipline and instruction is of nurturing the children as opposed to treating them as slaves or worse. Training and admonition come from the Lord through the fathers. Hoehner emphatically states that "the fathers are the Lord's agents and, therefore, raise their children according to his mandates. Such training and admonition would be sensitive to the children's responses and needs."¹¹⁶ Fathers cannot simply rely on their own wisdom and knowledge for training and instructing children. Hoehner posits that fathers should rely on the Holy Spirit "to temper their conduct and attitude."¹¹⁷ This will avoid the provocation of children to anger in their learning. The new perspective of the father nurturing is what Paul calls for in Ephesians 6:4.

What fathers today should glean from Ephesians 6:4 is that fathers are responsible for the teaching, discipline, and instruction of the children. There is a strong contrast to how fathers had been teaching their children and what Paul asserts in Ephesians 6:4. Believing fathers should train and admonish their children in accordance to the Lord by way of the Holy Spirit. Discipline and instruction of children should be, first and foremost, spiritual and not anthropocentric.

¹¹⁵ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 556.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 558.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Conclusion

From the beginning to the end of the Bible, fathers have the responsibility and duty to teach their children the commandments, statutes, and judgments of God. As witnessed in Deuteronomy 6:1-9, God clearly commands fathers to teach their children. In Psalms 78:5, fathers are commissioned to teach their children. Then, in Ephesians 6:4, fathers are charged to teach children spiritual formation in accordance with God's will that children know and understand what God says in Deuteronomy 6:4-7:

The Lord is our God; the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons 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 up (NASB).

God wants all humanity to know who He is. His identity should be made known to people at a young age, as children. God makes clear throughout Scripture that the father is responsible for the spiritual formation of the children. Both parents teach the children, but the father is responsible for the children's spiritual formation and the Scripture referenced here shows that the father has a dutiful role to teach and answer to God for the children's spiritual formation.

Theoretical Foundations

Satan has created problems in the family since the beginning of time. Satan has waged an eternal war on God.¹¹⁸ His target in the family is the father. Satan attacks by playing on the male's sensuality, ego, pride, and selfishness. Humanity is in a spiritual war against the principalities and rulers of darkness (Eph 6:12). Satan's influence has legions of demons who are "directly or indirectly behind all forms of 'natural evil.'" Satan turns a natural medium of the

¹¹⁸ Robert J. Spitzer, *Christ Versus Satan in Our Daily Lives: The Cosmic Struggle Between Good and Evil* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2020), 222-223.

natural order into a weapon.”¹¹⁹ He uses billboards, televisions, magazines, radio, the internet, women’s clothing styles, hairstyles, makeup, perfume, alcohol, drugs, and anything that appeals to the fancy of the male ego and senses to tempt man’s “self-determining freedom.”¹²⁰ He draws the married man, the father, away from his wife and children, thus breaking the family in half. Some may ask, how he can do this? F.L. Rodriguez gives an overwhelming description of Satan, “The only thing the devil does is try to pervert, corrupt, twist, bend, abuse, misapply, misuse, misrepresent, misinterpret, and falsify the things of God.”¹²¹ The father is under attack.

The driving forces leading to divorce are many. American society has been in a downward moral freefall. As with postmodern theory, Uecker and Froese point out that Americans have been looking inward to resolve moral issues and ethical problems, and the individual has become the arbiter of moral senses.¹²² This decline in moral logic makes the individual preeminent in decision-making, relying on oneself first and foremost. So, when it comes to teaching children God’s Law, the first question a father may have is, what is in it for me? Moral individualism is not constrained to the secular arena, and there is no definitive line between the secular and religious divide on this matter. Both are affected by divorce in the same way.¹²³ As such, some members of FBCS have also been affected by divorce. Therefore, Christian families in the church have the same problems as secularist families that are not

¹¹⁹ Gregory A. Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil: Constructing a Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2001), 318.

¹²⁰ Gary Emberger, “The Nonviolent Character of God, Evolution, and the Fall of Satan,” *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith*, 74 no 4 (Dec 2022): 226, <https://network.asa3.org/page/PSCF>.

¹²¹ F. L. Rodriguez, *Adam, Where Are You?* (Lake Mary, FL: Creation House, 2015), 20.

¹²² Jeremy Uecker and Paul Froese, “Religious Individualism and Moral Progressivism: How Source of Religious Authority Is Related to Attitudes About Abortion, Same-Sex Marriage, Divorce, and Premarital Sex,” *Politics and Religion*, 12 no 2 (Jun 2019): 283.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 309.

involved in the church. As far as work done on this topic, interestingly, the problems of absent fathers and fatherlessness are talked about and written about at length.

Uecker and Froese posit that many scholars and researchers have concluded that the ramifications are dire, as “Americans are thought to have seized moral authority from the state, the church, and even the community. Instead of looking to institutional or collective sources of moral authority to solve ethical problems, more and more Americans look inward because the self is believed to be the truest moral arbiter.”¹²⁴ And as such, truancy rates among the fatherless are higher than among children with both parents. Edward Kruk, in a *Psychology Today* article, states that researchers have found that of the high school drops outs in America, 71 percent are fatherless.¹²⁵ There are various issues of concern related to fatherless children, like “psychiatric problems, criminality, promiscuity, drug use, rape, domestic violence, and other less-than-optimal outcomes.”¹²⁶ Psychologists and sociologists make attempts to narrow down the culprit of the problems but have not put their finger on the procuring cause.

Investigation and questions related to this topic have not revealed if researchers are interested that fathers do not know their role in teaching their children God's Law. Therein, a gap has been revealed. What has been discovered is that theologians and scholars bridge this gap by mentioning Deuteronomy 6:1-9 positing that parents should teach their children God's Word, but they do not specifically mention that fathers have the responsibility to teach their children the commandments, statutes, and judgments as commanded in Deuteronomy 6:1-2. Ron Hunter and his team developed D6. D6 is a unified curriculum approach where students of all ages study the same Scripture on the same day, and Hunter finds that "it is built on the teachings of Deut. 6:4-9

¹²⁴ Uecker and Froese, *Religious Individualism and Moral Progressivism*, 283.

¹²⁵ Edward Kruk, “Father Absence, Father Deficit, Father Hunger,” *Psychology Today*, (May 23, 2012).

¹²⁶ Eberstadt, *Fury of the Fatherless*, 42.

and states that the church is to be the primary equipper of parents and parents are to be the primary disciplers in the home.”¹²⁷ It is agreed that parents should teach. However, fathers are commanded to teach children. Gregory Lamb comments that “the Bible teaches that husbands/fathers are to be the spiritual leaders in the home (Deut 6; Ps 78:1-8; Eph 5:21-33, 6:4).”¹²⁸ Among many other scholars determining that fathers are to teach, Jeynes states, “both the Old and New Testaments have a number of very clear teachings about the need for parents (the father especially) to bring up, train, and teach their children.”¹²⁹ It seems evident that it is the father’s role to teach spiritual matters in the family.

The role of the father to teach his son God’s Law is not prevalent in books, journals, dissertations, articles, or the internet. Son is most often replaced with children in Deuteronomy 6:7, “You shall teach them diligently to your *sons*...” Jeremy McGinniss, Coordinator of Research and Instruction at Liberty University, Jerry Falwell Library (JFL), concluded that “the topic of sons or children is not debated, there are no discussions about it, there has been no point of contention, and there are no specific books or articles of debate relating to Deuteronomy 6:7 in the use of son or children.” An interesting caveat, while listening to Pastor Adrian Rogers, in his sermon #1932, June 16, 1996, “How to be a Father to a Wise Child,”¹³⁰ Rogers emphatically uses the words son and grandson as written in Deuteronomy 4:9; 6:7, NASB. Rogers makes a point that fathers are to teach their sons. He does not say children at this point, which has become the norm.¹³¹ A few years later, Rogers preaches on a similar subject in sermon #2157, June 28,

¹²⁷ Denise Muir Kjesbo and; Cha, Lou Y., “Family Ministry: Past, Present, Future” *Christian Education Journal*, 17 no 3 (Dec 2020): 493.

¹²⁸ Lamb, *Fatherlessness*, 103.

¹²⁹ Jeynes, *The Wiley Handbook of Christianity and Education*, 68.

¹³⁰ Adrian Rogers, *Love Worth Finding*, Sermon #1932 “How to be a Father to a Wise Child,” accessed April 8, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t-UbOW17ICU>.

1999, “Dads who Shoot Straight,” and he uses the word children instead of son in Deuteronomy 6:7. He does not give a reason why, though. What has surfaced in this research topic is that there is a lack of scholarly research on whether Deuteronomy 6:7 specifies sons or children. But whichever is correct, fathers have the responsibility for the children's spiritual formation by teaching them God's Law.

The man's responsibility is an interesting peculiarity. Eve first ate the forbidden fruit and sinned first, or so it would seem. It is still understood that sin first came into the world through one man, Adam (Rom 5:12), who ate second. The male has the responsibility to God because God made him first (1 Tim 2:13). God first gave Adam the command not to eat of the tree of knowledge before Eve was even formed (Gen 2:16-18). Adam was responsible to God to teach Eve, which he did, or she would not have known God's Law that she parroted to the serpent (Gen 3:2-4). The responsibility for teaching is of the male to God. God made Adam first, and he was the primordial head.

The man, father, and husband, Adam, had the responsibility to teach. He is also responsible for evil entering humanity and the world. Adam's first sin was not eating the fruit but allowing it to happen. Earl Muller finds that Adam and Eve both sinned in eating the forbidden fruit, but before that, Adam allowed Eve to eat the fruit when he should have stopped it from happening. God first commanded Adam not to eat fruit from that particular tree. Adam did not act responsibly as the primordial head.¹³² Adam allowed disobedience to happen. Adam's inaction was the first sin. Muller asserts that Adam's sin allowed the fall to happen. Donald Keefe posits:

¹³² Earl C. Muller, “Adam and Eve in the Thought of Donald Keefe, S.J.,” *The Saint Anselm Journal*, 17 no 2 (Spr 2022): 26.

The problem is that “Original sin is not merely a refusal to obey, a refusal to act in a morally good way; because the freedom of covenanted existence is intrinsic to creation, the fall is first of all a refusal to be which is effective at the level of each of the transcendentals, hence a refusal of human and personal unity, goodness, and truth—which is to say, a refusal of the plenitude of covenantal existence that is life in Christ, *plena gratia*.”¹³³

In other words, Adam did not follow his teaching, neglecting his responsibility.

Sources relating directly to this topic that fathers have a God-given/commanded role to teach their sons/children as outlined in Deuteronomy 6:1-9 have been elusive. Fathers do not know that they have a role, which is a gap. What is evident is that most fathers do not know that they have this role. This project may not completely be “plowing new ground with a new theory,”¹³⁴ but what is new in this research is the discovery that the symptoms of absentee fathers, fatherlessness, and broken homes have not been connected to fathers not knowing their roles and duties to teach their children as God commanded. There is a gap that has been overlooked for a long time. So, the purpose is to teach fathers their role so they will perform their duty to teach their children. After all, God commanded it.

The overwhelming agreement among researchers, scholars, and pastors is that children should be taught God’s Word. Smith and Adamczyk state that the “vast majority of parents felt that the religious acculturation of their children was primarily their responsibility and not that of their congregations.”¹³⁵ The absent father is mentioned, and children's problems are discussed in books, articles, and papers. But, the role of the father is not discussed nor shown to be the primary teacher of the children. In a study, Van Niekerk and Breed show that those surveyed believe parents should teach their children. The survey results show that the primary teacher is

¹³³ Donald J. Keefe, S.J., *Covenantal Theology: The Eucharistic Order of History*, rev. 2 vol. in 1 (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1991), 219.

¹³⁴ Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity, *Doctor of Ministry Program and Candidacy Handbook* (Lynchburg, VA: August 2022), 44-45.

¹³⁵ Smith and Adamczyk, *Handing Down Faith*, 198.

the mother with an 81 percent rating and the father is second with 66 percent.¹³⁶ When referring to Deuteronomy 6:7, the author also states, "In Deuteronomy 6:7, the Israelites are ordered to teach their children about their faith diligently."¹³⁷ It may seem to be a trivial detail, but it is important to place the recipient of the command from God where it belongs, on the father as commanded.

When looking at newly discovered sources, it is automatic to think children and parents will be mentioned as opposed to what is written in Hebrew and depicted in the NASB: father and son. However, what is interesting is that many sources, such as the one from Smith & Adamczyk, say that fathers are crucial to forming children religiously.¹³⁸ Yet sources never go so far as to say that it is the father's role as commanded by God. In not doing so, it gives the father a pass on judgment or relief from the duty. The justification for this research project is based on statistical results mentioned about absentee fathers, fatherlessness, and broken homes. The gap is that fathers do not know their role in teaching their children God's Law. Sowers was raised fatherless and has studied other children who are fatherless. He has found that children who have been abandoned by their fathers feel the same way about God the Father, who, like their earthly father, is also gone.¹³⁹ Fatherlessness is beyond harmful. It has become a trend with no end in sight as Rowley cites that children are the victims; their fatherlessness leads to many social problems like crime, child pregnancy, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, child sexual abuse, and many

¹³⁶ Marsulize Van Niekerk and Gert Breed, "The role of parents in the development of faith from birth to seven years of age," *HTS Theological Studies*, 74 no 2 (2018): 2. <http://hts.org.za/index.php/HTS>.

¹³⁷ Niekerk and Breed, *Role of the Parents*, 7.

¹³⁸ Smith & Adamczyk, *Handing Down Faith*, 5.

¹³⁹ Sowers, *Fatherless Generation*, 75-76.

more.¹⁴⁰ The concept for undergirding this work is to confront this problem at FBCS. All participant fathers will be taught their fatherly role commanded by God.

This instruction will be a breath of fresh air for fathers at FBCS. With proper teaching, coaching, and intervention in this project, fathers will assume their roles and start to perform their duties and responsibilities. This project will be influential in strengthening families at FBCS as fathers start to properly teach their children as God commanded. Fathers will learn the significance of teaching sons their inherited role and responsibility they have to God.

Conclusion

God created mankind in His image and likeness. Starting with the male, Adam, God taught Adam what His commandments, statutes, and judgments are. God told Adam, before Eve was formed, do not eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:17). God's statute allowed for the eating of all the other trees in the Garden. And the judgment for eating the forbidden fruit is death. God's commandment, statute, and judgment were crystal clear to Adam, yet his rebellion and disobedience caused nothing but harm, causing God to take drastic actions. Not only did God cause death to come upon humanity, but it would also cost God His dearly beloved Son to be the atonement for the disobedience of Adam and all of his ancestors. The first Adam brought sin and evil into the world, making it necessary for God to implement His plan of salvation through His Son Jesus, the last Adam, "a life-giving spirit" (1 Cor 15:45, NASB).

God gave more commands to Moses and the people of Israel in the form of the Ten Commandments, statutes, and judgments. God emphatically commanded fathers to teach their children the Law. But, as a whole, they did not. Fathers were disobedient to God. As a result, Israel and Judah were disobedient to God. Israel was exiled, and Judah was taken captive. Those

¹⁴⁰ Rowley, *Because of Our Fathers*, 10.

are major historical events or ramifications for disobedience to God. The Law that Israel's fathers were to teach the children, for the most part, did not happen. What did replicate was dissension, rebellion, and disobedience to God. Israel's fathers did not effectively teach their children, and today, fathers do the same. In disobedience, they do not teach their children God's Law as God commanded. God makes it clear that to have a good life prolonged in the grace of God requires obedience (Deut 6:2-3), starting with teaching the children to perpetuate God's Law for all humanity from generation to generation.

The issue that fathers at FBCS deal with today is not knowing they have a role and duty to teach their children as God commanded. This gap is the focus of this action research project as it can have dire symptoms. God sees absentee fathers, fatherlessness, and broken homes. He sees mothers who are left to try and do all the work alone. They are valiant women who have handled their terrible situation the best they know how, but as a whole, the statistics and ramifications of fatherlessness speak for themselves. The symptoms of fatherlessness are what is written about.

As a solution to the problem, if fathers learn their roles and perform their duties to teach their children, then God will honor them and bless their families, having their days prolonged, and they will multiply greatly. This promise from God goes beyond one family and reaches into eternity as God promised Abraham that he will be the father of many nations (Gen 17:3-7).

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This qualitative action research project methodology illuminates the problem introduced in Chapter 1, which states that many fathers at FBCS do not teach their children God's commandments, statutes, and judgments as God commanded. The purpose of this DMIN action research project is to intervene with FBCS fathers to provide meaningful instruction in a small group setting, teaching fathers their role in teaching their children God's Law. Much of this chapter reflects on the theological and theoretical underpinnings of Chapter 2. This chapter is designed to explicate a detailed step-by-step action intervention plan for fathers with young children at FBCS. Utilizing a qualitative small group format, fathers will learn their role in teaching their children God's Law, and participants will have the freedom to express their experiences, successes, and concerns about what they have learned in implementing the action plan at home with their children. In this chapter, the terms class, course, and instruction are interchangeable and used accordingly, as needed. Ultimately, Chapter 3: Methodology will help fathers significantly strengthen their families in Christ as fathers learn their role of teaching God's Law to their children.

Intervention Design

This intervention design will be a bridge to span a gap that has existed for ages. It will be explained that many fathers have not been taught their role to teach their children God's Law, which has become the norm. Today, the failure to teach children God's Law is not of malice or of willful disobedience but rather of being unaware. Fathers not knowing their role to teach their

children God's Law has become the norm because forefathers of ages past have not taught their children as commanded by God. Therefore, not teaching children God's Law has become the norm. Since fathers in the past have not taught their children God's Law, the role of the father has faded over time. Consequently, teaching children God's Law has faded. The role of the father is not considered an important role today. Other sources have displaced the father. Popenoe states that the "Victorian culture...was intent on enthroning women as the preeminent figures in the household and having them essentially replace men as the primary parents of the child."¹

The intervention design will raise awareness of this deficiency among fathers at FBCS. The deficiency is that fathers do not know their role to teach God's Law in the home to their children. The project will begin with a two-week period of inviting fathers to join a small group. An ideal size for the group is four or more fathers with children between the ages of newborn and six years old. This group will participate in a six-week action research project. This project will give instructions to fathers about their role. They will learn the who, what, when, where, why, and how of teaching God's Law. The project research aspect will implement a triangulation method to acquire the research data. The object is to teach fathers their role, train them, and inspire them to teach their children at home. The effectiveness of the intervention will be assessed to determine if fathers learning their role to teach their children God's Law will, in fact, reduce absentee fathers, fatherlessness, and broken homes.

Participants

The action research project will incorporate two small groups with the intent to have a total of ten participants. In having one-on-one conversations with fathers at FBCS who have

¹ David Popenoe, *Families Without Fathers: Fatherhood, Marriage and Children in American Society* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2009), 96.

children meeting the requirement, the intent is to invite fathers to the study groups by mentioning that they have a fatherly role commanded by God to teach their children God's Law. Figure 2, Research Group Criteria Model, will be used to inform the fathers of the qualifications to join the action research group. These criteria are intended to assimilate a diverse group to generate pertinent and viable data.

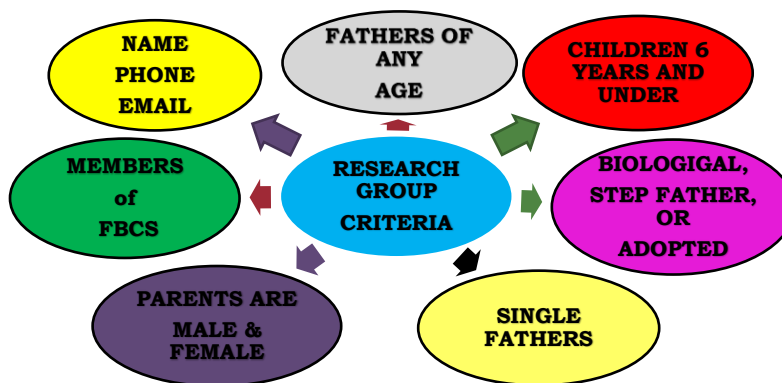


Figure 2. Research Group Criteria Model

Data Collection Procedures

The most trying concern about research study data collection is whether the information collected has the credibility necessary to be considered viable for the research. In other words, is the data trustworthy? Stringer emphasizes the triangulation method.² This method allows for an enhanced study based on multiple sources. The credibility would then be difficult to debunk as there are multiple witnesses, so to speak. The data collection for this action research project will incorporate three data collection tools, a survey, a weekly questionnaire, and a personal interview.

² Ernest T. Stringer, *Action Research*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2014), 92.

Survey, State of Spiritual Formation

This survey will determine the state of the participant's spiritual formation (Appendix D). This survey will be taken twice, once near the beginning of the project, Step 2/Week 2, and again near the end of the project, Step 3/Week 4. This survey will help to evaluate and determine if classroom instruction and fathers teaching their children at home have detected any significant growth or change in the participant's spiritual maturity. This survey will also determine if a father's teaching his children God's Law increases the children's spiritual growth and awareness of God by teaching them God's Law. The survey will also determine if teaching children God's Law at a young age is important to their spiritual formation. At their young ages, learning God's Law may be the necessary footing for their spiritual foundation in life. The premise is that this important step in children's lives has been missing in the recent past. David Popenoe's research shows that between 1960 and 1990, many fathers have been either absent or missing, leaving many children fatherless. In the early twentieth century, 8 percent of children lived in a home with one parent. In the 1960s, divorce rates increased as never before, and by 1980, the fatherless trend went up to 31 percent and rose to 36 percent by 1990 with continued inclination.³ This survey will evaluate how teaching children God's Law influences their spiritual formation while also reducing the surge of absentee fathers.

Weekly Questionnaire

This questionnaire will be an incremental measuring stick of the participants' progress in learning the father's role. Since the questionnaire will be given weekly, it will be a gauge revealing areas that need more emphasis in teaching fathers their roles. The questionnaire will also help in determining if the fathers understand their duties to be implemented in teaching their

³ Popenoe, *Families Without Fathers: Fatherhood, Marriage and Children in American Society*, 23.

children. The questionnaire will also have the purpose of gently nudging, encouraging, and motivating fathers to accept their roles and perform their duties. The questionnaire will be a subtle weekly reminder.

Personal Interview

The interview will take place after the last class session. By this time, the participants should have gained respect, trust, and confidence in the researcher⁴ and are willing to open up and answer questions posed (Appendix G). This interview will be personal in nature and designed to get a better understanding of the participant's phenomenological background, present status, and future perspective on accepting the fatherly role of teaching their children God's Law. The interview will be voice recorded and will be held in strict confidence, as discussed in the consent form (Appendix C). A voice recorder will be turned on and off by first giving the participant notice. This interview also evaluates how fathers respond to the instruction in the course. It will be determined if they feel comfortable accepting their role or if they feel uncomfortable teaching their children God's Law. The interview questions are designed to discover why or why not fathers have perpetuated God's command to teach their children and if fathers have become aware of their responsibility and role to teach their children God's Law.

Data Collection Analysis/Evaluation

After the weekly questionnaire (Appendix E) data have been analyzed and evaluated for spiritual growth in the father and children, the data will be presented in a combination of bar graphs and flow charts, plotting the results from the weekly questionnaires. By this time, fathers will have started teaching their children, which will continue until the end of the course. The data

⁴ Stringer, *Action Research*, 4th ed., 81-82.

will also present the father's spiritual maturity and growth from involvement in the project. And finally, the data will determine if and when the father has learned his role. These recording tools will be a significant visual format for viewing the results of the action research study and determining the outcome of the intervention. If there is a significant positive change, then the project can be considered a success in teaching fathers their role. If there is no positive change or a negative change, then this approach of teaching fathers their role needs improvement or shelving. If successful, the project could then be offered to other churches and ministerial organizations. If there is no significant change in the participants or children, then the data will possibly show what needs to be changed in the approach of the project. Either way, the graphs will show the results in a matter-of-fact way. As a result, the triangulation study approach will add credibility to the study represented in the graphs and charts.

Proposed Project Intervention Methodology

The intention of the intervention design is to be detailed and succinct. The project will begin with introducing the project and inviting fathers of young children ages six and under. The intent is to assimilate a small study group of participants meeting the specific requirements listed above. The participants will then participate in weekly sessions to learn the father's role. The participants will learn that they should be teaching their children the commandments, statutes, and judgments. Fathers will also learn skills for teaching children of young ages. In order to measure the father's success or failures in this project, as mentioned, surveys, questionnaires, and interviews will be implemented, thus allowing for a feasible determination of whether the efficacy of this intervention will meet the research assumptions.

Method

Today, many fathers at FBCS are unaware that fathers have a God-given duty to teach their children God's Law diligently, daily, and perpetually from generation to generation. The issue of unawareness is global, so it has not been difficult to recognize it at FBCS. To remedy this problem at FBCS, a study group research project will teach fathers their role, duty, and responsibility of teaching their children God's Law. The design of this action research study involves an intervention to bring about positive change in fathers of FBCS. Sensing, in his book *Qualitative Research*⁵ has developed a recipe for action research that will be the basis for much of this intervention design and action research study. Since the intention is to be succinct and detail-oriented, it is worth mentioning that sometimes, items can be inadvertently overlooked or missed. Patton elaborates that "Any given design inevitably reflects some imperfect interplay of resources, capabilities, purposes, possibilities, creativity, and personal judgments by the people involved."⁶ With this disclaimer in mind, every detectable avenue that presents itself will be investigated and discussed in the qualitative study group.

The action research project is for the benefit of the participants. The researcher assumes the role of facilitator or project arranger. A facilitator takes the position of an unbiased middleman with allegiance to neither side nor issue in analyzing the data.⁷ The objective is to bring about change by teaching fathers their role to teach their children God's Law. The change will be in their teaching habits. Based on the responses in the data collection, the data will guide and direct the instruction approach for the participants focusing on who, what, when, where, why, and how they should learn to teach God's Law to their children.

⁵ Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011).

⁶ Patton, *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*, 4th ed., 12.

⁷ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 121.

Project Delineation

The total time of the project will be eight weeks and will be outlined in the next section. Following the introduction and assimilation of the small group, there will be six weekly meetings with a time limit of one- and one-half hours each, making the total instruction and data collection period for the project nine hours. The weekly meetings will be held at FBCS (see address and map below). The meeting times will be Wednesdays from 6:00 to 7:30 pm in room E211. There will be flexibility in the length of the time frame as participants may need extra time to resolve concerns or need more time to ask questions. The project will consist of four steps, with each step being divided into two weeks, for example, Step 1 Week 1, Step 1 Week 2, Step 2 Week 1, Step 2 Week 2, and so on.

The location of one-on-one introductions and the following classroom meetings will be on the FBCS campus, Buildings D and E (Figure 3).



Figure 3. FBCS Site Map

Proposed Four-Step Method of the Intervention

Prior to submitting this prospectus to IRB for approval, FBCS pastor Dan Spencer will need to approve the use of the facility, grounds, and resources provided by FBCS to complete the project. Once approved, the document, along with the prospectus, will be submitted to IRB for approval. The researcher will present a Research Project Permission Response document (Appendix A) to pastor Dan Spencer for approval. Once the IRB approves the project, the project will be set in motion. What happens next is Step 1 Week 1, an advertising blitz to announce the research project to individual fathers of FBCS. This is the beginning of a four-step process.

Step 1

Step 1 consists of two weeks. The intent is to recruit fathers by promoting a personal qualitative study group addressing the problem, purpose, and thesis to be discussed in the upcoming sessions. Weeks one and two are the announcement period for the project. A flier has been designed to announce and advertise the group sessions and research project (Appendix B). The flier is an invitation to men of FBCS. The flier will be distributed for one week to fathers, Life Groups conducive to fathers of young children, and the nursery and kindergarten groups. The flier will be posted on the bulletin boards within the church facility and adjoining buildings.

Additionally, to encourage fathers to attend, information selected from the literary review in chapter two will be discussed. Some factual data about societal issues of absentee fathers, fatherlessness, and broken homes will be presented. The problem will be revealed. They will be introduced to the project's purpose, which is backed by Scripture and will be covered in the sessions. The scriptural passages to be referenced are Deuteronomy 6:1-9, Psalms 78:5-7, and Ephesians 6:4. A solution to the problem will be introduced. The solution will strengthen their families. The class instruction will teach participants how to avoid the problems of being an

absent father, fatherlessness, and broken homes. To generate awareness, a buzz for the group sessions will be created.

Step 1 Week 2 is a continuation of getting the word out, as mentioned above. As with week one, the one-on-one discussions will briefly introduce the problem, purpose, and thesis, as presented in Chapter 1.

Near the end of the introduction period, the buzz will have carried on about the action research project, which will soon begin. Prospective participants will know that the purpose of the action research project is to address the problem. They will also know that a qualitative research project⁸ is to be presented in a study group format for fathers with young children. The information shared in the one-on-one introduction is but the tip of the iceberg.⁹

The object to this point will have been to get fathers to be inquisitive about the problem at FBCS. A research group of interested fathers who meet the criteria will be formed by the end of the two-week introductory period. All interested will be asked to come to the first session starting next week. The criteria to be in the group is in Resource 1, in the Participants section.

The six sessions of the project are presented below. Additionally, the IRB required participant's consent form will be presented in session one. Copies of the consent form (Appendix C) will be available for them to take home. However, in order to start, they must first sign the consent form which will be the first order of business in Step 2 Week 1.

⁸ Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses*, 2011.

⁹ David Livermore, *Leading with Cultural Intelligence: The Real Secret to Success, Second Ed.* (New York, NY: American Management Association, 2015), 74.

Step 2

During Step 2, Week 1, the consent forms will be discussed and signed to comply with the IRB stipulations. Each participant will write their contact information on the Participant Information Form (Appendix J). The next step will be to choose a group leader. The group leader will be responsible for keeping the group informed and being a recorder of the group's verbal interaction.¹⁰ The group leader is a key position. Noting participant responses will help track growth in the group's teaching of their children. The leader needs to be responsible in terms of duty and character. He will also oversee the administration of the weekly questionnaires and surveys.

The class instruction for the day will cover the problem, purpose, solution, and thesis statement as outlined in Chapter 1. Following the classroom instruction, a weekly questionnaire (Appendix E) will be administered. This questionnaire will be given at the end of every class. Its purpose is to monitor and evaluate changes and growth in the participant's understanding of their role in teaching their children. Fathers will be instructed to gently prepare their children for teaching about God at home starting next week.

During Step 2, Week 2, the participants will start by taking a survey, State of Spiritual Formation (Appendix D). The purpose of this survey is to determine each individual's spiritual status. Are they new believers, backslidden believers, faithful believers, mediocre believers, or spiritually mature believers? Understanding the participant's spiritual status will help the researcher get a feel for the approach needed in presenting the purpose of the project and the thesis. This will allow the researcher to tailor the message to the group for clear understanding.

¹⁰ Stringer, *Action Research*, 4th ed., 112.

Instruction for this meeting will introduce, define, and explicate what commandments, statutes, and judgments are. The participants will be instructed to have their first teaching session with their child or children over the next week. Fathers are to teach at least once. Part of the learning process is for the participants to journal their experiences in a provided notepad. They will be asked to write out a teaching schedule. Again, the class will end with the weekly questionnaire. The questionnaire will evaluate their performance and growth in their role as teachers of their children.

Step 3

In Step 3 Week 3, “Who are You?,” the last week’s survey, State of Spiritual Formation, will be discussed. Similarities of the participants when it comes to teaching their children will be discussed. It will be determined where they are collectively as a group in teaching their children God’s Law. Stringer calls this step “Member Checking.”¹¹ Each participant will be asked to share their teaching experience over the last week. It will be good to hear where they are individually and as a group based on what they have learned about teaching. It is assumed that the participants were not aware of their role in teaching their children God's Law. Teaching their children God's Law has been neglected. The survey will prove or negate this assumption.

The group instruction will feature commandments of the father’s role as delineated in Deuteronomy 6:1-9, Psalms 78:5-7, and Ephesians 6:4. In adhering to this teaching, their families will be strengthened, and they will avoid being an absentee father, fatherlessness, and thereby solidifying their homes in Christ. They will be instructed to teach at least three times over the next week and to enter the times in their notepad. The instruction will be followed by the weekly questionnaire.

¹¹ Stringer, *Action Research*, 4th ed., 93.

During Week 4 the participants will again take the Spiritual Formation Status Survey (Appendix D). This will help gauge the children's spiritual formation and the father's spiritual growth in conjunction with the statutes.

The instruction features statutes, the rules to live by, and the way to grow in one's spiritual formation. Statutes lead one on the path of righteousness. The path of righteousness is the path of spiritual maturity. Fathers accept their role as teachers and perform their duty to teach their children, fulfilling some important statutes (Ps 78:5) in righteousness for both the father and the children. It is not about teaching for self-glorification but being in obedience to God. This spiritual maturity journey is shared with the children in their spiritual formation in what Stringer calls transferability.¹² The command for fathers to teach is subsidized by the statute of accepting the role of teacher. They go hand-in-hand, as is stated in Deuteronomy 6:1.

The group members will pick a time over the next week for a personal interview (Appendix G). A scheduled sign-up sheet (Appendix H) will be passed around for each one to sign up. They will have one hour to answer open-ended questions. They will be reminded that the interview will be recorded per the consent form they signed (Appendix C). Participants will be encouraged to speak freely and openly. They will also be instructed to teach their children four times the next week. The meeting will close with the weekly questionnaire.

Step 4

In Week 5, class will begin with two short videos on how children learn, the psychology of teaching young children. A television and the internet are necessary to stream the Youtube videos. Video one is four minutes twenty-eight seconds long.¹³ The second video is four minutes

¹² Stringer, *Action Research*, 4th ed., 93.

¹³ Erik Erikson, Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, Davidson Films, "How Children Learn," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uyf8vQn90Yg>.

long.¹⁴ Both online video addresses will be shared with the participants so they can view them again later. Both videos give psychological insight into how young children learn. This will teach fathers some necessary skills training. It cannot be expected that fathers teach young children as if they were teaching older children or adults, so the videos will give them something to think about on how to approach their young children in teaching them. The fathers will be reminded, "You shall teach them diligently to your sons 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 up" (Deut 6:7, NASB; emphasis added).

The instruction on the Judgments of God will be covered. God repeatedly warns Israel if they are not obedient, then they will suffer the judgments. In 2 Kings 17, Israel suffered God's judgment and was conquered by the Assyrians. This is a reminder to be obedient to God's command to teach their children. The meeting ends with the weekly questionnaire. They will be instructed to teach their children five times the next week. The meeting will close with the weekly questionnaire.

Week 6 begins with an exit strategy survey (Appendix F). Then, each participant will be allotted time to share their experiences of teaching over the past five weeks. They will be instructed to continue their teaching, so it will become a habit. Five days is good, but God says every day. A review of their spiritual formation, spiritual growth, and spiritual maturity will be discussed. A final weekly questionnaire will be completed. They will be informed of a future follow-up phone call. This will be approximately one month in the future (Appendix J).

¹⁴ Little Academy TV, "How young children learn. Efficient approach to early learning."
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X6-CSxhdQ2Y&t=1s>.

The Four-Step Method Plan of Progressing to Completion

The initial assumption was that fathers have not been teaching their children as God commanded in Deuteronomy 6:7. Progressing through the Four Step Method of classroom instruction, fathers learned their preeminent biblical role to teach their children the commandments, statutes, and judgments of God. Fathers will have completed six weekly questionnaires. The six successive questionnaires provide the researcher with pertinent information showing whether or not fathers have learned, accepted, and implemented the role of teaching their children. This progressive data will also show if children have become aware of their spirituality and grown in their spiritual formation. Thus, both scenarios help the family avoid an absentee father, fatherlessness, and a broken home.

Fathers will also have completed two surveys surveying the father's spiritual maturity status. The survey measures where they are on their path to spiritual maturity and prompts their willingness to go beyond what they traditionally have done in teaching their children God's Law. The survey urges fathers to grow in spiritual maturity, which will motivate them to teach their children regularly. The weekly questionnaire, along with the survey, is supported by a post-intervention follow-up questionnaire. This will help to determine if fathers are performing their role in the absence of the class instruction, questionnaires, and surveys. The triangulation data¹⁵ will show if the class instruction was successful in teaching fathers their role to teach. The action research project will come to completion as the data collected combines to present graphs, charts, and phenomenological results of the qualitative action research project of teaching fathers their preeminent biblical role to teach their children.

¹⁵ Stringer, *Action Research*, 4th ed., 92.

Implementation of the Intervention Design

This section lays out the details of the qualitative action research project intervention. The researcher will discuss how the group was formed, summarize each of the six classroom sessions, present the significance of the data collected using the triangulation method,¹⁶ and present the findings on how fathers and children reacted to the intervention.

Forming the Qualitative Action Research Study Group

Upon undertaking the task of inviting fathers to join a group, it became apparent that fathers with young children ages six and under have busy schedules and are hard-pressed to add another class to their schedules. They feel they are already stretched to their limits. The researcher came to this understanding as he attempted various ways of announcing and advertising the class.

Step 1: Weeks 1 and 2

The researcher distributed fliers (Appendix B) and a revised 3x5 card edition (Appendix L) of the flier to the FBCS nursery, kindergarten classes, age-specific Upward Basketball attendees, and young parents in an age-specific Life Group. Approximately five hundred to six hundred fliers and cards were distributed. The fliers seemed to have little effect on inviting fathers to the project. Who received a copy of the flier is unknown. For example, the fliers that were distributed in the nursery were laid on the counter next to the keyboard where parents sign in their child/children. A few times, the researcher stood outside the door of the nursery with extra fliers in hand. When asking parents if they had received a flier while checking their child in, the results varied from yes to no, or they missed it. Parents were in a hurry to get to a class or

¹⁶ Stringer, *Action Research, 4th ed.*, 92.

church service, so that was not an opportune time to engage in a conversation. It was not the right time, and it is often said that timing is everything. Thus, a different approach was necessary. The 3x5 card was smaller, easy to read quickly, and quick to hand out. Unlike the 8.5x11 size paper flier that needed to be folded, the card slips in a pocket or purse easily. So, the card became the choice going forward in face-to-face encounters.

Face-to-Face

On Sunday, FBCS has three worship services and two Life Group periods. Members have about thirty minutes after each service or class to engage in a brief conversation. This gave the researcher the opportunity to briefly introduce himself to a person, mention the project, name the benefits, and extend an invitation with a card about the class. This face-to-face interaction was the best way to announce the project, develop interest, and invite fathers who met the criteria to join the group. However, a third party noticed a problem. The particular observant church member, Allen Newton, whose title in the local government is Executive Director of the Economic Development Council, pointed out to the researcher that he was not letting the fathers know “what is in it for me.” In the face-to-face encounter, the researcher should point out to fathers that being a part of the group will strengthen their father-child relationship, and the child's spiritual formation can flourish. With this change in approach, the father's interest in joining the group went up. The point the director made, and he mentioned it with some reluctance, was that people often do something only if there is a benefit for them. So, when talking with fathers, it is important to let them know how the course benefits them. In an amended approach, the researcher told fathers that this research study course offers fathers the benefit of a stronger Christian family in obedience to God by teaching fathers their role to teach their children God's Law. Additionally, fathers will benefit by avoiding the risk of becoming an

absentee father, avoiding fatherlessness, and avoiding a broken home. As a result, fathers who were invited to a face-to-face interaction on the church campus enlisted in the research focus group. This was the progenitor for group development. It paved the way for a qualitative action research project that was explained in the first class, Step 2, Week 1.

Study Group Enlistment

As the researcher surveyed the halls and corridors of FBCS for group prospects, he sought out fathers with young children. It can sometimes be difficult to determine the age of a person walking in the halls. However, once an energetic child is noticed running around, the father is most often nearby or has the loving child in his arms. Both scenarios alert the researcher to a possible prospect for the study group. At this point, the researcher needs to be outgoing and friendly in making contact to connect with a possible enlistee. A contact that worked well was, "with sincere conviction say hello, (comment) what a wonderful child you have. Is he/she (however it applied) five or six years old?" That approach opened the door for the father to talk about his pride and joy, and many fathers did. After some brief pleasantries and handing out the card during the introduction, the researcher gets right to the point, mentioning the class for teaching men with young children the biblical role of the father. Most often, the fathers showed interest immediately. And if his wife was with him, most often she said something to the effect that the training is needed. This always prompted the researcher to talk about the problem, the purpose, and the benefit to the father in the thesis. Most all Christian people are deeply concerned with the problem of absentee fathers, fatherlessness, and broken homes. One point mentioned in each interaction was the unintentional non-volitional problem of being an absentee father. In the process, the new class at FBCS for fathers with young children was introduced, and some fathers accepted the invitation and enlisted in the six-week course.

The Meeting Room

Over two weeks of face-to-face advertising, a study group has been developed. As advertised, the course and research began on August 23, 2023. A second class began on January 23, 2024. Pastor Dan and his staff agreed to allow the first class to meet in room E211 of FBCS on Wednesdays from 6:00 pm until 7:30 pm. The second class was on Tuesday nights at the same time and in the same room. Room E211 is a basic fifteen by twenty-five-foot classroom of twenty-five chairs with armrests. At the front of the room was a teacher's podium, table and chair, ancient biblical times maps hanging on the wall, and a television with HDMI hookups to cast the videos in a future class (Step 4 Week 5). The next section will briefly summarize the six-week course. It will report on what was gleaned by the researcher that contributes to the research results disseminated in the next chapter.

Six Weeks of Qualitative Action Research, The Intervention

This intervention posits the problem that fathers at FBCS do not teach their children as God commands them to. There is a gap in the cultural experience of God's command to Israel's fathers to teach their children. In disobedience, Israel's fathers did not perpetuate this command from generation to generation. Therefore, the gap, which is created by disobedience to God's command, likewise does not perpetuate into the Christian cultural experience and, hence, the experience of fathers at FBCS. As previously mentioned in the theological foundation, the conquering of Israel and the captivity of Judah were the ramification or judgment for their disobedience. The prominent current ramification for disobedience, and a result of the gap, is the generating of absentee fathers, which leads to fatherlessness and ultimately leads to broken homes. Broken families are what Satan has been instigating and impelling from the dawn of humanity to the fall (Gen 3). His attack has been focused on negating the father's role and

responsibility to teach their children. This has crippled humanity's reliance on God fostering men like Friedrich Nietzsche to say "God is dead."¹⁷ This is the context for the action research project. The intervention is divided into four steps totaling eight weeks. Each step has two weeks. Step 1 was centered on announcing and advertising the course face-to-face, as summarized above. The remainder of this chapter is a summary of the course's six classes. Details of qualitative phenomenology will be explicated in Chapter 4: Results.

Step 2 Week 1

Class began with a hearty welcome, thanks to all attending, and prayer thanking God for His presence and blessing. The group had eight in attendance. The researcher introduced himself, made known his association with Liberty University as a doctoral candidate, and how the next six-week course correlated with the researcher's thesis project for completion of the DMIN. It was explained that the course was a qualitative action research project. Qualitative was defined and how it applied to the group members in a personal interactive way as opposed to a quantitative, numeric way. The six-week course was briefly outlined. It was made known that personal information would be discussed and collected on a weekly basis through six questionnaires, two surveys, and one interview. It was also explained that about one month after the course, the researcher will call each person to do a follow-up interview to determine the efficacy of the intervention research project and the course.

Personal Information

Discussing personal information made it necessary per the IRB for each member's consent, hence a consent form (Appendix C). The researcher read the consent form to the group.

¹⁷ Michael Ehrmantraut, "Nihilism and Education in Heidegger's Essay: 'Nietzsche's Word: "God is Dead,"" *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, Volume 48, Issue 8, (2016): 765.

A copy of Appendix C was offered to each. Each person signed the consent form prior to moving on, per the IRB approval. Once the consent form was completed, the participant information form (Appendix J) was passed around to receive the participant's contact information. Finally, based on the size of the group, it did not seem necessary to elect a group leader. The researcher kept notes of topics and comments related to the research. This first part of the class took between fifteen and twenty minutes. From this point on, the course engaged in the first instructive session of the class.

Class Instruction

The problem of fathers not teaching their children was addressed in detail per Chapter 1. Reactions from the fathers were of amazement and a seemingly surprised response as they were unaware of what God commands fathers in Deuteronomy 6. The gap between Israel's fathers and fathers today was discussed. Emphasis was added that they are not to blame. They did not intentionally disobey God by not teaching their children. It was not of their own volition but rather out of ignorance as they did not know. Ninety percent of the class agreed that they were not taught to do so by their fathers. This data will be explicated in the results chapter. Once the problem was out in the open and agreed upon, the purpose of the course, to teach fathers their role, was revealed. The group was informed of the three primary Scriptures that were to be used in presenting the role of the father (Deut 6:1-9, Ps 78:5-8, and Eph 6:4). The instruction wrapped up with the proposed end result of the six-week course. Per the thesis, fathers will develop a stronger spiritual relationship with their children and family. Their children will develop and grow in their spiritual formation as fathers simultaneously grow in their spiritual maturity. From its beginning, this course presented the recipe to avoid becoming an absentee father, avoid fatherlessness, and avoid having a broken home.

Research Data Collection

Class One ended with the weekly questionnaire (Appendix E). The questionnaire took about five minutes to complete. Some fathers asked if their names were necessary on the questionnaire. The researcher answered no. The questionnaire was about determining the growth of the group in general and how the group responded to the problem. The upcoming surveys were of a personal nature, where names will be required. Hence, the weekly questionnaires are anonymous. No one had specific questions about the questionnaire, meaning the questionnaire was straightforward and understandable. The questionnaire planted a seed that fathers should start teaching their children. It suggests at least once per week. The questionnaire asks how many times over the next week they plan to teach their children (Appendix E, question 13). This question measures their willingness and eagerness to teach. The class ended with prayer and the message that fathers are to start teaching their children at least once over the next week. So, to avoid any confusion, they were told that next week, they would learn what to teach their children.

Step 2 Week 2

This second class was awaited with excitement. As the fathers showed up, some of the discussion in the room was encouraging as they were asking one another if they taught their children over the last week. Two fathers did not show up, so the group consisted of six. As it turned out, in the long run, they never did return. After the greeting, the group prayed, and the researcher handed out the survey (Appendix D). The survey is to measure and evaluate the father's spiritual formation status. The survey gave the researcher a better idea of where each father was in his spiritual maturity as a Christian. Some answers will be discussed in the results. Interestingly, the diversity of the father's answers about where they were spiritually attested to

the need for greater depth of hermeneutical explanation and discussion in future classes for how fathers and their children can grow spiritually. After the survey, the researcher defined the meaning of commandments, statutes, and judgments. Each topic took about twenty minutes to cover. In discussing the commandments, one element that took center stage and became a large part of the course was Exodus 20:1-5 and Deuteronomy 5:6-10.

The Preamble to the Commandments

What became clear to fathers is that the primary number one command that God wants fathers to teach their children is that God is the one and only true God. In the preamble to the Ten Commandments, God makes it clear as He adamantly states, "I am the Lord your God" (Exod 20:2; Deut 5:6, NASB). The first two commandments explicate this, followed by God clarifying that He will not tolerate disobedience in this matter. The statute is that humanity should be obedient to God's command. If not, then judgment will follow as God is a "jealous God" (Exod 20:5; Deut 5:9, NASB). For reasons unknown, many do not emphasize this "jealous" attribute of God, but it became an important part of the course as God's judgment hinges on obedience. The preamble and the first two commandments include commandments, statutes, and judgments. This gave clarity to fathers as to how they can approach teaching their children who God is and what He expects. The spiritual formation of children should begin with who God is and what He expects. God is Love.

What to Teach Children

Now that fathers have an understanding of what God would have them teach about Himself, fathers are challenged to start teaching who God is to their children. There is only one God. He is the true God, no matter what anyone will try to say differently. A future class (Step 4 Week 5) helps in teaching. Two videos discuss the psychology of how children learn and how to

teach young children. The videos clarified how to approach teaching, but at this point, fathers should teach children about one true and loving God. Children can understand this, and it will be exemplified in Chapter Four. To close, fathers were asked to teach their children at least twice in the next week. The class ended with the weekly questionnaire and prayer, and the class was dismissed.

Step 3 Week 3

Last week, fathers learned what to teach their children. The survey they completed dispelled where each father is in their walk with God. One of the points made in the last class pertaining to the father's spiritual maturity was understanding the path of righteousness and what it means. The example used is the account of Abram's belief in God (Gen 15:1-6). After this, the group was asked what they believed about God. The answers, to be covered in results, varied and were in line with the omni attributes of God. One expectation that did not surface, covered last week, was about God being a "jealous God" (Exod 20:5; Deut 5:9, NASB). No one mentioned it. So, the researcher emphasized this once more, and the dominant answer in the room was, "Oh yeah." This particular attribute of God was thereafter reiterated throughout the course.

Survey One Takeaway

The survey is designed to inform the researcher about where the fathers were individually in relation to God. This was important because to teach God's Law, one must know who God is. One in the group stood out by knowing more about God than the others. And one stood out as just getting to know God, yet with a great desire to learn. A fascinating detail within the group was that they became aware of the Holy Spirit working among them. Fathers, for the first time,

began teaching and conveying God to their children, who desired to hear more and learn. This member checking¹⁸ survey showed favorable results to be covered in Chapter 4.

Teaching Experiences

As the fathers took a few moments each to share their experiences teaching last week, the researcher noticed that their answers mimicked their weekly questionnaire answers. What stood out is that fathers as a group would teach by opportunity or on the fly. They started thinking about teaching, which is evidence that they were moving in the direction of understanding their role and, more importantly, taking action. Their reactions became consistent with Deuteronomy 6:7, to teach children when they sit, walk, lie down, and rise. One father who stood out planned his teaching and did so in the evening at the dinner table. Another father would teach whenever he thought about it, combining an activity with a lesson, which he professed began to happen more often. The researcher met one father's son and immediately noticed the fire in the boy's eyes when the father told his son this is my teacher. There was an immediate connection, and he wanted to know more about God.

The Gap

The survey confirmed the researcher's assumption that the group's father's fathers did not teach them God's Law per Deuteronomy 6:1-9. Fathers became aware of a gap in teaching. What came out of the father's group discussion was that nearly half were from broken homes themselves. And none had teaching from their fathers in their youth as commanded by God. Once this was learned, the instruction switched from teaching what commandments are to the three passages (Deut 6:1-9; Ps 78:5-7; Eph 6:4). The focus was on God's command to teach

¹⁸ Stringer, *Action Research*, 4th ed., 93.

children. Fathers became aware of their responsibility to God and their children to teach them God's Law. The researcher emphasized again that these fathers are not at fault for not teaching their children as commanded. They did not know their role because it was not taught to them. However, that does not excuse them from their duty or responsibility. It is an apparent gap that needs filling. Phenomenologically, as a group, fathers agreed that what they have learned and have been counting on is Sunday School to do the teaching. That is what they understood as "the right thing to do." In covering the three texts, they came to realize that they are responsible to God and their children. To end the class, they completed the questionnaire, were challenged to instruct their children at least three times over the next week, prayed, and were dismissed.

Step 3 Week 4

Rules to live by are what keep humans in harmony with one another. Rules from God are statutes. This week, the class began with the second of two Spiritual Formation Surveys (Appendix D). At this juncture of the intervention, it is assumed that the survey will show if fathers have grown in their spiritual maturity. It may also allude if one is on the path of righteousness. The survey may introduce outcomes, if fathers are teaching their children regularly, if their children's spiritual formation is in awareness of who God is, how children respond to learning about God at a young age, and if fathers learning their role will keep them from becoming and absentee father.

Statutes

Statutes are rules that govern how people interact with one another. It has been said that statutes are the laws or commandments that come from earthly rulers or from God¹⁹ that govern

¹⁹ Trent C. Butler, *Holman Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 1991), 1303.

how people live with one another in harmony or a way that glorifies God through their lives and daily interactions. Fathers learned that statutes are the rules that dictate how fathers and their children apply and live by the Ten Commandments. Fathers also learned that most of the six hundred thirteen commandments and statutes mentioned in the Old Testament are for Israel as commandments that “hold a prominent place in Jewish thought.”²⁰ Mosaic laws and statutes dictate the rules and laws of the tabernacle, feasts, sacrifices, and more. Fathers also learned that statutes are the guide for one's path of righteousness. Statutes are the sail and rudder that guide the father in teaching children God's Law.

The Father's Role

God makes known in many places in the Bible that the father has the role to teach. In this class, fathers are expressly taught to accept their role. God commands it as written in Deuteronomy 6:1-9, Psalms 78:5-7, and Ephesians 6:4; therefore, there is no room for error or negotiation. It is here where the gap appears. Scripture shows that the gap started with Israel not being obedient on this matter. Instead of teaching their children God's Law, conversely, many of Israel sent their children through the fire as a sacrifice to Molech (2 Kgs 17:17). So, what is passed on from generation to generation is disobedience. Hence, the gap in teaching children appeared. God chose Israel to be His kingdom of priests, and they agreed, "Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel" (Exod 19:5-6, NASB). So, as God's kingdom of priests, Israel has the responsibility to teach humanity who God is and what

²⁰ Albert D. Friedberg, *Crafting the 613 Commandments: Maimonides on the Enumeration, Classification, and Formulation of the Spiritual Commandments* (Brighton, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2013), 13.

He commands. Israel agreed to this before God (Exod 19:8), but over the years, they have confounded themselves. As a consequence, the gap. As a result, fathers have not learned their role. This course for fathers is to narrow and remove the gap at FBCS. With all that information, the fathers were surprised. Again, they were reminded that it was not their fault. They are but victims of circumstances. It is their responsibility to get on track and point their children in the right direction. The group again completed the questionnaire. This week, they also are asked to sign up (Appendix H) for a personal interview (Appendix G). They were asked to answer questions openly and in detail. This interview is another phenomenological exercise in an open interactive dialogue about the problem, purpose, and thesis to help them avoid being an absentee father, fatherlessness, and a broken home. It is about their children being on a spiritual formation journey. They were asked to try and teach four times this week, prayed, and were dismissed.

Step 4 Week 5

This class was eagerly met with the anticipation to watch videos on how young children learn and how to teach children from a psychological perspective. Both videos were accessed via YouTube and cast on the television supplied by FBCS. Additionally, the interview the group signed up for was rescheduled for the end of the course. The researcher deemed it more advantageous to use the interview as a personal summary of each father's course experience. So, the sign-up sheet (Appendix H) was sent around again so fathers could choose a different date and time as necessary.

Videos on How Children Learn and Teaching Children

The videos are not from a biblical or religious view. They covered the general teaching of young children from a scholastic perspective. On a few occasions, the researcher stopped the video to interject how God's Word fits into the teaching process. Particularly, fathers are to

diligently teach when the children are sitting, walking, lying down, or rising (Deut 6:7). Diligently was the focus of the discussion. What all fathers agreed on is that children learn even when it seems they are not paying attention. Suddenly, out of the blue, children will ask a question or make a comment, showing that they are paying attention even though they are looking around and focusing elsewhere. With diligence, fathers need to keep teaching and occasionally ask questions to refocus the children. The point was made that children do not learn like adults do. The videos brought out good points on how to teach and what to expect when teaching so the right approach can be taken. Teaching should be out of love and not anger. Children turn off their learning ability when confronted with fear.²¹ Children do not learn through logical explanations but rather by theta frequency. Dr. Bruce Lipton posits that “children learn through observation and repetition.”²² Fathers were appreciative of having seen the videos. The web addresses were shared with them so they could view them again.

Spiritual Birth

Additionally, to bolster the learning and growth aspects of children and fathers, a hand out (Appendix K) was distributed to the group expressing a chart by James R. Estep.²³ The chart shows the progression of spiritual formation from baby to child, to youth, and to father. The chart references Scripture fortifying and explaining the growth phases (Baby: John 1:12; 1 Pet 2:1. Child: 1 John 2:12; Heb 5:12-14. Youth: 1 John 2:14; 2 Pet 1:5-8. Father: 1 John 2:23, 13). This exercise was interesting to the fathers as it helped them realize where they were in the process. The surveys they had taken supported Appendix K. Now, they understand where they

²¹ Erik Erikson, Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, Davidson Films, “How Children Learn,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uyf8vQn90Yg>.

²² Little Academy TV, “How young children learn. Efficient approach to early learning.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X6-CSxhdQ2Y&t=1s>.

²³ Estep, *Christian Formation*, 219.

are on the path of spiritual maturity and righteousness and how to get their children on the same path in their spiritual formation.

Judgments

The third part of the Law, judgments, brought to light how serious God is about who He is and what He expects from humanity. Fathers are commanded to teach children to follow and worship God as expressed in the first and second commandments (Exod 20:3-5; Deut 5:7-9). Two texts were covered in showing how God judged Israel and Judah for their disobedience (2 Kgs 17:17-1; Deut 28:15-65). Father's eyes were opened to how serious God is about obeying His commands. What finally hit home was that fathers are responsible to God for teaching their children. Disobedience can have severe penalties. Fathers once again completed the questionnaire. Interestingly, this time, it took a little longer. So, the researcher was anxious to see what, if any, the differences are in the answers. They were asked to teach five times this week; they prayed and were dismissed.

Step 4 Week 6

The research group has learned a great deal of new information over the last five weeks. The exit strategy survey (Appendix F) was passed out and quickly completed. Fathers expressed a new confidence in their newfound biblical teaching abilities. Each father had the chance to share their recent teaching experiences. One consistent theme is that their children have a new sense of who God is and that they need to put Him first, even over video games. That will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Sharing is Caring

Each father had the floor to share their experiences. Smiles and laughter echoed down the halls as fathers shared some of their teaching narratives. Their stories were different and exciting but similar, with God as the protagonist. Some of their stories will be discussed in the results. Phenomenology became an intrinsic part. All were encouraged to share their experiences, emotions, feelings, and outcomes. They have just been through an exercise in teaching their children as never before, from a Christian perspective. This became a segue to mention the follow-up interview, which will be a phone call in about one month's time.

Keep it Up

As a final gesture, fathers were reminded to keep teaching as they have learned. Spiritual formation, spiritual growth, and spiritual maturity were reiterated. Do not think about it too much; let it become a daily habit when sitting around, walking at the baseball field, lying down to sleep, and getting up. There is never a bad time to teach about God the Father; it is what He wants. So, keep it up. Eternal life depends on one's intimate personal relationship with God. The group completed the last questionnaire, said a final goodbye, and prayed. Keep it up.

Intervention Implementation Summary

The Implementation of the Intervention Design was successfully completed. With the realization of the father's role, the study group accepted the role. The qualitative interactive open class involved participants in the learning process for themselves and their children.

Phenomenologically, fathers presented deep personal feelings during the intervention. Fathers were genuinely appreciative and often moved by much of what they learned. Fathers, in their new role, began to teach their children who showed growth in their spiritual formation.

Additionally, fathers displayed growth in their spiritual maturity. Consequently, fathers avoided

becoming absentee fathers, children avoided becoming fatherless, and families avoided breaking apart. Families became renewed in Christ. Fathers learned their role and duty to teach their children as God commanded. The results in the next chapter will convey details, experiences, and growth of fathers and children attributed to fathers learning their preeminent biblical role as commanded by God.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This action research project is qualitative in nature, observing the phenomenon of each participant's teaching experiences. Quantitative studies rely on numbers, whereas qualitative studies dig deeper into people's lived experiences in life. This study features fathers with young children ages six and under. The participant is the father who became the center of focus. Delving deeper, a phenomenological approach renders the father the protagonist in each family phenomenon. The researcher observed that each participant developed his own interpretation of the same information presented in the course.

Collective Results

Based on Patton's position, "interpretation is essential to understanding of experience, and the experience includes the interpretation."¹ The participants often agreed with the class instruction about the father's role and that God commands it, but when it came to applying for the newly discovered role, each applied their duty differently. The various personalities produced mixed interpretations and applications, making this phenomenological approach exciting and interesting.

Data Collection

The data collection implements the triangulation method² involving questionnaires, surveys, and interviews, which are listed below. The weekly questionnaire (Appendix E),

¹ Patton, *Qualitative Research*, 116.

² Stringer, *Action Research*, 4th ed., 81-82.

coupled with the Spiritual Formation Status Survey (SFSS) (Appendix D), gave insight into how children grow in spiritual formation and how fathers grow in spiritual maturity. They assist in determining if fathers accept and apply the role of teaching their young children God's Law. Along the way of the course, a checkpoint evaluates each father's growth and experiences with the personal interview (Appendix G). Rounding out the course evaluation, the exit strategy survey (Appendix F) indicates if fathers have successfully acknowledged their role, accepted their role, implemented their role, and recognized changes in themselves and their children. Using these tools, the efficacy of the course for each participant and the study group can be determined. Ultimately, the follow-up interview (Appendix J) is the key as it dispels the outcome of how the participants fared after one month of taking the course.

Patton describes this course path as a subjective experience.³ In this study, the role of the father in teaching incorporates an objective device, such as the child being a voluntary student. Together, they are the combined reality in a father-child symbiotic relationship, resulting in a complete Christian family. Thus, the subjective experience leads to the avoidance of becoming a broken family or broken home. Consequently, a strong Christian family is "the focus of *meaning-making* as the essence of human experience."⁴ Coming full circle, the true experience of the family should conform to God's command, "I am the Lord your God... You shall have no other gods before me" (Exod 20:2-3, NASB). This first commandment should be the focus of all fathers teaching their children from generation to generation, in perpetuity, thereby bridging the gap.

The participant fathers journeyed the course on behalf of their children and families. Their phenomenological journey was explicated in their experiences shared in the triangulation.

³ Patton, *Qualitative Research*, 116.

⁴ Ibid.

Since the results are based on personal phenomenal life experiences, the participants had various results, yet with many similarities.

The Participants

The research group participants were held to specific requirements. They had to be fathers with children ages six and under. They had to be members of FBCS. As such, the researcher assumed that the participants were professing Christians. The survey revealed that each participant had a different level of spiritual formation and spiritual maturity, yet each was on the road to righteousness. Hence, their interpretations and understanding of Scripture were different. For the researcher to better understand the group's spiritual formation, surveys were administered. Survey questions were personal in nature. One question asked if the participant's fathers taught them God's Law. As expected, most did not, and thus, the participant's spiritual formation varied. Initially, the degree of variance was unknown. The SFSS revealed the variance, enabling the researcher to differentiate three groups, which will be focused on for explicating the results. The SFSS survey revealed the degree and depth of the participant's belief in God. Consequently, three groups emerged. They were identified and named as:

1. Novice Believer
2. Growing Believer
3. Unwavering Believer

For participant anonymity, the group name that an individual is connected with will be used in place of personal names when discussing answers in the data collection tools. In accordance with the consent form and anonymity, at no time will participants names be used.

The Process

The action research project incorporated two small groups. In the two courses, the groups followed a similar path, contributing to the results. A total of nine participants completed eighteen surveys, two surveys per participant for each of the two courses. The methodology in Chapter Three followed a step-by-step implementation of presenting the problem, purpose, and intervention. Although the weekly questionnaire (Appendix E) started at the end of the first class, Step 2 Week 1, the Spiritual Formation Status Survey (Appendix D) in Step 2 Week 2 was the first measuring tool that offered data showing where the participants resided relative to their spiritual formation and spiritual maturity. The significance of this point will be explicated in the Results section. Yet, at this point in the project process, knowing the spiritual formation of the fathers was required.

Spiritual Formation Status was a measurement of their future understanding and interpretation of the information to be presented throughout the course. As the information historically and systematically builds on top of one another, knowing the participant's SFSS will help the researcher with the proper and timely presentation of the information. Once their spiritual status is known, the commandments, statutes, and judgments representing God's expectations of the father in His role and duty for the father to teach his children will be presented.

The weekly questionnaire set the participant's starting point for moving forward. Answers to certain questions revealed if there was any change in a participant along the way of the intervention. Any significant change showed if a participant had grown in understanding the father's role. After understanding the father's role, the gap was presented. The gap is about fathers not performing their duty of teaching; this is due to fathers not understanding their

responsibility to God and their children, which was realized by the participants. Their progressive understanding of the gap cultivated the ground for a solid foundational approach to building a bridge to span the gap. The bridge-building process appeared in the participant's questionnaire answers, which are to be presented in graphs.

The weekly questionnaires showed changes in the path of the bridge building. The questionnaires revealed if the participants were stagnant or if they were progressing in spiritual maturity. Another necessary determination is if fathers had grasped their fatherly role and duty to teach their children. The weekly questionnaires reveal any growth which was also graphed with commentary.

The weekly questionnaire (Appendix E) presents how children grow in spiritual formation and fathers in spiritual maturity which was verified in the questionnaire. The surveys pictured personal progress to be explicated later. The capstone lies with the Follow Up Interview (Appendix J). This interview presented decisive evidence as to the success or failure of the action research project. Additionally, the efficacy of each triangulation step will be determined in the final result. The results begin with (Appendix D) the Spiritual Formation Status evaluation.

The first step in the course was to determine the father's individual spiritual maturity and then the spiritual maturity as a group. The SFSS was the first evaluation, showing each person's starting point for spiritual formation. Interestingly, the notes from classroom conversations with fathers in the field⁵ mirrored the questionnaire results about the starting points of father's/children's spiritual formation. The notes and questionnaires synchronized and supported one another. Some of what fathers talked about regarding themselves and their children in class

⁵ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 180.

was noted. The answers in the questionnaire were cross-checked⁶ and verified the notes taken in the class.

Spiritual Formation Status Survey

The SFSS survey was completed twice, once in Step 2 Week 2 (SFSS 1) and again in Step 3 Week 4 (SFSS 2). The survey is a checkbox type with seventeen questions. Ten questions were yes or no questions and seven were multiple choice questions where more than one answer can be chosen.

Church Attendance

The first five questions centered on basic Christian principles and ordinances. All participants affirmed that they were saved, have been baptized, participate in the Lord's Supper, and attend church regularly. The first change among the participants occurred in how often each attended church. The frequency of church attendance does not prescribe spiritual maturity but can be an indicator of a desire to worship God with other believers. This correlates with one's willingness to teach children as God commanded. In the graph here, the details remain consistent. Fathers did not desire to attend church more often based on taking the course. However, one participant did start coming to church more often, as can be noticed that the once-per-month attendee is no longer visible.

Another aspect consistent throughout both courses is that each father came to church with his wife and children as a family. When they do come to FBCS, more than half attend a Life Group which is consistent with FBCS Life Group attendance mentioned in the Church Area Demographics. This demonstrates that as a family they are involved by coming to church. The

⁶ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 72.

next sort of questions revealed answers that were concerning.

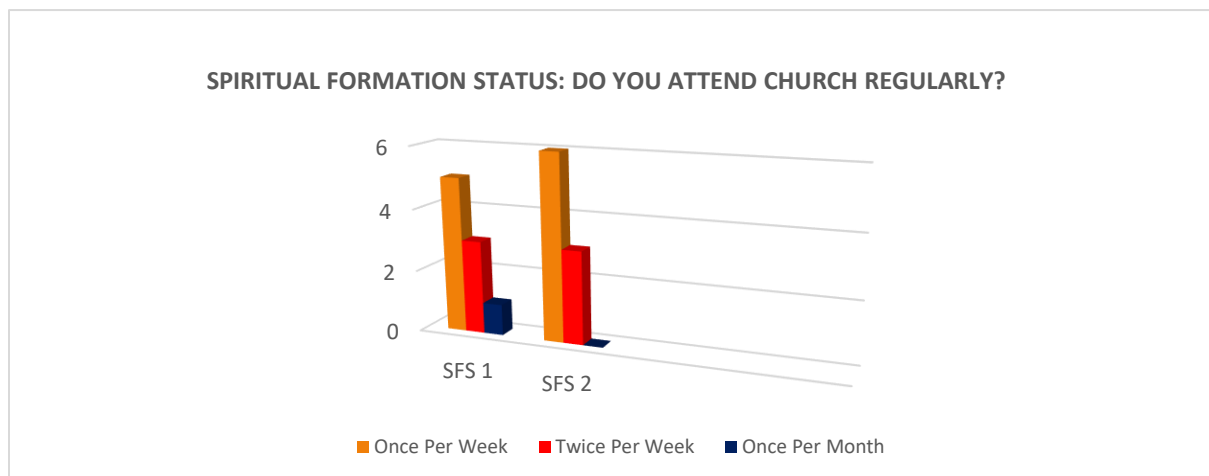


Table 1. Spiritual Formation Status

Bible Reading

Initially, less than half the group read the Bible on a daily basis. Most significantly, one did not read the Bible at all as he relied on others to read and teach Scripture to him. When asked why, the group two growing believer said, "I was raised Lutheran and never took a Bible to church or read one at home. The pastor would read it to us and preach the message, and we went home. Even in catechism class, I was never encouraged to bring a Bible to church." As a group, a little more than half said that they read the Bible. As to the frequency of reading the Bible, what started out as half of the participants improved as the fathers became aware of their role in teaching. Fathers were taught to get better acquainted with God's Word. That comes from reading and studying the Bible. Getting more familiar with God's Word also furthered their spiritual maturity.

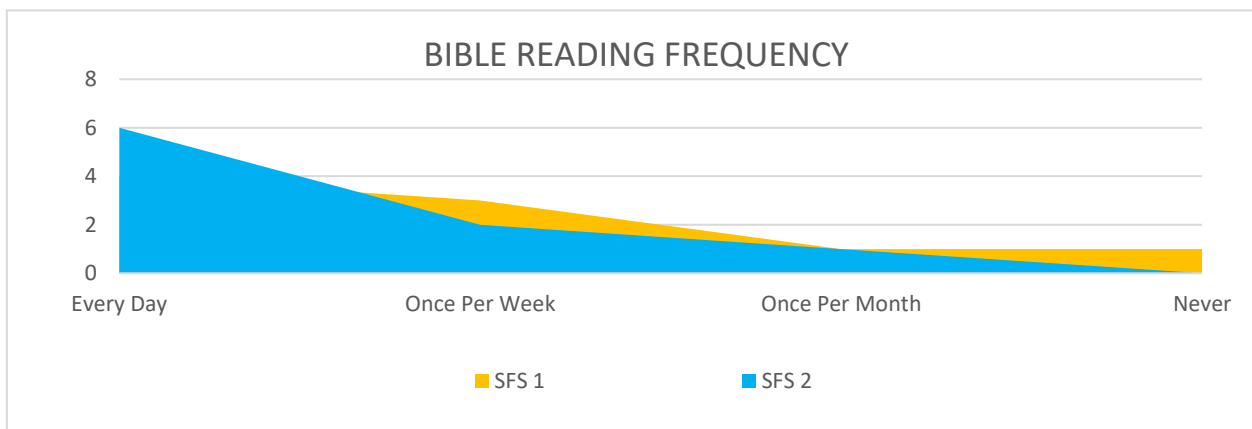


Table 2. Bible Reading Frequency

Prayer Life

The third section of the survey questionnaire dealt with the participants' prayer life. As a group, they all prayed daily for various reasons, such as before meals, on special occasions, for family health, and for work. One aspect that was lacking in prayer was prayer directed towards God and His Majesty. It is good that fathers prayed for thanksgiving and petitions for their families. But the most important prayer that God wants to hear is of praise, honor, and glory of His majesty. John Calvin spoke of "an 'infallible rule' prescribed in Psalms for directing the faithful in giving praise to God."⁷ This is yet another area where fathers excelled once they became aware of the first commandment where God says, "I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God" (Exod 20:5; Deut 5:8, NASB). When teaching children about God's Law, it is intrinsic to show them where God belongs in their hearts, mind, and soul. Praising God, honoring God, and glorifying God above all else is the highest level of spiritual maturity. Once this is truly realized and acted on, spiritual formation and spiritual maturity will flourish in righteousness. The graph shows spiritual maturity rising. Some fathers verified a rise in spiritual maturity. Question

⁷ Howard Neil Wallace, *Words to God, Word from God: The Dual Role of the Psalms in the Church* (London: Routledge, 2005), 11.

thirteen asks if the participant considers himself spiritually mature. The results went from one saying yes to three. Yet the majority of six went from answering "not sure" to "no."

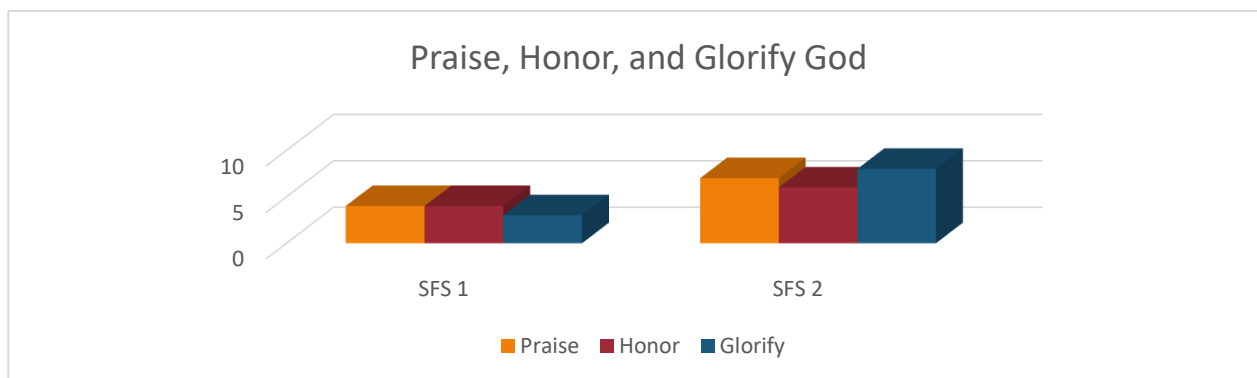


Table 3. Prayer to God

Teaching Children

The survey asked fathers if they felt comfortable teaching their children. All the participants admitted that they share God's Word with their children. However, when discussing this particular question, number fourteen of the survey, some fathers counted bringing them to church as sharing. Those answers became the segue to teach Deuteronomy 6:7 about when to teach children. As far as how comfortable the fathers were about teaching their children, their answers ranged from No Problem, Maybe, Shy, Reserved, and No Way. In SFSS 1, five said No Problem, and four said Maybe. After learning their role and duty to teach, the result in SFSS 2 became a resounding yes for all. And some fathers were also more inclined to talk with others about God.

Spiritual Formation Status Survey Summary

As a result, the SFSS revealed that fathers, by their own confession, did not feel themselves to be mature Christians. The answers in the surveys affirmed this. But each learned his role and duty to teach his children. In doing so, their spiritual formation took root in God's

commandments and statutes. In the first three weeks, the group as a whole noticeably changed as they took possession of their role and started to teach their children as never before. The SFSS was an effective tool in monitoring and recording their growth in spiritual formation and spiritual maturity. In addition to monitoring growth, the questions also gave thought-provoking ideas and instructions on what they should be doing. All the topics that the questions introduced were elements of discussion at one point or another during the course.

The survey stoked awareness of the problem to fathers of FBCS. They had not been teaching their children as commanded. The gap became apparent, and the remedy to teach became agreeably necessary. SFSS 1 and 2 were completed in the first half of the course. As assumed, the results showed the level of spiritual maturity among the participants. The class instruction presented the problem of what God commands and why. As a whole, the group showed inspiring growth and eagerness to teach their children the commandments, statutes, and judgments of God. This part of the action research project presented the problem and the gap that fathers at FBCS do not teach their children as God commanded. The SFSS manifests the father's level of spiritual formation or spiritual maturity. This understanding will assist fathers in receiving and using the information presented in the class for the spiritual formation of their children. The survey showed that more than half of the group answered "maybe" in response to their comfort level of teaching their children God's Law. That was not a favorable result and required discussion.

When discussing the answer "maybe" to question fifteen, it became apparent that this would be an area of concentration for the researcher to focus on. Hence, the purpose of the SFSS was crucial in guiding the researcher in the approach for teaching Exodus 20:5; Deuteronomy 5:8-9, 6:1-9; Psalms 78:5-8, Ephesians 6:4. The collective results from the SFSS exercise were

pertinent to the intervention. In retrospect, the survey results guided the researcher. They were a rudder steering the course, guiding the participants to maximize spiritual formation and spiritual maturity. Fathers became aware of their role to teach and what to teach. The next data collection section explicates the data gathered from the weekly questionnaire (Appendix E). This analysis expresses the efficacious depth and understanding of the qualitative action research project.

The Weekly Questionnaire

The collection of this data was initiated with a Likert scale questionnaire. The questionnaire was started at the end of the first class. It then continued in this manner throughout the course. The questions never changed, but the answers did as the participants changed in their knowledge, understanding, experiences, and spiritual maturity. To monitor and compare the data for any change, the researcher kept a running Excel spreadsheet from week to week. By recording the thirteen answers, change was apparent and immediate. As such, the answers became another tool for guiding the researcher in the weekly topic discussion. The Likert scale questionnaire subliminally prompted fathers to realize their role. It also challenged them to more effectively implement their newfound role and duty. The questionnaire had four sections that stirred the participant's motivation to teach and guided the implementation of their role to teach. The data analysis section will present the details of the results. The following section will discuss the purpose of the data collection.

Are Fathers Conceptualizing Their New Role (Section 1)

The first section has two questions. A basic question asked if they had learned something new, to which all answered "yes" on each questionnaire. This prompted question two, which became an insight into the participant's minds, revealing their perception of the course topics and material. The following is a prime example of what participants gleaned from the course and

how their minds interpreted the information leading to spiritual formation and spiritual maturity development. Reading down the list is like reading a chronological narrative of how the course material was presented. The answers are direct quotes from the weekly questionnaire question two. It asked what stood out the most in class that day.

Q2: What Stood Out the Most?

- “How I need to read the Bible more.”
- “How deep this will and could get.”
- “The division of tribes.”
- “That fathers have a role.”
- “The fatherless leaders who started this trend of not teaching.”
- “The father’s role to teach. The First Commandment, I am the Lord thy God.”
- “I am the God, your God.”
- “It is the father’s role to teach their sons.”
- “The Spiritual Formation.”
- “More about statutes.”
- “The armor of God.”
- “Discipline in the Lord.”
- “How children learn.”
- “Attitudes for school success.”
- “Judgment due to disobedience.”
- “The many judgments from disobedience.”
- “The spiritual birth.”
- “Spiritual birth life cycle.”

The answers reflect the participants insights gleaned from class material in helping them realize their role to teach and what to teach. Occasionally, one of the answers became a qualitative discussion topic. These results will be discussed in the data analysis. Many of the topics correlated with the fathers understanding and confidence level in teaching their children.

The Father’s Confidence to Teach (Section 2)

The second section was direct, asking fathers what their confidence level was for teaching their children. This then led to asking how well the participants knew God's Word, if they were ready to teach God's Word, and how close their relationship was with their children.

This line of questioning established their spiritual preparedness. Psychologically, knowing one's Authentic Inner Compass (AIC)⁸ helps to identify one's self-perception. This then helps to identify what one needs to learn in preparation for teaching their children. It also focuses on the father's need to prepare for teaching. Knowing one's true spiritual maturity level gives one the confidence needed to move forward in "true self-direction."⁹ One of the primary aspects of teaching one's children is having the confidence to do so. This intervention gave fathers confidence by teaching them what they needed to teach, when they needed to teach, how often and for what reason. These points will be explicated in the data analysis.

The Father's Teaching Practices (Section 3)

The third section dealt with how fathers should teach their children. First, ask how they taught in the past. Then, determine what method of teaching they used, such as verbal explanation, showing/demonstrating, or both. To gauge the participant's temperament for teaching, fathers were asked if they raised their voice when teaching, as in frustration. Then, there were thirteen different options to choose from, directing participants to mark all that applied (see Appendix E, question 9). Then, the section was rounded out by asking fathers if their children had asked questions while learning. The point was to discover if the children were paying attention and learning about who God is and whether God will be in their lives. All questions in this section gave fathers something to consider, like how they would teach and, more importantly, how their children understand and react to the teaching. After their teaching habits were established, the frequency came into question.

⁸ Avi Assor, Moti Benita, Yu Shi, Rima Goren, Noam Yitshaki, Qian Wang, "The Authentic Inner Compass as a Well-Being Resource: Predictive Effects on Vitality, and Relations with Self-Esteem, Depression and Behavioral Self-realization," *Journal of Happiness Studies* Vol. 22, Is 8, (2021): 2.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

The Father's Teaching Schedule (Section 4)

This fourth section was straightforward in asking fathers how often they taught before taking the course, how often they taught last week during the course, and how often they plan to teach. Deuteronomy 6:7 was the example that fathers should follow. This section is the bridge that spans the gap. It helps fathers to be aware of the gap and set mental goals. The results of the data analysis will reveal if the participants have the foresight to teach and if they plan to teach. Only time will tell. The culmination of the six weekly questionnaires led to a final exit strategy survey (Appendix F).

The Exit Strategy Survey

The exit strategy survey was the precursor for the phenomenological personal interview (Appendix G), which will be explored in the next section. The seven questions were personal in nature, asking the participants what their observations, personal views, and experiences were from taking the course. Their replies to the questions became a tool for placing the participants in one of the three groups (Group 1: Novice believer; Group 2: Growing believer; Group 3 Unwavering believer). For brevity, the groups will be referred to as Novice, Growing, or Unwavering. The assumption was that participants would move closer to the Unwavering spiritual maturity realm as the course material guided participants in that direction. The intent of the intervention was to help fathers grow in their spiritual maturity and develop their children's spiritual growth. This survey gave fathers the opportunity to realize and write down how they interpreted the course results in their spiritual growth and their children's spiritual formation. Essentially, this survey asked the participants if they noticed any changes in themselves and their children and what their approach would be moving forward. Some specific answers will be explicated in the data analysis. As mentioned, this survey was the precursor to the personal

interview, which was an in-depth investigation of the exit strategy survey. This survey also rounded out the second leg of the triangulation method in preparation for the third data collection tool.

Personal Interview

This third section is the most revealing phenomenological exercise. The previously mentioned personal interview gave the participants the opportunity to exhaustively speak on their experiences of learning a new role and how they implemented what they learned. One aspect that piqued the researcher's curiosity was whether fathers believed that their spiritual growth was appreciable to avoid becoming absentee fathers. In class, they learned that an absentee father scenario is the shaky ground on which fatherlessness has its roots embedded.

The Father's Father

The interview questions were personal in nature, reaching into the participants' past. In attempting to reveal the gap in the participant's past, they were asked to explain their relationship with their father or significant fatherly figure. As mentioned earlier, some were from broken homes. So, their experiences varied and were in tune with modern society, both in the church and in secular society. As Avi and others posited, the true self-direction¹⁰ needs to be individually understood in moving forward. Spiritual maturity needs this compass bearing to keep the participants on track after the course is completed.

The Christ-Centered Student

The second aspect of the personal interview dealt with how fathers interacted with their children based on their role and duty to teach them God's Law. The first item covered the status

¹⁰ Avi Assor, et al., "The Authentic Inner Compass," 2

of the father/child relationship. The purpose was to understand if the child listened with Christ-centered respect to the father. A father needs to respectfully set boundaries for children to adhere to. Children also need true self-direction. The spiritual formation of children needs to have this direction of knowing and understanding who God is and what God's Law is. The father's responsibility is to give his children direction. Additionally, the father should consistently teach God's Law, as presented in the qualitative action research project.

Moving Forward

The third part of the personal interview was concerned with what the father plans to do with this newfound knowledge of the father's biblical role in teaching children. The two main points ask the father to explain his purpose and goal of having been a part of the study group and if the father has accepted his role of teaching his children. The final message to the participant is to expect a follow-up phone call in about one month to review the progress of their spiritual maturity and the children's spiritual formation goals.

The Follow-Up Interview

The concluding follow-up was eagerly approached with curiosity for short-term results. Eight questions paralleled the personal interview. The dominant theme was what has transpired since the action research project course. The questions are listed in Appendix J. In this phenomenological exercise, the participants were open with their answers. At some points, the interview felt like an investigation on behalf of the researcher. Each interview differentiated in its results. In retrospect, the results matched the spiritual level of the father's maturity in maintaining and prioritizing teaching children beyond the course conclusion. The primary element that the researcher was looking to have answered, which went beyond the follow-up interview questions, was whether fathers continue teaching as they did during the course or if

their motivation to teach dropped off to some lesser degree. These questions will be answered in the data analysis section.

Data Analysis

This section will follow the same pattern as the previous Collection Results section with one divergence. The SFSS has been conclusively explicated and needs no more explanation. However, the maturity level groups (Novice, Growing, Unwavering) will be referenced in some of the analysis results. The data analysis will focus on the weekly questionnaires and the Interviews. The follow-up interviews were done in a more relaxed manner, like over a cup of coffee and lunch on a few occasions. Sensing notes that "Sometimes, conversations that occur after the event are crucial. Decisions are sometimes made in the parking lot. People will debrief over coffee afterward and say things that they would have never said during the official meeting."¹¹ This researcher found this advice to be advantageous to the research and, therefore, used it on occasion. This type of atmosphere also made for verbatim¹² reflections in the results, thus giving a better understanding of why participants reacted over time as they did. This then allowed for reoccurring evidence of the gap in how the participants reacted after learning their role in teaching children the commandments, statutes, and judgments. The first analysis is the weekly questionnaire.

Weekly Questionnaire Results Analysis

The questionnaire was an impetus for many class discussions relating to the role of the father. All the participants affirmed that they learned new biblical messages and commands from God in the form of statutes. They learned of the disobedience of Judah and Israel, who did not

¹¹ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 184.

¹² *Ibid.*, 190.

teach their children as they should. Fathers became aware of the gap that fathers did not teach their children God's Law. The current ramifications end in absentee fathers, fatherlessness, and broken homes.

The Gap

Becoming aware of the gap and learning their role in building a bridge by teaching their children was eye-opening for the group in general. Earlier, the participants were grouped into three groups (Novice, Growing, and Unwavering), and during class in Step 3, Week 1, a participant in group 1, a novice believer, mentioned that he did not realize that fathers have a role in teaching their children. Others nodded their head in agreement. It became apparent that none of the participants knew the role that fathers had to teach. Hence, evidence of the gap. What also surprised them is that God commanded it. This then validated the researcher's initial proposal that the problem is that most fathers at FBCS do not know that they have a role in teaching their children God's Law, and therefore, they have not. There are other significant responses to what stood out to the participants over the course, but the gap of not knowing that fathers have a role to teach was the most prevalent.

Confidence to Teach

After the problem was identified, the questionnaire pointed out that the participants' confidence to teach was at a low level. Upon asking the group why their confidence was low, the dominant answer had to do with not knowing what or how to teach commandments to young children. The researcher commented that in a future class, Step 4, Week 5, there will be videos on this subject. This also led to teaching about the preamble and the First Commandment, "I am the Lord your God" (Exod 20:2). Significantly, as the course continued over the six weeks,

the participant's confidence levels went up as they became more knowledgeable and comfortable teaching their children. These results from the questionnaire show that by the end of the course, participants rated higher as a group. Notice in Table 4, in week six, the blue and green represent group 2 growing, and purple represents group 3 unwavering. A noteworthy change is that group 1 novice also grew in confidence, joining group 2 growth in this particular study. Hence, the entire group benefited from the course learning to boost their confidence in teaching their children. In Step 4, Week 5, two videos on how to teach young children¹³ and how young children learn¹⁴ contributed as a significant confidence builder for the participants. The analysis showed that confidence was a contributor to the father's spiritual maturity as well as spiritual formation in their children.

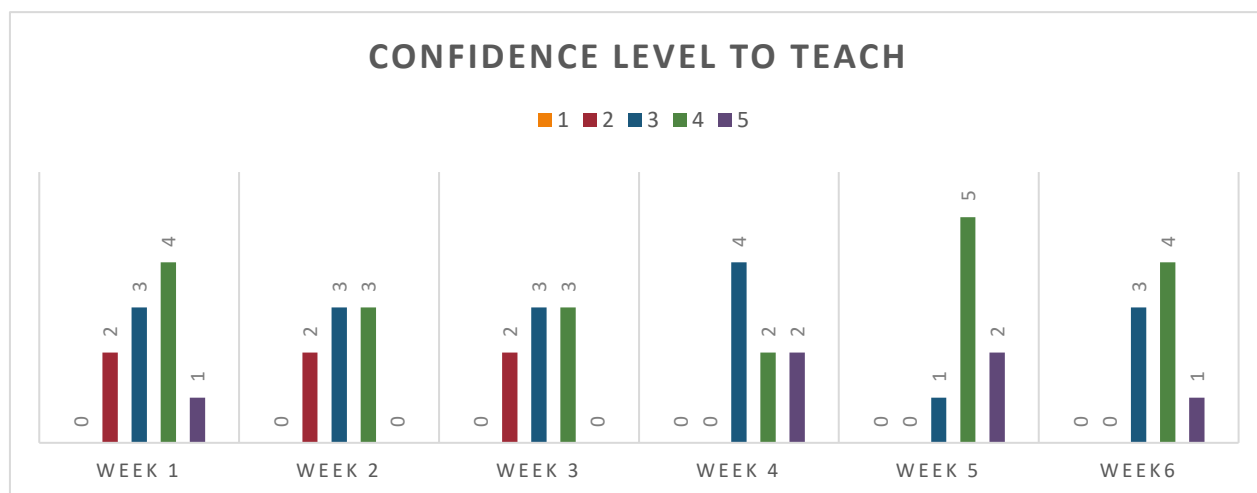


Table 4. Confidence Level to Teach

¹³ Erik Erikson, Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, Davidson Films, "How Children Learn," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uyf8vQn90Yg>.

¹⁴ Little Academy TV, "How young children learn. Efficient approach to early learning." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X6-CSxhdQ2Y&t=1s>.

Reading and Learning Scripture

Learning about God's judgment of Judah and Israel, the participants gained a new perspective on the ramifications of disobedience for failing to teach. In idolatry, Hebrew fathers sent their children through the fire (2 Kgs 17:17). This disobedient behavior was responsible for the gap of fathers not teaching their children. The participants realized that many Hebrew fathers sent their children through the fire and practiced sorcery and divination instead of teaching their children God's Law. The gap became evident. This scriptural example is expressed in God's judgment for disobedience (Deut 28:15-65). Israel's failure to teach perpetuated a gap from generation to generation. Today, the gap of failing to teach results in absentee fathers, fatherlessness, and broken homes. Upon learning this, fathers became aware of the importance of their role in teaching their children.

The goal for fathers became the reversal of this trend. One participant answered question two of the questionnaire, saying, "The fatherless leaders who started this trend of not teaching" stood out the most. That comment became a talking point for the class, showing that the trend started with Israel 2900 years ago when Israel split into the northern and southern kingdoms (1 Kgs 11:31-33). Disobedient kings were discussed. As fathers learned more Scripture, their confidence levels grew. As such, their confidence grew. Fathers felt better prepared to teach their children. Table 5 shows how their readiness improved. All three groups excelled in this area. Participants gained the confidence to teach. Then, questions on how to teach were raised.

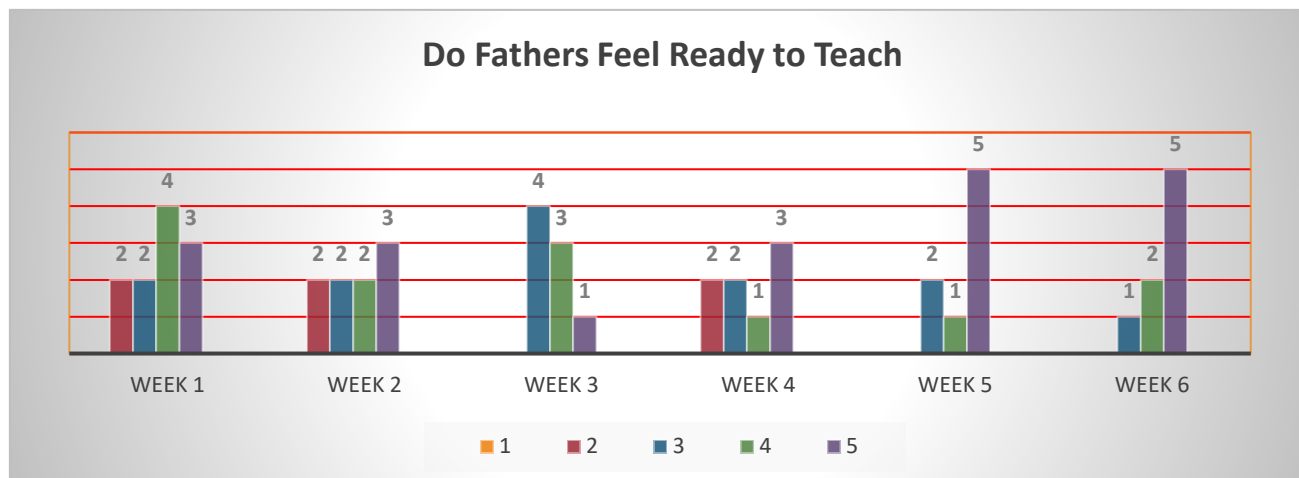


Table 5. Do Fathers Feel Ready to Teach

Approach to Teaching

The first aspect of teaching dealt with individual styles of teaching. All participants used both verbal communication and demonstration to teach their children. When teaching young children, some fathers in the group said they sometimes got aggravated because they thought their children were not paying attention. There was a consistent week-to-week result of five fathers who did not raise their voices when teaching and three fathers who did. This became a topic of discussion during the video sessions on how children learn. What became clear is that young children learn even when it seems that they are not paying attention. Some fathers expressed their experiences as being aggravated. They thought their children were not paying attention. But then, out of nowhere, a child would say something or ask a question relating to what the father had been teaching. They all had this same experience and chuckled about it as they learned this behavior of children in the video.¹⁵ Even when children do not seem to be listening, they are.

One video states that children learn by observation and repetition and not through logical

¹⁵ Little Academy TV, "How young children learn. Efficient approach to early learning."

explanations. Fathers learned that children learn on a Theta Frequency. Theta Frequency suggests that information bypasses the conscious mind and goes directly to the subconscious mind as in a state of hypnosis.¹⁶ So, there is no benefit to raise one's voice in anger when teaching. Even so, the answers on this question did not change throughout the course. The fathers that confessed to raising their voice agreed that that is how they learned from their father. The entire class blamed that behavior to stubbornness and pride. For a moment, there was a brief sense of uneasiness in the class which promoted the idea that everyone has a different style.

Styles of Teaching

Choosing from eleven different teaching styles, the participants took the opportunity to show their creative side and how they like to express themselves when teaching their children. Their choices changed over the six weeks as they learned new approaches and biblical principles in the statutes. The first week was a bit skewed as the class size was larger. From week two on, changes can be seen as fathers learn what to teach and how to teach. Notice in Table 6 how patience, rewards, recognition, and encouragement styles increased. These aspects of teaching contribute to fair and good treatment of the children, which is conducive to spiritual formation and mental health. What also increased were the child-centered aspects to keep their interest. The choices were activities, games, pictures, and a children's Bible. Fathers were commended for their efforts in making their teaching interesting and captivating to the children, which bolstered their spiritual formation and knowledge of God.

¹⁶ Little Academy TV, "How young children learn. Efficient approach to early learning."

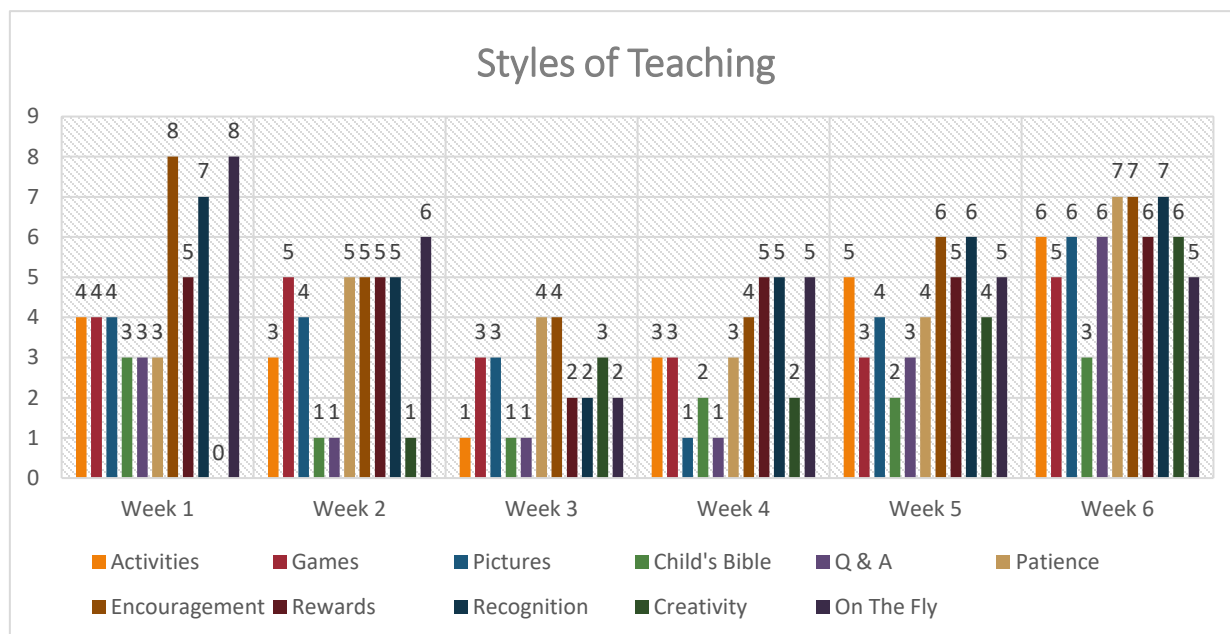


Table 4.6. Styles of Teaching

How Often to Teach

The last section of the weekly questionnaire dealt with three teaching frequencies. How often participants taught their children before taking the course, how often they taught during the course, and how often they planned to teach after the course. Half of the group responded that they had sometimes or never taught before the course. Teaching during the course gradually increased. Participants were first asked to teach once per week. This request increased by one every week, reaching five times per week by Step 4, week 6. By week six, four participants taught twice, one taught three times, and three taught five times. Much of how the participants taught was in relation to teaching on the fly, as they apologetically blamed themselves for being too busy to do a sit-down teaching session. This was attributed to being busy working. So, on the fly, it seems to be the norm. This result shows that the dominant spiritual maturity group is growing. Hence, by the time the course came to an end, of the eight participants, one was a Novice, six were Growing, and one was Unwavering. The weekly questionnaire was an

invaluable tool for measuring the growth of the individuals and the group as a whole. The next data analysis tool categorized each participant into one of the three groups after surveying their spiritual maturity.

Spiritual Formation Status Survey (SFSS) and Personal Interview Results Analysis

Understanding the spiritual formation of each participant was crucial to the approach of explicating the problem and purpose to reach the goal of the thesis. After the participants took the survey, based on their answers, they were categorized as Group 1 Novice believers, Group 2 Growing believers, or Group 3 Unwavering believers. As their survey answers were confidential, others had no idea who said what. So, the researcher used their answers in the survey to categorize them. A novice believer is a person who does not read the Bible but goes to church. Whereas an unwavering believer reads daily, studies Scripture attends church and is involved in church groups. An unwavering believer most likely has a better grasp of God's will and would be more apt to teach his children.

Survey Application

In analyzing the survey answers, one participant was categorized as a novice believer, and one participant was categorized as an unwavering believer. Six participants were categorized in the growing believer group. When analyzing the survey responses, the novice came to church once per week, was not in a life group, did not read his Bible, frequently prayed, prayed for personal comfort, was unsure of his spiritual maturity, was indifferent about teaching his children, and was not sure if he was comfortable with the idea of teaching. On the other hand, the unwavering believer came to church two to three times per week, was in a life group, read his Bible daily, prayed often for his family and for praising, honoring, and glorifying God, felt

spiritually mature, looked forward to teaching his children and was ready to implement his newfound role to teach.

The SFSS helped the researcher teach the class at various levels, which was needed to reach each person with the message that they needed to hear. Therefore, the message was not above or below one's understanding. Throughout the course, the researcher customized the message to reach everyone. In paralleling what Paul taught, "I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some" (1 Cor 9:22, NASB). The same principle is true when teaching this course. The SFSS allowed the researcher to teach all of them. The survey also prepared the group for the final exit strategy survey.

The Final Exit Strategy Survey

Here again, the novice believer's answers will be compared with the unwavering believer's answers. This survey has seven questions designed to reveal what the participants learned and how they changed from participating in the course. In question one, the novice did not see any changes in his child. He attributes no change to his lack of teaching. For question four, he confessed that he had not taught his child at all over the last two weeks. As far as changes in himself, he recognized that he should read the Bible more and lead by example. His teaching has not yet become a habit, but he did say that he has started. What stood out to him from the course was that he learned that he has a duty as a father. This father will be revisited in the Interview analysis.

The unwavering believer saw changes in his children as they asked more questions. He said that his children now talk about God every day. Over the last two weeks, he taught them four times. The changes in this father showed a growing relationship with the Lord. He said, "I am talking with God a lot more now." He realized that it is the father's role to be the spiritual

leader in the family. Teaching is taking root, so it will become a habit. This father said he plans to continue teaching so his children can learn to teach. And when they are older, they will teach their children. Ultimately, he said, "I want them to grow and walk with the Lord in their everyday lives." The difference is clear between these two groups. Nonetheless, they are both on the same path of righteousness and are serving the Lord by teaching their children. The disparity of the groups shows why the SFSS was necessary for customizing the teaching techniques.

The survey showed that all three groups enjoyed favorable results from the course. As different as their actions were, all participants gained an understanding that they have a role to teach their children. All participants in the group checked the question number six box, saying "Yes" to making a covenant with God to teach their children the commandments, statutes, and judgments as God commanded. This survey was another helpful tool in displaying the father's progress in spiritual maturity. Fathers expressed what they plan to do in the future. The analysis shows the efficacy of the research. The results show that the course was needed for fathers of FBCS to learn and act on their roles. All participants in the research intervention planned to teach their children going forward. The classes, questionnaires, and surveys led to the phenomenological personal interview.

Personal Interview and Follow-Up Interview Analysis

Each interview lasted about one hour. The interviews were also recorded. Prior to recording them, the fathers were advised that they were being recorded and were reminded of the consent form (Appendix C), which they signed. The interviews analyzed here are of the novice and unwavering believer. The questions probed in-depth to unearth the roots holding the essence of who the participants are. Patton describes the phenomenological exercise as "interviews with people who have directly experienced the phenomenon of interest; that is, they have 'lived

experience' as opposed to secondhand experience."¹⁷ The first section of the interview dug into the participant's past, asking if their fathers taught them as God commanded. Consistent with the researcher's assumption of the gap, neither had a father who taught them God's Law.

The Novice Believer

The novice believer's father was not a Christian when the participant was a child. The participant had no Christian upbringing. However, he did have friends at school who were Christians who would mention Jesus. So, he did have minimal exposure to knowing Jesus, but only as a name. It was not until he met his wife-to-be that he came to know Jesus. By then, he was in his mid-twenties. He did have a good fatherly relationship with his father, and he respected him. Now, in his forties, he is saved, and his father has come to know Jesus. But still, neither had known about the role of the father. Through this course, the novice has developed a hunger to know God more. The little teaching he has involved his son in has been rewarding. His son, who is four years old, has been asking many questions about God since his father started the course. His love for his father has taken on a new dimension of love through Christ. His son knew about the researcher being a Bible teacher and what he was teaching his father. His father told him about the classes. At one point, the researcher had the blessing of meeting the youngster. At FBCS, the father with his son told him, this is my teacher. The boy's eyes lit up. The researcher lowered himself to the child's level, and the boy came and hugged the researcher with a loving hug. The tug of the Holy Spirit was evident.

The novice father's business keeps him moving, so he says that he does not have much time to sit down and teach. But he does employ what he answered in the questionnaires and teaches on the fly. He was reminded that on the fly is consistent with Deuteronomy 6:7. He has

¹⁷ Patton, *Qualitative Research*, 115.

been teaching his son God's Law and was thankful for the course where he learned a great deal of new information. He knows teaching his son is his role and has committed to keep teaching him.

The follow-up interview verified that he is still teaching his son on the fly. The father said his son is growing in his spiritual formation and that he asks many questions out of the blue. The novice said, "It seems like the boy's mind is always on God now." His son's questions put the father on the spot, and he has to ask questions himself. As he committed, he is teaching more regularly, is now in a men's group, and is reading the Bible more so he can teach his son. At one point, this novice father accompanied the researcher and a few other group participants to see and listen to Dr. Tony Evans, who came to speak a message about "The Call to Biblical Manhood" from part of his book *Kingdom Man*¹⁸ at FBCS.

The Unwavering Believer

This interview was different but similar in many ways. His father has been a Christian since childhood. He was raised in FBCS and took his family to church there. The participant was saved at a young age. This gave him a head start at spiritual maturity over the novice. Yet his father did not teach him God's Law at home. He said they relied on children's church and youth group to teach them what they needed. Hence, the gap was prevalent in the Christian home as well. The unwavering believer had been on mission trips with the youth group. He had been to many summer camps and Vacation Bible School (VBS) events. He had his act together, or so it seemed. With all his Christian upbringing, he still lacked the knowledge of the father's role. The in-depth conversation was heartwarming, yet the concern that he did not know that he had a role

¹⁸ Tony Evans, *Kingdom Man* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2012).

is consistent with the gap. He understands the bridge and has taken on the challenge of building that bridge with his children.

One of his sons is five years old. He was talking with a classmate in kindergarten, and she had already been using cuss words. At the ripe age of five, he told her it was wrong and introduced her to Jesus and God. The father attributed his son's witnessing to what he learned from his father's teaching. He has a younger brother, and they compete in learning Bible stories. The father learned new approaches from the videos in Step 4 Week 5 and was thankful. The father was pleased to announce the continued spiritual growth in this youngster. A point of interest the father realized, understood, and mentioned what if he had died and left his sons without teaching them that they are also to teach their sons. He was concerned that no one would teach them their role, duty, and responsibility. He felt that, in God's eyes, there was no excuse. Even if one dies without knowing, there is a gap. The researcher let him know that his remarks are based on a spiritually mature assessment.

About one month later, the follow-up interview was done. This father continues to grow. His sons are engaged in spiritual formation and the father says they are ready to give their lives to Christ. The researcher assured the father, as one child has already acted on teaching his kindergarten mate, it is evident that one is never too young to build a bridge.

Summary of Results

The problem of fathers of FBCS not knowing their role in teaching their children became evident by applying a triangulation method, which revealed the problem and gap. As explicated by referencing several historical Old Testament books, the gap came about with Israel not honoring their covenant with God (Exod 19:8) in being His kingdom of priests (Exod 19:6). In their disobedience, they did not perpetuate God's command to teach their children God's Law

(commandments, statutes, judgments). Instead, Israel and Judah worshipped other gods, burnt incense on high mountains to other gods, and sent their children through the fire (2 Kgs 17:17). The results found in the triangulation tools show that the gap still exists. Fathers at FBCS who were a part of the qualitative action research project initially did not know that they have a command from God to teach their children God's Law (Deut 6:1-9; Ps 78:5-9; Eph 6:4). The results show that through the course of eight weeks, fathers learned their role, duty, and responsibility to teach their children. In the course, children under the age of six became aware of spiritual formation. They may not fully understand what that means, but their actions, as revealed in the phenomenological interview exercise analysis, showed that the children have grown in their knowledge and love for God as God desires. This was a result of fathers learning and implementing their role to teach their children. Consequently, fathers became more aware of their spiritual maturity and the path of righteousness. Fathers in all three groups (Novice believers, Growing believers, and Unwavering believers) demonstrated growth in their spiritual maturity as their answers in the weekly questionnaires changed. Participant fathers displayed spiritual growth in the direction of maturity, hence on the path of righteousness.

The purpose of teaching fathers of FBCS with young children that they have a role and a responsibility to their children and a responsibility to God to fulfill their duty was delivered via a six-week course taught on two separate occasions. The approach of the course teaching was qualitative persuasion, thus creating an environment of open dialogue of one's volition to be a better father and Christian by learning God's will and teaching their children God's Law. The qualitative openness of dialog in discussing the problem, presenting the purpose, and revealing the thesis outcome of building a bridge to span the gap of not teaching children God's Law resulted in stronger Christian families where fathers reduced and even dissolved the threat of

becoming an absentee father, thus overcoming the risk of fatherlessness and a broken home. The results showed that the action research project was a success with the fathers' small groups at FBCS.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The researcher has facilitated a worthy case that fathers are commanded by God to teach their children. Children are mostly in the home during their formative years, ages six years old and younger. Fathers of FBCS with children in this age group were called upon to participate in one of two qualitative action research projects. As participants, they were taught the three points of the proposal, which will be readdressed for clarity. The proposal laid out the problem, purpose, and thesis pertaining to the preeminent biblical role of the father. The proposal will be compared with the results attained from two small groups that were involved in the intervention project at FBCS.

Research Implications

The relevance of this research brings awareness to all Christians. The focus has been on fathers with children ages six and under. What has been explicated is that God commanded fathers to teach their children the commandments, statutes, and judgments of God, God's Law. That is not to say that women should not teach their children as well, but what it does say is that the responsibility lies on the shoulders of the father. Scripture explicitly shoulders the responsibility on the father, as has been demonstrated in the three passages presented in the thesis (Deut 1-9; Ps 78:3-7; Eph 6:4). The significance of fathers accepting or rejecting their role to perform their duty to teach has important implications affecting fathers, children, families, the church, and society. As posited in this research, since God's command to teach has not been perpetuated, a gap appeared, and God's judgment for disobedience has been significantly

perpetuated. The ramifications are evident. They are witnessed historically in 2 Kings 17:17 and, more recently, are displayed in the 2023 Fatherless Report presented earlier.¹ The importance of this research and study is to bring awareness to the gap prevalent at FBCS. Through awareness, necessary changes can be made at FBCS.

The Problem Readdressed

Fathers at FBCS became aware of a problem. The problem is that most fathers at FBCS do not teach their children God's commandments, statutes, and judgments as God commanded. In the assumptions, it was noted that most fathers had no knowledge of their role in teaching their children as God commanded. In the limitations, it further posited that fathers, in perpetuity, have not taught the role as they themselves were not taught the role. The personal interview (Appendix G) leveled the question to the participants about whether their fathers taught them the role that God commanded. Resoundingly, the answer was no, thus verifying the problem and indicating that a gap existed. In the literature review and throughout the research, it became apparent that there was a gap. Scripture shows that the fathers of Israel and Judah were negligent and disobedient to God in this matter. In place of teaching children God's Law, fathers errantly sacrificed their children to Molech and other gods (2 Kgs 17:17). This created a gap that has not been spanned.

Children's church, Sunday school, and youth groups have done well to fill parts of the gap, but the responsibility to teach children God's Law falls squarely on the shoulders of fathers and not the church. To reiterate, because of the gap, fathers are not to blame as they were not taught their role to teach their children. Yet the problem exists, and the problem is a burden that

¹ Save America Ministries, "Father Facts Fatherhood in Crisis 2023 Edition" (Richmond, VA: CDC, DOJ, DHHS, Census Bureau, 2023).

fathers are responsible for. God commanded fathers to teach their children, which was explicated in three texts presented in the project, Deuteronomy 6:1-9, Psalms 78:3-7, and Ephesians 6:4. So, the participants became aware that the problem exists.

Israel and Judah were judged by God. Both suffered judgment for their disobedience. Today, God's judgment for this same disobedience has come in the form of broken homes. Fatherlessness and broken homes are having a devastating impact on families and present-day society. One statistic that resounds is that 40 percent of all children born in America today are born to unwed mothers.² As shown earlier, the statistics from 2007-2009 are dire for children from fatherless and broken homes. More recent studies in 2023 show that the trend is continuing, “Consequences are Catastrophic! The CURSE of fatherlessness is almost beyond imagination and has nearly destroyed the functional foundation of an entire nation. According to the CDC, DOJ, DHHS and the Census Bureau, children who live apart from their fathers account for:

- 63% of teen suicides
- 70% of juvenile incarcerations
- 71% of high school dropouts
- 85% of youths in prison
- 85% of children with behavioral disorders
- 86% of rapists
- 90% of homeless and runaway children
- 90% of children living in poverty
- 100% of gang members”³

Most of the numbers are consistent. However, rapists went up 6 percent, poverty levels rose, and gang member activity also climbed dramatically. So, the problem persists. FBCS

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Center for Health Statistics, “Unmarried Childbearing, Births” <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/unmarried-childbearing.htm>.

³ Save America Ministries, “Father Facts Fatherhood in Crisis 2023 Edition” (Richmond, VA: CDC, DOJ, DHHS, Census Bureau, 2023).

fathers are not immune and, therefore, are ripe for the purpose of the qualitative action research project to first avoid becoming absentee fathers.

The Purpose Readdressed

The purpose of this DMIN action research project was to teach fathers of FBCS their role, duty, and responsibility of teaching their children God's Law. As the problem was clarified to the participants, they realized the significance of the purpose to teach participant fathers their role and duty to teach their children God's Law. The largest portion of the father's role taught was the clarification of and adherence to God's command. The father's role is not simply a suggestion. The father's role is a responsibility to God first, then to the father's children, and this responsibility should span from generation to generation. To span the gap at FBCS, fathers learned their roles, duties, and responsibilities.

The methodology was comprised of an eight-week course that presented pertinent scriptural essentials pointing out the preeminent biblical role of the father. The course guided, directed, and assisted the participants in avoiding becoming absent fathers. Participants learned and acknowledged that the absentee father is the beginning of the path of destruction for the family. An absentee father most often progresses into fatherlessness. The participants became aware that fatherlessness leads to a broken home. The hurt and pain associated with a broken home brightens the realization that God's judgment is because of the father's disobeying and not teaching children God's Law. When fathers teach their children God's Law, the precedence is set; in obedience, God's expectations of His command are met, and fathers apply their roles, duties, and responsibilities. The purpose of this qualitative action research project to teach fathers their purpose is also achieved.

Fathers learned their roles, duties, and responsibilities. Even so, in the Follow-up Interview (Appendix J), there were mixed results. The most significant realization in both course groups was the awareness of the problem. The purpose then raised the expectations of what God commands all fathers to do, which is to teach their children. Fathers learned and implemented teaching their children God's Law. Teaching their children God's Law seeded the children's spiritual formation and expanded the father's spiritual maturity. When teaching children as God commanded, the two perpetually go hand-in-hand from generation to generation as instituted by God. The result is a strengthened Christian family with the avoidance of becoming a broken home.

In evaluating the follow-up interview, all, with the exception of one father, were still teaching their children regularly. Since fathers have taken action to implement their roles, they have accepted their responsibilities and duties. Therefore, the participants are considered obedient in following God's command to teach their children. Obedience is the measure of one's righteousness, and the participants in both groups were well on the path of righteousness. As a result, the purpose had significant success in teaching fathers their preeminent biblical role to teach.

The Thesis Readdressed

God's judgment for disobedience is real and can be severe. The day is coming when all fathers will answer to God for teaching their children God's Law or for not teaching God's Law. Therefore, if fathers learn and implement their role to teach God's Law, then teaching children strengthens families (Deut 5:33). Obedience to God will reverse social problems of absentee fathers, fatherlessness, and broken homes. Judgment will pass by just like when the Lord passed over the homes that had the blood of the lamb painted on the lintel and door posts (Exod 12:23).

According to the results of Appendix J, the participants who adhered to God's command by teaching their children have noticed a change in their children towards God. Children have been asking questions about God and want to know more. One must keep in mind that these children are six years of age and under. They are inquisitive, which brings awareness to what Jesus said, "Let the children alone and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matt 19:14, NASB). Children are seeking the Lord.

On one occasion, a participant's son recognized the researcher as his father's teacher, and the child came to hug the teacher. It was evident that the intervention was working. Seeing the joy for God in the child's heart must have been what Jesus saw in the children coming to Him. This type of joy and love for God, exuberated in children, will deter absentee fathers, thus avoiding fatherlessness and a broken home. As predicted, families are strengthened in Christ for the glory, honor, and praise of God. God commanded fathers to teach their children to reestablish the obedient, loving relationship God had with humanity through Adam before the fall. Teaching God's Law avoids judgment and administers blessings of eternal salvation. The results showed that the participants received God's Law. The participants learned their role in teaching their children God's Law. The participants acted and administered God's Law. The participants strengthened their families in God's Law. Spiritual formation and spiritual maturity became rooted in eight families at FBCS through an intervention.

Implications of Fathers Who Teach God's Law

Fathers not knowing their role, duty, and responsibility leads to absentee fathers in the home. This then leads to fatherlessness and broken homes. David Popenoe explicates the ramifications of fatherlessness from a secular perspective. Studies have shown that families without the presence of godly fathers often end up as broken homes regardless of whether the

family is secular or religious. Popenoe records alarming fatherless trends. Children growing up in fatherless homes, which are “mother-headed families are the very poorest of the poor.”⁴ Conversely, when godly fathers perform their role and duty, the preeminent biblical role of the father research shows that families which have fathers who teach their children God’s Law are spiritually strengthened and they avoid becoming a broken home.

The recent fatherlessness statistic shows that “children who live apart from their fathers account for 100% of gang members.”⁵ Therefore, when fathers teach their children as God commanded, the likelihood of children joining a gang significantly drops. Fathers who teach their children God’s Law become spiritually mature. Teaching God’s Law has spiritual and positive effects on children, family, church, and society.

Implications of Children Who Learn God’s Law

As mentioned earlier, children learn “through observation and repetition.”⁶ When at the ages of six and under, children are primarily under the influence of their parents. Hence, what parents do at home in teaching their children directly or indirectly becomes the children’s societal and moral compass. Kvanvig speaks of youngsters making a commitment, and when a youngster follows through on a commitment, “he will be properly characterized as being faithful to the ideal in question, or pursuing it faithfully.”⁷ Fathers teaching their children God’s Law at a young age sets the teaching precedence for life, “Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Prov 22:6, NASB).

⁴ Popenoe, *Families Without Fathers*, 55.

⁵ Save America Ministries, “Father Facts Fatherhood in Crisis 2023 Edition” (Richmond, VA: CDC, DOJ, DHHS, Census Bureau, 2023).

⁶ Little Academy TV, “How young children learn. Efficient approach to early learning.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X6-CSxhdQ2Y&t=1s>.

⁷ Kvanvig, *Faith and Humility*, 19.

Children with a godly upbringing will be better prepared for the inevitable confrontation with secular life once they start school. This was the reason that the participant criteria required that the participant's children be ages six and under. The purpose was to have children grounded in spiritual formation prior to starting school, where they will no doubt be confronted with worldly pleasures, lusts, and temptations. Learning God's Law will strengthen and prepare the child's defense so they will recognize the wiles of the devil early on in life. One participant in group 3 was unwavering; his five-year-old son had already encountered a vulgar verbal confrontation at daycare. He told his daycare companion that what they were saying was wrong and that they needed to get to know Jesus. This is evidence that teaching children God's Law at an early age breeds spiritual formation.

Implications of Fathers Teaching God's Law on the Family

One often hears a saying in church or among Christians, which says, "a family that prays together stays together." Through family prayer, solidarity results in a "cohesiveness based on religious convictions that shaped a tight-knit family structure."⁸ One of the intentions of this research project was to determine if fathers teaching their children God's Law did indeed strengthen the family. The follow-up interview verified that the families became closer. The weekly questionnaire showed that children developed a desire to hear more about God. Children became more inquisitive and asked questions about God. The effect on fathers motivated fathers to want to teach more. Teaching children as God commanded is the recipe for avoiding broken homes. Thus, the family is strengthened, and this spills over into the body of Christ.

⁸ Francesco Barbera, Henry X. Shi, Ankit Agarwal, Mark Edwards, "The Family That Prays Together Stays Together: Toward a Process Model of Religious Value Transmission in Family Firms," *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 163, No. 4, (May 2020): 10.

Implications of Fathers Teaching God's Law to Children in the Church

Often today, preachers, elders, deacons, and laypersons on television, YouTube, Sunday school classes, or in the pulpit call for revival. Such people want to bring America back to how it was in the beginning. Little do people know or recognize the gap presented in this thesis. As fathers have not obediently taught their children as God commanded, children have become worldly and secularized. Church attendance in America has steadily declined in the last twenty to thirty years.⁹ It is not uncommon to see mostly gray-haired people in congregations. The teaching gap has broadened. Fatherless statistics show that many children no longer attend church as they are fatherless and they live in a broken home. Church attendance suffers along with the broken family.

To revitalize the families at FBCS, fathers with young children were offered two small group opportunities to learn their role and start teaching their children God's Law. This would strengthen their family in Christ, avoid becoming an absentee father, avoid fatherlessness, and avoid succumbing to becoming a broken home. This revitalization of the family will also revitalize the church as people will return to church as an obedient family following God's Law.

Implications of Fathers Teaching God's Law to Children on Society

Revival in the church would assimilate lost people to Christ. Fathers teaching God's Law to young children is the simplest form of teaching God's Word. Teaching affects the child, the family, the church, and society. In ancient biblical times, the society responsible for teaching other societies about God was Israel (Exod 19:5-6). Since Israel fell short by disobeying God's

⁹ Mark Chaves, *American Religion: Contemporary Trends* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017), 56.

command to teach their children God's Law, the gap ensued. The gap became societal, affecting cultures around the world.

To get fathers on track with God's command, fathers at FBCS were taught their role in teaching their children God's Law. The implication is that this qualitative research project will catch on and go beyond the bounds of FBCS, take hold in its local society, and spread. By fathers learning their role and implementing their duty, they become responsible members of the family, church, and society. This may, in turn, be the impetus for revival starting in the hearts of children who have learned God's Law. In turn, society will benefit from this, one child at a time. Possibly, that is what Jesus meant when he told His disciples to let the children come to Him (Matt 19:14).

Research Applications

A prevalent attribute of this research project was the qualitative approach involving two small-scale groups. In using this approach, the data collected was comprised of personal experiences which sometimes required anonymity and privacy, thus requiring consent from all the participants to control the releasing of any personal and private information in the form of research results. The research applications are based on qualitative research that covers a broad but limited data collection triangulation method, and workable methodology steps. Combined, they created a research project that can be duplicated.

Qualitative Approach

The qualitative approach allowed for open discussion and a free flow of information within the classroom setting. Topics of discussion were driven by participants' experiences, feelings, emotions, ideas, concerns, suggestions, and other personal contributions presented in the research results. The purpose of the qualitative approach was to look into each of the

participant's family phenomena, thus boosting the qualitative approach with a phenomenological nucleus. The nucleus revealed the who, what, when, where, how, and why the participants responded as they did in the research project data collection tools, for which the majority of the results were explicated in this thesis. A quantitative approach was used in a limited way. The quantitative approach revealed how the participants progressed in learning their role to teach their children; it measured the children's spiritual formation and the father's growth in spiritual maturity.

The qualitative approach took a personal direct path in drawing results from the participants that can be shared with others who may be experiencing similar situations. One similarity between the two group participants was that their fathers did not teach them their roles. Most of the participants were categorized and placed in group 2, growing. Their Bible knowledge was mediocre. They were not comfortable or did not know how to discuss God's Law with children. And lastly, on an encouraging note, they all wanted to learn how to implement their role so their children would be God-fearing Christians who would teach their children when they are grown and have their families. The previous is one result that the researcher had in mind, that God's Law will be taught by fathers from generation to generation as God commanded, thus spanning and possibly eliminating the gap.

Triangulation Method Approach

This research tool was also duplicable. Whether future researchers use the same appendices found in this thesis or modify them to cater to their research, the triangulation tool was and can be an invaluable asset by phenomenologically discovering the participant's motivations for how they taught their children and what their future approach is in continuing to teach their children. When applied as Sensing demonstrates, triangulation becomes a tool that

allows the researcher to cross-check data from three different avenues to get a deeper understanding of the results. Triangulation "provides breadth and depth to your analysis and increases the trustworthiness of your research."¹⁰ The researcher applied questionnaires, surveys, and interviews to collect data. Triangulation provided necessary information in every aspect of the research and showed to be trustworthy.

The necessary information includes but is not limited to the participant's spiritual formation status, the participant's historical account of being taught the role of the father, whether they have taught their children, what they have taught, how often they have taught, and do they plan to continue teaching. The significance is in helping fathers be obedient to God's command. Fathers learned their role, duty, and responsibility to God and their children. The application and implementation of the plan to continue their role correlate with the information shared in the course's teaching. Again, the information shared is necessary for all fathers and is duplicable.

Methodological Approach

The key to sustained workable research is its replication. If a project is too difficult to follow, it will lose interest from others. When a project stirs the interest of other researchers, they discover new informative results, and they add to what has already been discovered, making the research legitimate. In this way, a worthy method can be continuously reapplied by others. This researcher was mindful to maintain a simple approach.

The researcher's application of the methodology was simple and duplicable. The research covered four steps in a total of eight weeks (two weeks of introduction and six weeks of classroom study). The research covered relative information on the biblical role of the father, his

¹⁰ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 70.

duties, and responsibilities in relation to God's Law. The methodology correlated with the qualitative approach by using the triangulation data collection method. On the whole, the research application successfully confirmed the proposal problem, instituted a workable purpose, and presented a solution to the thesis by strengthening the participant's families in the name of Christ.

Research Limitations

The initial limitations centered on prospective participants and why they may or may not be a part of the action research project. After incorporating two small groups, new and unsuspecting limitations to the research stood out. The first limitation centered around what has been posited dealing with the male ego and pride. Some prospects felt that they had a good handle on teaching their children by bringing them to church and letting children's church and Sunday school teach their children what they needed to know. What was exhibited in the course was that God commands fathers to teach their children. It is the father's role, duty, and responsibility. This limitation became a hurdle for any researcher taking on this project. Another limitation is time.

All fathers with young children are more than busy in raising their children and maintaining a family. Most who were spoken with felt that they were doing what they could to carve out time to come to church on Sunday. Adding more to their plate just was not possible, or so they complained. Some would give the researcher the feeling that they would come, and then they never showed up or answered a text message. Some of the father's reactions were uncanny. This limitation affected the Step 1 process in raising awareness and concern among fathers with young children. It is also a hurdle that any researcher will have to negotiate to get the research

project off the ground. After getting into the six-week course, limitations took on a different form.

While teaching the course, it was difficult to stop and take notes. Teaching turned into conversations. Conversations were qualitative and phenomenological experiences. Sensing mentioned having one in the group take notes.¹¹ The researcher asked the participants if anyone would take notes, but none volunteered. A secretary would have been a valuable addition to the group. Each of the classes went by quickly. The participants had other family responsibilities, and when the class was over, they were gone. This may not be a limitation, but it opens one's eyes for what to notice and look for in the participants. Interestingly, the single participant in group 3, unwavering, was always the last to leave and was ready to learn more even while in the parking lot. On the other end, the one participant in group 1, the novice, was usually the last one to arrive and the first one out the door. But he did show up every week and showed progress in learning his fatherly role.

A final limitation of the research was finding the right time for all to meet. The researcher chose two different days of the week to meet with the two different groups. One realization the researcher had is that many different undertakings compete for time in young families, like football, cheerleading, soccer, and basketball, which seem to be more important to fathers than learning their role, which God commanded. In retrospect, since the largest group was group 2 growing, that would have also been the majority of prospective participants. Most are growing and may not possess the unwavering attitude that God comes first. The growing may say God comes first, but their actions show otherwise. This research limitation is a matter of personal

¹¹ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*.

preference and attitude towards God. It is also why, in each class, at some point, the researcher reiterated Exodus 20:3 and Deuteronomy 5:7, "You shall have no other gods before me."

In considering all the research limitations, the one that would require the most preparation is Step 1 Weeks 1 and 2, the announcement period. Getting the research project going needs people. The qualitative approach presented the best in depth phenomenological results based on the participant's lived experiences.¹² To get fathers to participate in a time-consuming class requires a plan. The limitation is a one-on-one conversation in the halls of the church. This was a limitation because a church policy is that if a class at church does not affect 50 percent of the congregation, then it will not be announced. This was never mentioned to the researcher until after the project started. Another limitation uncovered is that the researcher needs to get a better understanding of church policies for teaching a class. Each church will have its own limitations based on the size of the church.

Further Research

This researcher recognized three areas of further research. The research topics follow the lines of a textual word study, an exegetical study, and a practical application study.

The first research study is a textual word study, an argument of semantics. The Hebrew Bible, in its original Hebraic form, used the word "*bane*." Today, in most modern translations of Deuteronomy 6:7, it is translated as "children." Upon researching sixty-three different Bible translations, nine versions used the word "sons," and the rest replaced "sons" with "children." Among those using the word "sons," they are either older/earlier Bible translations or word-for-word translations such as the NASB 1995. This study would focus on the word בן (*bane, ben*) "son." The significance is that all children should learn God's Law, and it is the father's role,

¹² Patton, *Qualitative Research*, 115.

duty, and responsibility to make this happen. This study would require the input of experts and scholars of Hebraic text, custom, and Jewish historical law.

The second area of further research is an exegetical study of Genesis 2. This text discerns the unique role of the father to God and teaching his family God's Law. This research would investigate if Genesis 2:17 provides precedence for paternal leadership in teaching God's Word to the family. The significance in society today is that fathers are often absent, thus obligating mothers to inherit the spiritual leadership role in the family. Churches have also taken responsibility for teaching children. Voddie Baucham, in a sermon on YouTube, "Leading as a Husband and Father," teaches that this model, as good as it may be, is not scriptural. So, Genesis 2:17 needs further exegetical research to clarify roles.

The final area is a practical application study of parent's roles. The Bible clearly states the roles of both father and mother. The roles of both should be studied simultaneously, and their roles should be compared and contrasted to see how they should work together in teaching the family. A study on this topic will look at how the family grows in spiritual maturity, with the parents working as a team in teaching children God's Law.

APPENDIX A**Research Project Permission Response**

Date:

Dan Spencer

Senior Pastor

First Baptist Church Sevierville

317 Parkway

Sevierville, TN

37862

Dear Frank Heilmeier

After careful review of your research proposal entitled Fathers are Commanded to Teach Children God's Law, I have decided to grant you permission to access our membership men, contact our men faculty, and staff, to invite them to participate in your study at First Baptist Church.

Check all the following boxes, as applicable:

- I will provide our membership list to Frank W. Heilmeier, and Frank W. Heilmeier may use the list to contact our members to invite them to participate in his research study.
- I grant permission for Frank W. Heilmeier to contact men who are fathers of children between the ages of newborn to 6 years old, to invite them to participate in his research study.
- I will not provide potential participant information to Frank W. Heilmeier, but we agree to provide his study information to fathers of children between the ages of newborn to 6 years old on his behalf.
- I am requesting a copy of the results upon study completion and/or publication.

Sincerely,

Dan Spencer

Senior Pastor

First Baptist Church Sevierville

APPENDIX B

RESEARCH STUDY ANNOUNCEMENT/ADVERTISEMENT

Fathers with Young Children!

The Problem: Satan's Evil Plan to Attack Fathers

The Role of the father is under attack by Satan. Inciting broken father child relationships leads to absent fathers, fatherlessness, and broken homes.

The Solution: God's Righteous Plan for Fathers

Teach fathers their God commanded fatherly role to teach their children, thus molding and strengthening their relationship in a Christ centered bond.

Plan of Action: The Life Change University

A short 8-week program designed for Fathers with Children ages six and under.

Fathers will learn:

- How to be Godly fathers in the home
- How to be a Christ centered family man
- How to strengthen the father child relationship
- How to avoid being an absent father, fatherlessness, and a broken home

Benefits for Fathers

If Fathers will learn their fatherly role, then Fathers will gain:

- A close relationship with children in Christ
- A stable functional family in Christ
- Spiritual formation of children in Christ
- Spiritual Maturity of the father in Christ

When and Where:

When: Starting Date TBD and Announced

Time: 5:40-6:30 PM

Location: FBCS, Room E-211

For questions and more information:

Mention the Father's Role to

Frank Heilmeier: Call or text: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

APPENDIX C

CONSENT TEMPLATE: GENERAL

Consent

Title of the Project: Fathers are Commanded to Teach Children God's Law

Principal Investigator: Frank W. Heilmeier, Student/Doctoral Candidate, John W. Rawlings School of Divinity, 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 male, father, and member of First Baptist Church Sevierville with children of ages up to six years old. The children must not necessarily be the biological child of the father as long as the father is in the primary father role for the child and is married to the child's mother. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

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

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

The problem is that fathers at FBCS do not teach their children God's statutes and commandments at home during the week as God commanded. So, the purpose of the study project is to research the problem and teach fathers, in men's group meetings, their fatherly role of teaching children God's Law.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

The total time of the project will be ten weeks for a total of ten to eleven hours of instruction and data collection.

- Step 1 will be the introductory one-on-one encounters with fathers of young children. An action focused research group will be assembled. Consent forms will be sent with participants who will take part in the action research project to be brought with them next week.

Starting with Step 2, the project will last for a period of nine (9) weeks. Weekly meetings will be held at FBCS on Wednesdays from 6-7 PM in building B, room 4. Steps 2, 3, and 4 will consist of three weeks each covering the following details.

- Step 2 will be three weekly meetings discussing the problem, the purpose of the research, and the desired outcome. The meetings will address individual spiritual formation. Discipleship of children will begin in week two continuing for the remainder of the research project. Each week will have a brief questionnaire.
- Step 3 will be two weekly meetings discussing experiences in discipleship of children, spiritual formation of the family, and a personal interview will take place. Each week will have a brief questionnaire.
- Step 4 will be three weeks discussing the psychology of teaching young children and how to teach young children in way that they understand God's Word. The research phase of the project will come to a close with a final questionnaire and survey.

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

The first task is to participate in an in-person, audio-recorded interview that will take no more than 1 hour.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

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

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 mandatory 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?

Please read the below definitions before completing this section:

***Confidential** means **you will be able** to link individual participants to the information they provide or are associated with, but you will not disclose participant identities or how named or identifiable individuals responded.

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 members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.
- Data collected from you may be used in future research studies and 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 and in a locked file cabinet. After five years, all electronic records will be deleted, and all hardcopy records will be shredded.**
- Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for five years. The researcher and members of his doctoral committee/the study team/etc. will have access to these recordings.

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

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

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

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

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. 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 Frank W. Heilmeier. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him at [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] You may also contact the researcher's faculty mentor, Dr. Mark Brown, [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.

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 are agreeing 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-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

**APPENDIX D
SURVEY**

SPIRITUAL FORMATION STATUS SURVEY (SFSS)

The following questions will assist in determining one's current Spiritual Formation Status. This will help the researcher determine one's willingness to teach one's children God's Law. Please answer honestly. Any information provided will be kept confidential.

Check the appropriate boxes and fill in boxes marked Other if that is chosen.

If Other is chosen as an answer, please Fill in your response.

Print Name:

Date: M/D/Y

1. Are you saved? Yes No
2. Have you been baptized? Yes No
3. Do you participate in the Lord's Supper? Yes No
4. Do you attend church regularly? Yes No
5. How often? Once Per Week Twice Per Week Once Per Month Other: Fill In
6. Who all comes to church with you?
 Wife Children Friends Other: Fill In
7. Are you a member of FBCS? Yes No
8. Are you in a Life Group? Yes No
9. Do you read the Bible? Yes No
10. How often do you read the Bible?
 Every Day Once per week Once per month Other: How Often.
11. How often do you pray to God? *Check All that Apply*
 Daily Before Meals Weekly Special Occasions
 Rarely With the Family Other: Explain.
12. Reasons for Prayer? *Check all that apply*
 Personal Needs Thanksgiving Praise Honor Glorify
 Pain/suffering For wife For children For others
 For Work Other: Explain.
13. Do you consider yourself spiritually mature? Yes No Not Sure

14. Do you share God's Word with your children? Yes No

15. What is your comfort level talking with your children about your faith?

No Problem Maybe Shy Reserved No Way

16. Do you share your faith about God, Jesus, and Holy Spirit with others? Yes No

17. What is your comfort level talking with others about your faith?

No Problem Maybe Shy Reserved No Way

APPENDIX E

WEEKLY QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is designed to track overall growth in teaching your children God's Word. It will be taken weekly. It is important to answer honestly to measure any changes important to the research results.

- Choose the appropriate Step/Week and Multiple-Choice Answers.
- Step/Week:
 - 2/1 2/2 2/3
 - 3/1 3/2 3/3
 - 4/1 4/2 4/3

- Questions with, "On a scale from 1 to 5", 1 is Least Likely, and 5 is Most Likely.
- Wherever "God's Word" is used, it relates to the commandments, statutes, and judgments of God referred to in Deuteronomy 6:1.

1. Have you learned something new in the last week? YES NO

2. What stood out the most? Write in your answer:

3. On a scale from 1-5, what is your confidence level in teaching your children so that they will understand well enough to tell you what they learned?

1 2 3 4 5

4. On a scale from 1 to 5, how well do you know God's Word?

1 2 3 4 5

5. On a scale from 1 to 5, Do you feel ready to teach your children God's Word?

1 2 3 4 5

6. On a scale from 1 to 5, how close is your relationship with your child/children?

1 2 3 4 5

7. How do you primarily teach your children?

Verbal Explanation Showing Both

8. Do you raise your voice while teaching your child/children? Yes No

9. What style/s and format of teaching do you use? Check all that apply.

Fear Patience Intimidation With Pictures Activities Games

Rewards Recognition Encouragement Question Answer Creativity

With a Children's Bible On the Fly/Opportunity Other: Describe

10. Does your child/children ask questions when learning? Yes No

11. How often in the past did you teach your Child/Children about God?

Daily Weekly Sometimes Never

12. How many times did you have a teaching session this past week?

1 2 3 4 5 More.

13. What is your goal of teaching frequency over the next week?

1 2 3 4 5 More

APPENDIX F**FINAL EXIT STRATEGY SURVEY**

- In a few sentences each, respond to the following questions.

- If more space is needed, write the question number on the back with any additional comments.

1. In what ways did the research project influence any spiritual changes in your children?

2. What noticeable changes have occurred in you, the father?

3. Why is it important to accept and perform the role as teacher in the family?

4. How many times did you teach your children over the last two weeks?

5. Explain if and how teaching has become a habit.

6. Will a covenant be made with God to continue to teach one's children God's Word, the commandments, statutes, and judgments, as God commanded? Yes No

7. Explain your decision:

APPENDIX G
PERSONAL INTERVIEW

Please Explain in at Least One Sentence. If more space is needed use the back of this form.

1. Explain, what type or kind of relationship do you have with your father?
2. Did your father teach you God's Law as commanded by God?
3. Explain the previous answer. Why or why not did your father teach you.
4. Explain what type or kind of relationship you have with your child/children.
5. Have you been teaching your child/children God's Law as God commanded?
6. Explain why or why not you have been teaching your child/children God's Law.
7. Explain why you think it is important to teach your child/children God's Law.
8. Explain why or why not you think you that should teach your child/children God's Law.
9. Explain your purpose or goal for being a part of the action research focus study group.
10. Have you accepted the fatherly role to teach your children God's Law? Yes No.

Explain your answer.

APPENDIX H

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE SIGN-UP

Please Print Name	In Person	By Phone
Place Check Mark Below or Phone Number		
Wednesday		
5:00-6:00 PM _____	_____	_____
6:30-7:30 PM _____	_____	_____
8:00-9:00 PM _____	_____	_____
Thursday		
5:00-6:00 PM _____	_____	_____
6:30-7:30 PM _____	_____	_____
8:00-9:00 PM _____	_____	_____
Friday		
5:00-6:00 PM _____	_____	_____
6:30-7:30 PM _____	_____	_____
8:00-9:00 PM _____	_____	_____
Saturday		
5:00-6:00 PM _____	_____	_____
6:30-7:30 PM _____	_____	_____

8:00-9:00 PM _____

Sunday

5:00-6:00 PM _____

6:30-7:30 PM _____

8:00-9:00 PM _____

Monday

5:00-6:00 PM _____

6:30-7:30 PM _____

8:00-9:00 PM _____

Tuesday

5:00-6:00 PM _____

6:30-7:30 PM _____

8:00-9:00 PM _____

APPENDIX I**RESEARCH GROUP PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**PRINT NAMECELL PHONEEMAIL

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APPENDIX J

FOLLOW UP INTERVIEW

Due to the relational interactive nature of the course, the qualitative action research study group members are to be followed up with to determine how the fathers and their children have reacted after two to three months since the course has ended.

The follow up questions are intended to determine how the study group members and their children have reacted to The Preeminent Biblical Role of the Father course,

- What are you doing to teach your children, and how often
- What growth are you seeing in your children's spiritual formation
- What growth are you seeing in your spiritual maturity
- In what ways is your family drawing closer together in Christ
- What differences and changes have you noticed
- What has been the most rewarding change in your family
- What is the greatest obstacle that has have surfaced
- In what ways has teaching your children's God's Law brought you and your family closer to God

APPENDIX K

Spiritual Birth¹

Baby

John 1:12 “He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.”

1 Peter 2:1 “Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.”

Child

1 John 2:12 “I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name’s sake.”

Hebrew 5:12-14 “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.”

Youth

1 John 2:14 “I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.”

2 Peter 1:5-8 “Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, ⁶and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, ⁷and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. ⁸For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Father

1 John 2:12, 13 “I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name’s sake. I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father.”

¹ James R. Estep, *Christian Formation, Integrating Theology & Human Development* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2010), 219.

APPENDIX L**3 X 5 Advertisement Card****The Biblical Role of Fathers**

6 sessions for Fathers
with Children ages six and under.

Fathers will Learn:

- How to be a Godly a father
- How to strengthen the father child relationship
- How to avoid: being an absent father and fatherlessness

Starts: Jan 23, 2024 - 6:00 PM

Location: FBCS Room E211

Contact: Frank Heilmeier **Cell:** [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

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IRB APPROVAL LETTER

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

June 14, 2023

Frank Heilmeier
Mark Brown

Re: IRB Application - IRB-FY22-23-1746 Role of the Father

Dear Frank Heilmeier and Mark Brown,

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 that your study does not meet the definition of human subjects research. This means you may begin your project with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your IRB application.

Decision: No Human Subjects Research

Explanation: Your study/project is not considered human subjects research because

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

Please note that this decision only applies to your current application. Any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued non-human subjects research status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

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

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

Sincerely,

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