LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

Shaping Worldviews:
Helping High School Seniors Manage the Influence of Social Media

A Thesis Project Report Submitted to

the Faculty of the John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

in Candidacy for the Degree of

Doctor of Ministry

by

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Thesis Project Report Approval Sheet

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iii

THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT REPORT ABSTRACT
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Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity, July 23, 2024
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The rapid development of technology in recent decades has brought with it many unforeseen challenges. This project focuses on the challenge of learning to manage the influence social media has on worldviews. Young people are consuming information on social media with little or no instruction on how to discern what is real or true. Worldviews are being shaped by influencers who proclaim ideological messages that are often in conflict with a biblical Christian worldview. As with any tool, social media in the hands of a trained user can be used powerfully for good. Without a proper understanding and awareness of the dangers of social media and the precautions that one should take, many young people will be left to follow that which seems right in their own eyes. This project focused on a group of high school seniors at Lee Park Preparatory School to develop a series of six lessons designed to teach the importance of having and articulating a worldview, establishing a healthy identity, building healthy relationships, and discovering and understanding one's purpose and mission. The results showed that high school seniors can learn to manage the influence that social media has on their worldviews.

Contents

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To my wife Nancy, thank you for your unselfish support and encouragement, allowing me the freedom to hide away in my office for endless hours. I love you.

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To the Lee Park Prep Class of 2024, thank you to each of you who participated in the surveys and focus group interviews and for your patience and interest in participating in this project. I was blessed to be allowed to teach you.

Tables

Illustrations

Abbreviations

DMIN   *Doctor of Ministry*

LPP   *Lee Park Preparatory School*

Gen Z   *Generation Z*

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Generation Z is being confronted with an overwhelming influx of information via social media platforms. The digital world offers countless ways to access large amounts of information with little or no delay. It is faster and easier to ask Google or ChatGPT what one believes than it is to think critically about one's own answers to crucial worldview questions. Deep down, every human being longs for meaning and purpose. Social media platforms have taken advantage of Generation Z's desire to be seen and known, leading young people to create digital identities in the hopes of finding acceptance in a new, digital world.[1]

The search for answers to life's biggest worldview questions has been blurred by the technology held in one's hand. Worldviews are being shaped by a constant influx of often fake or falsified information and little is being done to teach younger generations how to filter through this information and discern what is true. Young people today, who are being released into the world of social media with no training in apologetics or critical thinking, are being shaped by a wide range of worldview ideas. The result is a generation that does not have a clear understanding of truth. Some have suggested that removing technology or banning social media is the best way to counter these effects. However, young people need to adopt a system to help them filter through the endless worldview messages they are hearing and seeing on social media.

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[1] Jason Thacker, *Following Jesus in a Digital Age* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2022), 111.

Ministry Context

The participants in this project are high school seniors at Lee Park Preparatory School (LPP) in Monroe, NC. LPP was started as a ministry of Lee Park Church. This researcher is an Associate Pastor at Lee Park Church and an educator in the school. He teaches the high school senior Bible class, Introduction to Philosophy. The nineteen students in this class will be the focus of this research project.

Monroe is located twenty-seven miles east of Charlotte in Union County, NC. Union County is fairly spread out, with a fast-growing population, and has been blessed in that it has until recently remained fairly sheltered from much of the woke culture that has permeated the rest of the nation. Union County's estimated population was 249,361 as of 2023, with a growth rate of 1.51% since the previous year according to the most recent United States census data.[2] Union County is the eighth largest county in North Carolina and has seen a population increase of nearly 24% since 2010.

Located in the Bible Belt, Union County offers many churches from which to choose. Lee Park Church is a Southern Baptist Church that has seen tremendous growth over the past eighteen years. Originating on April 7, 1925, as Oak View Baptist Church, it became Lee Park Baptist Church in 1954.[3] The current senior pastor, Chris Justice, was called by God to leave a successful career in television newscasting to lead what was at the time a small and struggling congregation. As of 2023, Lee Park has grown to a membership of over two thousand.

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[2] "Union County, North Carolina Population 2024," World Population Review, accessed August 24, 2023, https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-counties/nc/union-county-population.

[3] "Lee Park Baptist Church (Monroe, N.C.) records," Wake Forest University Special Collections & Archives, accessed August 24, 2023, https://wakespace.lib.wfu.edu/handle/10339/31791#N500AE.

History of Lee Park Preparatory School

After many years of dreaming, planning, and vision casting, LPP opened in the fall of 2019 under the leadership of Chris Justice, Senior Pastor of Lee Park Church in Monroe, NC. The mission of Lee Park Church is to "Preach the Word and Love People." This same mission carries over into the context of the school, with an intense focus on training students to develop a biblical Christian worldview.

Landon Keziah, who has been an educator on staff at LPP since it opened, took on the role of Headmaster in 2021. Having served as Family Pastor at Lee Park Church from 2008 until 2017, Pastor Landon understands the urgency of developing a biblical Christian worldview in the hearts and minds of young people.

When LPP's doors opened in 2019, there was a total of thirty-six students grades eight thru twelve, with a handful of educators teaching multiple subjects and filling multiple roles. The Lord has faithfully blessed LPP with tremendous growth. In the fall of 2023, the school year began with an enrollment of 199 students grades six thru twelve, led by a staff of over fifteen educators and administrators.

According to the school website, "The mission of Lee Park Preparatory is to prepare students for success in college, careers, and life through curricular and extracurricular activities infused with a Biblical Worldview."[4] LPP believes the Bible to be the absolute standard of truth given to man by God. Every course is evaluated and taught in accordance with the truth of the Bible, with the goal that students who graduate from Lee Park Prep will apply and display these truths in their lives long after they graduate (1 Peter 1:3).

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[4] "Why Lee Park Prep - Mission Statement," Lee Park Preparatory School, accessed August 24, 2023, https://www.leeparkprep.org.

A Day in the Life of LPP

LPP offers a typical high school experience, with a few key items that set them apart from other schools. Meeting in person four days a week, Monday through Thursday, each day begins with Bible class. Bible classes are broken down by grade level. Ninth grade learns the basics of Christian apologetics and theology, using the curriculum called *Understanding the Faith* from Summit Ministries. Tenth and eleventh grade are taught a survey of the New Testament and Old Testament, respectively. Twelfth grade is introduced to worldviews and philosophy. The goal of these Bible classes is to provide students with a solid foundation of Biblical literacy and equip them to understand and defend their beliefs.

Following Bible class, students take core classes such as math, science, and Spanish. Educators are trained to be intentional about integrating biblical Christian worldview truths throughout the curriculum. Kim notes that students who are exposed to intentionally-integrated biblical worldview teaching experience increased spiritual growth as well as an increase in critical thinking skills.[5] Biblical worldview integration involves more than tacking a Bible verse or some Bible truth onto the end of the lesson. Biblical worldview integration is the process of "weaving the biblical worldview into the subject and lives of students."[6] It involves weaving the truth of Scripture so intricately into the lesson that removing the biblical content would result in

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[5] Kim K. Young, "Think Christianly, Think Critically: Faith-Learning Integration, Critical Thinking, and Perceived Importance of Worldview Development Among Students in Christian Higher Education," *Religion & Education 47*, no. 3 (July 2, 2020): 273–99, accessed August 24, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1080/15507394.2020.1765068.

[6] D. P. Johnson, *Truth Weaving: Biblical Integration for God's Glory and Their Abundant Living* (Columbia, SC: Waking Elms Press, 2015), 17.

a noticeably incomplete lesson.[7] Every class at LPP strives to include this level of biblical worldview integration.

The last period on Mondays is reserved for a school-wide chapel service. Based on the 2023-24 theme "Exhort," students are led on a journey through the book of Hebrews. The chapel service opens with a fun crowd game followed by a time of prayer for unreached people groups around the world. After one or two worship songs led by the LPP Worship Team, a chapel speaker presents a biblical lesson based on the theme. Chapel speakers include pastors on staff at Lee Park Church, pastors on staff at LPP, and the occasional guest speaker.

Students have the opportunity to participate in clubs during the last period on Thursdays. Clubs such as chess, botany, performing arts, production, and ministry give students a chance to work together and learn something new about themselves and each other, while honing their skills in a discipline or hobby of their choosing.

Fridays are virtual study days at LPP. Each Friday students are given online assignments to be completed by Sunday at midnight. The leadership at LPP understands that online learning is a necessary skill for any student today. COVID introduced the need to be prepared to move to online teaching opportunities.[8] Colleges are becoming more and more accessible online,[9] allowing anyone with internet access to take online classes and complete college and graduate level degrees from anywhere in the world. Preparing students to interact and learn online is one of the primary goals of Friday online learning.

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[7] D. P. Johnson, *Truth Weaving*, 18.

[8] King Randall J, Carleigh Schoenleber, and Deana Mack, "Best Practices and Biblical Worldview for Technology Integration," ICCTE journal 17, no. 2 (October 2022): 1.

[9] Eric P. Bettinger, Lindsay Fox, Susanna Loeb, and Eric S. Taylor, "Virtual Classrooms: How Online College Courses Affect Student Success," *The American Economic Review* 107, no. 9 (2017): 2855–75, 1.

While academics are primary, athletics is a big part of student life at LPP. The fall season offers men's soccer, women's volleyball, golf, and cross country. In the winter, students can participate in basketball and cheerleading. Finally, the spring season is filled with women's soccer, women's softball, men's baseball, and men's volleyball. Students stay busy with athletic practices and games. Other extracurricular activities planned by the student council include homecoming, prom, and the occasional faculty/student volleyball game.

Senior Bible Class

This researcher has the privilege of teaching Introduction to Philosophy to the twelfth-grade class at LPP. Each morning the senior class gathers in room 204 to study worldviews and philosophy. The focus throughout the fall semester is on comparing six major worldviews: Christianity, Secularism, Postmodernism, Islam, Marxism, and New Spirituality. In the spring semester, the class focus turns specifically to philosophy, at which point students are required to write a position paper defending one aspect of their biblical Christian worldview. This researcher intended to incorporate the intervention described in this paper as a part of the class curriculum during the 2024 spring semester.

The 2024 senior class at LPP was made up of nine young men and ten young women. All were seventeen or eighteen years of age. Ten of the nineteen students had been at LPP since the school began five years ago, while three of these students joined LPP in the fall of 2023. Every student in this senior class professed to be a believer and follower of Jesus Christ. These students each came from various family backgrounds. Some were only children, some were adopted, some had parents who were divorced, and some came from more stable family situations.

Most of these students planned to continue their education at a college or trade school and several had already decided to enter the workforce directly out of high school. Besides being

high school seniors, these students all had exposure to social media in common. Screen time is a given for young people today, and these seniors were no exception.

Problem Presented

Generation Z lives in a world that is dependent on technology that can deliver information with the touch of a finger or even the sound of a voice. Without delay, using a device in the palm of one's hand, information can be summoned from any number of sources. Social media timelines are saturated with headlines from major media outlets.[10] While some of these sources are reliable and trustworthy, many are not. Social media delivers hours of unfiltered information into the minds of Gen Z, who sit and passively consume reels, memes, and posts littered with misinformation, fake news, conspiracy theories, and a general lack of truth, all from an endless stream of friends and influencers.

On the surface, this may seem like harmless entertainment. While the worldview issues Gen Z is dealing with today are certainly exacerbated by social media, technology is not the root of the problem.[11] Though technology is neither good nor bad in and of itself and is extremely useful and helpful in many areas of life, it is a tool that can be used for good or for evil.[12] Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, and other popular social media platforms can be useful in many ways in this researcher's context, allowing users to communicate instantly across the room or around the world. Gen Z has never known a world without social media. They have been

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[10] Thacker, *Following Jesus in a Digital Age*, 36.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Allen James Williams, "Social Media: A Tool for Discipleship" (DMin Thesis, Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity, 2023), 19, https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/doctoral/4476.

conditioned from an early age to rely on these networks, not just for short moments of distraction from work or school, but as a way of life.[13]

As with any tool, proper training is necessary if one is to learn to use that tool safely and effectively. High school seniors at LPP are consuming and assimilating information via social media without questioning or examining[14] the profound effect it is having on shaping how they view themselves and the world around them.[15] The problem at Lee Park Prep is that seniors lack a biblically consistent apologetic matrix to discern the information they are consuming on social media.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this DMIN action research project is to develop and deploy an apologetic worldview training program to equip seniors at LPP to discern the information they consume on social media. Social media is a powerful tool. Used properly, tools provide positive results. A tool in the hands of an untrained operator can result in devastating consequences. Due to a lack of theological training and failure to intentionally self-filter content on social media, seniors at LPP are not properly equipped to "defend themselves biblically from anti-Christian ideas."[16]

Christians of all ages tend to know certain theological truths but have never been taught to act on those truths as they navigate the technological challenges that exist today.[17] Apologetics

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[13] Thacker, *Following Jesus in a Digital Age*, 21.

[14] Ibid., 15.

[15] Ibid., 35.

[16] Terrance Jermayne O'Neil, "Preparing the Next Generation for a Pluralistic World: The Need to Teach Systematic Theology to Christian Youth" (DMin Thesis, Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity, 2021), 41, https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/doctoral/2830.

[17] Thacker, *Following Jesus in a Digital Age*, 28.

and theology classes are typically theoretical, leaving the student to wonder if and how to apply the information received. Theories are important, as they provide a much-needed foundation and framework for living. But unless students are taught to think critically and learn to engage intellectually with the thoughts and ideas that are driving this culture,[18] these theories will never become useful or applicable in the students' lives.

The goal of this training program is to equip high school seniors to practically apply the apologetical and theological teaching they will receive. A proper understanding of apologetics and theology will equip these seniors to defend against the ever-changing and blending of worldviews in their current cultural context.[19] A six-part study will be developed for seniors at LPP to teach them how to be transformed by renewing their minds, rather than being conformed to this world so that by testing they might discern what is good and acceptable and perfect (Romans 12:2, English Standard Version). Students will receive training in developing and defining their worldview as well as a healthy identity of themselves, learning to intentionally discern what they are exposed to on social media, finding and meeting with a mentor, and living with meaning and purpose. These lessons will equip seniors with the tools they need to develop a biblically consistent apologetic matrix to discern the information they are consuming on social media.

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[18] Chad John Brown, "Combatting Secular Humanism: Creating a Strategy to Teach Theology and Apologetics to High School Students" (DMin Thesis, Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity, 2020), 9, https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/doctoral/2659.

[19] Ryan G. Willert, "Teaching High School Students an Apologetic Curriculum on Relativism" (DMin Thesis, Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity, 2023), 30, https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/doctoral/4161.

Basic Assumptions

Setting out to accomplish a study that involves human participants assumes their willingness to participate in the study. The participants in this study were a captive audience, as they were required to be at school and to take this researcher's Bible class. However, the hope was that the students would willingly participate in this project as they recognized the benefits it would produce for them as individuals.

This project assumed that the participants were actively and regularly using social media, that they would recognize and admit their need to manage their use of social media, and that shaping and protecting their worldview is an important matter. Social media is a way of life for most Gen Zers. Having always had access to social media, its use is not something most students think about as it is a normal part of their day. When something is so ingrained in one's daily life, one does not typically stop and consider whether or not it is healthy. The goal was that participants would self-evaluate and apply the principles learned in this study to their own lives in a profound and life-changing way. Laying a solid worldview foundation is crucial for the future growth and development of young people both as individuals and as a generation.

The participants' honesty was another basic assumption. Self-evaluation may cause one to notice things about their behavior that they need to change. To make themselves look better to the researcher, one may be tempted to minimize their personal habits regarding social media use. The hope was that the students participating in this study would honestly share their personal findings without fear of judgment.

The researcher assumed that participants would find the principles learned in this project applicable beyond social media. This project aimed to teach principles that once learned could be applied in every area of life. Building a defense and learning to protect oneself from the

onslaught of anti-Christian content is a lifelong journey. The goal of this project was for these students to apply what they learned to many other areas of their lives.

A final assumption was that participants would internalize the skills learned through this process and carry them forward in their lives for many years. It would be a shame to go through the process of learning how to defend oneself against the empty teachings of non-biblical worldviews, only to abandon them and return to the way things were before the study.

Definitions

This project primarily examined the high school seniors at Lee Park Prep. A variety of terms were used to describe the issues being studied. Each term was related and important to the overall understanding of this project.

Apologetics - To defend or even strengthen one's faith, an individual must learn to defend that faith using logical reasoning and sound evidence. Young people today are faced with an overwhelming influx of incoherent ideas. Developing one's ability to defend and advocate for a particular position is imperative. "Christian apologetics is the rational defense of the Christian worldview as objectively true, rationally compelling, and existentially or subjectively engaging."[20]

Christian - The term "Christian" has come to mean different things to different groups of people. For the purposes of this project, a Christian is one who has "made a personal commitment to Jesus, who they believe was crucified and raised to conquer sin and death."[21] A

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[20] Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith,* Second Edition, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2022), 19, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[21] David Kinnaman, Mark Matlock, and Aly Hawkins, *Faith for Exiles: 5 Ways for a New Generation to Follow Jesus in Digital Babylon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2019), 31.

Christian affirms "that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, which contains truth about the world."[22]

Church - Generally, church is a term used to describe a gathering of believers. The Bible describes two categories of church. The universal church consists of all Christians everywhere and is not limited to a geographical place or a specific time in history. The local church refers to a gathering of Christians in a particular geographical location at a specific time in history. The church is sometimes mistakenly considered a building where believers gather. However, both the universal and local church can be described as "the community of all true believers for all time."[23]

Discernment - Discernment is an individual's ability to intentionally judge between right and wrong. There seems to be little if any effort put into discernment in today's culture. The ability to see how God is active within one's own life as well as in the world involves active awareness of what is true and what is false. Spiritual discernment is developed through the disciplined practices of listening to God and living according to His leading and direction in daily life.

Discipleship - A disciple is one who follows closely and learns from his teacher. Jesus' first followers were called His disciples. His final command to those first disciples was to go and "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20,

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[22] Kinnaman, *Faith for Exiles*, 31.

[23] Wayne Grudem, *Bible Doctrine: Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith*, 2nd ed., ed. Alexander Grudem, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2022), 443.

ESV). Discipleship is the process of developing "Jesus followers who are resiliently faithful in the face of cultural coercion and who live a vibrant life in the Spirit."[24]

Generation Z - A generation is a useful way of defining certain segments of a population by age. It is a tool that can be used to reflect the idea that "people who are born during a certain period of time are influenced by a unique set of circumstances and global events, moral and social values, technologies, and cultural and behavioral norms." [25] Generation Z is the designation for those who were born between 1999 and 2015.

Mentor - Young people today are often unknowingly encouraged to trust and follow their feelings, leading them to fall for the destructive lies that the world has to offer.[26] A mentor is someone outside their immediate family who, as an experienced follower of Jesus, can serve as a sensible sounding board who will guide and hold them accountable to sound truth and critical thinking.

Social Media - Social media is a broad term covering the general use of internet-driven platforms that allow users to "develop and distribute information online."[27] Examples of social media apps include Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, and TikTok. Generation Z has never known a world without social media.

Theology - Derived from the two Greek words *theos* and *logos*, theology refers to "the systematic study of the being, attributes, purposes, and works of God, and of the world, man, and

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[24] Kinnaman, Faith for Exiles, 30.

[25] Ibid., 222.

[26] Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt, *The Coddling of the American Mind: How Good Intentions and Bad Ideas Are Setting Up a Generation for Failure* (New York: Penguin Press, 2018), 254.

[27] Corey Seemiller and Meghan Grace, *Generation Z: A Century in the Making* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2019), 46.

history in relation to Him."[28] There are many branches of theology, each dealing with a particular aspect of the study of God. In general, theology seeks to help one to answer fundamental questions about the world based on what the Bible teaches.

Worldview - Everyone has a longing to understand the world in which they live and answer fundamental questions of life: Where did we come from? Why are we here? What is the meaning of life? Is there a God?[29] Today's culture offers "increasingly more viewpoints, philosophies, and religious ideas" that are leading young people away from Christianity toward other worldviews.[30] "A worldview is a pattern of ideas but also a pattern of beliefs, convictions, and habits that help us make sense of God, the world, and our relationship to God and the world."[31]

Limitations

The number of participants in this study was limited to the 2023-2024 senior class at Lee Park Prep. There were nine young men and ten young women in this class. This participant group was not widely diverse, representing a limited demographic of American culture. Several participants had attended LPP since the eighth grade. Others were previously homeschooled or had attended another private Christian school and several had transferred from the public school system. All but three or four attended Lee Park Church regularly.

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[28] Alan Cairns, Dictionary of Theological Terms (Belfast; Greenville, SC: Ambassador Emerald International, 2002), 483.

[29] Jeff Myers and David A. Noebel, *Understanding the Times: A Survey of Competing Worldviews* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2015), 6.

[30] O'Neil, "Preparing the Next Generation for a Pluralistic World," 36.

[31] Myers, *Understanding the Times*, 6.

As the participants were students in a private Christian school, it was likely that many were already aware of their need to be intentional about shaping their worldview while learning to guard against non-biblical worldviews. The study took place during Bible class over an eight-week period, limiting the time spent with the students. Some flexibility was required if a particular lesson or activity ran longer than anticipated.

Students who were absent due to sickness or other unforeseen circumstances missed a portion of the content, which could have affected the outcome of the study. Measures were taken to ensure that all students kept up with the material by offering make-up sessions as needed. Due to the nature of the private Christian school context, it is possible that some students may have felt compelled to answer questions or participate in activities based on what they thought the researcher would want to hear, rather than honestly evaluating themselves. It is possible that one or more of the participants in the high school senior class did not use social media, lowering the number of participants able to respond to and participate in certain portions of the study.

Delimitations

Topics of study related to theology and apologetics were thoughtfully and strategically chosen to fit the needs and interests of the participants. The senior Bible class met for sixteen weeks during the spring semester. However, to keep the research manageable, the researcher chose to limit the focus of this action research project to six weekly lessons. Instruction occurred during a one-hour class once a week and students were given activities and challenges to be completed outside of class time.

This action research project was limited to the 2023-2024 senior class at LPP. This class was chosen for two reasons. First, this class was taught by this researcher, making it a natural choice of study. Second, the students in this class were preparing to step out of their known

bubble of Christian high school and living at home and into the world of college and career, where they will be confronted with a new level of unlimited worldview ideas.

Thesis Statement

Participants were asked to follow a plan that would challenge them spiritually, mentally, and emotionally. Spiritually, students were challenged to memorize, meditate on, and journal about assigned Scripture passages. Memorizing Scripture is a powerful way to internalize the truths of God's Word. Meditation gives students the opportunity to slowly think about the truths they are internalizing. Journaling is a helpful way to process thoughts, expanding one's ability to think critically.

Having never known life without a device, students would be challenged by being made aware of the influence that social media has on their worldview. Anytime one is faced with spiritual and mental challenges, one's emotions are challenged as well. Emotions can be harnessed to help one discover more about themselves. The researcher hoped that as students began to learn to identify key information about themselves in light of Scripture, they would begin to find their identity in Jesus Christ.

Students would be asked to connect with a mentor, someone wiser and older than they are, who would come alongside and help guide their spiritual development. Social media has encouraged young people today to trust and follow their feelings, ultimately falling for and embracing the lies that the world has to offer.[32] Learning to think critically about the things they are hearing is a crucial need in developing one's worldview. "Each young disciple needs champions outside their immediate family who follow Jesus and can sponsor their spiritual

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[32] Lukianoff, *The Coddling of the American Mind*, 254.

development—other adults who can shape them, speak into their lives, and help them develop their gifts."[33] A wise mentor can serve as a sensible sounding board as students work with a guide to hold them accountable to sound truth and critical thinking.

Progressing through this training program, seniors at LPP would be faced with difficult and sometimes uncomfortable moments designed to help them think deeply about the ways they spend their time and the ways they have become dependent on technology. Having embraced and applied the "Shaping Worldviews" training program, seniors at LPP will have developed a consistent apologetic matrix for discerning the information they consume on social media.

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[33] Kinnaman, *Faith for Exiles*, 138.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

For thousands of years, an individual's worldview has been shaped by one's local context. An individual's system of beliefs was primarily influenced, and subsequently shaped, by family, school, and church communities. The boundaries of influence on an individual's worldview were relatively limited. With the explosion of technological advances over the last two decades, worldviews are now being shaped in ways that may not immediately be apparent but ought to be concerning.[34] One's local context is no longer the primary influencer of one's worldview. The Internet, especially social media, has taken over as one of the greatest sources of influence in the lives of young people and how they interact with the world today.

Literature Review

To better understand the influence social media has on impressionable young minds, one must first understand what a worldview is, how worldviews are shaped, and why it matters. This literature review sought to employ previous scholarly, academic, and ecclesiastical literature as it regards worldview, drawing a connection between the importance of apologetics, theology, and discipleship in equipping seniors at LPP to manage the influence of social media on their worldviews.

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[34] Thacker, *Following Jesus in a Digital Age*, 4.

The Social Media Machine

"Social media is bad."[35] Mark Dunbar surprises his reader with this over-generalized statement as he opens his article on the ills of social media. He justifies his conclusion by stating that social media takes an individual's worst characteristics and makes them even worse, leading to even more vanity or ignorance, weakening one's ability to focus, and causing distracted driving.[36] The advent of new online applications such as Facebook and Instagram has made technology a part of everyday life, resulting in a blurred distinction between "addictive and functional Internet use."[37] There is no doubt that the advancements in technologies such as the Internet and social media have resulted in a plethora of social issues among younger generations. Twenge discovered that "large studies consistently find that more frequent digital-media use is associated with lower well-being among adolescents."[38] Research affirms social media as the primary problem with the well-being of today's young people. However, one must be careful not to remove personal responsibility from the human beings who are holding and operating the devices.

Many believe that those running these social media platforms ought to take responsibility for the content posted on their platforms by way of moderation. But the very thought of moderation tends to make many people nervous. What about freedom of speech? Does the average citizen not have the right to post whatever is on their mind? Moderation is not an easy

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[35] Mark Dunbar, "IF SOCIAL MEDIA IS MAKING US WORSE: Can We Make It Better?," *The Humanist* 79, no. 1 2019: 12, https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A568569762/BIC?u=vic_liberty&sid=summon&xid=4be6bc35.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Kimberly S. Young, "The Evolution of Internet Addiction," *Addictive Behaviors* 64, (2017): 229–230, https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0306460315001884.

[38] Jean M. Twenge, "More Time on Technology, Less Happiness? Associations Between Digital-Media Use and Psychological Well-Being," *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 28, no. 4 (August 1, 2019): 372–79, https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721419838244.

approach to dealing with content on social media. Tarleton Gillespie contends that there are simply too many "blurry lines" when distinguishing the values of all those who are involved, whether individual users, groups of users, or the owner(s) of the platform in question.[39] Moderation is necessary and will remain a fundamental aspect of social media platforms,[40] but it remains incumbent upon the user to take responsibility for what they are allowing their mind and heart to consume.

Social media is a tool in the hands of users. As with any tool, social media is amoral, neither good nor bad in and of itself. Thousands of people die in car accidents each year, but it would be incorrect to conclude that cars are bad. It is not the car, but the driver of the car, who is responsible for the outcome of its use. Jaron Lanier is confident that the problem with social media is a business model designed to find customers willing to pay to modify people's behaviors.[41] Big tech companies such as Facebook, Instagram, and others purposefully cater to the addictiveness of social media by knowingly spying on users and manipulating their behaviors.[42] If a carmaker knows that there is a flaw in the design of their vehicle that is harming its drivers, are they not ultimately responsible for the injuries that result? In the same way, Lanier argues that tech companies who know their design is harming people ought to be taking responsibility.[43]

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[39] Tarleton Gillespie, *Custodians of the Internet: Platforms, Content Moderation, and the Hidden Decisions That Shape Social Media* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018), 12.

[40] Ibid., 14.

[41] Jaron Lanier, *Ten Arguments for Deleting Your Social Media Accounts Right Now* (New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 2022), 28.

[42] Ibid., 22.

[43] Ibid., 29.

These factors are certainly at work in and through social media platforms. Tech companies should take steps to ensure that their product is safe for their users as individuals and for society as a whole. But there seems to be no expectation that the user ought to be aware of what they are using and how they are being used. The author of *The Shallows,* Nicholas Carr sums up the problem nicely when he says, "The problem with Facebook is not just Facebook. It is also us."[44] Thacker rightly agrees that many of today's problems are exacerbated by social media, but he is quick to remind his readers that technology is not the root of the problem.[45] The real problem is rooted in worldview ideas that have been propagated through philosophy and science for many years.[46] While the carmaker is responsible to produce a safe vehicle, the driver of the vehicle must also assume responsibility for how they manage that vehicle.

Worldview

In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul exhorts followers of Jesus Christ to be transformed by the renewal of their minds rather than being conformed to the ways of this world (Romans 12:2, ESV). In this passage Paul is referring to one's worldview. Many attempts have been made to define worldview, resulting in many variations on its definition. More than merely how one views the world, Meyers contends that a worldview is that which "answers fundamental questions"[47] about life. These questions include how humanity got here, why humanity is here, what happens when people die, what is the purpose of life, do individuals matter, whether there

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[44] Nicholas G. Carr, "Is Facebook the Problem with Facebook, Or Is It Us?" *The Washington Post*, June 29, 2018, March 11, 2024, https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/is-facebook-the-problem-with-facebook-or-is-it-us/2018/06/28/5949992e-5939-11e8-8836-a4a123c359ab_story.html.

[45] Thacker, *Following Jesus in a Digital Age*, 38.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Myers, *Understanding the Times*, 6.

is a difference between right and wrong, and whether there is a God. These are the foundational

worldview questions that one must wrestle with and answer to develop their worldview.

Everyone asks these questions at some point, though often subconsciously. Meyers explains that

questions like these lead people to develop ideas, which in turn shape their beliefs and ultimately

determine how they behave.[48] Keller likens one's worldview to a map that is continuously being

updated throughout one's life.[49] Individuals are constantly being influenced by outside forces

resulting in a worldview that is constantly in flux. One's beliefs, actions, and interaction with

society all stem from what one believes to be true about the world in which one lives.

       DeLockery notes that one does not need to be able to precisely define what a worldview

is to recognize and agree that everyone has a way of thinking about and filtering through their

understanding of reality.[50] Everyone has a worldview, though most have never put much thought

into what their worldview is. Worldviews are often unknowingly shaped by culture, experience,

and personal backgrounds. As Smith suggests, this includes everything one hears, reads, and

sees.[51] Despite the seemingly unlimited number of ideas that can be found on social media,

Bavinck notes that "the number of ideas, the number of worldviews, is limited and also must be

limited."[52] Social media may appear to offer new forms and styles of worldview, but the

foundational questions do not change. Bavinck points out that throughout history one can

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[48] Myers, *Understanding the Times*, 28.

[49] Timothy Keller, "Foreword," in *Personality and Worldview*, ed. James Eglinton, trans. James Eglinton (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2023), x.

[50] Matt DeLockery, *The Essence of the Christian Worldview* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2021), 8, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[51] C. Fred Smith, *Developing a Biblical Worldview: Seeing Things God's Way* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2015), 2.

[52] J. H. Bavinck, *Personality and Worldview*, ed. James Eglinton, trans. James Eglinton (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2023), 25.

discover the same ideas and systems returning again and again. "It seems as though history is constantly repeating itself."[53]

Gen Z's Worldview

Gen Z is in no way immune to the influence social media has on worldview. According to Kinnaman, there is no doubt that this generation is being exposed to "attitudes, values, perspectives, and behaviors" that are in direct opposition to a biblical Christian worldview.[54] The overwhelming use of social media continues to have a major impact on the values and beliefs of younger generations.[55] Thomas Bergler found that twelfth graders who spent more than ten hours per week engaged with social media were more likely to hold values consistent with an entitled understanding of the world around them.[56] Though claiming belief in equality, those who use social media excessively are less likely to value community involvement.[57] Other studies have found that a greater amount of time spent online is generally related to a decline in communication with friends and family.[58] Kinnaman agrees, stating that social media has made it more difficult to have "meaningful dialogue and deep connection."[59] One would expect that

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[53] Bavinck, *Personality and Worldview*, 25.

[54] Kinnaman, *Faith for Exiles*, 78.

[55] Williams, "Social Media: A Tool for Discipleship," 26.

[56] Thomas E. Bergler, "Generation Z and Spiritual Maturity," *Christian Education Journal* 17, no. 1 (2020): 75–91, 84.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Patrick Joseph Wolf, "American Young Adults' Self-Perception of Interpersonal Communication with Family and Friends Online Through Social Media and In-Person" (PhD diss., School of Communication and the Arts, Liberty University, 2022), 31, https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/doctoral/3754.

[59] David Kinnaman, *Good Faith: Being a Christian When Society Thinks You're Irrelevant and Extreme* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2016), 20.

social media would make it easier than ever to connect with others, but in reality, young people today are twice as likely to say they are lonely than their previous generation.[60]

Discovering and defining one's identity is an important part of shaping one's worldview. Members of Gen Z have a strong need and desire to discover their identities, answering the foundational question "Who am I?" According to Stanovsek, social media has changed the way people view themselves as well as how they connect with others.[61] In their book on Gen Z, Luttrell and McGrath agree, stating that to answer the worldview question "Who am I?," Gen-Zers have mastered the art of projecting multiple identities.[62] Having several online identities is not uncommon, especially for those who maintain a presence on multiple social media platforms.[63] Social media has provided this generation with a place where they can explore their identity,[64] trying on new characteristics with seemingly little or no consequence. It is not uncommon for Gen Zers to create and maintain online identities without ever revealing their real-world identity.[65] Social comparison on social media has led to a generation that is living in a digital world without clearly defined boundaries of who they are and with whom they are interacting, increasing their need for an online persona to define who they are.[66]

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[60] Kinnaman, *Good Faith*, 20.

[61] Shelby Katherine Stanovsek, "Cultivating Digital Mindfulness in an Era of Constant Connection: A Phenomenological Exploration of College Students' Digital Detox" (PhD diss., University of Oregon, 2018), iv, http://hdl.handle.net/1794/24185.

[62] Regina Luttrell and Karen McGrath, *Gen Z: The Superhero Generation* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021), 23.

[63] Ibid., 23.

[64] Stanovsek, "Cultivating Digital Mindfulness in an Era of Constant Connection," 10.

[65] Luttrell, *Gen Z: The Superhero Generation*, 24.

[66] Ibid., 27.

Though social media platforms can be great resources for connecting and sharing information, an untrained or improperly trained user will find it more difficult than ever to make common connections with others. Social media has driven many users to one of two extremes. For some, its tendency to magnify individual differences has destroyed any sense of community. Others, having finally discovered like-minded individuals already convinced of the things they believe, form small groups that serve to reinforce their often-mistaken understandings of reality. Kinnaman concludes that in their attempt to establish individual identity, social media has made it easier than ever before to "fit in" with others who will never challenge one's beliefs.[67]

Compounded with the extreme addictiveness of social media, it is not hard to understand why many have difficulty controlling how much time is spent and how much content is consumed online.[68] According to her studies, DeFrank confirms that electronic devices are having a profound impact on the brains of youth, affecting the ways in which they respond to life situations.[69] Mental health experts have identified Social Networking Service (SNS) addiction as a "failure to regulate usage, leading to negative personal outcomes."[70] Williams notes that consuming social media content without proper boundaries has a negative impact on the users' motivation and drive.[71]

It is evident that the use of social media is having deep and long-term influences on young people today. It is changing the way Gen Z thinks and interacts with the world around

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[67] Kinnaman, *Good Faith*, 20.

[68] Williams, "Social Media: A Tool for Discipleship," 26.

[69] Molly DeFrank, *Digital Detox: The Two-Week Tech Reset for Kids* (Grand Rapids, MI: Bethany House Publishers, 2022), 17.

[70] Bernadette H. Schell, *Digital Detox: Why Taking a Break from Technology Can Improve Your Well-Being* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2022), 29, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[71] Williams, "Social Media: A Tool for Discipleship," 26.

them and influencing their ability to connect with other people.[72] As Schell points out, rather than managing technology, technology is managing them.[73] The result is a generation whose worldviews are being shaped and influenced in unprecedented ways. Helping the next generation regain control of these outside influences and shape their worldview according to the standards of the Bible is of utmost importance.

A Biblical Worldview

Secular humanism, moral relativism, and syncretism are just a few of the predominant worldviews in the culture influencing today's youth. Thacker argues that technology has played a major part in effectively destroying the concept of what is considered true.[74] Luttrell writes that truth is no longer defined as that which corresponds to what is real.[75] Thacker agrees, stating that truth has instead come to be what one wants it to be rather than the objective and knowable reality that exists outside of oneself.[76] According to Kinnaman, truth is now defined by feelings rather than reality and self-fulfillment has become the gauge of morality. These false messages of truth of self-fulfillment are reinforcing and justifying cultural norms.[77]

A biblical worldview must begin and end solely on what the Bible teaches about the world. The foundational questions one asks must be answered from the teachings of Scripture.

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[72] DeFrank, *Digital Detox: The Two-Week Tech Reset for Kids,* 21.

[73] Schell, *Digital Detox*, 19.

[74] Thacker, *Following Jesus in a Digital Age*, 35.

[75] Luttrell, *Gen Z: The Superhero Generation*, 4.

[76] Thacker, *Following Jesus in a Digital Age*, 37.

[77] Kinnaman, *Good Faith*, 57.

Truth is nonnegotiable and cannot be personalized according to one's feelings or emotions at a particular moment but corresponds to reality whether one believes it or not.[78]

Myers contends that a truly biblical worldview is based solely on the person of Jesus Christ.[79] The true story of Jesus Christ is found in the Bible. DeLockery sums up the essence of the biblical Christian worldview as revelation and renewal. There is a bigger story, a story beyond our immediate perception. This story has been revealed to Christians by the author, Jesus Christ. Revelation is only possible if there is someone to give it and someone to receive it. Renewal is only possible if something exists that is in need of renewal. "Christianity is not the whole of the story of God and man, but it is the turning point. It is the point at which God acted through Christ to fix what was wrong with creation and bring the whole story to a different conclusion."[80]

This is not a popular view. Truth is under attack. Kinnaman notes that only four percent of teenagers today have what might be considered a biblical worldview.[81] This fact highlights the need for deeper and more intentional engagement in the lives of Gen Z as Christians seek to influence and shape the worldview of today's youth.

Shaping a Biblical Worldview

Kinnaman's research concludes that Christianity is no longer the leading faith or religion in the United States.[82] The nation has now shifted to a post-Christian society. Pluralism has given

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[78] Kinnaman, *Good Faith*, 43.

[79] Myers, *Understanding the Times*, 28.

[80] DeLockery, *The Essence of the Christian Worldview*, 275.

[81] Kinnaman, *Faith for Exiles*, 100.

[82] Ibid., 21.

way to syncretism, the idea that multiple religions and worldviews can be merged or combined to define one's personal philosophical understanding of the world. There are a growing number of viewpoints, philosophies, and religious ideas permeating the culture every day. Lanier writes that the dominant media in today's age does nothing to support or promote truth.[83] He claims that most social media platforms are reliant on the suppression of truth for their existence.[84] It is unsettling to consider that Vosoughi found that "false news was more novel than true news,"[85] suggesting that people are more interested in novelty than truth. More people than ever are being shaped and influenced by non-biblical worldviews,[86] and social media has taken on great power and influence. The Bible has given a mandate to Christians to influence and shape each generation with a biblical worldview (Matthew 28:19-20).

Rather than being centers of biblical discipleship, well-meaning youth groups have become places of belonging filled with entertainment. Attracting students and filling seats by offering high-energy games, lights, and charismatic teaching has become the priority. In his book *Practicing Discernment with Youth*, White writes that modern attempts to draw youth into churches have resulted in a generation of young Christians who are not well-equipped to defend against the influences of cultural worldviews.[87] Barna's research suggests that most churches define success in ministry according to attendance, donations, and number of programs

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[83] Lanier, *Ten Arguments*, 65.

[84] Ibid., 58.

[85] Soroush Vosoughi, Deb Roy, and Sinan Aral, "The Spread of True and False News Online," *Science* 359, no. 6380 (2018): 1146–51.

[86] O'Neil, "Preparing the Next Generation for a Pluralistic World," 36.

[87] White, *Practicing Discernment with Youth,* 3.

available.[88] Many churches have eliminated midweek services and adult Sunday school classes in response to the so-called busyness of people's lives.[89] This, Brown contends, has left many high school seniors preparing to leave for college or enter the workforce unprepared and lacking the training needed to defend against the challenges of the opposing worldviews with which they are being presented.[90]

Learning to sift through and determine the proper use of technology requires one to be able to understand not only how technology works, but how it is interconnected with culture.[91] Values and beliefs are reflected in the culture and technology is an integral part of this process.[92] Being amoral, technology is not right or wrong in and of itself. A proper understanding of one's own beliefs and worldview is required if one is to learn to manage technology such as social media and relate to culture in a manner that is ultimately pleasing and glorifying to God.

Despite the overwhelming nature of the relationship between technology, culture, and worldviews, Gen Z is not a lost cause. The reality is that they have been left to their own 'devices' with little or no instruction on how to explain and defend what they claim to believe.[93] Those who hold to a biblical worldview need more than anything to know why they believe what they believe and how to defend what they claim to believe. Christian belief stands in contrast to other beliefs in this world. Gen Z, like every generation that has come before them, are called to

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[88] George Barna, *Raising Spiritual Champions: Nurturing Your Child's Heart, Mind and Soul* (Glendale, AZ: Arizona Christian University Press, 2023), 47.

[89] Barna, *Raising Spiritual Champions,* 47.

[90] Brown, "Combatting Secular Humanism," 6.

[91] R.J. King, C. Schoenleber, and D. Mack, "Best Practices and Biblical Worldview for Technology Integration," *International Christian Community of Teacher Educators Journal* 17, no. 2 (October 2022): 4.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Kinnaman, *Faith for Exiles*, 29.

be disciples. Their mandate is to go into the world and share the news of Jesus.[94] How can this social media-saturated generation be expected to fulfill their God-given calling apart from proper training and equipping? Apologetics is a powerful tool that can be used to defend one's biblical worldview.

<div align="center">Apologetics</div>

Groothuis defines an apologist as one who is trained to defend a particular position.[95] He describes apologetics as a form of argument that has been developed and used by many for thousands of years. The word apologetics derives from the Greek word *apologia*, meaning "defense" or "vindication."[96] Methods of apologetics are used by advocates of every religion in defense of their position or systems of belief. Defending one's position logically and rationally is an art and requires training and practice to be effective.

The Need for Christian Apologetics

The Bible gives a clear mandate to believers to be always ready to give a proper defense of the Christian faith (1 Peter 3:15). Willert contends that Christians are called to be on mission, preparing and training themselves to be able to think deeply and have rational discussions with doubters and skeptics,[97] always ready to give a reason for the hope they have within (1 Peter 3:15). If apologetics is a rational defense of one's position, Christian apologetics, Groothuis argues, seeks to defend the Christian worldview as "objectively true, rationally compelling, and

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[94] Willert, "Teaching High School Students an Apologetic Curriculum on Relativism," 1.

[95] Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 18.

[96] Ibid., 19.

[97] Willert, "Teaching High School Students an Apologetic Curriculum on Relativism," 31.

existentially or subjectively engaging."[98] Chamberlain and Price agree that as social media continues to saturate the culture with confused depictions of reality, believers can use their apologetic training to help clear up these misunderstandings.[99]

Apologetics is useful in responding to the doubts and denials of skeptics. However, it can also be useful to believers at all levels of maturity as they wrestle with doubts and questions or simply seek to strengthen the foundation of their biblical beliefs.[100] Gen Z Christians are regularly confronted with a tangled web of misconceptions about the Christian faith. According to Kinnaman, there is much skepticism concerning Christianity and the Bible, and organized religion is often rejected as being too exclusive in its claims.[101] Learning to use apologetics by providing hard evidence and logical reasons for their beliefs is one of the keys to equipping young people to defend the truth. Social media delivers a daily onslaught of sound bites that are easily absorbed, often unconsciously distorting Gen Z's views on religions. Young Christians will benefit from training designed to equip them to defend the Christian faith, giving them a systematic process for clearing away the intellectual confusion invading their culture while creating opportunities for the message of the gospel to be given a fair hearing in the marketplace of ideas.[102]

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[98] Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 19.

[99] Paul Chamberlain and Chris Price, *Everyday Apologetics: Answering Common Objections to the Christian Faith* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020), 11.

[100] Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 20.

[101] Kinnaman, *Faith for Exiles,* 27.

[102] Chamberlain, *Everyday Apologetics,* 11.

The Role of Apologetics in Shaping a Biblical Worldview

Kinnaman notes that most non-Christian Gen Zers do not see much value in following Jesus.[103] Having rejected organized religion altogether, many hold the Bible to be an oppressive book that is harmful to any who read it.[104] O'Neil rightly concludes that this anti-Christian mindset has brought young Christians today face to face with intellectual opposition to their Christian beliefs.[105]

Willert believes that apologetics is a tool that can be used to provide Gen Z with a well-reasoned defense to anyone who might question why they believe what they believe.[106] Brown states that young people who have been trained in apologetics and theology "are more likely to be able to present a more reasonable response to critics more accurately and appropriately."[107] But, as O'Neil points out, a lack of systematic theological instruction is preventing young people today from developing a biblical Christian worldview, resulting in biblically ignorant Christians who are unable to defend against anti-Christian ideas.[108] Kinnaman rightly concludes that without proper training in theology, biblical knowledge will remain limited, leaving students unable to confidently respond to the condescension and hostility from their peers, professors, and social media streams.[109]

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[103] Kinnaman, *Faith for Exiles,* 27.

[104] Ibid.

[105] O'Neil, "Preparing the Next Generation for a Pluralistic World," 39.

[106] Willert, "Teaching High School Students an Apologetic Curriculum on Relativism," 1.

[107] Brown, "Combatting Secular Humanism," 71.

[108] O'Neil, "Preparing the Next Generation for a Pluralistic World," 5-6 & 41.

[109] Kinnaman, *Faith for Exiles*, 27.

Training and practice in apologetics prepare one to stand against the relativistic and humanistic culture by which they are surrounded today,[110] enabling them to put their beliefs into action.[111] Proper apologetic and theological training has the potential to shape the worldviews of young Christians today, and biblical discipleship is a necessary part of this training process.

Discipleship

Discipleship is a term that has been misused and misunderstood by many in the church. Many churches know they are supposed to have a discipleship program, but most churchgoers are not clear on what constitutes discipleship. Peter Morden asserts that because the church has been largely marginalized in modern society, the result is a watered-down version of true discipleship "characterized by weariness and even cynicism."[112] The church has lost confidence in God and the gospel to transform lives.[113] Kinnaman suggests that the goal of discipleship "is to develop Jesus followers who are resiliently faithful in the face of cultural coercion and who live a vibrant life in the Spirit."[114]

The Bible gives a strong mandate for Christian discipleship. The Great Commission given in the New Testament book of Matthew is perhaps the most well-known biblical mandate among Christians. Jesus commanded His disciples, whom He had personally trained and mentored, to go and make more disciples. They were to baptize and teach others to observe all that they had been taught and commanded by Jesus (Matthew 28:19-20). New Testament

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[110] Willert, "Teaching High School Students an Apologetic Curriculum on Relativism," 30.

[111] Kinnaman, *Faith for Exiles*, 91.

[112] Peter J. Morden, *The Message of Discipleship: Authentic Followers of Jesus in Today's World*, ed. Derek Tidball (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 2018), 2.

[113] Ibid.

[114] Kinnaman, *Faith for Exiles*, 30.

disciples were committed followers whose entire lives were being shaped by the process. "Disciples were encouraged to be 'dusty with the dust of their rabbi,'" suggesting that they were so closely following their teacher that they could not avoid the dust that would be kicked up from His sandals.[115] True Christian discipleship is all-encompassing, involved in every area of one's life. It involves deep theological teaching, mentoring, practical application,[116] and intentional training of a person's "mental, emotional, and spiritual qualities."[117]

Today discipleship is often associated with a series of regimented classes and 'hoops' through which one must jump.[118] While the content of discipleship training must include comprehensive Bible knowledge, strategies for sharing one's faith, and learning to manage interpersonal relationships, along with the development of apologetic skills, logical reasoning, and worldview integration, the goal of discipleship should be to train Christians to become effective leaders in the growth and development of the kingdom of God.[119]

As disciples grow, they develop into mature believers who can apply the basic teachings of the Christian faith to everyday living, replacing sinful patterns of behavior with godly patterns of behavior.[120] In an effort to attract youth, the modern church seems to have abandoned the biblical understanding of discipleship. Youth groups have attempted to make church involvement look fun so they can fill the seats, while seemingly little effort has been made to disciple young people. Anyone desiring to be a disciple of Jesus must confess that He is the Messiah, 'the Son

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[115] Morden, *The Message of Discipleship*, 4.

[116] William F. Cox, Jr., and Robert A. Peck, "Christian Education as Discipleship Formation" *Christian Education Journal* 15, no. 2 (08, 2018): 243-261, 243-44.

[117] Brown, "Combatting Secular Humanism," iv.

[118] Morden, *The Message of Discipleship*, 6.

[119] Cox, "Christian Education as Discipleship Formation," 243-244.

[120] Bergler, "Generation Z and Spiritual Maturity," 77.

of the living God,'[121] trust in the power of the cross on a personal level, [122] and willingly take up

that cross by denying personal desires and putting Christ first in all things.[123]

Discipleship Is Not Just for Grownups

The Great Commission does not have a minimum age requirement. All who trust in Jesus

are expected to become disciple-making disciples.[124] Discipling young people ought to be the

primary focus of the church and Christian schools alike.[125] Generation Z is surrounded by

pluralistic thinking and today's Christian church is not preparing youth to respond adequately to

the pluralistic culture they encounter.[126] The Christian community can help students do God's

work in this world to discern and live out their calling.[127] Rather than isolating the next

generation from the philosophies of the world, the church must prepare students by insulating

them, equipping the next generation to learn to live lives pleasing to God in the midst of this

confused and evil world.[128]

Brown suggests that one of the reasons young people are being left behind regarding

discipleship is the idea that students are to disciple themselves.[129] Kinnaman agrees that

American Christianity has shifted toward the notion that "discipleship is a solo effort, that the

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[121] Peter Morden, *The Message of Discipleship*, 21.

[122] Ibid., 25.

[123] Ibid., 30.

[124] O'Neil, "Preparing the Next Generation for a Pluralistic World," 35.

[125] Cox, "Christian Education as Discipleship Formation," 246.

[126] O'Neil, "Preparing the Next Generation for a Pluralistic World," 5.

[127] Kinnaman, *Faith for Exiles*, 151.

[128] Ibid., 85-86.

[129] Brown, "Combatting Secular Humanism," 7.

best way to grow spiritually is on your own."[130] This is contrary to the foundational core of

discipleship. Brown contends that disciples are only effectively produced in a learning

environment that encourages engagement and observation.[131] Using the resources God has

provided, He prepares and sustains His followers for discipleship. The Bible is the source of

nourishment and guidance, without which one may quickly lose his way.[132] Prayer is vital to the

life of the disciple. "Just as physical life is impossible unless the person breathes, so spiritual life

is impossible unless the Christian prays."[133] The Holy Spirit of God is crucial to the process of

discipleship. Without His direct input and guidance, one is prone to wander into error and

misguided understandings of the faith.[134] A community of mature disciples consisting of adults

and peers who will speak into the lives of young people is needed for developing and shaping a

biblical worldview.

The Screen is the New Discipler

Large-group teaching and small-group discussions are important and necessary for

developing disciples. But according to Kinnaman, disciples are more effectively developed one

life at a time.[135] O'Neil contends that today's popular methods and principles for youth ministry

are not adequate for educating and preparing young Christians for the screen-driven cultural

context in which they live.[136] The amount of time a typical Gen Zer spends connecting, learning,

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[130] Kinnaman, *Faith for Exiles*, 50.

[131] Brown, "Combatting Secular Humanism," 2.

[132] Morden, The Message of Discipleship, 67.

[133] Ibid., 80.

[134] Ibid., 92.

[135] Kinnaman, *Faith for Exiles*, 30.

[136] O'Neil, "Preparing the Next Generation for a Pluralistic World," 16.

and being discipled in a church community is minuscule in comparison to the number of hours

and the amount of content they are exposed to on their screens.[137] As a result, the church is

consistently losing this generation to a pluralistic, relativistic, and non-religious world.[138] In the

words of David Kinnaman, "Screens demand our attention. Screens disciple."[139]

Discernment

Maintaining a Biblical worldview in a day when the technological advances of social

media have captivated the minds of an entire generation requires a proper understanding and use

of knowledge and discernment.[140] Discernment is the ability to see how God is active within

one's own life as well as in the world in which they live.[141] It involves active awareness of what

is true and what is false. Spiritual discernment is developed through the disciplined practices of

listening to God and living according to His leading and direction in daily life.

Regarding the use of social media, there is little if any thought of discernment. Parents

hand unfiltered devices to toddlers so they can enjoy a moment of peace. Often viewed as a

harmless diversion to mundane daily life, users tend to 'shut off' their brains and simply soak in

endless streams of mixed messages delivered in short but captivating bits of video and audio.

Nouwen is concerned that many have unintentionally tuned out the still small voice of God,

becoming spiritually deaf and even unaware that anything important is happening in their

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[137] Kinnaman, *Faith for Exiles*, 28.

[138] O'Neil, "Preparing the Next Generation for a Pluralistic World," 36-37.

[139] Kinnaman, *Faith for Exiles*, 25.

[140] King, *International Christian Community of Teacher Educators Journal,* 1.

[141] Darren Cronshaw, "Discernment: Reading the Signs of Daily Life." *Pacifica* 28, no. 1 (2015): 95-97, https://doi.org/10.1177/1030570X15613359a.

lives.[142] Social media allows its users to escape the present moment in an attempt to fill the time and avoid the emptiness they might otherwise experience.[143] Since one cannot readily remove oneself from the dynamics of the culture and the potential influence of social media,[144] how are young people today to be protected from the evil and misguiding influences of the culture in which they are immersed?

To discern biblically what one is exposed to on social media, one must learn to listen to God. One must pay attention to and be aware of God's active presence in every moment and in every activity. Jane Hamon notes that the Holy Spirit is at work within each Christian giving them the advantage of spiritual discernment and guiding believers to identify and manage ideas that are contrary to God's ways.[145] White contends that biblical discernment involves the Christian's struggle to understand how God reveals truth to humans who by their very nature are prone to distorting this truth.[146] Christian young people who are living in these critical times must learn to recognize and heed the voice of God.[147] With practice and experience, young people can learn to recognize and respond to the work of the Holy Spirit in their own lives, bringing them into alignment with His Kingdom purpose. With practice and intentionality, recognizing and resisting evil will become more natural over time.[148]

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[142] Henri Nouwen, *Discernment: Reading the Signs of Daily Life* (Oxford, England: SPCK Publishing, 2013), 5.

[143] Ibid., 5.

[144] David F. White, *Practicing Discernment with Youth: A Transformative Youth Ministry Approach* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2018), 62.

[145] Jane Hamon, *Discernment: The Essential Guide to Hearing the Voice of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 2019), 16, ProQuest Ebook Central, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/liberty/detail.action?docID=5928849.

[146] White, *Practicing Discernment*, 65.

[147] Hamon, *Discernment*, 16.

[148] Ibid., 17.

Social media is leading a generation of passive followers to consume content with little or no hesitation. However, young people who are truly listening to the voice of God will exercise caution. The voice of culture shouts its desires. God's voice is small and still, requiring intentional effort to hear and heed. The Holy Spirit is unwavering in His work. If young people are to escape the engulfing grip of social media, biblical discernment must be developed and applied in every area of life.

Based on Luke 10:27, White suggests four categories of discernment Christians might use in their search for God's truth amid confused cultural messages: "the work of the heart, mind, soul, and strength."[149] God speaks to the heart through feelings and emotions, engages in intellectual analysis through the mind, awakens the faculty of contemplation and theological imagination through the soul, and reveals Himself practically through one's work in the physical world.[150]

White notes that silence and solitude have been replaced with the constant buzzing and beeping of electronic devices, diminishing the opportunities for young people to listen for God's voice.[151] Today's generation is afraid of silence, avoiding being alone at all costs. Learning to hear and listen to the still, small voice of God is a necessary part of discernment. Discernment and listening work together toward the cultivation of lives grounded in love of God and neighbor.[152] Listening to one's feelings and emotions leads to self-awareness, allowing individuals to identify problems within their context.[153] Small group discussion, journaling, and

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[149] White, *Practicing Discernment,* 64-65.

[150] Ibid.

[151] Ibid.*,* 91.

[152] Ibid.

[153] Ibid.*,* 96.

other interactive activities can be used to help young people begin to learn how to listen for the voice of God and discover and understand their deep and often suppressed feelings and desires. Prayer creates a space of silence and solitude in which the deep tensions that bind humanity can be felt, and in which individuals can gain a clear sense of the grace of the Holy.[154]

J.P. Morland writes that faith in the current culture, especially among younger generations, has come to be understood as a "blind act of will, a decision to believe something that is either independent of reason or that is a simple choice to believe."[155] He contends that churches and youth groups are largely to blame by catering to the culture. The gospel message has been oversimplified and deep teaching has been replaced with catchy entertainment. Moreland writes, "Our society has replaced heroes with celebrities, the quest for a well-informed character with the search for flat abs, substance and depth with image and personality."[156] Social media, just one element in the onslaught of information being poured into the minds of young people, has played a major part in shaping a generation that tends to have a decreased interest in learning.[157]

Critical thinking is an art that has lost traction in recent years. The work of understanding seeks to engage youth and adults together in exploring a situation in some depth.[158] "Our Lord is a God of reason as well as of revelation."[159] Young people today need leaders and teachers who

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[154] White, *Practicing Discernment*, 103.

[155] J. P. Moreland, Love Your God with All Your Mind: The Role of Reason in the Life of the Soul (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2012), 19.

[156] Ibid., 14.

[157] White, *Practicing Discernment*, 116.

[158] Ibid., 121.

[159] Moreland, *Love Your God with All Your Mind*, 45.

will help them unlock the power of the mind by pushing them to analyze and reason rather than passively accept information presented to them by the media.

Over time, as the influence of social media has overwhelmed the fading memories of the biblical moral norms of the past, young people have come to believe that the social behaviors present on the internet are normal. What previous generations considered lewd or abnormal according to traditional biblical standards has become common in the minds of young people today.[160] Discernment is the process of knowing what the Bible teaches about morality and learning to recognize the distortions in today's culture.

In their search for meaning and purpose, young people have a God-given desire to be active in the world in which they live.[161] The constant stream of social media does not come close to filling this need. Unfortunately, "adult work has become identified with alienation from our most creative, caring, and responsible selves."[162] As a result, young people are drawn into the illusionary solace of the digital world. These distractions tend to alienate young people from working adults who might serve as mentors, training young people to deal with working life.

<center>Mentoring</center>

The search for truth requires a sense of curiosity and a desire to learn. Young people have many questions. As has been previously discussed, it is often easier for young people to turn to social media to ask their questions. Yet Kinnaman claims that the world of social media is delivering chaotic and conflicting messages.[163] How can students be expected to find reliable

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[160] White, *Practicing Discernment*, 137.

[161] Ibid., 187.

[162] Ibid., 178.

[163] Kinnaman, *Faith for Exiles*, 59.

answers to big questions in this type of environment? A healthy church will have a solid base of individuals who can serve as mentors who will be able to aid in answering these questions.

A mentor is someone who has had life experiences that others may not have had. Green defines mentoring as "an ongoing, regular, reciprocal process of advice-sharing."[164] Van der Walt describes a mentor as someone who is willing to share their knowledge and experience to advance the growth of a younger person.[165] A mentor may call out poor choices, encourage those who feel like quitting, or hold up those who are too weak to stand on their own. A good mentor will be patient as they lead and guide their disciples. Young people who want to grow as individuals should find someone who exemplifies what they want to be like and find a way to spend time with them.

It is vital that both younger and older generations recognize the importance of mentoring in shaping worldviews. Van der Walt suggests that older people tend to have a desire to share their knowledge and experience.[166] In the Old Testament, Joshua commanded the people to be prepared to talk to their children about the faithfulness of God when they asked (Joshua 4:19-24). It is the responsibility of older and wiser Christians to share their biblical Christian worldview with young believers. Van der Walt cautions that older believers should not try and force their

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[164] Malcolm D. Green, "Mentoring Youth Across Cultures Incorporating Different Worldviews: A Zones of Proximal Exploration Model," *Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work* 26, no. 4 (October 2, 2017): 307–25, https://doi.org/10.1080/15313204.2017.1344947.

[165] Bennie J. Van der Walt, "Sharing an Integral Christian Worldview with a Younger Generation: Why and How Should It Be Done and Received?," *In Die Skriflig: Tydskrif van Die Gereformeerde Teologiese Vereniging* 51, no. 1 (2017): 1–11, https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v51i1.2245.

[166] Van der Walt, *Sharing an Integral Christian Worldview,* 5.

beliefs on young people in a pushy or dogmatic way.[167] At the same time, young people should approach mentoring with open hearts and minds and with a humble desire to learn.[168]

Mentoring in the context of shaping worldviews requires intentionality. Kinnaman suggests that the church should be active in helping younger men and women identify and connect with mentors in older generations, stating that churches can start by "creating space for questions, engaging our younger generations in meaningful mentor relationships."[169]

Theological Foundations

Scripture exhorts Christians to not only know and study the Word of God but to learn to incorporate the commands of Scripture into their daily life. Readers are cautioned in Ephesians 4:14 against remaining infantile in their faith. The culture is responsible for spreading false doctrines and deceitful human philosophies. The ease of access to online content is just one more aspect of life that has made it more difficult than ever to discern the truth in recent times. Just as children desire to grow up and become adults, it ought to be the desire of every Christian to grow in spiritual maturity. Peter compares the spiritual life to the growth and development of a child. Just as a newborn baby has a longing for physical milk to satisfy their hunger, Christians ought to long for "pure spiritual milk, that by it [they] may grow up into salvation." (1 Peter 2:2-3, ESV).

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[167] Van der Walt, *Sharing an Integral Christian Worldview,* 5.

[168] Ibid.

[169] Kinnaman, *Faith for Exiles*, 60.

Combatting the false doctrines and human philosophies of the world requires special equipping. The Bible offers instruction for those who desire to learn and grow in their faith. Developing one's worldview, learning to defend that worldview, and being discipled according to that worldview are biblical mandates to be followed by young Christians seeking to stand firm in the online world.

<div align="center">Biblical Mandate: Develop a Biblical Worldview</div>

In simple terms, a worldview can be described as the way in which one views the world. Smith further notes that Christians must learn to view the world through the lens of Scripture, using the Bible as their guide for understanding and interacting with the world.[170] In Romans 12:2 (ESV), Paul contrasts being "conformed to the world" and being "transformed by the renewal of your minds" to emphasize how Christians ought to approach spiritual growth. The goal of spiritual growth is holiness. One is conformed to the world when one allows the world, rather than God's Word, to control one's mind.[171] Instead of thinking and reasoning for oneself, individuals who are conformed to the world allow the culture in which they are immersed to determine how they think and act. Wiersbe confirms that God desires to transform the Christian mind.[172] Being "conformed" carries the idea of being passively shaped by outward forces. Social media tends to pour unfiltered worldview ideas into the minds of young people. Left unchecked and unfiltered, these young minds will naturally conform to the messages they are hearing and viewing without limits. To be "transformed by the renewal of [one's] mind" (Romans 12:2,

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[170] Smith, *Developing a Biblical Worldview*, 5.

[171] Warren W. Wiersbe, *Romans*, vol. 1, The Bible Exposition Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 554.

[172] Ibid.

ESV) implies a renewal from within. Similar to the metamorphosis of a butterfly transforming out of a caterpillar, transformation describes not only a change from within but a complete renewal of the mind.[173] Spiritual transformation requires intentionality and reasoned action on the part of the one seeking to be transformed. Paul's hope here is that Christians will develop their outlook on life (i.e., worldview) in such a way that they are able to discern God's perfect will and learn to recognize that which is "good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:2, ESV).

Peter, supporting this same idea, writes "Do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance" (1 Peter 1:14, ESV). "Former ignorance" here refers to one's "former walk in sinful lusts."[174] Though lust is often associated with sexual temptation, Lange contends that lust can be any desire for what is different from what God allows, sensual or otherwise.[175] Social media casually promotes these ungodly desires, causing many to continue in their ignorance. Rather than continuing to allow one's former desires for things that are contrary to God's desires to determine how one lives, Peter calls on Christians to be holy in everything they say and do. The contrast between "former ignorance" and God's holiness is vast and can only be bridged by the power of God's Spirit working to transform one's mind.

Paul urges believers to "walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which [they] have been called" (Ephesians 4:1, ESV). One's worldview inevitably determines how one lives their life. Having been called by God to live holy lives, Christians are duty-bound to live up to that high calling. It must be understood, as Lange's commentary is quick to point out, that the Christian

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[173] C. K. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Rev. ed., Black's New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 1991), 214.

[174] John Peter Lange et al., *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: 1 Peter* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008), 22.

[175] Ibid.

cannot walk in a manner worthy to be called in his own power, since he is called through the undeserving and unmerited grace of God.[176] It only is after one is called that he is able by the enabling power of the Holy Spirit to fulfill God's ultimate desire, which is the complete transformation of the Christian mind. As one spends time studying, memorizing, and meditating on God's Word, God will gradually accomplish this task.[177]

<div align="center">Biblical Mandate: Defending One's Worldview</div>

As young minds seek to be transformed by the Word of God, it is important that they also be equipped to defend their biblical worldview position. Christians should always be ready to give a reasonable defense for their beliefs. Reasonably defending one's worldview allows the defender to avoid appearing foolish for having fanciful beliefs. One cannot know for sure when one may be asked to give a reason for one's faith, whether by the questioning skeptic seeking to defend an unbelieving position or by a curious Christian seeking to learn and grow in the faith.[178]

Biblical apologetics is a method of defending one's biblical worldview beliefs using reasonable and logical arguments. Peter commands Christians to always be prepared to defend the truth of the Bible and to do so with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15, ESV). The original recipients of Peter's letter were Christians who were facing suffering and persecution from people with opposing worldviews. Similarly, young people today live in a culture that is adamantly opposed to biblical ideas. According to Marshall, Christians can and should remain

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[176] Lange, *1 Peter*, 135.

[177] Wiersbe, *Romans*, vol. 1, The Bible Exposition Commentary, 554.

[178] Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 2429.

positive despite the threats that they face.[179] There is no need for Christians to fear those who intend harm. Just as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego who, when faced with certain death for their refusal to bow to King Nebuchadnezzar chose to say "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up" (Daniel 3:17-18, ESV), so when Christ becomes the center of one's life, Christ will be honored in that individual's heart.[180] Peter's command is baseless if the faith one seeks to defend is not worth defending. The individual who honors Christ above all this world has to offer will have no one to fear. They will have a faith worth defending and they will have the boldness and the courage to stand up for what they believe.

Paul argues for a bold and challenging defense of the faith in 2 Corinthians by proclaiming that Christians "destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5, ESV). Whether dealing with issues in one's mind or responding to the expressed thoughts of others, apologetics is about overcoming any idea or philosophy that might prevent one from knowing God.[181] Paul's defense begins with the destruction of arguments and opinions that are in opposition to God and culminates in leading one into obedience to Christ. The lofty opinions of man are cast down and the mind is instead led into captive obedience to Christ.[182] Biblical

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[179] I. Howard Marshall, *1 Peter*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 114-115.

[180] Ibid.

[181] Norman L. Geisler, "Apologetics, Need For," in *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 37.

[182] Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle To The Corinthians*, vol. 2, Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 315.

apologetics is as interested in defending the faith as it is in converting those in opposition. That is the reason Peter encourages gentleness and respect. One can persuade by actions if not by words.

One's ability to biblically defend their worldview will only be as strong as the foundation of their biblical worldview. Defending one's worldview apologetically does not come naturally, nor is it learned in isolation. The Bible clearly provides a path for young Christians to grow in their faith under the direction of those who have gained wisdom through previous life experiences.

Biblical Mandate: Mentoring Disciples

Perhaps one of the most well-known commands given in Scripture in reference to discipleship is found in Matthew 28:19-20. As Jesus was preparing to leave His disciples, He commanded them to go into all the world and make more disciples, baptizing and teaching them to observe the commands He had given. Wilkins points out that though the words "disciple" and "discipleship" are rarely found in the Old Testament, the roots of biblical discipleship are clearly seen in God's desire to initiate and pursue a relationship with humanity.[183] From the beginning of history, Wilkins argues, God has been calling His people to be His representatives on Earth. Christians are called to be salt and light, to walk in the ways of God, to obey His commands, and to be transformed to become more like Him.[184]

In the New Testament, Peter reminds Christians that they have been called to a life of obediently following Jesus' steps (1 Peter 2:21). Wiersbe says that Jesus' life on Earth is the

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[183] Michael J. Wilkins, "Disciple, Discipleship" in *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), 175, electronic edition.

[184] Ibid.

perfect example for Christians to follow.[185] According to Jamieson's commentary, the word Peter uses for "example" can be compared to a drawing or writing that a student reproduces.[186] Christians are to strive to reproduce an exact copy of Jesus' character and conduct in the way they live their lives.

Paul exhorts Christians to "be imitators of God" (Ephesians 5:1, ESV). However, realizing that calling someone to follow the example of someone they have never seen can be challenging, Paul offers himself as an example for Christians to imitate (1 Corinthians 4:16; Philippians 3:17). Christians are called to more than receiving instruction. They are to put those instructions into practice. Fee states that any who follow the example of Christ by imitating His behavior will internalize and live out the model presented to them.[187]

Just as young children learn from the example of their parents by observation, Paul called upon the early church to watch and follow his example because as Wiersby writes, he was "following the greatest Example of all, Jesus Christ."[188] As Christian disciples follow the examples of saints who have gone before, and lived in obedience to Jesus' commands, they too become salt and light in this world, in turn becoming living examples for others to follow.[189]

Not only are Christians to imitate the example of Paul's conduct and character, but more mature Christians have a responsibility to follow his example of being an example worth imitating. Young people today need examples that are worth imitating. As a mentor to Timothy,

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[185] Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2, 406.

[186] Jamieson, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, vol. 2, 506.

[187] Gordon D. Fee, *Philippians*, vol. 11, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 1999), 161.

[188] Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1, 585.

[189] Ibid., 177.

Paul was a living example who also spent time instructing Timothy by sharing the wisdom he had accumulated over years of learned experiences. "Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another" (Proverbs 27:17, ESV). No person can experience healthy spiritual growth on their own. Interactive conversation with others is profitable, serving to improve and develop both the mentor and the disciple. By way of intentional discussions, the two can encourage one another to become wiser and better.[190] Honest discussion, including criticism, suggestions, and ideas, only serves to improve one's character and skill.[191]

The Bible clearly calls upon Christians to establish a foundational worldview built on the foundation of Scripture. As one grows in their knowledge and understanding of God's Word, one must be prepared to defend one's worldview reasonably and logically. Learning to defend one's worldview is best accomplished alongside those who are wiser and more experienced in their knowledge of God.

Theoretical Foundations

Many studies have been conducted on the effects that social media has on its users. Though social media is useful in many ways, research highlights the detrimental effects social media has on the mental health of young children and teenagers. It is clear from these studies that social media affects the ideas and behaviors of individuals who use these online platforms. While much of the focus has been on the psychological impacts of social media, little has been done to investigate the causal effects of social media on truth discernment.[192] There is no doubt that

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[190] Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 1016.

[191] Sid S. Buzzell, *Proverbs*, vol. 1, The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 964.

[192] Ziv Epstein et al., "The Social Media Context Interferes With Truth Discernment," *Science Advances*, (2023), accessed December 13, 2023, https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.abo6169.

technology is shaping the worldviews of young people, often in ways that are not immediately noticeable,[193] yet there is little agreement on how to respond to these issues.

One of the reasons that social media has such adverse effects on young people is because few question its presence in society. Technology is accepted as normal with little or no discussion concerning its influence.[194] Social media has become so normalized in society that few people stop to consider whether it is beneficial or harmful. Most assume that social media is just a tool in the hands of aware users, but Thacker questions whether human beings are the ones being used.[195]

Technology has developed at such a rapid pace that society is barely able to keep up with the changes, resulting in a world with "more distractions and less community, more religious skepticism and less institutional trust."[196] With little or no awareness on the part of its users, social media is slowly choking out the deep spiritual longings that lie hidden within humanity.[197] Rather than discovering and cultivating these supernatural desires of the soul, individuals allow screen time to distract them from pursuing the deeper things of life. Kinnaman contends that screens are not necessarily bad in and of themselves but "if we are not vigilant and intentional," social media will succeed in keeping its users from "pursuing the deeper things of life."[198] Thacker adds that technology is more than just a distraction from life, "[i]t's a whole way we've

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[193] Thacker, *Following Jesus in a Digital Age*, 4.

[194] Ibid., 15.

[195] Ibid., 3.

[196] Gabe Lyons, *The NEXT Christian: The Good News about the End of Christian America.* 1st ed, (New York: Doubleday Religion, 2010), 20.

[197] Kinnaman, *Faith for Exiles*, 17.

[198] Ibid.

been trained."[199] Technology is about making life more efficient, but at what cost to humanity? One must have an awareness of the effects that social media is having on themself as well as on society. It is not social media, but the way in which social media is being used that is the problem.[200]

In her book *My Tech-Wise Life*, Amy Crouch writes that 68 percent of young people agree that electronic devices hinder real relationships and 50 percent admit that today's technology is distracting, often leading to procrastination or ignoring loved ones.[201] Crouch goes on to affirm that though so many young people are affected by technology, the answer is not to eliminate the technology. Technology is amoral, meaning it is neither good nor bad in and of itself. Removing or banning smartphones or social media platforms in the hopes that the next generation will somehow remain sheltered from their effects is not a viable solution.[202]

Crouch notes that though social media companies do profit from the dependency it has created among users, they certainly are not to be blamed as the source of society's insecurities.[203] There is a level of responsibility incumbent on the user that must be taken into account. One gets to build their life around whatever they choose.[204] The challenge for this generations is that social media does not care about how one develops as an independent, responsible individual. And since technology is not going away, young people need to be made aware of the influence

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[199] Thacker, *Following Jesus in a Digital Age*, 21.

[200] Kinnaman, *Faith for Exiles*, 186.

[201] Amy Crouch and Andy Crouch, *My Tech-Wise Life: Growing Up and Making Choices in a World of Devices* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2020), 13.

[202] Kinnaman, *Faith for Exiles*, 85-86.

[203] Crouch, *My Tech-Wise Life*, 26-27.

[204] Ibid., 71.

social media has and equip themselves to handle technology in such a way that it does not distract from the important things in life.[205]

Other attempts to resolve the issue encourage users to learn to manage their use of technology in a healthy way. Parents are encouraged help keep younger teenagers and children accountable by restricting access, but at some point, young teenagers become young adults. Who will restrict their access then? Parental restrictions should be balanced with sound teaching; otherwise, the devious tendency of humanity will likely lead to rebellious behavior.

Attempts to limit or control access to technology do little to help young people learn how to think for themselves. The focus must turn from control to formation. Forcing young people to exist within boundaries set for them does little to teach them to think critically or make wise decisions on their own. Learning to set and maintain healthy boundaries is not an easy task, but it is better in the long term. When one can behave in a certain way of their own volition, then formation has taken place.[206] One's choices cannot be predetermined, but one can catch a "vision for spiritual maturity and pursue it in community with other disciples of Jesus."[207] Discipleship, the primary method that will lead to young people formed into the likeness of Jesus Christ, is the best way to help young people identify for themselves the importance of forming healthy social media habits. Parents are an important part of this process. Young people will also benefit tremendously from the input of wise and spiritually mature individuals other than their parents or immediate family who will commit to be a part of shaping their way of thinking.[208]

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[205] Crouch, *My Tech-Wise Life*, 64.

[206] Bergler, "Generation Z and Spiritual Maturity," 87.

[207] Ibid., 90.

[208] Kinnaman, *Faith for Exiles*, 138.

In their study on an individual's ability to distinguish between accurate and fake news,

Jan Rudloff and Mark Appel concluded that children and teenagers today have not been taught to

develop their own set of epistemic beliefs.[209] There is a growing need to equip this generation of

young people with clear guidelines for using social media.[210] This researcher agrees that young

people need to be trained and equipped to think critically if they are ever to learn to manage the

vast amounts of information available through social media.

Using the biblical example of the Israelite exiles taken into Babylon, the authors of *Faith*

for Exiles make a comparison to the modern-day world of digital technology, likening American

culture to a "digital Babylon."[211] Babylon was a wicked place opposed to Yahweh on many

levels. God's people were unwillingly dragged into captivity (because of their own

rebelliousness) and had to learn to live for God despite their circumstances. John Lennox wrote

an entire book devoted to understanding the parallels between the ideology of Babylon and that

of the world today.[212] He contends that the idea that everything can be reduced to materialism

dominates the thinking in American society just as it did during the days of Daniel.[213]

Well-meaning Christians often feel it is necessary to separate themselves completely

from the culture if they are to avoid the negative influence that culture might have. Lennox

observes that Daniel did not avoid the culture at all. Instead of isolating himself from the culture,

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[209] Jan Philipp Rudloff and Markus Appel, "When Truthiness Trumps Truth: Epistemic Beliefs Predict the Accurate Discernment of Fake News," *Journal of Applied Research in Memory and Cognition* 12, no. 3 (n.d.): 344–51.

[210] Luttrell, *Gen Z: The Superhero Generation*, 116.

[211] Luttrell, *Gen Z: The Superhero Generation*, 13.

[212] John C. Lennox, *Against the Flow: The Inspiration of Daniel in an Age of Relativism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Monarch Books, 2015), 67.

[213] Ibid.

he learned to live a "very professional life at the highest levels of administration in the empire."[214] Without ever compromising his commitment to his God, Daniel was able to thrive in an anti-God society and even have an influential presence.[215] Without a proper theological framework and the ability to stand firm within the culture, young people will lack the ability to respond with confidence to the false worldview content found on social media.[216]

Social media has enabled its users to absorb information with little thought concerning its veracity. Many have never learned to determine whether something is true in a deliberate manner, evaluating the information being presented to them according to specific and reasonable criteria.[217] Critical thinking requires intentional effort on the part of the individual. The ability to come to one's own conclusion and act accordingly is what sets an individual apart from the crowd.[218] Young people who develop critical thinking skills will have the power to liberate their minds from the preconceived ideas being delivered on social media, enabling them to evaluate each piece of information properly.[219]

Kinnaman divides Gen Z into four major groups of exiles: Prodigals (ex-Christians), Nomads (Unchurched), Habitual Churchgoers, and Resilient Disciples. His goal is to identify the factors that lead an individual to become a Resilient Disciple, that is, a Christ follower who is regularly involved in church, believes the Bible to be true, is committed to following Jesus as

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[214] Lennox, *Against the Flow*, 69.

[215] Ibid., 70.

[216] Brown, "Combatting Secular Humanism," 5-6.

[217] Ulrich L. Lehner, *Think Better: Unlocking the Power of Reason* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021), 53–54.

[218] Ibid., 55.

[219] Lehner, *Think Better*, 55.

Lord and Savior, and has the desire to transform the world around them.[220] Kinnaman has

identified five "practices of resilient faith,"[221] which if implemented will help young people

develop into bold and effective Christians. These practices are intimacy with Jesus, cultural

discernment (the ability to recognize truth and oppose untruth), meaningful relationships with

other believers, vocational discipleship (discovering what God created one to do), and

countercultural mission (involvement in what the body of Christ does for the sake of the

world).[222] This project uses Kinnaman's five practices as the basis for developing a hands-on

training program to equip the seniors at Lee Park Preparatory School with an apologetic matrix

for discerning the information they consume on social media.

Conclusion

In his book *Understanding the Times*, Jeff Myers defines a worldview as a "pattern of

beliefs, convictions, and habits that help us make sense of God, the world, and our relationship to

God and the world."[223] Many live their entire lives without taking the time to define their

worldview. As young people continue to be exposed to the influences of social media, it is

imperative that they not only consider their worldview in light of these influences but also learn

to define and defend their beliefs. A solid apologetic and theological foundation is critical. As

young people are taught from a biblical perspective to know and defend what they believe and to

live out their convictions in practical ways, they will gain awareness of what they are viewing

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[220] Kinnaman, *Faith for Exiles*, 32.

[221] Ibid., 34.

[222] Ibid., 34-35.

[223] Myers, *Understanding the Times*, 6.

and hearing on social media platforms and learn to form habits that will lead to a right

relationship with God and the world in which they live.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This DMIN action research project seeks to equip teenagers with the theological and apologetical tools to manage the influence of social media on their worldviews. The participants in this project were high school seniors who actively use social media on a regular basis. This chapter reveals in detail the plan designed to teach students how to develop and defend their worldview, and how to manage the influence of social media.

Intervention Design

The intervention detailed in this chapter consists of a series of six-lessons taught by the researcher to the high school senior Bible class at Lee Park Prep. Each lesson was taught by the researcher and includes a practical application assignment to give students the opportunity to act on the information they are receiving as well as a journaling prompt to help students process their learning assignment. The following sections describe in detail the participants, the process, and the criteria for evaluating the success of this project.

The Participants

This project's focus is on the senior high school class at LPP. These students have never known life without social media and may have unknowingly become reliant on its presence in their lives. The students chosen for participation have been in this researcher's Intro to Philosophy class since the beginning of the fall 2023 semester and will have already learned a foundational understanding of worldviews. Having received IRB (see Approval Letter at the end

of this thesis) and mentor approval, this project began during the spring 2024 semester at LPP.

The researcher requested and was granted permission by the Head of School (see Appendix A &

Appendix B). Participants were then informed of the project during the first week of the study.

Although each participant was required to be in this researcher's Introduction to Philosophy

class, participation in the research portion of the study was voluntary, as this researcher wanted

students to participate in this study of their own volition. All students were asked to sign a

consent form and a parental opt-out form was emailed to parents and/or guardians of students

under the age of eighteen.

The Intervention Process

The intervention took place over a period of nine weeks (see Figure 1). The first week

(Week Zero) served as an introductory and preparation week, allowing the researcher to

introduce the study, gather consent forms, and answer questions from participants. The study

officially began during Week One with an initial questionnaire and focus group interviews. Over

the span of Weeks Two through Seven, the researcher taught six lessons and challenged

participants to respond to each lesson by completing a practical application assignment and

responding to a weekly journaling prompt.

WEEK 0	WEEK 1	WEEKS 2-7	WEEK 8
• Present project to participants • Distribute consent forms • Email parental opt-out forms	• Administer initial questionnaire • Meet with focus groups	• Teach lessons 1-6 • Participants complete weekly practical application assignments • Participants respond to weekly journaling prompts	• Final participant questionnaire • Final focus group
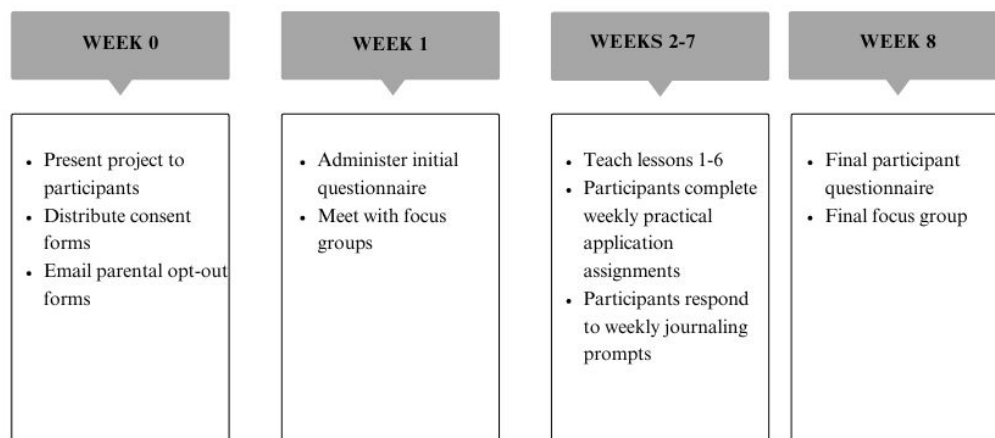
Figure 3.1. The intervention process

Week Zero

During the first week of the spring semester, the researcher thoroughly explained the project to the students, inviting them to be a part of the project (see Appendix C). Participants were introduced to the details of the project, including expectations and goals. After explaining the project to the students, the researcher distributed a copy of the Participant Consent form (see Appendix D) to each student. The researcher read through the Participant Consent form out loud while the students followed along. Those who agreed to participate were asked to sign the consent form and return it to the researcher. Parents of student participants under the age of eighteen received an email describing the project (see Appendix E) and were provided with a Parent Opt-Out Form (see Appendix F) to be signed and returned to the researcher if they did not wish for their student to participate in the study.

Week One

Student participants were asked to complete an initial questionnaire (see Appendix G) in class. Following the completion of the initial questionnaire, students were assigned to participate in one of four focus groups consisting of four to five participants each. These groups met at

various times during Week One of the project. The researcher met with each of the four focus groups, acting as the facilitator and asking questions to get the conversation started (see Appendix H), while allowing participants the freedom to converse with one another about each question or topic. These sessions were recorded for the accuracy of gathering data. The Initial Questionnaire and Focus Group Interviews served as a baseline for the study to determine the level of awareness participants had of the influence that social media had on their worldviews.

During Week One the researcher would begin the process of recruiting mentors from senior adult Sunday school classes at Lee Park Church. Adults interested in helping with the mentoring process would receive an orientation email (see Appendix K) explaining the purpose and guidelines for their meetings with the student participants. Student participants would be asked in Lesson 4 to meet with a mentor.

Weeks Two Through Seven

Having completed the initial surveys and focus groups, the action-oriented intervention continued as students were guided through a six-week series of lessons (see Appendix I) designed to create awareness of the influence social media has on shaping worldview. Participants who opted out of the study were still required to attend these sessions, as they were taught during the researcher's regularly scheduled Introduction to Philosophy class. Participants were taught to build an intentional worldview foundation that would equip them to defend that worldview. Each week participants were given a practical application assignment. These assignments required participants to respond to that week's lecture. Weekly journaling prompts were also assigned as a way for participants to report on their assignments. If a student opted out of participation in the study they were not expected to complete these assignments.

Lesson One laid the foundation for the rest of the study. Using Romans 12:2 as a starting point, participants were challenged to consider whether their lives were being intentionally transformed or subconsciously conformed to the culture. True transformation is only possible when Jesus Christ is the foundation of one's worldview. Participants were taught how to consider, develop, and write out their worldviews and then compare them with the worldviews they might encounter on social media.

Lesson Two focused on the issue of identity. Young social media users are facing an identity crisis. Discovering one's identity is a natural and healthy part of growth, but today many young adults are forming their identities based on a virtual world of fantasy. Students were challenged to find their identity in Jesus Christ rather than in the things of this world, specifically social media. Using a template provided in class, participants were challenged to write out a description of their identity and compare that to the identities that might be promoted on social media.

Lesson Three was designed to help participants understand the importance of being involved in a thriving Christian community. The church is a gathering of like-minded believers who not only desire to follow Jesus, but also have a concern for helping others become stronger followers. Cultural discernment, the skill necessary for discerning what one is seeing or hearing in the world, cannot happen in isolation. True disciples of Jesus must have the support, encouragement, and accountability of other Christians if they are to grow in their faith. Participants were encouraged to reflect on their church involvement and were challenged to commit to attending church services and small groups at least weekly.

In Lesson Four, participants were paired with a mentor. Young people may often come across as being self-sufficient, not needing or wanting the input of older and wiser individuals.

The reality is that young Christians can benefit greatly from intentional relationships with older Christians. Both older and younger individuals can benefit from overcoming isolation and mistrust and pursuing meaningful intergenerational relationships. Approved mentors from Lee Park Church were assigned to each student, and each student was challenged to meet with their mentor at least once. Mentors were provided with a set of expectations for these meetings (see Appendix K). A list of conversation starters was additionally provided to the students (see Appendix L) to help remove any initial awkwardness from these meetings.

Lesson Five aimed to lead participants to recognize their bigger purpose and calling in life. One's purpose extends beyond schooling, marriage, or careers. Recognizing one's God-given purpose includes recognizing the person God has called one to be. Truly knowing and understanding one's purpose in life comes only through a proper understanding of one's divine calling. Social media presents distorted views of one's purpose and calling in life. Participants spent time journaling and reflecting on how to live out their calling in the world in which they live.

Finally, Lesson Six turned the participants' attention away from themselves, encouraging them to live differently, faithfully and intentionally living out their worldview by engaging in countercultural mission. Christians are called to be intentional about living differently from cultural norms. Social media screams for followers who will conform to its distorted ideals and empty philosophies. It is easy to conform to society, but true disciples have a worldview that can defend against cultural norms as well as engage the culture with the purpose of transforming society. Participants were challenged to identify one way they could intentionally engage the culture and then write about that experience in their journal response. Table 3.1 gives an

abbreviated overview of the assignments and journaling prompts given at the conclusion of each

leasson.

Table 3.1. Overview of assignments and journaling prompts

	Title	Application Assignment	Journaling Prompt
Lesson One	Transforming My Mind	Develop and write out your personal worldview.	In at least one paragraph write out your worldview and compare that with what you might see on social media.
Lesson Two	Discovering My Identity	Consider the question "Who am I?" Answer the question of identity for yourself.	In at least one paragraph, write out a description of your identity. Compare your description to the identities that social media portrays.
Lesson Three	Strengthening My Discernment	Commit to attending a church service and a small group study at least once a week.	Describe your experience in church and small group. How does participation in these activities influence your use of social media?
Lesson Four	Building Meaningful Relationships	Meet with assigned mentor at least one time.	Describe your interaction with your mentor. How did your conversation with him or her change your view of the world, and your view of social media?
Lesson Five	Discovering My Purpose and Calling	Consider your understanding of your God-given purpose and calling in life.	Describe your role as a Christian on this planet. Compare God's purpose for humanity with social media's portrayal of

			people's purpose for living.
Lesson Six	Living Out My Mission	Identify one way you can intentionally engage the culture. Go do it.	Describe how you chose to intentionally engage the culture. What was that experience like?

Week Eight

Once the six lessons, journaling responses, and personal application activities were all completed, the researcher administered the Final Questionnaire (see Appendix M) and conducted final focus group interviews (see Appendix N). The post-intervention focus groups were randomly selected and scheduled during the final week of the intervention process. Participants were asked similar questions as in the initial focus groups. The researcher would note how the previous six weeks impacted each participant by comparing responses given in the initial focus groups with responses given in the final focus groups. This concluded the action-research intervention portion of this project.

Criteria for Evaluation

The researcher desired at least 80% of participants to follow through by completing the entire intervention, including weekly assignments and journaling responses. While participation was a valid indicator of success, many other factors contributed to the efficacy of the project. The researcher was looking for positive change in the lives of individual participants. Positive change would be measured by comparing participant responses in the initial and final questionnaires and focus groups. The initial and final questionnaire questions were similar, allowing the researcher to quantitatively detect whether participants grew in their understanding of the issues presented throughout the lessons and activities. Initial and final focus group

responses would require some qualitative comparison on the part of the researcher. Participant journals would be useful in giving the researcher a glimpse into the minds and hearts of the participants.

Initial questionnaire and focus group responses were compared to final questionnaire and focus group responses to determine changes in the way the participants thought about social media, as well as how they used social media. Since this researcher does not spend every moment of every day with each participant, he had to rely on individual responses on the surveys, in their journals, and in interviews to evaluate the success of the project.

Developing a Christian Moral Foundation in Young People

To completely separate oneself from moral influence in this world is impossible.[224] As moral agents created in God's image, humans have an innate sense of what is right and what is wrong. Yet at the same time, every interaction an individual has with the world has the potential to influence that person's moral development. Young minds are easily molded and shaped by the subtle influences to which they are exposed on social media platforms. This researcher desires to help young users of social media ensure that they are developing morals that are based on a biblical Christian worldview while learning to protect themselves against the negative moral influences young people face today.

Theological Perspective

The process of moral development is often defined and described in purely humanistic terms. Jean Piaget suggested that morality is confined to a set of rules to be followed by

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[224] James R. Estep and Jonathan H. Kim, *Christian Formation: Integrating Theology and Human Development* (Nashville, TN: B&H Books, 2010).

individuals seeking to respect one another.[225] As these rules are adopted and internalized, one's sense of morality is developed. It is purely an externally-informed process. Attempts have been made to regulate the use of social media. Age limits, parental controls, and time limitations are available to the user to help set boundaries. The government has proposed laws to limit or even ban some forms of social media. These are all attempts to develop moral behavior using external processes.

Lawrence Kohlberg concluded that one's moral behavior develops from a deeper sense of reason based on rules.[226] Regulation alone is not sufficient. True morality can only develop when one understands the reasoning behind a set of rules. Moral reasoning bases the idea of what is right or wrong on the individual's ability to determine what is best for them as an individual. Moral development requires an individual to progress beyond self-interest to respect for others, with justice becoming the guiding principle in moral behavior. This humanistic understanding of morality is problematic as it relies on the individual's ability and desire to make the right choice for themself with respect to others.

Though the Bible doesn't specifically lay out a theory of moral development, it does provide a moral framework that can help direct the development and growth of moral behavior in Christians.[227] In Romans 12:1-2 (ESV), Paul calls on Christians to present themselves "holy and acceptable to God." Holiness is the state of living a perfectly moral life based on the perfect moral law given by the perfect Moral Law Giver. The only way an individual can be acceptable in God's sight is by being presented holy and blameless before Him. Left to one's own attempts

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[225] Estep, *Christian Formation*, 126.

[226] Ibid.

[227] Ibid., 129.

at morality, this is an impossible task. One may attempt to set boundaries for oneself or others, but the sinful nature within eventually overpowers human will, leading to immoral behavior.

In Paul's appeal to perfect moral behavior, he explains in verse 2 of Romans 12 that the only way to truly become holy in the presence of God is through a process of transformation, which he terms "the renewal of your mind." "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind" (Romans 12:2, ESV). Following a set of man-made rules and setting boundaries for oneself may give the appearance of morality for a while, but rules and regulations do not lead to transformation. Moral development requires transformation and renewal from within. Moral decisions may give the appearance of morality but there is more to morality than mental assent or cognitive reasoning. Moral development must include a dimension beyond human reasoning. The world, including social media, wants to conform and control the mind. Jesus Christ wants to transform the mind.[228] Transformation describes an internal change. Rules and regulations may result in external change for a time, but unless an individual's heart is truly changed, their behavior will eventually betray the thoughts and intentions of the heart (Hebrews 4:12). Inward moral transformation will result in a life that displays moral behavior despite circumstances, temptations, or pressures from outward sources (Romans 12:2). The thoughts and intentions of young people must be transformed if they are to learn to stay holy in a naturally depraved world.

<div align="center">Application for Teaching</div>

As a teacher in a Christian setting, it is necessary to understand the interrelated dimensions associated with the development of moral behavior. Cognitive or moral reasoning

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[228] Warren W. Wiersbe, *Romans*, vol. 1, The Bible Exposition Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 554.

suggests that moral decisions are made based on thinking or reasoning, understanding why a particular rule exists and adhering to it because there is good reason to do so. Moral affect involves the process of internalizing a set of values related to feelings and emotions. Moral behavior describes moral actions, or the behaviors of an ethical person. Behavior is the result of the combination of moral reasoning and moral affect.

Rules and regulations give the boundaries or guidelines for one's behavior. As students learn to understand the reason behind the rules, they can internalize the values associated with the rules. As one's internal values are shaped, individuals will more naturally exhibit their reasoning and values in their behavior.

This project attempted to combine these three elements using a series of lessons in which students were taught the reason and the need to filter the content they may encounter on social media. Rather than teaching students everything that is wrong with social media, they were taught to internalize that which is "true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, and commendable" (Philippians 4:8, ESV). As students internalize these things, owning for themselves the value of thinking along these lines, they will more naturally learn to recognize and avoid the things that do not align with this way of thinking. As Paul goes on to say in Philippians 4:9 (ESV), practice the things "you have learned and received and seen in me." The result will be ethically moral behavior.

<div align="center">Measuring Success</div>

As participants progressed through the weekly lessons, they were asked to complete action steps in response to weekly challenges. These action steps served to internalize the principles being learned by putting them into practice. When an individual takes the time to practice what they have been taught, they are more likely to learn from that experience, resulting

in transformation. The goal is life-change, and participants who complete these action steps will be more likely to experience long-term life-change.

Establishing a filter for managing social media requires that one have a cognitive understanding of what is right and what is wrong. But only having a list of dos and don'ts is akin to legalism. Human nature tends to reject rules and regulations. Participants needed more than a list of rules; they needed to be taught the principles behind those rules. Likewise, Christians must learn to understand which rules are important for developing internal values as they seek to live lives that are holy and acceptable to God.

As participants completed weekly action steps, they were asked to keep a personal journal. The process of journaling was meant to help participants reflect on how the action steps related to them as individuals. This reflection served as a reinforcement of the activity within their own lives. Participants also participated in weekly community activities, including worship service attendance, small group Bible studies, and mentoring relationships. Each of these encounters was designed to help participants understand the deeper value (reasoning and affect) of practicing ethical moral behavior.

Implementation of the Intervention Design

Upon IRB approval (see IRB Approval Letter at the end of this thesis) and permission from the school (see Appendix A & B), it was finally time to put the long hours of planning into action. The researcher introduced the action research project to the senior class at LPP. After an opening prayer, the researcher read the Verbal Recruitment Script (see Appendix C) and distributed a copy of the Participant Consent Form (see Appendix D) to each student. The researcher read through each section of this document while the students followed along.

Students were allowed to ask questions. The researcher enjoyed the interest and curiosity that the students displayed. All but one student agreed to participate in the study.

Because some of the students were not yet eighteen years of age at the beginning of the intervention, a Parental Opt-Out Email (see Appendix E) was sent to the parents of those who were still minors along with a copy of the Parental Opt-Out Form (see Appendix F). Parents would have the opportunity to opt their students out of the study if they chose to do so. Thankfully, no parents responded to the email. Eighteen student participants began the intervention process.

Sensing recommends the use of data triangulation to analyze data more accurately.[229] He suggests using three angles of view which he labels insider, outsider, and researcher perspectives (see Figure 3.2). This action research project employed several methods of data collection. The participants provided the insider perspective by responding to questionnaires, participating in focus groups, and completing journaling assignments. Pre-intervention questionnaires and focus groups captured participants' initial understanding of the problem. Post-intervention questionnaires and focus groups measured changes in the participants' knowledge and understanding of the problem, while participant journals offered insight into the participants' perspectives throughout the project.

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[229] Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 72.
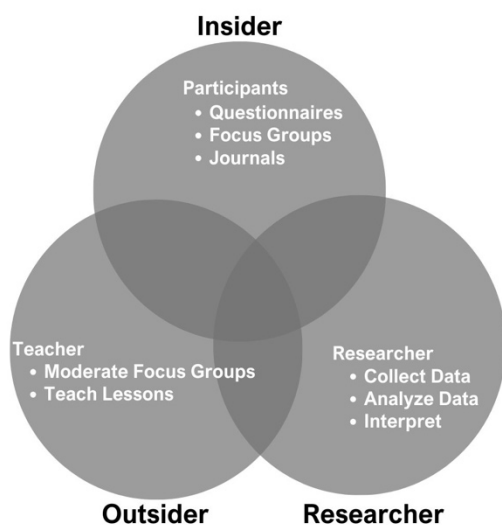
Figure3.2. Data triangulation

The researcher provided his perspective by analyzing and interpreting data collected from questionnaires, focus groups, and participant journals. The outsider typically observes and interacts with participants with no direct involvement in the study itself, allowing for an unbiased view of the participant's involvement. In this case, the researcher taught the lessons and moderated the focus groups, which required that he simultaneously occupy the role of researcher and outsider. It was important for the researcher to be aware of this dual role in combining two perspectives while seeking to maintain objectivity.

Triangulating data from various sources and perspectives allows the impact of the intervention to be thoroughly assessed from multiple perspectives. These perspectives provide a balanced view of the data by considering the viewpoints of the participants, the teacher, and the researcher.

Initial Questionnaire and Focus Group Interviews

On the Monday after the participants had been invited to participate in the study, with most of the class in attendance, the researcher passed out copies of the Initial Questionnaire (see

Appendix G). Students were instructed to take their time and thoughtfully and thoroughly answer each question. The researcher clarified that this was not a test and would not count as a grade. All but three students were able to complete the survey within the 50-minute class period. The three students who were not able to complete the survey in class were given time to complete the survey the following day during class. Due to illness, another three students were absent from class on the day the survey was initially distributed and were given the opportunity to complete the survey after they returned to school.

Having received completed surveys from each student, the researcher began scheduling the focus group interviews. Student participants were randomly divided into four groups using the Google Sheet randomize function. Groups one and two consisted of five students each and were scheduled to meet on Tuesday. Groups three and four had four students each and were scheduled to meet on Wednesday. Due to illness, groups three and four had to be reorganized and reassigned. Group three got reorganized into five students and met at the initially scheduled time on Wednesday. The final group, which now had the remaining three student participants, did not meet until the following Monday.

The focus group participants gathered around a table with a microphone in the center of the table and an iPhone on a tripod behind the researcher. The researcher and students were a bit nervous to begin, but as the conversation developed, the participants and the researcher became more comfortable. The researcher posed questions dealing directly and indirectly with the following major themes: worldview, social media, identity, mentoring, purpose, and mission. The students handled their responses well, giving honest feedback. The researcher was pleasantly surprised at the level of thought and intentionality that went into answering the questions.

Having typically taught these students only in large group settings, it was refreshing to hear them interact and discuss these issues at a deeper level in a more intimate setting.

Each group took on a unique personality, though many of the responses were similar. There was much agreement on many of the topics. Watching each conversation unfold throughout the process was interesting. Having completed all four focus group interviews, the researcher used the online transcription tool Happy Scribe to convert the conversations into text. The text from each group interview was then broken down by question and added to a spreadsheet to organize participant responses for further analysis.

The Lessons

The next step of the intervention consisted of a series of six lessons taught by the researcher (see Appendix I). Each lesson included a fill-in-the-blank handout so students could engage as they followed along (see Appendix J). At the end of each lesson students were given an activity and a journaling prompt. The researcher provided each student participant with a small journaling notebook which they could use as they completed each of the journaling exercises.

One of the challenges the researcher had to overcome was absenteeism due to illness. The flu and COVID were working their way through the school, and inevitably one or more student participants had to miss school, thereby missing lessons on the days they were taught. Because the size of the group was limited to eighteen participants in total, the researcher wanted to ensure that all eighteen students had access to the information being taught in each lesson. The researcher responded to this challenge by recording each lesson on an iPhone and posting the recording along with the student handouts on Google Classroom so that absent students would be able to watch the lessons and complete the journaling prompts.

Lesson One: Transforming My Mind

Sixteen students were present on Wednesday, January 24. They were attentive and engaged as the researcher began to tell the story of Daniel and his friends in Daniel 1. Daniel faced a crisis of belief. Having been removed against his will from all that was familiar to him, he had to make a decision. Would he remain faithful to his worldview, or would he allow the culture to shape him? Though there were things around him that were out of his control (location, name, education), Daniel resolved that he would not "defile himself with the king's food" (Daniel 1:8, ESV). Believers can and should intentionally filter what they allow to enter their minds and hearts.

One's worldview is what determines one's response to the current culture. Knowing and defending one's worldview requires that one know what they believe and why (theology), as well as how to defend what they claim to believe (apologetics). Theology is the system of belief, the doctrine, of what one holds to be true. Apologetics is the ability to show what one believes and why one believes it to be true. Theology seeks to help one answer fundamental questions about the world based on what the Bible teaches. Apologetics is a powerful tool that can be used to defend one's biblical worldview. To defend or even strengthen one's faith, an individual can learn to defend their faith using logical reasoning and sound evidence. One will not be able to defend something they do not truly believe.

After learning how theology and apologetics relate to shaping and maintaining one's worldview, the students were asked to raise their hands if they felt like they had a good theology. Most students raised their hands. When asked to raise of hands if they felt like they had a sound apologetic for what they believed (the ability to explain and defend their believe and why), no hands were raised as far as the researcher could see.

Romans 12:2 challenges Christians to be intentional in the development of their worldview. Students on social media must recognize the difference between conforming and being transformed. Social media seeks to conform its followers. Jesus desires to transform His followers. In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul exhorts followers of Jesus Christ to "be transformed by the renewal of their minds", rather than being "conformed to this world" (Romans 12:2, ESV). To be conformed means allowing outside factors to influence who one is, what one thinks and believes, and how one behaves. To be transformed involves intentionally developing oneself, including what one thinks and believes, and how one behaves from within.

The lesson concluded with a challenge to the students to commit to preparing to stand firm by resolving to be transformed rather than conformed and to develop a biblical Christian worldview by answering some basic foundational questions. If one is to be grounded in a biblical Christian worldview, one must know and believe that God is in control. When one faces a crisis of belief, one's response will be determined by their worldview. The students were left with a journaling assignment: to write out in their own words the answers to the foundational worldview questions presented in the lesson, and then to summarize their worldview in a brief paragraph.

Lesson Two: Discovering My Identity

The following week, on Wednesday, January 31, the researcher presented Lesson Two to a full class. This would be the only class in which all participants were present. A crucial part of building a biblical worldview foundation is understanding and defining one's identity. This social media-saturated culture is driving individuals to look for their identities in all the wrong places. Every person has a deep-seated desire to find and portray their identity. Social media has changed the way people view themselves and the way people connect. According to Lutrell and

McGrath, in an attempt to answer the worldview question "Who am I?," Gen Zers have mastered the art of projecting multiple identities.[230] Social media has provided members of this generation with a place where they can explore their identities in new and different ways. Social comparison on social media has led to a generation that is living in a digital world without clearly defined boundaries of who they are and with whom they are interacting, increasing their perceived need for an online persona to define their identities.

Instead of finding their true identities, individuals are being told who they are by social media. The very essence of identity is being redefined. Today's culture would have one believe that one's identity can be found within oneself. The idea is that if one follows their heart and believes what they feel, and your "true self" will evolve from within. Gender identity is just one example of social media's attempt to redefine one's identity to become whatever one feels is right at that moment. The problem with this line of thinking from a biblical worldview standpoint is that the Bible says that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9, New King James Version). There is nothing good that comes from within a person.

A Christian's identity is found in their relationship with Christ, not in subjective and often negative life experiences. According to a biblical Christian worldview, man was created by God in God's image, fully dependent on God for food, life, breath, plans, and abilities. All of humanity is fully dependent on God because they are His creatures created in His image for His purposes. As creatures of God, man is morally accountable to God. Genesis 2:16-17 (ESV) says the Lord commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden." God gave Adam and Eve a beautiful garden, the Garden of Eden. He put them in charge of

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[230] Luttrell, *Gen Z: The Superhero Generation*, 23.

everything. He told them they could eat anything they wanted, but they were not to touch the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, because on the day that they eat of it, they would surely die.

Man was given a standard in the form of a command to be obeyed. Where there is a command to be obeyed, there is moral accountability. Creatures who are fully dependent on God for everything are morally accountable to the One who created them.

Recognizing who one is in Christ ought to produce humility and gratitude. In humility, one can come before God, asking Him in full dependence for the things they need. Upon recognizing all that He has provided, one ought to respond with a sense of gratitude and thankfulness. Man ought to be overwhelmingly grateful for the food, the breath, and the life that the Creator has provided.

Humans are sinners by nature. Because Adam and Eve chose to disobey God, all of creation has been cursed. Every descendant of Adam has inherited a sin nature. In Psalm 51:5 (New International Version) David wrote, "Surely I was sinful at birth from the time my mother conceived me." From the moment of conception in the mother's womb, every human is a sinner. The sinful nature is inherited from Adam. Through the line of Adam, through every man who has ever been born, the seed of sinfulness has been passed from generation to generation.

God did not leave man to suffer in the sinful condition he was in without offering a solution. He offered atonement and forgiveness through His only Son, Jesus Christ, who became the perfect sacrifice for the sins of man. With Jesus Christ as the new representative of the human race, all who believe and receive His forgiveness are justified in God's sight. To be justified means to be accepted and treated by God as righteous because Jesus Christ is the believer's representative. Humanity's sin has been charged to Christ, and His perfect righteousness has been fully credited to humanity.

Those who have been justified can say with confidence that they are a new creation. God changes those who are justified into new people. The old man was crucified with Christ. The new man is now in union with Christ changing the makeup of who that person is. One's identity changes when one is justified by Christ. God desires that the one who has been justified will act on this radical change in their identity by applying the truth of that change to everyday life.

The believer in Christ, born a sinner, is now a new creation by way of justification. They are not only a new creation, but they are also now a saint. A saint is on the path of sanctification, in the process of being made holy before God. A saint is a follower of God who is set apart, no longer belonging to himself. The saint has a new identity. That identity is found in Jesus Christ and is defined by union with Jesus Christ. And the saint has a responsibility to take part in the process of their sanctification: Live a life of worship, read and study God's Word, look to experience God's presence at church, and get into the habit of prayer. As one makes these habits an important part of daily living, God will continue to develop His saints into people who can be used by Him to grow His kingdom.

At the end of this lesson on identity students were again asked to respond to the journaling prompts in their handout. Reflecting on the notes from this lesson on identity, they were prompted to write out their answer to the question of their own identity and compare their response with the content they typically view on social media.

Lesson Three: Strengthening My Discernment

The third lesson in the series was presented on Tuesday, February 13. Fourteen of the eighteen student participants were present for this lesson on discernment. Discernment is the ability to differentiate truth from untruth. If a high school senior is going to learn to manage the influence of social media, they must develop the ability to discern.

In his book *Faith for Exiles,* Kinnaman writes, "Exercising cultural discernment means taking part in a robust learning community under the authority of the Bible in order to wisely navigate an accelerated, complex culture."[231] Discernment, like muscles, must be exercised if it is to be strengthened. The church is the gym where young people can go to develop the much-needed ability to discern.

Exercising cultural discernment happens best when one participates in a church that stands unashamedly on the truth of the Word of God. American culture is complex. If one is going to develop their muscles of discernment, they need to be in a learning community with others who can help them grow and develop that discernment. One of the exercises that young people are missing today is the lost art of critical thinking. If one is to learn to be discerning, one must learn to think like a Christian.

2 Peter 3:18 (ESV) encourages believers to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." Growing in grace means becoming more like the Lord Jesus Christ in the way one behaves regardless of the situation, developing the character traits that Jesus displayed, learning to face trials, and even suffering as Jesus did. Peter also calls believers to grow in knowledge. It is easy to grow in knowledge but not in grace! Many people know more of the Bible than they live. Wiersbe writes that "knowledge without grace is a terrible weapon, and grace without knowledge can be very shallow."[232] Growth in grace and knowledge works to develop not only individual Christians, but also the entire church body. As one grows in the

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[231] Kinnaman, *Faith for Exiles*, 69.

[232] Warren W. Wiersbe, *2 Peter*, vol. 2., The Bible Exposition Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 470.

knowledge of Jesus Christ, one will grow in grace. As one grows in grace, one's knowledge and understanding of the Bible will develop.

When Jesus was asked what was the most important of all the commandments in the law, His reply was, "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" (Mark 12:30, ESV). Love is a choice, a willful action that requires commitment and dedication. The heart is the control center of one's affections. Loving God with all one's heart demands thoughtful and intentional attention. Fake and hypocritical love follows the natural desires of the heart. One's heart must be completely committed to loving God first and foremost. The soul is the center of one's self-conscious life. Loving God with all one's soul requires a command of one's emotional nature, that is, the personal touch, the feeling and empathy that seasons one's love with personality. Loving God with strength refers to physical action. It is where one puts his energy, power, might, and strength, involving every activity one does outwardly.

One's mind is the center of thought and reason, referring to one's ability to command their intellectual nature. Love is not blind devotion; it must be logical and reasoned. It is the mind that can formulate answers to questions such as "Why do you follow God?" or "How do you know there is a God?" Loving God with all one's mind is the process by which one can answer the foundational worldview questions discussed in Lesson One. Loving God with all one's mind requires that one develop the lost art of critical thinking.

In his book *Think Better*, Ulrich Lehner gives a great definition of critical thinking. The adjective "critical" has its origin in the Greek verb *krinein*, which means "to discern."[233] Being

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[233] Lehner, *Think Better*, 53.

critical here does not have anything to do with being judgmental,[234] referring instead to the process of determining whether something is true.[235] Critical thinking is the process of discernment done deliberately to evaluate and interpret information according to specific, reasonable criteria.[236]

Learning the art of critical thinking prepares one to follow the evidence no matter where it leads. This generation has been trained to interpret the evidence so that it will follow predetermined personal opinions or ideas. Asking critical questions is a lost art that must be revived if one is to love the Lord their God with all their mind. One must not just toss out personal beliefs and try and convince others of what he thinks is right.

The lack of critical thinking has fed the plethora of conspiracy theories that float freely around on social media. History is routinely changed and updated to fit personal worldview ideas, regardless of the evidence. The non-thinking population has been fooled into believing that the internet is trustworthy. It is not. But too many are willing to sit and wallow in their ignorance.

Discernment will grow and develop in younger generations when they choose to intentionally pursue wisdom. The pursuit of wisdom must begin within a community of believers who have made the Bible the foundation of truth. There is a big difference between protecting oneself from the culture and preparing oneself to engage the culture. One must be careful not to isolate themselves from the culture. God has not placed His church on this earth to be protected or isolated from the culture. His purpose for the church is to stand boldly amid the culture,

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[234] Lehner, *Think Better*, 53.

[235] Ibid., 54.

[236] Ibid.

engaging and seeking to transform the culture with grace and courage. Gen Z must be equipped with wisdom and the tools of critical thinking if they are to have any impact on the world today. As high school seniors learn to know and choose to believe the Bible and commit to engaging in growth with other believers, they will develop their muscles of discernment, preparing them to be agents of change in their culture.

After the lesson, the researcher asked students to consider their involvement in church community and small group gatherings. Does time in the church have any effect on one's relationship with the Lord and others? How does time spent in the church community affect one's relationship with social media?

Choosing and Assigning Mentors

In preparation for the activity and journaling portion of Lesson Four, the researcher began vetting and recruiting senior adults at Lee Park Church to serve as mentors for the high school seniors participating in this project. Recruiting began the week after Lesson Two. The researcher approached eight senior adult men and ten senior adult women. No one turned down the opportunity to be a part of the mentoring meetings.

The researcher sent the Mentor Equipping Letter (see Appendix K) to each of the prospective mentors, who were told that they would be contacted by a student to schedule a meeting sometime during the week of February 19-23. The mentors would not need to prepare anything ahead of time, as the students would come with a list of Mentor Meeting Conversation Starters (see Appendix L), that would be distributed to the student participants by the researcher after Lesson Four.

Lesson Four: Building Meaningful Relationships

Initially, the researcher had planned to teach one lesson each week for six weeks. After presenting the first three lessons, the researcher decided to teach two lessons a week. The time between lessons was longer than it needed to me. The researcher wanted to continue to the next lesson while the information from the previous lesson was still fresh in the minds of the students. With several time constraints to consider, the researcher decided to accelerate the process, confident that doing so would have no adverse effects on the outcome of the project.

On Thursday, February 15, the researcher taught the much-anticipated lesson on building meaningful relationships to a nearly full class. 17 students were in attendance as the researcher began to explain the importance of having older, wiser Christians who could speak into their lives. Connecting with others has become more accessible to more people than ever before, yet people on social media report being lonelier than ever before. Meaningful relationships have been replaced with digital likes and filtered friends. Fewer young people are crossing generational lines to talk to older adults. There is no longer a need to ask Grandpa for help with the lawnmower or to talk to Grandma about the best way to bake an apple pie. This information can be quickly found on YouTube, and the time commitment is so much less. Why call Grandpa when there is a four-minute video that tells one exactly what they need to know?

The isolation from older generations has led to a mistrust of older generations as well.[237] In the initial focus group interviews, several of the student participants agreed that older generations "don't get us because they don't understand technology" like we do. It seems to them that older generations just won't understand them because "older generations are not even

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[237] Kinnaman, *Faith for Exiles*, 120.

using social media." This and other similar perceptions seem to have led to a level of isolation between generations, creating a level of mistrust. Social media has perpetuated the mistrust of the church as an organized religion, and authority in general.

Kinnaman suggests that one of the best ways to overcome this mistrust is to encourage younger generations to take steps to overcome isolation by intentionally developing meaningful, intergenerational relationships.[238] One becomes who one spends time with. The church ought to be the best place to find people one should want to become. Aspiring to become like a peer is not always the best option as peers likely have similar life experiences as you. But there are people in church who have vast knowledge and wisdom that has resulted from years of life experiences.

The Apostle Paul urged believers to "admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all" (1 Thessalonians 5:14, ESV). Instruct and teach those who are out of line and warn those who neglect their daily duties. Encourage those who are prone to give up or be pessimistic to press on and be positive in outlook. Hold fast to the weak, guide their walk, keep them on the path of truth. Finally, be patient with them all. A mentor is someone who has had life experiences that others may not have had. They are someone who can instruct those who are out of line, encourage those who feel like quitting, and hold up those who are too weak to stand on their own. A good mentor will be patient as they lead and guide their disciples. Young people who want to grow as individuals should identify someone who exemplifies what they want to be like and find a way to spend time with them. This requires intentionality.

Jesus is the primary example of living. But becoming like Christ is not something that just happens. It must be intentionally sought after. Peter compared following the example of

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[238] Kinnaman, *Faith for Exiles*, 109.

Christ to a drawing or writing that a student reproduces. "For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps" (1 Peter 2:21, ESV). The word Peter uses for "example" means a copy, traced or reproduced from an original.[239] Christians are called to reproduce exact copies of Jesus' character and conduct in the way they live their lives.

Paul urged his readers to be his "imitators" (Phil. 3:17, ESV). To imitate means to "follow as a pattern," "to produce a copy of," or to "mimic."[240] As young children learn from the example of their parents by observation, Paul called upon the early church to watch and follow his example. The best way to mimic someone is to spend time with that person. A mentor should be someone worthy of imitation. Mature Christians have a responsibility to be an example worth imitating. Young people today need examples that are worth imitating. "Building meaningful relationships means being devoted to fellow believers we want to be around and become."[241]

The researcher distributed slips of paper to each student participant with the name, phone number, and email address of their assigned mentor. The students were instructed to contact their assigned mentor by Sunday, February 18 and schedule a meeting sometime between Monday, February 19 and Friday, February 23. Some of the students recognized the names of their mentors, but most were meeting with a total stranger. This researcher was pleased to see the excitement in the students who all seemed eager to meet with their mentors.

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[239] Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *The First Epistle General of Peter*, vol. 2, Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 506.

[240] Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, s.v. "Imitate," accessed April 25, 2024, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/imitate.

[241] Kinnaman, *Faith for Exiles*, 109.

Lesson Five: Discovering My Purpose and Calling

On Tuesday, February 20, 14 students gathered as the researcher prepared to present Lesson Five. High school seniors are especially interested in knowing God's plan for their lives. One of the big foundational worldview questions centers on the question of purpose: "Why am I here?" One cannot properly approach this all-important question of purpose without first laying the foundation of worldview, identity, community, and relationship. Social media and the internet are quick to offer many humanistic explanations for humanity's purpose. But if young people are to be equipped to manage the influence of social media, they must answer this important question from a biblical Christian worldview standpoint.

One's purpose has to do with how one thinks about and plans for what they will do with their lives. In the initial focus groups, most of the student participants quickly responded to the question of purpose by saying that they exist to glorify God and to be an example of God to the world. In other words, they claimed to be His representatives to His creation. According to the Westminster Shorter Catechism, "Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever." To glorify someone (or something) means making sure that they are seen no matter what. To glorify someone means to reflect that person's character so that that person can be seen in one's own behaviors[242]. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians that we are to make sure that God gets the glory no matter what we are doing. "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31, ESV). Glorifying God in all things includes making sure that other Christians see God and are not confused by one's behavior.

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[242] Wayne Grudem, *Bible Doctrine: Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith*, ed. Alexander Grudem, Second Edition. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2022), 140.

God's purpose for His creation, to glorify God and to make Him known, is a responsibility that most Christians want to take seriously. But questions arise when one tries to answer practical life questions such as whom to marry, where to work, and what car to purchase next. A false dichotomy has arisen between the secular and the sacred, bringing unnecessary confusion to many who are earnestly seeking God's direction for their lives. Glorifying God in one's vocation does not necessitate having a job in a church or ministry organization. Most people will spend most of their lives working in a job. One's job is where one will live out their identity, practice discernment, build relationships, and pursue significance in the world. Determining where one will choose to spend this amount of time is no small undertaking. Young people today will benefit from understanding the difference between God's purpose for humanity and God's calling on one's life.

God's calling on one's life is that which one is specifically called to do. Genesis 2:15 (ESV) says, "[T]he LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it." Adam was created and immediately given purpose and a calling. Adam was not a pampered guest in Eden on a permanent vacation in paradise. He was to manage and maintain the garden. As the first people created in the image of God, Adam and Eve were to represent God to all of creation. They were instructed to rule or have dominion over all the earth (Genesis 1:27-28). Adam's first task, naming the animals, required creativity and organizational skills. Then God told Adam and Eve to "fill the earth and subdue it" (Genesis 1:28, ESV). Skye Jethani contends in his book *Futureville* that "in communion with God, humanity was to extend the order, beauty, and abundance of Eden to the ends of the earth."[243] They were given the

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[243] Skye Jethani, *Futureville: Discover Your Purpose for Today by Reimagining Tomorrow* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2014), 26.

responsibility of bringing order, cultivating beauty, and generating abundance to the ends of the earth. As image-bearers of God, Christians have the same purpose today. They are called to bring order by working jobs related to science and teaching, to cultivate beauty in creative careers such as photography or music, and to generate abundance in entrepreneurial careers.

Discovering God's calling happens when one recognizes the giftings and passions that one has. Asking "What am I good at?" and "What do I enjoy?" can help point young people toward a potential career. The important thing is to remember that no job should be thought of as "menial labor to be endured."[244] God created each person with a purpose, and He gives each person gifts and passions that are to be used to do honest work.

God promised Joshua that if he would study the Word of the Lord and meditate on it and obey it, then he would enjoy prosperity and wealth (Joshua 1:8). If one's purpose is to glorify God, does prosperity and success have any place in one's life? It absolutely does! One must remember that the primary purpose of man is to glorify God in everything, including work. But nowhere in Scripture does God prohibit man from collecting or gathering wealth. Nor does He prohibit success. What better display of God's faithfulness than prosperity and success? The problem today, thanks in part to social media, is that young people have been taught a wrong understanding of what success is. Prosperity does not always mean earthly wealth, and success does not always mean fame and fortune.

Most dictionaries define success along the lines of accomplishing an aim or purpose, or attaining fame, wealth, or social status. In the "American Worldview Inventory 2023" report, Barna defined success according to the Bible as "consistent obedience to God—in thoughts,

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[244] Jethani, *Futureville*, 101.

words, and actions."[245] God's definition of success is much different than the world's definition of success. Jesus said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (Matt. 6:33, ESV). As young people refine their worldviews and identities and grow in their relationships with other believers, God will reveal more and more what He is calling them to be and do for His kingdom. Social media is perpetuating a very unbiblical view of success. Young people can and will be successful if they learn to trust and follow God's direction in their lives.

Lesson Six: Living Out My Mission

The final lesson in the six-part series was presented to the high school senior class on Thursday, February 22. There were 16 students in attendance. A biblical Christian worldview is shaped by transforming one's mind, discovering one's identity, strengthening one's discernment, and building meaningful relationships. As one discovers their purpose and calling, one will be better equipped to live out their mission. Believers are called to live differently from cultural norms by engaging in countercultural mission.[246]

To live out one's mission as a faithful presence, believers must reorient themselves from a self-centered to a Christ-centered view of life. Keeping in mind the contrast made in the previous lesson between the world's definition of success—the attainment of fame, wealth, or social status—and God's definition of success—consistent obedience to God in thoughts, words, and actions—one can easily see the self-centeredness in the world's definition. One cannot

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[245] George Barna, "American Worldview Inventory 2023 Release #2: Research Identifies the Best Starting Point for Developing a Biblical Worldview," (Glendale, AZ: Arizona Christian University Press, 2023), https://www.arizonachristian.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/CRC-Release-2nd-2023-Final.pdf, 5.

[246] Kinnaman, *Faith for Exiles*, 175.

possibly obey God consistently in all they do unless they have a Christ-centered approach to daily life.

In the third chapter of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are once again facing a crisis of belief. King Nebuchadnezzar has constructed an image of himself made of gold and towering 90 feet high. His command is simple: "You are commanded, O peoples, nations and languages, that when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up" (Daniel 3:4–5, ESV). Sometimes the mere appearance of greatness is enough to cause people to follow. Sometimes the sight of everyone else following along suggests it is the right thing to do. And for others, the thought of being publicly rejected or shunned by friends for choosing to go against the flow of culture is enough to bring them to their knees. But Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were three young men who had already shown themselves to be firm in what they believed. They knew and believed that their God was the one true God. They were so confidently committed to following Him that nothing was going to sway them from worshipping only Him.

Moving from a self-centered to a Christ-centered life means committing to always obey Him regardless of the cost. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego knew that obedience to God in this moment might very well cost them their lives. But they were more concerned with God's reputation than their own. They chose to be God-centered rather than self-centered. The importance of having a solid biblical Christian worldview foundation, of being able to articulate one's identity, of being involved in a solid Christian community, and of having wise mentors who can speak into one's life has been discussed in previous lessons. But knowing about and

acknowledging these things is not enough. One must put these things into practice. These beliefs are to guide one's actions.

James warns believers to be "doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (James 1:22, ESV). Dr. J. Allen Blair wrote that "one only believes what one is willing to apply to daily living."[247] As discussed in Lesson One, Daniel and his friends had been forced into exile in a pagan land. There were things beyond their control that they just had to live with. But there was one thing they could control, and that was what they chose to allow into their bodies. One does not always have control over their location or how others perceive them, but one can control what one allows into their mind and heart. Dr. Blair reminds believers that "those who profess the name of the Lord Jesus are to take their stand for Him and reveal Him by a transformed life."[248] People should be able to tell one is a Christian by their behavior, not just their words. This requires that one move from being self-centered to being Christ-centered in word and deed.

Entitlement is the "belief that one is deserving of or entitled to certain privileges."[249] Parents, social media, and a culture of participation trophies have all contributed to this attitude among young people today. Kinnaman writes that "most twentysomethings expect to have attained their dream job within the next five years, but only half as many say they have clear goals for how they're going to get there."[250] One can dream, but that is not enough. One must

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[247] J. Allen Blair, *Living Consistently: When Life Goes Up and Down* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publication, 1995), 79.

[248] Ibid.

[249] Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, s.v. "Entitlement," accessed April 25, 2024, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/entitlement.

[250] Kinnaman, *Faith for Exiles*, 184.

learn to work if they are to achieve their dreams. Entitlement has become such a normal part of life that many do not even recognize it as such.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego could have easily taken the path of entitlement. "I deserve to live, so I am going to bow down to appease this king (the culture). Besides, God knows my heart. He'll understand my reason for bowing to the king. I don't have to mean it; I'll just follow along outwardly so I don't offend anyone." This would have been a self-centered and entitled attitude. If young believers expect to have any influence on the culture around them, they must overcome the attitude of entitlement and learn to put Christ first in everything. One cannot put Christ first if they are entitled.

Learning to be Christ-centered and overcoming entitlement are necessary steps for anyone who intends to engage in countercultural mission. Kinnaman defines countercultural mission as "living differently from cultural norms."[251] It involves taking the practices that have been discussed in each of the previous lessons and putting them into action.[252] As Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stood before the golden statue, they had a big decision to make. But for them, the decision had already been made. They knew whom they worshipped, and no king could persuade them otherwise.

Everyone worships something. Idolatry is worshiping something that a human has made instead of worshiping the God who made humans. Today's culture offers endless idols to choose from, and though today's idols may not appear in the form of statues, they are nonetheless real. Man has made objects of worship out of politics, the economy, family, social status, careers, and more. The question is not whether someone is worshipping something or someone, the question

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[251] Kinnaman, *Faith for Exiles*, 179.

[252] Ibid., 180-181.

is who or what are they worshipping? One way to determine who or what someone is worshipping is their willingness to make sacrifices to or for that thing. Sacrifice is giving up something valuable to help another person. It involves the surrender of something for the sake of something else.

Everyone worships something or someone. Everyone, whether consciously or not, makes sacrifices for the object of their worship. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were willing to give up something valuable (their lives, their reputations) to help make God known to a pagan world. True worship requires sacrifice, and often that sacrifice is displayed in obedience.

Alistair Begg writes, "[F]aith is not believing in spite of evidence; rather it is obeying in spite of the consequences."[253] Believers are expected to follow in obedience even when obeying will not work out well for them. Pragmatism, seeking to deal with problems in a practical way, stands in direct opposition to the obedience to which Christians are called. Begg writes that decision-making based on what appears to be the more sensible option will result in the worship of the culture's idols in place of obedience to God. "Pragmatism is the enemy of obedience."[254] Had Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego taken a pragmatic approach to their situation, they would have logically deduced that to live is better than to die. It seems bowing down would have made the most sense for them. However, they did not take a pragmatic approach. Instead, they chose to be obedient to God despite the consequences. "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up" (Daniel 3:16–18, ESV).

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[253] Begg, *Brave by Faith*, 53-54.

[254] Ibid., 54.

When one's decision-making is based on what looks more sensible, beneficial or understandable, and one's approach to living is based on doing what seems most suitable, amenable, or comfortable, then one is are worshipping the idols of their culture rather than obeying God. Living on countercultural mission will sometimes require one to refuse to meet others' expectations and accept the consequences.

Living on countercultural mission means putting everything that has been discussed in each of the lessons up to this point into practice. Living out one's mission happens when one's worldview, identity in Christ, ability to discern, meaningful relationships, and purpose and calling come together and are lived out in daily life.

At the end of Lesson Six, students were challenged to identify one way in which they might intentionally engage the culture. How might they practically take a stand and obediently follow God in a culture that stands in opposition to Christianity? They were instructed to review past journal entries, reflect on their answers, and identify one way they might practically engage the culture. Finally, they were asked to describe in their journals how they chose to intentionally engage the culture, whether they did, and what happened, and then compare their countercultural mission with what they typically enjoy viewing on social media.

Final Questionnaire and Focus Group Interviews

Having completed the teaching sessions, the researcher made preparations to complete the study with a final questionnaire and final focus group interviews. The initial plan was to use the same questionnaire for both the initial and final questionnaire. However, after reviewing the responses from the Initial Questionnaire (see Appendix G), the researcher chose to narrow the number of questions and focus on some very specific details surrounding the major themes of the study.

The Final Questionnaire (see Appendix M) was limited to a very specific line of questioning surrounding each topic: Does social media have any influence in this area, and how can a young Christian learn to manage that influence? The narrowed line of questioning provided the researcher with more efficient and manageable data and the students were relieved to see a shorter questionnaire. All who were present were able to complete the questions within the given 50-minute class period. Two students were absent due to illness and were given the questionnaire to complete on their own time once they returned to school. The final focus groups were once again randomly assigned using the Google Sheet randomize function. Four groups were created with two groups of five and two groups of four. Due to illness, groups three and four had to be reorganized and reassigned to accommodate absent students, and the fourth group had to be rescheduled for the following week. Focus group participants gathered around a table with a microphone in the center and an iPhone on a tripod behind the researcher. This time around, students were excited to participate in the focus groups. They were not as nervous as they had been in the initial interviews and several mentioned how much they enjoyed the discussions. It was enjoyable for the researcher to observe the students as they sought to recall information that had been taught in the lessons and assimilate that information into their own ways of thinking as they went about answering the questions that were being posed. The researcher again used the online transcription tool Happy Scribe to convert the conversations into text. The text from each group interview was then broken down by question and added to a spreadsheet to organize participant responses for further analysis.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Collective Results

Individual surveys, focus group interviews, and weekly journal entries from student participants were used to generate data to be collected data and analyzed to measure the success of this action research project. Before the intervention began, student participants were asked to complete the initial questionnaire (see Appendix G). The intervention that followed consisted of a series of six lessons. The final questionnaire (see Appendix M) was given to the students to complete after the intervention had concluded. Both questionnaires were administered during class time and students were given the entire period to complete them. Due to illness and absence, several students were given the questionnaire and asked to complete it and return it at their convenience.

Students also participated in an initial focus group interview (see Appendix H) and a final focus group interview (see Appendix N) at the beginning and end of the intervention respectively. The senior class consisted of a total of eighteen students. Eight young men and ten young ladies were randomly divided into four groups using the randomize function in Google Sheets. Due to illnesses and absences, some adjustments to the groups had to be made.

Throughout the intervention, six lessons were presented to the students. Each lesson concluded with a journaling prompt. Students were asked to consider the material taught in the lesson, review the notes and handouts they had completed during each lesson, and respond to

several brief prompts in their journaling notebooks which had been provided by the researcher. Journals were collected and read by the researcher.

<div align="center">Initial Questionnaire Responses</div>

Most students invested the necessary time to thoughtfully consider their answers to the questions provided. Three students were absent on the day the questionnaire was distributed and were given time to complete it upon their return to school. Though two of the absent students gave thorough and complete answers, one of the three students seemed to rush through the questionnaire, giving short and vague answers. Data from the initial questionnaire was collected and organized using an Excel spreadsheet. Each row represented the student who completed the question, and each column represented the question being answered. The resulting data has been compiled and summarized here.

Warmup Questions

Students were first asked to rate their most and least preferred social media apps (Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and Snapchat) on a scale from one to four, with one representing their least preferred and four representing their most preferred app (Figure 4.1.). Not surprisingly, Facebook was the least preferred app (the kids say it is where the old people hang out), while Instagram was the most preferred app. TikTok and Snapchat fell between these two, just slightly higher than Facebook.
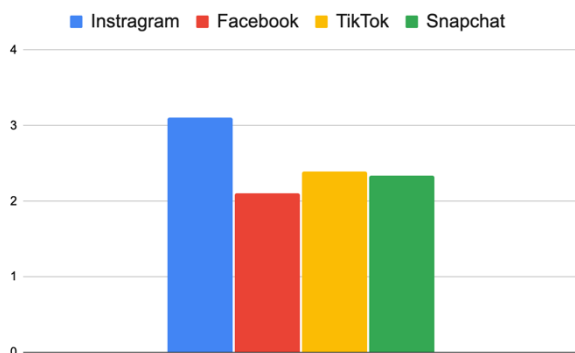
Figure 4.1. Most preferred social media apps

Students were asked to open the screen time function on their phones and record the amount of time they had spent during the previous week on each of these four popular social media apps (Figure 4.2.). Instagram, by far the favorite of the group, had consumed on average four hours and forty-one minutes of each student's time during the previous week. Boys spent an average of two hours and forty-three minutes more on Instagram than girls. Students spent an average of two hours using Snapchat. Boys tended to use Snapchat almost twice as long as girls. Students who used Facebook averaged about one hour, and students who used TikTok averaged just over two hours in the previous week. This poll was in no way conclusive, as it was only a snapshot from one week, but it did allow the students to get an idea of what their typical usage looks like. A big part of this intervention revolved around creating awareness and giving students the resources to continually be aware of the influence that social media has on their worldview.
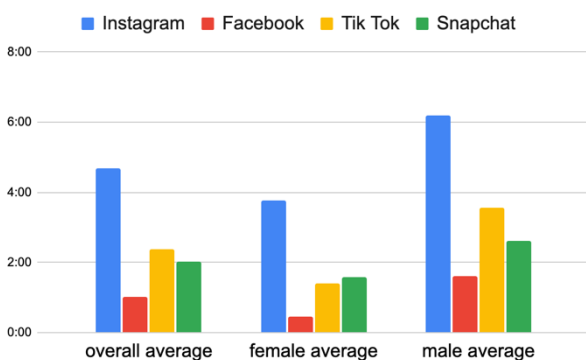

Figure 4.2. Average time spent weekly on social media apps

The warmup questions were intended to draw the students in with the hope that they would remain engaged and interested throughout the rest of the questionnaire. Questions were varied, alternating between Likert scale questions and open-ended short-answer questions. Questions were grouped into the following six major themes: Worldview, Identity, Church Community, Relationship, Purpose, and Mission. These themes coincide with the practices identified by Kinnaman[255] as key practices of young people who hold a solid biblical Christian worldview. The initial questionnaire seeks to identify how the student participants compare to Kinnaman's results.

Worldview

Students were asked via a Likert Scale whether they believe social media influences their worldview (Figure 4.3.). Eleven agreed and two strongly agreed that it does. One student strongly disagreed with the statement that social media influences their worldview, two disagreed, and two were not sure.
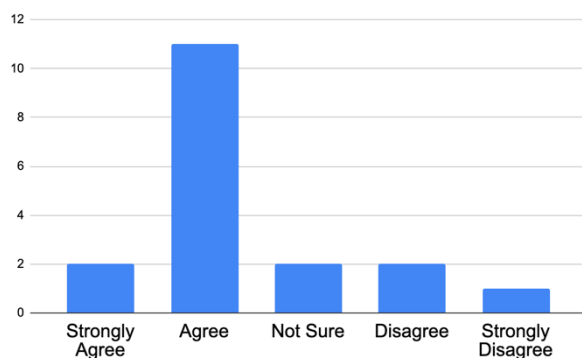

Figure 4.3. Does social media influence worldview?

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[255] Kinnaman, *Faith for Exiles*, 30.

When asked how they believe social media influences the way they think and behave, one student wrote, "If you are not guarding your mind against certain ideas then they may start to influence the way you think and behave." He noted that social media is constantly pushing ideas down one's throat, which can have a negative or a positive impact. "It is slowly introducing new thoughts to you in an appealing way." There seemed to be a good understanding that social media content is a means to influence its users whether they realize it or not.

Students suggested that social media can have a positive impact by encouraging them to do things like workout or cook meals. Seeing peers share ideas pushes users to think about these ideas as well, causing them to ask questions and seek answers. Several students follow creators who cater to their hobbies or interests, such as photography.

One student admitted that it is easy to get caught in the loop of watching reels, which are short video clips designed to capture attention quickly by delivering comedic or informational content. Another wrote that it is easy to be influenced to think badly about people, get jealous, or be judgmental— "Sometimes music from social media gets stuck in my head and I find myself quoting random videos." To try and fit in, one might see trends or things their friends are doing and begin to think or behave differently. Social media may even cause one to think something is acceptable when it is not. One student said, "It feeds me ideas and videos that I just believe are true. It gives me opinions about certain things."

Students' suggestions for managing the influence of social media fell into three main categories (Figure 4.4.). Nine students suggested that one can choose to limit screen time using time management apps or simply by spending less time looking at the screen. Three students suggested that one might restrict content by restricting who they follow, as well as what type of content is viewed. Five students said that the best way to manage the influence social media has

on one's thoughts and behaviors is by being biblically grounded and using biblical discernment

to recognize the worldviews being introduced in social media posts.
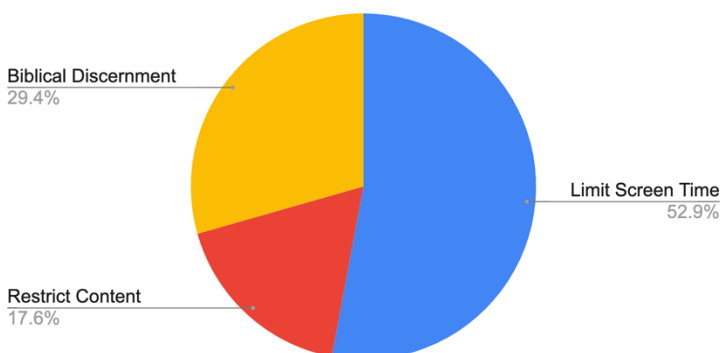
Figure 4.4. Three ways to manage the influence of social media

Every respondent agreed or strongly agreed that an individual's worldview is determined

by the friends they hang around (Figure 4.5.). Every male student strongly agreed, and every

female student agreed. When asked if a mentor relationship is necessary for the proper

development of one's worldview, three respondents were unsure, nine agreed, and six strongly

agreed (Figure 4.6.).
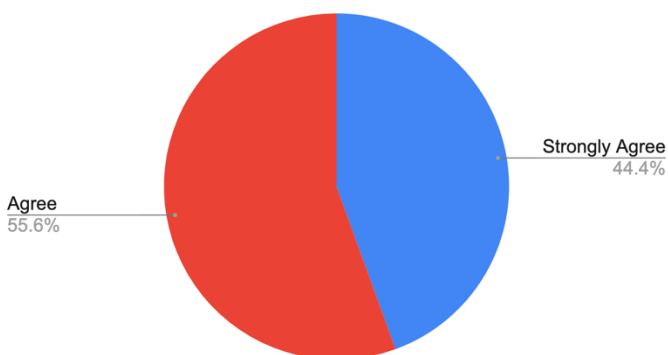
Figure 4.5. Friends influence one's worldview
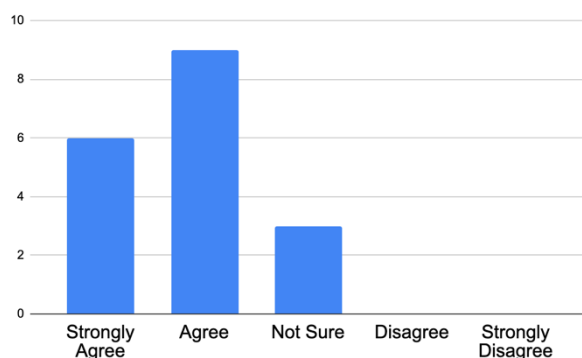
Figure 4.6. A mentor relationship is necessary for proper worldview development

When asked to describe their worldview, several students claimed to have a Christian or biblical worldview. Seven students very briefly summed their worldview up in terms of following what the Bible says, living right, and glorifying God. Six students mentioned creation, eight mentioned sin or the Fall. Nine students mentioned the cross, sacrifice, or redemption, and two mentioned the resurrection. Two students mentioned the Trinity and one student mentioned the future return of Christ.

Students were then asked to discuss how they believed someone's worldview influences how they live their life each day. One student wrote that one's worldview has a tremendous influence on one's daily life. Five said that worldview determines choices and decisions, four said that worldview determines morals, and eight stated that worldview affects actions and behaviors, including how one treats other people. Three students suggested that friend choices are influenced by worldview. One student said worldviews affect what one supports, and another that it influences one's thought life.

Identity

Students were given four questions dealing with identity. Ten respondents agreed that social media plays a part in shaping one's identity, four were not sure, and four disagreed (Figure

4.7.). When asked what identity is and who or what defines one's identity, those who were not sure whether social media shapes identity gave four completely different responses as to what might shape one's identity: the Bible, personal beliefs, being a Christian, and God. Of the four who disagreed that social media plays a part in shaping identity, three said that God defines who they are. One of the four said that what one believes defines who one is. The ten who agreed that social media plays a part in defining one's worldview unanimously answered that God, Jesus, or the Lord defines who they are.
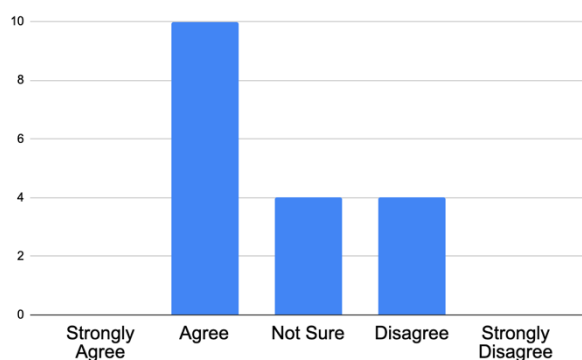
Figure 4.7. Social media shapes one's identity

Relationships

Eight students strongly agreed that church involvement affects the influence social media has on worldview (Figure 4.8.). These eight suggested that being involved in a church community can help remove doubt and motivate a person to grow and become more discerning and that being around like-minded believers allows one to think and reflect on deeper truths, and discuss and deal with personal issues. Students suggested that the church can equip young people with the tools they need to develop a firm worldview foundation. The more one is around the things of God, the more one will desire to view the things of God on social media. The more time spent in church and small groups, the less time one has to waste scrolling endless feeds.

One student even suggested that since everyone's phone is listening, talking about God might lead one's social media feed to begin to supply videos and posts about God.
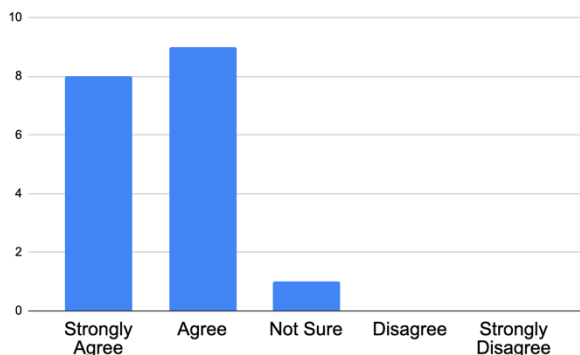
Figure 4.8. Involvement in church affects the influence of social media

The next series of questions dealt with relationships with friends, parents, and older adults in general. One student was not sure if social media had any influence on their relationship with friends. Two said they disagreed, though they went on to say that social media could start drama, causing one to drift apart from their friends or alter one's thinking, leading them to get involved with the wrong crowds.

Ten students agreed and five strongly agreed that relationships with friends can be influenced by social media (Figure 4.9.). Seeing friends post things on social media can sometimes leave one feeling left out, causing them to become jealous or feel badly. "Someone could post something and mean something completely different than what you read it as and it could cause you to think differently about them." Spending too much time on social media can distract someone from spending actual time with friends.
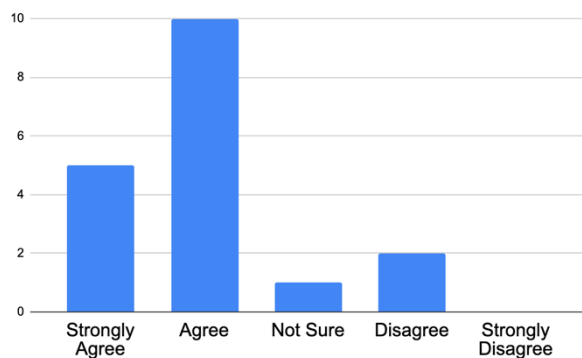
Figure 4.9. Social media influences relationships with friends

One student noted that social media can be fun when one sees pictures and videos of friends. Another suggested that it can be a great way to connect with and communicate with friends. Staying connected and sharing reels and photos with friends could serve to strengthen those friendships.

When asked if social media has any effect on their relationship with their parents, one student wrote that their "ability to share stuff and talk to them makes our relationship stronger." Five students recognized that social media tends to take time away from spending time with parents, while another five did not think it affected their relationship with their parents much, if at all. Social media, some said, can create disrespect in homes and empower children to use knowledge they learn on social media to undermine their parents. Two students mentioned that they and their parents like to follow each other on social media and send each other funny posts and memes.

Two of the student participants did not think social media had much influence on their interaction with older adults. Several pointed out that there is a barrier between generations and that older generations are either not on social media or do not understand what younger people are doing. One noticed that there is confusion and a tendency to mistrust each other. When asked if they had complete confidence in the wisdom of older generations, eleven of the eighteen

students agreed or strongly agreed, six were unsure, and one disagreed (Figure 4.10.). Fifteen

agreed or strongly agreed, three were not sure, but none disagreed that spending time with

someone from an older generation could be beneficial for them (Figure 4.11.).
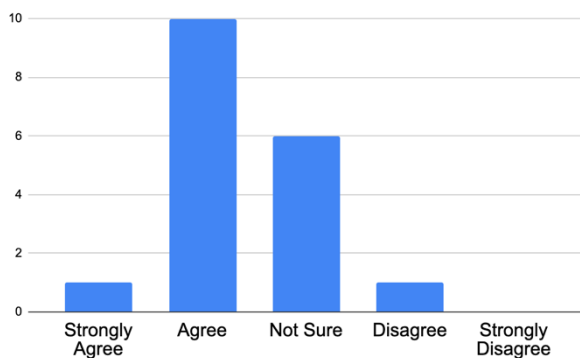
Figure 4.10. Confident in the wisdom of older generations
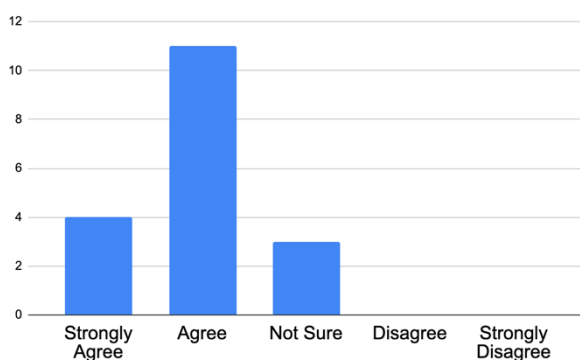
Figure 4.11. Spending time with someone older could be beneficial

The students were asked if they had someone in their life that they would consider a

mentor. All eighteen students said yes. When asked if they would be willing to meet a mentor,

one was not sure while the rest were in agreement. Every student responded that having a one-

on-one mentorship is very important, even crucial for developing one's worldview. Having

someone who cares enough to spend time with them would influence them to follow what they

believe. Having someone older and wiser to confide in, hold them accountable, and help them

get on and stay on the right path are all important reasons to have a mentor. While all the

students saw value in having a mentor, one did suggest that a mentor is not necessarily required and that one can achieve the same results if they have enough self-discipline.

The students concluded that having an intentional mentor relationship could influence their use of social media. A mentor's perspective might persuade one to use social media less or even stop using it altogether. Mentorship could help align one's focus in a more meaningful way, helping one to focus on the more important things in life. A mentor might be able to help young people learn to use social media more wisely. One could even go to the mentor for answers instead of social media or ask a mentor to help them better understand things they had seen or heard on social media. One student wrote, "A strong Christian mentor could show me how to live a life that is honoring to God, and they could help to cut out the false ideas that social media is feeding me."

Purpose and Calling

One student agreed that social media affects one's understanding of their purpose. Five were not sure, nine disagreed, and one strongly disagreed (Figure 4.12.). When asked if they understood their purpose, all eighteen agreed or strongly agreed. According to student responses, social media can lead people to believe that their purpose in life should be to live for success by having a great career, making money, and having many things. "It's all about the now. YOLO! For the plot! Just do it! It tells you to follow your heart to do what is fun and makes you happy." Others wrote that social media could distract from one's understanding of their purpose by creating envy of other people's lives, or even doubt about one's own life. Seeing someone who has a better life might lead someone to desire that life or to question their own.
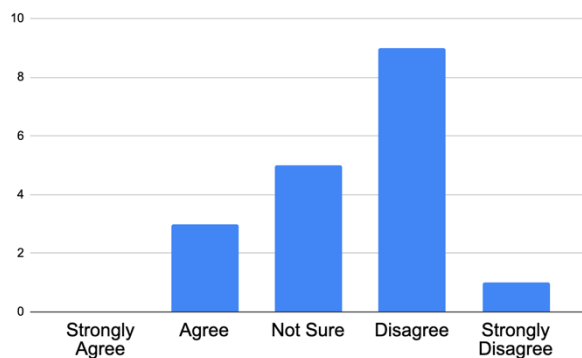
Figure 4.12. Social media influences one's understanding of purpose

Five of the students wrote that social media does not influence their understanding of their purpose in life. "I know my purpose is to honor God, live like Jesus, and make disciples by sharing the gospel!" "It doesn't affect that at all. I know that my purpose is to follow God and spread His word to others." "I don't think it alters mine, I understand my purpose as a Christian and don't have anything on social media that can deviate from that." Two students mentioned that they follow Christian influencers and receive encouragement to understand and live out their true purpose in life.

When asked about managing the influence social media might have on one's purpose in life, eight students agreed that keeping God and the Bible at the center of one's life and surrounding oneself with other believers will keep one from being distracted by the things that social media promotes. Reading the Bible, praying, and spending time talking with other believers can help a person discover their purpose, give meaning to their life, and keep them focused on following Christ. Six suggested that one should consider setting boundaries, limiting time on social media, being aware of what one is viewing, and being intentional about blocking certain influencers as ways one might manage social media's influence on one's understanding of their purpose.

Mission

Students were asked to consider how social media influences how they live their lives each day (Figure 4.13.). Two strongly agreed and seven agreed that social media influences how they choose to live their day-to-day lives. Two were not sure and seven disagreed with this statement. Two students said that sometimes social media is the first thing they do when they wake up. Seven wrote that social media sometimes influences priorities and affects daily routines. Four noticed that being on social media influences how they spend their time, money, and resources, while six said it does not affect them at all. One student commented that sometimes they feel left out if they see a post about what others are doing, or even rejected if people do not follow them back.
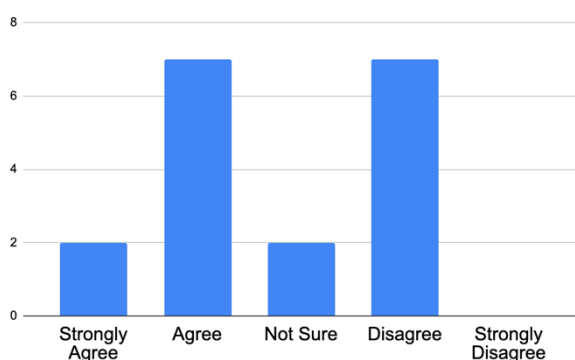
Figure 4.13. Social media influences how one lives each day

Students were asked how one might manage the influence social media has on how they live their lives daily. Answers ranged from "delete the app" to "read the Bible." Deleting or limiting time on social media and being intentional about who you watch and what you listen to were the main ways students suggested managing the influence of social media. A couple of students reiterated the importance of searching for and finding truth in the Bible rather than expecting to find it on social media.

Final Questionnaire Responses

Using a Likert Scale, students were asked if the series of lessons had been helpful to them personally and if they were now more aware of the influences that social media has on their worldviews. Twelve students strongly agreed and six agreed that the lessons had helped them personally (Figure 4.14.). Seven students strongly agreed and eleven agreed that they were now more aware of the influence that social media has on their worldview (Figure 4.15.).
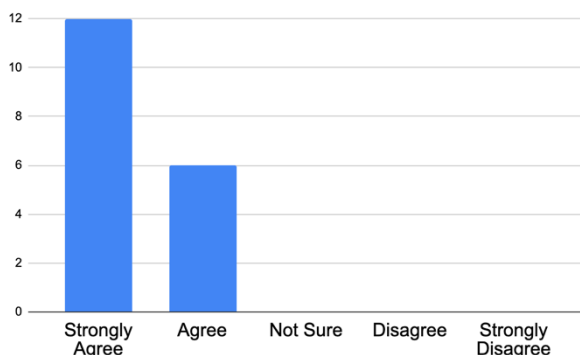
Figure 4.14. These lessons were helpful
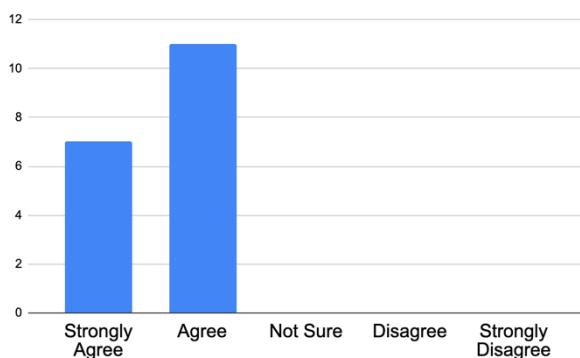
Figure 4.15. More aware of social media's influence on worldview

Students were asked to describe how the lessons had helped them develop their understanding of worldviews. Four stated that the lessons helped them realize just how much of an influence social media has on their worldview and their lives. Five were impressed with the importance of connecting with an older generation. The meeting with their mentor enabled them to gain a new perspective on their worldview. Eleven students were helped by learning to

develop their worldview, gaining a deeper knowledge of themselves and what they believed.

They now have a better understanding of what a worldview is as well as how worldviews are

shaped and influenced. One student mentioned that the intervention helped them "to have more

discernment regarding what influences worldviews and how to manage" that influence.

Worldview

Using a Likert Scale, students were asked if they thought social media had any influence

on their worldviews (Figure 4.16.). Eight students strongly agreed and ten agreed that social

media influences worldview in some way. This question was followed up with two open-ended

questions: How does social media influence the way one thinks and behaves, and how might one

manage the influence social media has on their worldview?
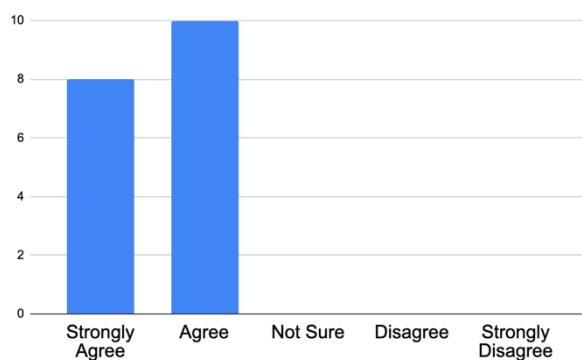
Figure 4.16. Social media influences worldview (final questionnaire)

One student said, "I try not to listen to social media and think for myself." Other answers

noted that social media "changes your attention span and the way you think," "tempts in many

ways," and is "constantly pushing the narrative of the culture" and "subtle ideas that don't align

with your beliefs." This results in "many worldview ideas being put into your head at a fast rate,"

allowing minds to be "shaped by its unfiltered influence." Social media "builds some up and

tears others down."

To manage the influence social media has on one's worldview, one student suggested that the Bible be used to develop discernment. Another responded that having self-control could help you manage what you view on social media. Eight students suggested that managing time on social media is the best way to manage the influence social media has on one's worldview, and five suggested managing or cutting out negative content. One student said that having a strong sense of what one believes is the most important thing. Users should follow people who have good, strong beliefs and trust their example rather than what people say on the internet.

Identity

When asked if social media influences how one defines their identity, one student did not respond, one was not sure, twelve agreed, and four strongly agreed (Figure 4.17.). Two follow-up questions asked students to describe how social media influences one's view of themself and how one might manage that influence.
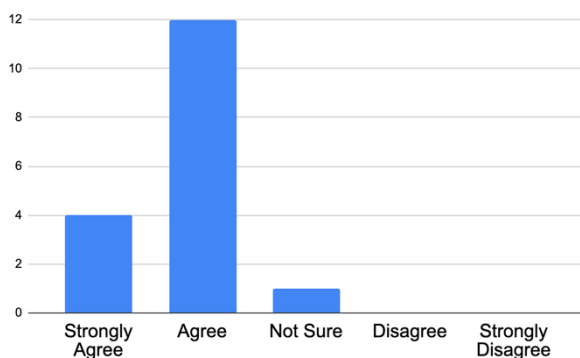
Figure 4.17. Social media influences identity (final questionnaire)

Two students said that social media has never really influenced their understanding of who they are because their identity is in Christ. Two others pointed out the contrast between the world's understanding of identity and a Christian's understanding of one's identity being in Christ. Most agreed that social media tries to define one's identity by influencing one's understanding of who they are because of what they see. It "tries to tell you your value comes

from likes and followers" with a "constant unrealistic comparison" to the world's false "standards of the 'perfect' life," which is "defined by the world's standards." One can think they need to be someone they are not and social media does not care. "People on social media push an agenda of self-worth, value, and acceptance and it can be easy to buy into that rather than what God has told us about ourselves." Students noted that social media plays on its user's tendency to compare themselves to others, putting "people in a place where their worth is defined by likes or followers, and not by who Christ says we are." One student commented that social media is more likely to shape an individual if they do not have a good understanding of who they are. Another said that social media can "trick you and make you think you are something, but you really aren't."

Students recognized that "there are a lot of accounts out there of people who are living 'perfect lives' but they don't, they just only post the good. This could make others believe you can have a perfect life." "Oftentimes people are putting bad messages out there and you start to think about it and wonder if it is true or not." "They try to tell you that your truth defines your identity" and that "your identity can come from whatever you want it to." It "skews our understanding of others and warps our self-image."

Another student observed that "social media puts the idea of a limitless identity out there, causes the word identity to be overused, and tries to stretch its meaning. This allows people to call their sin part of their identity rather than what it is by telling you that it's ok to be a certain way and then showing them people who are that way." One student concluded that "there are a lot of opposing ideas online and it's just going to leave you confused if you're gaining your knowledge online."

When asked how one might manage the influence social media has on their identity, two students suggested limiting or getting rid of social media. Another said, "Develop self-control to be able to control how easily you are influenced." Four wrote that one should read the Bible to find their identity in Christ. "Build a strong foundation on Christ and understand that our value and identity come from Him." Remember "that you are made in the image of God and your identity ultimately lies in Him."

Five said that having a good understanding of one's identity is the best way to avoid being negatively influenced by social media. "Hold to your God-given identity," understand "who you are and what defines you before you get on social media," and "be aware that social media does not define you." Knowing where one's identity comes from will help one live according to their worldview, making "all of these ideas much easier to deal with."

Six students suggested that one should learn to filter what one views by wisely choosing who one follows and removing things they do not need to see. Scroll past inappropriate content and unfollow negative influencers. Limit oneself to viewing content that agrees with the way one views their identity.

Relationships

Students were asked if social media influences one's relationships with others (Figure 4.18.). Eleven strongly agreed and seven agreed. One student was not sure, seven agreed, and ten strongly agreed that one-on-one mentorship is important for developing one's worldview (Figure 4.19.).
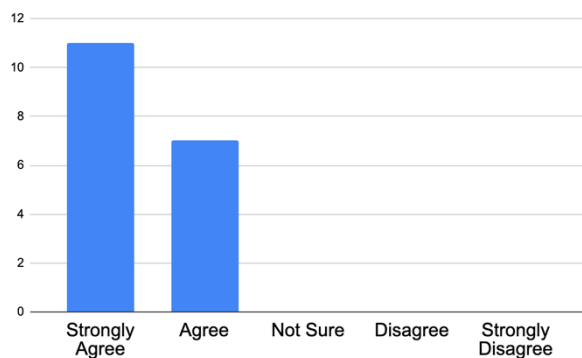
Figure 4.18. Social media influences relationships (final questionnaire)
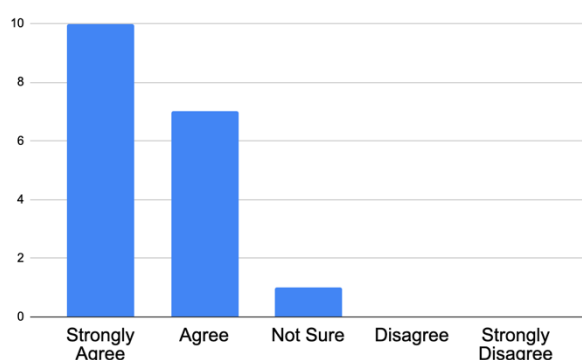
Figure 4.19. One-on-one mentorship is important for developing one's worldview

Four students wrote that a one-on-one mentor relationship can help strengthen and solidify one's worldview beliefs by helping one establish a worldview and strengthen the pillars of their faith. Getting spiritual insights from someone will make it harder for one to be torn down by social media. One wrote that having someone constantly pouring into them might help them overcome feelings of isolation. Mentors from older generations can help younger generations develop socially and learn to have face-to-face conversations.

Most of the students, twelve in all, said something about the wisdom and insight that a mentor would have to offer. Older people understand different things and offer different perspectives that can help develop one's worldview, as well as help them learn to discern what they see on social media. A mentor will "tell you the truth and not tickle your ears." They can be

a "good guide," they can help one "gain the same knowledge that they gained," and they can help one understand more about one's worldview.

Twelve of the eighteen students strongly agreed and five agreed that involvement in a church community affects the influence social media has on an individual's worldview (Figure 4.20.). One was not sure, and none disagreed with this statement. This Likert Scale question was followed up with two open-ended questions.
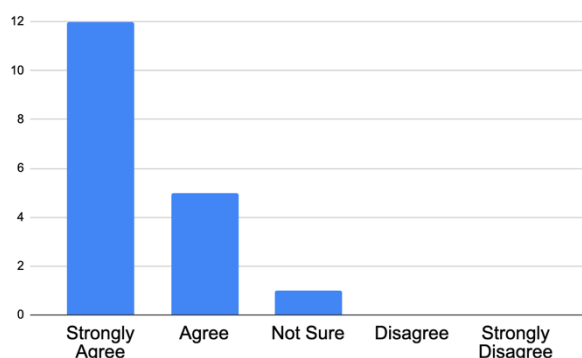
Figure 4.20. Church involvement affects social media's influence (final questionnaire)

How does regular involvement in a church community affect the influence social media has on one's worldview? Six students stated that involvement in church was something that would help to reaffirm and solidify biblical truths, keeping them from being distracted and allowing them to identify false worldviews on social media. Six students suggested that involvement in church offered accountability and awareness. "Community encourages and supports you," they noted. Being around godly people helps one be obedient to God. One may make better choices because they are spending time with and learning from others in the group. Six students shared that being in groups with people who hold a common belief is helpful because one is constantly being encouraged by other believers. Church is a place of influence that can teach one how to deal with worldly influences. Two students talked about the clarity that comes from being united with Christ.

How might involvement in a church community help one manage the influence social media has on their worldview? Four students suggested focusing on God and standing firm in what they believe. Ten students alluded to the accountability that comes from being involved in a church community. "By being poured into and built up we have a stronger defense against what social media puts in front of us." "Being around like-minded people will influence others and being able to see like-minded people and how they act will rub off on people and they won't be wrapped up in social media." "You won't be viewing or posting bad things on social media if you're surrounded by believers who will hold you accountable for doing that." By spending "time with fellow believers that will encourage and challenge what you believe you will learn to properly filter all the things you see on social media." One student suggested serving others by "getting to know vulnerable people and empathizing with them." Seven students mentioned learning and growing in one's faith. Church is a place where one can "ask questions, learn more about God, and develop a Christian worldview without feeling judged or lonely." Learning and growing will help one identify the errors in the world's thinking and empower them to turn away from sin.

Purpose and Calling

All eighteen students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "Social media influences how one understands their purpose and calling in life" (Figure 4.21.). Two more open-ended questions followed: "How does social media influence understanding your purpose and calling in life?" and "How might one manage the influence social media has on one's understanding of their purpose and calling in life?"
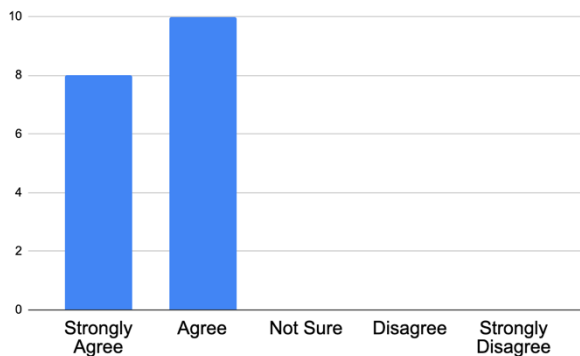
Figure 4.21. Social media influences understanding of purpose and calling in life

Concerning the influence social media has on one's purpose and calling, five students noted the possibility of being drawn away from the Bible's definition of success to seek success according to the world's standards. Social media can "make things look appealing and easy to achieve" and "romanticize your expectations for success." Five commented on the selfish outlook social media tends to promote: "Your purpose and calling in life is what you want it to be." "Just go have fun. YOLO!" "Do whatever makes you happy." Three students said that social media can "distract you from your true purpose" by making one compare their purpose to others' and maybe even question it. It can also affect one's work ethic. Two students shared that social media might make one "feel like their purpose is inferior and less important," or even make one "think that they don't have a purpose or calling." Four students confirmed that social media does not influence their understanding of their purpose and calling in life. They knew their purpose is "not to make a lot of money and have it all together" but to glorify Christ with their passions, worship Christ, and give Him the glory.

When asked how one might manage the influence social media has on one's understanding of their purpose and calling in life, one student suggested praying to God to reveal their purpose and another said to prioritize Christ in one's life, making sure that He is the focus. Five students said to read and study the Bible. "The Bible affirms that our purpose in life is to

honor God." "Reading the Bible will help you know your purpose and help you find what field of work God is calling you to." The Bible is the source of truth. "[I]f we find the answers in there, we wouldn't need social media's opinion."

Five students suggested that limiting time and exposure would help them manage social media's influence on their understanding of their purpose and calling. Six others wrote that having a solid understanding of one's purpose and calling would help them avoid negative influence. One of those students quoted Proverbs 3:5-6 and suggested that "if we allow God to show us His plan for us then we can follow that."

Mission

When asked if social media influences how one chooses to live life daily, one student disagreed, ten students agreed and seven students strongly agreed (Figure 4.22.). This statement was followed up with two more open-ended questions: "How does social media influence how you live your life each day?" and "How might one manage the influence social media has on how they live their life daily?"
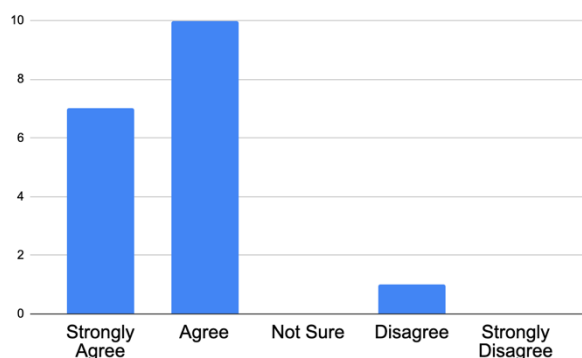
Figure 4.22. Social media influences how one lives life daily

Five students suggested that limiting one's time and exposure will help one manage social media's influence on their understanding of their purpose and calling. Six others wrote that understanding one's purpose and calling would help. Two students stated that social media

does not control their lives, but that it does waste time they could be using to do something else. Others said that they find themselves wasting time on social media when they are bored. "Whenever I have any free time, the first thing I do is open social media." Social media "can influence your decisions like outfits" or even "influence how you treat others." "Social media is a big part of my life. It's how I stay up to date on things and with my friends."

Four of the respondents wrote about the way social media can make them feel drained, anxious, and lonely. Not using social media usually leaves one student feeling more content. Social media can cause one to not "appreciate the little things or rest in the moment." Social media makes people want to do whatever it takes to fit in. "What you see may become what you do, and people tend to see you like that."

According to student responses, managing the influence social media has on how one lives life can be accomplished by managing time, spending more time pursuing God, being intentional about what one watches and who one follows, and being confident in who God created them to be. Seven students suggested putting the phone down, setting limits and boundaries, and spending more time doing more productive things. Six students said that one should choose to spend more time in God's Word, focusing "your mind on God," and praying for self-control and discernment. "Allow yourself to live a life that would please God rather than yourself." "Stay in the Word and allow it to shape your day-to-day life."

Three students commented that one should be intentional about what they watch and who they follow. Five students stated that one needs to have a good understanding of who they are and what God has called them to do. "God has called us to be different." "We have to develop our Christian worldview first, then we can begin to discern the ideas on social media." "God

made you just how He wanted you to be made." One can manage the influence of social media "by building a foundation in Christ and placing your identity in what He says about us."

<center>Initial Focus Group Interviews</center>

Initial Focus Group One started at 10:30 am. Students gathered around the table and the researcher began the recording using an iPhone with two lapel-type Bluetooth mics lying in the center of the table and connected to an iPhone mounted on a tripod behind the researcher. A Tascam DR-05 voice recorder was placed on the table as a secondary recording device. Both the researcher and students were nervous. Starting the conversation felt awkward but the first question was familiar as the students had recently studied the topic of worldview.

Worldview

"What is a worldview?" Students' definitions of worldview fell into three basic categories: what one believes, how one behaves, and how one sees the world (Figure 4.23.). Six students defined worldview as how one sees or views the world—the lens through which one sees everything. "It is your mindset on how you view the world." Five students described worldview as that which one believes, like morals, convictions, and the ideas and presuppositions one has about major topics. Nine students made the connection between worldview and behavior. Worldview is one's thoughts and actions and how one handles situations. It affects how one acts and lives every day.
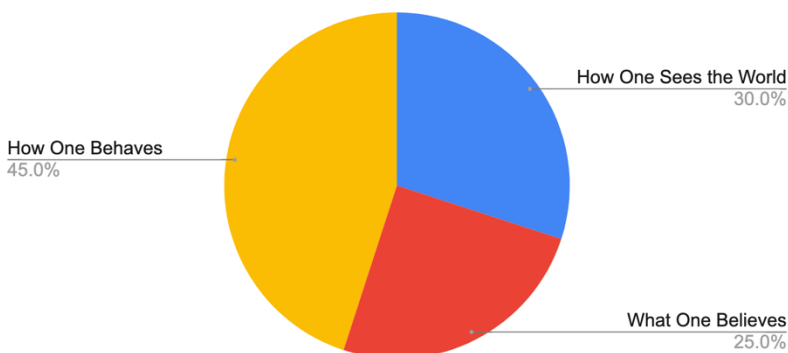
Figure 4.23. What is a worldview?

The students unanimously agreed that everyone has a worldview, though not everyone is aware that they have a worldview. They also agreed that one can have control over their worldview but that outside influences also shape it (Figure 4.24.). Students said that the people they are around, parents and upbringing, religious experiences, and social media and TV all play a part in influencing one's worldview.
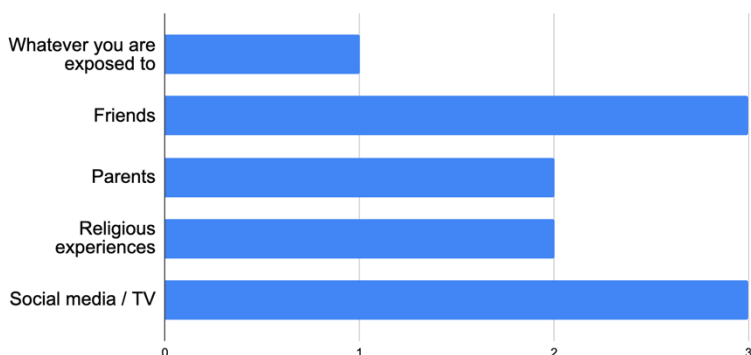
Figure 4.24. Influences on one's worldview

One student said that worldview was "[w]hatever you are exposed to." Another said one is "raised with certain information, but also the outside aspects, both of them converge together." "A person's worldview is shaped by outside influences." Three students said the people one is around, especially friends, strongly influence worldview. One tends to become like the people with whom they spend time. Two students said parents, upbringing, and religious experiences can play a part in shaping one's worldview. Three students recognized that sources such as social

media and TV have a strong influence on worldview. One said that social media is "just constantly pouring into your mind…[and] whether we want it to or not, it's going to affect our mindset." Another commented, "I don't think a lot of people realize that they do act on what they are influenced by online."

One student pointed out that it is the job of influencers to influence, so one should not be surprised by the influence that social media has. Three students talked about the amount of information that is being "flooded into your brain at once." There is so much information "you probably don't even have the opportunity to realize what ideas are being presented to you." One student said, "Everything is out of context," often leading people to misunderstand or misinterpret the author's intended message. Another said, "You start seeing things that you think are true that might not necessarily be true." One might see many people doing something or agreeing with something, and "nobody seems to be doing anything about it. So that means it must be right." "People can see that and change how they think about" different topics.

The students agreed that one's worldview shapes how one lives their life. Thinking a certain way leads to acting a certain way. Christians are morally obligated to read their Bibles and to pray. "That's going to change how we live our daily lives."

Identity

Students were asked to define identity (Figure 4.25.). Eight students responded by saying that one's identity is just "who you are." Three added that it is how one presents themself to others and how they are perceived. One student said that one's identity is also defined by how one responds to other people's perceptions of them. "If a random person that you don't know commented on your outfit or something and you allow that to affect you, I think that says something about who you are."
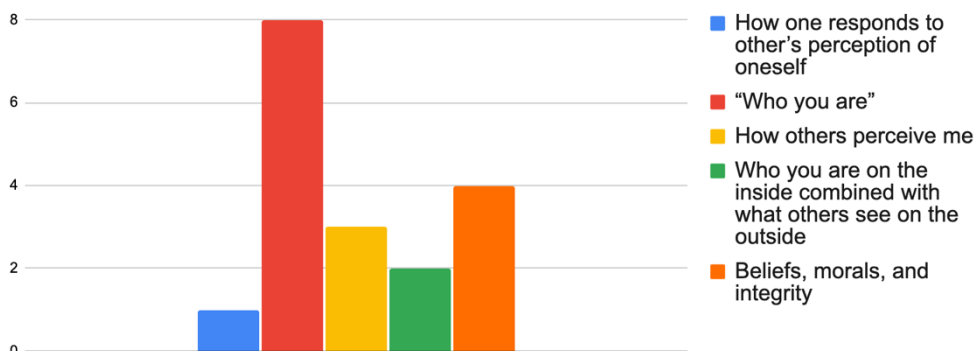
Figure 4.25. Define identity

Two students said that identity is two-sided, made up of self-image as well as how one is views by others. "Not just on the outside, but on the inside too." "Your identity does matter a good bit outside because it's what the majority of people are going to see, and what the majority of people are going to think about you." Four students suggested that one's identity is defined by the way one lives. "Identity isn't just appearance. It's also your morals and the way you live your life, your worldview." Integrity, reputation, "what you do in front of other people and how they see what you do" combined with "your thoughts, and the way you live, and your beliefs and morals" defines your identity.

Students agreed that one's identity is shaped by one's worldview. It is important to understand one's identity because it "aligns with your worldview." All the students agreed that since they are Christians they are to strive to be more like Christ. "My worldview is a Christian worldview. My identity is through Christ," one student stated. One student noted that finding one's identity in Christ is a blessing, even though people outside of Christianity see it as a burden. Having a Christian worldview changes how one lives. If one has a Christian worldview, "you're not going to go out drinking and partying. That's not going to be your identity." One student concluded by saying, "My identity and my character will change more towards that the more I strive for it."

"Influencers and creators on social media tell followers they can make their identity whatever they want it to be." Social media tries to "tell you who you need to be." "We want to live up to other people's picture that they have of themselves." "Social media can easily mold people's minds." Being the same age as some of those influencers might make users question their success in life. "If they can do this, what's wrong with me?" Students were aware that an inability to properly manage social media may make one more prone to comparing themselves to others, leading to an unhealthy view of one's identity.

Social media sets up a standard and people may become more insecure about their looks. "They tell you who you need to be." The world wants to show the good parts and hide the bad parts. Another student said that social media influences one's identity by influencing "the way you think, like what you believe. Social media will tell you, 'Well, no, you can't believe that. You have to accept this.'" "Social media can easily mold people's minds." But when one finds their identity in Christ, they can learn to be comfortable with who they are.

Students recognized that one has no "choice but to be influenced by everything that goes on" in one's daily life. "Everything we do is going to influence us." "The truth is, when you go on [social media], you start seeing stuff, and you're going to be influenced by that stuff." "You're going to be influenced no matter what you do." How then can believers in Christ maintain their identity in Christ when creators and influencers on social media are actively trying to influence one's identity? Five students agreed that it is possible to control the influence social media has on an individual's identity.

Limiting time on social media was offered as the most effective way to limit the influence of social media. One student suggested cutting out social media altogether. Several students suggested that one should be careful what they watch. As one views certain videos and

posts, "your feed will be curated to you." "You want to follow the Christian pages and stuff and not just all these other random things." Not everything will align with what you think or believe, but it will help filter the content. One student said, "Don't put yourself in that situation or don't put yourself around people that will make you or want you to try to be like them or influence you." Several students valued building up a Christian worldview. "Ensure that you're building up your own worldview apart from social media." Christians should know who they are in Christ and determine that social media is not going to influence that.

Discernment

Six students defined discernment as the ability to differentiate right from wrong. Four students took the definition a step further, including the ability to take action based on one's understanding of what is right or wrong in a particular situation. When asked how one might learn to discern truth from untruth, students responded by saying that God set the standard for moral truth when He gave the Ten Commandments. He established moral truth in the beginning. One can know the truth and learn to discern the truth by reading and studying the Bible.

The researcher asked if involvement in a church might influence one's ability to discern the truth. Students agreed that "Yes, it is important." By being involved in church one can develop their ability to discern. Four students said that one's knowledge of truth will grow and be reinforced if they are spending time with other believers. Being around other believers will "help deepen your roots in what you believe to be true." Three others said that being around other believers helps one stay accountable. Six students added that one is influenced by the people with whom they spend time. "If you're hanging out with a group of bad kids, you're probably going to start to change, and your morals and stuff will align with theirs. When you're

around a body of believers, you're going to be inclined to grow with your Christian morals and stuff like that." One's ideas are being "reinforced by that community of people."

Relationships

Without any real explanation of what a mentor relationship is, the students were asked to discuss if they had ever been in a mentor-type relationship (Figure 4.26.). Two students were unsure. Eight students said that a parent was or had been their mentor. Of those eight, two said their mom, and six said their dad. Two students pointed to a grandparent who had had an impact on their lives, and two mentioned that their boyfriend was their mentor. Others mentioned a Sunday School teacher, a cousin, a babysitter, and two mentioned shadowing a job as mentorship. One student commented, "It's good to have a mentor, but you don't have to have one." The student elaborated that immature people may benefit from having a mentor, whereas more mature people would be fine without one. "It's not bad not to have."
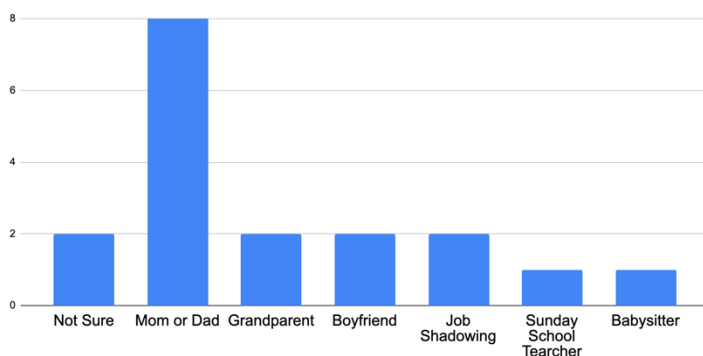
Figure 4.26. Have you ever had a mentor?

When asked if social media has had any influence on isolating their generation from older generations, the students agreed that there is a barrier between the generations and that social media may be partly to blame. Four students pointed out that older people do not tend to be on social media as much because they struggle to understand the concept of social media, seeing it as only bad, whereas younger generations have always had this technology and see the good in it.

Three students noticed a difference in the way older generations communicate. The students noted that older generations are often not afraid to talk face-to-face, while younger generations like to hide behind their phones to say what they want to say. With social media and the internet, one can find answers to any question without ever having to talk to a person.

One student commented, "Our generation is arrogant, and both generations are ignorant of the fact that we need the same truths. We need to be able to humble ourselves to understand that they may have knowledge that we may have missed," and they need "to humble themselves to understand that they may need some of our input." Another student continued, "Our generation is so caught up with themselves," thinking they know what they are doing. If they are wrong, they do not want to hear that. It feels like older generations are just tired of the younger generations, "so it feels like there's that great divide."

Students talked about how much more sensitive their generation is because they have been 'babied' by their parents. "I feel like the reason we're babied now is because the world has changed so much. It has gotten more evil and there is more selfishness. I feel like that's not what it used to be. So that's why we're babied now." They went on to say that social media can be very disrespectful to authority, warping the younger generation's ideas of what older people are like and telling them to challenge authority, which can lead to isolation between generations.

Purpose

Responses to the question about an individual's purpose in life varied but centered around glorifying and honoring God. Students said that Christians are to be a light to everybody, follow God, make disciples, and spread the Word. Three students specifically said, "glorify God," while the others said things that align with the idea of glorifying and honoring God.

When asked how one's worldview might influence one's view of their purpose, students said that one's worldview shapes how one lives their life. "If you view your purpose as to please people, you're always going to go out and do all these things to make other people happy." "If our purpose and our goal is to glorify Christ, then our worldview shapes how we should do that." One's worldview defines what success looks like to them, which will guide their next steps in life. One's worldview might try to tell people that their purpose is just to live life, have fun, and follow their heart.

Students recognize that what people see on social media often affects how they act. "It could make you start thinking that's how I have to do it." One student suggested that if someone sees a McDonald's employee filming themselves screaming at a customer, they might think that is how one should act at McDonald's. Another student commented that they have followed accounts that seemed to Christian, but the way the person on the account acted was not biblical. One's way of life can be influenced based on what they see.

Another student noted that "social media has created a very false narrative on how your life is going to go and that everybody's going to be rich and that everybody's going to have this very successful job." They push ideas like one does not need college or high school, or "it's so easy to get rich. And it's just not true." Another student followed up by saying, "There's just so many opinions on Instagram or whatever that people see. Whatever looks the flashiest and what looks best for them in their personal life, that's what they're going to gravitate to."

Mission

To wrap up the initial focus groups, students were asked how young Christians like themselves ought to respond to the influences of social media in their culture. A couple of students said that one should "make sure that you have a strong foundation of your biblical

knowledge" so that one doesn't misinterpret or misapply something. One must be aware and make sure they are looking through Scripture to know that what they are viewing is biblically accurate. Rather than just taking in things from social media, "you need to also be in the Word yourself, and you need to constantly be building your own worldview based on what the Bible says."

Other students responded by saying that one should consider accountability, either from a friend or an app. Self-control was also suggested by several students. "God gave us self-control so we can make our own decisions, but we're trying to make the right decisions." Be intentional and "be aware of who you're following and how much time you're spending" on social media. Viewing social media with discernment and prayer will help someone make the right decisions. "If you're watching something that you know is not right and it's convicting you, you have to be able to make that decision to turn it off and look away."

Another suggestion was that one can learn to be proactive and intentional in their use of social media. Instead of posting about oneself, "making it prideful and all about my Instagram page," one could ultimately make it about Christ. Everything one does on social media "should reflect Him and His name, even if it's a little Bible verse that might be bypassed." Without being pushy, one can promote their worldview, "letting out what we believe is true and to try to influence others." Rather than allowing social media to control what one thinks, "we could use it in a good way."

At the same time, students warned that one should be careful not to let even the good things on social media become a replacement for other things. Students noted that one should not just post something on social media to show that one is a Christian. One should make sure they

are doing these things in their daily life, apart from social media. "We need to be more intentional and notice our daily behaviors."

Final Focus Group Interviews

After the lesson series was completed, the researcher conducted a second round of focus groups (see Appendix N). As with the initial focus groups, students were randomly assigned to groups, each consisting of four or five individuals. Final focus groups one and two met on Monday and group three met on Tuesday. Due to illness, participants in groups three and four had to be reassigned. Group four ended up meeting on Thursday. This time the students were more excited and less nervous. They had enjoyed the initial focus group discussions and were eager to begin.

The questions for the final focus group followed a simple pattern, first asking students how social media influences one's worldview, identity, relationships, purpose, and mission, and then asking them how they, as young Christians, might manage each of those influences. The following is a synthesis of responses from all four focus group interviews.

Worldview

Four students said that the influence social media has on one's worldview depends on how well they already know their worldview (Figure 4.27.). "If you don't know what your worldview is," or "if you're not strong in your worldview," social media has more influence. But if one has a strong worldview, they will quickly recognize the false teachings and possibly even reinforce their worldview. The age at which one is first exposed to social media also affects the level of influence social media has on their worldview. "The younger you are and the earlier you have it, it can be more addicting."
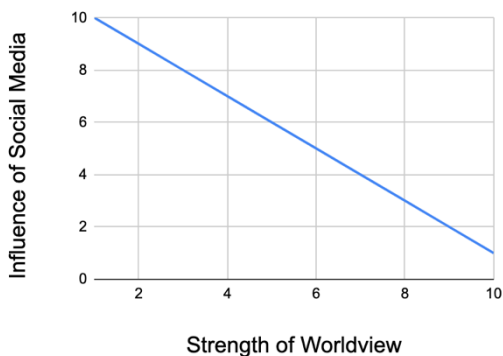
Figure 4.27. Strength of worldview vs. influence of social media

Most of the students agreed that every time they go on social media they are "being exposed to a different worldview." Everything around a person has an impact on their worldview. "We spend so much time with it, and it's putting so many ideas into our heads. There's going to be an impact." People want to be like what they see. Videos and posts will become a part of their actions in their world. Each person's worldview is being shaped by what they are seeing online, often without realizing it.

Students said there is so much information on social media that "it just becomes a melting pot, and we can't tell when it begins or when it ends." Social media is "constantly putting new ideas in your face and giving you all these different ideas and beliefs." It will "start feeding you more of those ideas so that it can keep you invested in it." Another student said "It doesn't let you make up your own mind. It forces you to choose which one you want to follow." There are "so many different correlating ideas that go against each other on social media, it's just going to be confusing." "It can stray your beliefs in small ways."

Students were then asked how they might manage the influence that social media has on their worldview (Table 4.1.). The Bible, discernment, and accountability were mentioned, along with the need to have a strong biblical worldview foundation. Staying in the Word will help improve one's abilities of discernment. Being involved in church, small groups, and fellowship

with other believers will help shape one's worldview according to the Bible. "Make sure you know your worldview," "prioritize relationships around you," and "don't rely on social media as your primary source of information."

Table 4.1. Managing the influence of social media on one's worldview

Social Media's Influence	Ways to Manage Influence
• Exposure to hundreds of conflicting worldview ideas. • Puts many ideas into one's head. • Subtle and addictive. • Causes confusion.	• Establish a strong worldview. • Stay in the Word. • Be involved in church. • Learn self-control. • Manage time on social media.

Several students suggested that learning to use self-control is practical and important. "Stop looking at it as much." We "can't be consumed by it." Learn to "manage your time on it," and "don't just take everything in." One student recognized that the time one spends on social media does not even compare to the amount of time one spends in church. Two students concluded that awareness and intentionality are of great importance. Limiting time is not going to do any good if one is not properly filtering what one is watching during that time. "Being aware is the biggest piece."

Identity

"How does social media influence how a person views their identity?" Students responded that social media "tries to force identity on you." People on social media "put on fake identit[ies] to make themselves look more popular." "They only show the good in their life." They are allowing the world to define what success is. One student suggested that social media has "destroyed the word identity." "They're using your sins" as your new identity.

Several students noticed that social media tends to lower one's value of themselves by encouraging comparison. "It can make you feel less than other people." If one is constantly focused on trying to be like someone else, they are "going to feel worthless." Social media gives the impression that one can create their own identity in themselves. People naturally want to feel accepted. But social media "sets an unrealistic standard" making it easy "to lose focus of what your purpose is when you're constantly comparing yourself." The more one tries to become what they see on social media, the more they might start questioning "Who really am I, and why do I identify with that? Should I identify with that? It just starts questioning and doubting."

Young Christians can learn to manage the influence that social media has on their identities (Table 4.2.). One must recognize that "we're a fallen people and we live in sin." They need to find their worth in God and their identity in the Bible. Anything "can lead you away from finding your identity. You can find your identity in a lot of things." Social media tries to dictate that one's identity is "anything that you want it to be. And that's not the truth." One must know their identity is in Christ hold tightly to it.

Table 4.2. Managing the influence of social media on one's identity

Social Media's Influence	Ways to Manage Influence
• Pushes fake identities. • Sets unrealistic standards. • Encourages comparison to others. • Can lowers self-worth. • Gives the impression that one's identity comes from within in themselves. • Causes questioning and doubting.	• Recognize one's sinfulness. • Search for identity in the Bible. • Be intentional about looking for identity in the right places. • Find one's worth in God. • Know one's identity is in Christ and hold tightly to it. • Build up discernment. • Follow people who have a strong biblical worldview. • Live out what one claims to believe.

"Build up discernment with what you let in and what you allow to influence you." Be careful to follow people who have a strong biblical worldview. Be intentional about looking for identity in the right places. One must recognize "that social media is just unrealistic" and "actually act out what you say you believe."

Discernment

The conversation naturally flowed into the topic of discernment. Students said that discernment is "being able to tell what is…the will of God or what is beneficial to the will of God." It is the ability to see and understand the difference between right and wrong.

Students understood that social media tends to weaken one's ability to discern things. Social media is often used to mindlessly pass time, "making it hard to discern what's wrong and what's right." "You just scroll without thinking about the content" and "your brain just automatically starts thinking, 'okay, that's what I need to have.'" "Social media makes you want to fit in and be like everyone else. When you're trying to fit in it makes it hard to be able to discern."

Social media doesn't come with labels or filters telling one what is right and wrong. "The little things you think are innocent aren't." One student commented that social media may not affect one's ability to discern, "but it might affect what they view as good and bad." "After you've been around it so much, it's like, it's not as bad now." If one is unable to discern that something is wrong, "they'll keep seeing and keep seeing, and they won't be able to discern right from wrong after that."

The researcher asked how young Christians might manage the influence that social media has on their ability to discern (Table 4.3.). One student said, "We're not meant to fit in, we're supposed to be different." Other students continued in agreement, stating that one must stay

strong in their core values, always being intentional about what they believe. "If you watch a video and somebody's doing something you know is wrong, do the complete opposite of what that is." One should look at Scripture and make sure what they are watching lines up. Do not compromise, take a stand and say, "I'm going to stick with what I know is right."

Table 4.3. Managing the influence of social media on one's discernment

Social Media's Influence	Ways to Manage Influence
• Weakens one's ability to discern things. • Often used to mindlessly pass time. • Makes one want to fit in and be like everyone else. • Does not come with labels or filters telling one what is right and wrong.	• Don't be concerned about fitting in. • Stay strong in core values. • Be intentional about what one believes. • Make sure what one is watching lines up with Scripture. • Do not compromise what one knows is right. • Put time limits on social media. • Intentionally use social media for good.

Four students suggested using social media less by putting time limits on it. "A lot of the answers to all these questions in one simple answer is managing your time. Because when you're around something so much, it's what's filling your head the most. If you lessen that time on it, it's not the main thing filling your head." Another said one should put the same amount of time spent on social media into Christ, "so that we can build up our immunity to social media."

Another student proposed intentionally using social media for good. It can be used to reach people for Christ, but one should recognize that "it can also tear down your testimony." Others agreed that one can use social media to better follow Christ, but this requires discernment because not all who claim to follow Christ are teaching the truth.

Relationships

When asked how social media might influence one's relationships with others, one student said that social media causes social anxiety (Table 4.4.). She went on to say that she has known people her age who could not communicate. "They were shy or kept to themselves and would never talk in class." "Kids our age can't communicate."

Table 4.4. Managing the influence of social media on one's relationships

Social Media's Influence	Ways to Manage Influence
• Causes social anxiety. • Fewer conversations with people. • Less time interacting with others. • Distorts God's intentions for relationships. • Unhealthy examples of how to treat others.	• Be intentional about using social media to develop relationships. • Don't waste time talking about what one sees on social media instead of talking about the Lord. • Post content that can lead to conversations about Christ.

Several students noted that social media tends to take away from relationships, because when "you're on social media so much, you don't have those conversations with people, you don't hang out with them as much." One of the students commented on a conversation she had with her mentor. Before landlines, relationships were so intentional. People would gather and just sit and talk. As soon as the telephone came along, "she saw a decrease in the intentionality of the community. She doesn't even know her neighbors now."

One student pointed out that what one views on social media can take away from what God intended relationships to be like. For example, when one sees "relationships of couples that aren't married that are living together, it takes away from the value of marriage." Social media might unknowingly influence how one treats other people. One might see someone treating another person badly and might treat someone in the same way without realizing it. Another

student proposed that the ability to look up somebody's profile and know everything about them is unhealthy.

One student suggested that there is some good when it comes to social media and relationships. "You can see what everybody's doing." At the same time, several students recognized that social media can also lessen "the value of your conversations with people." People might waste time talking about what they see on social media instead of talking about the Lord. "Half of my conversations with some people are just sending reels back and forth, and we don't even say anything to them. We just send them back and forth, and that's our communication. There's not an actual human conversation." Another proposed that someone can be more involved in things because they "see what you post, they see what you talk about. It sometimes can lead to conversations, which for me, sometimes leads to conversations about Christ. And that's the way you can evangelize to people through social media."

Purpose

When asked about the influence that social media has on a person's understanding of their purpose in life, one student proposed that many people just do not feel like they have a purpose. "They're just doing what they feel like they need to do." Another student said it depends on one's religion or worldview. According to a biblical Christian worldview, one's purpose is to be in a relationship with Christ and to follow Him. But as one student pointed out, "If you're sitting there, hours a day, sitting there just scrolling on Instagram but you're not even reading your Bible, how can you teach people about the Bible?"

Several students noticed that social media promotes riches and fame as one's purpose for living. "To be successful and to have a good life, you have to have riches, women, cars, money." "Your purpose is your status, followers, and stuff." One said that "social media makes you think

that your purpose and calling should be the same thing as everyone else, that your purpose on this earth is just to have money and all of the fancy things on earth and just live your best life here because nothing else matters." One student admitted that before he was saved, his main goal when he got older was to have a lot of money.

Students went on to say that social media tries to tell people that their purpose is to "have fun and make the most out of this life." One of the messages social media sends is "YOLO: You only live once; do whatever you can, have a fun life, and post about it on social media." "Follow your heart, or if you have a dream, pursue it." Social media distracts from the little moments in one's life, taking away from one's opportunity to honor God in all things.

Two students discussed that social media has taken away from the fact that work is a blessing. "Social media is just so focused on getting that romanticized life where you can work your pretty little job and make enough money to buy whatever. It's so materialistic, and I think it's dangerous." She went on to point out how sad it is that the worth of a job is found in how the job itself looks and not in how one can honor the Lord by it.

How can young Christians manage the influence that social media has on how they view their purpose and calling (Table 4.5.)? One student warned against allowing social media to distract from discovering one's true purpose and calling. Social media makes it too easy to procrastinate. Others said that one should stay strong, stay in the Bible, pray, and know what their purpose is. "Get in the Bible and read what God has written and then pray about it. Ask God to give you knowledge and understanding."

Table 4.5. Managing the influence of social media on one's purpose

Social Media's Influence	Ways to Manage Influence
• Distracts from thinking about one's purpose in life.	• Do not let it distract from discovering one's true purpose and calling.

• Promotes riches and fame as one's purpose for living. • Makes one think that their purpose is to just live their best life here because nothing else matters. • Suggests that one should follow their heart. • Distracts from the little moments in one's life, taking away from one's opportunity to honor God in all things. • Takes away from the fact that work is a blessing.	• Stay strong, stay in the Bible, pray, and know one's purpose. • Be in constant pursuit of God. • Look to the Lord for purpose and learn to trust His plan.

One student quoted Proverbs 3:5-6, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge Him and He will make your path straight." He went on to explain that "we need to constantly be pursuing the Lord, and He will make it clear to us where we need to be and what He wants for us in our lives." Others agreed that instead of saying, "I want to get there, I want to have that house, we need to focus on right here in the moment, what God has for us right now." "Take one step at a time and walk in what He's placed right in front of us." "Do what God is calling us to do," and "don't rely on social media to define your purpose and calling. Instead, look in front of you and trust in the Lord's plan."

Mission

The final topic of discussion centered on one's mission in today's culture. Students were asked if they think that the culture aligns with a biblical Christian worldview. All students agreed that it does not. "They do what's right in their own eyes. Every person thinks they can do whatever they want." One student mentioned that it used to, and another said that the norm for morals was Christian standards. Everything now has been confused and perverted.

How does social media influence how an individual interacts with the culture? Social media can be helpful or harmful regarding interacting with the culture. It can be harmful because it "takes away accountability." "Now people think they can do whatever they want and there are no consequences." Social media is misleading people with all the beliefs that are being posted. It often puts people on a pedestal. For example, someone might choose to believe something someone on social media says just because they have many followers. Social media can be divisive, splitting "people into factions" and putting them all in different groups "where they're fighting each other."

Social media could be discouraging to a new believer or someone seeking to follow Christ. If "they post something like, guys, I think I'm going to give my life for Christ. And then all of a sudden you have these messages popping up or comments like, 'Don't do that, that's a terrible idea.'"

Conversely, several students suggested that social media could be helpful in one's interaction with the culture. One might choose "to post about Christianity and being pro-life, and someone might see it and question their beliefs. If they disagree with the Bible, it might just get them thinking [and] that's good."

Students offered several ways they as young Christians can manage the influence that social media has on their interaction with the culture (Table 4.6.). "Develop your worldview first." One student said that as a parent, she "would make sure that my kid knows who they are in Christ. That's where their identity is. That's who they are. They can't let social media and other people tell them who they are. They must let God tell them who they are." Other students said they must "pray for help for discernment" and take "a stand for our personal convictions, being spiritually sound about what is right and what is wrong."

Table 4.6. Managing the influence of social media on one's mission

Social Media's Influence	Ways to Manage Influence
- Has confused and perverted everything. - Removes accountability and consequences for actions. - Misleads people with conflicting beliefs and ideas. - Puts people on a pedestal. - Can be divisive, splitting people into different groups. - Could be discouraging to a new believer seeking to follow Christ.	- Develop one's worldview first. - Be intentional about posting about things from a biblical viewpoint. - Pray for help for discernment. - Stand up for one's personal convictions. - Be spiritually sound about what is right and what is wrong. - Learn to focus on what matters. - Guard one's heart. - Be aware and recognize "when it's becoming an idol in our life." - Manage time on social media. - Some may need to cut social media off completely. - Be proactive and intentional in one's use of social media.

One must learn to focus on what matters, guard their heart, and be careful what content one views. Be aware and recognize "when it's becoming an idol in your life." If one does not manage their time on it, it could consume their whole life. Some may need to "delete Instagram or cut social media off completely. That doesn't mean that it can't be used for good through somebody else."

Students realize that though social media can be dangerous and divisive, it can also be used for good in this culture. One can learn to redeem the use of social media if they can manage it. "It is good to be informed, to know what's happening. That's a good way to minister to the culture. When you're ministering to people, you know what other people are going through." One can be proactive and intentional in their use of social media. "Instead of using social media as a tactic of just watching endless videos, I think you should use it as a form of spreading the

gospel." "Be intentional about what you're going to stand against and make it very clear where you stand so nobody else questions where you stand."

In closing, the researcher asked students how they would define countercultural mission. A couple of students said that countercultural mission means being a preacher or going into church ministry. Others said, "We're supposed to love people," "just witnessing," and "something that takes away the glory from the world and then gives it back to God where it should be." Some suggested actively engaging the culture by "intentionally being obedient to God" and "doing what the culture says you shouldn't do." Another said, "Being a Christian is now a countercultural mission. We're supposed to be set apart. That's our countercultural mission. It's just to be set apart." One student suggested "telling your non-Christian friends when they're wrong." Another student responded, "There's a right way and a wrong way to do that. You can't just be like, 'Oh, you're wrong.' Try to see what they're seeing so you can understand their perspective and change it."

Journal Entries

Journaling prompts were given following each of the six lessons (see Appendix J) to allow students to process and respond to the information they were being taught. Each student was given a journaling notebook to be used for these assignments. Seventeen of the eighteen students completed at least four of the six journaling assignments. The results gleaned by the researcher from these journals are synthesized below.

Worldview

At the end of Lesson One, students were asked to write out their worldview using a series of foundational questions to help guide them. To the first question, "How did we get here?," two

students responded that God put humanity here, while fourteen said that God created everyone. In response to "Why are we here?," students wrote that we are here because God has a plan. Mankind is here to serve the Lord and others, to be in a relationship with God, to spread His Word, and to be a light to the world. Six students said people are here to glorify God, six mentioned being obedient to God and sharing the gospel with others, and three said it is humanity's calling to be His disciples.

In response to the question "What happens when we die?," one student said, "We will be judged by God based on our life and our dedication to the Lord, and He will determine if we go to Heaven or Hell." Two students wrote that we will be reunited with Christ in Heaven, and twelve wrote that what happens after death depends on whether the individual chooses to follow Christ or reject God during their lifetime. Those who accept and follow Christ will go to Heaven and those who reject Him will go to Hell.

Nine students responded that the purpose of life is to spread the Word of God and be obedient to Him, while five said that one's ultimate purpose is to glorify God in all one does. Students unanimously agreed that yes, every person matters, so much so that God sent His Son Jesus to die for mankind. People are loved by God, were made with a purpose and for a reason, and were created in His image.

Students were in complete agreement regarding the question of morals. "Is there a difference between right and wrong?" Yes, and people can know that difference because God has revealed it in the Bible and has placed a sense of morality within each person. Finally, students were asked whether God exists or not, which they answered once again with a resounding "Yes, there is a God."

Identity

Lesson Two dealt with the issue of identity. Students were prompted to answer the question "Who am I?" "Our identity is what makes us who we are," "God and others define who I am," and "Christ lives through me" were three ways students used to describe their identity (Figure 4.28.). All seventeen students used "Christ," "Jesus," or "Christian" to define their identity, ten included the word "sinner," seven mentioned the term "child of God," and seven used the terms "made new" or "redeemed."
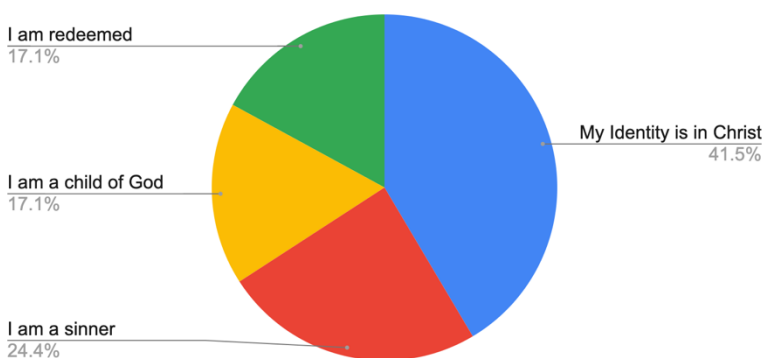
Figure 4.28. "Who am I?" (journal response)

Discernment

The journaling prompt for the lesson on discernment asked students to consider whether church involvement is important, how church involvement affects their relationship with God and other people, and finally, how church involvement affects their relationship with social media.

Students were in complete agreement that involvement in church is important for believers. When asked how time spent in church affects one's relationship with the Lord and with others, students wrote that time spent in church is powerful, gives them a sense of security, helps them focus, encourages them to overcome doubt, and allows them to collectively glorify

God. Thirteen students said church helps them grow in their relationship with God, seven said church involvement helps them strengthen their faith in God, six said it helps them grow in their knowledge and understanding of God and the Bible, three mentioned the accountability it brings, and six talked about the importance of fellowship with other believers.
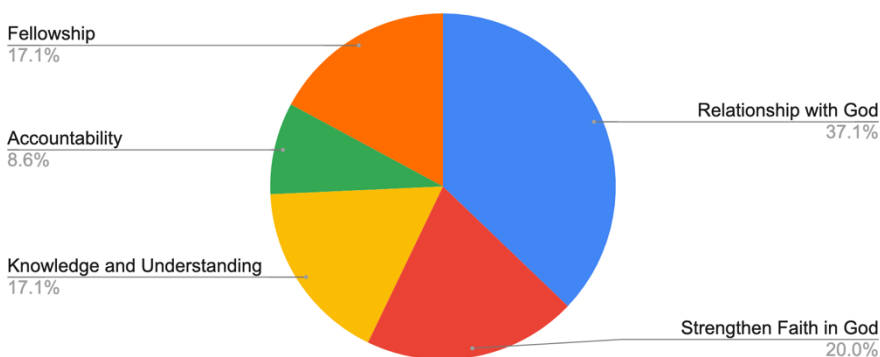
Figure 4.29. How church involvement affects my relationships (journal response)

Nine students claimed that church involvement has helped them develop discernment by making them feel more accountable for what they post and what they view, and by helping them to align their priorities and focus on Christ. Church involvement helps one build immunity to the world and make better decisions on social media. Four students mentioned that more time in church helps limit the amount of time spent on one's device.

Relationships

Despite the endless opportunities that social media offers to connect with others, more people on social media report being lonelier than ever before. Isolation and loneliness have taken the place of meaningful relationships. Kinnaman discovered that young people who overcome this isolation have done so by intentionally engaging in meaningful intergenerational

relationships.[256] Lesson Four challenged students to reach out to a mentor from an older generation, allowing them to cross generational lines and have a meaningful conversation with an older adult. Mentors were vetted and assigned by the researcher. Lesson Four journaling prompts asked students to reflect on these visits.

All but one of the students reported being nervous about meeting with their mentor. Students spent an average of just under two hours with their assigned mentor. The lowest reported time was one hour and ten minutes, and three students met with their mentors for about two and a half hours.

Students wrote that the experience was amazing, good, great, and very impactful. "It went really well." "I really enjoyed talking to her." Several shared that they are planning to meet with their mentor again. Seven students agreed that building intergenerational relationships is important. People from older generations have wisdom and insight from their personal experiences that they can share with younger generations to help them grow.

Purpose

Each lesson up until this point was geared toward helping students answer some of the foundational worldview questions for themselves. In Lesson One they had written out their worldview by responding to some foundational worldview questions. In Lesson Two they were asked to write out their identity in response to the question "Who am I?" Lessons Three and Four led students to consider the influence that church and relationships have had on their worldviews. Lesson Five asked students to consider their purpose and calling in life. One's understanding of their purpose and calling develops from a proper understanding of these foundational worldview

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[256] Kinnaman, *Faith for Exiles*, 112.

questions. In response to Lesson Five, students were asked to describe their purpose and calling and to define success according to a biblical Christian worldview.

"What is my purpose and calling?" Two students gave very practical responses: "School, work, personal relationships," and "Building homes." Others wrote that their purpose is to love Jesus and live a faithful life that represents Christ well. Eight students included serving and evangelizing, seven included doing God's will and being obedient to His commands, and eleven mentioned bringing glory to God and honoring Him.

Four students defined success as completing a task to the best of one's ability, six suggested that success means living in obedience to God's will, and four wrote that success is simply being in a relationship with God. Three students defined success as glorifying God in everything one does.

Mission

The final lesson challenged students to consider how they might resolve to live counterculturally for God. Students were asked to write in their journals how they would define countercultural mission and explain why it matters. One student wrote that Christians have "a responsibility to show the world how we live and behave so we can fulfill our God-given purpose." Another noted that one must allow God to transform and change the way one thinks. One student said, "Not engaging in gossip" and another wrote, "Working hard toward goals." Six of the students responded by saying that countercultural mission involves spreading the gospel and teaching people how to follow Christ. Eleven students wrote that taking a firm and confident stand in obedience to God in a culture that opposes Christ and the things of Christ is what it means to be countercultural. "The most important thing we can do is to be grounded in our faith and not waiver in that."

Students were asked to describe how they might engage in countercultural mission. Three students proposed personal changes in behavior such as being kind to others, not engaging in gossip, and cutting out the things of this world. Five students suggested doing local missions work or sharing the gospel with people. Three students wanted to be more intentional in their use of social media, posting about and supporting biblical concepts so that others might notice and ask questions.

Data from questionnaires, focus groups, and journals was documented and organized into useful categories. This information was then analyzed and interpreted, bringing meaning to the raw data presented above and forming conclusions that revealed whether student participants successfully developed a consistent apologetic matrix for discerning the information they consume on social media by establishing the tools needed to manage the influence social media has on shaping one's worldview.

Data Analysis

Comparing and contrasting data gathered from initial and final questionnaires, initial and final focus groups, and student journals revealed a story about how this process informed the students and made them aware of the influence that social media has on one's worldview. The data analysis revealed whether the intervention accomplished the goal of helping students learn to manage the influence that social media has on their worldview.

Worldview

It was evident from the results that as a group students grew in their awareness of the influence that social media has on their worldview. As illustrated in Figure 4.30, one can see more agreement among students that social media influences one's worldview. Though evident

from the initial questionnaire that most students had some awareness of the influence that social media has on one's worldview, they showed deeper insight and an increased ability to articulate that influence in their comments on the final questionnaire, in final focus groups, and in their journals. The researcher asked students to describe if and how the intervention had helped them develop their understanding of worldview. Four specifically stated that they now have a greater awareness of social media's influence and eleven said the lessons helped them develop their worldview by giving them a deeper knowledge of themselves as well as a better understanding of how worldviews are shaped.
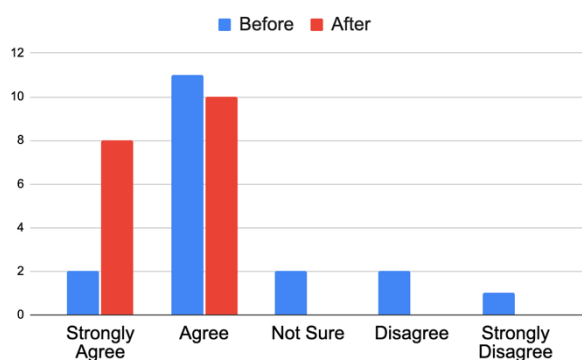
Figure 4.30. Change in awareness of social media's influence on worldview

In the initial focus group, students discussed the high rates at which information and ideas are being forced into their minds via social media. Students continued to speak of this in the final focus group, stating that "it just becomes a melting pot, and we can't tell when it begins or when it ends." Not only did there seem to be an increased awareness of social media's influence, but there was also a realization that the information and ideas found on social media are for the most part conflicting with one another, creating even more confusion for young people. Students recognized that having an established biblical Christian worldview would help them manage this influence. If one has a strong worldview, they are more likely to recognize false teachings and bad ideas.

Identity

A major shift occurred in the student's awareness of social media's influence on identity. Initially, nearly half of the students either disagreed or were unsure, but the final questionnaire revealed that all but one student agreed or strongly agreed that social media influences one's identity (Figure 4.31.). Students also grew in their understanding of what identity is. Initially, students defined identity as how one views oneself, how others view them, or some combination of these two. In their journals, every one of them wrote that their identities are centered in Christ, and included some reference to being a sinner who has been made new or redeemed. One's identity is what "makes us who we are," and "we are defined by God, by Christ living in us."
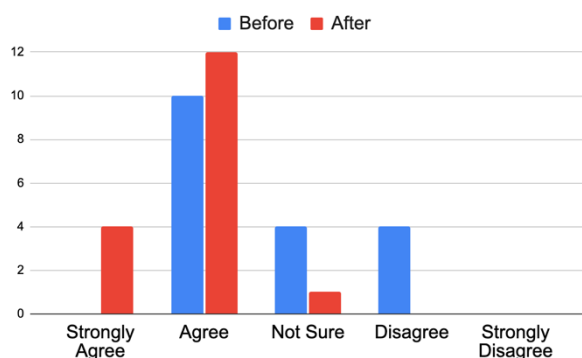
Figure 4.31. Change in awareness of social media's influence on identity

It is interesting to note that though several of the students initially disagreed or were not sure if social media has any influence on one's identity, all of them were able to articulate how they believed one's identity might be influenced by social media. Social media easily molds people's minds into thinking they can make their identity whatever they want it to be. People longing for acceptance will reach for the unrealistic standards being portrayed to become someone everyone will love and follow.

People on social media "put on fake identity to make themselves look more popular." "They only show the good in their life." They are allowing the world to define what success is.

In the final questionnaire and focus groups, students displayed more awareness of the "constant unrealistic comparison" to the world's false "standards of the 'perfect' life." People tend to find their value in how they compare to others. People want to be accepted but social media is setting standards that are unrealistic and unattainable. Several students pointed out that social media tries to define one's identity by trying "to force identity on you."

On the final questionnaire and in the final focus groups students used words and phrases like "one's understanding of who they are," which seemed to indicate a deeper level of insight into how an individual's identity is formed. Students began drawing some conclusions concerning the influence that social media has on one's identity. Because social media tries to force identity on individuals by enticing them to compare themselves to unattainable and unrealistic standards, one can begin to feel less valuable, even worthless. It "skews our understanding of others and warps our self-image." One student noted that "people on social media push an agenda of self-worth, value, and acceptance and it can be easy to buy into that rather than what God has told us about ourselves."

The standards are very unrealistic, often leading people to doubt themselves because they do not have a healthy understanding of their identity. Several times in the final questionnaire students mentioned that if one has a good understanding of who they are, their identity is less likely to be influenced by social media. This idea of having a biblical Christian worldview foundation seemed more present in the final questionnaire and focus groups than it did in the initial ones.

Initially, only five students agreed that it was possible to control or manage the influence social media has on an individual's identity. Most of these students suggested that limiting time on social media was the most effective way to limit the influence of social media, one student

suggested cutting out social media altogether, and several others saw value in building up a strong Christian worldview. By the end of the intervention, only two students thought limiting time was the solution. Rather than limiting time or eliminating social media altogether, students now suggested developing self-control, filtering what they view, and reading the Bible to find their identity in Christ. "Build up discernment with what you let in and what you allow to influence you." Learn to find worth in God and identity in the Bible. One must know their identity is in Christ and be strong with it.

Relationships

As expected, involvement in a church community was important to all the respondents. Interestingly, the students seemed to place a greater degree of importance on church involvement in the final questionnaire (Figure 4.32.). By the end of the intervention, four students had moved from agree to strongly agree, indicating a change in their awareness of a church community's influence on one's worldview. Even the one student who indicated that they were not sure conceded that "at a minimum, it would make you hesitant" to believe what one sees on social media.
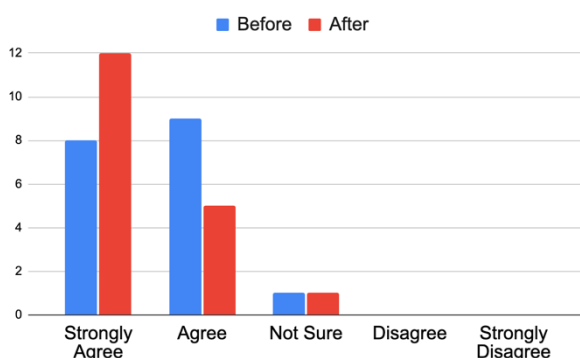
Figure 4.32. Change in awareness of church community's influence on worldview

Though most were aware before the intervention began that church involvement affects the influence social media has on a person's worldview, they were unable to give valid reasons why. They mentioned that church involvement is beneficial because it can help remove doubt, motivate someone to grow, and increase discernment. On the final questionnaire, students gave more substantial examples of how church involvement might affect the influence of social media in one's life. Church involvement creates opportunities for accountability and encouragement from other believers. Being involved in church can help reaffirm and solidify biblical truths, teaching one how to deal with worldly influences. Students seem to have grasped a deeper appreciation for the importance of church involvement regarding the influences of social media.
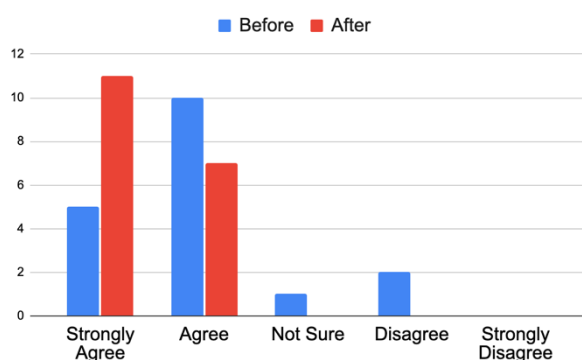
Figure 4.33. Change in awareness of social media's influence on relationships

Kinnaman suggests that the church should be active in helping younger men and women identify and connect with mentors in older generations.[257] Students rose to the challenge to reach out to a mentor who had been vetted and assigned by the researcher. All but two students initially agreed that social media has an influence on their interactions with older adults. They said that social media has created a barrier between generations, removing the influence that older generations might have on younger generations and resulting in confusion and a tendency to

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[257] Kinnaman, *Faith for Exiles*, 138.

mistrust. Even though seven students admitted that they do not have complete confidence in the wisdom of older generations, only two did not see value in spending time with someone from an older generation. By the end of the intervention, only one student was unsure whether one-on-one mentorship with an older person might be important or helpful for developing one's worldview.

Partly due to the divide that social media has created, students suggested that many people their age assume that older generations just do not trust them or understand them. Because of social media, students are often only surrounded by others from their generation. Many members of older generations do not understand modern technology, so they are unable to engage with younger generations as much. Younger generations feel isolated because they are dealing with "…social anxiety, anxiety, depression, stuff like that," and they feel like they cannot talk to people from the older generation "because they won't understand."

Despite students' awareness that there is a disconnect between their generation and older generations, there seems to be a sense of respect among these students for the older generations as the students recognized that "their circumstances are so much different." "There is a huge contrast of how they're viewing the world and how we're viewing the world." "They're stronger and tougher and have gone through more things."

After meeting with their assigned mentors, seven students wrote in their journals that building intergenerational relationships was important, recognizing that "people from older generations have wisdom and insight from their personal experiences that they can share with younger generations to help them grow." Students shared some of the words of wisdom and insight they received from their mentors. "Hold true to my core values and don't allow trends to tear me away from these values." "Don't worry about what other people think, stand strong in

your faith." "In everything I do, do it to the best of my ability." Mentors encouraged students to read their Bibles, memorize Scripture, and never lose their faith. Students were told to always stay biblically grounded, always pursue Jesus, and stay on the path that God has for them. One mentor encouraged the student she met with to "focus on Christ through chaos and trust that even when bad things happen, there is a plan and a purpose."

The mentor meetings were greatly beneficial to many of the students. "I was encouraged, I am going to make a plan to strengthen my relationship with the Lord." "It makes me want to put the phones down and have conversations more often." "I will try harder to use social media in a way that affects my generation positively." Students were encouraged to stay strong in their faith and to continue to develop a strong worldview.

<div align="center">Discernment</div>

Kinnaman suggests that young people who spend time learning how to think alongside other Christians who are learning how to think are more likely to develop the ability to discern truth.[258] At the beginning of this action research project, students recognized that being involved in a church community could help one become more discerning by equipping young people with the tools they need to develop a firm worldview foundation. They also recognized the value that might come from meeting with a mentor. "A strong Christian mentor could show me how to live a life that is honoring to God, and they could help to cut out the false ideas that social media is feeding me." Students initially had the basic understanding that discernment is the ability to tell right from wrong and the ability to make the right choice based on one's understanding of right or wrong in a particular situation.

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[258] Kinnaman, *Faith for Exiles*, 76.

After having met with their assigned mentors, students seemed to recognize at a deeper level the influence that a mentoring relationship could have on one's ability to discern. More than just recognizing right and wrong, they began to realize that discernment is rooted in one's system of worldview beliefs. By spending time with a mentor who has a strong biblical Christian worldview students can strengthen their worldview and develop a stronger sense of discernment. More than just the ability to see the difference between right and wrong, at the end of the program students defined discernment as the ability "to tell what is for the will of God or what is beneficial to the will of God." The difference is a deeper understanding of one's identity and purpose.

<div align="center">Purpose and Calling</div>

Initially, only three students agreed that social media has any influence on one's purpose and calling in life. By the end of the intervention, however, all eighteen students either agreed or strongly agreed that social media influences a person's purpose and calling (Figure 4.34.). Despite the initial disagreement, it was evident throughout the intervention that these students did not doubt their own purpose and calling. Though at the beginning most indicated that social media does not influence one's purpose, students were able to articulate their understanding of their purpose and calling very well. One reason for this may be that because they have such a strong understanding of their purpose and calling, they had not yet realized the influence social media has on other people's purpose and calling. In their journals, most of the students stated that their purpose and calling in life is to love Jesus and represent Him by living a faithful life, serving, evangelizing, being obedient to His commands, and ultimately striving to honor and glorify God in all things.
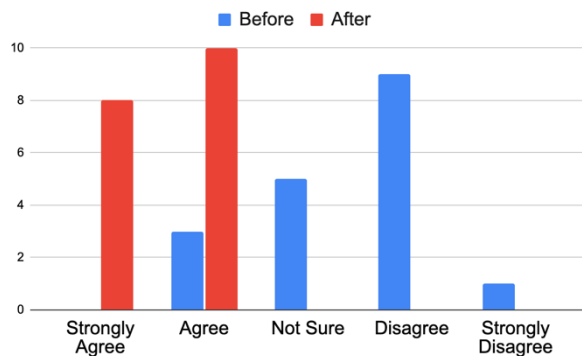
Figure 4.34. Change in awareness of social media's influence on purpose and calling

The students seemed to see through the facade of social media. They were very aware of the false narrative that social media pushes, telling them that their purpose is to get rich, get famous, and have fun. The students pointed out multiple times that social media distracts people from what their true purpose is, causing them to doubt whether they even have a purpose or leading them to chase after a purpose defined by the world's understanding of success. Success is a theme that is closely related to one's purpose and calling. Students had a good understanding of what the biblical definition of success looks like as well, indicating that most of the students either had a solid biblical Christian worldview foundation or at least knew how to answer the question according to a biblical Christian worldview.

Overall students seemed to have realized that social media influences one's understanding of their purpose and calling. They offered solid advice on managing social media's influence on one's purpose. In the initial questionnaire and focus groups, while six students suggested setting boundaries and time limits, no mention of boundaries was made in the final focus groups. The students instead focused on implementing things like prayer and Bible study to better understand and discover one's purpose. Knowing what one's purpose is and being aware of and focusing on the things of God instead of relying on social media for information

will help one avoid the negative influences social media has on one's understanding of their purpose and calling.

<div align="center">Mission</div>

Kinnaman asserts that young people who have a strong biblical Christian worldview tend to have a "resolute commitment to serving and sacrificing for others." He uses the term "countercultural mission" to describe young people who believe that "God is powerful, active, and intentional," and who are actively playing "a part in redeeming people and restoring the world to" God.[259] Comparing the initial and final responses from students shows consistent growth in their understanding of their mission. Initially, half of the students were either not sure or disagreed that social media had any influence on an individual's behavior. Figure 4.35 shows that by the end of the intervention, all but one student agreed or strongly agreed that social media influences behavior.
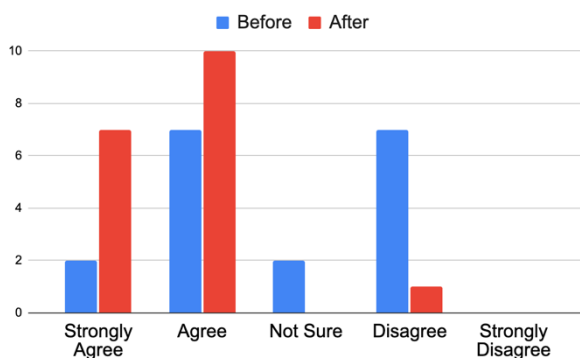
Figure 4.35. Change in awareness of social media's influence on behavior

Reading the follow-up responses to the next question suggests that the researcher's wording of the question did not communicate the researcher's intent. The researcher was looking

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[259] Kinnaman, *Faith for Exiles*, 178.

for how social media influences students' interactions with the culture at a worldview level. Instead, the students gave answers that had more to do with their daily routines. Their responses were focused on their individual lives. For example, several mentioned how time-consuming social media can be and that they tend to use social media when they are bored or procrastinating. Others mentioned things related to daily routines and activities, including how one spends time, money, and other resources. Initially, six students said that social media does not affect their daily lives. In the end, however, only two students said social media does not influence their daily lives. The others recognized the influence social media has, commenting that they have noticed feelings of anxiety and loneliness that often result from endless scrolling.

Several students were careful to point out that though social media has its shortcomings, it can be used for good. While they recognized the dangers and some felt that limiting or deleting the apps was the best approach, a few students believed that social media can be helpful in one's interaction with the culture. They suggested posting about Christian stances and discussing biblical themes as ways one might share their views with non-believers.

Students initially suggested that deleting or limiting time on social media and being intentional about who one watches and listens to are good ways to manage the influence social media has on one's mission. Limiting time, setting boundaries, and building self-control are important, but many of the students also recognized the importance of having a strong foundation of biblical knowledge and establishing a solid biblical worldview to be a more effective way of managing social media's influence.

By the end of the intervention, most students seemed to recognize the need to be intentional and aware. Having a good understanding of one's worldview is crucial if one is to

manage the influence of social media. One can learn to manage the influence of social media "by building a foundation in Christ and placing your identity in what He says about us."

Summary of Results

Learning to manage the influence of social media on one's worldview requires that one be aware of their worldview. The students who participated in this study developed an awareness of the influence that social media has on one's worldview. It was evident that these student participants recognized that having an established biblical Christian worldview would help them better manage this influence by giving them the tools needed to discern false teachings and bad ideas. This idea of having a biblical Christian worldview foundation was more prevalent in the final questionnaire and final focus group interviews than in the initial ones.

Student participants developed a deeper understanding of the role identity plays in shaping one's worldview. Moving from a general understanding of identity to a recognition that one's identity is found only in Christ, by the end of the intervention all but one student admitted that social media influences how one views oneself. Several times in the final questionnaire students mentioned that if one has a good understanding of who they are, their identity is less likely to be influenced by social media.

The student participants recognized and valued the importance of relationships. All the participants were actively involved in a church community, and all but one recognized that being involved in a church community could help them manage the influence social media has on their worldview. Students can find accountability and encouragement in church that cannot be found in the isolated world of social media. Studying the Bible can help develop one's ability to discern what they see and hear on social media.

Perhaps the most meaningful portion of this study was the mentor meetings. Students were assigned to meet with a mentor from an older generation to discuss some of the influences that social media has on worldview. Though initially split on their confidence in the wisdom of older generations, most agreed that spending time with someone older could be beneficial. After having spent time with their assigned mentors, all but one agreed that mentorship is important for developing one's worldview. Students now recognized that social media has negatively influenced their view of older generations and agreed to work to bridge that gap and learn from their wisdom.

The greatest shift in awareness occurred in the student participants' awareness of social media's influence on their purpose and calling. Though from the outset they were able to articulate that their purpose was to glorify God, only three initially recognized social media's influence on one's purpose. Having a better understanding of what one's purpose and calling is helped students better recognize how these might be influenced by social media. Students recognized that social media portrays a false reality that distracts people from finding their true purpose in Christ.

Students developed a deeper awareness of the influence that social media has on one's behavior. How one treats other people, how one behaves both privately and publicly, and how one views their job or occupation can all be influenced by social media. There are countless poor examples on social media, and many people are led without thinking to follow those examples. Students mentioned a new awareness of the negative feelings associated with too much exposure to social media.

The goal of this action research project was to equip students to better manage the influence that social media has on their worldviews. Rather than limiting time spent on social

media or eliminating social media altogether, students recognized the value of developing self-control and using discernment to filter what they view. One must know their identity is in Christ and hold to it strongly. Creating awareness and being intentional are the keys to helping young people manage the influence social media has on shaping one's worldview.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The purpose of this DMIN action research project was to develop and deploy an apologetic worldview training program to equip seniors at LPP to discern the information they consume on social media. One's worldview is the collection of ideas and beliefs that shape a person's understanding of the world in which they live. The term 'worldview' never appears in Scripture, but the idea of one's belief system being shaped by outside influences is present throughout. In Romans 12:1-2 (ESV), the Apostle Paul exhorts believers to be "transformed by the renewal of [their] minds" rather than being "conformed to the world." Transformation here implies a complete change from within, while being conformed is a passive change that occurs from outside influences. An individual's worldview determines their interpretation of the world in which they live and affects every decision that individual makes. Social media has had a major influence on Gen Z's interpretation of the world in which they live. Endless worldview ideas stream into the minds of its users resulting in a confused collection of contradictory ideas and beliefs. Left unchecked, social media has the powerful tendency to conform young minds by shaping their worldviews with little or no awareness on their part.

Much has been written on the topic of social media and its effects on young people. There is no question that the advent of this new and unbridled technology ushered in by the internet has influenced an entire generation in ways that may not be fully understood for years to come. For this and future generations to establish and maintain a solid biblical Christian worldview, they need to learn to learn to manage the vast amounts of information they are being

exposed to. As the president of Barna Group, David Kinnaman has been involved in research that has been pivotal in discovering the factors that have influenced the worldviews of Gen Z. In his book *Faith for Exiles*, he suggests five practices to help keep young minds from being so easily influenced by the digital world. Developing a healthy self-identity, learning to discern truth, being in healthy intergenerational relationships, knowing one's purpose and calling, and living on mission[260] are the practices that Kinnaman found to be present in the lives of young adults who display traits of resilient disciples in their daily lives. Resilient disciples, according to Kinnaman, are individuals who are "resiliently faithful in the face of cultural coercion and who live a vibrant life in the Spirit."[261]

The lessons outlined in this project were developed and designed to help students understand and implement these practices in their lives with respect to social media. Lesson One develops the concept of worldview, helping students understand the importance of knowing what a worldview is and how to identify and articulate their worldview. Social media portrays a false sense of reality leading many young people to seek out their identity in the things they see and hear online. Lesson Two introduces the idea of identity, showing students that one's identity can only be found in the person of Jesus Christ. Learning to manage the influence of social media requires that one develop skills of discernment, the ability to know truth and recognize untruth. Lesson Three emphasizes the importance of developing discernment by being involved in a church community. Lesson Four encourages students to develop intergenerational mentor relationships, teaching the importance and benefits of mentoring and giving students opportunity to meet with a mentor. Lessons Five and Six help students understand their purpose and calling

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[260] Kinnaman, *Faith for Exiles*, 34-35.

[261] Ibid., 30.

in life, encouraging them to live a life on countercultural mission. The lessons help lay a foundation of theology and apologetics, equipping students with the tools they need to defend their biblical Christian worldview.

It was evident from the results of this project that when high school seniors at LPP were made aware of the influence that social media has on one's worldview, they were willing and able to be more intentional in their use of social media and their ability to learn to manage its influence. Many studies have concluded that social media is detrimental to young minds. These same studies often suggest that banning or limiting the use of screens is the best way to deal with the problems that social media presents to young people. While limiting screen time is a good idea, this is not a very practical or feasible solution. Social media is here to stay. Young people who are taught to understand and defend what they believe will be much more prepared to critically discern what they are presented with on social media.

The results of this action research project presented in Chapter Four show that students who participated in the Shaping Worldviews lessons taught by the researcher were made aware of the influence that social media has and were able to become more intentional in their approach to their interaction with and usage of social media. There is no one-size-fits-all solution for managing the influence of social media, as every individual has differing needs, personalities, and backgrounds. However, this project has succeeded in providing a tool designed to equip students to manage the influence that social media has on their worldview by helping them develop a biblical Christian worldview foundation, making them aware of the influence of social media, and teaching them to be intentional in their approach to social media.

Research Implications

It is evident from the results presented in Chapter Four that student participants grew in their awareness of the influence that social media has on their worldviews. At the end of the intervention student participants were better equipped to articulate what they believe and why. They successfully developed the ability to better answer the question of identity and had a better understanding of the power that strong relationships with peers and older believers can have on their ability to develop skills such as discernment and critical thinking. Knowing what one believes, being confident in one's identity in Christ, and being intentional about who one spends time with are foundational elements that will help as one seeks to discover and fulfill one's purpose and calling. Student participants concluded that awareness and intentionality are the keys to managing social media's influence on worldview.

An individual's worldview begins to develop as soon as they can form thoughts and think for themselves. If Barna is correct in his assertion that most individuals' worldviews are largely in place and unlikely to change after the age of thirteen,[262] then beginning this type of training as a high school senior might be too late. One might argue that the positive results of this action research project are because within the context of a Bible class at a private Christian school most if not all the student participants already had a strong biblical Christian worldview foundation. This may be true, but the effectiveness of the project should not be discounted. This researcher was able to use the process developed in this project to help these students strengthen and articulate their already existing beliefs, create awareness of the influence that social media has,

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[262] Barna, *Raising Spiritual Champions*, 7.

and lead them to be more intentional in their application of those beliefs to their usage of social media.

This researcher was aware that attempts to shape worldview must consider the power of long-term intervention. Though this short series of six lessons has proven to be effective with the given set of student participants, unless these student participants continue to apply the principles taught, the effectiveness may be short-lived. Student participants who want to ensure that the changes they experienced because of their involvement in this project stay will need to be intentional about continuing to develop and follow the practices they studied and learned.

Encouraging accountability partners among the student participants or continued meetings with the mentors are ways that could increase the long-term effectiveness of this intervention. Developing daily prayer and Bible study will help keep students focused on their identity in Christ. Regular involvement in church and small groups will help keep discernment skills sharp. Finding and spending time with an intergenerational mentor will help students remain focused on the things that are important in this life. Continually seeking to boldly live out one's purpose and calling in their cultural context will present opportunities to stand up and defend the truth.

The student participants in this action research project were eager to be a part of the research. They seemed to recognize that social media has a powerful and influential grip on their generation. Having the opportunity to be a part of the solution was important to them because they recognized that the issues presented here have real bearing on their lives and the lives of their future children. Given the opportunity, students were generally willing to be a part of the solution.

Through the process of working with the high school seniors at LPP, the researcher discovered a new desire to challenge teenagers to learn to develop critical think skills. As the teacher of the Intro to Philosophy class at LPP, which is a seated dual enrollment class earning college credit for students, the researcher developed renewed insight into students' understanding of the digital world in which they are a part. It may appear to older generations that younger generations have been lost to a world of digital entitlement, but this group of high school seniors demonstrated a desire to overcome these appearances. They longed to be accepted and led by older generations as they sought to establish their worldviews and defend their beliefs.

This researcher will be more intentional as he seeks to teach younger generations to think critically and understand their worldviews. Theology and apologetics are timeless and must not be neglected, especially among younger generations. The researcher plans to continue to develop and incorporate the lessons from this action research project into future Bible classes at LPP.

The world of social media is here to stay. Gen Z is the first generation to have always had access to social media. With the continuing advancements of digital technology, one can only imagine what social media might look like in the future. As this generation becomes more aware of the negative effects of social media, this researcher is convinced that they will take on the responsibility to take control of their digital lives in preparation for future generations.

Research Applications

Though this action research project was intentionally focused on a group of eighteen high school seniors at LPP, the principles can easily be applied in a variety of contexts. Everyone has a worldview that is being shaped. The younger a person is, the more malleable their system of belief will be. The younger one is when they begin the process of equipping themselves to manage the influence of social media, the more effective that equipping will be. Parents have the

earliest and most direct access to their children's minds. The principles outlined in this project can be modified and presented in such a way that children and adults of any age will be able to apply them to their lives. The sooner one begins to intentionally develop their identity, discernment skills, relationships, purpose, and mission, the more effective they will be at managing the powerful influences social media has on their worldview.

While it is primarily the parent's responsibility to train their children to properly manage social media, social media is not the central problem. Limiting or banning screens from children is only a part of the solution. Parents must be diligent in guiding the development of their children's worldviews by establishing a foundation of biblical theology and apologetics. Many parents feel underqualified for such an undertaking. The material presented in this action research project can be modified and used to help guide parents in teaching their young children biblical Christian worldview principles, equipping them to stand on the truth of Scripture and defend what they believe.

Churches can also partner with parents who desire to be trained and equipped to help their children develop the ability to discern biblically. The material presented in this action research project could be modified for use as a parent training seminar or a discipleship class for parents. The lessons could easily be modified to help parents as they are given tools to present the information to their children. The material should be modified to accommodate parents of children of all ages.

Church youth groups and Christian schools might consider taking the material presented here and modifying it as needed to be taught in large and small group settings. The illustrations should be modified to fit the context of the intended audience. Lessons could be taught in a large group setting, and youth leaders could be trained to lead small group break-out discussions,

giving each student the opportunity to discover and verbalize their worldview in a more intimate setting.

Everyone has a worldview that is being shaped. Parents and leaders have a responsibility to ensure that the next generation is learning to manage how their worldviews are being shaped. One can be intentional in helping young people be transformed by renewing their minds, or one can sit back and allow social media to conform the next generation to the pattern of this world.

Research Limitations

As with any action research project of this nature, certain limitations were put in place to make the research manageable within the given context and time frame. While limitations are acceptable and expected, considering these limitations will help future researchers who may choose to apply this or a similar project in their own context. The purpose of this project was to develop and deploy an apologetic worldview training program to equip seniors at LPP to discern the information they consume on social media. Though limiting the research to this subset of participants revealed many positive results, one should consider several of the limitations that, if different, might yield different outcomes.

The participant group represented in this project had spent the entire semester leading up to this action research project studying worldviews under the instruction of this researcher. The fall curriculum of the Intro to Philosophy class covered six major worldviews, highlighting their differences and similarities. Students were taught to identify those differences and defend the Christian worldview. Participants who have not been exposed to this type of training prior to hearing the lessons presented in this project might respond with differing results. One may need to expand the lesson on worldviews to ensure that participants have a solid understanding of

what a worldview is before they attempt to define and articulate their own. Each lesson builds on the previous and will be more effective if the foundation is well developed.

Another limitation to be considered is that every student participant attends a Southern Baptist church, and most of them have attended church all their lives. This is certainly not true of the larger population of high schoolers. Barna's research reveals that the number of American adults who hold a to biblical Christian worldview continues to decline.[263] While this project has produced an effective tool when applied within the ideal context outlined in this intervention, it would be prudent to explore how applying these same principles in other contexts might prove helpful to students who hold to a different set of worldview ideas. Presenting the information outlined in this project could have differing levels of influence depending on the initial worldview beliefs of the participants involved. The age of the participants should also be considered. As stated earlier, older youth and adults are less likely to change or adjust their worldview beliefs, while younger minds tend to be more malleable and open to worldview shaping.

Limiting the study to high school seniors at LPP presented another challenge. The researcher had to learn to deal with the frustration of students not showing up for school on days the lessons were taught. Illness, doctor's appointments, and 'senioritis' sometimes kept students from attending class. Although disappointing to the researcher, students who were present benefited from and enjoyed hearing the lectures. Finding a way to ensure that all participants are

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[263] Dr. Tracy F. Munsil, "Barna, *CRC Research Identify 'Seven Cornerstones' for Restoring Biblical Worldview,*" Arizona Christian University, (Glendale, AZ: Arizona Christian University Press, 2023), accessed February 22, 2024, https://www.arizonachristian.edu/2023/03/14/barna-crc-research-identify-seven-cornerstones-for-restoring-biblical-worldview/#:~:text=The%20ultimate%20purpose%20of%20human,thoughts%2C%20words%2C%20and%20actions.

present for every lesson and survey may be impossible or impractical but would likely have an impact on the overall efficacy of the study. Though the researcher was able to record each lesson and offer it to students who missed a class, students did not always follow through. One student stated that watching the video on his own time proved to be extremely difficult.

A final limitation to be considered is the number of lessons used to relay the information. The teaching was limited to a total of six lessons. Depending on the audience, this may or may not be sufficient. If students are not familiar with the idea of worldview, Lesson One might need to be expanded to two or three lessons to ensure that everyone understands what a worldview is and why it is important. At the same time, one should keep in mind that lengthening the number of lessons needed to present the material could result in attrition. It has been this researcher's experience that attendance in Bible study and discipleship classes offered in church tends to decline over the course of the study. The longer the class, the more people tend to drop out over time.

The researcher is aware of weaknesses in this study that could yield better results if corrected. One weakness is found in Lesson Six, the lesson on countercultural mission. The researchers' goal with Lesson Six was to help students take what they had learned in the first five lessons and apply their new knowledge in practical ways in their cultural context. The journal prompt and the questions asked regarding countercultural mission were apparently unclear and did not connect well with the intentions of the researcher. As a result, the students' responses did not seem to indicate that the students fully understood the point of Lesson Six.

The leap from information and head knowledge to practical application can sometimes be difficult. For individuals who have grown up learning to repeat information, understanding how to apply that knowledge practically does not always come naturally. One way to overcome this

weakness is to lead students to participate in some role-play activities or take them on a field trip to demonstrate by example how one might interact with the culture. Observing the teacher in action might give students the opportunity to learn how to apply their knowledge in practical ways.

It is impossible to be directly involved with participants in a research project without having some impact on the outcome. The researcher's relationship to the student participants had an influence on the results at some level. Student participants seeking to please their teacher may have responded to questions in the focus groups differently than they might have responded if the moderator of the focus groups been a stranger. Some may suggest that another weakness of this action research project was that the researcher acted as the lesson presenter. This likely resulted in a more personal and passionate presentation than might have occurred had the presenter been someone other than the researcher.

The purpose of this thesis project was to help students learn to manage the influence of social media on their worldviews. Knowing that these students were months away from graduation and were preparing to face challenging situations in which their worldviews would be tested was a sober realization for this researcher. Seeing the students lean in and take a hold of the material was encouraging and gave the researcher a sense of hope for these students.

Further Research

The shaping of one's worldview happens whether one is intentional about the process or not. The results of this action research project showed that with minimal awareness and intentionality high school students can be taught to take control of the influence social media has on their worldviews. However, as mentioned in the section on limitations, this intervention only

lasted for a period of eight weeks from start to finish. This raises questions to be considered and opens opportunities for more detailed research in the future.

One area that deserves further investigation concerns the long-term effects of this training on its participants. One cannot accurately measure the long-term results of this project over the period of eight weeks. While it was encouraging to see change and a greater awareness in the student participants' understanding of the influence social media had on their worldviews, it would be beneficial to survey this same group of students six months or a year after the intervention. All these students will have left the comfort of their high school Bible class and will have faced many new challenges and opportunities in their lives. Will they maintain their awareness of social media's influence several months later? How will leaving the comfort of friends and teachers at a private Christian school change their ability to manage the influence of social media?

Intergenerational mentoring is another potential avenue for future research. The students' response to one meeting with a mentor revealed a strong desire from both the students and the mentors to continue to be involved in these types of relationships. The students in this action research project were profoundly impacted by their meeting with their assigned mentor. Many spoke of the amazing wisdom they had gleaned, and several had intentions to meet again. It would be interesting to take the mentoring portion of this study to another level and watch it play out over a longer period. If one meeting could have such a great impact, what might the long-term effects of intergenerational mentoring be on a young person as they navigate the influence that social media has on their worldview? The students recognized the value of meeting with someone older and wiser, and the mentors were encouraged by the meetings.

Future researchers might want to consider how a long-term intergenerational mentoring relationship might affect a high school student's awareness of the influence of social media on their worldview. One approach to such a study might involve establishing a plan for students to meet with a mentor over a longer period, maybe six or eight weekly or bi-weekly meetings. One might consider strategically providing discussion topics to guide each meeting. Having students respond to a journaling prompt and asking mentors to complete a short survey after each meeting would be one way for the researcher to collect data to gauge the effectiveness of long-term intergenerational mentoring.

The final practice covered in Lesson Six on countercultural mission needs to be improved. As mentioned earlier, it did not appear to this researcher that his intent concerning the area of countercultural mission was clearly communicated to the students. Countercultural mission is not to be understood as a one-time effort that one makes to stand up for or defend their worldview, although that is part of it. Countercultural mission should be understood as the way of life for a student who is intent on living out their God-given purpose and calling. Lesson Six needs to be modified to reflect this deeper understanding of countercultural mission. Consideration must be made for what it takes to move a student from knowing information to applying that information in practical ways. The goal of worldview shaping should go beyond one's ability to state what one believes. Students need to be challenged to live out what they believe in practical ways.

Preparing young people to manage the influence that social media has on one's worldview is a major undertaking. Worldviews are being shaped with or without one's consent. Parents, teachers, and leaders have a responsibility to ensure that the next generations are being equipped theologically and apologetically to develop and defend a biblical Christian worldview.

Everyone has a worldview that is either being transformed or conformed. One's ability to manage the influence of social media begins with intentionality and awareness, along with the desire to grow as disciples and follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ.

APPENDIX A

PERMISSION REQUEST

January 1, 2024
Pastor Landon Keziah
Head of School
Lee Park Preparatory School
2505 Morgan Mill Road
Monroe, NC 28110

Dear Pastor Landon,

As a doctoral candidate in the John W. Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry degree. The title of my research project is *Shaping Worldviews: Helping High School Seniors Manage the Influence of Social Media* and the purpose of my research is to help high school seniors recognize the influence that social media has in shaping their worldviews and to develop an apologetic and theological matrix to equip them to defend against the mix of false worldviews they are exposed to on social media.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research at Lee Park Preparatory School.

Participants will be asked to complete the attached questionnaire, participate in two focus group discussions, and receive training designed to help them develop a worldview matrix to discern what they consume on social media. Following the training students will complete the attached questionnaire a second time. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Parents of participants under the age of eighteen will receive a parental opt-out form should they choose to remove their student from the study. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please sign and return the attached permission letter.

Sincerely,

Geoffrey Janes
Associate Pastor
Lee Park Church

APPENDIX B

PERMISSION RESPONSE

January 1, 2004

Geoffrey Janes
Associate Pastor
Lee Park Church
2491 Morgan Mill Road
Monroe, NC 28110

Dear Pastor Geoffrey:

After careful review of your research proposal entitled *Shaping Worldviews: Helping High School Seniors Manage the Influence of Social Media*, I have decided to grant you permission to conduct your study at Lee Park Preparatory School.

Check the following boxes, as applicable:

☐ I grant permission for Pastor Geoffrey Janes to contact Lee Park Prep high school seniors to invite them to participate in his research study.

☐ I am requesting a copy of the results upon study completion and/or publication.

Sincerely,

Pastor Landon Keziah
Head of School
Lee Park Preparatory School

APPENDIX C

VERBAL RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Hello Class,

As a doctoral student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry degree. The purpose of my research is to help high school seniors like yourself recognize the influence social media has in shaping worldviews and develop an apologetic and theological matrix to equip them to defend against the mix of false worldviews they are exposed to on social media. As a student in this Bible class, I would like to invite you to join my study.

Participants must be high school seniors at Lee Park Preparatory School and have access to social media. Taking part in this research project is voluntary. Participants, if willing, will be asked to complete a questionnaire to assess their understanding of their worldview as it relates to their use of social media, participate in focus groups consisting of four to five participants, attend six weekly teaching sessions, complete weekly practical application assignments to further reinforce the teaching received in the teaching sessions, complete a weekly journal in response to weekly journaling prompts provided each week during the teaching sessions, participate in a final focus group consisting of four to five participants, and complete a final questionnaire to assess their learning experience and evaluate their overall progress. It should take approximately 8 weeks to complete the procedures listed. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

A consent document is provided for you to read and complete. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me. Doing so will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the study.

Thank you for your time. Do you have any questions?

APPENDIX D

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of the Project: Shaping Worldviews: Helping High School Seniors Manage the Influence of Social Media

Principal Investigator: Geoffrey Janes, 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 high school senior at Lee Park Preparatory School and have access to social media. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

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

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

The purpose of the study is to help high school seniors recognize the influence that social media has in shaping their worldviews and develop an apologetic and theological matrix to equip them to defend against the mix of false worldviews they are exposed to on social media.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following:
1. Participants will be required to complete a questionnaire to assess their understanding of their worldview as it relates to their use of social media.
2. Participants will be required to participate in focus groups consisting of four to five participants. These groups will be scheduled to take place at various times during the first week of the study.
3. Participants will be required to attend six weekly teaching sessions. These will take place during weeks two through seven.
4. Participants will be asked to complete weekly practical application assignments to further reinforce the teaching received in the teaching sessions.
5. Participants will be asked to complete a weekly journal in response to weekly journaling prompts provided each week during the teaching sessions.
6. Participants will be required to participate in a final focus group consisting of four to five participants. These groups will be scheduled to take place at various times during the eighth week of the study.
7. Participants will be required to complete a final questionnaire to assess their learning experience and evaluate their overall progress.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

The direct benefits participants should expect to receive from taking part in this study include a heightened awareness of the influence social media outlets such as social media have in shaping their worldviews, and a stronger desire to continue to develop and defend their own biblical Christian worldview.

Benefits to society include high school seniors who are better equipped to have a positive impact on their communities.

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?

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 to the initial and final questionnaires and participant responses recorded in the focus group interviews and discussions will be kept confidential.
- 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/or shared with other researchers. If data collected from you is reused or shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed beforehand.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and/or in a locked office.
- Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then deleted. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

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

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Is the researcher in a position of authority over participants, or does the researcher have a financial conflict of interest?

The researcher serves as an educator at Lee Park Preparatory School and a pastor at Lee Park Church. This disclosure is made so that you can decide if this relationship will affect your willingness to participate in this study. No action will be taken against an individual based on his or her decision to participate or not participate 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 Lee Park Preparatory School. 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 included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

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

The researcher conducting this study is Pastor Geoffrey Janes. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at
████████████████████.

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 and/or video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____
Printed Subject Name

_____
Signature & Date

APPENDIX E

PARENTAL OPT-OUT EMAIL

Hello _____,

My name is Pastor Geoffrey Janes. I am your student's Intro to Philosophy teacher at Lee Park Preparatory School. As a part of my doctoral candidacy requirements at Liberty University, I am conducting an action research project on the influence that social media has on the worldviews of young people today.

      The purpose of my research is to develop and deploy an apologetical worldview training program to equip seniors at Lee Park Preparatory School to discern the information they consume on social media. This will be accomplished through a series of six lessons, each of which contains a practical application assignment and journaling response. Students will be surveyed before and after the six-week series using questionnaires and focus group discussions. I have already explained the study in detail to your student and they have signed a participant consent form expressing their willingness to participate in the process. However, because your student is under the age of eighteen, I am sending you a Parental Opt-Out form in the event that you would prefer that your student not participate in this study. **The form only needs to be signed and returned if you are choosing not to allow your student to participate.**

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to me. You can contact me via email at ██████████████████.

Thank you,
Pastor Geoffrey Janes

APPENDIX F

PARENTAL OPT-OUT FORM

Title of the Project: Shaping Worldviews: Helping High School Seniors Manage the Influence of Social Media

Principal Investigator: Geoffrey Janes, Doctoral Candidate, John W. Rawlings School of Divinity, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

Your student is invited to participate in a research study. To participate, he or she must be a high school senior at Lee Park Preparatory School and have access to social media. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

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

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

The purpose of the study is to help high school seniors recognize the effects that social media has in shaping their worldviews and develop an apologetic and theological matrix to equip them to defend against the mix of false worldviews they are exposed to on social media.

What will participants be asked to do in this study?

If you agree to allow your student to participate in this study, I will ask her or him to do the following:
1. Participants will be required to complete a questionnaire to assess their understanding of their worldview as it relates to their use of social media.
2. Participants will be required to participate in focus groups consisting of four to five participants. These groups will be scheduled to take place at various times during the first week of the study.
3. Participants will be required to attend six teaching sessions. These will take place during weeks two through seven.
4. Participants will be asked to complete weekly practical application assignments to further reinforce the teaching received in the teaching sessions.
5. Participants will be asked to complete a weekly journal in response to weekly journaling prompts provided each week during the teaching sessions.
6. Participants will be required to participate in a final focus group consisting of four to five participants. These groups will be scheduled to take place at various times during the eighth week of the study.
7. Participants will be required to complete a final questionnaire to assess their learning experience and evaluate their overall progress.

How could participants or others benefit from this study?

The direct benefits participants should expect to receive from taking part in this study include a heightened awareness of the influence social media outlets such as social media have in shaping their worldviews, and a stronger desire to continue to develop and defend their own biblical Christian worldview.

Benefits to society include high school seniors who are better equipped to have a positive impact on their communities.

What risks might participants 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?

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 to the initial and final questionnaires and participant responses recorded in the focus group interviews and discussions will be kept confidential.
- 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/or shared with other researchers. If data collected from you is reused or shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed beforehand.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and/or in a locked office.
- Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then deleted. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

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

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Is the researcher in a position of authority over participants, or does the researcher have a financial conflict of interest?

The researcher serves as an educator at Lee Park Preparatory School and a pastor at Lee Park Church. This disclosure is made so that you can decide if this relationship will affect your willingness to participate in this study. No action will be taken against an individual based on his or her decision to participate or not participate 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 Lee Park Preparatory School. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

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

If you choose to withdraw your student from the study or your student chooses to withdraw, please contact the researcher at the email address included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw her or him or should your student choose to withdraw, data collected from your student, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your student's contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw him or her or if your child/student chooses to withdraw.

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

The researcher conducting this study is Pastor Geoffrey Janes. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at ███████████████████.

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

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the 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 Opt-Out

If you would prefer that your child NOT PARTICIPATE in this study, please sign this document, and return it to your child's teacher by January 8, 2024.

_____
Printed Child's/Student's Name

_____
Parent/Guardian's Signature   Date

APPENDIX G

INITIAL QUESTIONNAIRE QUESTIONS

Instructions:
Thank you for taking the time to respond to these questions. Please take your time and reflect on each question. This is not a test and will not be graded. Treat this as a personal time of reflection. Consider thoughtfully each of the following questions as you answer. Your responses will remain confidential. Please answer as honestly as you can.

1. Name: _____

Warmup Questions (Multiple Choice)

2. On a scale of 1-4, rate your preferred social media apps (1 = least preferred, 4 = most

   preferred)

   _____ Instagram   _____ Facebook   _____ TikTok   _____ Snapchat

3. Based on the screen time option on your device, how much time (hh:mm) do you spend

   weekly on each of the following social media apps?

   ___:___ Instagram   ___:___ Facebook   ___:___ TikTok   ___:___ Snapchat

Worldview

4. Social media has an influence on my worldview.

   Strongly disagree   Disagree   Not Sure   Agree   Strongly Agree

5. How do you think social media influences the way you think and behave?

6. What are some ways you might manage the influence social media has on your thoughts

   and behaviors?

7. An individual's worldview is determined by the friends they hang around.

   Strongly disagree   Disagree   Not Sure   Agree   Strongly Agree

8. A mentor relationship is necessary for the development of one's worldview.

Strongly disagree   Disagree   Not Sure   Agree   Strongly Agree

9. Describe your worldview using 2-4 sentences.

10. How do you think one's worldview influences how one lives their life each day?

Identity

11. Social media plays a part in shaping one's identity (circle one).

Strongly disagree   Disagree   Not Sure   Agree   Strongly Agree

12. How would you define "identity"?

13. Who or what defines who you are?

14. Describe how you think social media might play a part in shaping your identity.

15. How can you manage the influence social media has on your identity?

Church Community

16. Being involved in a church community can affect the way you are influenced by social media (circle one).

Strongly disagree   Disagree   Not Sure   Agree   Strongly Agree

17. How do you think regular involvement in church worship services might affect the

influence social media has on your worldview?

18. How do you think involvement in a church small group might help you manage the

influence social media has on your worldview?

19. Does social media influence your understanding of what is really true?

Relationship

20. Social media has an influence on my relationships with friends.

Strongly disagree   Disagree   Not Sure   Agree   Strongly Agree

21. Describe how you think social media might influence your relationships with friends.

22. How does social media affect your relationships with your parents?

23. I have complete confidence in the wisdom of older generations.

Strongly disagree   Disagree   Not Sure   Agree   Strongly Agree

24. Spending time with someone from an older generation would be beneficial for me.

Strongly disagree   Disagree   Not Sure   Agree   Strongly Agree

25. How important do you think one-on-one mentorship is for developing one's worldview?

26. What kind of influence does social media have on your interaction with older adults?

27. Given the opportunity, I would meet with a mentor.

   Strongly disagree   Disagree   Not Sure   Agree   Strongly Agree

28. I have someone in my life I consider to be a mentor.

   Strongly disagree   Disagree   Not Sure   Agree   Strongly Agree

29. How do you think an intentional mentor relationship might influence your use of social

   media?

Purpose

30. Social media influences my understanding of my purpose in life.

   Strongly disagree   Disagree   Not Sure   Agree   Strongly Agree

31. I understand my purpose for existing.

   Strongly disagree   Disagree   Not Sure   Agree   Strongly Agree

32. How do you think social media influences your understanding of your purpose in life?

33. How do you think one might manage the influence social media has on one's purpose in

   life?

Mission

34. Social media influences how I choose to live my life daily.

   Strongly disagree   Disagree   Not Sure   Agree   Strongly Agree

35. How do you think social media influences how you live your life each day?

36. I understand my purpose for existing.

   Strongly disagree   Disagree   Not Sure   Agree   Strongly Agree

37. How do you think one might manage the influence social media has on how they live

   their life daily?

APPENDIX H

INITIAL FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are prompts that serve as discussion starters. The researcher may or may not use all of them. The use of these questions will be largely determined by the direction of the focus group discussion.

Worldview Questions (Open-ended discussion starters)

What is a worldview?

How are worldviews shaped and influenced?

Do you think individuals have control over their own worldview? Why or why not?

How does social media use influence your thinking?

How does social media use influence your behavior?

Are there things on social media that we shouldn't look at?

Does it really matter what we view on social media if we don't do those things?

Identity

Does worldview influence one's identity or does one's identity influence their worldview? How?

On what do most people base their identity?

How would you answer the question "Who or what defines you?"

How does social media use influence how you view and understand yourself?

Why do you think so many social media users struggle with depression?

What does it mean to say someone has a healthy identity?

Is it possible to use social media without being influenced by it? How can one use social media without being overcome by its influence?

How important is it to have a proper understanding of one's identity?

What are ways social media users can defend against the influence that social media has on one's identity?

Discernment

Do you believe truth can change over time?

How important is involvement in a community of believers?

How can being around other believers influence one's worldview?

Does church involvement have any influence on your ability to discern truth in our culture?

Relationship

How do other people influence an individual's worldview?

Have you ever been involved in, or are you now involved in a mentor relationship with someone older than yourself?

How important do you think one-on-one mentorship is for developing one's worldview?

How do you think social media relates to isolation from and mistrust of older generations?

How have your mentor meetings influenced your view and/or use of social media?

Purpose

What kind of influence does one's worldview have on one's view of their job?

How does one's worldview influence how one lives their life each day?

How does social media influence one's view of their work/job?

How has social media influenced the way you view your vocation?

Do you think social media hinders one's ability to perform well at their job?

How can you as a believer defend against the influences of social media on the way you view your job?

Mission

Why do you think it matters how we live in this world?

How does social media influence how one lives their life each day?

How should Christians respond to influences of social media on the world?

APPENDIX I

TEACHING LESSONS

Lesson 1: Transforming My Mind
Learning Objectives As a result of this lesson, students will - gain a better understanding of the importance of worldview, theology, and apologetics. - see the connection between their worldview and the world around them. - learn to recognize the influence that social media has on shaping their worldview. - gain perspective on what it means to develop their worldview as they live out their theology and apologetics.

Lesson Outline
 	
I.   Worldviews, Theology, and Apologetics
 	
Daniel, Shadrack, Meshack, and Abednego faced a crisis of belief when they were unexpectedly thrown into the midst of Babylonian exile. They were clearly grounded in their worldview beliefs before they faced any opposition. Learning from their example, students today can prepare themselves to stand against the cultural opposition found on social media.
 	
a. Daniel's Crisis (Daniel 1:1-7)
    i. Change of Location
    ii. Change of Education
    iii. Change of Name
    iv. Change of Diet
b. Daniel's Resolve
c. Daniel's Plan
d. Danie's Results
 	
II.   Preparing to Stand Firm
 	
Romans 12:2 challenges Christians to be intentional in development of one's worldview. Students on social media must recognize the difference between conforming and being transformed. Social media seeks to conform its followers. Jesus desires to transform His followers.
 	
a. Conformed vs Transformed
b. Foundational Questions
c. Know and Believe that God is in Control

III.   True Transformation Comes Through Experiencing Jesus Christ

Without Jesus Christ at the center of one's life, none of the material covered thus far will be beneficial. Worldview, theology, and apologetics must be built on the firm foundation of a relationship with Jesus Christ.

"Experiencing Jesus is entering into a dynamic relationship with him as the author and perfecter of our faith. Experiencing the real Jesus is the starting point and the ending point—the Alpha and the Omega—of resilient faithfulness in digital Babylon."[264]

Action Steps

Participants will be challenged to develop and write out their personal worldview using a template provided in this lecture.

Journaling Response

In at least one paragraph write out your personal worldview.

Compare and contrast what you wrote with what you typically enjoy viewing on social media.

Take some time to reflect on your beliefs, values, and experiences that have shaped your worldview. How have your upbringing, culture, education, and personal experiences influenced your views?

In light of these thoughts, begin answering the fundamental worldview questions discussed in class. Trying to fully answer the question of what you believe is more manageable if you can break it down into parts. Try answering these fundamental questions one at a time. Try and use Scripture to back up your answers.

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[264] David Kinnaman, Mark Matlock, and Aly Hawkins, *Faith for Exiles: 5 Ways for a New Generation to Follow Jesus in Digital Babylon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2019), 67.

Lesson 2: Discovering My Identity

Learning Objectives
 	
As a result of this lesson, students will
 	
    • better understand what it means to find one's identity in Christ.
    • explore where their identity comes from.
    • be challenged to discover their identity in Jesus Christ rather than in the things of this world, specifically social media.

Lesson Outline
 	
    Finding Your Identity in Jesus Christ: A relationship with Jesus Christ leads to a transformed identity.
 	
    "To Form a Resilient Identity, Experience Intimacy with Jesus. Experiencing Jesus means clearing religious clutter for closeness with and joy in Christ."[265]
 	
    I.   Looking for Identity in all the Wrong Places
          a. Our search for identity
          b. Social media wants to tell you who you are
          c. The quest to find your true identity
 	
    II.   What the Bible Says About Who I Am
          a. I am a creature who is fully dependent on God (Genesis 1:26-27)
          b. I am a sinner by birth
          c. I am justified
          d. I am a new creation
          e. I am a saint
 	
    III.   Now What?
          a. Clearing the religious clutter
          b. Grow in intimacy with Jesus

Action Steps   Participants will be challenged to write out a personal identity statement.

Journaling Response
 	
    In at least one paragraph, write out a description of your identity.
    Compare that description to the identities that social media portrays.

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[265] Kinnaman, *Faith for Exiles*, 39.

This lesson focuses on the issue of identity. Young social media users are facing an identity crisis. Discovering one's identity is a natural and healthy part of growth, but today many are trying to form their identity based on a virtual world of fantasy.

- Read over last week's journal entry. Reflect on your answers to the fundamental worldview questions.

- Consider the question "Who am I?" Looking back over your notes from this week's lesson, answer the question of identity for yourself. You may use the outline in the notes as a guide but try to personalize your answer. Who are you? What is your identity?

  Compare and contrast what you wrote with what you typically enjoy viewing on social media.

Lesson 3: Strengthening My Discernment
Learning Objectives As a result of this lesson, students will • discover the way social media distorts what we consider to be true. • understand the importance of being involved in church and small group. • be challenged to evaluate their level of participation in church and small group.

Lesson Outline
 	
Participation in a Christian Community leads to Stronger Cultural Discernment.
 	
"In a Complex and Anxious Age, Develop the Muscles of Cultural Discernment. Exercising cultural discernment means taking part in a robust learning community under the authority of the Bible to wisely navigate an accelerated, complex culture."[266]
 	
"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, **25** not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." (Hebrews 10:24-25)
 	
I.   Learning to Think Like a Christian
    a. Grow in Grace and Knowledge
    b. Love the Lord with all your mind.
    c. The lost art of critical thinking
 	
II.   The Internet is Filtered Reality
 	
III.   The Pursuit of Wisdom
    a. Insulate, don't Isolate
    b. Know and believe the Bible
    c. Grow in unity with other believers

Action Steps Participants will commit to attending a church service and a small group study at least once a week.
Journaling Response In at least one paragraph, describe your experience in church and small group. Reflect on your involvement in church: • How important is it for you to be involved in church community (large group gatherings, small group gatherings)? • How does time spent in church community affect your relationship with the Lord and with others?

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[266] Kinnaman, *Faith for Exiles*, 69.

- How does time spent in church community affect your relationship with social media?
- Compare and contrast what you wrote with what you typically enjoy viewing on social media.

Lesson 4: Building Meaningful Relationships
Learning Objectives As a result of this lesson, students will • understand the importance of seeking the wisdom of older and wiser mentors. • be challenged to meet with a mentor at least twice in the next three weeks. • see the value in developing a mentoring relationship.

Lesson Outline
 	
Intentional mentor relationships can help lessen the isolation and mistrust experienced by users of social media.
 	
"When Isolation and Mistrust Are the Norms, Forge Meaningful, Intergenerational Relationships. Building meaningful relationships means being devoted to fellow believers we want to be around and become."[267]
 	
I.   Isolation Leads to Loneliness
    a. Meaningful relationships are rare.
    b. How screens keep us from having meaningful relationships
    c. Loneliness leads us to question our purpose.
II.   Isolation Leads to Mistrust
    a. Younger generations tend to mistrust older generations.
    b. Younger generations tend to mistrust church as an organization.
    c. Younger generations tend to mistrust authority.
III. Overcoming Isolation by Developing Meaningful Relationships
    a. Spend time with those you want to become.
    b. Be intentional about who you want to become.
    c. Finding a mentor – an adult who can shape you, speak into your life, and help you develop your gifts.

Action Steps Participants will be challenged to choose a mentor and commit to having meeting with him or her.
Journaling Response After meeting with your mentor, write out a short description of the experience. How did your conversation with him or her change your understanding of the world, and your view of social media?

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[267] Kinnaman, *Faith for Exiles*, 109.

Lesson 5: Discovering My Purpose and Calling
Learning Objectives As a result of this lesson, students will • begin to understand God's purpose for their lives. • begin to understand God's calling on their lives. • be able to integrate God's calling and purpose with their ambitions for the future.
Lesson Outline "To Ground and Motivate an Ambitious Generation, Train for Vocational Discipleship. Vocational discipleship means knowing and living God's calling, especially in the arena of work, and right-sizing our ambitions to God's purposes."[268] I.   Knowing and Living God's Calling II.   What do you want to be when you grow up? III.   Aligning my Ambitions with God's Purpose for my Life
Action Steps Participants will be challenged to consider their understanding of their God-given purpose in life.
Journaling Response Describe your role as a Christian on this planet. Compare God's purpose for humanity with social media's portrayal of people's purpose for living.

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[268] Kinnaman, *Faith for Exiles*, 143.

Lesson 6: Living Out My Mission

Learning Objectives
    As a result of this lesson, students will
        • see the importance of intentionally living life counterculturally.
        • be able to identify opportunities to live out their faith in the culture.
        • understand the risk involved in living on mission for god.

Lesson Outline
    Learn to live out your faith by learning to fulfill your mission. Believers are called to live differently from cultural norms by engaging in countercultural mission.
    "Curb Entitlement and Self-Centered Tendencies by Engaging in Countercultural Mission. Engaging in countercultural mission means living as a faithful presence by trusting God's power and living differently from cultural norms."[269]
 	
    I.   From Self-centered to Christ-centered
 	
    II.   Overcoming Entitlement
 	
    III.   Countercultural Mission
        a. Living on mission requires prayer.
        b. Living on mission requires personal holiness.
        c. Living on mission requires action.

Action Steps   Participants will be challenged to identify one way they can intentionally engage the culture, and then do it.
Journaling Response   Describe the way you chose to intentionally engage the culture. Describe how you chose to engage the culture and why. Describe your experience?

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[269] Kinnaman, *Faith for Exiles*, 175.

APPENDIX J

STUDENT HANDOUTS

Shaping Worldviews
Lesson 1: Transforming My Mind

I.   Worldviews, Theology, and Apologetics

    a. Daniel's _____ (Dan 1:1-7)

        i. Change of _____ - "Where I am."

        ii. Change in _____ - "What I hear."

        iii. Change of _____ - "How I am perceived."

        iv. Change in _____ - "What I allow in."

We **CAN** and **SHOULD** intentionally filter what we allow to enter our minds and hearts.

    b. Daniels' _____ (Dan 1:8)

    c. Daniel's _____ (Dan 1:9-13)

    d. Daniel's _____ (Dan 1:14-16)

    Theology seeks to help one to answer fundamental questions about the world based on what the Bible teaches.

    Apologetics is a powerful tool that can be used to defend one's biblical worldview.

II.   Preparing to Stand _____ (Rom 12:1-2)

    a. Conformed or Transformed?

    <u>**Conformed**</u>: allowing outside factors to influence who you are, what you think and believe, and how you behave

    <u>**Transformed**</u>: Intentionally developing who you are, what you think and believe, and how you behave from within

    b. Foundational Questions

- how did we get here?
- why are we here?
- what happens when we die?
- what's the purpose of life?
- do I matter?
- is there a difference between right and wrong?
- is there a God?

    c. Know and Believe that God is in Control

III.   True _____ Comes Only Through Experiencing Jesus Christ

    a. A biblical worldview must begin with and be built entirely and solely on what the Bible teaches about the world.

    b. A biblical worldview is based solely on the person of Jesus Christ.

Application & Journaling

In *at least* one paragraph (more may be needed) write out your personal worldview.

- First, take some time to reflect on your beliefs, values, and experiences that have shaped your worldview. How have your upbringing, culture, education, and personal experiences influenced your views?

- In light of these thoughts, begin answering the foundational worldview questions discussed in lesson 1. Trying to fully answer the question of what you believe is more manageable if you can break it down into parts. Try answering these foundational questions one at a time.

- Can you back up your answers with Scripture?

- Compare and contrast what you wrote with what you typically enjoy viewing on social media.

Shaping Worldviews
Lesson 2: Discovering My Identity

I.   Looking for _____ in all the Wrong Places

    a. Our _____ for Identity

    According to Stanovsek,

- social media has changed the way people view themselves
- social media has changed the way people connect with others.

    b. Social media wants to _____ you who you are

    The essence of our identity is being redefined.

- I discover the truth about myself by looking inside myself.
- I can believe whatever I want as long as those beliefs don't affect society.
- I should pursue the things I desire most.

    Understanding and properly answering the question "Who am I?" is a crucial foundational worldview question.

II.   What the _____ says about Who I am?

    a. I am a _____ who is fully dependent on God (Genesis 1:26-27)

    26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."
    27 So God created man in his own image,
        in the image of God he created him;
        male and female he created them.

    We are utterly dependent on God for _____, _____ and breath, _____, and abilities.

    We are morally accountable to God (Gen 2:16-17)

    And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

    Recognizing who we are in Christ should produce: _____

Recognizing who we are in Christ should produce: _____

b. I am a _____by Birth

  o   Psalm 51:5

  o   1 Corinthians 15:22

  o   1 Corinthians 15:45

c. I am _____

    o   Our sins are forgiven because they were _____ to Christ

    o   The perfect righteousness of Christ has been fully _____ to us

    Justification was not only a past event but also a present reality.

    Every day we too must look outside ourselves to Christ and see ourselves justified before God because of our representative union with Christ.

d. I am a New _____

    In pardoning and adopting us, God _____ us into a different person, a new creation.

    He wants us to act on this radical change in our identity by applying the truth of it to our everyday lives.

    Our positions of being justified, adopted, and a new creation in Christ are ours, but they are basically privileges.

    Our right and proper response is to believe these truths about ourselves, rejoice in them, and live in the reality of them.

e. I am a _____

    Our whole outlook on life should be colored by the fact that, as saints, we no longer belong to ourselves, but to Him.

III.   Now What?

a. Clearing the "religious clutter"

    i.   Worship is not a _____ event

     ii. Bible reading is not a _____

    iii. Church is not primarily a _____ gathering

    iv. Prayer is not a _____

b. Grow in intimacy with Jesus

    i. Worship Jesus with your _____ (Romans 12:1)

    ii. Read your Bible to _____ from God

    iii. Church is a place to _____ God's presence

    iv. Prayer is _____ to God

Application & Journaling

In at least one paragraph, write out a description of your identity.
Compare that description to the identities that social media portrays.

This lesson focuses on the issue of identity. Young social media users are facing an identity crisis. Discovering one's identity is a natural and healthy part of growth, but today many are trying to form their identity based on a virtual world of fantasy.

- Read over last week's journal entry. Reflect on your answers to the fundamental worldview questions.

- Consider the question "Who am I?" Looking back over your notes from this week's lesson, answer the question of identity for yourself. You may use the outline in the notes as a guide but try to personalize your answer. Who are you? What is your identity?

- Compare and contrast what you wrote with what you typically enjoy viewing on social media.

Sources:

Bridges, Jerry. *Who Am I? Identity in Christ*. Adelphi, MD: Cruciform Press, 2012.

Kinnaman, David, Mark Matlock, and Aly Hawkins. *Faith for Exiles: 5 Ways for a New Generation to Follow Jesus in Digital Babylon.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2019.

Shaping Worldviews
Lesson 3: Strengthening My Discernment

Participation in a Christian Community leads to Stronger Cultural Discernment.

I.   Learning to _____ Like a Christian

a.   _____ in Grace and Knowledge.

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Pe 3:18)

b.   Love the Lord with all your _____.

Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. [30]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.' [31] The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:29-31)

The Heart is the control center of our affections.

The Soul is the center of our self-conscious life.

Strength refers to physical action.

Our Mind is the center of our ability to think and reason.

c.   The lost art of _____ thinking

II.   The Internet is Filtered _____

III.   The Pursuit of _____

[16] How much better to get wisdom than gold!
To get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver.
[17] The highway of the upright turns aside from evil;
whoever guards his way preserves his life. (Proverbs 16:16–17)

a.   Insulate, don't _____

"For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12)

b.   Know and believe the _____

[24] And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, [25] not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. (Heb 10:24–25)

c. _____ in unity with other believers

We grow best in a loving family.

The local church is the place that God has designed and designated for us to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Application & Journaling

In at least one paragraph, describe your experience in church and small group.

Reflect on your involvement in church:

- How important is it for you to be involved in church community (large group gatherings, small group gatherings)?

- How does time spent in church community affect your relationship with the Lord and with others?

- How does time spent in church community affect your relationship with social media?

- Compare and contrast what you wrote with what you typically enjoy viewing on social media.

Sources:

Kinnaman, David, Mark Matlock, and Aly Hawkins. *Faith for Exiles: 5 Ways for a New Generation to Follow Jesus in Digital Babylon.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2019.

Lehner, Ulrich L. *Think Better: Unlocking the Power of Reason.* 1st ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021.

Wiersbe, Warren W. *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Vol. 2. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996.

Shaping Worldviews
Lesson 4: Building Meaningful Relationships

I.   Isolation Leads to _____

   a. Meaningful relationships are _____

   b. _____ keep us from having meaningful relationships

   "Screens demand our attention. Screens disciple." – *Dan Kinnaman, Faith for Exiles*

   c. Loneliness leads us to question our _____.

II.   Isolation Leads to _____

   a. Younger generations tend to mistrust _____generations.

   b. Younger generations tend to mistrust the _____as an organization.

   c. Younger generations tend to mistrust _____.

III.   Overcome Isolation by Developing _____ Relationships

   a. Spend time with those you want to _____.

   "The church should be the best example of what God can do with human community."

   Dan Kinnaman, Faith for Exiles

   1 Thessalonians 5:14
   And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.

   Admonish the idle -

   Encourage the fainthearted - **Help** the weak -

   Be patient with them all –

   A mentor is someone who has had life experiences that others may not have had. They are someone who can instruct those who are out of line, encourage those who feel like quitting, and hold up those who are too weak to stand on their own.

   b. Be _____ about who you want to become.

    c. Find a _____

A mentor is someone who can shape you, speak into your life, and help you develop your gifts.

"Building meaningful relationships means being devoted to fellow believers we want to be around and become."

<u>Application & Journaling</u>

In at least one paragraph, describe your experience with your mentor.

- Review past journal entries. Reflect on your answers as you consider your mentor meeting.

- Take notes – try to include insights and wisdom you picked up from your mentor meeting in your journal.

- How much time did you spend with your mentor? What was it like? Were you nervous? What were your expectations going in?

- How important is it for people of your generation to build relationships with people from older generations? Did you pick up any words of wisdom or insight that might help shape your worldview?

- Compare and contrast what you wrote with what you typically enjoy viewing on social media.

Shaping Worldviews
Lesson 5: Discovering My Purpose and Calling

I.   Know God's _____for Your Life

One's purpose has to do with how they think about and plan for what they do with their lives.

According to the Westminster Shorter Catechism

"Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever."

"So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." (1 Corinthians 10:31)

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasure on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal." (Matthew 6:19–20)

Genesis 2:15 tells us that "The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it."

As image-bearers of God, our purpose is to:

- o bring order (STEM careers)
- o cultivate beauty (creative careers)
- o generate abundance (entrepreneurial careers)

II.   Find God's _____ on Your Life

a. Know your purpose.

b. Learn to view your gifts and passions as part of God's calling.

c. Learn how the Bible applies to your field or interest area.

d. Learn how to better be able to live out your faith in the workplace.

"Let the thief no longer steal, but rather **let him labor**, **doing honest work** with his own hands, so that he may have something to **share with anyone in need**." (Ephesians 4:28)

III.   Where Purpose and Calling Collide

a. Faith and work are inseparable.

b. Help others discover who God made them to be.

c.   We are not just a consumer but a creator.

d.   Feel confident about the future because we know God will provide.

"Seek first the kingdom of God and all the rest will be added to you (Matt. 6:33).

Application & Journaling

In at least one paragraph, describe your purpose and your calling.

- Review past journal entries. Reflect on your answers as you consider your purpose and calling.

- In your own words, what is your purpose in life?

- What are the gifts and passions that God has given to you that might be indicators of God's calling on your life?

- How do you define success?

- Compare and contrast your understanding of success with what you typically enjoy viewing on social media.

Shaping Worldviews
Lesson 6: Living Out My Mission

A biblical Christian worldview is shaped by transforming your mind, discovering your identity, strengthening your discernment, and building meaningful relationships. As you discover your purpose and your calling, you will be better equipped to live out your mission.

I.   From _____-centered to _____-centered

      The world defines success as the accomplishment of an aim or purpose; the attainment of fame, wealth, or social status.

      The Bible defines **success** as "consistent obedience to God—in thoughts, words, and actions."

      "One only believes what one is willing to apply to daily living." *(Dr. J. Allen Blair)*

II.   Overcome _____

      Entitlement is "the belief that one is inherently deserving of privileges or special treatment."

III.   Countercultural _____

      a. Everyone Worships _____

          Idolatry is worshiping something that a human has made instead of worshiping the God who made humans.

          Romans 1:21-25 -

      b. Worship Requires _____

      c. Obedience is the Result of _____

          Daniel 3:16-18 –

          Living out your mission happens when your worldview, your identity in Christ, your ability to discern, your meaningful relationships, and your purpose and calling come together, and are lived out in your daily life.

Application & Journaling

Identify one way that you can **intentionally** engage the culture. Maybe this is something you've already done, or something you've already been thinking about. How can you take a stand and obediently follow God in a culture that stands in opposition to Christianity?

- Review past journal entries. Reflect on your answers as you consider your mission.

- In your own words, what is **countercultural mission** and why does it matter?

- Describe how you chose to intentionally engage the culture. Did you take action? Why or why not?

- Compare and contrast **countercultural mission** with what you typically enjoy viewing on social media.

APPENDIX K

MENTOR EQUIPPING LETTER

Dear (*Mentor Name*),

Thank you for agreeing to be a part of my research project as a mentor. Your time is valuable, and I pray God uses your interaction with your mentee in a way that is positive for both of you. A mentor is an individual who is spiritually mature, humble, soft-spoken, and willing to guide young mentees by sharing their life experiences with them. Mentors for this research project are asked to meet with you at least once. The meeting should be informal. The goal is relationship building. In the process of getting to know each other, take every opportunity to answer the mentee's questions thoughtfully and honestly. These meetings will take place sometime during the week of February 19-23.

Young people face a world of technology that delivers information at a rate far beyond what you could have imagined when you were their age. This is not wrong or right, but they must learn to manage this aspect of their lives. The hope is that in building a relationship with a more experienced and wiser mentor, these students will see the value in that relationship and be more willing to talk to someone rather than seek the wisdom of the world found on social media.

As you meet with your mentee, remember to be encouraging, not condemning. You may not agree with the way the technological age is progressing, but this is the world they have grown up in. Thank you for being willing to take the time to pour into the lives of this up-and-coming generation. I pray God uses you in a meaningful way, and that you also will be encouraged and blessed through your meetings with your mentee.

Pastor Geoffrey Janes

APPENDIX L

MENTOR MEETING CONVERSATION STARTERS

These questions are intended to aid student participants in starting and carrying out a conversation with their assigned mentor. The hope is that by providing these questions, some of the initial awkwardness will be removed, allowing both the mentor and the mentee to make the most of their time together.

After introductions, consider asking questions along these lines. You don't have to use them all, but you can as time allows.

- Where did you grow up?
- Tell me about your family.
- What was it like growing up in your family environment?
- Tell me about your salvation experience.
- What was your biggest struggle as a teenager?
- If you could change one thing about your teen years what would that be?
- How do you feel about the advancements in technology?
- Are you on social media? Why / why not?
- How would you define your worldview?
- Did you ever struggle with your identity? How / Why?
- Do you think social media is helpful or harmful to my generation?
- How do you manage the influence that the culture has on you?
- What advice would you give someone my age when it comes to managing the influences of the culture?
- How would you define your purpose in life?
- Now that you can look back on your life, what is one thing you would do differently if you were my age again? Why?

APPENDIX M

FINAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: _____

Instructions:
Thank you for taking the time to respond to these questions. Please take your time and reflect on each question. This is not a test and will not be graded. Treat this as a personal time of reflection. Consider thoughtfully each of the following questions as you answer. Your responses will remain confidential. Please answer as honestly as you can.

Feedback

1. This series of lessons was helpful to me personally (circle one).

   Strongly disagree   Disagree   Not Sure   Agree   Strongly Agree

2. Briefly describe how this series of lessons helped you develop your understanding of worldviews.

3. As a result of these lessons, I am more aware of the influences that social media has on my worldview (circle one).

   Strongly disagree   Disagree   Not Sure   Agree   Strongly Agree

Worldview

4. Social media influences how one's worldview is shaped (circle one).

   Strongly disagree   Disagree   Not Sure   Agree   Strongly Agree

5. How does social media influence the way you think and behave?

6. How might one manage the influence social media has on their worldview?

Identity

7. Social media influences how one defines their identity (circle one).

   Strongly disagree   Disagree   Not Sure   Agree   Strongly Agree

8. How does social media influence your understanding of who you are?

9. How might one manage the influence social media has on their identity?

Church Community

10. Being involved in a church community affects the influence social media has on an individual's worldview (circle one).

   Strongly disagree   Disagree   Not Sure   Agree   Strongly Agree

11. How does regular involvement in a church community (worship services and small groups) affect the influence social media has on your worldview?

12. How might involvement in a church community help one manage the influence social media has on their worldview?

Relationship

13. Social media influences one's relationships with others.

   Strongly disagree   Disagree   Not Sure   Agree   Strongly Agree

14. One-on-one mentorship is important for developing one's worldview.

   Strongly disagree   Disagree   Not Sure   Agree   Strongly Agree

15. How might an intentional mentor relationship help manage the influence social media has on one's worldview?

Purpose and Calling

16. Social media influences how one understands their purpose and calling in life.

   Strongly disagree   Disagree   Not Sure   Agree   Strongly Agree

17. How does social media influence your understanding of your purpose and calling in life?

18. How might one manage the influence social media has on one's understanding of their purpose and calling in life?

Mission

19. Social media influences how one chooses to live life daily.

   Strongly disagree   Disagree   Not Sure   Agree   Strongly Agree

20. How does social media influence how you live your life each day?

21. How might one manage the influence social media has on how they live their life daily?

APPENDIX N

FINAL FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

These questions are prompts that serve as discussion starters. The researcher may or may not use all of them. The use of these questions will be largely determined by the direction of the focus group discussion.

Worldview Questions (Open-ended discussion starters)

How does social media use influence how worldviews are shaped?

How can young Christians like you manage the influence social media has on your worldview?

Identity

How does social media influence how one views their identity?

How can young Christians like you manage the influence social media has on your identity?

Discernment

How does social media influence a person's ability to discern?

How can young Christians like you manage the influence social media has on your ability to discern?

Relationship

How does social media influence the relationships an individual has?

Talk about your mentor experience. What are some of your takeaways from that meeting?

Have your mentor meetings influenced your view and/or use of social media?

Purpose

How does social media influence a person's understanding of their purpose and calling?

How can young Christians like you manage the influence of social media has on how you view your purpose and calling?

Mission

How well do you think the culture aligns with a biblical Christian worldview?

How does social media influence how one interacts with the culture?

What is countercultural mission? Does it matter?

How can young Christians like you manage the influence social media has on how you interact with the culture?

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IRB APPROVAL LETTER

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

November 16, 2023

Geoffrey Janes
Reginald Weems

Re: IRB Application - IRB-FY23-24-811 Shaping Worldviews: Helping High School Seniors Overcome the Influence of Social Media

Dear Geoffrey Janes and Reginald Weems,

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 project is not considered human subjects research because 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.

For a PDF of your IRB letter, click on your study number in the My Studies card on your Cayuse dashboard. Next, click the Submissions bar beside the Study Details bar on the Study Details page. Finally, click Initial under Submission Type and choose the Letters tab toward the bottom of the Submission Details page.

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