SPIRITUAL VITALITY OF ASSEMBLIES OF GOD POST-HIGH SCHOOL YOUNG ADULTS

By

Stephen James Pulis

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ProQuest LLC.
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 - 1346

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to develop the components of a theory for retention of young people after their high school years by examining the factors that contribute to continued spiritual vitality in Assemblies of God (AG) post-high school young adults. Data was collected from a stratified sample of ninety-five young adults in the United States during their senior year of high school in 2011 and two years later in 2013. In line with research by the Fuller Youth Institute (FYI), continued spiritual vitality was operationalized by using the Religious Behavior Scale, the Religious Identity Scale, and the Risk Behavior Scale. The results identified nine elements from spiritual formation factors, social considerations, and high school youth group experiences that produced fourteen statistically significant correlations with higher levels of retention and spiritual vitality in the sample two years after leaving school. This research appears to suggest that it is the aggregated effect of intentional youth group experiences providing opportunity for the internalized guidance of the Holy Spirit, recognized as God's work, and not specific youth group programs or religious activities that have the potential to create a unique spiritual journey that would ensure spiritual vitality for the youth after they leave high school.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACMR	All Church Ministries Report
AG	Assemblies of God
AGYS	Assemblies of God Youth Study
AGYSW1	AGYS Wave One
AGYSW3	AGYS Wave Three
BGCA	The Boys and Girls Clubs of America
CBC	Central Bible College
CTP	College Transition Project
CTP2W1	CTP2 Wave One Questionnaire
DYD	Assemblies of God District Youth Director
FYI	Fuller Youth Institute
MLE	Mediated Learning Experiences
NSYR	National Study of Youth and Religion

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Perhaps no issue in the last ten years of youth ministry is of greater significance than the retention rate of post-high school young adults. Several have asked how many youth walk away from their faith when they graduate from high school. Shock value alarmism sells, so if authors and speakers can create a crisis with inadequately researched statistics, then their solutions can show up in books or conferences. The overuse of retention-rate clichés dominates some areas of youth ministry, but does not negate the fact that some young adults do choose to leave their faith in Jesus Christ.

I was Shelly's[1] youth pastor. She was an all-star Christian in High School. She attended all the discipleship programs. Her friends became followers of Jesus because of her witness. If the youth group voted for "youth ministry student of the year" or "graduate most likely to succeed in God's Kingdom," she would have won. Six months after graduation, Shelly was not in church and refused to talk to me. Many churches and youth leaders share related experiences. The debate over how many young adults leave the church has consumed a lot of time and energy. Perhaps a more helpful approach would be to focus the churches' resources on what helps young adults continue to grow

[1]Name changed for confidentiality reasons.

in the faith after high school. This chapter provides an overview of the various elements of the problem related to the spiritual vitality in AG post-high school young adults.

Background

I grew up in an AG church. My experience included extensive involvement in youth ministry as a teenager. God called me to missions during my first semester at Central Bible College (CBC) in 1986. Shortly thereafter, I served as a volunteer youth pastor over the summer break in 1987. At the time, I did not realize this was the beginning of a marriage between missions and youth ministry in my life. This experience also marked the beginning of my participation as a youth leader in the AG. Missions continued to direct my education and ministry experience. I was accepted as part of a church planting team in northern New Jersey and focused on starting a youth ministry while still a college student. Upon graduating with a bachelor's of arts in missions, I returned to New Jersey to help start another youth ministry in a different church plant.

Over the next few years, I served as youth pastor in three churches, two in Missouri and one in Texas. During this time, I married Melissa. My wife and I considered a world missions appointment with the AG, focusing on youth, but never sensed God's confirmation. We continued in youth ministry until God's timing revealed a newly created missions appointment to the schools and students in the United States. God's initial calling to missions and the opportunity of youth ministry united in my new role as Youth Alive Missionary. My wife and I were among the seven originally commissioned Youth Alive missionaries in 1998. I began as the missionary to Southern Missouri. In 1999, I started teaching youth ministry courses at Central Bible College (CBC) and provided leadership to youth ministry majors as the Program Coordinator.

I have served as part of the Assemblies of God (AG) national office since 2002. I served as the Student Outreach and Youth Alive Director from 2008 through 2013, while continuing as a Youth Alive missionary. My calling and ministry focus on helping leaders make disciples who make disciples. I developed working relationships with AG national ministries, such as Discipleship, Higher Education, Chi Alpha, Young Adults, and Youth Ministry, which further contributed to my preparation for this research. My current role connects me with the AG youth ministry network of Regional Youth Representatives, District Youth Directors, and local churches.

Research on Church Youth Discipleship

Discipleship research can inform the church and youth leaders on spiritual vitality in post-high school young adults. This section presents the findings from a sampling of studies on this topic and the need for AG representation in similar youth studies.

Results of Discipleship Studies

Willow Creek Community Church, a mega church in South Barrington, Illinois, performed a study of the churches' effectiveness at creating disciples. A summary of staff members Greg Hawkins, Cally Parkinson, and consumer research advisor Eric Arnson's findings on discipleship states, "A spiritual migration path exists, but it is not defined by a person's church involvement. Instead, it is defined by a person's relationship with Jesus Christ … Meeting the need for connection and genuine spiritual relationships is crucial to spiritual growth. Yet organized efforts to create these environments appear to be effective only in the earlier stages of spiritual growth" (Hawkins et al. 2007, 57). In different research, Kara Powell (2011a, 23, 93, 101) found in the *Sticky Faith* study that relationships with parents and a church are contributing factors in the spiritual vitality of

young people. The church can help facilitate a relationship with Christ and fellow Christians, but involvement in church events or activities do not necessarily define a spiritually growing person.

Christian Smith (2009, 211) found no simple solution for spiritual vitality in the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR). Specific religious experiences do not guarantee spiritual growth. Instead, a combination of the several factors prove most important to spiritual growth including the following: individual prayer, influence of parents, personally embraced faith, core beliefs versus doubts, and religious experiences (Smith 2009, 211). For most emerging adults, a decrease in public faith practices indicates a decrease in private, personal faith (Smith 2009, 256).

The Exemplary Youth Ministry study, coordinated by Luther Seminary under the direction of Roland Martinson and completed in 2003, found nine common denominators in each of its exemplary youth ministries. One finding that impacts this study reveals intentional congregations "custom-designed, innovative ways to address the particular needs of youth, their families, and the congregation" (Martinson, Black, and Roberto 2010, 16). Specific models do not inherently bring success; however, these youth ministries develop contextualized approaches. The study also identified these three faith assets: "life within the family, parental faith influence, and faith practices at home" (Martinson, Black, and Roberto 2010, 173). Important relational factors consist of the church equipping parents to nurture faith at home, fostering parent-youth relationships through youth activities, and the longevity of adult leaders in the youth group (Martinson, Black, and Roberto 2010, 173, 213). The Ecumenical Study of Lifelong Faith Formation reported in 2009 on findings from seven different denominations. The research

emphasizes relational community, cross-generational experiences, and the role of the home as part of lifelong faith formation (Center for Ministry Development 2009).

Some of the research available concentrates on the role of the youth leaders. Churches can train youth leaders to relate to youth in long-term relationship. Brian Kirk and Jacob Thorne (2011, 108) propose eliminating the word volunteer in youth ministry in favor of an upgrade of the term to "spiritual mentor." They feel the significance of the role should reflect a "fellow traveler" who leads less and walks with the youth more. Andrew Root affirms the role of relational ministry. He sees youth ministry as more than just influencing the leaders and hoping for a trickle-down effect on the larger student population. Relational youth leaders live life, the positive and negative, the victories and the suffering, of middle and high school life alongside the students. As these adolescents develop their sense of identity, the youth group experiences can serve as a mirror, reflecting back what being means to a follower of Jesus (Root 2007 and 2009). Providing a place to explore the difficulties of life and reflect on the way Jesus' difficulties shaped his life and mission can help guide students through this phase of development.

Smith (2009) found religious change in emerging adults, but did not find a large overall decline, or dropout rate, in religious faith. Stetzer (2013)affirms that Smith's assertion about emerging adults not leaving the church also applies to the entire Church in the United States, "No serious researcher believes Christianity in America is dying. Not one". Mark Chaves (2011, 11) further challenges the high dropout rate, "It should make us skeptical when we hear that American religion is changing dramatically or suddenly."

Some youth do leave the faith, but not the large number often misquoted. Catholics and mainline Protestants are the churches that most commonly experience decline (Smith 2009). Pew Research, in 2008 under the direction of Luis Lugo, found helpful reasons showing why young people say they left the faith. "Former Protestants who are now unaffiliated are less likely to have regularly attended worship services as a child and even less likely to have attended regularly as a teenager. They also are much less likely to report having attended Sunday school or having had very strong religious faith as a child or a teenager" (Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life 2009, 4).

Relationships—especially those with parents, a church, and home religious environments—play an important role in spiritual vitality. The research appears to indicate that church experiences play a role, although no specific methods or youth group experience appear directly related to spiritual development (Hawkins et. al 2007; Martinson, Black, and Roberto 2010; Smith 2009). The limitations of existing studies, such as the particular group surveyed, can also restrict the application of the research conclusions. The Hemorrhaging Faith's ecumenical study in 2011 found that indigenous cultural factors influence Canadian adolescents differently than indigenous cultural factors influence adolescents in the United States (Penner et al. 2012). Findings from the studies that focus on different cultural settings or specific denominations limit their application and do not necessarily apply to the AG (Nappa 2012; Penner et al. 2012; Shields 2008; Center for Ministry Development 2009).

Assemblies of God Involvement

Many discipleship research studies do not include the AG. The *Reveal* study focused on one specific church, Willow Creek Community Church, and its effectiveness

in making disciples. Due to the nature of that study, the AG was not included. Fuller Youth Institute collected research from a six-year study through the College Transition Project, resulting in the *Sticky Faith* movement. The AG was not included in this research either. Only two out of 230 (.87 percent) of the participants in The National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR) were AG (Smith 2009, 319).

The Jesus Survey: What Christian Teens Really Believe and Why surveyed 845 teenagers, but none were AG (Nappa 2012, xxii). A recent survey by Canadian Evangelical churches did not include any individual from the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC), an AG organization, in their 2,049 participants (Penner et al. 2012). An ecumenical study on lifelong faith formation did not include the AG in its qualitative study of churches in seven denominations (Center for Ministry Development 2009, 3). The AG, however, was represented as one of the seven churches from different denominations in *The Spirit and Culture of Youth Ministry: Leading Congregations Toward Exemplary Youth Ministry* (Martinson, Black, and Roberto 2010). Overall, many studies do not include the AG because of a limited focus to a single denomination or because they focus on those churches where interest or existing networks of relationship provide the best opportunity for study. Yet, the AG in the United States has grown every year since 1990 and the fellowship had 3,095,717 United States adherents and 66,383,778 worldwide adherents in 2012, making it the largest Pentecostal group in the world (Pinsky 2013; "Statistics of Assemblies of God (USA)" 2013).

The exclusion of AG involvement in many discipleship studies raises the question of how AG inclusion might change the results. Would the AG emphasis on the interaction of the Holy Spirit in an individual's life make a difference? Does the primacy

of summer youth camp focus as an AG youth group experience make a difference? Does the primacy of international ministry involvement such as missions' trips and learning to give to missions make a difference? Do youth group experiences specific to the AG make a difference? None of the studies answer these questions about AG youth ministries. These and other questions specific to AG religious culture and emphasis need to be explored to investigate AG post-high school young adults' spiritual vitality. There is a deficit in the current research and a need exists to study the factors that contribute to continued spiritual vitality in Assemblies of God post-high school young adults.

Research on Church Youth Retention

Discipleship studies seek to determine the factors that help shape a Christian into the image of Christ through his or her spiritual journey. Some studies also measure the number of emerging adults who continue in the faith after high school. The retention rate of post-high school young adults can provide helpful information, but can also distract from the focus of continued spiritual vitality through inappropriate or inadequate research methodologies. The following overview focuses on the inadequate research used in some of the most commonly repeated statistics and the lack of AG involvement in many of these studies.

Evaluation of Current Retention Studies

The methodologies of some youth retention studies limit the generalization of their research. This section reviews some of these methodological flaws, including inadequate sampling techniques, inappropriate generalization of findings, and inappropriate operationalization of variables used in some of the retention rate survey statistics. In the case of retention rate studies, the questions asked often refer to

experiences that occurred years earlier and at a younger age. This methodology is referred to as retrospective dominant memory. An individual's perspective and memory can vilify or glamorize responses and thus skew research results. The researchers for the Hemorrhaging Faith study acknowledge the weakness of this methodology, "We are dealing with what young adults remember, which is not necessarily the same as their actual affiliation or attendance at religious services. Affiliation and attendance could also have changed over the course of their childhood and teenage years. The answers given are their dominant memory or the synthesis of those memories" (Penner et al. 2012, 21).

One of the ways researchers have overcome the deficiency of retrospective dominant memory is to develop longitudinal studies to investigate the religious behavior of young adults over an extended period. The National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR) offers a longitudinal look at emerging adults' religious beliefs and practices. Christian Smith (2009, 212, 283), who directs the NSYR survey, concludes "most emerging adults tend not to change religiously, many tend to decline, and a few tend to increase religiously."

Retention studies can suffer from methodological mistakes through inadequate sampling techniques. James Brandon Shields (2009, 102, 103) concludes the most popular statistics of post-high school young adult dropout rates are either "flawed or incomplete" or "misleading and inconclusive." Shields traces an early 1990s statistic of a 90 percent dropout rate of post-high school young adults to Jay Strack.

> In a personal interview with Jay Strack, he stated that his contribution to the dropout number came out of a gathering of denominational leaders, parachurch workers, and youth pastors. He asked these ministers to give their 'gut feeling' on how many kids they were losing after high school graduation. He specifically stated that he never intended for this observation to be used as a published statistic (Renfro 2009, 104).

Another popular statistic asserting that evangelical families lose 88 percent of their children from church after high school comes from The Southern Baptist Convention's Council on Family Life (Pipes 1999, 124). Shields finds "the percentage was based on the experiences and recollections of a couple of youth ministry veterans, Jerry Pipes and Victor Lee" (Renfro 2009, 103). This is clearly a non-representative sample. T. C. Pinckney's (2007) report to the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee of a 70 percent dropout rate also fails to cite any empirical research to substantiate their claims. Anecdotal evidence can create a faulty foundation and result in misguided rationale for discipleship practices.

Another issue in retention studies arises from inappropriate generalization of findings. Thom Rainer's (1997) assertion that only four percent of the Bridger generation were born again Christians provides an example. In "Evangelicals Behaving Badly with Statistics," Smith (2007) points out Rainer's mistake of generalizing a small, informal survey result to a wider national audience. Ed Stetzer points out the overall misuse of statistics on this subject in his "Curing Christians' Stats Abuse: The Statistics We Most Love to Repeat May be Leading us to Make Bad Choices about the Church." He also makes the point that Rainer and the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board "accurately reported their methods and conclusions, but the research took on a life of its own" (Stetzer 2010). The widely repeated, although out of context, result of this informal survey in the mid-1990s illustrates the misuse of research by those other than the researcher.

Retention rate study researchers also need to appropriately operationalize the variables used in their research. What specifically constitutes "previous involvement in a

church" during the high school years? Conclusions based on twenty-five surveys from across the United States indicate, "The most potent data regarding disengagement is that a majority of twentysomethings—61percent of today's young adults—had been churched at one point during their teen years (attended at least 2 months) but they are now spiritually disengaged (i.e., not actively attending church, reading the Bible, or praying)" (The Barna Group 2006). The Barna report, however, operationalizes their conception of engagement as only two months of church attendance at an earlier age. Many churches would categorize two months of church attendance by a young person as initial interest in the church, or possibly as an example of someone exploring the faith at best, but it would not be construed as a life commitment.

Lifeway Research (2007)reports "70 percent of young adults ages 23-30 stopped attending church regularly for at least a year between ages 18-22." They operationalize the variable of attendance as attending a Protestant church regularly twice a month for at least one year. This is a better starting point than examining attendance of those who were involved for only two months. Neither Lifeway Research nor the Barna Group define commitment as an active faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord, or a commitment to a discipleship journey where the Holy Spirit shapes the young person into the image of Christ. Both studies use a low attendance rate in the operationalization of their measurement. Both use retrospective dominant memory as a primary research tool. Both combine responses from multiple church traditions, including mainline or liberal with evangelical and conservative, in one set of results. Different structures for faith development and different belief systems are combined into one statistic. These differences could significantly affect the results.

Similarly David Kinnamon (2011, 23), owner of the Barna Group and author of the book *You Lost Me*, finds "59 percent of young people with a Christian background report that they had or have 'dropped out of attending church, after going regularly.'" Not attending church does not constitute leaving the faith. This 59 percent decreases to 11 percent who actually leave the faith and deconvert from Christianity (Kinnaman 2011, 70). The Pew Research Center's report on the Millennial generation states, "nearly one-in-five adults under age 30 (18 percent) say they were raised in a religion but are now unaffiliated with any particular faith" (Taylor and Keeter 2010, 88).

James Shields finds 88 percent of young adults in the Southern Baptist mega churches he studied remain actively involved in church after having active involvement in a youth group. Churches that successfully retain students have the following common factors: tenured youth pastor of at least five years at the church, conservative and evangelical beliefs, and an emphasis on evangelism and discipleship necessitating a specific and organized approach (Shields 2008). Kinnaman's 11 percent who deconvert, Pew Research's 18 percent who unaffiliate, and Shields' 12 percent who do not remain actively involved strike a sharp contrast to many of the previously referenced retention statistics of post-high school young adults.

Retention rates studies of youth maintaining their faith after high school reveal significant research deficits. The operationalization of concepts such as whether a study measures attendance to a church event, or the Holy Spirit shaping committed followers into the image of Christ, would also affect not only the capacity to compare findings, but also the potential application of the research. Retention study methodologies suffer from inadequate sampling techniques, inappropriate generalization of findings, and

inappropriate operationalization of variables as previously described. The hope of potential financial gains from book sales, or of filling conferences to provide a solution could have caused the publication and promotion of skewed research results. Such research, however, does not contribute to the development of understanding the factors that contribute to youth retention for the kingdom of God after they leave high school.

When analyzing controversial data, the most important question is "How does youth ministry make more Christ-like disciples?" No matter the retention rate, high or low, youth ministry can improve. As Kinnamon advises, "A new standard for viable youth ministry should be—not the number of attenders, the sophistication of the events, or the 'cool' factor of the youth group—but whether teens have the commitment, passion and resources to pursue Christ intentionally and whole-heartedly after they leave the youth ministry nest" (The Barna Group 2006). The Church can continue to improve in helping post-high school young adults continue to grow in the faith.

AG Involvement

Just as in the studies of discipleship factors, retention rate studies do not always include the AG. Kinnaman (2011) conducted his research for *You Lost Me* based on a random sampling, but he provided no specific denominational affiliation data. The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life (2009)published *Faith in Flux*, which included several denominations but omitted the AG. Likewise, *Millennials: Confident, Connected, Open to Change*, published by the Pew Research Center, did not include subjects from the AG (Taylor and Keeter 2010). Studies of other denomination's retention rates, often credited to varied traditions, practices, and discipleship factors, may not be generalizable to organizations with different theological views or practices such as the AG. There is a

deficit in the current research and a need exists to study the factors that contribute to continued spiritual vitality in Assemblies of God post-high school young adults.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to develop the components of a theory for faith retention of young people after their high school years by examining the factors that contribute to continued spiritual vitality in Assemblies of God post-high school young adults.

Problem Statement

The problem to be explored in this study is to define the factors that contribute to continued spiritual vitality in AG post-high school young adults. Present research on youth retention after high school is deficient in its ability to address the issue within the AG. The research suffers from deficits in appropriate research designs and also largely excludes young people who were members of the AG.

Research Questions

This dissertation seeks answers to the following four research questions. Chapter two considers research question one, chapters three through seven each address research questions two, three, and four, while chapter four and seven also include research question one.

1. What biblical theological characteristics shape continued spiritual vitality that could facilitate retention in AG post-high school young adults?
2. What spiritual formation factors contribute to continued spiritual vitality and could facilitate retention in AG post-high school young adults?

3. What social considerations contribute to continued spiritual vitality and could facilitate retention in AG post-high school young adults?
4. What youth group experiences contribute to continued spiritual vitality and could facilitate retention in AG post-high school young adults?

Significance of the Study

This study will be significant in the following ways:

1. This study will assist in the fulfillment of the calling God has placed on my life and in the actualization of my ministerial commitments. These include serving the Assemblies of God national office, formulating an outcome-based discipleship strategy, educating future youth pastors, preparing local church leaders, and empowering Christian teenagers for missional living. The tools I acquire during this study will facilitate my future teaching and training endeavors.
2. The principles that emerge from the study will provide not only the AG USA with theological and practical guidelines for the spiritual vitality of post-high school young adults, but will also contribute to the void in research available for the wider Pentecostal movement which is often omitted from such studies. The benefits of empirically-based knowledge will positively affect ministry models. Findings from such research could potentially shift or strengthen existing youth ministry philosophy and programming applications within the AG and in the wider Pentecostal movement.
3. This research will benefit intercultural studies through the development of factors affecting the spiritual vitality of United States teens. Principles relative to teen

spiritual development and retention could help other cultures to further investigate this phenomenon in their context.

Limitations and Delimitations

This is a longitudinal study of AG post-high school retention and was conducted through a stratified sampling in the United States. The instruments designed in the Fuller Youth Institute's College Transition Project were adapted to AG high school seniors in the spring of 2011, with longitudinal follow up for the next two years through 2013. Although many factors may affect continued spiritual vitality, this study will be limited to spiritual formation factors, social considerations, and youth group experiences as measured through the questionnaires and topics from the Fuller College Transition Project. This study is limited to the AG in the United States, even though spiritual vitality remains an issue across the youth ministry spectrum.

Definitions

The following terms and definitions will be used in this study:

Adolescence: The developmental period of transition from childhood to early adulthood, entered at approximately 10 to 12 years of age and ending at 18 to 21 years of age.

Assemblies of God: A Pentecostal denomination formed in the United States in 1914 as a cooperative fellowship of ministers and congregations for the purpose of doctrinal integrity and missional activity.

Assemblies of God Districts: Districts can follow state boundaries, other geographical boundaries, or are set according to specific language groups to provide ecclesiastical leadership for their churches and ministers.

Assemblies of God Youth Ministries: Programmed ministry for youth, officially designated as ages twelve to twenty-three. For the purpose of this study, youth refers to ages twelve through eighteen.

Baptism of the Holy Spirit or Speaking in Tongues: The Assemblies of God believes the initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is "speaking in tongues" as experienced on the Day of Pentecost and referenced throughout Acts and the Epistles.

Discipleship: The process of becoming like Jesus.

Pentecostalism: An evangelical charismatic reformation movement that traces its origins to the beginning of the twentieth century and emphasizes the "baptism in the Holy Spirit" as normative for all believers.

Post-high school young adults: The first two years immediately following high school.

Retention rate: The ratio of young adults continuing in their faith in Jesus Christ as compared to those who leave their faith.

Spiritual formation: The process where the Holy Spirit forms humans into the image of Christ.

Spiritual vitality: Progress in the spiritual journey of becoming more like Jesus measured in this study by the dependent variables: Religious Behavior Scale (Powell 2011a), Religious Identity Scale (Powell 2011a), Faith Maturity Scale (Benson, Donahue, and Erickson 1993), and Risk Behavior (Search Institute 2008). [2]

[2] The Religious Behavior scale and the Religious Identity Scale are from Kara Powell (Powell 2011a). The Risk Behavior is from the Search Institute (Search Institute 2008).

Youth Group Experience: Variety of activities church youth groups provide including religious services, small groups, and social activities.

Assumptions

By focusing on the factors of spiritual vitality in AG post-high school young adults, it is assumed that the role of the Church is to make disciples who continue in their faith. Additional assumptions include that young adults make the choice to continue growing in their faith in Jesus Christ and many factors affect this choice. Spiritual formation, social considerations, and youth group experiences are also assumed to have a determining role in the retention of post high school young adults. The research will determine the validity of these assumptions.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY AND SPIRITUAL VITALITY

Introduction

This chapter addresses the first research question and considers the biblical theological characteristics that shape continued spiritual vitality that could facilitate retention in AG post-high school young adults. It begins with a biblical theology of parents discipling children, followed by a biblical theology of discipleship, and ending with an overview of the journey motif to help understand the biblical theological characteristics shaping continued spiritual vitality that could facilitate retention in AG post-high school young adults. Many evangelicals in the United States increasingly supplant the concept of "the priesthood of all believers" with a desire for a professional clergy to assume the role of primary spiritual growth provider from the cradle to the grave. Parents check their children into excellent age appropriate programs at many churches and wait for their child to graduate high school expecting those teenagers to emerge as fully conformed to the image of Christ. Families spend little time growing in God together. Congregations pay pastors and church leaders and recruit volunteers to provide quality religious education. Many Christians, however, forget that church leadership should prepare God's people for works of service. The process of the body of Christ doing ministry should lead to building each other up, unity, and maturity (Ephesians 4:11-13).

God places a priority on the family. He communicates through the Bible, using the word picture and example of family, and revealing the plan and purpose for God's family (Drane 2000). The parental responsibility for the discipleship and passing on of spiritual heritage is seen primarily in the Old Testament at the foundation of Israel as a nation, and evidenced throughout their existence.

Biblical Theology of Parents Discipling Children

Pentateuch

God establishes the role of parents as primary disciplers of children in the Pentateuch. This section examines the life of Abraham in Genesis, the role of the Exodus, and the prime directive in Deuteronomy 6 for parental discipling of their children in the faith, a concept echoed throughout Scripture.

Genesis contains the story of beginnings. God begins with creation of the heavens and the earth, followed by the beginning of humanity and sin, the need for a Savior, and the beginning of God's redemptive plan. God blesses Abraham, who begins a family. This family becomes a nation, set apart for God, distinct from other nations. God tells His story through their experiences. God chooses Abraham, "so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him" (Gen. 18:19).[3]

God instructs Abraham to function as parent and teacher for his family and future generations. God uses recurring themes from Genesis 12:2-3 in Genesis 18:18 and19 to

[3] All Scripture citations, unless otherwise noted, are from the New International Version.

connect His covenant to His command for Abraham to teach his children. Abraham serves as the God-designed prototype parent as discipler. Abraham fulfills his assigned duty and later God reaffirms His covenant through Isaac. God tells Isaac "Abraham obeyed me and kept my requirements, my commands, my decrees and my laws" (26:5).

In Exodus, God provides the story of the deliverance of His people and an account for all generations of His power and salvation. The attempted killing of Hebrew baby boys in chapter one begins a story Claire R. Matthews McGinnis calls "Exodus as a 'text of terror' for children" (2008, 24). This terminology aptly describes the impact on the children who lived the Exodus events and the continuing effect on those to continue to hear the story of God's salvation plan for His people from Egypt. The account of the death of Egypt's firstborn sons creates opportunities for parents to share the way of the Lord.

When future generations ask about the plagues, God instructed parents to tell children and grandchildren, so they "may know that I am the LORD" (Exod. 10:2). In preparation for the Passover in Egypt, God instructed the Israelites to continue this ceremony as a lasting ordinance (Exod. 12:25-27). God explained this ceremony would spark questions from the children, provide a teaching moment for the parents, and remind everyone of what God had done for Israel (Exod. 12:25-27). The unleavened bread was an example to remind the father to explain God's provision, "I do this because of what the LORD did for me" (13:6-7).

William P. Brown states in *The Child in the Bible* that questions about the consecration of the firstborn to God (13:14-15) also bring the parents the opportunity to explain, "With a mighty hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, out of the land of

slavery. When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed every firstborn in Egypt, both man and animal. This is why I sacrifice to the LORD the first male offspring of every womb and redeem each of my firstborn sons" (William P. Brown 2008, 50-51). Natural questions prompt life lessons illustrating God's control of life and His sovereign rule over man's mightiest kingdoms. The Lord shows His people and Egypt, the most powerful nation on earth at that time, the insignificance of Pharaoh and all the other Egyptian gods when compared to Him, the great "I AM."

The Exodus story, through telling and explanation, serves as proactive instruction not just reactive boasting. Jewish parents, experiencing similar struggles in the future, realize the application focuses not only on lessons from the past, it also serves to remind generations to come that others may seek to destroy them (McGinnis 2008). This theme continues in Leviticus as the Feast of Tabernacles provides a teaching illustration about why God had the Israelites live in booths when he brought them out of Egypt (Lev. 23:42-43). Numbers provides reminders of God's commands for future generations through the tassels God adds to clothing (Num. 15:37-41). God's story and creative illustrations of plagues and Passover, unleavened bread and firstborn, tabernacles and tassels, provide a way for parents to teach God's covenant keeping promise and power to their children.

Moses, in Deuteronomy, teaches a new generation of wandering Israelites about God. Their parents died in the wilderness due to their lack of faith and trust in God. The next generation did not have a firsthand account of the original Passover and exodus. Moses reminded the people of God's covenant and provision, of God's law that set them apart, and of their obligation to serve only God. As Joshua took over leadership, Moses

wanted to encourage God's chosen people to reminisce and learn from the lessons their parents learned. "Sixteen times in Deuteronomy God told them to 'remember,' and nine times he said, 'don't forget.' If they were not careful, as time passed, these events would not be so fresh in their minds and their memory of them would slip" (Zuck 1996, 130).

Moses begins referencing the children in Deuteronomy 1:39 and ends in 32:46 directing Israel to ensure children know and follow the content of the book. He speaks and writes to teach the ways of the Lord. Deuteronomy serves not only to encourage families to teach, but also to provide the content of what parents should teach their children. Patrick Miller (2008, 50) states by utilizing the story examples from the Pentateuch, children will not only memorize commands, but, "They learn the story behind the rules."

Moses reviews God's covenant and the Ten Commandments in Deuteronomy 5, leading up to the *shema*, the Jewish daily prayer of faith, in Deuteronomy 6:4-9. "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" (6:4-5). This love forms the foundation for discipling children. To follow such a strong declaration immediately with the responsibility to teach it to children (6:7) emphasizes the importance of both the statement about God and the necessity to pass it down to future generations (6:2).

God emphasizes the teaching of His commands by instructing parents to "Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates" (Deut. 6:7-9). Varied learning methods mentioned in these verses multiply

the opportunities for application: impress and talk (6:7), tie and bind symbols (6:8), and write (6:9).

Location does not restrict the learning environment. Discipleship can happen at home, on the road, while sitting, walking, lying down, or getting up. God prompts His followers to seize every moment to impress and teach their children (6:7) (Christensen 2001). Moses instructions to place reminders on hands, foreheads, doorframes, and gates (6:8-9) provide multiple locations for Old Testament children to see and to remember. God wants His teaching to become part of the rhythm of life. Deuteronomy provides more than the command to train; it supplies the training methodology and the content. God provided all these strategies and tools so parents would teach Deuteronomy to their children so their children would never be far from God's words.

God places the responsibility of discipling their children and passing on the faith to them on the shoulders of the parents. Carl Nelson (2005, 18) points out this happens "through direct teaching (Deut. 6:6-7a), through conversation about events that happen in the home (6:7b), and through public display of their faith by belief statements on their arms and forehead, and signs on their houses (6:8-9)." He adds children develop religious beliefs as they develop language skills. "As children grow, their language, as well as their belief, about God is shaped and corrected by the religious community to which they belong and by direct instruction from their parents" (Nelson 2005, 18). Parents form the starting point for Christian formation. Deuteronomy 6 serves as a foundation for the Church to equip and empower parents to shape the disciple-making process.

Deuteronomy repeatedly reminds God's people that the learners must practice what they have learned and eventually teach their children what they were taught (Deut.

4:9-10, 6:7-9, 11:19, 31:13, 32:46). In Deuteronomy 6, God promises future generations long life (6:2), and blessing as a nation in the Promised Land (6:3) if they follow God's commands and pass them onto future generations. In chapter 11, God promises longevity as a nation (11:21) if God's people teach their children God's ways. As Deuteronomy comes to a close, Moses challenges the people one final time, "Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. They are not just idle words for you—they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess" (32:46-47). From the beginning (1:39) to the end of Deuteronomy, Moses looks to the next generation. "Deuteronomy as a whole offers a cohesive and persuasive argument for the importance of excellent and comprehensive faith formation within families and communities" (Miller 2008, 62). God uses Deuteronomy to highlight His thematic principle of the discipleship responsibility belonging to the parents.

Historical Books

The historical books build on the foundation laid in the Pentateuch entreating parents to teach their children about the Lord and how to serve him. Additional experiences add to the Exodus as teachable moments in the development of children. The book of Judges (17:6, 21:25) records what happens when the parents do not teach their children the lessons they learned.

The book of Joshua continues the idea, from the Pentateuch, of learning the story behind the law. When the Jordan River stopped flowing downstream and the whole nation crossed on dry land during flood stage, God created a teaching opportunity. In Joshua 4:1-9, God instructed one man from each of the twelve tribes to place one rock as

a monument to God's faithfulness in providing a way for the Israelites to cross the Jordan (4:21-24). He did this so when the children ask, "What do these stones mean?" the parents can tell the story of God's power at both the Jordan River and the Red Sea. God established a teachable moment so children could hear the story behind the need to respect and fear the Lord.

The Old Testament world did not accommodate official schools. When an opportunity presented itself, parents taught the practical lessons at hand (Packer and Tenney 1997, 455). Most education occurred informally within the routines of life. The realities centered more on the necessities of helping the family survive and make a living than on a designed educational curriculum. In the midst of this cultural reality, God instituted built-in, mini-learning modules that naturally and spontaneously connected everyday life to God. This life-long educational model informed children not only how to live in the immediate world around them, but how to live by God's law.

God's question and answer method provided teachable moments throughout the Israelite experience. The very means of worshipping God generated "why" questions concerning rituals, sacrifices, clothing worn by priests, temple objects, and even everyday items used in Israelite homes. As the Israelite community worshipped, children saw religious symbols that stimulated questions about their function and purpose. Parents answered the questions, passing on the teaching handed down from Moses and given by God. The Passover served as a primary example of the question and answer discipleship method for parents.

Other festivals and religious rituals created opportunities for children to ask questions, whether those rituals were celebrated in the home, with the larger community,

or as a nation. Children's attendance with parents at religious feasts and ceremonies sparked interest. Anticipation grew as children helped in the preparations for the festivals. Their growing interest fueled questions leading to applied lessons germinated in the soil of active learning. Festivals reinforced vital lessons from Israel's history.

The celebrations of the Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles were associated with the harvest. Throughout the biblical period, those festivals remained closely identified with the growing season. Such occasions became educational opportunities for children. They learned the Passover commemorated the deliverance of their ancestors from slavery in Egypt. At Pentecost, the Jewish people remembered God giving the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai. The Feast of Tabernacles, with its green booths made from tree branches, commemorated God's faithfulness to the Jews on their seemingly endless journey to the Promised Land (Perkin 1988, 658).

God designed life to originate questions that lead to Him. Parental education, through explanation, taught Hebrew children "how God had manifested Himself to them in the past, how they were to live in the present, and what God's promises were regarding the future of His people" (Culpepper 1979, 22). Instructing children through the history in the Bible teaches them not only about God, but also about His mission for the world and for each of His followers (Zuck 1996, 131).

God encourages children to ask questions. Each time a child asks "Why?" an opportunity presents itself. Curiosity breeds receptivity towards the answer. Context provides an ever-present classroom where learning takes God from the theoretical realm to the practical. The Bible shows parents how question and answer opportunities produce one of God's favored discipleship methods.

Tyndale's *Concise Bible Commentary* describes Israel's repeating loop of sin and renewal in the book of Judges as relapse, ruin, repentance, restoration, and rest, followed by a reiteration of relapse (Hughes 2001). Multiple issues caused this recurring performance, but the repeating pattern could have been prevented if parents had done a better job of teaching their children the lessons they themselves learned. If one generation successfully trains their children to faithfully continue the cycle of discipling in the ways of the Lord to future generations, then obedience to God could circumvent the cycle of sin. God's discipleship plan benefits His children.

Wisdom Literature

The wisdom literature provides examples of God's discipleship guidelines in action generations after the Pentateuch. Psalm 44 illustrates the success of God's discipleship plan. It begins, "We have heard with our ears, O God; our fathers have told us what you did in their days, in days long ago" (Ps. 44:1) In Psalm 71:14-16, the Psalmist declares hope and praises God for righteousness, salvation, and mighty acts. Verse 17 informs the audience how he gained this knowledge, "Since my youth, O God, you have taught me, and to this day I declare your marvelous deeds." The Psalmist does not stop with how he learned about God, but commits to continuing the reproductive process of discipling future generations. "Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your might to all who are to come" (Ps. 71:18).

Psalm 78 outlines God's discipleship plan yet again, "… what we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders

he has done" (Ps. 78:3-4). God established the law for Israel, "which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children" (78:5b-6). The results of this discipleship paradigm are "Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands" (78:7). The reaffirming of the ongoing discipleship process of parents and grandparents teaching their children introduces an example of this teaching. The writer spends the rest of the Psalm recounting lessons learned from the Exodus and the wilderness wandering, up to the choosing of David as the shepherd of God's people. Psalm 78 not only advocates God's model of parental responsibility for discipling children about God, but also illustrates what to teach and which stories to tell.

The book of Proverbs functions as a discipleship manual for parents guiding their children to fear the Lord. Proverbs states its purpose, "for attaining wisdom and discipline; for understanding words of insight; for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair; for giving prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young" (Prov. 1:2-4). The introduction to the book also states God's model of parents discipling children: "Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching" (Prov. 1:8). The student was addressed as "my son," "wise son," or "son" forty-three times (Prov. 1:8, 10, 15; 2:1; 3:1, 11, 21; 4:1, 10, 20; 5:1, 7, 20; 6:1, 3, 20; 7:1, 24; 8:32; 10:1, 5; 13:1, 24; 15:20; 17:2, 21, 25; 19:13, 18, 26, 27; 23:15, 19, 22 (implied), 24, 26; 24:13, 21; 27:11; 28:7; 29:17; 31:2). Community adults and other teachers may educate, but the primary responsibility for discipleship lies in familial involvement.

The introductory admonition of Proverbs 1:8 appears again in Proverbs 6:20. This time adding a direct tie to Deuteronomy 6:6-9, reminding and reinforcing the parental object lessons of "Bind them upon your heart forever; fasten them around your neck. When you walk, they will guide you; when you sleep, they will watch over you; when you awake, they will speak to you" (Prov. 6:21-22). Proverbs 4 serves as another example. The father explains to his sons how his father taught him as a child (Prov. 4:3-4). The father repeats the process. Again, God's model is reproduced. The proverb "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it" (Prov. 22:6) reinforces the advice this book provides concerning parenting. As God has taught His children Israel, the children become parents passing on the teaching to future generations (Strawn 2008, 133).

Roy Zuck (1996, 140) calls Proverbs, "a parental guidebook par excellence." He addresses how Proverbs explains the consequences for both right and wrong actions. Just as other parts of the Bible explain the story behind the law, proverbs often explains the reason behind the rules (Zuck 1996). Preparing children for life on their own brings the reality of gradually letting go and helping children learn to make their own decisions. Proverbs functions as a guide for the grown child transitioning into the community as an adult. In Proverbs 1-9, the father imparts the teaching and wisdom his sons need (Brown 2008, 80). The book concludes with the sayings of King Lemuel, taught to him by his mother (Prov. 31:1). The final instructions focus on what to look for in a "wife of noble character" (31:10). Proverbs follows the principle and moves from a lesson book for the student to a lesson plan for the teacher, as child becomes parent.

Prophetic Books

The Prophetic books provide examples of the ongoing discipling of children by parents. The foundation in the Pentateuch and Proverbs continues through the voice of God's messengers. Whether they brought a reminder of God's faithfulness, a call to repentance, or a foretelling of future events, God maintained the pattern of parents passing on instruction to their children. Isaiah 38 records King Hezekiah's praise to God after his illness and recovery, "Fathers tell their children about your (God's) faithfulness" (Isa. 38:19). The King affirms the role of parents as disciplers. Joel follows the parental teaching motif, but through an example of bad news when he reports the invasion of locusts, "Tell it to your children, and let your children tell it to their children, and their children to the next generation" (Joel 1:3).

The Old Testament concludes with God's instruction recorded in Malachi to "Remember the law of my servant Moses, the decrees and laws I gave him at Horeb for all Israel" (Mal. 4:4). Afterward Malachi prophesies 400 years into the future, and speaks of the role of John the Baptist as the forerunner of Jesus (Mal. 4:5-6). Luke confirms John's purpose, "And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17). Not only do the prophets reinforce the role of parents as religious educators for their children, but also John the Baptist's role of preparing the people for the Messiah utilizes the father's role in the family.

New Testament

The Old Testament contains the primary content for the development of God's plan of parents as the primary discipler of children. "While the NT gives surprisingly little attention to the instruction of children, this instruction appears to have remained primarily the responsibility of the family, just as it was among the Jews" (Culpepper 1979, 27). The New Testament does bear witness to this model. When Jesus was asked about the greatest commandment (Matt. 22:37-38; Mark 12:29-30; Luke 10:27), He affirms the importance of Deuteronomy 6 when He references the Shema (Deut. 6:4-5).

Paul emphasizes Deuteronomy 6:7, 20-25 in Ephesians 6:4, "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." Margaret Macdonald (2008, 280) points out, "Though it has rarely been recognized as such, Ephesians 6:4 is the earliest expression in the New Testament of the education of children as a community priority." Timothy serves as a primary example and product of this discipleship motif. Paul thanks God (2 Tim. 1:3) for the sincere faith from both Timothy's grandmother Lois and mother Eunice that lives on in Timothy (1:5). Paul reminds Timothy how he knew the Scriptures from infancy (3:15), taught by Lois, Eunice, and later Paul (3:10). The context of the passage points to the inerrancy and function of Scripture (3:16-17), leading to Paul's charge to "Preach the Word" (4:2). Although not a major focus of the New Testament, parents and grandparents taught their children and grandchildren, perpetuating God's model for passing on the faith from one generation to the next.

Biblical Theology of Discipleship

The Old Testament rarely uses the specific words "disciple" or "discipleship," but the concept of a master to disciple relationship exists in several places: Moses and Joshua (Num. 11:28), Eli and Samuel (1 Sam. 2-3), Samuel (1 Sam. 19:20-24) and Elisha's (2 Kings 4:1, 38; 9:1) association with prophets, Elisha and Gehazi (2 Kings 4:29), Jeremiah and Baruch (Jer. 36:32), and with Isaiah and his disciples (Isa. 8:16) (Wilkins 1992a; Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman 1998a). Discipleship is present in several Old Testament relationships.

The writers of the New Testament use the word "disciple" 269 times, producing 27 books by disciples, for disciples, and about discipleship (Willard 1990). The Gospel authors use the term at least 230 times (Hull 2006, 32). Jesus makes discipleship a dominant theme of His life, teaching, and ministry. He calls disciples to follow Him from varied careers and social backgrounds. Luke uses the term disciple 28 times in the book of Acts (Hull 2006, 32). The Epistles do not use "disciple," but use words like brothers, church, believers, and saints as interchangeable with disciple (Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman 1998a).

The discipleship theme overlaps from one Gospel to another, but each writer provides specific insights into Jesus' formation of His followers. Each Gospel points out how Jesus' followers do not seem to fully understand His life, teaching, and mission. Matthew shows how Jesus' teaching brings comprehension. Jesus directs His major discourses at His disciples (Matt. 5:1; 10:1; 13:10, 36; 18:1; 23:1; 24:1–3). He often uses the term "disciple" to direct His discipleship teaching (Matt. 8:21, 23; 9:27; 10:42; 12:49; 13:10; 15:23; 16:5; 17:6; 17:10; 18:1; 19:10; 21:20; 24:3; 26:8, 40, 45). Jesus' parables

often focus on discipleship as their subject (Matt 18:21–35, 25:31–46; Luke 10:25–37, 14:28–32, 17:7–10). John also emphasizes the gradual understanding process the disciples undertake to believe Jesus is the Son of God (John 2:21–22; 4:27, 33; 6:60; 9:2; 10:6; 11:8, 11–15; 12:16; 13:36; 14:5, 8, 22; 16:17–18)(Wilkins 1992a). The process of understanding who Jesus is informs a disciple's ability to become like Jesus.

Matthew uses disciple as a noun seventy-three times, more than any other Synoptic Gospel. In the four gospels, only Matthew uses disciple as a verb (Matt 13:52; 27:57; 28:19) (Meye 1979, 947). Matthew's Gospel serves as a manual on discipleship. Jesus strategically helps the crowd understand that to follow Him, one must submit to Jesus as "Lord" (Matt. 8:18–21; 17:14–5; 19:16–22). Although Jewish disciples followed their rabbis as a practical method of learning how to lead their own future followers, Jesus emphasized that His disciples were different. They would continue to follow Him and He would remain their Lord and Teacher (Matt. 23:1-12). Jesus' last words in Matthew instruct His followers to go and make disciples of all nations. Jesus multiplies Himself through His disciples and expects His disciples to make more disciples. The Great Commission ends with a reminder of the strength and power of discipleship. Jesus is always with His disciples and His disciples can always follow Jesus (28:18-20) (Wilkins 1992a).

In Mark, Jesus calls His followers to more than developing a lifestyle based on His teaching. Jesus calls His followers to self-denial (Best 1981; Best 1986). Mark points to Jesus' suffering and to the cross (Mark 8:31–33; 9:30–32; 10:32–34), and connects this theme with Jesus emphasis on discipleship as servanthood (9:33-37; 10:35-45). Jesus' disciples follow Him through suffering and carry their cross as servants (Wilkins 1992a).

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus reveals the way of salvation as costly. Jesus wants His disciples to know who he is, understand the cost of following him, and resemble Him. "Everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher" (Luke 6:40b) (Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman 1998a). Jesus calls His disciples to deny themselves, take up their cross daily, and follow Him (Luke 9:23). Knowing His disciples do not fully understand, Jesus explains that He will die and that His disciples share in that future if they follow Him (Luke 9:22-27, 14:25-33). Luke focuses ten chapters of his writing about Jesus on the discipleship journey to Jerusalem (9:51-19:44). Jesus strives to change the worldview of His followers from their default cultural background to that of the Kingdom. Jesus leads the disciples to Jerusalem and His death while teaching them along the way about how to live.

The term disciple appears more time in the Gospel of John than any other book in the Bible. John's gospel reveals that Jesus knew his followers would face difficulties and struggles and tried to prepare them for the trials ahead. He encourages the crowd of potential followers to understand the cost, and He makes it difficult to follow Him by telling them to eat His flesh and drink His blood. Many did not accept his teaching and no longer follow Him (John 6:25-70). Jesus describes Himself to His disciples as the way, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).

The Gospels demonstrate how following Jesus serves as a synonym for discipleship (Wilkins 1992a). Discipleship in the Gospels connotes being with Jesus. The Gospels reveal many additional aspects of discipleship including the growth in understanding of Jesus, the acceptance of Jesus as Lord, the cost of servant discipleship, and the commission to make disciples.

Acts also portrays the discipleship process as time spent with Jesus. When the early believers selected a new apostle to replace Judas, the requirement was that he had been with Jesus from John's baptism through the ascension (Acts 1:21-22). Luke adapts the literal meaning of disciple from being with Jesus, and uses the word "disciple" to mean a believer in Christ (Acts 6:1–2, 7; 9:10, 26; 11:26; 14:21–22; 15:10; 16:1).

Jesus, as illustrated in the Gospels, and Paul, as described in Acts, both had disciples at different levels of relationship and proximity to their leader. Jesus refers to "a great crowd of disciples" as well as a "great number" of other people at the sermon on the plain (Luke 6:17). He designated twelve distinct disciples as apostles (Luke 6: 12-16), and three were closer than the rest: Peter, James, and John (Luke 9:28). Women accompanied Him, contributing financial support (8:2). Paul likewise had different groups of people travel with him at different times, also including women as disciples (Acts 13:1-5, 15:22, 16:1-3, 18:2, 5, 18, 20:4).

Other New Testament books provide discipleship guidelines for followers of Jesus. James offers practical help in areas like controlling the tongue and finances. Revelation helps disciples who suffer for Jesus see not only the Suffering Lamb, but also the Almighty Warrior who defeats the enemy and concludes the mission in eternal victory.

Just as Jesus serves as the role model, Luke portrays Paul in Acts as the example to emulate. Paul encourages disciples to imitate himself (1 Cor. 4:16, 11:1; 2 Thess. 3:7, Phil. 3:17) and the Lord (Eph. 5:1; 1 Thess. 1:6, 2:14). A disciple can only grow to the point of his discipler. Following only Paul restricts the disciple to Paul's limitations, based on his personality, worldview, background, cultural heritage, and family.

Following Jesus creates limitless potential for the disciple's character. The discipleship process shapes a disciple into the person of Jesus. The Holy Spirit can help the disciple overcome the discipler's human limitations and still become more like Jesus.

The New Testament demonstrates God's plan for the Holy Spirit's transformation of humans into the image of Christ. The closing chapter of Matthew outlines three parts of God's discipleship plan for the church. First, make disciples of Jesus. Second, baptize or immerse the disciple into the Trinity's presence, enabling growth. Third, teach the disciples the words and way of Jesus, transforming them from within (Matt. 28:18-20) (Willard 2002). In John, Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit to guide His disciples into all truth (John 16:13-14). Hebrews encourages disciples to train themselves and to grow from a spiritual infant to maturity, from milk to solid food, from student to teacher (Heb. 5:12-6:3).

Paul explains how the Holy Spirit forms disciples into the image of Christ. God conforms disciples in the likeness of His Son (Rom. 8:28-29), and Christ forms within them (Gal. 4:19). In Romans, Paul urges disciples to "not conform any longer to the pattern of the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom. 12:2). God's Spirit reveals wisdom to disciples, allowing the spiritual person to make "judgments about all things," so he or she has "the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:6-16). Jesus' ascension brought grace and Spirit-empowerment "to prepare God's people for works of service," to build up, to "become mature, attaining the whole measure of the fullness of Christ … to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness" (Eph. 4:7-24). He establishes a morality based on

Jesus in the life of a disciple. The Holy Spirit forms, conforms, transforms, and renews disciples into the image of Christ. When disciples accept the identity of Jesus, they spend their life in the process of becoming like Jesus.

Journey Motif as Discipleship

Many works contribute to the understanding of the discipleship process as explained through the journey motif. John Bunyan's (1949) *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *The Jesus Way: a Conversation on the Ways that Jesus is the Way* (Peterson 2007), scholarly works such as Dennis Sweetland's (1987) *Our Journey with Jesus: Discipleship According to Mark*, *Our Journey with Jesus: Discipleship According to Luke-Acts* (Sweetland 1990), *The Biblical Journey of Faith: The Road of the Sojourner* (VanDevelder 1988), *Following the Master: Discipleship in the Steps of Jesus* (Wilkins 1992b), *The Way of Jesus Christ* (Moltmann 1993), and commentaries like Joel Green's (1997) *The Gospel of Luke* all influence the journey motif. The biblical and theological characteristics of the journey motif from the Old and New Testament shape the process of spiritual vitality in adolescents.

The Scripture tells the story of a journey. Starting with primal humanities' earliest steps to the specific path of God's chosen people in Genesis 12, the journey progresses throughout the Old Testament. Journeys can produce positive results like Abraham setting out from Ur (Gen.11:31-12:4) or the children of Israel arriving in the Promised Land (Josh. 3:1-17). Whether literally or figuratively on a journey, God's people must depend on God and His word to show them the way (Ps. 119:105). The Prophets build on the theme of a journey to show not only a way of return from exile through God, they

also foreshadow the preparing of a way for all humanity to journey from sin to salvation through Jesus (Isa. 35:8-10; 40:3; 43:19; 57:14; 62:10).

Jesus and the disciples continue the journey into the New Testament Church, which continues until present day, culminating eschatologically in a New Jerusalem symbolic of a better Eden. The Gospels each highlight different facets of Jesus' journey. Luke elaborates on Jesus' journey, establishing the way of salvation. Jesus calls His followers to a journey that will cost His life, and invites them to join Him on the same path (Luke 9:22-26). Beginning in Luke 9:51, they set out together toward His death in Jerusalem, arriving in Luke 19:45. Nine times, Luke emphasizes that Jesus takes the disciples on a journey to Jerusalem (9:51, 53; 13:22, 33; 17:11; 18:31; 19:11, 28, 41). Jesus shapes His disciples with the values of the Kingdom on the way to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51-19:44). He lived with them so they could learn how to live like Him.

Stephen preaches the journey motif in Acts 7 and the community of sojourners coalesces around "the Way" (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22). Paul's journeys spread the Gospel throughout the earth. Paul speaks of "straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13-14). He includes, "our citizenship is in heaven" (3:20). The book of Hebrews exemplifies Abraham's journey of faith (Heb. 11:8-9). The letter also broadens that journey from applying only to the Promised Land to encompass the entirety of life. Disciples are to live as aliens and strangers (11:13) waiting for the heavenly city (11:16). Revelation brings the end of the journey with a new heaven, new earth, and a new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:1-2) (Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman 1998b).

On other journeys, people attempt to move away from God and some come back, like Jonah fleeing God's call (Jon. 1:3) and Jesus' parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32). Journeys can result from negative experiences, such as Jacob leaving his home after tricking Esau in receiving his blessing (Gen. 27:41-45), Moses fleeing Egypt after killing an Egyptian (Exod. 2:11-15), or the scattering of disciples in Acts 8:1. Punishment can produce journeys that teach more about God and what serving Him means.

The Bible also describes a spiritual journey with God as a walk. Enoch (Gen. 5:24) and Noah (Gen. 6:9) "walked with God." Amos states that God requires humanity "to walk humbly with your God" (Mic. 6:8). Cleopas and his companion walked with Jesus to Emmaus. As their "eyes opened" (Luke 24:31), their path changed and they returned to Jerusalem due to Jesus' revelation (Luke 24:13-35). Biblical "walks" describe experiences with God, including everything from lifetimes to lifestyles. The Bible has much to teach about adolescent discipleship through the image of journey.

The discipleship journey motif established through Abraham in Genesis and Hebrews, furthered by Jesus in Luke on His way to Jerusalem, and taught by Paul in Philippians, illustrates God's intent to change and shape the direction of His followers while transforming their worldviews and characters into the likeness of Christ. The authors who write about discipleship and spiritual formation utilize the journey motif. James Fowler (1981), Robert Mulholland (1993), Janet Hagberg and Robert Guelich (2005), James Estep and Jonathan Kim (2010), and Henri Nouwen (2010) refer to life's journey as a metaphor for followers becoming more like Jesus. J. Rodman Williams (1990) also views the Christian life as a walk (or journey) into God's light. Hagberg and Guelich (2005) emphasize the necessity of viewing "journey" as a whole, the idea of

changes in pace, disruptions, and progress shape the journey of spiritual formation into more than a singular focus on a destination.

Nouwen, Christensen, and Laird (2010) describe a weakening of the journey motif when individualistic cultures adapt the motif. Societies that value social progress in development add unnecessary measurements to the process. When a Christian considers spiritual formation, he or she should "leave the world of measurements behind" (Nouwen, Christensen, and Laird 2010, 130). Spiritual formation as a lifelong process or journey draws a sharp contrast to an instant society that expects to wait on nothing (Estep and Kim 2010).

The study of the biblical motif of journey shows characteristics of how a follower of Jesus views and interacts with the world. Often sojourners like Abraham and his clan (Gen. 12:1-5; 17:8; 23:4), Jacob and his extended family (Gen 31:3; 47:9), Moses and the children of Israel (Exod. 40:36-38), the Israelites of the Assyrian (2 Kings 17:5-23) and Babylonian captivity (Isa. 52:4-5), Jesus and His years of ministry (Luke 9:51-19:44), the disciples who followed Him (Luke 9:51-19:44), and Paul on his missionary trips (Acts 13:3-14:26; 15:36-18:22; 18:23-21:15) characterize their experiences through a call, an uprooting, a starting point, and a destination. The steps taken bring life lessons and growth in God to an individual, community, or nation. The movement implied by journey adds strength to the concept of discipleship as a process, not an event or even a series of events. Abraham, Moses, and Peter did not have perfect journeys, but they continued to follow God. Their journeys do not focus on mastering spiritual disciplines or attaining perfection in a lifetime on earth. The journey simply helps them become more like God.

Conclusion

The chapter presents three concepts: (1) a biblical theology of parents discipling children, (2) a biblical theology of discipleship, and (3) an overview of the journey motif. The Bible not only instructs parents to serve as the primary disciplers for their children, it provides them with the teaching methods to accomplish this lifelong task. In Deuteronomy, God through Moses teaches a new generation ready to enter the Promised Land about His covenant and how to live. He wants His people to know Him and understand His unfailing love. Deuteronomy chapter six serves as the prime directive of God's commandments to the Israelites to reproduce the discipleship process in succeeding generations. The home provides the classroom and everyday life provides the curriculum. The great revelations of God, like His deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt through the Passover and exodus, tell the story behind the rules. Other training, such as the instructions found in the Proverbs, provides reasons behind the rules.

Teachable moments spontaneously occur as children ask questions about life and God. Religious rituals, symbols, monuments, and everyday life can provide opportunity to learn about God, His character, the why, and how to live. God provides application to move wisdom from the abstract to the practical. Books such as Judges remind God's people what happens when His teaching plan does not penetrate the belief system, lifestyle, and actions of a generation. With these examples in mind, parents must prayerfully seek to engage in holistic interaction with their children's daily lives in order to successfully disciple their children.

Parents bear the responsibility of raising children who know God and actively participate in His mission. Parents with assistance from family and the community of

believers provide a caring environment allowing children to flex and develop spiritual muscles under their care. Families guide children through failure when caring parents and adults help them get back up to continue the journey. Parents disciple their children through the teaching of the Bible and the faithfulness of God to the next generation.

The Bible is a book of discipleship providing the model for youth ministry. The Old Testament examples of master to disciple relationships and the New Testament pattern of Jesus with his followers demonstrate the relational characteristic and method of making disciples. Jesus serves as the example for all believers. They must follow His example and be more like Him (Eph. 5:1; 1 Thess. 1:6, 2:14). Jesus sends the Holy Spirit as Discipler to enable a Christian to grow. Therefore, discipleship is the process of becoming like Jesus. Discipleship does not produce perfect journeys; however, youth ministry can focus on discipleship as a journey rather than spiritual perfection as a destination.

CHAPTER 3

LIFE-SPAN DEVELOPMENT THEORY AND SPIRITUAL VITALITY

Introduction

This chapter will investigate the contributions of life-span development theory to spiritual vitality, and how these insights can facilitate an understanding of retention in post-high school young adults addressing the second, third, and fourth research questions. Life-span development provides a sociological perspective that frames religious development and allows for a scientific understanding of the development process. The first section of this chapter contains research and a historical review of developmental theorists, followed by a section on the application of this information to religious development, with attention given in both sections to their contributions to adolescent development. Life-span development theories, a survey of adolescent development literature, and biblical background impact this study.

Life Span Development Theory

The Beginning of Life-Span Development Theory

Sigmund Freud developed psychoanalytical theories, positing that childhood interaction with parents shape adult personality. He proposed five psychosexual stages and looked at puberty to initiate the fifth or genital stage correlating with adolescence (Freud 1917). According to Freud (1917), development is mostly complete by adolescence and occurs through sequential stages. If individuals do not successfully

complete a particular stage, they cannot move to the next stage. His overemphasis on the effect or lack thereof of sexual gratification on development caused those who came after him to change, or even disregard, his theories. Nonetheless, his pioneering work influenced the theory of how humans, adolescents included, develop.

Psychosocial Development

Researchers after Freud worked to discover and document different aspects of development, compensating for Freud's primary focus on the psychosexual. New theories emerged that altered Freud's theory. Erik Erikson, a student of Freud, took his teacher's five psychosexual stages and built on them, thus developing a theory to encompass the entire lifespan. The first five of his eight stages approximate the same chronological spans as Freud's stages (Erikson 1963, 1968). Erikson also includes the impact of earlier and later in life experiences on development. His psychosocial theory focuses on social motivation rather than the sexual motivation of Freud's work (Erikson 1968).

Erikson theorizes that the developmental stages overlap. A person does not have to complete one stage before moving into the next. The stages focus on the navigation of life crises or conflict experiences. If the crisis resolves with a positive outcome, then the person moves on successfully to the next stage of development. If the crisis resolves without a positive outcome, then the person moves on to the next stage, but the negative implications from the previous stage influence future developmental stages (Erikson 1963, 1968).

Erikson's (1963) fifth stage, identity versus identity confusion, applies primarily to adolescents twelve to eighteen years of age. Adolescence brings the realization of the possibility of loss of self. This and other crises form the process of determining basic

identity. Positive navigation of the stages results in the development of identity and serves as a foundation throughout life. The lack of identity development results in identity confusion, which causes obstacles to future development (Erikson 1963, 1968). In stage six, those eighteen and older search for intimacy versus isolation. Erikson describes a psychosocial moratorium during adolescence. During this time, society allows youth to experiment with different roles and career options without significant responsibility. This helps youth develop an identity. Many teens discard potential identity components that they feel do not fit their lives. Forming an identity allows one to share it with others, while failure to form an identity brings isolation (Erikson 1968).

Cognitive Development

Jean Piaget's theory focuses on cognitive development and its influence on moral development. He was also influenced by Freud, but only identified four sequential stages of cognitive development (Piaget 1954). Piaget's fourth, formal stage begins between eleven and fifteen years of age and continues throughout life. The adolescents move from concrete thinking to abstract, idealistic thinking, comparing the actual to the perceived ideal (Piaget 1954, 48). This stage creates a potential interest in just causes. Piaget's cognitive development theory also postulates that comprehensive thought does not occur in an instant, but develops because of a sequence of cognitive accomplishments. This gradual understanding process can illuminate the understanding of theological development as an individual's small steps lead to long-term progress rather than full and immediate realization (Piaget 1954, 105).

Piaget (1954) believed the acquiring of moral concepts is from peers rather than parents. This means social interaction transmits moral thinking between peers. His

theories of gradual understanding and transmitting moral thinking between peers are valuable development concepts; however, he was challenged for focusing on the cognitive factor and not including a greater emphasis on methods used by various cultures to interact socially. These cultural methods influence cognitive development differently (Vygotsky 1962).

Morality Development

Lawrence Kohlberg (1973) built on Piaget's cognitive stages of development to propose six stages of moral development. He theorizes that development occurs as the child struggles with the moral thinking of an older individual at a higher stage (Kohlberg 1958). Kohlberg (1958) views his stages as universal, occurring in sequence, and related to specific age spans. Adolescence is included in stages three and four. In stage three, early adolescents develop standards set primarily by influences like parents. As moral development continues, the realization of the greater social order of government, law, and justice influence stage four's social systems of morality (Kohlberg 1973). One of the major criticisms against Kohlberg came from Carol Gilligan (1982), who pointed out that Kohlberg displayed a bias overly influenced by male norms. In so doing, she added an emphasis on gender to the development process showing that females define themselves primarily through relationships.

Kohlberg collaborated with Clark Power to propose a model for religious developmental stages corresponding to his moral developmental stages. Together they theorize that as morality develops throughout the stages, faith also develops at a comparable rate affecting the ability to understand a deity (Kohlberg 1984). Kohlberg suggested that religious educators should base their training on psychological

development instead of using only age categories, an idea also developed by James Michael Lee (1977). Kohlberg's theory led to significant advancement in educational and religious development theory. Lisa Kuhmerker (1994, 165) notes that many religious educators cite Kohlberg's work as a basis for moving away from a primarily indoctrinational approach to a process of individual encouragement and empowerment through religious development structures.

According to Lee (1977), Kohlberg's influence on religious education is due to his emphasis on measurable research methods. The empirical nature of his methodology posits God's developmental work is strictly limited to the process of human development. This view discounts the work of the Holy Spirit, since it focuses solely on quantifiable development (Munsey 1980).

Community in Development

James Marcia advances Erikson's psychosocial research on identity. Marcia (2002) proposes that identity development occurs throughout one's lifetime and not as a stage limited to adolescence. He came to the conclusion that an individual's exploration and commitment to distinct traits shape his or her identity, resulting in four statuses: identity diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, and achievement (Marcia 1966). Marcia also suggests the community shapes identity by forming an individual's understanding of self through the connectivity and role development with others. Individuals base their identity on more than their sense of self, meaning the person's understanding of place and role in community also shapes his or her identity (Marcia 1993).

Robert Kegan agrees with Marcia that personal and identity development is not locked into stages. Kegan (1982) describes the process as meaning-making movements

consisting of a person's attempt to understand personal experiences. He feels the defining and redefining of self in relationship to others begins in childhood and continues past adolescence through adulthood. He shows that through discovering and resolving problems, people navigate the tension of integration into community and differentiation of self-identity (Kegan 1982).

No researcher has developed a unifying theory due to the complexities of individual human development. John Santrock (2010) recommends an eclectic theory orientation when comparing the developmental theories, criticisms, and revisions. Different theories contain different elements, pointing in different directions. The theories serve as guides in the discovery process (Santrock 2010; Brown 2005).

Summary

Several helpful life-span development theories contribute to current understanding of adolescents and their development. Freud posits that sexual identity development and interaction with parents constitute a significant focus for adolescents. Erikson contributes the idea that adolescents struggle with understanding their potential loss of self. His psychosocial moratorium allows for the period of identity development in adolescence to occur without adult responsibility. The positive navigation of life's crises allows positive identity development; not successfully navigating the crisis brings repercussions from the failed attempt into the next developmental crisis (Erikson 1963, 1968). Erikson (1963, 1968) also found that one does not fully integrate into a community without the formation of an identity, giving the individual something to share in the community.

Piaget (1954) shows how comprehensive understanding comes from a gradual process and does not develop all at once. He also contributed the theory that peers

influence each other's moral development through the complex process of social interaction (Piaget 1954). Piaget's work demonstrates that cognitive development affects moral development, which leads to Kohlberg's explanation of how moral development is necessary before faith development can occur. Kohlberg (1958, 1973, 1984) encourages adolescent interaction with adults who function at a higher developmental level to challenge and encourage morality development within the adolescent.

Erikson and Marcia see identity development occurring over a lifetime, more like fluid movements than a perception of development locked in stages. Marcia (2002) disagrees with Erikson's description of the adolescent stage consisting of identity resolution or identity confusion. A better description is development based on the level of the adolescent's understanding of identity through a variety of life opportunities, environs, and lenses (Marcia 1973). He also focuses on the idea that community shapes identity and a person does not develop a sense of identity in isolation. The understanding of role and relationship to others helps form a sense of self (Marcia 1973).

Kegan (1982) contributes to the topic through his understanding of the role of meaning making and how it shapes identity through the process of understanding one's experiences. These various insights help shape the understanding of spiritual vitality in post-high school young adults.

The works of Erikson, Piaget, and Kohlberg alone cannot answer the question of which spiritual formation factors contribute to spiritual vitality, and which could then promote retention in AG post-high school young adults. These theorists for the most part, do not have a theocentric model. Kohlberg's work includes religious development, but he

adhered to Immanuel Kant's contention that moral reasoning requires faith instead of faith necessitating moral reasoning (Kohlberg 1984, 124).

Spiritual Applications of Development Theory

In addition to these psycho-social, identity, and educational models of adolescent development, an understanding of the theories that apply these insights to theological and spiritual development is required.

Faith in Development

James Fowler, a contemporary of Lawrence Kohlberg, was the first to apply stage development theory to the development of faith. Fowler (1981) recognized a pattern in faith development similar to the overall pattern of moral development. He identified faith as a meaning-making experience that helps individuals determine the purpose of their life. According to Fowler (1981, 4), faith is not necessarily religious, but is a universal human quest; everyone needs to wrestle with the questions of "Why am I here?" and "What is the purpose of life?" Faith involves a changing system of values, ideas, and practices that become guiding principles in one's life.

Fowler's stages of faith apply to adolescents. His views correlate with Paiget's observation that an ability to think more abstractly develops during this age. Fowler (1981) typifies this faith development stage as congruous with the self's identity-development. Interpersonal relationships shape this time of life, and adolescents tend to ignore any discrepancies with personal beliefs to avoid the problem of inconsistencies. These differences come to the forefront during the mid-twenties to late thirties, when a process of explicit faith examination occurs (Fowler 1981). The process of challenging previously untested beliefs allows the individual to own his or her faith personally. This

deepening of understanding and challenging faith assumptions leads to individual responsibility for belief (Fowler 1981). Fowler (1981) provides a useful structure for parents and church leaders to understand adolescents' development of their own faith.

Fowler's insights have had an influence on religious training. He emphasizes the need of relational nurturing for the transference of faith (Fowler 2004). Fowler (2004) encourages the involvement of children and youth in faith community engagement that allows faith practices and texts to gain personal application and use. He pioneers a trail of faith-development based on life-span development stages and theory.

Kenda Creasy Dean builds on the work of Erikson and Fowler, applying their theories specifically to faith development in youth ministry. Erikson (1968) sees the adolescent development of identity springing from the realization that the self could disappear. Dean recognizes that the struggle for identity formation through the tension between gaining or losing self occurs in the search for unconditional love and relationship. Pure love causes a person to sacrifice even to the point of death, as Jesus' love for humanity resulted in His giving His life (Dean 2011). Fowler (1996) also sees how adolescents searching for unconditional acceptance and love can find their salvation in Jesus' demonstration of His love.

According to Dean (2011, 71), the implication of identifying with Jesus' true love brings one to a willingness to suffer for Jesus and become more like Him. She also views true holistic identity formation as impossible apart from this salvific relationship with God the creator. Identifying with Christ allows transformation of sin-filled lives into the *imago Dei*. In turn, adolescents do not have to reflect a personal nature and identity, but can reflect God living within self (Dean 2011, 76). This process fulfills the purpose of

identity development through spiritual formation. Discipleship focused youth ministry can point adolescents to the salvation experience made available through Jesus' self-sacrifice, therefore, worth every individual's loss of self to identify with Jesus (Dean 2011, 75).

The Holy Spirit in Development

James Loder and Henri Nouwen emphasize the Holy Spirit in the application of development theory to spiritual vitality. Nouwen focuses on adult spiritual formation, but he brings a helpful perspective to this study. Michael Christensen (Nouwen, Christensen, and Laird 2010, 130) states that Nouwen does not view spiritual development as stages to complete, which then carry upward progress to the next stage; he explains the Spirit's formative activity as movements . He uses the classic analogy of a vertical Jacob's ladder, which necessitates upward steps, and turns it horizontal to facilitate back and forth progress of recurring and converging themes. In this adapted analogy, a person discerns and follows the subtle direction of the Holy Spirit, bringing holistic human development instead of perfect stage completion. The result draws individuals closer to God, others, and a true self (Nouwen, Christensen, and Laird 2010, 132).

James Loder places the structure of Erikson's eight stages within the dynamic work of the Holy Spirit. Both Loder and Nouwen provide a framework for the understanding of an individual's development with self, the wider community, and God. Previous theorists, such as Erikson, Piaget, and Kohlberg, focus on human development and limit the work of God in the individual (Loder 1998). Piaget's cognitive development theory explains how comprehensive thought occurs through a long-term process of gradual understanding. Loder (1998), however, disregards the timeframe limits of

Piaget's theory, acknowledging the Spirit can intervene in an individual's development in an instant or over time. Both Nouwen (Nouwen, Christensen, and Laird 2010) and Loder (1998) describe the interaction between the human spirit and God's Spirit as a vital connection in God's development of humanity.

Loder (1998) also builds on Erikson's realization of loss of self during adolescence introducing theological possibilities as youth reach out to the community around them and look with new hope and understanding to God for an answer to their questions of existence and awareness of potential loss of self. Loder (1998, 203) identifies four themes that converge and define the struggle of the adolescent years: the inevitability of order, the eventual emergence of disorder, the possibility of new order, and the relationality that underlies all forms of order and their explanations. When this struggle brings the self's identity into interaction with purpose for existence, the Spirit's transformational work can create an identity with an understanding of Jesus Christ and faith, bringing about a spiritual formation that continues throughout life (Loder 1998). Ultimately, Loder (1989, 153) develops a theological framework of how the Spirit develops humanity.

The Holy Spirit transforms through developmental stage transitions (Loder 1989). While Erikson and Piaget outline the developmental stage process utilized by the Holy Spirit, Loder (1989, 126-127) theorizes that human development consists more of the transitions between stages than in the stages. The Holy Spirit utilizes the guiding, developmental pattern of the human spirit to transform all levels of human experience. Erikson (1968, 166) explains that developmental stages overlap and the negative implications from previous stage navigation influence future developmental stages. Loder

explains this overlap as an ongoing opportunity for the Holy Spirit's transformational interaction with the human spirit, through the developmental process. The repeated failure of the human spirit to successfully navigate every aspect of transition in development and the consequent disequilibrium with the Holy Spirit's work characterizes this ongoing interaction as a journey (Loder 1989). The stages and movements of life-span development, specifically the transitions, provide the framework for the Holy Spirit's interaction and development of the human spirit into the image of Christ.

Three relational factors impact this adolescent development according to Loder (1998, 206). The transitional journey between developmental stages causes adolescents to find others to whom they can talk about the experience. First, Loder describes a transitional object that can help in the process of keeping and letting go of determinants. Peers often serve in this capacity, when needs and self-esteem match, providing an opportunity to discuss things with each other that they do not talk about with parents and family. Adolescents express themselves through words in an attempt to bridge the gap between their previous understandings of self to a yet undetermined purpose of life as well as the gap between themselves and others (Loder 1998, 206). A second affiliation often aligns peers by gender. Males associate with males and females with females in peer groups as an extension of the one friend as transitional object (Loder 1998, 206). Loder revealed a third relational factor of adolescent development consisting of another significant, but non-parent, adult. This person participates in the adolescent's life and interests because of nearness to age, yet also models authentic adulthood as an achievable stage (Loder 1998, 227). Loder (1998, 228) defines the significant other adult as one who manifests a "transformation of authority into authenticity."

Individual and relational factors influence each other during adolescent development. Erikson describes males as moving from identity to in-depth relationships. The female's perspective adds the finding of identity through in-depth relationships (Loder 1998, 206). Relationships provide the context for identity and identity provides the basis for relationships. Belonging through relationships helps adolescents make healthy identity decisions during this time of development (Loder 1998, 207). Loder (1998, 207) builds on Erikson's idea to define identity as "a consistent sense of oneself" and "also that the inner sameness and continuity sensed in one's self is matched by one's meaning for others." The Holy Spirit shapes the conscience, changing and conforming an adolescent into the image of Christ, through the contextual grounding of these peer, peer groups, and significant other adult relationships (Loder 1998).

The Holy Spirit begins His shaping work in an individual by convicting a person through existential guilt. He brings an individual to greater awareness that through the potential loss of self the meaning of life leads to nothingness. The Holy Spirit convicts of sin in an act of grace to allow further examination of one's relationship with God. The shame or humiliation brought by conviction leads to an opportunity for the person to make individualized changes (Loder 1998, 244). The Holy Spirit illuminates the words of God through the Bible and brings the presence of Jesus as the foundation for identity, shaping the developmental process through the image of Christ (Loder 1998, 245).

Religious Community in Development

Craig Dykstra and Amy Jacober emphasize religious community in the application of development theory to spiritual vitality. Dykstra applies stage development to spiritual formation through Christian discipleship. He utilizes Erikson's work, but

rejects Kohlberg's structural development as juridical, where individuals make judgments concerning the right or wrong nature of certain acts (Dykstra 1981). Within its place, Dykstra (1981) suggests a visional ethic based on how an individual views reality and responds. He does not want to limit moral growth solely on cognitive ability. He examines the Reformed churches' practices and contributions of passing on the faith to the next generation. Adolescents experiment through their experiences, in search of identity and the meaning of their lives. The church can help its youth through this discovery process by means of creating community and developing a faith language (Dykstra 1981).

Dykstra stresses the important role of the religious community in socialization and enculturation of faith. Participating in a faith community implies living life with others in such a way that members explore the religious norms, traditions, values, and beliefs of their primary social group (Dykstra 2005). The resulting identification and imitation process produces change in the individual participants. Faith communities either provide an opportunity for adolescents to encounter meaning making experiences through interaction with others, or they miss a strategic developmental opportunity that causes youth to find meaning elsewhere (Dykstra 2005).

Dykstra builds on Erikson's assertion that adolescence focuses on the development of identity. Language plays a significant part of development, therefore religious language influences spiritual development (Dykstra 2005). He emphasizes the need for youth to develop a personal religious language. The rote use of theological terms, however, does not accomplish this purpose. Finding a way to speak about religious belief while searching for meaning and purpose helps teens see faith as a way of life and not

just as an unpractical tradition (Dykstra 2005). Understanding language does not occur simply through hearing it. Teens can create contextualized terms from everyday experiences and conversations about faith, adding to the formation of personal identity. The more adolescents explore faith, experiment with personal belief, and learn to express these experiences, the more faith becomes a way of life (Dykstra 2005).

Dykstra's (2005) application of stage development to spiritual formation points out the significance of social and linguistic components, including how poetry and story can form the heart of religious language. Music communicates through a universal language. Exploring this wider lens of art as religious language can help students develop expressions of faith, leading to further religious understanding resulting in spiritual formation (Dykstra 2005).

Amy Jacober also builds on the work of Erikson and Loder. While each author examines crises that affect development, Loder (1989) focuses more on the time between the stages than the actual stages. Jacober (2011) points out stage completion does not lead to formation, but life provides a continual process of reconciliation with God from a broken self to a transformed identity. This continual spiritual transformation provides ongoing renewal and change. Adolescence may consist of specific aspects of development, but this maturation process does not divide into linear segments culminating in an arrival at the final destination of a completely developed identity (Jacober 2011). Jacober views adolescent development as a transformational journey rather than stage development.

Youth ministry provides an environment for the transformational journey. Transformation does not occur in private isolation. The faith community plays a

symbiotic role in facilitating transformation that changes the dynamic of individuals and the community as a whole (Jacober 2011).

God's work transforms the individual's fear of personal negation. The adolescent quest for connection is a primary path to experience God's love as revealed through the faith community (Jacober 2011). Understanding this love comes from more than human ability causes a person to want to show love to others through justice and mercy. The community that youth ministry provides can enable adolescents to experience authentic connection with adults, other adolescents, and God through the natural expression of God's transformational work of love already active in the community (Jacober 2011).

Development as Conscientization

Paulo Freire contributes to spiritual development through his work on conscientization, or critical consciousness. He describes reflection and action as crucial dialogue partners in the ongoing process of discovering a person's social context. Reflection or action alone cannot produce the same result without the other. Thomas Groome (1980) views Freire and Kohlberg's works as necessitating an ongoing logical argument between the individual and religious authority, in route to spiritual formation. He adapts Freire's idea into a life-to-faith-to-life approach, where the faith community encourages individual and biblical reflection on contextual life issues, bringing action that focuses adolescents on their own spiritual development. Groome's (2011) approach describes the process in dynamic movements. Cheryl Bridge Johns argues that Freire (1970) builds his view of reality on the dialogue between human experience and the world. Johns (2010) advocates for an increased understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit in the development of conscientization, emphasizing the spiritual element in

community interaction and shaping of religious identity. She sees the Holy Spirit shaping the individual's formation through the interaction of the Bible with personal experiences (Johns 2010).

Cognitive Modification in Development

Reuven Feuerstein studied under Piaget, but Feuerstein (1990) does not support a developmental stage approach or the ideal of arrival at stage completion. Piaget (1954) believed peers influenced adolescents' moral development more than parents. Feuerstein, in Ruth Burgess' (2008, 9) biography *Changing Brain Structure through Cross-cultural Learning: The Life of Reuben Feuerstein,* acknowledges parents as the mediators, or delegates to society, who determined the interaction their children receive, which influences cognitive development. Since humans exist in a dynamic environment, no two people live out similar experiences in exactly the same manner. Changing contexts produce individuals who develop in a complex and modifiable way (Burgess 2008, 125).

Feuerstein (1990) describes an organic journey on a reasoned pathway, embedded in the context of family and community. He includes cognitive and affective perspectives in his approach, but views brain structure as more stable than the emotions. Unlike behavioral theorists who place limitations on human development, he believes brain structure can change and a person can overcome life circumstances, whether biological, psychological, nature, or nurture. One possesses the ability to learn throughout life (Feuerstein 1990). Feuerstein developed his theory in the context of Israel's struggle to establish and maintain borders and identity as a nation in the hostile 1954 to 1970 Palestinian section of the Middle East. He tested his hypothesis through the analysis of outcomes of ever-changing mediated activities concentrating on human needs (Burgess

2008, 100). His approach does "not look for capacity, but for modifiability" of cognitive capabilities (Burgess 2008, 97). Feuerstein (2008, 65) sums up his theoretical shift this way in Burgess's biography, "It is not how well the students do; but rather how well they learn." His "Theory of Structural Cognitive Modifiability" does not produce cognitive change from a predetermined content that dictates its own implementation; modification comes through equipping a person with a process for changing cognitive structures (Feuerstein 1990). He focuses on teaching a person how to think within the framework of Judeo-Christian belief, by one generation passing on values and logic to the next (Fererstein 1990).

Ruth Burgess (2013), who studied under and worked with Feuerstein, explains the theory by pointing to Scripture as the "why" of cognitive modification. A person's belief system should drive his or her theory and practice. She adds a new interpersonal pedagogical approach with the "what" comprised of knowledge, habits of the mind, habits of the spirit, and literacy. Mediated Learning Experiences (MLE) form the "how" (Burgess 2013).

Feuerstein (Feuerstein, Klein, and Tannenbaum 1991) develops the cognitive map to describe his process of faith transference where an individual derives content from three background areas: experiential, cultural, and educational. These three aspects provide for a content-free curriculum that relies on structure for learning, utilizes available background information to teach habits of the mind and spirit, while a mediator creates opportunities where students can recognize the significance of the heritage, experience, and scientific learning (Feuerstein, Klein, and Tannenbaum 1991). Asking questions facilitates development of the thought process within the individual's

theological framework, and assessment occurs through an evaluation of the level of proficiency of the performance of the mental act (Feuerstein, Klein, and Tannenbaum 1991).

Burgess (2013) builds upon Feuerstein's foundation, and compliments Loder's work, to explain how the Holy Spirit serves as Mediator to bring fusion between God and humans. God's mediated encounters provide opportunities to shape humans into the image of Christ. The Holy Spirit can help individuals' progress through the development of actions on beliefs, the balance of inquiry and reflection, and the balance of the individual and community through learning experiences (Burgess 2013). MLEs require relational, identity, and task goals for holistic development. This process creates community and individuation that helps people feel like they belong in the community. The Holy Spirit leads and shapes both the emotions and the mind. When an individual understands the potential of life in Christ, the Holy Spirit, through MLEs, helps that person grow and fulfill that opportunity. He can create new neural pathways in the mind of a disciple. The Holy Spirit, as Mediator, helps individuals live in a better understanding of identity in Jesus and through this process unites them with Christ (Burgess 2013).

Summary

Life-span development theories help inform the process of spiritual vitality. Growth from mid to late adolescence brings a change from ignoring discrepancies in faith to examining, acknowledging, challenging, and struggling with conflicts to produce ownership of personal belief. Therefore, the understanding of loss of self and the resulting process of forming an identity as a catalyst for realizing how the cross shows

God's love for adolescents provides a purpose worthy of giving one's life. The drive not to disappear allows spiritual formation to aid in identity development based on reflecting the *imago Dei*. Youth ministry can help adolescents experience salvation through Jesus' self-sacrificing love.

The individual's loss of self and the struggle of adolescence to determine a reason for life create an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to transform a person through an identity based on Jesus. Pentecostals' embrace the Holy Spirit's interaction and experience as an opportunity for biblical-centered dialog to produce spiritual development. Therefore, the Holy Spirit's shaping in overlapping and recurring movements of spiritual formation allows for continued formation throughout life.

The religious community can facilitate an adolescent's discovery process of exploring faith, experimenting with personal belief, and expressing these experiences to result in faith becoming a way of life. The use of the arts by the religious community also could foster new mechanisms for religious language development, while religious experiences in community become a focal point through conscientization in spiritual formation of adolescents.

Family and community work together for development of the thought process through an individual's theological belief. A person can modify cognitive development through mediated learning experiences. When the focus from these experiences shifts from "what to teach" to "how to think," it provides a framework for continued growth adaptable to future life circumstances.

The spiritual applications of development theory function as a transformational journey of reconciliation with God for Christians. Humanities' desire for authentic

relationship provides an opportunity for the Holy Spirit through youth ministry in the faith community to reveal God's love through experiences with God, adults, and other adolescents.

Conclusion

Life-span development theories inform adolescent development. Adolescence involves multiple facets including sexual development issues and life-stage insights including identity development, educational stages focusing on cognitive development, and moral development implications. Hence, individuals process meaning-making experiences through more fluid movements over a lifetime, rather than a perception of development as locked into stages. Factors that influence the developmental process include community, parents, other significant adults, and peers. Since theorists, like Erikson, Piaget, and Kohlberg, generally do not have a theocentric model, an understanding of the theories that apply life-span development insights to theological and spiritual development is necessary.

The adolescent self's inner existential reflection, focused on not disappearing, allows an increased opportunity to aid in identity development based on reflecting the *imago Dei*. Effective youth ministry can give meaning to this adolescent realization of potential loss of self through reframing the negative consequences of identity development into a positive identity with Jesus. A Christian relationship with God changes an adolescent's moral framework by providing the opportunity for the Spirit of God to live within an individual. The Holy Spirit serves as the person who transforms an individual into the image of Christ. In this transformation process, the Holy Spirit utilizes interaction with spiritually mature adults, and interaction with peers exploring their own

faith, to reveal God's word in a personalized application to individual adolescents. That individual's theological belief provides a growing framework encouraging ongoing development adaptable to unforeseen future life circumstances. A successful youth ministry assists with this development by helping a young person think with a biblical mindset.

Loder and Feuerstein place Erikson and Piaget's life-span development framework within the work of God and explain how He transforms an individual through His Spirit. The Holy Spirit shapes through conviction, providing an opportunity for illumination of Scriptures and the presence of Jesus to produce individualized change. The Spirit also shapes the conscience, changing and conforming an adolescent into the image of Christ, through relationships with a peer, a peer group, and significant other adults to create the contextual grounding of community (Loder 1998). The Holy Spirit serves as Mediator to bring fusion between God and humans. Through these experiences, He can create new neural pathways in the mind of a disciple (Burgess 2013). Therefore, what Erikson identifies as the cognitive work of the individual's mind adjusting to the developmental stage sequence, Loder (1998, 247) identifies as the work of the Holy Spirit embedding life-span development into the transformation of human life through re-centering on Christ.

Retention of adolescents after high school, for the kingdom of God, is a multi-faceted, complex endeavor. The role of parents, other spiritually mature adults, and peers, combined with the context of the faith community and youth leaders, contribute to continued spiritual vitality with the Holy Spirit leading the process. The next chapter

examines the components of adolescent discipleship, including definitions, spiritual formation, social considerations, and youth group experiences.

CHAPTER 4

COMPONENTS OF ADOLESCENT DISCIPLESHIP

The first section provides an investigation into the current understanding of discipleship and spiritual formation in discipleship. For the Christian, this includes spiritual vitality, or the continued progress in the spiritual journey of becoming more like Jesus. The next sections survey discipleship factors, such as how social considerations and youth group experiences flow together to build a comprehensive picture of adolescent discipleship. This chapter addresses the research questions concerning what spiritual formation factors, social considerations, and youth group experiences contribute to continued spiritual vitality and could facilitate retention in AG post-high school young adults.

Discipleship

A large quantity of published information focuses on the topic of discipleship. The literature includes scholarly works such as *Following Jesus: Biblical Reflections on Discipleship* (Wright 1995) and *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament* (Longenecker 1996), classics like *The Cost of Discipleship* (Bonhoeffer 1963), *The Lost Art of Disciplemaking* (Eims 1984), and *Spiritual Discipleship: Principles of Following Christ for Every Believer* (Sanders 2007). There are also published practical guides such as *Transformational Discipleship* (Geiger, Kelley, and Nation 2012), *The Complete Book of Discipleship* (Hull 2006), and *Discipleship Essentials: A Guide to Building Your Life*

in Christ (Ogden 2007), and popular titles like *More than a Fan* (Idleman 2011). All explore and explain important facets of discipleship. For the purposes of this research, the scope has been narrowed to highlight the definitions and theological characteristics and definitions of discipleship from the Old and New Testament that shape the process of spiritual vitality in adolescents.

Definitions of Discipleship

Bible dictionaries define disciple similarly. *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* defines disciple as "a follower, pupil, or adherent of a teacher or religious leader" (Nelson 2000, 348-49). *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary* designates a disciple as a "student, learner, or pupil" (Youngblood 1995, 356). Youngblood adds that the Bible most often uses disciple to refer to a follower of Jesus. The *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* delineates a disciple as "Someone who follows another person or another way of life and who submits himself to the discipline (teaching) of that leader or way" (Helm 1997). The *Dictionary of Christianity in America* concisely summarizes the definitions well—a disciple is a "follower of Jesus Christ" (Albin 1990, 357).

"Following Jesus" refers to the technical expression of a disciple going after Jesus. It connotes being with Jesus on the Way either literally or figuratively (Wilkins 1992a, 187). The image of disciple implies radical, fundamental, dynamic change focused on progress and development (Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman 1998a). Both Jewish and Greek historical literature and traditions speak of the process involved in discipleship. In Jewish tradition, disciples learned from rabbis while Greek education encouraged mentees to follow and model the life of a mentor (Houston 2011; Nelson 2000). Johan Mostert (2013, 16) describes discipleship as "operationally being conceived as a dynamic

process that is facilitated by a mentoring relationship to achieve certain psycho-behavioral goals." He makes use of the "Talmideem Agenda" in the Hebrew tradition of "disciples committing themselves to follow in the footsteps of a chosen master to facilitate this process of personal insight, reflection and dying to self" (Mostert 2013).

Different writers have added their perspectives on discipleship. In *The Cost of Discipleship*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1963, 64) states, "Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ." Bonhoeffer (1963) asserts that the Church had truncated the definition of disciple with the acceptance of cheap grace instead of costly grace. Ernest Best (1981) also emphasizes the process of discipleship and how becoming like Christ lasts a lifetime. Dallas Willard (1998, 282) defines a disciple as "someone who has decided to be with another person … doing what that person does … to become like that person." Both James Houston and Michael Wilkins point to Jesus' impact on identity. Houston (2011) bases the source of a disciple's identity solely on relationally being with Jesus. Wilkins (1992b) also sees the disciple receiving a new sense of identity based on following Jesus. Thus, when disciples emulate Jesus, basing their identity on Him, they spend their life in a process of becoming like Jesus. Therefore, this study defines discipleship as the process of becoming like Jesus.

Spiritual Formation as Discipleship

The term spiritual formation connotes various meanings depending on the source and the context of application. Historically, schools of spirituality associate themselves with different emphases based on the founder, including religious orders such as Augustinian, Benedictine, Camaldolese, Carmelite, Carthusian, Cisteran, Dominican, Franciscan, Ignatian, and Salesian. Other groups, based on geographical influences,

include African, African American, American, Celtic, Eastern (Asian), Egyptian Desert Fathers, French, Hispanic, Hispanic American, and Native American (McBrien 2001). Some find direction from religious traditions: Anglican, Anglo-Catholic, Islamic, Jewish, Oriental Christian, Orthodox and non-Orthodox alike, and various denominational traditions within Protestantism (McBrien 2001). Other categories based on eco-feminist, feminist, holistic, lay, and New Age widen the spiritual formation discussion (McBrien 2001). Varied streams of faith view spiritual formation differently and emphasize different facets. This study refers to spiritual formation in the Judeo-Christian discipleship setting and focuses on adolescent spiritual formation. This study defines spiritual formation as the process where the Holy Spirit forms humans into the image of Christ.

The Catholic Church has a long history of emphasizing spiritual formation. Anselm of Canterbury (Anselm 1979) coined the popular adage "faith seeking understanding" (*fides quaerens intellectum*) in his work *Proslogion*. His eleventh-century argument to prove God exists describes believers in Christ continuing the process of developing their faith. Imitating Christ remained a theme throughout the works of St. Augustine (2001), St. Francis of Assisi (Miles 2005), and Thomas a Kempis (Thomas and Creasy 1989).

Thomas Chan Chan (1998) points to Saint Teresa of Ávila as someone who viewed stages in spiritual formation, accessible through grades of prayer (Teresa of Avila, Zimmerman, and Abbey 1997). Henri Nouwen (Nouwen, Christensen, and Laird 2010, 132) also teaches that classic spiritual development in Roman Catholic thought came through three stages: purgation, illumination, and unification. Based on the Exodus and

God's people's deliverance from slavery in Egypt to freedom in God, Nouwen (Nouwen, Christensen, and Laird 2010, 132) points to continued biblical reflection leading to the identification of five parts of the journey to God: (1) awakening (of desire), (2) purgation (of the passions), (3) illumination (of God), (4) dark night (of the soul), and (5) unification (with the Divine). These examples from historical Catholic Christianity directly or indirectly refer to spiritual formation as a process.

Protestants scholars also examine Scripture and find the potential for stages of spiritual development. John Stott (1991, 101) points to three stages of spiritual development in 1 John 2:12-14. In these verbs, the Apostle John addresses dear children, young men, and fathers. According to Stott (1991), these three different ages represent different levels of spiritual maturity. Don Willett (2010) applies Ephesians 4:12-16 to the middle stage of development from childhood to maturity, focusing on relationships that transform through community. He builds on the Stott model to develop eight milestones along the path of spiritual maturity. Willett (2010) describes the young adult stage as ownership of faith and categorizes the two milestones as owning a firsthand faith and linking truth with life.

Just as different schools of spirituality focus on different aspects of spirituality, various definitions of spiritual formation highlight various aspects of spiritual formation. These definitions help shape this study of spiritual formation. James Wilhoit (2008, 23) defines spiritual formation as "the intentional communal process of growing in our relationship with God and becoming conformed to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit."

Mark Maddix explores the understanding of spiritual formation in the book, *Christian Formation: Integrating Theology and Human Development*. He states the goal of spiritual formation is, "to be shaped and formed into the image and likeness of Christ" (Maddix 2010, 266). He also focuses on the Holy Spirit as the one who holistically forms a person into the likeness of Jesus (Maddix 2010, 266). Using Exodus as a model, Maddix (2010, 266) describes the journey as growth toward spiritual maturity. Community provides a vital context in the collectivist social setting of the Bible for a person's growth in relationship to others. Maddix (2010, 244) describes the Church's primary objective as spiritual formation.

Robert Mullholland (1993, 25) adds an outward, missional component to the journey in his definition of spiritual formation, which is "a process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others." The Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, a 105 member international association of Christ-centered colleges and universities based in Washington, D.C, convened in 2010 to define spiritual formation. Their definition, from *The CCCU and the Moral and Spiritual Development of Their Students,* includes the elements previously noted: "Spiritual formation … is the biblically guided process in which people are being transformed into the likeness of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit within the faith community in order to love and serve God and others" (Stokes and Regnerus 2010, 13).

Some Christian authors define spiritual formation as a strictly inner transformation, largely unseen. In support of this view, Jim Plueddemann (2000, 901) views spiritual formation as "a process that takes place inside a person, and is not something that can be easily measured, controlled, or predicted." Richard Foster and

Dallas Willard build on the association of spiritual disciplines helping a person facilitate the transformation process by the Holy Spirit.

Richard Foster's (1988) *Celebration of Discipline* shapes the direction of spiritual disciplines in the context of spiritual formation through writing about inward, outward, and corporate spiritual disciplines. He warns that although the disciplines shape us inwardly and spiritually, knowing the mechanics does not mean one actually practices the disciplines (Foster 1988). He presents the disciplines as an inner reality, and the inward attitude of the heart as more important to spiritual life (Foster 1988).

Dallas Willard (2002, 22) focuses on Jesus in his definition of spiritual formation as "the Spirit-driven process of forming the inner world of the human self in such a way that it becomes like the inner being of Christ himself." He suggests that it is not only the Spirit of God forming the spirit of a person, but Christ's presence through His word and the personalities of those who have already been more fully shaped by God also contribute to spiritual formation (Willard 2002). Foster and Willard focus on spiritual disciplines as a pathway for the Holy Spirit's formation of humans. The disciplines do not form a person, but serve as a road for the journey of becoming like Jesus.

James Estep and Jonathan Kim (2010, 247) note the change in the literature from the term "spiritual formation" to "Christian formation" as a reaction to the rationalism and objectivism of modernity and the shift to postmodernity's connectivity and subjectivity. Where spiritual formation could identify almost anyone's formation on a general spiritual basis, no matter what his or her religion or even lack thereof, Christian formation applies specifically to Christians (Estep and Kim 2010). Dean defines formation in this regard specifically for youth by bringing together the actions of the

Holy Spirit, the pilgrim journey process, and the missional nature of God. "Christian formation invites young people into this motley band of pilgrims and prepares them to receive the Spirit who calls them, shapes them, and enlists them in God's plan to right a capsized world" (Dean 2010, 7). Even though Maddix encourages a shift to the term Christian formation, this dissertation will continue to utilize the term spiritual formation.

The Holy Spirit and Discipleship

The Holy Spirit leads the spiritual formation process. *Spiritual Formation: Following the Movements of the Spirit*, the posthumous compilation of Nouwen's work, summarizes the role of the Holy Spirit. Nouwen (2010, xxix) points to Jesus' promise to send the Holy Spirit to guide humanity into all truth (John 16:7-13). Christians live in a process of discovering the wind of God's activity blowing throughout life (Nouwen, Christensen, and Laird 2010, viii).

Spiritual disciplines alone, however, do not form a person. In *Disciplines of the Holy Spirit: How to Connect to the Spirit's Power and Presence*, Douglas Gregg and Siang-Yang Tan summarize the purpose of the Holy Spirit in the transformation process. They explain disciplines create the process for a person to connect to the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit shapes the individual (Tan and Gregg 1997). Willard (1998) agrees that the Holy Spirit transforms character in the life of a disciple.

Hollis Gause summarizes the role of the Holy Spirit in his book *Living in the Spirit: The Way of Salvation*. He explains the Holy Spirit enters a believer as a sovereign ruler residing in a temple and shapes a person spiritually, mentally, and bodily into the nature of Jesus (Gause 1980, 122). The infilling of the Spirit brings Christ-likeness in believers through the growth of the Spirit's fruit and the death of the sinful nature (Gal.

5:19-25) (Gause 1980, 101). God expects the Holy Spirit-filled, life-shaping process to occur in all believers (Gause 1980, 119). “Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.” (Eph. 5:18).

J. Rodman Williams (1965), charismatic reformed theologian, also views the Holy Spirit as a guide to bear fruit and form virtues in a person. The Holy Spirit helps the individual produce fruit through setting his or her mind on Christ (Williams 1965). Fruit bearing requires the process of maturation: growth and development. The Spirit forms virtues in a person through the interaction of the self, the community, and the Bible (Williams 1965, 1990, Lewis 1998).

The Holy Spirit guides each individual through a life-long process of becoming like Jesus. The believer should focus on the daily ongoing formation in the journey and not just completing the process. The farther a believer progresses, the more he or she realizes remains in the journey. This conclusion causes the person to know sin remains a life-long struggle until reaching the perfection of heaven. Yet knowing a believer still wrestles with sin does not mean he or she is planning to sin, nor does it excuse sin (Nelson 2011). Each new day brings opportunities for a Christian to grow and move forward in the Holy Spirit’s shaping of a follower of Jesus.

The Community of Faith and Discipleship

The Holy Spirit forms individuals through community, which helps the believer live out faith and continue to grow more like Jesus. The Southern Baptist Convention, through Lifeway Research, identifies the Holy Spirit as the One who causes a disciple to grow in the environment provided by the church. He fosters the spiritual formation through the intergenerational interaction of teachers and learners co-journeying through

community, instead of focusing solely on individual experience (Geiger, Kelley, and Nation 2012, 61). Personalized interaction allows each person to receive guidance catered to his or her individual needs, background, and personality factors. The interaction gains strength within community, but the individual maintains the responsibility of seeking God's will in his or her formation (Williams 1990).

Simon Chan's (2000) Asian context emphasizes the importance of community. He points out that Pentecostals focus on spiritual life from a primarily individualistic perspective but he believes the tradition of a faith community is essential to spiritual formation (Chan 2000, 13). Powerful personal narratives of God's interaction in life provide strength for Pentecostal traditions, but the mostly oral tradition brings a weakness – the inability to explain itself (Chan 2000, 20). A living tradition emerges as the Holy Spirit focuses on the church with His ongoing work (Chan 2000, 35). Repeatable experiences of Spirit in-filling and freedom between the structure of the Word and illumination of the Spirit provide Pentecostals an opportunity to develop community traditions in corporate settings (Chan 2000, 94, 117). The church provides these traditions as dynamic truth encounters where the Holy Spirit directs God's people to experience the living word (Chan 2000, 102).

Chan also points to the specific practice of spiritual direction as a traditioning process. Spiritual direction allows the faith community to influence the discipleship relationship between more mature followers of Jesus and those desiring help in spiritual growth (Chan 1998, 235). Mountain climbing provides a strong analogy to explain this idea. A new climber needs a guide to navigate the journey successfully. As a beginner, the climber's lack of skill means the guide finds a pathway with small steps helping the

climber to progress. Repeated steps bring progress over time. Sometimes God sovereignly moves someone forward quickly, while others seem to struggle for movement. The interaction between guide, new climber, and community creates a process for continued spiritual formation (Chan 1998, 239).

Through the study of historical and contemporary views of spiritual formation, it can be understood as the process whereby the Holy Spirit forms the life of a disciple into the image of Christ. Spiritual formation develops through different levels. Some spiritual formation theorists see this part of the discipleship process as divided into distinct stages correlating to the stages of adolescent development, while other theorists consider the discipleship process occurring in more fluid movements. The next section examines an array of discipleship factors that contribute to spiritual formation in adolescents including the role of the church as community and the Holy Spirit directing the process.

Factors in Discipleship

Survey of Discipleship Factors

Many organizations, denominations, and individual experts have researched spiritual formation and discipleship methods that provide factors contributing to spiritual vitality. The following section gives a brief survey of some of the more helpful findings as they relate to this study. Authors often develop new descriptions for their systems or groupings of factors. One of those authors, Jim Wilhoit (2008, 50), finds four dispositions that build on Jesus' great invitations to guide spiritual formation in community: receiving, remembering, responding, and relating. Likewise, John Plake (2013, 10) identifies four discipleship domains in which to measure change: relationship with God; relationship with others; beliefs, values and character; and actions. Lifeway Research discovered eight

attributes to effective discipleship: engaging the Bible, obeying God and denying self, serving God and others, sharing Christ, exercising faith, seeking God, building relationships, and being unashamed (Geiger, Kelley, and Nation 2012, 59). Willow Creek Community Church's "Reveal Spiritual Life Survey" identifies a four-stage continuum of spiritual formation: "exploring Christianity, growing in Christ, close to Christ, and Christ-Centered" (Hawkins et al. 2007, 37). As people progress through the continuum, the following factors increase: spiritual behaviors, spiritual attitudes, and personal spiritual practices (Hawkins et al. 2007, 37). The Empowered21 Spirit-Empowered Discipleship Global Task Force (2012), a global consortium of Pentecostal and Charismatic groups based in Tulsa, Oklahoma, is developing an outcome-based discipleship model with four stages: explore truths of the faith, embrace truths of the faith in a personal way, experience truths of the faith in everyday life, and express truths of the faith to others through identity as a Christ-follower. Brad Waggoner (2008), of Lifeway Christian Resources, researcher and president of Broadman and Holman Publishing, discusses a relationship with a good leader, the discipline of daily Bible reading, and intentional strategies helping parents disciple their families as key spiritual maturity factors.

In an attempt to formulate a more inclusive and comprehensive understanding of the factors of discipleship, Mostert (2014) suggests that discipleship should be operationally conceived as encompassing five dimensions, each with their own set of measurable behavioral outcomes. The first of five dimensions of the Discipleship Dynamics model is Spiritual Formation and includes the traditional disciplines of prayer, Bible study, evangelism, spiritual fellowship and meditation (Mostert 2014). The second,

Healthy Relationships, reflects outcomes such as the quality of marital relationships and sexuality but also includes outcomes such as seeking the peace, promoting reconciliation, extending hospitality and caring for the marginalized (Mostert 2014). The third dimension focusses on the intra-psychic elements of Personal Wholeness. The outcomes in this dimension include personal integrity, managing anxiety and fear, developing a healthy self-image, overcoming bad habits and living with a clean conscience (Mostert 2014).

The fourth dimension attempts to reclaim the truths of the Protestant Reformation by developing Vocational Clarity in the disciple. Under this dimension, disciples seek to develop a sense of personal calling irrespective of their occupation, try to discover their unique gifts and talents, and seek to work for the common good of their community by, among other things, caring for the poor and marginalized (Mostert 2014). The final dimension of the Discipleship Dynamics model, God at Work, draws on the recent revival of a Protestant theology of work. In it, God invites His children to co-create value with Him in a world that is "without form and void." Work is sacred, labor is to be rewarded, and the workplace is a mission field where His ambassadors display Holy Spirit-inspired creativity to solve difficulties and to display the wisdom of God (Mostert 2014). Discipleship Dynamics is developing an online assessment to identify these discipleship outcomes as a tool to facilitate the process of discipleship (Mostert, 2014).

Social Considerations in Discipleship

Social considerations contribute to continued spiritual vitality, facilitating retention in post-high school young adults. Parents and peers uniquely influence spiritual development in adolescence.

Parent Factor

Parents play an important role in shaping adolescent development (Laursen and Collins 2009; McElhaney et al. 2009; Santrock 2010). They influence their children through mirroring, mediating, and monitoring. Parent and family relationships shape adolescent and identity development by providing a mirror where an adolescent views the parents' reflection of adolescent actions. In object relations psychology, this interaction impacts the self's sense of being for better or worse (Bengtson 2013; Root 2010). Parents also serve as mediators who provide learning interaction with the world and culture around adolescents (Burgess 2008). This role shapes what adolescents access, and can either stimulate or decimate developmental opportunities. Parents also monitor adolescents' choices from school to social activities, as well as from friends to free time. When the process is completed effectively, the parent serves as a primary manager of adolescent development (Bornstein and Lansford 2010; Santrock 2010; Smetana et al. 2010). In this way, parental mirroring, mediating, and monitoring each affect the development of an adolescent.

Adolescents show their desire for family and parental support in a variety of ways that may surprise conventional wisdom or seem like the opposite of the average television portrayal of the family. Youth in this age bracket desire fulfilling family relationships. Mid-adolescents, ages fourteen to twenty, seek affirmation from their family of their daily decisions and life choices (Clark 2011). This age group also seeks out the advice of parents and other trusted adults when making important decisions (Solarz 2002).

Parents provide an important balance between freedom and control, especially as adolescents grow older. When teenagers experience the larger social context around them, parents provide support for adolescents' advances and failures during this broadening life journey (Santrock 2010). The growth of independence during adolescence still necessitates a strong family connection (Hair et al. 2008; O'Koon 1997). The first year after high school graduation, the parental relationship can diminish in light of all the new relational opportunities, yet adolescents seem to increasingly value that relationship with parents (Clydesdale 2007). Typically, when the post-high school life-opportunities arrive, an adaptation of the relationship with parents occurs when adolescents provide parents with less direct knowledge about many important areas of life. The relationship remains positive and important, but the sharing of vital information concerning continued developmental issues diminishes (Smith et al. 2011). Parents can expand the role of monitoring to help adolescents in their developmental progress by encouraging their children to offer accountability to their parents through access to more information of their whereabouts and what they are doing (Keijsers and Laird 2010; Smetana et al. 2010; Stattin and Kerr 2000). This type of shared monitoring produces adolescents more willing to ask for accountability instead of parents needing to require accountabililty.

Parents provide an important factor, but other significant non-parental adults impact adolescent development also (Chang et al. 2010; DuBois and Karcher 2005; Smith 2005; Zimmerman, Bingenheimer, and Notaro 2002). These adults can serve in a variety of relationships, providing value as surrogate parents. The help these additional intergenerational connections provide is different in the transition from adolescence to adult life than the help peers provide (Chang et al. 2010). Parents play the most important

role, but other non-parental, adult mentors, including youth workers, can exert high influence on the spiritual development of adolescents (Smith 2005).

David Elkind (2001) warns that parents are marginalizing their role in the lives and development of their children, forcing adolescents to replace the family relationships with deeper peer relationships. Patricia Hersch (1998) describes the results of adults spending less time with youth as the creation of "a tribe apart." Therefore, the challenge comes in finding adults willing to invest in the life of an adolescent (Root and Dean 2011).

Adult society produces the traits adolescents' exhibit. Too often, adolescents receive the majority of the blame for issues they face or problems they endure as if they exist in a vacuum. The parent generation passes on its best and worst to the next generation, and adolescents acculturate to the broader world they inherit (Clydesdale 2007; Santrock 2010). This socialization process includes faith. Spiritual formation problems or continuity of faith issues identified in the next generation reflect the religious values and state of the parents, adults, and the culture at large around them (Dean 2010; Smith et al. 2011).

Research in United States religious practices points to the influential role of parents in the faith development of adolescents, and they continue to exert one of the greatest influences on the religious life of adolescents (Bengtson 2013; Black 2006; Boyatzis, Dollahite, and Marks 2006; Chang et al. 2010; Chaves 2011; Dean 2010; Jones 2011; Root 2010; Smith 2005, 2009; Waggoner 2008). Parents reproduce themselves not only physically in the biological sense, but spiritually in the religious context as well. Vern Bengtson's (2013, 189) research found in his analysis of a twenty-five year

longitudinal study that religious "nones" transfer their belief system to their children just as effectively as religious families. Mark Chaves (2011, 90) points to a higher religious emphasis in evangelical families, in contrast to mainline denominational families, resulting in the twenty percent better retention rate of evangelical youth staying in the faith.

The relationship between the parents and the parent to adolescent relationship influences adolescent faith. The stronger the marriage and closer the adolescent connection to parents, the higher the impact on an adolescent's religious life (Day et al. 2009). Divorce shakes adolescent ontological security, or sense of being. The split in the family divides the adolescent's primary community that shapes being and identity. The implications bring new challenges to this age group's religious formation (Root 2010).

Peer Factor

While the family unit is important in adolescent development, peers exert significant influence in adolescent life (Brown and Dietz 2009; Vitaro, Boivin, and Bukowski 2009). Piaget (1954) views peers as more important than parents in the moral development of adolescents because peer interaction transmits knowledge independent of parents and other authority structures. Henry Stack Sullivan also emphasizes the value of peer friendships. In early adolescence, the need for intimacy draws teens to each other to meet social needs. A failure to build strong friendships can lead to a lower sense of self-worth and loneliness (Sullivan 1953). Adolescents depend less on parents and more on peers for intimacy, friendship, and reassurance of worth. When friends experience the positives and negatives of the adolescent journey together, it helps form their well-being. (Bukowski, Motzoi, and Meyer 2009; Laursen and Pursell 2009).

Adolescence brings an increase in the significnace of peer groups and cliques (Santrock 2010). Mid-adolescents' need for social connections providing affiliation, security, and support drive the basic developmental motivation for peer groups. They want a safe place to find, develop, and build meaningful relationships. Due to the abandonment they feel from adults, the peer group provides the opportunity for and creates the potential for powerful relationships (Clark 2011).

Adolescents do not always choose their peer group. As they form ideas about their fellow peer identities, both individual and group, their own personality type and social actions create categories where they place other individuals based on their correlation of perceived identity. Potenial similarities push peers into groups, while differences force some peers into other groups. Peers may place each other in particular groups based on the matching of assumed identity or exclude someone based on the unrelated nature of a peer group (Barber, Eccles, and Stone 2001).

Adolesents experience a higher influence of peer pressure than children. At about the eight or ninth grade, peer conformity peaks. (Brown and Larson 2009; Brown et al. 2008). Transitions in school or family bring increased conformity to peer pressure, due to the lack of security brought by these times. Adolescents who experience higher levels of uncertainty, due to affected self-esteem and social anxiety, also conform to peers at a higher rate. Peers conform more when they feel pressure from another adolescent they perceive has a higher status (Cohen and Prinstein 2006; Prinstein 2007; Prinstein and Dodge 2008).

Due to the renegotiated relationship with parents, peers gain even more influence on life decisions during late-adolescence. Often friends with no particular expertise,

additional life experience, common sense, or discernment serve as guides through some of the most vital decisions of early adult life (Smith et al. 2011). The positive influence of friendships can be seen in spiritual vitality.

Both parents and peers play essential roles in the development of adolescents. They shape the religious life of teens more than any other factor. Parents shape the spiritual development of adolescents through mirroring, mediating, and monitoring. As parents guide adolescents through new choices and freedoms, involving other adults in the lives of teens provides more opportunities for adult modeling and interaction with teens.

The peer factor manifests its influence as adolescents develop relationships with friends, sometimes in place of parents or other authority figures. The adolescent identity brings social negotiations, resulting in peers forming groups to foster safe meaningful relationships. The onging development of relationships and group interaction can affect self-worth, security, and identity.

Youth ministry has an opportunity at this critical time in development to help adolescent's spiritual vitality through the influence of parents and peers. The ministry can partner with parents to help them pass on their faith to the next generation, and can help connect families and other mature Christian adults into the spiritual development of students that can last beyond adolescence. Youth ministry can provide Christian peer interaction and relationships with others on the journey of physical, psychologocial, and spiritual development. Small groups provide places for parent, adult, and peer interaction, where exploration and questions about faith occur where it is safe to express doubts. The

Holy Spirit orchestrates the developmental factors of parents and peers who are influential in the transformation process of adolescents becoming like the image of Christ.

Youth Group Experience

Youth group experiences can contribute to spiritual vitality. Although a number of experiences can contribute to holistic spiritual adolescent development, this study examines factors associated with youth ministry in AG churches. The first section presents an overview of research on the value of youth clubs. The next section focuses on faith language articulation development opportunities in youth group experiences. The last section evaluates the role of family in youth group experiences.

Religion provides a positive developmental element to adolescents' lives (Santrock 2010, 388). A study by Mark Chaves' (2011, 55) found "congregations remain the most significant social form of American religion." Combine that with Santrock's assertion and the role youth group experiences play in discipleship comes into focus.

Youth ministry books help youth leaders make disciples. Examples include *Simple Student Ministry: A Clear Process for Strategic Youth Discipleship* (Geiger 2009), and *Building A Youth Ministry That Builds Disciples: A Small Book About A Big Idea* (Robbins 2011). The AG published *The 360-Degree Disciple: Discipleship Going Full Circle* (Garrison 2009) with a chapter by Steve Pulis on youth discipleship. The tools such as these can assist youth leaders and churches in the process of developing spiritual vitality in post-high school young adults, but resources alone do not make disciples.

Value of Youth Clubs

Structured, organized activities such as clubs for adolescents, at school or in the community, demonstrated favorable influence on positive youth development (Busseri

and Rose-Krasnor 2009; Fauth, Roth, and Brooks-Gunn 2007). The Boys and Girls Clubs of America (BGCA) serve as an example. Adolescents participating in BGCA experienced improved academic achievement and lower risk and behavior problems (Anderson-Butcher, Newsome, and Ferrari 2003). The BGCA developed Family PLUS, an after-school program, to strengthen families. The strategy links the school, youth club, and family in a contextualized effort to place children at the center of a program led by family-friendly staff. Results show benefit to children (Kreider and Raghupathy 2010). Another study reveals that early adolescent, inner-city girls develop close friendships at youth clubs better than at school or in the neighborhood. Participation for these girls was motivated by having fun with friends (Loder and Hirsch 2003).

A British study by Leon Feinstein, John Bynner, and Kathryn Duckworth (2006) reported that social interaction between adolescents contribute to identity formation in leisure activity contexts like sports and community centers as well as youth and church clubs. They found church clubs offering a variety of youth group experiences, including fellowship, sports, and choir. Participants did their homework and helped at home, demonstrating a source of personal control. Those who attended church clubs tended to not go to pubs (Feinstein, Bynner, and Duckworth 2006). Likewise, sports in church youth group experiences provide value through the encouragement of social activities and interaction and contribute to continued church involvement (Carpenter 2001). Rebecca Fauth, Jodie Roth and Jeanne Brooks Gunn's (2007) study in Chicago reported that in nonviolent neighborhoods lower substance abuse occurred in adolescents that participated in church groups. These studies demonstrate that youth group experiences, including youth clubs, provide a positive impact on adolescent development.

Denise Janssen's (2013) dissertation research found the youth group experiences that help young people remain active in church and strengthen adolescents' faith emphasize relationships with authentic, consistent adult role models journeying with teens. Scott Desmond's study on adolescent religious development found higher attendance at religious services linked to either living with both parents or strong peer relationships (Desmond, Morgan, and Kikuchi 2010).

Wesley Black also explored the significance of relational factors and young adults who continue to attend church. His "study found that the church participation and spiritual depth of young adult friends is one of the strongest links to whether or not a young person is active in church beyond the high school years" (Black 2006, 26). The more youth find similar age friends and older adult Christian friends that attend church, the more likely youth and young adults are to attend church. He also found the depth of those relationships with God have a direct impact on church attendance. If the friends have a minimal commitment to Christ, however, the person's attendance decreases (Black 2006).

Attending a Christian club at school also produces higher church attendance after high school. Black (2006, 29) proposes "students who attend campus clubs are demonstrating more personal initiative than those who just attend church with their families, which translates into a personal decision to remain active when they are away from parents." Black's development of a scale to predict continued faithfulness in church attendance following high school graduation, The Lasting Faith Scale, "reveals that discipleship, family influences and relationships are among the factors that influence faithfulness in church attendance" after high school graduation (Black 2008). These

studies suggest that youth group experiences benefit from the positive influence of parents, other adults, and peer relationships resulting in longer continued involvement in church.

Faith Language Articulation

Youth group experiences provide opportunities to cultivate a faith language, or how to communicate what a person believes in their own words. This overcome what Smith (2005, 267-68) identifies as religious inarticulation, the inability to express what one believes, by young adults. Craig Dykstra's book points out how the development of religious language impacts identity. An adolescents' social and linguistic quest for a way of life brings religious identity and purpose through the verbal expression of beliefs and practices (Dykstra 2005). James Heft identifies a context for this opportunity in characteristics of churches that successfully pass on the faith. Adult leaders, full-time and volunteers, develop intentional experiences where youth learn their faith language and allow its message to impact their lives. Students apply it through the spiritual disciplines of the church (Heft 2006).

The church can help young adults develop sensitivity to the Holy Spirit's shaping of their lives into the image of Jesus. The development of a faith language includes adolescents thinking about and articulating experiences based on biblical truth in a new generation's vocabulary. The Pentecostal movement spread globally and multiplied due to its ability to maintain shared global attributes while encouraging unique local characteristics including contextualized expressions (Dempster, Klaus, and Petersen 1999). Pastors, youth leaders, and parents can assist young people in talking about Spirit-empowered discipleship in ways that make sense in their context. The previous

generation's choice of words or affinity to particular terms may not adequately describe the beliefs and practices for another generation.

The development of a personal faith language leads to religious enculturation. Adolescents identify and emulate their beliefs through social contact with other practitioners. Dykstra (2005, 116) explains, "We do not become involved in and take on communal religious life without changing. We cannot live it without becoming, in some ways, different people ourselves. People tend to take on as features of their own identities the values, beliefs, patterns of activity, and ways of seeing of primary social groups." Youth groups can provide experiences that serve as a laboratory for socialization into faith practices.

Youth group experiences can serve as a vital opportunity to help adolescents articulate what they believe, and consequently encourage the formation of an identity based on those religious beliefs. If a new generation can contextualize their beliefs and experiences in terms they develop, their authentic, personalized expressions of truth take deeper root in their identity.

Adaptation of Spirit-empowerment language, descriptions, and experiences based on biblical principles provide openness to more expressions of the Holy Spirit, instead of limiting to a particular cultural experience or preference. The quality of Christian relationships directly affects continued church attendance after high school (Black 2006, 26). The benefits can begin when Christian relationships, both same age friends and older adults, influence adolescent faith and their ability to express what they believe. This aids in the identity development of adolescents and leads to the enculturation of religious

beliefs, which encourages continued spiritual vitality later in post-high school young adults.

Role of Family

Vern Bengston researched religious similarity between parents and their young adult children. His findings show a stable level of transmission of faith over time between families in 1970 and 2005 (Bengston 2013, 185). Non-religious families pass down their values and standards at the same steady rate as religious parents pass down their religious values and beliefs (Bengtson 2013). Bengtson (2013, 190) finds the factors that contribute to over half of children following their parent's religious tradition include "strong and intentional bonds between family and church or synagogue … an emphasis on parents' role modeling … the value given to family solidarity …" and "a reliance on strong and exclusive bonds within the religious community." The family needs the faith community and the faith community needs the family to pass on the faith to the next generations. These two God-created structures function better through the synergy of their strengths.

Family ministry, defined as ministry by the family and to the family, encompasses the combination of family and church to make disciples. Several practical tools exist to help churches and families in this endeavor including *Orange*, a local church produced family ministry program, and its related resources (Joiner 2009; Joiner and Nieuwhof 2010) and *Sticky Faith* (Powell 2011a; Powell 2011b). A principle in *We Build People*, an AG program, demonstrates the emphasis it gives to the value of family and parents in discipleship, "Parents are their children's first and primary teachers" (Clarensau, Lee, and Mills 1996, 33).

The definitions and models of family ministry vary. Michelle Anthony (2012, 23) points out "a relationship with God … really fosters faith." She categorizes four models for churches: family-friendly, family-sensitive, family-empowered, and family-centered (Anthony 2012, 23-24). She further explains that family ministry helps the church to exist as a family of families (Anthony 2012, 45). Paul Renfro (2009, 40) defines family ministry as "the process of intentionally and persistently realigning a congregation's proclamation and practices so that parents are acknowledged, trained, and held accountable as the persons primarily responsible for the discipleship of their children." He also summarizes the different views on family ministry with three perspectives: family-based, family-equipping, and family-integrated (Renfro 2009, 40, 100, 144). Different leaders advocate these three perspectives and an overview of each provides helpful insights to this study.

Mark DeVries champions the family-based ministry model. He points to time pressures on families as a limitation in faith transmission, and the benefit of additional significant Christian adult influences as the need for family-based ministry. "For the minority, that extended family will simply affirm the healthy Christian values they (teenagers) find at home. But for the majority, an extended Christian family is imperative to allow them to overcome the spiritual deficits of their families of origin. For many, the church may be the only Christian family they (teenagers) ever know" (DeVries 2004, 79). Churches utilizing young adults as youth leaders need more than this one person in the disciple making process. "By and large, the age-driven transience of twenty-something youth directors severely limits their long-term availability" (DeVries 2004, 86). The

challenges of current youth ministry provide an opportunity for a family-based ministry model.

DeVries (2004, 176) defines the strengths of his version of family ministry: "Family-based youth ministry accesses the incomparable power of the nuclear family and connects students to an extended family of Christian adults to the end that those students grow toward maturity in Christ." In short, the family-ministry model plus the traditional youth-ministry model equals family-based youth ministry. DeVries (2004, 103) asserts, "There is no such thing as successful youth ministry that isolates teenagers from the community of faith." His model utilizes the existing youth ministry structure of the church with an emphasis on empowering parents and equipping the extended family of the church to help make disciples.

Renfro's second model, family-equipping, changes the framework of ministry programs to place a stronger emphasis on the parents as the primary disciplers of children. Jay Strother (2009, 144) defines family-equipping as churches that retain "some age-organized ministries but structure the congregation to partner with parents at every level of ministry so that parents are acknowledged, equipped, and held accountable for the discipleship of their children." This approach moves a step away from traditional youth ministry to refocus on ensuring parents can train their children in the faith without dissolving all age-organized ministries.

The third model, family-integrated or family-driven, moves the farthest away from traditional youth ministry. This movement insists "on integration as an ecclesiological principle" (Baucham 2007, 196). It rejects age-organized ministries and has no youth pastors or children's pastors (Baucham 2007, 191-95). Families worship

together; all church events, services, and activities occur together. Evangelism and discipleship, with education as a key component, happen in and through the home (Baucham 2007, 195-200). The family-integrated model centers its philosophy "upon many of the same principles that drive the home education movement" (Baucham 2007, 200). This model seems to fit in a smaller constituency of churches as home-schoolers account for "less than two percent of elementary and secondary students" (Renfro 2009, 82).

The family-integrated model overstates its case against age-organized ministries, like youth ministry, by relying on the repeated use of statistics not based on research, such as the 70 to 88 percent of teens dropout from church, or utilizing inadequate methodology as explained in chapter one (Baucham 2007, 12, 176, 184, 217). This movement calls for an abandonment of traditional youth ministry, stating "no clear mandate for the current approach" in the Bible (Baucham 2007, 181).

Context assumes a vital role in considering the need for youth ministry. No "youth culture" or concept of adolescence existed in the world of the Bible. Centuries later, the study of adolescent development and adolescent psychology began with G. Stanley Hall in 1904 (Hall 1904).

The modern world forces families and teenagers to live different lives than the ancient world. Joseph Hellerman (2009, 22) states vocation, spouse, and residence are the three most important life-decisions made by contemporary Americans. In an individualistic culture like the United States, these decisions affect personal identity and often reside solely with the individual. Most of the world does not live in individualistic

cultures, but in collectivist, family-group cultures, similar to the Mediterranean setting of the Bible. In contrast,

> People in biblical times simply did not make major life decisions on their own. An ancient Israelite, for example, typically did not have to determine whom he was going to marry, what he was going to do for a living, or where he was going to reside. All these decisions were made for him by his community, that is, by his family and the broader society to which he belonged. (Hellerman 2009, 24)

The "great majority of people in collectivist peasant societies (such as Jesus' first-century Galilee) never leave home" (Hellerman 2009, 24-27). Current life choices, the consequences of those choices, ministry to this age group, and the process of discipleship differ dramatically from the culture of the Bible. It seems inappropriate to use the historical and cultural context of a different people group and time, one without "youth," to disprove the need for youth ministry in a modern culture.

Marcia Bunge (2008, 349) finds "programs for youth rarely include parents; and when they do, it is more to 'inform' parents about youth activities than to engage parents in meaningful conversations with their children about faith or service activities." Youth ministries can shift from disengagement with parents to intentional empowerment of parents to fulfill their God-given role as primary disciplers of their children.

One practical starting point that connects the extended church family to individual families involves intergenerational ministry. Brenda Snailum, in an article for Christian Education Journal, "Implementing Intergenerational Youth Ministry within Existing Evangelical Church Congregations: What Have We Learned?" recommends beginning with the current status of a congregation and balancing intergenerational values with age-specific ministry. Her work show a paradigm shift involves more than a youth ministry initiative to create intergenerational ministry (Snailum 2012). This approach allows churches to continually transition to better models while focusing on biblical principles as

the long-term goal. Parents and children can potentially make easier changes in ministry expectations when they understand the reason for the shifts. Churches that abandon current structures, such as age appropriate children's and youth ministry, may run the risk of some families leaving that church for one providing a continuation of the ministries to which the family has grown accustomed.

Summary

Studies demonstrate that youth group experiences, including youth clubs, provide a positive impact on adolescent development. Precedent research finds that the quantity and quality of relationships, especially from parents, other significant Christian adults, and the church play an important role. Youth groups also make a difference in positive youth development, although specific experiences do not seem necessary for spiritual development. The relationships at church youth clubs can help adolescents develop a faith language, strengthening religious beliefs as part of the young adult's identity.

The family-based, family-equipping, and family-integrated models of ministry provide a spectrum designed to help churches partner with Christian families for spiritual vitality in post-high school young adults. Individual churches need to assess how to make disciples of those from non-Christian families when evaluating changes to make in ministry paradigms. Even though the models apply the principle in different ways, one common conclusion emerges: parents and churches can work together to produce long-term disciples.

A variety of models offer opportunities for different churches to find the approach that fits their context. Anthony (2012, 24) establishes a worthwhile benchmark, "Today's family ministry needs a mission that says the entire faith community will feel the

responsibility of raising a spiritually transformed generation of children." The AG needs to provide solutions for churches and parents who want to work together to better disciple their children. A variety of definitions and models for family ministry exist. Some versions prescribe radical change in the current structure; others seek to shape the next stage of an evolving ministry paradigm with gradual shifts. Both parents and churches need resources with adaptable solutions to fit local contexts, involving the factors that contribute to spiritual vitality in post-high school young adults.

Conclusion

This chapter addresses all four research questions concerning what biblical theological characteristics, spiritual formation factors, social considerations, and youth group experiences shape and contribute to continued spiritual vitality that could facilitate retention in AG post-high school young adults. The Holy Spirit functions as more than a factor in spiritual development. As the architect, the Holy Spirit guides the journey. The way an adolescent chooses to respond to promptings of the Holy Spirit affects the next steps in the journey. An adolescent's ability to recognize the leading of the Holy Spirit, discern wise counsel from parents and peers, and interpret God's word as a light for a teenager's path often determines the type of journey they experience and the type of person they become. The Holy Spirit utilizes the faith community to form humans into the image of Christ through discipleship.

Several discipleship factors impact adolescent discipleship, however, parents continue to exert one of the greatest influences. Peers add their own significance and both provide unique opportunities in the context of church youth group experiences for this discipleship process.

Youth ministry can emphasize the development of relationships while allowing for experimentation with personal belief by providing a safe place to ask questions in the faith community. This ongoing process can assist faith articulation experiences and personal application producing adoption of faith practices and faith texts resulting in faith becoming a way of life. The contextualization of Spirit-empowerment language to the next generation can help facilitate continued reliance on the Holy Spirit to shape followers into the image of Christ. Youth ministry can partner with family ministry to provide a broad spectrum of models for churches to help families make disciples.

Discipleship involves several components that influence retention of adolescents for the kingdom of God after high school. The Holy Spirit guides the journey and the components that potentially contribute to continued spiritual vitality identified in this chapter. Those components include (1) the level of spiritual formation achieved, (2) the nature and perceived quality of social consideration, especially parental and peer groups, and (3) the nature of the actual youth group experiences including faith articulation development opportunities, and family ministry. These three serve as independent variables and were operationalized using a variety of scales developed by the Fuller Youth Institute (FYI). The next chapter (chapter 5) explains the research design, including the instrument design, sample, and data analysis.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design is based on the College Transition Project (CTP) questionnaires developed by Fuller Youth Institute (FYI). This chapter will discuss how the CTP questionnaires were adapted for this research, how the sample was constructed, how the questionnaires were applied to the subjects over the three years of the study, and a discussion of how the data was analyzed. The research design helps to answer the research questions concerning what spiritual formation factors, social considerations, and youth group experiences contribute to continued spiritual vitality and could facilitate retention in AG post-high school young adults.

Instrument Design

FYI conducted the CTP consisting of four different research initiatives. Three of the four initiatives were primarily quantitative in design: First, a pilot study utilizing sixty-nine youth group graduates was conducted. Then, two longitudinal studies, College Transition Project One and College Transition Project Two (CTP2), were completed with seniors in high school and follow up questionnaires over their next three years in college (Powell 2011a). FYI's research through the CTP produced the Sticky Faith youth movement, providing web, print, and other resources to churches and parents to help students "stick to their faith" after high school.

Permission was received from FYI to use elements of its CTP questionnaires and to replicate its research design. This research became an official AG Youth Study (AGYS) with official sponsorship from the General Council of the AG.

AGYS Year One Questionnaire (Spring 2011)

The Assemblies of God Youth Study (AGYS) included the following sections: demographics, spiritual formation factors, social concerns, youth group experiences, and risk behaviors. The AGYS primarily utilized the CTP2 questionnaires. Minor words were changed to fit the AG context and occasionally a question was added to a scale to measure a specific AG programmatic element, such as Fine Arts Festival participation or Speed the Light giving. Participants were not required to answer all questions. Each question provided "No answer" as a potential answer. Chapter six, Findings, reported the number of responses per item as "n." Each data collection point represents a wave. The CTP2 wave one (CTP2W1) questionnaire provided the basis for the AGYS wave one (AGYSW1) questionnaire. The following information shaped the final version of the AGYSW1 questionnaire (see appendix A).

Demographic Questions

The AGYSW1 utilized the demographics questions from CTP2W1 with some changes. AGYSW1 added a Pentecostal demographic question, "Do you speak in tongues?" AGYSW1 also changed church size from CTP2W1's options to match the categories the AG uses to measure church size and includes a wider range for smaller churches (See Table 5.1).

Table 5.1 Church Size

CTP2W1	AGYSW1
1 to 100	1 to 49
101 to 300	50 to 99
301 to 800	100 to 199
over 800	200 to 399
	400 to 699
	over 700

AGYSW1 added the following question pertaining to AG programmatic specific ministries: "Before High School were you involved in any of the following church programs? Mpact Girls (Missionettes), Royal Rangers, Children's church." AGYSW1 also added the following question: "In an average day (a 24-hour cycle), approximately how many entertainment hours do you spend with TV, video games, online, media, etc.?"

Spiritual Formation Questions

The AGYS spiritual formation questions were based on the following scales: Religious Behavior Scale, Religious Support Scale (Fiala, Bjorck, and Gorsuch 2002), Intrinsic Religious Motivation (Hoge 1972), and Narrative Faith Relevance Scale (Lee 2004). The AG national youth ministries department emphasizes the spiritual habits of pray, live, tell, serve, and give. The first four habits were already included in the Religious Behavior scale, however, AGYSW1 added the following item to include give: "give tithes and/or offerings?"

AGYSW1 made the following changes to the CTP2W1 combined Intrinsic Religious Motivation (Hoge 1972) and Narrative Faith Relevance Scale (Lee 2004) for better understanding by AG participants: (1) CTP2W1 "My faith *involves* all of my life" to AGYSW1 "My faith *affects* all of my life;" (2) CTP2W1 "It is important to me that my future career somehow *embody* a calling from God" to AGYSW1 "It is important to me

that my future career somehow *represent* a calling from God;" (3) CTP2W1 "In my life, I experience the presence of *the Divine*" to AGYSW1 "In my life, I experience the presence of *God*;" (4) CTP2W1 "Although I believe in *my religion*, I feel there are many more important things in life" to AGYSW1 "Although I believe in *Christianity*, I feel there are many more important things in life;" and (5) CTP2W1 "I try to carry my *religion* over into all my other dealings in life" to AGYSW1 "I try to carry my *faith* over into all my other dealings in life" [emphasis mine]. The AG national youth ministries department's emphasized spiritual habits of live, serve, and give were already included in this scale. AGYSW1 added two questions to measure pray and tell: "Prayer is vital to my relationship with God and others" and "Telling others about Christ and his love is part of my life as a Christian."

Social Consideration Questions

Social considerations were measured with four scales: Parent Support Scale (Powell 2011a), Parental Religious Modeling (Powell 2011a), Parental Monitoring (Lamborn et al. 1991), and Social Support (Powell 2011a). AGYSW1 excluded four questions from Parental Religious Modeling (Powell 2011a) used in the CTP2W1: **(1) "**How often does your mother/stepmother talk with you about her own faith or beliefs in God?" (2) "How often does your father/stepfather talk to you about his own faith or beliefs about God?"(3) "How often does your mother/stepmother talk with you about YOUR faith or what YOU believe about God?" and (4) "How often does your father/stepfather talk with you about YOUR faith or what YOU believe about God?"

Youth Group Experience Questions

The following measures of youth group experiences developed by the FYI for the CTP were employed in the AGYSW1: Intergenerational Worship and Relationships, Youth Group Activities and Involvement, Perception of Youth Group Experience, and Recommendations for Youth Group Improvement (Powell 2011a). The AGYS added the Intergenerational Worship and Relationships instrument (Powell 2011a) to Wave One to measure activity while students were still in high school. AGYS changed the wording from CTP2 wave four's instructions, "Thinking back to high school, how often did you…" to: "How often do you do…" AGYSW1 also added the following experiences to the CTP2W1 Youth Group Activities and Involvement measure to incorporate AG programmatic specifics: discipleship programs, youth camps, youth conventions, campus missionary, Christian club at school, district Fine Arts Festivals, Bible Quiz, and Speed the Light fundraisers. AGYSW1 changed the following wording to better represent or clarify AG understanding of the activity. AGYSW1 added "United States or out of the country" to further clarify a mission trip. AGYSW1 changed CTP2W1's "local service and outreach" to "community service projects," and changed the question, "How many times in the PAST TWO MONTHS have you been involved in some type of ministry (e.g. worship team, usher, drama team, led small group, taught elementary or junior high students, etc.) at your church?" to "How many times in the PAST TWO MONTHS have you been involved in some type of ministry (for example: worship team, greeter, drama team, led small group, taught elementary or junior high students, etc.) at your church?"

AGYSW1 made the following modifications to CTP2W1's Perceptions of Youth Group Experience (Powell 2011a). AGYSW1 changed CTP2W1's "I like my youth

pastor(s)" to "I like my youth leader(s)" for participants with volunteer youth leaders that might not call their leader a youth pastor. AGYSW1 added "The church helps me to answer problems I face outside of church" and "The church helps me to address global problems such as poverty and inequality." AGYSW1 made the following modifications to CTP2W1's Recommendations for Youth Group Improvement (Powell 2011a). AGYSW1 changed CTP2W1's "Service projects" to "Community service projects" and added the following: "Bible memorization," "Giving to missions," "Developing my gifts," "Discuss how to share my faith at school," and "Discuss issues about life outside of church."

Risk Behavior and Miscellaneous Questions

AGYSW1 measured frequency of participation in risk behaviors with the Risk Behavior Scale, and included the Reynolds Short Forms of the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Crowne and Marlowe 1960) to control for social desirability. AGYSW1 incorporated the following two optional, open-ended questions the CTP used in a later wave: "Reflect on your experience in high school youth group as a whole. What part of that experience was most significant for you personally?" and "What, if anything, do you wish had been different about your high school youth group experience?" AGYSW1 also added the following three optional, open-ended questions: "What would you say 'being a Christian' is all about?" "In what ways have your parents shaped your answer to that question?" and "In what ways did your experiences in high school youth ministry shape your answer to that question?" The open-ended questions provided an opportunity to add a narrative to certain aspects of the study.

Pilot Study

The questionnaire was given to a pilot group to ensure the questions were understandable to high school participants. Five recent youth group graduates completed the preliminary version of the AGYSW1 questionnaire on March 31, 2011, at Central Assembly of God in Springfield, Missouri. They were asked to provide input on any questions that were difficult to understand. It took them a mean time of 22 minutes and 38 seconds to answer the quantitative questions and 25 minutes and 52 seconds to complete the entire wave one questionnaire including the last five open-ended optional questions.

Three changes were made based on the input from the preliminary version of the questionnaire. One question was added: "Is your youth leader/youth pastor…" followed with "Paid full-time," "Paid part time," "Volunteer,' "Don't know," and "no answer" as answer options. Some students were not familiar with the AG programmatic specific term "campus missionary." The following options were added as potential responses: "I do not know what a campus missionary is" and "I was not a Campus Missionary." Finally, based on responses from the preliminary version, formatting changes like font size and line spacing were made to make the questionnaire easier to follow.

AGYS Year Three Questionnaire (Spring 2013)

The AGYS wave three (AGYSW3) focused on the following sections: demographics, spiritual formation factors, social concerns, and risk behaviors. The AGYSW3 questionnaire started with the AGYSW1 instrument and made the following changes utilizing the instruments from CTP2 wave one through five questionnaires. The

following information shaped the final version of the AGYSW3 questionnaire (see appendix B).

Demographic Questions

The AGYSW3 utilized the demographic questions from CTP2. The CTP focused on the transition to college and all participants were college students. The AGYS, however, did not limit the study to college students and included all participants after high school. The AGYSW3 changed wording to include post-high school young adults not in college. Examples include removing the words "in college" from the CTP2 question about preparedness in "Managing my time in college." Adding the option, "Not in college," to some potential responses also modified certain questions. The following demographic question and potential responses were added: "Are you a college student?" "Yes, full-time at a 4-year college," "Yes, part-time at a 4-year college," "Yes full-time at a 2-year college," "Yes, part-time at a 2-year college," "Yes, at another type of college," "Not a college student," and "No answer." One additional clarifying question was inserted, "Are you attending the same college/university as last year?" Non-college students were asked to not answer four questions pertaining to items such as type of college and chapel service attendance.

Spiritual Formation Questions

Spiritual formation was measured using the same Religious Behavior Scale in AGYSW1. Two items were deleted to reflect the new context of a participant who is no longer in high school. An additional item was deleted that had been added to wave one to account for AG specific content. AGYSW3 added "participate in community service or justice work that helps people in need" to the Religious Behavior Scale. The wave three

questionnaire added the Religious Identity Scale, and Faith Maturity Scale. AGYSW3 deleted the item "attend a school-sponsored chapel" since this study was intended for more than college students.

Social Consideration Questions

Social considerations were measured with the following scales: Social Support 2 Scale (Powell 2011a), Social Provisions Scale (Cutrona and Russell 1987), Social and Academic Adjustment Scales (Woosley 2003), Family Member Well-Being Index (McCubbin and Thompson 1991) and a scale from CTP to measure use of social media (Powell 2011a). AGYSW3 deleted "I am satisfied with my courses this semester/quarter" from the Social and Academic Adjustment Scales (Woosley 2003).

Risk Behavior and Miscellaneous Questions

AGYSW3 measured participation in risk behaviors with the Risk Behavior Scale (Search Institute 2008). AGYSW3 simplified responses by asking for frequency in risk behaviors "during the last 30 days" and eliminating the phrase "during the last 12 months." The reliability of participants remembering risk behavior frequencies from several months ago was questioned and contributed to this change. The "Reynolds Short Forms of the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale" (Crowne and Marlowe 1960) was included as a control for social desirability. AGYSW3 used two additional scales created by FYI for the CTP: Preparation for Transition and College Environment and Experience Scale (Powell 2011a). AGYSW3 deleted the phrase from the College Environment and Experience Scale (Powell 2011a): "My professors seem to care about me as a person."

AGYSW3 ended with the addition of the following four optional, open-ended questions:

- "Since leaving high school, what's changed about the way you view God?"
- "What doubts or questions about your faith have you had?"
- "What would you say being a Christian is all about?"
- "If you had an opportunity to speak to a group of high school students about what it's like as a Christian to leave youth group what would you say to prepare them?"

AGYSW3 adapted some of the open-ended questions from the CTP2 questions. The open-ended questions provided an opportunity for participants to add a narrative to the study.

Pilot Study

The questionnaire was given to a pilot group to ensure the questions made sense to participants. Five recent high school graduates completed a preliminary version of the wave three questionnaire on March 24, 2013, at Central Assembly of God in Springfield, Missouri. Participants offered input on any questions where the wording needed clarification. The responses from this trial run resulted in the addition of the following introduction to the four qualitative questions. "The last four questions are open-ended and optional. Please share your honest responses about your beliefs and how they have shaped you. The additional four questions took an average of less than three minutes. If you choose not to answer these questions please click next so you can proceed to the final pages to provide your address for the gift card." The participant responses from previous questionnaires were not viewed until the completion of AGYSW3 and did not influence the creation of AGYSW3.

Sample

The CTP's second longitudinal study (CTP2) gathered data at five points, starting in the spring of the participants' senior year in high school, followed by the fall and spring of their first year in college, the spring of their second year in college, and concluding in the spring of their third year in college. CTP2's 227 participants were from different regions across the United States, the median church attendance was over 800 members and the median youth group was 51 to 100 students (Powell 2011a). Since the FYI focused on the transition to college, the CTP limited its research to high school students in the first wave who would become college students in wave two.

The Assemblies of God Youth Study (AGYS) focused on post-high school young adults including those not going to college. The AGYS also focused on AG churches and stratified its sample to reflect a wide range of small to large churches with varying size youth groups as well as volunteer, part-time paid, and full-time paid youth leaders. The sampling frame consisted of high school seniors from six regional districts across the United States, including one non-geographical region of Spanish AG churches. The five geographical regions were Southwest, Northwest, Midwest, Northeast, and Southeast. The regions were composed of AG districts.

- The Spanish region was composed of the Central, Gulf Latin American (now divided into South Central Hispanic, Texas Gulf Spanish, Texas Louisiana Hispanic, and West Texas and Plains) Midwest Latin American, Northern Pacific Latin American, Puerto Rico, Southeastern Spanish (now divided into Florida Multicultural, and Southern Latin) Southern Pacific, Southwest, and Spanish Eastern districts.

- The Southwest region was composed of the Arizona, Hawaii, New Mexico, North Texas, Northern California/Nevada, Oklahoma, Rocky Mountain, South Texas, Southern California, and West Texas districts.
- The Northwest region was composed of the Alaska, Montana, Northwest, Oregon, Southern Idaho, and Wyoming districts.
- The Midwest region was composed of the Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Northern Missouri, Ohio, South Dakota, Southern Missouri, and Wisconsin-Northern Michigan districts.
- The Northeast region was composed of the New Jersey, New York, Northern New England, Pennsylvania-Delaware, Potomac, and Southern New England districts.
- The Southeast region was composed of the Alabama, Appalachian, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Peninsular Florida, South Carolina, Tennessee, and West Florida districts.
- The Brazilian, German, Korean, National Slavic, and Second Korean ethnic districts were not included in a region.

Stratified Sampling

The AGYS wanted the sample to be representative of various sub-groups in the AG and reflect ethnicity and diverse youth group and church sizes corresponding to the AG as a whole. A stratified random sampling was determined as the best option to facilitate such a study. This model divides "a population (a sampling frame) into subpopulations (subframes), based on key independent variables and then take(s) a random (unbiased), sample from each of those subpopulations ... As the main sampling frame gets divided by key independent variables, the subframes presumably get more and

more homogeneous with regard to the key dependent variables of the study" (Bernard 2006, 153).

AG churches complete an All Church Ministries Report (ACMR) at the end of each calendar year recording attendance for different age groupings. Youth represent ages 13 to 17. The ACMR Vital Statistics for 2010 had the following percentage of participants in each of the regions for the AGYS (General Council of the Assemblies of God 2011).

- The Spanish region accounted for 11.3 percent of AG youth.
- The Southwest region accounted for 26.3 percent of AG youth.
- The Northwest region accounted for 7.2 percent of AG youth.
- The Southwest region accounted for 26.3 percent of AG youth.
- The AG has another 1.2 percent of youth in the districts not represented in AGYS participants.

During the AGYS, I served as the Student Outreach Director for the AG national youth ministries. This position provided the opportunity to enlist the help of AG district youth directors (DYD). DYDs were asked if they were interested in having their students participate during their districts' Spring 2011 youth conventions. The following districts responded: Southeastern Spanish, Rocky Mountain, Iowa, Northern New England, Pennsylvania Delaware, New York, Louisiana, New Mexico, Mississippi, Kentucky, Southern Missouri, Northern Missouri, Arizona, Oregon, and Northwest. I narrowed the list to the participating districts based on the schedule of their conventions and which districts seemed closest to matching the AG ACMR regional participant stratification sample: (1) the Southeast Spanish district represented the Spanish region, (2) the New

Mexico and Arizona districts represented the Southwest region, (3) the Northwest district, consisting of Washington and Northern Idaho, represented the Northwest region, (4) the Iowa district represented the Midwest region, (5) the Northern New England district, consisting of Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont represented the Northeast region, (6) the Louisiana district represented the Southeast region. Students were given the opportunity to participate in a random sample stratified by their regional youth convention. I attended each spring convention in the participating districts to administer the AGYSW1 questionnaire.

Procedures

Following the example of the FYI, the AG National office approved a sponsorship budget and subjects were offered an initial 25 dollar incentive to complete the first questionnaire. For the ensuing surveys, the incentive increased incrementally by 25 dollars at each wave, up to 75 dollars for the wave-three assessment. The incentive was mailed in the form of a Visa gift card to the address provided by the participant following completion of each survey.

I asked students attending district AG youth conventions in each region to participate in the AGYS. To participate in the survey, students were required to be eighteen years of age, seniors in high school, and part of an AG youth group. The incentive was explained. The first wave was a paper survey administered in person at the youth conventions in March and April of 2011 during the participants' senior year in high school. The following two waves were taken online via Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com) in April of 2012 and 2013.

Participants were required to complete a consent form that explained the longitudinal nature of the AGYS and assured confidentiality (see appendix for consent form). The same three-digit code was placed on each Wave 1 paper survey and two copies of the consent form. The participants completed and turned in one copy of the consent form and the wave one survey and kept a copy of the consent form. Regions were numbered to differentiate the sample. The first number of each code represented the participant's region and the last two numbers represented their individual number within that region. The consent form also contained contact information including a physical address used to mail the incentive and an email address for sending the links for future wave's online surveys. Participants accessed Survey Monkey with their unique code that allowed AGYS to match responses across all survey waves.

Email announcements and weekly reminders were sent to the participants in April of 2013 for the wave three survey via Survey Monkey. A final letter reminder was sent to the physical address in May if participants had still not taken the survey.

Participation in each wave

The following tables describe the participants in the AGYS. Table 5.1 shows the AGYS percentage of participants compared to the number of AG USA youth age 13-17 in that region.

Table 5.2. Geographical dispersion of sample

Region	AGYS Participants	AGYS Percent	AG USA Percent
Spanish	8	8.4	11.3
Southwest	21	22.1	26.3
Northwest	17	17.9	7.2
Midwest	16	16.8	21.3
Northeast	13	13.7	11.3
Southeast	20	21.1	21.5
Other	0	N/A	1.2
Total	95	100.0	100.1

*Percentage may not equal 100 due to rounding.

Other represents 1.2 percent of the AG youth in the districts not represented in AGYS participants. Table 5.2 shows the AGYS ethnicity compared to AG USA youth.

Table 5.3. Ethnicity of AGYS compared to the AG USA.

Ethnicity	AGYS percent	AG USA percent
White	71.6	61.1
Hispanic American	15.8	20.4
Asian American	6.3	4.1
Black American	4.2	9.1
Mixed	2.1	3.7
Native American	N/A	1.6

The AGYS did not ask about Native American ethnicity and no one indicated such in the provided blank, compared to 1.6 percent in the AG constituency. Table 5.3 shows the AGYS church size representation compared to AG USA.

Table 5.4. Church Size of AGYS compared to the AG USA.

Church Size	AGYS Percent	AG USA Percent
1-49	5.6	6.5
50-99	17.8	13.4

Table 5.3 cont.

Church Size	AGYS Percent	AG USA Percent
100-199	17.8	17.0
200-399	24.4	17.6
400-699	15.6	12.1
Over 700	18.9	31.3

The AGYS sample of geographical dispersion, ethnicity, and church size compared favorably to the national data from the AG ACMR. Table 5.4 shows the AGYS mortality rate (participants who dropped out of study).

Table 5.5. AGYS Participants and Mortality Rate.

AGYS	2011 Wave 1	2012 Wave 2	2013 Wave 3
Participants	137	102	95
Mortality rate per wave		25.5%	6.9%
Cumulative mortality rate		25.5%	30.7%

Demographics of Wave Three Sample

The following list describes the AGYS participants. Demographic data is extrapolated from AGYSW1 2011 senior year in high school for AGYSW3 participants:

- 50 percent were female and 50 percent were male
- 80.3 had a GPA of ≥ 3.0
- 46.2 percent had a GPA of ≥ 3.5
- 42 percent did not live with both parents
- 39 percent of mothers held college degrees
- 33.7 percent of fathers held college degrees
- 11.6 percent of mothers held graduate degrees

- 10.5 percent of fathers held graduate degrees
- 34.7 percent of mothers do not work outside the home
- 5.3 percent of fathers do not work outside the home
- 18.9 percent of mothers work part-time outside the home
- 5.3 percent of fathers work part-time outside the home
- 41.1 percent of mothers work full-time outside the home
- 77.9 percent of fathers work full-time outside the home
- 73.7 percent attended a public high school
- 13.7 percent were home-schooled
- 7.4 percent attended a private Christian high school
- 4.2 percent attended a private secular high school

Demographic data from AGYSW3 2013 two years after high school shows:

- 75 percent attended college at least part-time in 2013
- 15.8 percent of those attending college, attended a different college than in 2012
- 38.6 percent of those attending college, attend a public or state institution
- 27.1 percent of those attending college, attend a community college
- 5.7 percent of those attending college, attend private secular institution
- 27.1 percent of those attending college, attend a Christian college or university

The AGYS had participants from various sizes of youth groups. Table 5.5 shows youth group size demographics and Table 5.6 shows the church locations for the AGYS participants.

Table 1.6. Youth Group Size Demographics of AGYS.

Youth Group Size	Percent
1-10	12.1
11-25	26.4
26-50	20.9
51-100	24.2
Over 100	16.5

Table 5.7. Church Location of AGYS.

Context	Percent
Inner City/Urban	29.4
Suburban	40.0
Rural	30.6

Data Analysis

The Statistical Package of the Social Sciences (SPSS) was utilized to analyze the data. Since the focus of this study was to determine which demographic variables in the high school year were correlated with the level of spirituality of the subjects in Year 3 it was decided to choose three scales from AGYSW3 to become the dependent variables: Religious Behavior Scale, Religious Identity Scale, and the Risk Behavior Scale.

Similar to the FYI and the CTP findings, the AGYS study affirmed through the Social Desirability Scale that participants were providing accurate answers and not providing the answers they thought the AGYS desired (Powell 2011a). Initial analyses obtained descriptive statistics for each of the demographic variables as well as the dependent variables. Scale scores were calculated for each of the three independent variables and recodes were developed where appropriate to allow for the use of inferential statistics.

Data were then analyzed based upon the hypotheses previously identified. It was assumed that the scale scores for both the independent and dependent variables were at the interval level of measurement and thus allowed for correlation coefficients to be calculated to see if there were significant relationships between Independent Variable (IV) scale scores and Dependent Variable (DV) scale scores. When the IV was a nominal variable, example given gender, the relationships between the IV and DV were analyzed using analysis of variance when there were three or more groups or t-tests when there were two groups as in the case of gender.

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings from the research. The instruments from the wave one questionnaire, taken during the participants' senior year in high school in the spring of 2011, provided the independent variables in this longitudinal study. The independent variables included demographic questions regarding personal and church information and the assessments for spiritual formation, social considerations, and youth group experiences. Wave three questionnaires provided the three dependent variables: the Religious Behavior Scale, the Religious Identity Scale developed from the Faith Maturity Scale (Benson, Donahue, and Erickson 1993), and the Risk Behavior Scale. The SPSS program was used to determine any correlations between the independent variables and the dependent variables. The study was designed to determine which variables in the categories of demographics, spiritual formation, social considerations, and youth group experiences in the respondents' high school year appeared to contribute to their spiritual vitality two years later as measured by the dependent variables and addressing the second, third, and fourth research questions.

Dependent Variables

The concept of spiritual vitality for the subjects was operationalized as obtaining high scores on The Religious Behavior Scale, the Religious Identity Scale, and the Risk Behavior Scale.

Religious Behavior Scale

Fuller Youth Institute (FYI) created the Religious Behavior Scale for their CTP. Participants are asked to assess their frequency of involvement in eleven individual and corporate religious behaviors. A six-point scale measures responses from "less than once a month" (1) to "once a day or more" (6) on the question "how often did you"

- talk with another Christian about your faith outside of a church related context
- pray alone
- attend a worship service or church related event with your parents
- attend a worship service or church related event intended for students
- speak or try to speak with a non-Christian about your faith
- volunteer your time to serve others
- participate in a small group of your peers for religious or spiritual purposes
- read the Bible by yourself
- work in ministry side by side with adults from outside your youth group
- meet with a spiritual mentor (other than your parents)
- give tithes and/or offering

Religious Identity Scale

FYI created this scale using items from the Faith Maturity Scale (Benson, Donahue, and Erickson 1993) to assess the subjects' perception of their closeness to God and the extent to which that faith appeared to produce caring actions toward others. Participants were asked to respond on a five-point scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5) to each of the following statements:

- I feel God's presence in my relationships with others
- I am valued by God
- My life is filled with meaning and purpose
- I can turn to God for advice when I have problems
- I try to apply my faith to political and social issues
- God cares about my life and situation
- My life is committed to Jesus Christ
- It is important to me that whatever money I have be used to serve God's purposes
- I go out of my way to show love to people I meet
- I do NOT feel close to God
- I have a real sense that God is guiding me
- In choosing what to do after High School, it was important to me to seek God's will
- I like to worship and pray with others
- When I think of the things I own or would like to own, I try to remember that everything I have belongs to God
- I think Christians should be involved in promoting racial harmony and creating international understanding
- I am spiritually moved by the beauty of God's creation

Risk Behavior Scale

The Risk Behavior Scale (Search Institute 2008) asks participants about their frequency of participation (in the previous thirty days and the previous twelve months) in the following risky behaviors: drinking alcohol, gambling with money, viewing

pornography on the Internet, and engaging in sexual encounters. Fuller Youth Institute adapted the scale from the Attitudes and Behaviors measure of the Search Institute's Profiles of Student Life (1996). Participants were asked to respond on an eight-point scale ranging from "0" times (1) to "40+" times (8).

Independent Variables

The literature identified three elements of youth group experience that could potentially contribute to spiritual vitality in later years; the level of spiritual formation that was achieved, the nature and perceived quality of social support (both parental and peer groups) and the nature of the actual youth group experiences. These three independent variables, spiritual formation, social support, and youth group experiences, were operationalized using a variety of scales developed by the FYI.

Spiritual Formation Scales

The concept of spiritual formation in the high school years was operationalized using two scales, the Religious Support Scale and a combination of the Intrinsic Religious Motivation Scale and the Narrative Faith Scale.

Religious Support Scale

Fuller Youth Institute adapted William Fiala's Religious Support Scale (Fiala, Bjorck, and Gorsuch 2002) into twenty-one items that posed questions about the extent to which participants experienced a sense of support and nurture from God, their youth group leaders, and from other teens in the youth group. Participants were asked to rate their answers on a four-point scale from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (4) on the following statements:

- I can turn to other teens in my youth group for advice when I have problems
- If something went wrong, my youth group leaders would give me help
- God gives me the sense that I belong
- Other teens in my youth group care about my life and situation
- I am valued by my youth group leaders
- I feel appreciated by God
- I do NOT feel close to others teens in my youth group
- I can turn to my youth leaders for advice when I have problems
- If something went wrong, God would give me help
- Other teens in my youth group give me the sense that I belong
- My youth group leaders care about my life and situation
- I am valued by God
- I feel appreciated by other teens in my youth group
- I do NOT feel close to my youth group leaders
- I can turn to God for advice when I have problems
- If something went wrong, other teens in my youth group would give me help
- My youth group leaders give me the sense that I belong
- God cares about my life and situation
- I am valued by other teens in my youth group
- I feel appreciated by my youth group leaders
- I do NOT feel close to God

Intrinsic Religious Motivation and Narrative Faith Scale

Fuller Youth Institute's Cameron Lee combined his Narrative Faith Scale (Lee 2004) with the Intrinsic Religious Motivation Scale (Hoge 1972). The items assess whether the participant's religious decisions are internally motivated by personal values and a sense of relationship with God or external behaviors. Participants were asked, on a five-point scale how much they "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5), with the following statements:

- My faith affects all of my life
- One should seek God's guidance when making every important decision
- It is important to me that my future career somehow represents a calling from God
- It doesn't matter so much what I believe as long as I live a moral life
- In my life, I experience the presence of God
- I try to see setbacks and crisis as part of God's larger plan
- My faith sometimes restricts my actions
- Although I am a religious person, I refuse to let religious considerations influence my everyday affairs
- If and when I date someone, it is (or would be) important to me that God be pleased with the relationship
- In thinking about my schedule, I try to cultivate the attitude that my time belongs to God
- Nothing is as important to me as serving God the best I know how
- It is important to me that whatever money I have be used to serve God's purposes

- Although I believe in Christianity, I feel there are many more important things in life
- In choosing what college to attend, it was important to me to seek God's will
- I try to carry my faith over into all my other dealings in life
- When I think of the things I own or would like to own, I try to remember that everything I have belongs to God
- My religious beliefs are what really lie behind my whole approach to life
- Prayer is vital to my relationship with God and others
- Telling others about Christ and his love is part of my life as a Christian

Social Considerations Scales

The nature and perceived quality of social support from parents and peer groups was operationalized by using the Parent Support Scale, Parental Religious Modeling Scale, Parental Monitoring Scale, and the Social Support Scale.

Parent Support Scale

FYI created the Parent Support Scale through the adaptation of the Parent Form of the Social Provisions Scale (Cutrona and Russell 1987) to measure social support participants received from parents in areas including: sense of security, sense of belonging, reassurance of worth, and guidance. Participants were asked to answer “no”, “sometimes”, or “yes” concerning the following questions about their relationship with their parents:

- Can you depend on your parents to help you if you really need it?
- Do you feel you could NOT turn to your parents for guidance in times of stress?

- Do your parents enjoy the same social activities that you do?
- Do you feel personally responsible for the well-being of your parents?
- Do you feel your parents do NOT respect your skills and abilities?
- If something went wrong, do you feel that your parents would NOT come to your assistance?
- Does your relationship with your parents provide you with a sense of emotional security and well-being?
- Do you feel your competence and skills are recognized by your parents?
- Do you feel your parents do NOT share your interests and concerns?
- Do you feel your parents do NOT really rely on you for their well-being?
- Could you turn to your parents for advice if you were having problems?
- Do you feel you lack emotional closeness with your parents?

Parental Religious Modeling Scale

FYI created a scale for the CTP to measure the consistency of religious behaviors modeled by parents. Participants were asked the following questions:

- Do your parents profess to be Christians?
- During high school, which of your parents discussed the Christian faith with you, if either?
- How much does your mother/stepmother really live out what she says she believes, or "practices what she preaches"?
- How much does your father/stepfather really live out what he says he believes, or "practices what he preaches"?

The first two questions provided answer choices of mother, father, both, and neither. For the last two questions, participants were asked to respond on a four-point scale ranging from "not much" (1) to "always" (4).

Parental Monitoring Scale

The extent of parental monitoring was measured through associated items from the Susie Lamborn study (Lamborn et al. 1991). Participants were asked to respond to how much their parents really knew about the following on a three-point scale ranging from "don't know" (1) to "know a lot" (3):

- Where you go at night
- What you do with your free time
- Where you are most afternoons after school

Social Support Scale

Fuller Youth Institute created a measure where participants ranked the following groups according to how much support they felt they received from each: (a) teens in your youth group, (b) other teens outside your youth group, (c) your youth group leaders, (d) your parents, and (e) other adults in your church.

Youth Group Experience Scales

The third element that was postulated that could contribute to spiritual vitality in post-high school youth was the nature and quality of youth group experiences. This concept was operationalized using the Intergenerational Worship and Relationships Scale, the Youth Group Activities and Involvement Scale, and the Perception of Youth Group Experience Scale.

Intergenerational Worship and Relationships Scale

FYI created a scale to measure the frequency of intergenerational relationships participants experience in four religious activities. Participants were asked to respond, on a five-point scale ranging from "never" (1) to "once or more per week" (5) to the following opportunities:

- Worship alongside adults in a church service
- Participate in worship services where a special effort was made to include students in the leadership of that service
- Pray with or alongside adults who were neither your parents nor your youth leaders
- Participate with adults in service or mission work (locally or outside of your community) that was not just a youth group activity

Youth Group Activities and Involvement Scale

FYI created an assessment to measure students' frequency of participation in youth group activities over the past four years, two years, or two months depending on the activity. Examples include retreats, small groups, mission trips, and mid-week youth group. The AG added program specific activities such as serving as a campus missionary, district Fine Arts Festivals, Bible quiz, and Speed the Light fundraisers. Participants were asked to respond to a range of options from "none" to "four," "five," or "eight" depending on the activity. The questions were:

- Approximately how many discipleship programs (lasting at least 4 weeks) have you participated in during the PAST FOUR YEARS of high school?
- Approximately how many youth camps (overnight more than 3 nights away from

your local community) have you participated in during the PAST FOUR YEARS of high school?

- Approximately how many youth conventions (overnight at least 1 night away from your local community) have you participated in during the PAST FOUR YEARS of high school?
- Approximately how many semesters did you serve as a campus missionary during the PAST FOUR YEARS of high school?
- Approximately how many semesters did you participate in a Christian club at your school during the PAST FOUR YEARS of high school?
- Approximately how many district fine arts festivals have you participated in during the PAST FOUR YEARS of high school?
- Approximately how many years were you involved in Bible Quiz during the PAST FOUR YEARS of high school?
- Approximately how many years did you give to or participate in fundraisers for Speed the Light during the PAST FOUR YEARS of high school?
- Approximately how many missions trips (United States or out of the country and overnight more than 2 nights away from your local community) have you participated in during the PAST FOUR YEARS of high school?
- Approximately how many retreats (overnight at least one night away from home) have you participated in during the PAST TWO YEARS of high school?
- How many times in the PAST YEAR have you participated in community service projects with your youth group?
- How many times in the PAST TWO MONTHS have you attended a youth group

related small group meeting (e.g. discipleship or accountability groups) or Bible study?

- How many times in the PAST TWO MONTHS have you attended a SUNDAY /WEEKEND youth group program or event at your church, other than a small group?
- How many times in the PAST TWO MONTHS have you attended a MIDWEEK youth group program or event at your church, other than a small group?
- How many times in the PAST TWO MONTHS have you attended a worship service at your church?
- How many times in the PAST TWO MONTHS have you been involved in some type of ministry (e.g. worship team, greeter, drama team, led small group, taught elementary or junior high students, etc.) at your church?

Perception of Youth Group Experience Scale

FYI created a set of items to assess participants' perception of why they attend their youth group. Participants were asked to tell, based on their experiences, how true each of the statements below was on a five-point scale ranging from "not true at all" (1) to "completely true" (5):

- It's where my friends are
- My parents make me or require me to go
- My parents encourage me to go
- I feel comfortable there
- I like the pastor's sermons
- It's a place where I can really worship God

- It's fun
- I learn the Bible there
- It's a place where adults take time to really listen to me
- I like my youth leader(s)
- I experience real fellowship there
- I feel guilty if I don't go
- It reinforces what I already believe
- It's a safe place where I can talk to adults about my doubts and questions
- I can escape from the world there
- I am in leadership
- I feel like I belong there
- It's a place where I can learn to serve
- I've always gone to church / youth group
- I learn about God there
- It feels like a real community
- It's a safe place where I can talk to my peers about my doubts and questions
- It really helps me grow spiritually
- The church/youth group helps me to answer problems I face outside of church
- The church/youth group helps me to address global problems such as poverty and inequality

Recommendations for Youth Group Improvement Scale

Fuller Youth Institute created a measure of what youth group activities participants would like to experience more or less often. Participants were asked to respond to each of the following on a five-point scale ranging from "much less" (1) to "much more" (5):

- Bible study
- Time to worship
- One-on-one time with leaders
- Student-run
- Time to ask questions
- Accountability
- Games
- Community service projects
- Retreats
- Small groups
- Camps
- Mission trips
- Time for deep conversation
- Bible memorization
- Giving to missions
- Developing my gifts
- Discuss how to share my faith at school
- Discuss issues about life outside of church

Findings

Demographics

None of the demographic independent variables showed significant relationships with the three dependent variable measures. The wave one questionnaire included several demographic questions including gender, grade point average, and home environment. Participants were also asked about church demographics such as youth group size, church size, whether located in an urban, suburban, or rural setting, and if their youth leader was full time, part time, or a volunteer. None of these demographic variables were statistically significantly correlated with the measures of spiritual vitality.

The AG is a Pentecostal denomination that believes in God's direct interaction with his people. Core beliefs include the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the initial physical evidence of speaking in tongues. Wave one posed the question, "Do you speak in tongues?" Table 6.1 presents the responses to that question.

Table 6.1. Do you speak in tongues?

Response	AGYS Percent
I do not know what speaking in tongues is	1.1
Not at all	26.7
Rarely	11.1
Sometimes	34.4
Often	26.7

The responses "Sometimes" and "often" accounted for 61.1 percent with the remaining 28.9 percent answering: "I do not know what speaking in tongues is," "not at all," or "rarely." Speaking in tongues showed no statistically significant correlations with the three dependent variable measures used to assess spiritual vitality.

Spiritual Formation

Three elements from the spiritual formation scales showed significant relationships with the three dependent variables measures. The first element comes from the Religious Support Scale (Fiala, Bjorck, and Gorsuch 2002). The question regarding perceived support from "other youth in my youth group" was statistically correlated to the Religious Identity Scale ($r = .234$, $n = 87$, $p < .05$).

The second element also comes from the Religious Support Scale and the question about perceived support from "God". This too correlated significantly with the Religious Identity Scale ($r = .219$, $n = 89$, $p < .05$). There were no further significant correlations between the Religious Support Scale (Fiala, Bjorck, and Gorsuch 2002) and the Religious Behavior Scale, or the Risk Behavior Scale and any of the dependent variables. Of particular interest was The Religious Support Scale (Fiala, Bjorck, and Gorsuch 2002) questions regarding "my youth group leaders" that did not show any significant correlations with any of the three dependent variables.

Finally, the combined Narrative Faith Scale (Lee 2004) and Intrinsic Religious Motivation Scale's (Hoge 1972) correlated significantly with all three of the dependent variables: Religious Behavior Scale ($r = .313$, $n = 93$, $p < .01$), Religious Identity Scale ($r = .388$, $n = 93$, $p < .01$), and the Risk Behavior Scale ($r = -.231$, $n = 93$, $p < .05$).

Table 6.2 shows the results The Religious Behavior Scale produced when the participants were seniors in high school.

Table 6.2. Religious Behavior. Ranked from highest to lowest mean.

Rank	Religious Behavior	Mean	% at least once per week
1	pray alone	5.01	86.2
2	read the Bible by yourself	4.24	69.9
3	attend a worship service or church related event with your parents	3.99	81.1
4	attend a worship service or church related event intended for students	3.92	81.1
5	talk with another Christian about your faith outside of a church context	3.67	55.4
6	volunteer your time to serve others	3.60	56.0
7	participate in a small group of your peers for spiritual purposes	3.59	67.0
8	give tithes or offering (82.4 percent give at least once per month)	2.96	36.5
9	speak or try to speak with a non-Christian about your faith	2.69	28.6
10	meet with a spiritual mentor (other than your parents)	2.59	36.0
11	work in ministry side by side with adults from outside your youth group	2.54	28.9

Social Considerations

Parents, from the social consideration scales, showed significant relationship with the three dependent variables measures. The Parent Support Scale (Powell 2011a) correlated significantly with the Religious Identity Scale ($r = .211$, $n = 93$, $p < .05$). The Parental Monitoring Scale (Lamborn et al. 1991) correlated significantly with the Risk Behavior Scale ($r = -.413$, $n = 92$, $p < .01$). The Social Support Scale rankings of "your parents" ($r = .240$, $n = 92$, $p < .05$) and "other teens outside of your youth group" ($r = -.214$, $n = 92$, $p < .05$) correlated significantly, the former positively and the later negatively with the Risk Behavior Scale.

Risk behaviors decreased significantly when social support was highest from parents and increased when social support was highest from friends outside of the youth group. Social support from teens in the youth group, youth group workers, and other adults in the church did not correlate significantly with any of the dependent variables. The Parental Religious Modeling Scale also did not correlate significantly with any of the dependent variables.

Youth Group Experiences

Five elements from the youth group experience scales showed significant relationships with the three dependent variables measures, but many experiences did not show significant correlation. The Intergenerational Worship and Relationships measure (Powell 2011a) showed a significant correlation to the Religious Behavior Scale ($r = .263$, $n = 93$, $p < .05$). Intergenerational worship did not correlate significantly with the Religious Identity Scale or Risk Behavior Scale.

The Youth Group Activities and Involvement Scale listed sixteen different activities. Participation levels measured so low in the following three activities that they were not included in the analysis: campus missionary with 14.4 percent participation, Bible Quiz with 19.1 percent participation, and missions trips with 34.8 percent participation. Of the remaining thirteen activities, only four had positive significant correlations to any of the three dependent variables and all four of these activities correlated significantly to the Religious Behavior Scale. The activities were mid-week youth group program or event at church other than small group ($r = .223$, $n = 89$, $p < .05$), youth camp ($r = .247$, $n = 91$, $p < .05$), participation in a Christian club at school ($r = .232$, $n = 84$, $p < .05$), and youth-group related small group meeting ($r = .329$, $n = 92$, $p < .01$).

Youth-group related small group meeting ($r = .205$, $n = 92$, $p < .05$) was the only activity to correlate significantly to the Religious Identity Scale. I was surprised that youth convention ($r = -.235$, $n = 90$, $p < .05$) showed a significant negative correlation to the Religious Identity Scale. Of particular interest was the finding that eight activities did not significantly correlate with any of the three dependent variables: discipleship programs, retreats, community service projects, Sunday/weekend youth group programs,

worship service, and involvement in ministry, district fine arts festivals, and Speed the Light fundraisers.

The Perception of Youth Group Experiences questions (Powell 2011a) produced the results shown in table 6.3 when participants were high school seniors.

Table 6.3. Perception of Youth Group Experiences.

Rank	Youth Group Experience	Mean
1	I learn about God there	4.37
2	I like my youth leader(s)	4.20
3	It really helps me grow spiritually	4.14
4	It's a place where I can learn to serve	4.08
5	I learn the Bible there	4.07
6	I like the pastor's sermons	4.05
7	It's a place where I can really worship God	4.04
8*tie	It's fun	4.03
8*tie	It reinforces what I already believe	4.03
10	I feel like I belong there	4.00
11	I feel comfortable there	3.94
12	I experience real friendships there	3.91
13	It feels like a real community	3.88
14	The church/youth group helps me to answer problems I face outside of church	3.81
15	It's a safe place where I can talk to adults about my doubts and questions	3.58
16	It's a safe place where I can talk to my peers about my doubts and questions	3.54
17	It's a place where adults take time to really listen to me	3.48
18	I've always gone to church/youth group	3.41
19	I can escape from the world there	3.36
20	The church/youth group helps me to address global problems such as poverty and inequality	3.14
21	My parents encourage me to go	2.89
22	It's where my friends are	2.69
23	I feel guilty if I don't go	2.38
24	My parents make me or require me to go	1.68

The Recommendations for Youth Group Improvement resulted in the following top four responses when participants were high school seniors (in descending order): "Missions trips," "Time for deep conversations," "Developing my gifts," and "Discuss how to share my faith at school." The bottom four consisted of (in descending order):

"Giving to missions," "Small groups," "Student-run," "Games". Table 6.4 lists the complete recommendations.

Table 6.4 Recommendations for Youth Group Improvement

Rank	Recommendations for Youth Group Improvement	Mean
1	Missions trips	4.06
2	Time for deep conversations	3.95
3	Developing my gifts	3.92
4	Discuss how to share my faith at school	3.87
5* tie	Bible study	3.85
5* tie	Community service projects	3.85
7	Retreats	3.80
8	One-on-one time with leaders	3.76
9	Discuss issues about life outside of church	3.74
10	Accountability	3.66
11	Time to worship	3.63
12	Bible memorization	3.62
13	Time to ask questions	3.58
14	Camps	3.55
15	Giving to missions	3.54
16	Small groups	3.47
17	Student-run	3.33
18	Games	3.12

These results identified elements from spiritual formation factors, social considerations, and high school youth group experiences that have statistically significant correlations with higher levels of retention and spiritual vitality in AG youth two years after leaving school. The implications of these findings will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter will answer the research questions by discussing the demographic elements, spiritual formation factors, social considerations, and youth group experiences, as derived from the research, that contribute to continued spiritual vitality in Assemblies of God post-high school young adults. The following discussion takes into account that correlation is not causation. The commentary offered synthesizes research from the biblical and theological fields as well as the social sciences, each informing the significant correlation findings from the AGYS. Sections include recommendations for further study. A final summary provides the components for a theory of retention.

Demographics

None of the demographic independent variables, including gender, ethnicity, and grade point average, showed significant correlation to the spiritual vitality scales. These findings support the egalitarian nature of God's Kingdom. Everyone who learns about Christ has an equal opportunity for continued spiritual vitality. The Holy Spirit does not discriminate.

Home environment variables also did not significantly correlate with spiritual vitality factors. I expected participants' responses with regard to home environment to have a direct link with spiritual vitality. The study, however, showed factors such as respondents from single parent homes, divorced families, low educational level of parents,

or whether a parent works full-time, part-time, or not at all, did not prove to be significant determinants. Since these environmental factors have less of an impact than suspected, perhaps other factors that were not accounted for contributed to offset any detrimental effect these factors may have had on spiritual vitality. Perhaps in homes without two parents, other significant adult relationships shape adolescent spiritual development and promote resiliency. Future research could examine what factors serve this purpose in AG youth.

Church demographics, including the context of urban, suburban, or rural setting, size of the church, size of the youth group, whether a participant's youth leader was full-time, part-time, or a volunteer did not significantly correlate to the spiritual vitality scales. I expected a stronger correlation for participants from larger youth ministries or churches, especially those with full-time youth leaders. Perhaps the smaller churches and youth groups provide the same level of relationship between leaders and students as the larger churches. If the ratio of intentional relationships remains roughly the same between larger youth groups dependent on volunteers to build one-on-one relationships and smaller youth groups led by volunteers who build one-on-one relationships, the larger group may suffer the disadvantage of having to find more volunteers to build relationships with a larger number of students.

Youth group leaders in a small church may have a better understanding of their unique opportunity, realizing that if they do not build life-forming relationships, perhaps no one else will. Future research could compare different size youth groups to discover similarities or differences in organizational structure that could contribute to spiritual vitality. Similar research could also investigate if there is a minimum ratio of volunteer,

part-time, and full-time youth leaders to students, and how these could contribute to spiritual vitality.

Speaking in tongues showed no significant correlations to the spiritual vitality scales. This finding surprised me, but perhaps it should not. This finding does not mean that those who speak in tongues do not experience spiritual vitality. The AG theological position refers to speaking in tongues as the initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit (General Council of the Assemblies of God 2014). "Initial" indicates "occurring at the beginning; first: the initial step in a process" ("Definition of Initial" 2014). Having the initial physical evidence of the Holy Spirit in a person's life does not guarantee that person will grow more like Jesus. There is a difference between initially experiencing the baptism in the Holy Spirit and responding to His Lordship in a disciple-making process over time. The initial physical evidence should lead to a lifetime of discipleship but each individual personally determines his or her level of obedience to the Holy Spirit.

Chapter four describes the biblical and theological view of discipleship as a journey and implies that there is movement. Processes certainly start with a beginning, but continuing in the journey proves essential to spiritual vitality. Speaking in tongues is not the finish line in discipleship. It serves as a marker along the journey. Perhaps AG churches, leaders, parents, and students need more of an emphasis on the Spirit-empowered life and how the Holy Spirit forms humans into the image of Christ rather than on a too-narrow focus of acquiring the initial physical evidence.

Chapter four also describes how the Holy Spirit functions as more than simply a factor in spiritual development. As the architect of discipleship, the Holy Spirit guides the

journey. The way an adolescent chooses to respond to promptings of the Holy Spirit affects the next steps in the journey. An adolescent's ability to recognize the leading of the Holy Spirit, discern wise counsel from parents and peers, and interpret God's word as a light for their path often determines the type of journey they experience and the type of person they become.

Spiritual Formation Factors

A few spiritual formation factors correlated significantly with the spiritual vitality scales. It came as no surprise to me that participants' perceived religious support from God ($r = .219$, $n = 89$, $p < .05$) and other youth in their youth group ($r = .234$, $n = 87$, $p < .05$) correlated significantly with the Religious Identity Scale. When youth perceive that they have a sense of being supported by God or that their peers from the youth group support them, this predicts continued spiritual vitality in later years.

Religious support from youth group leaders did not indicate continued spiritual vitality in later years. Religious support from God, other youth in their youth group, and youth group leaders did not correlate significantly with the Religious Behavior Scale or the Risk Behavior Scale. I expected youth leaders to impact one or more of these areas. The effect from the youth group peers appears greater than the influence of youth leaders in relation to a participant's perception of closeness to God and the extent that faith produces caring action for others.

The dominant factor in spiritual formation resulted from internal motivations, not external spiritual behaviors as indicated by the composite score for the combined Intrinsic Religion Motivation Scale (Hoge 1972) and the Narrative Faith Scale (Lee 2004). The scales correlated significantly, as reported in chapter six Findings, with all three

dependent measures of spiritual vitality. When a participant's religious decisions are motivated by personal values and a sense of having a relationship with God there was a high correlation to continued involvement in religious behaviors ($r = .313$, $n = 93$, $p < .01$) two years later. Internal religious motivation also showed a high correlation to participant's perception of closeness to God and the extent that their faith produced caring, altruistic action for others (Religious Identity Scale $r = .388$, $n = 93$, $p < .01$). Finally, internal religious motivation had a negative significant correlation to risk behaviors (Risk Behavior Scale $r = -.231$, $n = 93$, $p < .05$). The data seemed to confirm that internal religious motivation predicted later involvement in (1) religious behaviors, (2) altruistic care for others, and (3) mitigated against involvement in risky behaviors.

Perhaps the reason for significant findings associated with internal religious motivation comes through the Holy Spirit's shaping of a believer's life. The Holy Spirit can produce internal religious motivation that correlates significantly with outward religious behavior, higher perception of closeness to God, and lower frequency of risk behaviors. These findings reinforce the maxim that being produces doing. Further study could investigate how the youth group can facilitate the process that would allow the Holy Spirit to produce the personal values and an internal sense of having a relationship with God.

The Religious Behavior Scale measured participant's external religious habits. The highest habit by mean were pray alone (5.01), read the Bible by yourself (4.24), and attend a worship service with parents (3.99), or for students (3.92). Praying alone could be first because the substance, type, or length of prayer was not qualified. Prayer, Bible reading, and attending church services match the factors listed in chapter four as to their

importance in the spiritual formation of adolescents. Interestingly, the responses meet with a spiritual mentor (other than your parent) (2.59) and work in ministry side by side with adults from outside your youth group (2.54) ranked as the last two behaviors by mean. Chapters three and four addressed the impact of other adults in the development of adolescents. The AG could potentially benefit from more spiritual mentoring by adults in student's lives. Perhaps the low response to involvement in ministry with adults outside the youth group comes from a lack of opportunities. If adolescents had more intentional options to engage in ministry with other adults, spiritual mentoring could increase too.

The research presented in chapter three informs the practice of youth ministry to give meaning to the adolescent realization of potential loss of self through reframing the negative consequences of identity development into a positive identity with Jesus. When adolescents derive their value from the concept of Jesus choosing to die for them instead of them pursuing their own personal achievement, then the Holy Spirit through the revelation of Jesus' sacrifice transforms their self-worth. Teenagers need this interaction with the Holy Spirit to transform their mind and their self-worth into Christ-centered alignment. Relationships and experiences based on the dynamic role of the Holy Spirit can foster spiritual disciplines, or spiritual habits, in the lives of Christians. Spiritual formation allows the Holy Spirit to shape the individual into the image of Christ through the aligning of an individual's spirit with God's Spirit.

The AGYS research indicates that continuing religious behaviors like praying, reading the Bible, going to church, caring for others, sensing closeness to God, and lowering risk behaviors do not come from an external sense of achievement or outward

motivation. These outcome-based discipleship factors come from an internal motivation. The Holy Spirit directs this process. The Spirit-empowered life produces these outcomes.

In terms of spiritual formation dimensions, when youth perceive that they have a sense of being supported by God, or that they are supported by the peers from their youth group, this predicts continued spiritual vitality in later years. Also, high levels of internal religious motivation tended to indicate later involvement in religious behaviors, altruistic care for others, and mitigated against involvement in risky behaviors.

Social Considerations

Chapter two expounded a Biblical theology of the role of parents in discipling their children. The literature reviewed in chapters three and four identified parents as the biggest social influence on adolescent spiritual vitality. The data from the AGYS also identified parents as the social construct that most significantly correlated with the spiritual vitality scales. As expected, parents monitoring the behavior of adolescents correlated significantly with lower frequency of risk behaviors in later life (r = -.413, n = 92, p < .01).

When participants received social support from parents in areas such as sense of security, sense of belonging, reassurance of worth, and guidance participants' perception of closeness to God and their faith producing caring actions for others significantly correlated (r = .211, n = 93, p < .05). Parental support led to a sense of religious identity and led to altruistic behaviors in later life.

The lower levels of risk behaviors in later life was correlated with teens experiencing high levels of social support from their parents in high school (r = .240, n = 92, p <.05). Also, higher risk behaviors occurred in later life when other teens outside of

youth group during high school measure high as those from whom participants felt they received social support ($r = -.214$, $n = 92$, $p < .05$). I was surprised when teens in the youth group, youth group workers, and other adults in the church did not significantly correlate with any of the dependent variable measures. The quality of these relationships could be the determining effect.

The significance of the correlation by parents in other areas raises the question as to why parental religious modeling did not have a stronger correlation as seemed to be indicated by the previous research examined in chapter four (Bengston 2013, 190). Parents may need resources or a more intentional partnership with the church and youth ministry in modeling religious behavior. Parents may not adequately model religious behavior and values in the home for this sample. If this had been the case, then students would receive no benefit. Even with the lack of correlation in religious modeling of parents, parents still stand out as the primary social construct in determining the participants' spiritual vitality in later years.

Chapter three and four identified how the Holy Spirit conforms, transforms, and renews disciples into the image of Christ, allowing individuals to grow past the limitations of human disciplers. When disciples accept the identity of Jesus, they spend their life in the process of becoming like Jesus. The Holy Spirit shapes morality based on Jesus and His word in the life of a disciple. The Spirit utilizes the faith community, interaction with spiritually mature adults, and interaction with peers exploring their own faith to reveal God's word in a personalized application to individual adolescents.

The social context influences spiritual vitality. Since the role of parents and the social environment often change at high school graduation, future research could

concentrate on the effects of removing those specific social influences on spiritual vitality. Jesus prepared His followers for the rest of the journey when they were no longer in His physical presence. Churches must prepare adolescents for continued spiritual vitality after life transitions, like high school graduation, may separate them from the churches' physical presence.

The AGYS indicated that peers were not as strong of a social consideration in spiritual vitality as parents. Parents often provide more content and life experience to their adolescents than peers. Various relationships can provide different social contexts for the Holy Spirit to utilize to develop disciples. Youth ministry can provide the social environment through youth group experiences and the relational framework of Spirit-empowered people, including parents and peers, as tools for the Holy Spirit to make disciples. Youth groups can partner with parents, as the primary discipler of their children, to encourage spiritual vitality.

In summary, parental support in high school appears to be significantly related to the development of a religious identity in later years that overflows into altruistic behaviors. Parental support is also correlated to lower levels of risky behaviors in later years, while social support from friends that are not associated with the church during high school has the opposite effect. Parental monitoring of high school behaviors appears to predict lower levels of risky behavior in later life.

Youth Group Experience

Many youth group experiences did not significantly correlate to the spiritual vitality scales. Only five experiences correlated significantly to religious behavior. Participating in intergenerational worship, midweek youth service, youth camp, attending

a club at school, and youth group small groups associated with higher religious behaviors two years later like prayer, reading the Bible, and attending church. Youth-group related small group experiences stands alone as the only experience to positively significantly correlate with the perception of one's closeness to God and faith, producing altruistic actions towards others (Religious Identity Scale $r = .205$, $n = 92$, $p < .05$). No other youth group experiences had significant correlations with the Religious Identity Scale or the Risk Behavior Scale. Small groups stand out as the most significant youth group experience and the only one to correlate with two of the three spiritual vitality scales. Perhaps students have the opportunity to openly discuss problems they face, express doubts, or develop a faith language to express what they believe in a small group context instead of the environment of other youth group experiences. Future research could examine what factors create the significant correlations in these small groups.

Discipleship programs, district fine arts festivals, Speed the Light fundraisers, retreats, community service projects, Sunday/weekend youth group programs, worship service, and involvement in ministry did not significantly correlate with any of the spiritual vitality scales. The significance of one youth group experience, attending youth conventions, correlated negatively with the perception of one's closeness to God and faith producing caring actions towards others (Religious Identity Scale $r = -.235$, $n = 90$, $p < .05$).

High school students indicated they go to youth group because of the following reasons listed in descending order they: learn about God, like their youth leader, grow spiritually, learn to serve, learn the Bible, and like the pastor's sermons. High school students indicated the following as the lowest reasons they go to youth group (listed in

descending order): friends are there, they feel guilty if they do not go, and parents make or require them to go. Even though the presence of youth leaders did not significantly correlate as a social consideration as expected above, adolescents probably would not attend if they did not like the youth leader. Teens ranked friends attending the youth group as the third lowest reason they attend. The students' reasons for attending youth group seem to focus on deeper religious identity development opportunities. An additional support for this conclusion comes from students choosing playing games as the activity they most wanted to see less of in youth group. Adolescents may have responded in this manner because they desire and understand that they need spiritual substance and not just games and friends for spiritual vitality. There are other community sources for games and socializing with friends, there are none to obtain spiritual substance.

Chapter three indicates activities that help adolescents develop the ability to talk about what they believe and that facilitate social interaction are important. Youth ministry can provide opportunities for authentic relationships in the faith community to encourage the development of a faith language centered on the revelation of God's love. The Holy Spirit guides the interaction of these factors through experiences with God, with adults, and with other adolescents. Some youth ministries may want to consider shifting from a primary focus on what to teach adolescents toward discovering how to help an adolescent think with a biblical worldview. The journey to spiritual vitality for post-high school young adults can involve youth group experiences shaped by the Holy Spirit and interaction with peers and adults.

Participating in most specific youth group experiences may not result in a significant association with religious behaviors, a perception of closeness to God, or to

lower risk behaviors but what adolescents experience may make the difference. Providing youth camps, discipleship programs, community service projects, or even church services does not guarantee spiritual vitality. With any youth group experience, the most important question may be to discover how this activity fits into the discipleship journey of an individual believer. If youth services or summer youth camps prove a major focus, parents and youth group experiences before and after can help an adolescent understand and apply the youth services or camp experiences to everyday life. Experiences that shape adolescent lives continue past the timeframe of the activity and connect to previous, future, and everyday experiences with the Holy Spirit.

In summary, it appears that youth group activities such as intergenerational worship and process-oriented youth activities such as mid-week youth services, camps, school clubs, and small-group meetings all contribute to later adolescent involvement in religious behaviors after they had left high school. The small group meetings also contributed to the development of a religious identity that resulted in altruistic care for others.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to develop the components of a theory for retention of young people after their high school years by examining the factors that contribute to continued spiritual vitality in AG post-high school young adults. Independent variables of demographic elements, spiritual formation factors, social considerations, and youth group experiences were operationalized using a variety of scales. After high school, dependent variables measuring continued spiritual vitality for the subjects were operationalized as

obtaining high scores on The Religious Behavior Scale, the Religious Identity Scale, and the Risk Behavior Scale.

Six independent variables all predicted later involvement in religious behaviors such as prayer, reading the Bible, and attending worship services: religious decisions internally motivated by personal values and a sense of relationship with God, intergenerational worship and relationships, midweek youth group programs, youth camps, participating in a club at school, and youth group related small group meetings. Religious decisions internally motivated by personal values and a sense of relationship with God, parents, and youth related small groups each associated with more than one dependent variable.

Five independent variables predicted a participant's greater perception of closeness to God and that their faith produced a caring, altruistic action toward others:

1. Religious decisions internally motivated by personal values and a sense of relationship with God,
2. Perceived religious support from other teens in the participants' youth group,
3. Perceived religious support from God,
4. Perceived parental support, and
5. Youth group related small group meetings.

Three independent variables mitigated against involvement in risky behaviors: religious decisions internally motivated by personal values and a sense of relationship with God, parental monitoring, and perceived parental support.

Several independent variables did not predict later involvement in religious behaviors, develop altruistic care for others, or mitigate against involvement in risky

behaviors two years after high school (the elements of continued spiritual vitality). None of the demographic variables associated with the independent variables indicated continued spiritual vitality. These included gender, ethnicity, and grade point average. Nor did the home environment variables of single parent homes, divorced families, low educational level of parents, or whether a parent works full-time, part-time, or not at all.

The context of urban, suburban, or rural setting, size of the church, and size of the youth group did not have an impact. Neither did whether a participant's youth leader was full-time, part-time, or a volunteer. Of particular interest to the denominational context of the research, speaking in tongues did not predict continued spiritual vitality. The research appears to support the notion that there is a difference between adolescents initially experiencing the baptism in the Holy Spirit and responding to His Lordship in a disciple-making process over time. Finally, religious support from youth group leaders, and parental modeling did not show a significant relationship with the independent variables.

Each individual brings a different combination of backgrounds, worldviews, nature and nurture effects, and emotional, cognitive, and spiritual development levels to the discipleship journey. This would tend to indicate that developing a standard list of spiritual vitality factors applicable to every adolescent would be difficult. Discipleship planning may look more like an ever-changing travel itinerary than a dot on a linear scale. Different people find themselves at different places, thus mass production assembly lines do not make disciples. They make clones; sterile copies, not individual, vibrant, Spirit-empowered followers of Jesus. This type of approach relies less on the Holy Spirit and more on what worked for someone else. Churches should focus more on individual, niche discipleship. Alton Garrison (2013), Assemblies of God Assistant

General Superintendent and Executive Director of Church Ministries, believes the current discipleship model's focus on learning facts and doing things produces pride and exhaustion. This research would challenge the church to allow the Holy Spirit to drive the discipleship process rather than programming.

The findings from the AGYS lead to the next step in research. The church may have underestimated the role of the Holy Spirit. Declaring that the Holy Spirit accomplishes a role does not itself shape adolescents into disciples. The church does not understand the behavioral manifestations or correlations that indicate evidences of the Holy Spirit's work and formation. To the same extent that a spiritual influencer, such as a youth group leader or parent, can analyze adolescents wrestling with issues of development and the level of the Holy Spirit's work one can predict their retention and continued discipleship in the faith. What is a Pentecostal spiritual engagement? How does the Church diagnose engagement? What constitutes these relational moments? What do encounters with the Holy Spirit look like? Future studies can seek to answer these questions and determine the same measures for older and younger age cohorts such as children, tweens, mid-twenties or older.

The findings from the AGYS bring implications for the church. Chapter three's explanation of how the Holy Spirit orchestrates the life-span development theorist's work to provide opportunities to shape adolescents into the image of Christ combines with the correlations from this study to inform ministry. The correlations from this research that indicate continued spiritual vitality after high school include the spiritual formation factor of internal motivation for religious decisions from personal values and not external behaviors, the social consideration of parents, and the youth group experience of small

groups. The Holy Spirit guides all these components in a unique manner for each individual. In light of these factors, significant influencers of adolescents such as parents, peers, the older generation, youth leaders, and pastors must examine how the Holy Spirit directs their involvement in this journey.

The spiritual formation factor of the Holy Spirit developing internal motivation for religious decisions from personal values creates an opportunity for these influencers to contribute to continued spiritual vitality after high school. They must provide healthy Christian relationships that help adolescents build a Christ-centered identity. The realization that programs consist of an external motivation for control affects praxis. Parent and youth leader must help adolescents shift from doing, an external motivation because they ask or rewards action, to being, an internal motivation driven the Holy Spirit. The coaching model for youth ministry could provide an adaptable model where an influencer, such as a youth leader or parent, helps an adolescent discover how the Holy Spirit shapes them into the image of Christ.

The relational role of parents creates an opportunity for the church and its significant influencers of adolescents to contribute to continued spiritual vitality after high school. The church must partner to help Christian parents disciple their children through increased resourcing and continued discipleship of parents. Influencers can serve as spiritual parents providing mirroring, mediating, monitoring, and mentoring for those adolescents from non-Christian backgrounds. The church must help foster spiritual families, comprised of unique persons based on relationships, helping an adolescent discover how the Holy Spirit shapes them into the image of Christ.

The youth group experience of small groups creates an opportunity for the church and its significant influencers of adolescents to contribute to continued spiritual vitality after high school. The church and its leaders should not let the program dictate the process, pace, or time together. Specific ministries do not independently produce disciples, but can cultivate aspects of the journey. Adolescents need the structure of church and youth group most when it allows them to fuse God, life, and experience. Small groups must create an atmosphere where adolescents can engage in the struggles of life in a supportive, relationship-developing context, intentionally providing opportunities for the Holy Spirit to shape them into the image of Christ.

Religious behavior such as reading the Bible individually or praying does not automatically make a disciple. The proper social considerations or relationships alone do not guarantee continued commitment to Christ. Spiritual vitality requires more than simple attendance at a youth service, weekend worship service, small group, or hearing a sermon. If an individual does not cultivate a personal interaction with the Holy Spirit's shaping process through these spiritual formation factors, social considerations, and youth group experiences, he or she would forfeit spiritual growth while only earning personal achievement awards. Personal progress in becoming more like Jesus creates disciples. Youth ministry should focus on discipleship as a journey rather than spiritual perfection as a destination. Disciples being together makes the difference, but no specific list of activities that will create disciples exists. Retention based on attendance alone does not necessarily lead to spiritual vitality. The answer does not appear to lie in eliminating or adding any particular youth group activity, but rather in focusing on relationships and experiences that facilitate the Holy Spirit's shaping of an adolescent into the image of

Christ. This research appears to suggest that it is the aggregated effect of intentional youth group experiences providing opportunity for the internalized guidance of the Holy Spirit, recognized as God's work, and not specific youth group programs or religious activities that have the potential to create a unique spiritual journey that would ensure spiritual vitality for the youth after they leave high school.

APPENDIX A

AG Youth Study 2011

Assemblies of God National Youth Study Spring 2011 Code #_____

Thanks for participating in this survey. Those who will be handling your answers will have your code number, but will not know who you are, and those who know who you are will not have your answers to the survey.
As you go through the survey, it's the most helpful to us if you answer all of the questions. But remember that you are always free to refuse to answer. If you don't want to answer a question, you'll need to check the "no answer" option, which is always either on the bottom or at the right of the list of possible responses.
Most of the students who have taken this survey finished it in 30 minutes or less.
Now let's start with a few simple demographic questions...

1. Are you male or female?
☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ No answer

2. What is your current GPA? (your "unweighted" GPA, on a regular 4 point scale)
☐ Below 2.0 ☐ Between 2 and 2.49 ☐ Between 2.5 and 2.99 ☐ Between 3 and 3.49
☐ Between 3.5 and 3.99 ☐ 4.0 ☐ No answer

3. Which of your parents do you live with, if any? Please check all the answers that apply:
☐ Mother
☐ Father
☐ Stepmother
☐ Stepfather
☐ Guardian or other adult relative
☐ Other non-related adult
☐ I live on my own
☐ No answer
☐ Other (please specify)_____

4. If you do not live with both parents, select the most important reason why.
☐ Divorce
☐ Legal separation
☐ Death of a parent
☐ Economic hardship
☐ Abandonment
☐ Other
☐ No Answer

5. How much education does your mother / stepmother / female guardian have?
☐ High school or less
☐ Some college but hasn't finished
☐ Finished college
☐ Some graduate school but hasn't finished
☐ Finished graduate degree
☐ No answer

6. How much education does your father / stepfather / male guardian have?
☐ High school or less
☐ Some college but hasn't finished
☐ Finished college
☐ Some graduate school but hasn't finished
☐ Finished graduate degree
☐ No answer

7. Does your mother / stepmother / female guardian have a job outside the home?
☐ No ☐ Yes, part-time ☐ Yes, full-time ☐ No answer or not applicable

8. What is her occupation? _____
(Note: to refuse to answer this question, simply leave it blank.)

9. Does your father / stepfather / male guardian have a job outside the home?
☐ No ☐ Yes, part-time ☐ Yes, full-time ☐ No answer or not applicable

10. What is his occupation? _____
(Note: to refuse to answer this question, simply leave it blank.)

Please note: There will be more questions about "parents," "mothers," and "fathers" in the survey. When you answer these, think about the adults who CURRENTLY LIVE WITH YOU and fill these roles. They may be your biological parents, or stepparents, or guardians.

11. Which of the following best describes the type of high school you are attending?
☐ Public school ☐ Private secular ☐ Private Christian ☐ Home-school ☐ No answer

12. Approximately how many hours of paid work do you do per week?
☐ None ☐ 1-5 ☐ 6-10 ☐ 11-15 ☐ 16-20 ☐ 21 or more ☐ No answer

13. Approximately how many hours of volunteer work do you do per week (e.g. ministry, community service)?
☐ None ☐ 1-5 ☐ 6-10 ☐ 11-15 ☐ 16-20 ☐ 21 or more ☐ No answer

14. What is your ethnic/racial background? Please check the one that you think best describes you:
☐ White/Anglo/Caucasian ☐ African-American/Black
☐ Hispanic/Latino/Mexican-American ☐ Asian/Asian American
☐ Native American
☐ Other: Please specify_____

15. In an average day (a 24-hour cycle), approximately how many hours of sleep do you think you are getting?
☐ 0-2 ☐ 3-4 ☐ 5-6 ☐ 7-8 ☐ 9 or more ☐ No answer

16. In an average day (a 24-hour cycle), approximately how many entertainment hours do you spend with TV, video games, online, media, etc?
☐ less than 1 hour ☐ 1-2 ☐ 3-4 ☐ 5-6 ☐ 7 or more ☐ No answer

17. In an average week, approximately how many hours do you spend participating in sports/ exercise?
☐ None ☐ 1-5 ☐ 6-10 ☐ 11-15 ☐ 16-20 ☐ 21 or more ☐ No answer

18. In an average week, approximately how many hours do you spend participating in a hobby?
☐ None ☐ 1-5 ☐ 6-10 ☐ 11-15 ☐ 16-20 ☐ 21 or more ☐ No answer

19. Bullying has significantly impacted me personally during high school.
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Moderately disagree ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
☐ Moderately agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ No answer

20. Bullying has significantly impacted other students during high school.
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Moderately disagree ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
☐ Moderately agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ No answer

Thanks! Now please think about the high school youth group you are in. Here are three questions about the group and the church:

21. Approximately how many students are in the youth group?
☐ 1-10 ☐ 11-25 ☐ 26-50 ☐ 51-100 ☐ Over 100 ☐ No answer

22. Is your youth leader/youth pastor…
☐ Paid full-time ☐ Paid part time ☐ Volunteer ☐ Don't know ☐ No answer

23. Approximately how many people attend the church where the youth group meets?
☐ 1-49 ☐ 50-99 ☐ 100-199 ☐ 200-399 ☐ 400-699 ☐ Over 700 ☐ No answer

24. My church is located in which of the following?
☐ Inner City/Urban
☐ Suburban
☐ Rural
☐ No answer

25. With what denomination is the church affiliated? Please write your answer on the blank provided to the right. (If you don't know, just leave it blank). _____

26. Before High School were you involved in any of the following church programs?
a. Children's church ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ No Answer
b. Mpact girls (Missionettes) ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ No Answer
c. Royal Rangers ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ No Answer

27. Do you speak in tongues?
☐ I do not know what speaking in tongues is.
☐ Not at all ☐ Rarely ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ No answer

Please think of all the people, whether teens or adults, who support you and care about you.

28. Please rank the five groups of people below by how much support you feel you get from each. The group that gives you the most support and care should be ranked 1, while the group that gives the least support should be ranked 5.

Please use each number from 1 to 5 only once!

a. The teens in your youth group ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ No answer
b. Other teens outside your youth group ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ No answer
c. Your youth group leaders ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ No answer
d. Your parents ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ No answer
e. Other adults in your church ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ No answer

29. For each sentence below, please select the answer that is most true about your life, not how you might like it to be or think it should be. We want to know how things really are. The 21 items below ask the same 7 questions about (a) your youth group leaders, (b) your youth group, and (c) God.
(Note: be careful not to get the "strongly agree" and the "no answer" columns confused.)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	No Answer
a. I can turn to other teens in my youth group for advice when I have problems.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. If something went wrong, my youth group leaders would give me help.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. God gives me the sense that I belong.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Other teens in my youth group care about my life and situation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. I am valued by my youth group leaders.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. I feel appreciated by God.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. I do NOT feel close to other teens in my youth group.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
h. I can turn to my youth group leaders for advice when I have problems.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
i. If something went wrong, God would give me help.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
j. Other teens in my youth group give me the sense that I belong.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
k. My youth group leaders care about my life and situation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
l. I am valued by God.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
m. I feel appreciated by other teens in my youth group.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
n. I do NOT feel close to my youth group leaders.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
o. I can turn to God for advice when I have problems.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
p. If something went wrong, other teens in my youth group would give me help.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
q. My youth group leaders give me the sense that I belong.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
r. God cares about my life and situation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
s. I am valued by other teens in my youth group.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
t. I feel appreciated by my youth group leaders.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
u. I do NOT feel close to God.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Below are some questions about your faith and religious behavior.

30. For each of the following statements, please select one answer to show how much you agree or disagree with it. (Note: again, here and throughout the rest of the survey, be careful not to get the "no answer" column confused with the other responses).

	Strongly Disagree	Moderately disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree	No answer
a. My faith affects all of my life	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. One should seek God's guidance when making every important decision.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. It is important to me that my future career somehow represent a calling from God.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. It doesn't matter so much what I believe as long as I live a moral life.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. In my life, I experience the presence of God.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. I try to see setbacks and crisis as part of God's larger plan.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. My faith sometimes restricts my actions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
h. Although I am a religious person, I refuse to let religious considerations influence my everyday affairs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
i. If and when I date someone, it is (or would be) important to me that God be pleased with the relationship.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
j. In thinking about my schedule, I try to cultivate the attitude that my time belongs to God.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
k. Nothing is as important to me as serving God the best I know how.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
l. It is important to me that whatever money I have be used to serve God's purposes.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
m. Although I believe in Christianity, I feel there are many more important things in life.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
n. In choosing what college to attend, it was important to me to seek God's will.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
o. I try to carry my faith over into all my other dealings in life.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
p. When I think of the things I own or would like to own, I try to remember that everything I have belongs to God.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
q. My religious beliefs are what really lie behind my whole approach to life	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
r. Prayer is vital to my relationship with God and others	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
s. Telling others about Christ and his love is part of my life as a Christian.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

31. For each of the following 10 items, please tell us how often you did each, during the PAST 12 MONTHS. Choose the answer that fits best.

How often did you…

	Less than once a month	About once a month	2-3 times a month	About once a week	2-3 times a week	Once a day or more	No answer
a …talk with another Christian about your faith outside of a church-related context?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b …pray alone?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c …attend a worship service or church-related event with your parents?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d …attend a worship service or church related event intended for students	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e …speak or try to speak with a non-Christian about your faith?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f …volunteer your time to serve others?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
g …participate in a small group of your peers for religious or spiritual purposes?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
h …read the Bible by yourself?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
i …work in ministry side by side with adults from outside your youth group?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
j …meet with a spiritual mentor (other than your parents)?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
k …give tithes and/or offerings?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please tell us about your relationship to your parents. Again, these may be your biological parents, stepparents, guardians, etc.--in other words, the adults who live with you and have a supervisory role.

32. Do your parents profess to be Christians?

☐ No ☐ Yes, both ☐ Yes, mother only ☐ Yes, father only ☐ No answer

33. During high school, which of your parents discussed the Christian faith with you, if either? Please check one.

☐ Mother only ☐ Father only ☐ Both ☐ Neither ☐ No answer

34. How much does your mother/stepmother really live out what she says she believes, or "practice what she preaches"?

☐ Not much ☐ Sometimes ☐ Usually ☐ Always ☐ No answer

35. How much does your father/stepfather really live out what he says he believes, or "practice what he preaches"?

☐ Not much ☐ Sometimes ☐ Usually ☐ Always ☐ No answer

36. How much do your parents try to know….

a …where you go at night?	☐ Don't try	☐ Try a little	☐ Try a lot	☐ No answer
b …what you do with your free time?	☐ Don't try	☐ Try a little	☐ Try a lot	☐ No answer
c …where you are most afternoons after school?	☐ Don't try	☐ Try a little	☐ Try a lot	☐ No answer

37. How much do your parents REALLY know…

a…where you go at night?	☐ Don't know	☐ Know a little	☐ Know a lot	☐ No answer
b…what you do with your free time?	☐ Don't know	☐ Know a little	☐ Know a lot	☐ No answer
c…where you are most afternoons after school?	☐ Don't know	☐ Know a little	☐ Know a lot	☐ No answer

38. Please think about your current relationship with your parents.

	No	Some-times	Yes	No answer
a. Can you depend on your parents to help you if you really need it?	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Do you feel you could NOT turn to your parents for guidance in times of stress?	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Do your parents enjoy the same social activities you do?	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Do you feel personally responsible for the well-being of your parents	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Do you feel your parents do NOT respect your skills and abilities?	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. If something went wrong, do you feel that your parents would NOT come to your assistance?	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. Does your relationship with your parents provide you with a sense of emotional security and well-being?	☐	☐	☐	☐
h. Do you feel your competence and skills are recognized by your parents?	☐	☐	☐	☐
i. Do you feel your parents do NOT share your interests and concerns?	☐	☐	☐	☐
j. Do you feel your parents do NOT really rely on you for their well-being?	☐	☐	☐	☐
k. Could you turn to your parents for advice if you were having problems?	☐	☐	☐	☐
l. Do you feel you lack emotional closeness with your parents?	☐	☐	☐	☐

39. How often do you do each of the following?

	Never	1-2 times a year	3-6 times a year	Once or more per month	Once or more per week	No answer
a. Worship alongside adults in a church service	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Participate in worship services where a special effort was made to include students in the leadership of that service	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Pray with or alongside adults who are neither your parents nor your youth leaders	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Participate with adults in community service projects or mission work (locally or outside of your community) that is not just a youth group activity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

40. For each of the 12 statements below, mark whether you think the statement is true or false in describing you.

	True	False	No answer
a. It is sometimes hard for me to go on with my work if I am not encouraged.	☐	☐	☐
b. I sometimes feel resentful when I don't get my way.	☐	☐	☐
c. There have been times when I felt like rebelling against people in authority even though I know they were right.	☐	☐	☐
d. No matter who I'm talking to, I'm always a good listener.	☐	☐	☐
e. There have been occasions when I took advantage of someone.	☐	☐	☐
f. I'm always willing to admit it when I make a mistake.	☐	☐	☐
g. I sometimes try to get even rather than forgive and forget.	☐	☐	☐
h. I am always courteous, even to people who are disagreeable.	☐	☐	☐
i. I have never been annoyed when people expressed ideas very different than my own.	☐	☐	☐
j. There have been times when I was quite jealous of the good luck of others.	☐	☐	☐
k. I am sometimes irritated by people who ask favors of me.	☐	☐	☐
l. I have never deliberately said something that hurt someone's feelings.	☐	☐	☐

The following questions are pretty personal. Your answers are confidential, so please be as honest as you can.

41. How many times, if any, have you had alcohol to drink…?

	0	1	2	3 to 5	6 to 9	10 to 19	20 to 39	40 or more	No answer
a…during the last 30 days	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b…during the last 12 months	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

42. How many times, if any, have you gambled with money (e.g. Texas Hold 'Em, online casinos and gaming)…?

	0	1	2	3 to 5	6 to 9	10 to 19	20 to 39	40 or more	No answer
a…during the last 30 days	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b…during the last 12 months	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

43. How many times, if any, have you viewed pornography on the Internet...?

	0	1	2	3 to 5	6 to 9	10 to 19	20 to 39	40 or more	No answer
a…during the last 30 days	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b…during the last 12 months	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

44. How many times, if any, have you engaged in a hookup, sexual intercourse ("gone all the way"), or oral sex...?

	0	1	2	3 to 5	6 to 9	10 to 19	20 to 39	40 or more	No answer
a…during the last 30 days	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b…during the last 12 months	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

45. Approximately how many different sexual partners have you had IN THE LAST 30 DAYS? Please enter a number in the box. If you have not had any sexual partners, enter "0." To refuse to answer the question, leave it blank.

_____

46. Generally, how would you describe the nature of your relationship with your partner(s)? Choose as many as apply.

☐ I haven't had any sexual partners.
☐ Barely knew them
☐ Casual friend
☐ Good friend
☐ Dating
☐ Committed relationship
☐ No Answer

The rest of the questions all have to do with your high school youth group. We have questions about what activities you've been involved in, the main reasons you go to youth group, and what you would suggest for improvement.

47. For the following questions, we would like to know how often you have been part of certain activities. We know it's hard to remember exact numbers, but please give us your best guess! Notice that the time frame changes depending on the question (e.g. "the past four years" vs "the past two years" vs. "the past two months"), so please read carefully before you answer! It's OK if some of the numbers for your answers overlap.

a. Approximately how many discipleship programs (lasting at least 4 weeks) have you participated in during the PAST FOUR YEARS of high school?
☐ None ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 or more ☐ No answer

b. Approximately how many youth camps (overnight more than 3 nights away from your local community) have you participated in during the PAST FOUR YEARS of high school?
☐ None ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 or more ☐ No answer

c. Approximately how many youth conventions (overnight at least 1 night away from your local community) have you participated in during the PAST FOUR YEARS of high school?
☐ None ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 or more ☐ No answer

d. Approximately how many semesters did you serve as a campus missionary during the PAST FOUR YEARS of high school?
☐ I do not know what a campus missionary is.
☐ I was not a Campus Missionary
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ No answer

e. Approximately how many semesters did you participate in a Christian club at your school during the PAST FOUR YEARS of high school?
☐ None ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ No answer

f. Approximately how many district fine arts festivals have you participated in during the PAST FOUR YEARS of high school?
☐ None ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ No answer

g. Approximately how many years were you involved in Bible Quiz during the PAST FOUR YEARS of high school?
☐ None ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ No answer

h. Approximately how many years did you give to or participate in fundraisers for Speed the Light during the PAST FOUR YEARS of high school?
☐ None ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ No answer

i. Approximately how many mission trips (United States or out of the country and overnight more than 2 nights away from your local community) have you participated in during the PAST FOUR YEARS of high school?
☐ None ☐ 1 to 2 ☐ 3 to 5 ☐ More than 5 ☐ No answer

j. Approximately how many retreats (overnight at least one night away from home) have you participated in during the PAST TWO YEARS of high school?
☐ None ☐ 1 to 2 ☐ 3 to 5 ☐ More than 5 ☐ No answer

k. How many times in the PAST YEAR have you participated in community service projects with your youth group?
☐ None ☐ 1 to 2 ☐ 3 to 5 ☐ More than 5 ☐ No answer

l. How many times in the PAST TWO MONTHS have you attended a youth-group related small group meeting (e.g. discipleship or accountability groups) or Bible study?
☐ None ☐ 1 to 2 ☐ 3 to 5 ☐ More than 5 ☐ No answer

m. How many times in the PAST TWO MONTHS have you attended a SUNDAY / WEEKEND youth group program or event at your church, other than a small group?
☐ None ☐ 1 to 2 ☐ 3 to 5 ☐ More than 5 ☐ No answer

n. How many times in the PAST TWO MONTHS have you attended a MIDWEEK youth group program or event at your church, other than a small group?
☐ None ☐ 1 to 2 ☐ 3 to 5 ☐ More than 5 ☐ No answer

o. How many times in the PAST TWO MONTHS have you attended a worship service at your church?
☐ None ☐ 1 to 2 ☐ 3 to 5 ☐ More than 5 ☐ No answer

p. How many times in the PAST TWO MONTHS have you been involved in some type of ministry (e.g. worship team, greeter, drama team, led small group, taught elementary or junior high students, etc) at your church?
☐ None ☐ 1 to 2 ☐ 3 to 5 ☐ More than 5 ☐ No answer

48. Here are some of the reasons high school students have given us for why they go to youth group. Please tell us how true each of the statements below is, with regard to your own experience overall.

	Not true at all	A little true	Pretty true	Very true	Completely true	No answer
a. It's where my friends are.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. My parents make me or require me to go.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. My parents encourage me to go.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. I feel comfortable there.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. I like the pastor's sermons.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. It's a place where I can really worship God.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. It's fun	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
h. I learn the Bible there.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
i. It's a place where adults take time to really listen to me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
j. I like my youth leader(s).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
k. I experience real friendships there.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
l. I feel guilty if I don't go.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
m. It reinforces what I already believe.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
n. It's a safe place where I can talk to adults about my doubts and questions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
o. I can escape from the world there.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
p. I feel like I belong there.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
q. It's a place where I can learn to serve.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
r. I've always gone to church/youth group.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
s. I learn about God there.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
t. It feels like a real community.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
u. It's a safe place where I can talk to my peers about my doubts and questions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
v. It really helps me grow spiritually.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
w. The church/youth group helps me to answer problems I face outside of church.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
x. The church/youth group helps me to address global problems such as poverty and inequality.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

49. Thinking about your youth group, would you want to see more or less of each of the following?

	Much Less	Less	Keep about the same	More	Much more	No Answer
a. Bible study	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Time to worship	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. One-on-one time with leaders	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Student-run	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Time to ask questions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Accountability	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. Games	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
h. Community service projects	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
i. Retreats	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
j. Small groups	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
k. Camps	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
l. Mission trips	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
m. Time for deep conversation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
n. Bible memorization	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
o. Giving to missions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
p. Developing my gifts	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
q. Discuss how to share my faith at school	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
r. Discuss issues about life outside of church	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

The last five questions are open-ended. Please share your honest responses about your beliefs and how they have shaped you.

50. What would you say 'being a Christian' is all about?

51. In what ways have your parents shaped your answer to that question?

52. In what ways did your experiences in high school youth ministry shape your answer to that question?

53. Reflect on your experience in high school youth group as a whole. What part of that experience was most significant for you personally?

54. What, if anything, do you wish had been different about your high school youth group experience?

Before you turn in your survey, **please go back and make sure you haven't missed any pages (front and back) by accident.**

Thank you VERY MUCH for sharing your answers with us! Please be assured that your answers are confidential and will not be linked with your name or other identifying information.

APPENDIX B

AG Youth Study 2013

AG Youth Study 2013 Survey 3

Welcome to AG Youth Study 2013 Survey 3

***1. Welcome back to the Assemblies of God National Youth Study. Thanks for your continued support by taking this Spring 2013 survey.**

Please begin by entering your 3-digit code number.

This survey contains questions for a variety of participants including those who are full-time college students, working full time, a combination of college and working, or not in college or working. As you go through the survey, it's most helpful to us if you answer all of the questions, but remember that you never have to answer a question if you don't want to. You can click the "no answer" option instead, which is always either on the bottom or at the right of the list of possible responses. Be careful not to get the "no answer" button confused with the other responses! For those not in college, you can click the "not in college" option available on certain questions.

We take confidentiality very seriously, and will make sure that your personal information is kept private. No one who actually analyzes any of the data will know who you are - they will have your code number, but not your name. A staff member of the Assemblies of God will have a list with both your name and code number together - but that person will not be analyzing your data. In other words, the people who handle the survey information will not know who you are, and the people who send you messages and the gift cards will not handle the survey information.

If you have questions you can email YouthStudy@ag.org or read the "Informed Consent" you signed last year.

Most of the students who have taken this survey finished it in 18 minutes or less. There are four optional questions at the end that take an average of less than three additional minutes to complete for a total of less than 21 minutes.

This is the third of four surveys. You received a $25 Visa Gift card for completing the initial survey in the Spring of 2011, and a $50 Visa gift card for completing the second survey in the Spring of 2012. We increase our gifts with each survey in return for your staying with the project. At the end of this survey, you will be asked to enter the address you would like us to mail your $75 VISA gift card to, as our way of saying thanks. You will receive $100 in 2014 for a total of $250 for your help.

Page 1

AG Youth Study 2013 Survey 3

2. Are you a College Student?

◯ Yes full-time ◯ Yes part-time ◯ Not a college student ◯ No answer

If not a college student, you do not need to answer questions 3-7, go to question 8.

3. Are you attending the same college/university as last year?

◯ Yes

◯ No

4. Which of the following best describes the type of college/university you are currently attending?

◯ Large public/state institution ◯ Small public/state institution ◯ Community college ◯ Large private secular ◯ Large Christian ◯ Smaller private secular ◯ Smaller Christian ◯ Not in college ◯ No answer

5. Does your college / university have regular chapel services?

◯ Yes ◯ No ◯ Don't know ◯ Not in college ◯ No Answer

6. If yes, how often are you required to go to chapel?

◯ Not required ◯ Less than once a month ◯ About 1 to 2 times a month ◯ About once a week ◯ More than once a week ◯ Not in college ◯ No answer

7. How often do you participate in an on-campus Christian group?

◯ Less than once a month ◯ About 1 to 2 times a month ◯ About once a week ◯ More than once a week ◯ Not in college ◯ No answer

8. Approximately how many hours of paid work do you do per week (e.g. job, work study)?

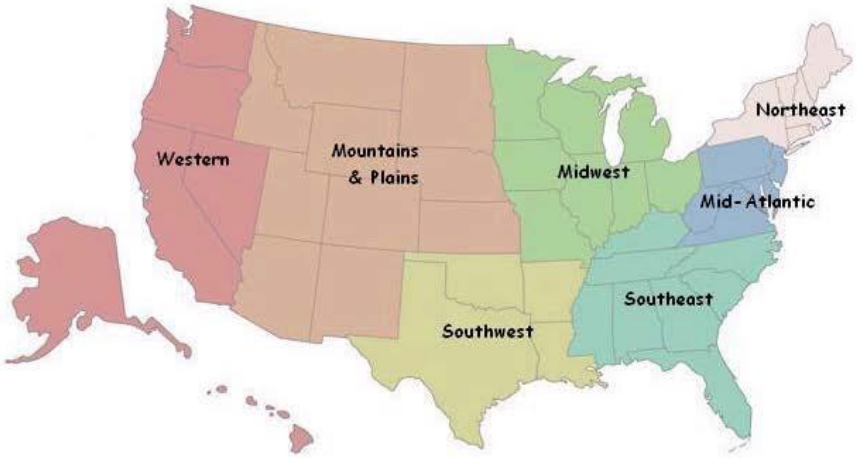
◯ None ◯ 1-10 ◯ 11-20 ◯ 21-30 ◯ 31-40 ◯ 41 or more ◯ No answer

9. Approximately how many hours of volunteer work do you do per week (e.g. ministry, community service)?

◯ None ◯ 1-5 ◯ 6-10 ◯ 11-15 ◯ 16-20 ◯ 21 or more ◯ No answer

AG Youth Study 2013 Survey 3

Map of U.S.



10. In what region of the United States are you located? (If you live outside of the U.S., select "other")

- ◯ Western (including Alaska and Hawaii)
- ◯ Mountains and Plains
- ◯ Southwest
- ◯ Midwest
- ◯ Southeast
- ◯ Mid-Atlantic
- ◯ Northeast
- ◯ Other

AG Youth Study 2013 Survey 3

11. Now think about the transition you've made from high school. To what extent do you feel like the high school youth ministry at your church prepared you for each of the following?

	Not at all	A little	Moderately	A lot	No Answer
If you moved, finding a new church	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Finding Christian relationships after High School	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Managing my time	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Making new friends	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Making choices about parties, alcohol, and sex	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Handling emerging doubts about my faith	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
The transition overall	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

12. Approximately how far are you living away from home? Please choose one answer:

◯ I live at home ◯ 1 to 50 miles ◯ 51 to 100 miles ◯ 101 to 500 miles ◯ More than 500 miles ◯ No answer

13. Which of the following best describes your current living situation?

◯ I live at home
◯ I live in college on-campus student housing
◯ I live in college off-campus student housing
◯ I live in other housing not related to college - i.e.apartment or house
◯ No answer

14. How many roommates, if any, do you live with?

◯ None ◯ 1 ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯ 4 or more ◯ No answer

15. How many friends do you currently have?

◯ None ◯ 1 or 2 ◯ 3 to 5 ◯ 6 to 10 ◯ More than 10 ◯ No answer

AG Youth Study 2013 Survey 3

16. Whom, if anyone, from the list below do you enjoy hanging out with? Click as many as apply:

- ☐ One of my roommates
- ☐ Someone from my floor/building where I live
- ☐ Someone from a small group I participate in
- ☐ Some other new friend
- ☐ I don't hang out with any new friends
- ☐ Friends from high school
- ☐ No answer

17. How happy are you with your current roommate situation? (If you aren't living with a roommate, choose the first answer.)

◯ I don't live with a roommate	◯ Extremely unhappy	◯ Very unhappy	◯ Somewhat unhappy	◯ Somewhat happy	◯ Very happy	◯ Extremely happy	◯ No answer

18. Would you say that your roommate situation is making life easier or more difficult? Please choose one response:

◯ I don't live with a roommate	◯ Much more difficult	◯ Somewhat more difficult	◯ Somewhat easier	◯ Much easier	◯ No answer

19. Please tell us how much you agree with each of the statements below:

	Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree	No answer
My new environment has made me confused about my faith	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I have more free time than I did in high school	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Other friends encourage me to do things that I'm not sure I should do	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I feel anxious that so much of what I do is up to me to decide	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
My environment is helping me grow as a Christian	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I feel pressure to have a boyfriend/girlfriend	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I generally feel friends respect my beliefs	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
The pressure to succeed is really intense	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

AG Youth Study 2013 Survey 3

For the following 9 items, please tell us how often you engaged in each of the behaviors listed during the past 3 months. Click the button that matches the best answer.

20. How often did you. . .

	Less than once a month	About once a month	2-3 times a month	About once a week	2-3 times a week	Daily	No answer
. . . talk with another Christian about your faith, outside of a church-related context?	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
. . . pray alone?	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
. . . attend a worship service or other event at a church?	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
. . . speak or try to speak with a non-christian about your faith?	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
. . . volunteer your time to serve others?	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
. . . participate in a small group of your peers for religious or spiritual purposes?	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
. . . read your Bible by yourself?	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
. . . meet with an older christian for spiritual growth, mentoring, or discipleship?	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
. . . participate in community service or justice work that helps people in need?	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

AG Youth Study 2013 Survey 3

21. For each of the following statements, please select one answer to show how much you agree or disagree with it.

	Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree	No answer
I feel God's presence in my relationships with other people	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I am valued by God	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
My life is filled with meaning and purpose	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I can turn to God for advice when I have problems	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I try to apply my faith to political and social issues	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
God cares about my life and situation	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
My life is committed to Jesus Christ	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
It is important to me that whatever money I have be used to serve God's purposes	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I go out of my way to show love to people I meet	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I do NOT feel close to God	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I have a real sense that God is guiding me	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
In choosing what to do after High School, it was important to me to seek God's will	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I like to worship and pray with others	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
When I think of the things I own or would like to own, I try to remember that everything I have belongs to God	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I think Christians should be involved in promoting racial harmony and creating international understanding	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I am spiritually moved by the beauty of God's creation	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

22. Do you speak in tongues?

- ◯ I do not know what speaking in tongues is
- ◯ Not at all
- ◯ Rarely
- ◯ Sometimes
- ◯ Often
- ◯ No answer

AG Youth Study 2013 Survey 3

23. For each of the 12 statements below, mark whether you think the statement is true or false in describing you.

	True	False	No answer
It is sometimes hard for me to go on with my work if I am not encouraged	◯	◯	◯
I sometimes feel resentful when I don't get my way	◯	◯	◯
There have been times when I feel like rebelling against people in authority even though I know they were right	◯	◯	◯
No matter who I am talking to, I'm always a good listener	◯	◯	◯
There have been occasions when I took advantage of someone	◯	◯	◯
I'm always willing to admit it when I make a mistake	◯	◯	◯
I sometimes try to get even rather than forgive and forget	◯	◯	◯
I am always courteous, even to people who are disagreeable	◯	◯	◯
I have never been annoyed when people expressed ideas very different than my own	◯	◯	◯
There have been times when I was quite jealous of the good luck of others	◯	◯	◯
I am sometimes irritated by people who ask favors of me	◯	◯	◯
I have never deliberately said something that hurt someone's feelings	◯	◯	◯

24. If you needed some emotional support right now, whom would you talk to/contact? Look at the following list, and please tell us how likely you would be to contact them.

	Definately wouldn't contact	Probably wouldn't contact	Might contact	Probably would contact	Definately would contact	No answer
One of my parents	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
My high school youth pastor or youth group leader	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
A friend from high school, outside my youth group	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Some other adult from the church	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
One of my roommates	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Someone from my floor/building where I live	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Someone from a small group I participate in	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Some other new friend	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
If attending college, a leader in campus ministry	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

AG Youth Study 2013 Survey 3

25. Think about the people that were part of your life during high school. Since September, how often do you interact with each of the following? It can be face-to-face, or by phone, email, Facebook, or other social media, etc. Choose one answer for each.

How often do you interact with. . .

	Never	Once a month or less	About twice a month	About once a week	About twice a week	Almost every day	Every day	No answer
. . . your high school youth pastor?	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
. . . some other adult from your church?	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
. . . friends from your high school youth group?	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
. . . other friends from high school?	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

26. Approximately how many HOURS EACH WEEK would you estimate you spend ALTOGETHER on phone, email, Facebook, or other social media, with any of the people above?

◯ None ◯ Less than 1 hour ◯ Less than 2 hours ◯ Less than 5 hours ◯ Less than 10 hours ◯ 10 hours or more ◯ No answer

27. Since September 2012, how many times have you gone home?

◯ I live at home ◯ 1 ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯ 4 ◯ 5 ◯ 6 or more ◯ No answer

28. How often do your parents contact you (e.g. phone, email, Skype, Facebook, or other social media)?

◯ I live at home ◯ Never ◯ Once a month or less ◯ About twice a month ◯ About once a week ◯ About twice a week ◯ Almost every day ◯ Every day ◯ No answer

29. How often do YOU contact your parents (e.g. phone, email, Skype, Facebook, or other social media)?

◯ I live at home ◯ Never ◯ Once a month or less ◯ About twice a month ◯ About once a week ◯ About twice a week ◯ Almost every day ◯ Every day ◯ No answer

AG Youth Study 2013 Survey 3

30. For the statements on this page, please think about the relationships that you have NOW. Then tell us how much you agree with each statement.

	Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree	No answer
There are people who enjoy the same social activities I do	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I feel part of the group of people who share my attitudes and beliefs	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
There is no one who shares my interests and concerns	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
There is no one who likes to do the things I do	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
There is no one I can turn to for guidance in times of stress	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
There is someone I can talk to about important decisions in my life	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
There is a trustworthy person I could turn to for advice if I were having problems	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
There is no one I feel comfortable talking about problems with	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

31. Again, thinking about the relationships that you have NOW, tell us how much you agree with each statement.

	Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree	No answer
I feel that I do not have close personal relationships with other people	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I have close relationships that provide me with a sense of emotional security and well-being	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I feel a strong emotional bond with at least one other person	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I lack a feeling of intimacy with another person	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
There are people I can depend on to help me if I really need it	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
If something went wrong, no one would come to my assistance	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
There is no one I can depend on for aid if I really need it	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
There are people whom I can count on in an emergency	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

AG Youth Study 2013 Survey 3

The following six questions are pretty personal. Your answers are confidential, so please be as honest as you can.

32. How many times, if any, have you had alcohol to drink DURING THE LAST 30 DAYS?

○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3-5 ○ 6-9 ○ 10-19 ○ 20-39 ○ 40+ ○ No answer

33. How many times, if any, have you gambled with money (e.g. Texas Hold 'Em, online casinos or gaming) DURING THE LAST 30 DAYS?

○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3-5 ○ 6-9 ○ 10-19 ○ 20-39 ○ 40+ ○ No answer

34. How many times, if any, have you viewed pornography on the Internet DURING THE LAST 30 DAYS?

○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3-5 ○ 6-9 ○ 10-19 ○ 20-39 ○ 40+ ○ No answer

35. How many times, if any, have you engaged in a hookup, sexual intercourse ("gone all the way") or oral sex, DURING THE LAST 30 DAYS?

○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3-5 ○ 6-9 ○ 10-19 ○ 20-39 ○ 40+ ○ No answer

36. Approximately how many different sexual partners have you had IN THE LAST 30 DAYS? Please enter a number in the box. If you have not had any sexual partners, enter "0". To refuse to answer the question, leave it blank.

37. Generally, how would you describe the nature of your relationship with your partner (s)? Choose as many as apply.

- ☐ I haven't had any sexual partners
- ☐ Barely knew them
- ☐ Casual friend
- ☐ Good friend
- ☐ Dating
- ☐ Committed relationship
- ☐ No answer

AG Youth Study 2013 Survey 3

38. Thinking about your experience since high school, please tell us how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree	No answer
I feel that I am adjusting well	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I feel like I am managing my independence well	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I feel that I fit in well here	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Transitioning from high school is one of the hardest things I've ever done	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I am managing my time well	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
The academic and/or work challenge has been more than I expected	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I am adjusting to college study and/or work demands	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
So far, it's been difficult to find a church where I feel welcome	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

39. In an average day (a 24-hour cycle), approximately how many hours of sleep do you think you are getting?

◯ average of 5 or less hours ◯ average of 6 hours ◯ average of 7 hours ◯ average of 8 hours ◯ average of 9 or more hours

Please look at the following 6 questions. Answer each question on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is the description on the left and 10 is the opposite description on the right. Please click the answer that seems closest to how you have generally felt DURING THE PAST MONTH.

40. How relaxed or tense have you been in the past month?

◯ Very relaxed ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯ 4 ◯ 5 ◯ 6 ◯ 7 ◯ 8 ◯ 9 ◯ Very tense ◯ No answer

41. How much energy, pep, and vitality have you felt in the past month?

◯ No energy at all, listless ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯ 4 ◯ 5 ◯ 6 ◯ 7 ◯ 8 ◯ 9 ◯ Very energetic, dynamic ◯ No answer

42. How depressed or cheerful have you been in the past month?

◯ Very depressed ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯ 4 ◯ 5 ◯ 6 ◯ 7 ◯ 8 ◯ 9 ◯ Very cheerful ◯ No answer

AG Youth Study 2013 Survey 3

43. How afraid have you been in the past month?

○ Not afraid ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 ○ 6 ○ 7 ○ 8 ○ 9 ○ Very afraid ○ No answer

44. How angry have you been in the past month?

○ Not angry at all ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 ○ 6 ○ 7 ○ 8 ○ 9 ○ Very angry ○ No answer

45. How sad have you been in the past month?

○ Not sad at all ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 ○ 6 ○ 7 ○ 8 ○ 9 ○ Very sad ○ No answer

AG Youth Study 2013 Survey 3

The last four questions are open ended and optional. Please share your honest responses about your beliefs and how they have shaped you. The additional four questions took an average of less than three minutes. If you choose not to answer these questions please click next so you can proceed to the final pages to provide your address for the gift card.

46. Since leaving high school, what's changed about the way you view God?

47. What doubts or questions about your faith have you had?

48. What would you say being a Christian is all about?

49. If you had an opportunity to speak to a group of high school students about what it's like as a Christian to leave youth group what would you say to prepare them?

AG Youth Study 2013 Survey 3

Gift Card and Thank You

***50. Thank you for your time! We appreciate it greatly.**

To ensure that you receive your $75 Visa gift card and future surveys, we need to know whether we have your most current physical address.

Please enter the mailing address where you would like your $75 Visa gift card mailed.

Address:

Address 2:

City/Town:

State:

ZIP:

51. If you have a preferred email address different than the one we sent your survey to, please enter it here.

Thanks again for participating and enjoy your gift card! We will contact you again next Spring with the next survey. Please email YouthStudy@ag.org if you have any questions or change email addresses.

APPENDIX C

Confidentiality Form

INFORMED CONSENT

Code #_____

Assemblies of God
National Youth Study
Steve Pulis

Hello from the Assemblies of God! We are asking for your help in a research study of high school seniors like yourself, who are involved in Assemblies of God youth groups. The purpose is to look at your transition from high school and our specific interest is in how you grow as a Christian after leaving high school. Your only responsibility would be to fill out surveys, which ask questions about your faith and personal life. The first survey is to be completed now, in your senior year of high school. It should take about 25-30 minutes of your time. Then we will contact you in the Spring of the following three years (2012, 2013, and 2014) for follow-up surveys of a similar nature—so please say yes only if you are willing to keep participating in the study for the next three years. Please be advised, however, that your participation is always voluntary. That means that it is always your right to withdraw from the study at any time, even if you say yes now.

To participate, read this consent form carefully. **At the end, if you agree to participate, simply sign at the end of this document. Please be sure to fill out the contact information, with your home address, and email. We will use this information to be in touch with you in the future.**

The code number that you see at the top of this form is unique to you; because this is a three-year project, we need the code number to match your later answers to earlier ones. **Be assured that we will not use it to match your identity to any survey information you provide.**

Upon completion of the first survey, 300 participants will be selected from across the U.S. to join the study. If you are selected for the study, we would like to send you a $25 gift card as a way of saying "Thank you!" for your help and participation. Because this is an invitation to a three-year process, we will increase our gifts in return for your staying with the project: $25 in 2011, $50 in 2012, $75 in 2013, and $100 in 2014 for a total of $250 for your help.

Some of the questions are quite personal in nature, and answering them could make you feel a little uncomfortable. Again, your responses are voluntary, so you are free to refuse to answer any question asked of you. All you have to do is check the "no answer" option that appears at the end of each question. You will still receive your $25

gift card, if you are selected for the study, even if you refuse to answer some of the items.

We take confidentiality very seriously, and will make sure that your personal information is kept private. No one who actually analyzes any of the data will know who you are: they will have your code number, but not your name. There will be a staff member of the Assemblies of God who will have a list with both your name and code number together—but that person will not be analyzing your data. In other words, the people who handle the survey information will not know who you are, and the people who send you messages and the gift cards will not handle the survey information. All data will be stored in password protected files or other secure locations.

We will save your contact information following the study in case we decide to add additional surveys. All contact information will be kept in a privacy-secured database and will not be shared with third parties. No personally-identifying information will be used in any way other than to attempt to contact you in the future should a follow up study emerge.

We do anticipate publishing the results, but your role and participation will be kept anonymous. The students and the churches participating in the study will not be identified in print anywhere. Your information will be analyzed as part of a group, together with other students from across the U.S., so it will be impossible to trace specific information to you. Any other information you supply over the course of the study, such as written answers to more open-ended questions, may be quoted directly, but without any corresponding information that could identify you as the source.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact us by email at YouthStudy@ag.org or by phone at 417.862.2781, ext 4084.

Risks and Benefits to you

There are no direct benefits to you from participating in the study. There are also no foreseeable risks to you.

Agreeing to participate in the Assemblies of God National Youth Study means that you understand it is a three-year study, and that we will be contacting you to fill out four surveys overall. It also signifies that each of the following statements is true of you:

- **You are 18 years of age or older;**
- **You have read this consent form and all of your questions have been answered;**
- **You understand that you may withdraw from the study at any time, or refuse to answer any of the questions asked of you.**

All of the answers you provide will be kept private and confidential in the manner described above. You have the right to see the results prior to their being published. You may want to keep a copy of the consent form for your records.

We hope that this study will be of great importance to churches, youth workers, and the students they serve. Thank you!

If you are agreeing to participate in this study please sign on the line provided below and fill out the information below. When finished, please return the form to the person who gave it to you. You will be given a duplicate copy of the form for your records.

_____

SIGNATURE DATE

NAME: _____ (**please print clearly**)

ADDRESS: _____

_____

EMAIL: _____

(**Email contact is necessary for this study, as future surveys will be online and we will send you email instructions for taking each survey. We will check your email address and also contact you in late summer to see if your email has changed. At any point you may contact us at YouthStudy@ag.org with questions.**

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