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ADOLESCENT CHRISTIAN FORMATION AND MOTHER
NURTURANCE AND INVOLVEMENT:
A MIXED METHODS STUDY

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Philip Lee McKinney II
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ADOLESCENT CHRISTIAN FORMATION AND MOTHER
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Philip Lee McKinney II

Read and Approved by:

Timothy Paul Jones (Chair)

Randall L. Stinson

Date_____

This work is dedicated to all my girls. To Angie (my beautiful wife, best friend, and sister in Christ), who was there for me when others failed. To our daughters, Kaylee, Taylor, and Rylie, who allowed me to be away when they deserved more. No words could express my love and appreciation to each of you.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DMI	Desired Mother Involvement
FIS	Father Involvement Scale
MI	Mother Involvement
MIS	Mother Involvement Scale
MN	Mother Nurturance
NFS	Nurturant Father Scale
NMS	Nurturant Mother Scale
PMI	Perceived Mother Involvement
RSD	Religious and Spiritual Development
SFI	Spiritual Formation Inventory

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PREFACE

This manuscript is the result of countless hours of research and writing. I have been continuously challenged by my doctoral professors to think critically and thoroughly in regard to this study. However, I am thankful for my dissertation supervisor, Dr. Timothy Paul Jones, for allowing me freedom to explore this area of research and to expand my knowledge and expertise in the process.

My colleagues in the Ph.D. program have been a tremendous source of strength and encouragement throughout this process. We all faced multiple deadlines, sleepless nights away from families, and hours and hours of research. Yet my partners in study always provided a quick word of encouragement and extended me fellowship that allowed me to keep my focus on completing the tasks.

I find it very difficult to express adequately my love and appreciation to my wife and children. Angie, my wife, my best friend, and my sister in Christ, has been my constant support and encourager in my doctoral program and in this writing. She pushed me when I did not want to continue. To say I owe this manuscript to her would be an understatement. I now owe her a great deal of time as she has so willingly sacrificed it to me.

I also must thank our daughters, Kaylee, Taylor, and Rylie, for allowing Daddy to read, research, write, and be away from them. There were times when I struggled to reconcile my study of father involvement when my very own father involvement was jeopardized. Yet what I learned compelled me to be a better father to them, and I know they are benefitting more through it. My daughters demonstrated grace, mercy, patience, and love to me for which I am forever indebted.

Finally, I have found myself overwhelmed in thought, emotion, and spirit when considering the wonder of God and His love and patience for me. His grace rained down on me through this process, and I owe Him everything. My prayer is that the results of this work will only honor Him and ultimately aid in the expansion of His kingdom. For His glory I have written this and for none other.

Philip Lee McKinney II

Louisville, Kentucky

December 2013

CHAPTER 1

RESEARCH CONCERN

This research sought to explore the relationship between adolescent Christian formation and the influence of maternal nurturance and involvement in the lives of adolescents in Churches of Christ. Passing on the faith to the next generation is imperative for the continuation and expansion of the Christian faith community. The research herein examined both maternal nurturance and involvement and Christian formation from the perspective of adolescents.

Introduction to the Research Problem

Presently, there is a lack of literature in the area of maternal influence in adolescent Christian formation. A recent study, conducted by Andrew Clyde Parker, focused on paternal influence and its impact on the Christian formation of adolescents.¹ His research indicated that fathers hold a primary role in Christian formation during the formative years of adolescence. The study's findings demonstrated that there was a significant correlation between the Christian formation of adolescents and paternal nurturance and involvement.² Parker's work brought about an awareness of the importance of fathers and the extent of the damage created in their absence. However, Parker's research did not include the maternal influence in the Christian formation of adolescents. David Dollahite and Jennifer Thatcher address this, "Although the subject of

¹Andrew Clyde Parker, "An Analysis of the Relationship between Adolescent Spiritual Development and Father Involvement" (Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010).

²Ibid., 113–19.

motherhood is a rapidly growing area of research, there is relatively little on this topic, and even less on the linkages between mothering and religion.”³

This lack of research and literature may be due to a general consensus that mothers have taken on that role because of an absence of paternal influence and, therefore, no attention was necessary. However, the maternal role in Christian formation cannot be neglected. Parents (both father *and mother*) are responsible for this task, and the maternal role is vital to the process. Parents need to realize the gravity of that role and that it has implications both positively and negatively. The hope is that the awareness brought about by this study will help mothers become more intentional about this God-given role through the adolescent years and that churches will recognize their part in equipping mothers in that role. In addition to helping mothers understand their responsibility, fathers will become more aware of how to be supportive of their wives in fulfilling this role.

Scriptural Foundations

Scripture indicates that parents hold the primary responsibility for passing on faith to their children (Deut 6:4–9; Ps 78:1–7).⁴ According to Scripture, the father is to take the primary role of leading his family and discipling his children. In ancient Israel, it is evident that the father took this role. Daniel Block states, “Israelite families were patrilineal (official lines of descent were traced through the father’s line), patrilocal (married women joined the households of their husbands), and patriarchal (the father governed the household).”⁵ He goes on to discuss the difference between the terms

³David C. Dollahite and Jennifer Y. Thatcher, *How Family Religious Involvement Benefits Adults, Youth, and Children and Strengthens Families* (Salt Lake City: Sutherland J. L. & Pub., 2005), 6 [on-line]; accessed December 29, 2010; available from <http://www.sjlpp.org/documents/dollahite92605.pdf>; Internet.

⁴All Scripture will be taken from the New International Version, 1984, unless otherwise stated.

⁵Daniel I. Block, “Marriage and Family in Ancient Israel,” in *Marriage and Family in the*

patriarchy and *patricentrism*. *Patriarchy* is the term that most scholars use to refer to the structure of ancient Israelite families.⁶ However, Block believes this term does not adequately reflect the true nature of the social structure of families in ancient Israel. Instead, he prefers the term *patricentrism*, which denotes a family structure centered on the father as “family life radiated outward from him.”⁷

Although both parents had responsibility to aid in the spiritual growth of their children, the father was to take an elevated or primary role in these efforts. Of special note are the instructions given to men/fathers found in Deuteronomy 4:9; 6:6–7, 20–24; 11:18–21; 31:13; 32:7; 32:46–47. Duane Christensen believes that Deuteronomy serves as a “curriculum” for the ongoing religious education of the Israelite nation.⁸ This education was primarily in the hands of the father or head of house. As others have stated,

While religious instruction is a joint responsibility of both parents, in the Bible it is more the domain of fathers than of mothers (Prov 1:8; 4:1; 6:20; 13:1; 15:5; 27:10). The psalmist writes of how “our fathers have told us” of God’s past deeds (Ps 44:1; 78:3) in fulfillment of Moses’ command in his farewell discourse to “remember the days of old...ask your father, and he will show you” (Deut 32:7 RSV). Fathers simply held a position of authority in ancient cultures that is quite foreign to most modern ones.... A good father takes responsibility for the spiritual welfare of his family.⁹

Biblical World, ed. Ken M. Campbell (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 40–41.

⁶V. H. Matthews, “Family Relationships,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 293–94.

⁷Block, “Marriage and Family in Ancient Israel,” 41.

⁸Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1–21:9*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 6A (Dallas: Word, 2002), 143. The focus on teaching your children “these words” diligently within the context of the family—at all conceivable times and places—illustrates once again the pedagogical purpose of Deuteronomy. The content of this book was the primary curriculum in an ongoing program of religious education in ancient Israel.

⁹Leland Ryken et al., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 273–74.

This paternal role continued in and through the times of the New Testament. Paul states this plainly in Ephesians 6:4, “Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.” The command here is that fathers focus their efforts with their children on nourishing (rearing or bringing up) children to maturity.¹⁰ Therefore, Scripture clearly indicates that the father is to lead his family in all areas of life, but especially in the area of Christian formation. This spiritual leadership is not to the exclusion of the mother, but is to be indicative of the God-designed roles given to both man and woman. Yet, what about mothers? What role do mothers play in Christian formation according to Scripture?

The role of mother. As in the case of fathers, mothers had some specific roles within an Israelite family. A primary maternal role was to bear and nurture children.¹¹ Motherhood was something that was honored and coveted among the Hebrews. So much so that it was painful for those women who were unable to bear children (e.g., 1 Sam 1:4–11; Ps 113:9; Isa 54:1).¹² Although Block argues for a patricentric Israelite society, he demonstrates an elevated status for the wife and mother in six ways: (1) the creation of man and woman in the image of God confirms an ontological equality between them; (2) both man and woman are given the responsibility to govern the earth with no mention as either being inferior to the other (Gen 1:28); (3) God does not create a servant or slave for Adam but a helper to complement him; (4) woman was created from man’s rib, which indicates complementarity as she is “at his side and near/dear to his heart”; (5) the name for woman as she is introduced to man is recognized as his feminine counterpart; and (6)

¹⁰Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 446.

¹¹C. J. Vos, “Mother,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 3:426.

¹²*Ibid.*, 3:427.

Genesis 1:24–25 demonstrates mutuality between man and woman because they are one body.¹³

Block goes on to share that even though man and woman share ontological equality it does not mean that they share the same function within the created order. This does not negate, however, God’s intended ideal of equality and complementarity. He notes, “Although the functional subordination of the wife to her husband is a constant, throughout the Old Testament one recognizes clear affirmations of the dignity of the wife and obvious room for significant influence within the household.”¹⁴ Bruce Ware comments on this from a Trinitarian perspective and states, “The wife is under the authority of her husband, but is over the children in the household, partnering with their father to ensure that they learn godliness and obedience. The children are under the authority of both of their parents, understanding that they are to learn from their father and mother what is most important in life, all the while obeying their parents with joy and gladness.”¹⁵ Block lists eight ways in which a wife/mother influenced an Israelite home and family:¹⁶

1. Husbands and wives related to one another as equals in dating and sex (Song of Solomon).¹⁷
2. In many cases wives/mothers named their children (a sign of authority) (Gen 29:32; 30:6; 35:18; 38:29; Judg 13:24; 1 Sam 1:20; 4:21; Isa 7:14).¹⁸

¹³Block, “Marriage and Family in Ancient Israel,” 65.

¹⁴Ibid., 66.

¹⁵Bruce A. Ware, “The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,” in *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective*, ed. Randy Stinson and Timothy P. Jones (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2011), 68.

¹⁶Block, “Marriage and Family in Ancient Israel,” 66–68.

¹⁷Ibid., 67n152; Richard M. Davidson, “Theology of Sexuality in the Song of Songs: Return to Eden,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 27, no. 1 (1989): 8–10. Song of Solomon represents an egalitarian picture of love and romance between a man and a woman.

3. Children must honor both fathers *and mothers* (Exod 20:12; Lev 19:3; Deut 5:16).¹⁹
4. Both fathers *and mothers* were to defend their falsely accused daughter (Deut 22:13–18).²⁰
5. Wisdom literature often places the instruction of mothers on equal level with that of fathers (Prov 1:8; 6:20; 31:1).²¹

¹⁸Gerhard von Rad says, “Let us remind ourselves once more that name-giving in the ancient Orient was primarily an exercise of sovereignty, of command.” Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), 83. Grudem also comments on this, “In Old Testament thought the right to name someone implied authority over that person (this is seen both when God gives names to people such as Abraham and Sarah, and when parents give names to their children). . . . The fact that mothers sometimes give their children names in the Old Testament does not contradict the idea of name-giving as representing authority, since both mothers and fathers have parental authority over their children.” Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 462.

¹⁹As Sarna notes, “The command applies equally to son and daughter irrespective of their age, and it holds for *both* parents” (emphasis mine). Nahum M. Sarna, *Exodus*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 113. Interestingly, Lev 19:3 reverses the order and places the mother as the first recipient of honor. Levine comments on this, saying, “More significant is the fact that mother precedes father, whereas elsewhere father usually comes first, as one would expect in a patrilineal society. There are a few exceptions to the normal pattern, however, suggesting that in familial contexts, deference is shown to the mother. In 21:2, one’s mother comes first in a list of consanguineal relatives. In Genesis 35:18 we observe that the name given a newborn child by its mother is recorded prior to the name given by the father. The traditional resolution of the unusual order evident in our verse is based on a comparison with the Fifth Commandment, where father precedes mother. The two statements, when combined, amount to an equitable estimation of both parents.” Baruch A. Levine, *Leviticus*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 125.

²⁰As Craigie notes, “When such charges were made, the legal responsibility for defending the young woman rested on her parents. They were responsible because they had given their daughter to the man in marriage, and by that act they had indicated that the girl was qualified for marriage (i.e., a virgin). The parents of the woman took their case to the elders of the city, to whom, it may be assumed, the man made his initial charge (v. 14); the role of the parents was to present a proper defense for their daughter against the charges that had been laid.” Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976), 292. Tigay makes the point that “the mother joins the father here, though only the father speaks, because it was women who kept the cloth after the consummation of the marriage.” Jeffrey H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 205.

²¹Roger N. Whybray, *Wisdom in Proverbs* (Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1965), 42. Whybray observes that Hebrew wisdom literature adapts an Egyptian tradition and places both father and mother “on exactly the same footing as teachers of their children.” Whybray believes that father and mother *shared* the responsibility for educating children. See also William Barclay, *Train Up a Child: Educational Ideals in the Ancient World* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1959), 17: “It is relevant to note the place of the mother in this parental education. She is mentioned again and again; and King Lemuel, that sage, passes on the prophecy ‘that his mother taught him.’ In the Jewish home father and mother shared responsibility for the education of the child.” Waltke addresses this saying, “Significantly, *your mother* (*’immekā*) is mentioned at this seam in the book (see 10:1), pointing to both parents as having an authoritative voice with

6. Proverbs 31:10–31 describes a noble wife/mother as one who takes initiative and demonstrates creativity and energy. She is subordinate, but not subservient.²²
7. Wives often exert great influence over their husbands (both positive and negative) (Gen 16:1–6; 21:8–21; 28; 1 Sam 1 [note v. 23]; 19:11–17 to note a few examples).²³
8. Although women were usually excluded from leadership roles, they often filled *ad hoc* roles for God through prophecy and religious affairs (Judg 4–5; Esther, Ruth, Exod 15:20; Isa 8:3; 2 Kgs 22:14; Neh 6:14; 1 Sam 2:2–10).²⁴

reference to the children in their home-schooling.” Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 1–15*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 186–87. In addressing the role of Lemuel’s mother, Waltke says, “Lemuel’s sayings (see esp. vv. 4, 8–9) resemble the Egyptian and Babylonian wisdom literature that also aim to equip rulers to discharge their duties as wise and just kings (see 1:1). Verset B qualifies the royal sapiential genre as also a prophetic *oracle* (*maššā*, see 30:1) and modifies Lemuel’s burden as that which *his mother* (*’immo*, see 1:8; 30:11a) *taught him* admonished (*’aser-yiss’rattō*, see 9:7; 19:18; 29:17, 19; cf. Ps. 2:10). *Yāsar* means, ‘to communicate knowledge in order to shape specific conduct.’ Queen mothers influenced the policies and theological stance of the king (see 30:23), but no parallel exists in ancient Near Eastern literatures of a mother’s wise sayings to her son (see 1:8; 4:3; 6:20).” Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 15–31*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2005), 503. See further comments pp. 8–9 below.

²²As Waltke notes, “Verset A asserts the teacher’s vigilance over her household, and verset B re-enforces it by asserting her unstinting diligence. The initial participle *one who watches* vigilantly over (*sopiya*, lit. “keep a lookout”) links v. 27 with v. 26, explaining that as teacher she keeps a sharp lookout over the *affairs* (*h’likot*) of her household (*betah*, see v. 21) promptly to right any irregularities (see 15:13) and to maintain its orderly arrangement. With regard to the children, the aristocratic wife turns over to her servant girls much of the routine work in rearing the children but assumes responsibility for their instruction and retains final authority (see 1:8). *With regard to her wise husband, he celebrates her wisdom* (cf. vv. 28–29, 30–33), and, like Adam who celebrated his wife’s equality with him, encourages her to share her loving and wise teaching with him (cf. Eph 5:21)” (emphasis mine). Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 15–31*, 532–33.

²³One of the most notable occurrences of this is found in King Solomon. Two specific commands given by Moses were not followed by Solomon: (1) Do not marry foreign women “for they will turn your sons away from following me to serve other gods” (Deut 7:4), and (2) the king is not to have many wives “or his heart will be led astray” (Deut 17:17). Instead, Solomon chooses to have many wives from different nations and therefore “his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been” (1 Kgs 11:4). House stresses, “What occurs in this passage must have sickened the author of 1, 2 Kings and any original readers committed to the Lord. In Solomon’s old age *his wives influence* his devotion to God, and he worships ‘other gods’” (emphasis mine). Paul R. House, *1, 2 Kings*, The New American Commentary, vol. 8 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 167.

²⁴Many women held roles as prophetesses. Stuart remarks on these women in reference to Miriam, “Several other godly women bear this same title ‘prophetess’ in the Old Testament (or its Greek equivalent in the NT): Deborah (Judg 4:4), Huldah (2 Kgs 22:14), Isaiah’s wife (Isa 8:3), and Anna (Luke 2:36); a couple of not-so-godly women do as well (Noadiah in Neh 6:14 and “Jezebel” in Rev 2:20). Micah

There were three ways in which a wife fulfilled her role to her husband in an Israelite family: (1) the most noble contribution a wife could make was to bear a child (specifically a son); (2) to manage the household through gardening, harvesting, cooking, and clothing the family; and (3) to provide companionship to her husband, which often functioned as a confidant and true friend.²⁵ Each of those responsibilities is detailed in Proverbs 31:10–31. When fulfilled, they were considered marks for the most noble of wives and mothers. These were characteristics and responsibilities that Israelite women aspired to fulfill and that brought them great honor in the family and among the community of Israel. As mentioned earlier, the role of bearing children and motherhood was to be the most coveted of all the responsibilities of a wife.

In Proverbs 31, a noble wife and mother would tend to the daily care of her husband and children by providing them with food, clothing, and shelter. However, there was a great deal more to the role of mother than simply providing for the domestic needs of the children. Mothers took a prominent role in the Israelite home. They were involved

confirms Miriam's leadership role in the exodus (Mic 6:4), which, on the analogy of how Moses and Aaron exercised their leadership and how prophets in general do so, would have meant that she received instructive words from God to relay to the people as a way of guiding them. We do not know what these were apart from the present context any more than we know what sorts of prophetic oracles, say, Huldah may have uttered over time to make her the prophet of choice for King Josiah to consult in the crisis of 2 Kgs 22:11–20. *Nevertheless, the leadership of the exodus was clearly a family affair*, as confirmed also by the specific mention of the death and burial of Miriam (Num 20:1), an honorable sort of mention accorded otherwise only to Moses (Deut 34:5–6) and Aaron (Num 20:28; Deut 10:6; 32:50) (emphasis mine).” Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 2 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 362–63. Ackerman addresses this saying, “The Bible thus does admit the possibility that women could assume the role of prophet within Israelite society and, in the case of Zipporah, may even intimate the possibility of a woman taking on priest-like functions. But the biblical record also suggests that the Israelites could imagine women as occupying these sorts of roles only within the context of some very specific conditions. Historically, the conditions required were the kind of period of destabilization or decentralization during which women can generally achieve a more elevated status and find opportunities for a greater exercise of power. Literarily, the conditions required were a narrative containing a liminal phase in which the characteristically liminal experience of anti-structure allowed women to be depicted as holding positions within their communities that in the reaggregated sections of the text they would otherwise be denied.” Susan Ackerman, “Why Is Miriam Also Among the Prophets? (And Is Zipporah Among the Priests?),” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 121, no. 1 (2002): 80.

²⁵Block, “Marriage and Family in Ancient Israel,” 72–76.

in the naming of the child (as mentioned earlier), which often meant the passing on of faith as names were often indicative of the parent's faith.²⁶ It was not uncommon for mothers to take the initiative in the home in directing the affairs of the family. As C. J. Vos points out, "Sarah insisted on the expulsion of Hagar despite Abraham's misgivings (Gen 21:10); Rebekah instigated the shift of the blessing from Esau to Jacob (Gen 27:5–17); Abigail interceded on behalf of her household (1 Sam 25:14–35); Bathsheba intervened on behalf of her son Solomon" (1 Kgs 1:11–31).²⁷ Those instances demonstrate the great influence a mother had in the family (even in a patricentric culture).

Through the first decade of life, the mother held a primary role of nurturer to her children and aided in their education, because the home was the primary means of pedagogy.²⁸ Block points out, "In laying the foundations for civilized behavior, excellent performance and responsible decision-making, the maternal role was as important as the father's."²⁹ Although it is clear that the father was to take a primary role in the education and faith formation of his children (as outlined earlier), the mother aided greatly in this process and was at times left alone to do so (as will be evidenced in the discussion on Timothy). At adolescence, sons would begin to spend a great deal more time with their fathers, as the fathers were to pass on to their sons the skills and character necessary to be responsible male adults.³⁰ However, mothers were not absent during these years, and Scripture indicates their continued instruction: "Listen, my son, to your father's

²⁶Ibid., 76.

²⁷Vos, "Mother," 3:427.

²⁸Block, "Marriage and Family in Ancient Israel," 76.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid.

instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching" (Prov 1:8). "My son, keep your father's command and do not forsake your mother's teaching" (Prov 6:20). "The eye that mocks a father, that scorns an aged mother, will be pecked out by the ravens of the valley, will be eaten by the vultures" (Prov 30:17). "The sayings of King Lemuel—an inspired utterance his mother taught him" (Prov 31:1).

These passages indicate an elevated role of motherly instruction and teaching in the Israelite family. Bruce Waltke comments on Proverbs 1:8 and points out, "Significantly, *your mother* (*'immekā*) is mentioned at this seam in the book (see 10:1), pointing to both parents as having an authoritative voice with reference to the children in their home-schooling."³¹ Not only is the instruction and teaching of a mother seen as authoritative, it is also seen as wisdom. Rowland Murphy comments on this wisdom by saying that "the teaching of the mother and father are paired with the words of Wisdom."³² Maternal instruction is also so influential that it directs a king's thoughts on the moral requirements for good government.³³ All these instances demonstrate how powerful maternal influence was in an Israelite family.

The New Testament does not appear to indicate a different pattern for wives and mothers. In fact, Paul stresses the continued importance of mothers and the role in the home. Andreas Köstenberger and David Jones stress this point by saying the following:

The apostle Paul taught that one of the primary roles of women is that of "childbearing," that is, not only the act of giving birth but their domestic role related to the upbringing of children and managing of the home (1 Tim 2:15; cf. 5:14). Thus, motherhood is not disparaged in biblical teaching; contrary to many in

³¹Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs*, 186–87.

³²Rowland E. Murphy, *Proverbs*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 22 (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 11.

³³Duane A. Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, The New American Commentary, vol. 14 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 246. See also Prov 31:1.

modern society, it is held up as the woman's highest calling and privilege. In fact, in his first letter to Timothy, the apostle intimates that, for women, straying from the home is yielding to the devil's temptation in a similar way to Eve overstepping her bounds at the original Fall (1 Tim 2:14–15).³⁴

This quote illuminates the importance of mothers not only in the Old Testament, but also in the New Testament family. Mothers held a vital role in the raising and nurturing of children in the home that did not supersede that of the father, but instead evidenced a role of complementarity and equality.

The important and necessary role of mothers in the Christian formation of their children is clearly demonstrated in the life of Timothy. One reads in 2 Timothy 1:5, “I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.” Here, Paul is discussing the faith of Timothy in light of its origins. This evidence of inherited faith clearly demonstrates the impact mothers have on the faith of their children. No mention of Timothy's father is made here, but in Acts 16:1 the NIV states, “Paul came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was Jewish and a believer but whose father was a Greek.” This implies that the father was not a believer and would, therefore, mean that Timothy grew up in a home where his faith was primarily influenced by his mother and (as 2 Tim 1:5 indicates) his grandmother.

Though this is the extent of the knowledge we have surrounding Eunice and Lois, it does seem that they themselves inherited a Jewish faith that found its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Thomas Lea and Hayne Griffin note,

Paul commended the spiritual heritage Timothy had received. This faith in the God of the Bible had first lived in his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. Their faith was the expression of the faith of a “true” Jew (Rom 2:28–29) which found its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. The pair had a genuine expectant faith for the Messiah of the Old Testament. When they heard the gospel, they believed upon Jesus Christ as

³⁴Andreas J. Köstenberger with David W. Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 120.

the Messiah for whom they had hoped. They passed their faith on to Timothy. Paul was tracing the faith of Timothy back to its roots.³⁵

This environment was what Timothy found himself in and was the impetus for his Christian formation. Philip Towner comments that “we know only that Timothy’s grandmother and mother apparently came to faith in the Messiah prior to Timothy and provided an environment crucial to his conversion and spiritual development.”³⁶

Paul further references this spiritual development in 2 Timothy 3:14–15, “But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” This reference demonstrates how, from his childhood, Timothy had received instruction in the Holy Scriptures from his mother and grandmother (this teaching would follow typical Jewish upbringing). Paul was more than likely referring to both the instruction and teaching Timothy received from both his mother and grandmother and Paul himself. However, he is witnessing to the moral and spiritual impact that Timothy’s mother and grandmother had on him.³⁷ Towner makes an important statement regarding this passage:

Paul apparently draws on his knowledge of Timothy’s upbringing in traditional Jewish fashion. From the account in Acts 16:1, which identifies Timothy’s father as being a Gentile, we should probably conclude in conjunction with 1:5, that his Jewish mother and grandmother would have been mainly responsible for his learning of “the holy Scriptures” in the early years.³⁸

³⁵Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *I, 2 Timothy, Titus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 185.

³⁶Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 454.

³⁷Lea and Griffin, *I, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 233.

³⁸Towner, *Timothy and Titus*, 582.

Both in the Old and New Testaments, mothers played a vital role in the Christian formation of their children. Although fathers were to play a primary role in that endeavor, mothers were to work in a complementary and equal fashion to the fathers to help children grow in their faith in every facet of life. Scriptural evidence undoubtedly points to an influential role of mothers in the Christian formation of children and adolescents, and this role should not be overlooked today.

Parental Response to the Call

When one examines Scripture, it becomes evident that parents are responsible for the Christian formation of their adolescents. Yet, how are parents (in particular mothers) currently responding to this call? Recent literature indicates that parents today tend to relinquish their role as disciplers in the lives of their children to “the professionals” with the belief that in doing so they have fulfilled their God-given responsibility. Timothy Paul Jones speaks to this by saying that “most parents are perfectly willing to let their church provide all their children’s religious instruction. In some cases, this is because parents assume that the spiritual maturity of their children is primarily the responsibility of professional ministers in their churches.”³⁹ This abdication may be due to feelings of ineffectiveness in that role rather than a lack of desire to fulfill it.

In 2003, the Barna Group conducted a study, titled “Parents Accept Responsibility for Their Child’s Spiritual Development But Struggle With Effectiveness,” that demonstrated the feelings of ineffectiveness. The group found that 85 percent of parents surveyed believed that they held the primary role of directing the Christian formation of their children, not the church. (Only 11 percent felt it was the role

³⁹Timothy Paul Jones, ed., *Perspectives on Family Ministry: 3 Views* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2009), 16.

of the church. Also, 96 percent of the parents surveyed with children 13 years old or younger believed they held the primary Christian formation role.)⁴⁰ This research would indicate that parents are going in the right direction. However, further study by the group found that “Most of those parents are willing to let their church or religious center provide all of the direct religious teaching and related religious experiences that their children receive.”⁴¹ Parents typically do not spend time discussing religious matters with their children throughout the week.⁴²

This research is backed by a study conducted earlier of some 8,000 teens that were brought up in both Protestant and Catholic homes. The study found that 10 percent of these families did not discuss faith issues with any degree of regularity, and in 43 percent of the homes, faith was never discussed.⁴³ Timothy Paul Jones (and Southern Baptist Seminary) partnered with FamilyLife to conduct the “Family Needs Survey”⁴⁴ in 2007. This survey examined the needs and habits of nearly 40,000 church families and provided a statistical analysis of “what is and what is not happening in Christian homes throughout North America.”⁴⁵ The following are the results of the Family Needs Survey:

⁴⁰Barna Research Group, “Parents Accept Responsibility for Their Child’s Spiritual Development But Struggle With Effectiveness,” Barna Group, May 6, 2003 [on-line]; accessed July 6, 2010; available from <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/120-parents-accept-responsibility-for-their-childs-spiritual-development-but-struggle-with-effectiveness?q=parents+accept+responsibility>; Internet.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Merton P. Strommen and Richard Hardel, *Passing on the Faith: A Radical New Model for Youth and Family Ministry* (Winona, MN: Mary’s Press, 2000), 14.

⁴⁴FamilyLife, *Family Needs Survey: National Database: August 2008* (Little Rock, AR: FamilyLife Church and Pastor Relations Office, 2008).

⁴⁵Timothy P. Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Pub. House, 2011), Kindle ed., loc. 353-61.

1. “More than half of parents said that their families never or rarely engaged in any sort of family devotional time. Of the minority that did practice some sort of family devotions, one-fourth admitted that these devotional times were sporadic.”
2. “Approximately forty percent of parents never, rarely, or only occasionally discussed spiritual matters with their children.”
3. “Nearly one-fourth of parents never or rarely prayed with their children; another one-fourth only prayed with their children occasionally.”⁴⁶

Jones goes on to cite another recent study on family discipleship through the Gheens Center for Christian Family Ministry that found the following:

1. “More than one-third of parents with school-aged children had never engaged in any form of family devotional or worship times at any time in the past couple of months. For an additional three out of ten parents, such practices occurred once a month or less.”
2. “Among two-thirds of fathers and mothers, biblical discussions or readings with their children happened less than once each week.”
3. “One in five parents never read, studied, or discussed God’s Word with their children.”⁴⁷

Through these results, Jones concludes,

These numbers represent the rhythms of life in many core families in real-life congregations—parents who faithfully attend every week and serve in the church’s ministries, teenagers who rarely miss their small group Bible studies, and children who are consistently present in Sunday school. Yet, in most of their homes, prayer with one another is infrequent at best. Times of family devotion and Bible study range from rare to nonexistent. From the perspective of one out of every five parents, church activities seemed to have been the family’s sole intentional experiences of Christian formation.⁴⁸

One certainty is found in current literature: *Parents are the primary spiritual influence in the lives of their teens*. Christian Smith concludes that “contrary to popular misguided cultural stereotypes and frequent parental misperceptions, we believe that the

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid., loc. 381–84.

⁴⁸Ibid., loc. 386–90.

evidence clearly shows that the single most important social influence on the religious and spiritual lives of adolescents is their parents.”⁴⁹ He goes on to say that grandparents, mentors, and youth workers do play an important role in the lives of teens, yet “parents are most important in forming their children’s religious and spiritual lives.”⁵⁰

Mothers play a vital role in that process. Based on the considerable maternal influence over adolescents in the area of Christian formation, this study strived to provide additional research (lacking in Parker’s research) by studying the spiritual maternal influence. It also attempted to add to the current literature and research base⁵¹ on the subject of the maternal role in Christian formation. The intent is to provide an understanding of what specific influence mothers have in the Christian formation of adolescents and how mothers can be better equipped to fulfill that role.

Research Purpose

This concurrent mixed methods study explored the relationship between adolescent Christian formation and mother nurturance and involvement. The goal was to assess the amount of involvement mothers have in the Christian formation process experienced during the adolescent years (as perceived by the adolescents studied) and to ascertain whether there exists a correlation between the two. Recent research has shown a positive correlation between parental involvement and Christian formation.⁵²

⁴⁹Christian Smith with Melinda Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 261.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹See Alan C. Acock and Vern L. Bengtson, “On the Relative Influence of Mothers and Fathers: A Covariance Analysis of Political and Religious Socialization,” *Journal of Marriage & the Family* 40, no. 3 (1978): 519–30; Gina M. Brelsford and Annette Mahoney, “Spiritual Disclosure between Older Adolescents and their Mothers,” *Journal of Family Psychology* 22, no. 1 (February 2008): 62–70; and Gordon E. Finley, Sandra D. Mira, and Seth J. Schwartz, “Perceived Paternal and Maternal Involvement: Factor Structures, Mean Differences, and Parental Roles,” *Fathering: A Journal of Theory, Research, and Practice about Men as Fathers* 6, no. 1 (Winter 2008): 62–82.

⁵²Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*, 261.

Additionally, Parker's research demonstrated a positive relationship between father nurturance and involvement and Christian formation.⁵³ However, there remains a lack of significant research and literature base concerning the role mothers play in the Christian formation of adolescents.

Delimitations of the Proposed Research

This study had the following delimitations. First, this study only investigated the influence of mothers in the lives of adolescents. Second, this study was delimited to Christian formation and did not address spiritual development among other religions and faiths. Third, this study confined its sampling of Christian adolescents to those within the Churches of Christ. Finally, this study delimited to adolescents between the ages of 12 and 18.

Research Questions

This research was guided by four questions in order to study the relationship between adolescent Christian formation and mother nurturance and involvement. The questions were assessed using the Spiritual Formation Inventory (Waggoner), the Nurturant Mothering Scale (Finley, Mira, and Schwartz), the Mother Involvement Scale (Finley, Mira, and Schwartz), and interview questions. The following questions served to focus this research:

1. What is the relationship, if any, between the Christian formation of adolescents and mother nurturance?
2. What is the relationship, if any, between the Christian formation of adolescents and perceived mother involvement?
3. What is the relationship, if any, between the Christian formation of adolescents and desired mother involvement?

⁵³Parker, "Adolescent Spiritual Development and Father Involvement."

4. What is the correlation, if any, between gender, Christian formation in adolescents, and mother nurturance and involvement?

Terminology

The following definitions of terms are intended to provide clarity and a foundation for the research project.

Adolescence. This term refers to a period in life between the point when puberty begins and when adulthood is approached (between the ages of 10 and 25). It is a time when young people are preparing to take on the roles and responsibilities that are expected for adults in a given culture.⁵⁴

*Christian formation.*⁵⁵ Christian formation is the process in which an individual is formed, conformed, and transformed into the image of Christ.⁵⁶ Timothy Paul Jones indelibly links the process of Christian formation to discipleship and, therefore, defines the whole process as follows:

Discipleship: A personal and intentional process in which one or more Christians guide unbelievers or less mature believers to embrace and to apply the Gospel in every part of their lives. Discipleship is a process that begins with and includes personal profession of faith in Jesus. Discipleship involves developing perspectives and practices that reflect the mind of Christ, as revealed to us in the New Testament. The Gospel, expressed and applied in the context of the community of faith, is the centerpoint of discipleship; conformity to Jesus Christ is the goal of discipleship; “spiritual development” and “Christian formation” describe progress toward this goal.⁵⁷

⁵⁴Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, *Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood: A Cultural Approach*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007), 466.

⁵⁵From a social science perspective, Spiritual development/formation is defined as thus, “The process of growing the intrinsic human capacity for self-transcendence, in which the self is embedded in something greater than the self, including the sacred. It is the developmental ‘engine’ that propels the search for connectedness, meaning, and purpose and contribution. It is shaped both within and outside religious traditions, beliefs and practices.” Peter L. Benson, Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, and Stacey P. Rude, “Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence: Toward a Field of Inquiry,” *Applied Developmental Science* 7, no. 3 (2003): 205–13.

⁵⁶M. Robert Mulholland, *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 12, 25; Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002), 14–15.

⁵⁷Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 17.

Early adolescence. This is a period during adolescence development between the ages of 10 and 14.⁵⁸ This stage is characterized by an adolescent's effort to exercise some level of independence.

Emerging adulthood. This term refers to a period of adolescence between the ages of 18 and 25 in industrialized parts of the world. It is characterized by adolescents becoming more independent and exploring avenues to take in life before making lasting commitments.⁵⁹

Late adolescence. This is a period during adolescence development between the ages of 15 and 18.⁶⁰ It is characterized by a "shift from concrete consciousness of the world around them to a more nuanced awareness."⁶¹

Mother involvement. This term refers to the extent to which a mother participates in various aspects of her children's lives. There are three assumptions that accompany this definition according to Finley, Mira, and Schwartz: (1) mother involvement is viewed as a highly differentiated construct with many different domains of a child's life in which a mother may or may not be involved; (2) time spent with a child is not what is most important, but rather the child's perception of a maternal *level* and *quality* of involvement; and (3) the long-term affect that a mother has on the child is not a function of the parent's behavior, but rather of "the child's long-term *perceptions* of parental behavior."⁶²

⁵⁸Arnett, *Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood*, 16.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 469.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 473.

⁶¹Chap Clark, *Disconnected: Parenting Teens in a Myspace World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 133.

⁶²Gordon E. Finley, Sandra D. Mira, and Seth J. Schwartz, "Perceived Paternal and Maternal Involvement: Factor Structures, Mean Differences, and Parental Roles," *Fathering: A Journal of Theory, Research, and Practice about Men as Fathers* 6, no. 1 (Winter 2008): 63–64.

Mother nurturance. This is the affective quality of mothering that includes how much a woman enjoys being a mother, the closeness felt within the child-mother relationship, and how a mother relates with her children. Mother nurturance refers to the warmth and acceptance received from a mother.⁶³

Motherhood. “From a physical and social perspective, motherhood begins when a woman has a child.”⁶⁴ According to most social science definitions today, mothering or motherhood is “the social practices of nurturing and caring for dependent children.”⁶⁵

Procedural Overview

This concurrent mixed methods study was conducted by surveying adolescents between the ages of 12 and 18.⁶⁶ The study used three distinct instruments: the Spiritual Formation Inventory, the Nurturant Mothering Scale, and the Mother Involvement Scale. These surveys were intended to determine an adolescent’s perception of and desired level of mother involvement, to establish an adolescent’s perception of mother nurturance, and to assess the level of spiritual maturity. Spiritual formation was evaluated by using seven domains of faith: Learning, Obedience, Service, Evangelism, Faith, Worship, and Relational.

Church leaders who work with adolescents in Churches of Christ across the United States were contacted and invited to have students from their youth ministries

⁶³Ibid., 64.

⁶⁴Jill B. Fancher and Elizabeth Soliday, “Becoming a Mother,” in *Encyclopedia of Motherhood*, ed. Andrea O’Reilly (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2010), 1:105.

⁶⁵Terry Arendell, “Conceiving and Investigating Motherhood: The Decade’s Scholarship,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 62, no. 4 (November 1, 2000): 1192.

⁶⁶As replicated by Parker, “Adolescent Spiritual Development and Father Involvement.”

participate in this research project. Those who expressed interest were provided with information and the supplies necessary to invite students to participate.

Church leaders who demonstrated interest in participating were directed to a website that had all the appropriate information, instructions, and surveys available. They were instructed to inform students between the ages of 12 and 18 of this website and the time frame in which the surveys needed to be completed. Demographic information was collected from students while still maintaining the confidentiality of the minors.

Church leaders were offered a hard copy of all materials in case of an instance where the Internet was unavailable. Congregations that chose to use hardcopies were encouraged to have students complete the surveys at a meeting designated by the church leader. The leader was instructed to collect the completed hardcopy surveys and return them to the researcher.

Of those who participated in the study, a random sample (adolescents who were 18 years of age) was drawn for an interview. These individuals were asked to answer four open-ended questions concerning maternal behaviors and memorable characteristics.

The data was analyzed for corresponding relationships between maternal involvement and nurturance and the seven assessed domains of Christian formation. Data was evaluated to determine what specific roles mothers play in the Christian formation of their children.

Research Assumptions

The following assumptions in the research were acknowledged:

1. Respondents provided accurate demographic information.
2. Respondents accurately responded to the survey instruments and interview questions administered.

CHAPTER 2

PRECEDENT LITERATURE

This review of pertinent literature examines the precedent research in mother nurturance and involvement from both a biblical and social science perspective and adolescent Christian formation. The review is divided into three major sections. First, the review critically examines the biblical theological foundations for motherhood found in Old and New Testaments passages and is followed by a survey of social science research in the field of mother nurturance and involvement. Second, the review examines adolescent Christian formation in an attempt to define terms and to provide an overview of the most significant literature available from both biblical theological and social science perspectives. Finally, the review will examine how the research design was shaped by the noteworthy literature studied.

Motherhood

Motherhood has recently been studied through biblical and social scientific review and research.¹ Although contemporary roles and expectations of mothers have changed, the responsibility and expectations of motherhood began long before modern culture began studying and researching the subject. The original source of family design and maternal responsibility is God Himself. Therefore, a foundation for motherhood must begin in Scripture. Scripture communicates a great deal regarding motherhood and the responsibilities and expectations of earthly mothers. Yet, social science provides some

¹Timothy Paul Jones, ed., “Biblical and Theological Perspectives on Motherhood,” special issue, *The Journal of Discipleship & Family Ministry* 2, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 2012); Andrea O’Reilly, ed., *Encyclopedia of Motherhood* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2010).

insight into the subject as well. The following is an examination of the biblical theological foundations and social science perspectives for motherhood.

Biblical Theological Foundations for Motherhood

This biblical theological examination will begin by studying the word *mother* and then by briefly surveying passages that present God’s metaphorical maternal activities and qualities. Following this discussion is an exploration of early and intertestamental Jewish discipleship practices and then a brief synopsis of passages that address the role of the home and father in Scripture. A more lengthy exegetical examination of passages in Scripture that specifically address the role of mother will follow and then a few illustrations of the role of mother in the early church will bring the theological discussion to a close.

Definition. The word for *mother* in Hebrew is אִמָּה (*em*) and ranges in meaning from “a biological or adoptive female parent of any creature (Gen 2:24; Exod 22:29)”; to grandmother (i.e., the mother of a child’s parents) (1 Kgs 15:10, 13; 2 Chr 15:16)”; to “caregiver, provider, formally, mother (i.e., one who cares, helps, and protects an object as a figurative extension of a biological mother [Judg 5:7; 2 Sam 20:19]).”² The word occurs 220 times and always except once³ denotes “mother.” In most of the occurrences in Scripture, it refers literally to the female parent. At times, however, it is also used figuratively. For instance, the word refers to Eve as the mother of all living things (Gen 3:20); it refers to Deborah as a mother in Israel (Judg 5:7); it refers to a city as mother to

²James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)*, electronic ed. (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997).

³The word occurs in Ezek 21:21. However, its meaning is unique in this occurrence. Rather than “mother,” the word means “the parting (fork) of the road” in the sense of the origin (mother) of the road. Jack B. Scott, “115 אִמָּה,” in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, electronic ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 51.

its inhabitants (Isa 50:1; Ezek 16:44; Hos 2:2); it refers to a worm as the mother of Job (Job 17:14); and on occasion applies to nonhuman mothers (Exod 34:26; Deut 22:6).⁴ Of particular interest in studying the contexts and senses in which the word is used, several occurrences relate to the duties of the mother. In Isaiah 66:13, the “mother” is to be a source of comfort; in Proverbs 31:1, a teacher; and in Zechariah 13:3, a discipliner.⁵ It is also used to refer to God figuratively, which will be examined further later.

The Greek counterpart for mother, μήτηρ (*mētēr*), is used primarily to mean “mother” in the sense of the female parent (Matt 1:18; 13:55; 14:8, 11; 20:20; Mark 6:24, 28). It can also be used to transfer the meaning of “mother” to “an entity that bears the relation of a mother.” In reference to persons, it can refer to individuals who are respected or loved as a mother (Matt 12:49f; Mark 3:34f; John 19:27; Rom 16:13), and in reference to impersonal entities, it can be used to refer to “cities in relation to their citizens” (Gal 4:26; Rev 17:5)⁶ or to “a state or quality viewed as point of origin or source.”⁷

“Motherhood,” in general, also plays a vital role in the main plot of Scripture.⁸ God created man and woman in His image and likeness (Gen 1:27), and they were commanded to “fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion” (Gen 1:28). Therefore, motherhood is fundamental to God’s mandate for humanity, and the command cannot be

⁴Scott, “115 מַמָּה,” 50.

⁵Ibid.

⁶William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 649.

⁷Ibid.

⁸James H. Hamilton, Jr., “A Biblical Theology of Motherhood,” *Journal of Discipleship & Family Ministry* 2, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 2012): 7.

accomplished apart from motherhood.⁹ Though man and woman would be tempted by the serpent and eventually choose to sin, the promised seed through woman would ultimately save them from themselves and triumph over the serpent (Satan). Therefore, salvation is made possible through motherhood. As James Hamilton puts it, “Without motherhood the Bible’s plot goes nowhere, for its protagonist, the seed of the woman, would never have been born to triumph over the arch-antagonist, the great dragon, the ancient serpent who is the devil and Satan.”¹⁰ He further states, “The Bible’s story does not focus on motherhood, but motherhood makes the Bible’s story possible.”¹¹

Because motherhood plays an important role in God’s redemptive metanarrative, it also plays an important role in the transmission of faith in Scripture. While fathers are the primary figure in the passing on of faith, mothers play an essential role in the process. Although this will be discussed in greater detail later, it will be sufficient at this point to quote Hamilton in saying that “...mothers are to join fathers in raising children in the fear and admonition of the Lord.” However, this point provides a base for understanding Scripture’s definition of motherhood and mothers both from a literal and figurative sense. Interestingly, while God is always literally referred to in the masculine, He is also figuratively portrayed in motherly imagery.

Maternal metaphors applied to God’s activities.¹² Motherhood is used at times in Scripture to demonstrate the relationship that God has with His people Israel.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid., 9.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²It should be noted here that this study does not contend that any reference to God in the feminine should be understood in the literal sense, but in a metaphorical one. These references are to be attributed to the qualities and characteristics of God rather than attributing a particular gender to Him. There are 26 references to God in this way, and none assigns gender to Him (see Num 11:12; Deut 32:18; Ruth 2:12; Job 38:8, 29; Ps 17:8; 22:9–10; 90:2; 91:14; 123:2; 131:2; Prov 8:1, 22–25; Isa 31:5; 42:14; 44:2; 45:10; 46:3; 49:15; 66:9–7; 66:13; Hos 13:8; Matt 23:37; Luke 13:34; 15:8–10; John 3:3–8; 1 Pet

These passages are expressions that attribute feminine or motherly qualities to God, but do not denote a gender for God. Instead, they are intended to help God's children understand one of His characteristics. As noted earlier, God is always referred to in the masculine and never called mother or wife. Yet, various comparisons with the role and work of a mother or wife with the role and work of God do appear in Scripture. In these passages, God is likened to one who gives birth (Isa 44:2), nurses (Isa 49:15), comforts (Isa 66:13), and protects (Matt 23:37 and Luke 13:34).

In Isaiah 44:2, God is pictured as the “originator,” “maker,” “shaper,” or “creator” of Israel but using the imagery of a mother’s womb.¹³ The message here is that God is “responsible for the nation’s very existence.”¹⁴ It is intended to emphasize that God is the one and only originator of the nation and is reminiscent of Isaiah 43:1 in which God is portrayed as the one who created and formed the nation of Israel. This imagery of God as giving birth to Israel is seen further in Deuteronomy 32:18, “You deserted the Rock, who fathered you; you forgot the God who gave you birth.” Here, there is a double imagery of God as both father *and* mother. God is seen as a mother who *begot and delivered in pain* the Israelite nation. In their rebellion, the Israelites forgot

2:2–3). As Randall Stinson notes, “In their effort to rename God, the evangelical feminists...have confused the concepts of name and metaphor. There are approximately twenty-seven biblical references to God that utilize feminine imagery in some sense. Further, it is clear that when these images are used, they are most certainly figures of speech: similes, metaphors, analogies, or personification. There are no cases in which feminine terms are used as names, titles, or invocations of God. There are no instances where God is directly identified by a feminine term.” Randall L. Stinson, “Religious Feminist Revisions of the God-World Relationship and Implications for Evangelical Feminism” (Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2005), 152.

¹³John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 34–66*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 25, rev. ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 687–88; John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 165.

¹⁴Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 165.

God's love for them that is as intimate as a mother's love for her own child.¹⁵ Jeffrey

Tigay comments on this by saying the following:

Although verse 6 describes God as Israel's father, the verbs *yalad* and *hotel* may have been chosen to suggest the image of a mother. The first is used far more often for giving birth than for fathering, and the second refers literally to the mother's labor pains. The image of forgetting one's *mother* would cast Israel's behavior in the most unnatural light and, combined with the father image, would suggest that Israel owes its existence *totally* to God, its father *and* mother. A similar combination of metaphors appears in ancient Syrian inscriptions which describe kings as father and mother to their people.¹⁶

In Isaiah 49:15, this imagery is continued with the additional picture of God as a nursing mother to Israel who will not forget His child, "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!" This is very strong imagery as it portrays God's personal attachment to His people. The rhetorical question concerning mothers forgetting their attachments to the children they have borne in their wombs and nursed at their breasts begs the answer, "By no means!" Mothers have a direct attachment with their children because the children draw their life from the mother's body both in the womb and from the breast. This intimate connection cannot be easily forgotten or severed.¹⁷ Yet, God's love for His children and attachment to them should not only be understood from this motherly perspective but also beyond. As John Watts notes, "YHWH emphasizes his continued concern and compassion by using a comparison with a nursing mother and insisting that his regard and intention are even more certain and sure."¹⁸

¹⁵Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976), 383.

¹⁶Jeffrey H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 307.

¹⁷Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 305.

¹⁸Watts, *Isaiah 34–66*, 744.

As a mother is connected with her children through childbirth and nursing, so is she a comforter of her children. One of the most direct inferences of God's motherly characteristics is found in Isaiah 66:13, "As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you; and you will be comforted over Jerusalem." This verse is one of the few instances in Scripture where God is directly compared to a mother. The comparison is used to highlight the depth of God's love, care, and concern for his children.¹⁹ As John Oswalt states, "When he gives them courage, strength, hope, and will (*comforts* them), these are not merely arm's-length transactions. They are an expression of the intimate, personal involvement of a loving, personal God with his people."²⁰

Another imagery of the motherly qualities that God possesses is found in the words of Jesus in Matthew 23:37 and Luke 13:34. Both gospels quote Jesus as saying, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing." This quote is reminiscent of 2 Esdras 1:28–30, which says—

Thus says the Lord Almighty: Have I not entreated you as a father entreats his sons or a mother her daughters or a nurse her children, so that you should be my people and I should be your God, and that you should be my children and I should be your father? I gathered you as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. But now, what shall I do to you? I will cast you out from my presence.

The motherly imagery here is repeated by Jesus in His desire to gather the children of Jerusalem together under His wings as a mother hen gathers her chicks for protection and safety. This picture of the mother bird protecting her young under her wings makes use of a common biblical image of God's activity and loving protection.²¹ Blomberg rightly speaks to this imagery by saying:

¹⁹Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 678.

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21–28: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 2005), 161–62.

Jesus' words betray great tenderness and employ maternal imagery. God transcends gender and displays attributes that humans often associate with women, as well as those commonly associated with men. Here Jesus wishes he could gather all the recalcitrant "children" of Israel, to love, protect, and nurture them like a mother hen does with her baby chickens. Similar imagery recurs frequently in Jewish literature (e.g., Deut 32:4; Ps 36:7; Ruth 2:12; Isa 31:5).²²

It should be noted here that Scripture is careful to maintain God's transcendence. God is "other than," and humankind should not project onto God a human understanding of Him. Rather, God should be understood in relation to His transcendence and immanence. Oswalt notes here, "He is not an extension of us, or a projection of us, as 'nursing' and 'bearing' would suggest, and as paganism, whether in its ancient or its modern dress, asserts."²³ He goes on to say, "All that is personally and spiritually true of mothers and fathers is true of God. But he is not of the same essence as we, and to begin to blur the distinction is to lose our grip on reality and be plunged into an abyss."²⁴

One must understand that the language of humankind is bound to its finitude and cannot transcend it. Therefore, God chooses to reveal Himself to humankind through human language. When He does so, "he draws on human analogies to lead us by the hand to Himself."²⁵ Michael Horton speaks to this thought further by saying, "Just as God comes down to us in the incarnation in order to save us who could not ascend to Him, He meets us in Scripture by descending to our weakness."²⁶ Therefore, any analogy used in Scripture (as in the case of the motherly characteristics of God) should not infer or promote a literal description of God's gender or person. Instead, the analogies provide

²²Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 350; Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, The New American Commentary, vol. 24 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 384.

²³Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 678–79.

²⁴*Ibid.*

²⁵Michael S. Horton, "Hellenistic or Hebrew? Open Theism and Reformed Theological Method," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 45, no. 2 (June 2002): 324.

²⁶*Ibid.*

humankind with a better understanding of the essence of God and His work through creation and redemptive history. Understanding God in terms of His motherly characteristics provides a basis for how human mothers are created and the functions that they often carry out. God has a place and purpose for mothers and this is evidenced throughout Scripture.

Early and intertestamental Jewish discipleship practices. It is important to begin this examination by understanding that all the authors of both the Old and New Testaments (with the possible exception of Luke) were Jews. This information is important because to truly understand the biblical family one must understand the Hebraic family. Marvin Wilson, in his book *Our Father Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith*, says that all the authors of the Bible

write from the heritage of their own Jewish family background. Accordingly, they remind us that to understand the Christian family correctly one must understand the Jewish family. To gain Jewish insight into marriage and the family, therefore, is not an optional matter for today's Christian—it is essential, for it concerns the very foundation of the Christian home. From the teachings of Judaism the Church can learn many vital lessons and thereby renew its perspective on the family.²⁷

Therefore, one must ask, “How did the Jews disciple their children? Whose responsibility was it to teach the fundamentals of the faith?” Historically, one finds that Jewish children were disciplined in a variety of settings, including the temple, the synagogue (in the intertestamental period and beyond), the community, and the home. However, what becomes abundantly clear through biblical and historical research is that the home was the primary setting in which children and adolescents were disciplined.

Discipling came first in the form of education. Not education in the sense we have today, but for the purpose of developing the whole of a person for lifelong service *to*

²⁷Marvin R. Wilson, *Our Father Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989), 208.

and worship of God. This was accomplished through knowledge of God by understanding His Word and by obeying everything the Word (Law²⁸) commanded.²⁹ Obedience was a product of loving God with all one's heart, soul, and strength (the *Shema*). Emil Schürer states this succinctly by saying the following:

The whole purpose of education in family, school and synagogue was to transform the Jewish people into "disciples of the Lord." The ordinary man was to know, and do, what the Torah asked of him. His whole life was to conform to the precepts and commandments of the "Instruction" or "Enlightenment." Obedience to these rules, which were firmly believed to have been laid down by God himself, was seen by Torah scholars, Pharisees and rabbis alike as the only way to put into practice the heavenly command, "You shall be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exod 19:6).³⁰

The ultimate goal of this education (discipleship) was to develop the individual toward holy living (to be set apart for God in every aspect of life). An important aspect of this education was understanding God's love of His people through history. Hence, history was an important part of discipleship for Jewish children.³¹

The role of the home. The primary setting for this education was the home. Parents shared in this task, though the father bore the primary role of discipling his children.³² A more thorough handling of the role of both father and mother can be found

²⁸“A distinctive mark of Intertestamental Judaism was that the law, Torah, was the center of daily life. It regulated the living of each day, not just special occasions. At the most basic level, no food was eaten without the pronouncement of a blessing. The Shema and other prayers were recited before the household started the affairs of the day and at other times. There were several different tithes: of produce, of land, of dough or bread, and of money. Tassels worn on the fringes of cloaks, Scripture portions affixed to the right-hand doorpost of homes and buildings (mezuzahs), phylacteries (or tefillin) that bound the words of the law to head and arm all served as constant reminders of God, his law, and the obligation to obey.” J. Julius Scott, *Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 251–52.

²⁹Ibid., 279.

³⁰Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, ed. Geza Vermes et al. (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1973–87), 2:464.

³¹Ibid.

³²Scott, “115 אָמֵן,” 248 and 257; Wilson, *Our Father Abraham*, 279–80.

later, but note here the emphasis on the home. The home in Jewish thought was essentially a “small temple.” Wilson notes, “Foundational to all theory on the biblical concept of family is the Jewish teaching that the home is more important than the synagogue. In Jewish tradition, the center of religious life has always been the home.”³³

God gave the primary responsibility of passing on the faith to parents, which happened largely in the home. Deuteronomy 6:7 instructs parents to disciple their children at home. “These words” were to be passed on to all the coming generations so that God’s people would never forget God, His commands, and most importantly His love for them. This was first and foremost the responsibility of the parents. Verse 7 reads, “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*” (emphasis mine). These “God discussions” were to take place first in the home and then outside the home from the beginning of the day to its end.

Wilson notes that when the Jews were scattered into exile after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem (586 B.C.), rabbis began to recognize the home as a *miqdash me’at* or a “small sanctuary” or “miniature temple.”³⁴ Hence, the rabbis taught that this small temple was “set apart” (holy) and was, therefore, meant for special purposes. These special purposes included (1) worshiping of God (“house of prayer”), (2) learning of the Torah (“house of study”), and (3) serving community needs (“house of assembly”).³⁵ Wilson goes on to say, “Just as the *shekhinah* (the abiding presence of God) filled the Temple, and as light, a symbol of the Divine, brightened the holy place through the

³³Wilson, *Our Father Abraham*, 216.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 214.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 215.

menorah (the seven-branched lampstand), so each home was to reflect God's glory through prayer and praise."³⁶

All this emphasizes the importance of the home as a setting for discipleship in Jewish homes. This history is what the New Testament writers understood and lived. It informed their writing and, therefore, influenced the early Christian practices toward discipleship. Yet, the home was only the primary setting for discipleship. The actual duty of discipling children lay firmly in the hands of parents. In light of the home being a "small temple," one should understand that parents were viewed as "priests" or "teachers" in that temple. Therefore, the parent (predominantly the father but in partnership with the mother) was to provide instruction to the children in the same way a priest would instruct the Jews in the Torah within the holy Temple.³⁷ In Jewish tradition, however, each parent fulfilled a specific role as priests in the home.

Role of father. In ancient Israel, the father evidently took the primary leadership role in the family. Block states, "Israelite families were patrilineal (official lines of descent were traced through the father's line), patrilocal (married women joined the households of their husbands), and patriarchal (the father governed the household)."³⁸ He goes on to discuss the difference between the terms *patriarchy* and *patricentrism*. *Patriarchy* is the term that most scholars use to refer to the structure of ancient Israelite families.³⁹ However, Block believes this term does not adequately reflect the true nature of the social structure of families in ancient Israel. Instead, he prefers the term

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid., 216.

³⁸Daniel I. Block, "Marriage and Family in Ancient Israel," in *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World*, ed. Ken M. Campbell (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 40–41.

³⁹V. H. Matthews, "Family Relationships," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 293–94.

patricentrism, which denotes a family structure centered on the father as “family life radiated outward from him.”⁴⁰

While many abused their role as father and head of house, it is apparent that this problem was not God’s intent and that many did not follow this pattern.⁴¹ Instead, God had specific roles that a man was to play as husband, father, and head of house. According to Block, a man was obligated to serve his family through nine specific responsibilities as head of house:⁴²

1. A man was to model strict personal faithfulness to Yahweh.
2. A man was to lead his family in all the prescribed festivals to pass on the memories of Israel’s salvation to his entire family.
3. A man was to instruct his family in the ways of the Exodus and the Torah (See Deut 6:4–9, 20–25; 11:18–25 addressed to fathers).
4. A man was to manage land according to the Torah to secure his family in God.
5. A man was to provide for the basic needs of his family (food, shelter, clothing, etc.).
6. A man was to defend his family from outside threats.
7. A man was to function as an elder at the town gate to represent his family in Israelite affairs.
8. A man was to maintain the well-being of each member of his family and harmony among its members.
9. A man was to function as the primary decision maker in all areas of family life.

In addition to these responsibilities to the family, a man had specific responsibilities to his children as father. For sons, a father was responsible for (1) naming

⁴⁰Block, “Marriage and Family in Ancient Israel,” 41.

⁴¹Christopher J. H. Wright, “Family,” in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freeman (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 2:766–68.

⁴²Block, “Marriage and Family in Ancient Israel,” 47–48.

his son; (2) consecrating his son to Yahweh; (3) circumcising his son; (4) delighting in, having compassion on, and loving his son; (5) *overseeing the spiritual development of his son (modeling personal commitment to Yahweh and His Torah)*; (6) guarding his son from immoral behavior; (7) instructing his son in wisdom and developing in him skills for life and to carry on in his father's footsteps; (8) disciplining his son; (9) managing his son's inheritance; (10) arranging the marriage of his son; and (11) blessing his son before death.⁴³

In addition to the responsibilities listed for a son, a father was responsible to the daughter for (1) giving protection from male predators, (2) arranging the marriage of his daughter, (3) providing his daughter with a dowry, (4) protecting his daughter from making rash vows, and (5) protecting his daughter in the case of a divorce or the death of her husband.⁴⁴ What is most pertinent in these lists for this discussion is the area of spiritual development (italicized previously). Although both parents had responsibility to aid in the spiritual growth of their children, the father was to take an elevated and primary role in these efforts. Of special note are the instructions given to men and fathers found in Deuteronomy 4:9; 6:6–7, 20–24; 11:18–21; 31:13; 32:7; 32:46–47. Duane Christensen believes that Deuteronomy serves as a “curriculum” for the ongoing religious education of the Israelite nation.⁴⁵ This education was primarily in the hands of the father or head of house.

⁴³Ibid., 53–54.

⁴⁴Ibid, 54–55.

⁴⁵Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1–21:9*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 6A (Dallas: Word, 2002), 143. The focus on teaching one's children “these words” diligently within the context of the family—at all conceivable times and places—illustrates once again the pedagogical purpose of Deuteronomy. The content of this book was the primary curriculum in an ongoing program of religious education in ancient Israel.

As others have stated,

While religious instruction is a joint responsibility of both parents, in the Bible it is more the domain of fathers than of mothers (Prov 1:8; 4:1; 6:20; 13:1; 15:5; 27:10). The psalmist writes of how “our fathers have told us” of God’s past deeds (Ps 44:1; 78:3) in fulfillment of Moses’ command in his farewell discourse to “remember the days of old...ask your father, and he will show you” (Deut 32:7 RSV). Fathers simply held a position of authority in ancient cultures that is quite foreign to most modern ones. A good father takes responsibility for the spiritual welfare of his family.⁴⁶

According to Christopher Wright, a father had didactic and catechetical functions in the spiritual development of his children. He notes the following:

The family had a major role in the preservation of the legal traditions through the didactic duty of the father. He was to teach his children the precepts of Yahweh, both as a solemn obligation of parenthood and as a condition of prolonged enjoyment of life in the land. A second aspect of this role of the family in the continuity of the national relationship was the catechetical duties of the father. This is related not so much to the law itself (like the didactic function) as to certain cultic institutions and memorials of historical events, the significance of which a father is required to explain to his inquiring children (“When your son asks you...you shall say...”). Hence the term “catechetical.”⁴⁷

This role of father continued in and through the times of the New Testament.

Paul states this plainly in Ephesians 6:4, “Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.” The command here is that fathers focus their efforts with their children on nourishing (rearing or bringing up) children to maturity.⁴⁸ Therefore, Scripture clearly indicates that the father is to lead his family in all areas of life, but especially in the area of spiritual formation. This spiritual leadership is not to the exclusion of the mother, but is to be indicative of the God-designed and God-designated roles given to both man and woman. What about mothers though? What role do mothers play in nurturing spiritual growth?

⁴⁶Leland Ryken et al., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 273–74.

⁴⁷Christopher J. H. Wright, *God’s People in God’s Land: Family, Land, and Property in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 81–84.

⁴⁸Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 446.

Role of mother in the Old Testament. As in the case of fathers, mothers had some specific roles within an Israelite family. A mother's primary role was to bear and nurture children.⁴⁹ Motherhood was something that was honored and coveted among the Hebrews. So much so that it was painful for those women who were unable to bear children (e.g., 1 Sam 1:4–11; Ps 113:9; Isa 54:1).⁵⁰ Although Block argues for a patricentric Israelite society, he demonstrates an elevated status for the wife and mother in six ways: (1) the creation of man and woman in the image of God confirms an ontological equality between them; (2) both man and woman are given the responsibility to govern the earth with no mention as either being inferior to the other (Gen 1:28); (3) God does not create a servant or slave for Adam but a helper to complement him; (4) woman was created from man's rib, which indicates complementarity as she is "at his side and near/dear to his heart"; (5) the name for woman as she is introduced to man is recognized as his feminine counterpart; and (6) Genesis 1:24–25 demonstrates mutuality between man and woman as they are one body.⁵¹

Block goes on to share that even though man and woman share ontological equality it does not mean that they share the same function within the created order. This does not negate, however, God's intended ideal of equality and complementarity. He notes, "Although the functional subordination of the wife to her husband is a constant, throughout the Old Testament one recognizes clear affirmations of the dignity of the wife and obvious room for significant influence within the household."⁵² Bruce Ware comments on this from a Trinitarian perspective and states, "The wife is under the

⁴⁹C. J. Vos, "Mother," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 3:426.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 3:427.

⁵¹Block, "Marriage and Family in Ancient Israel," 65.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 66.

authority of her husband, but is over the children in the household, partnering with their father to ensure that they learn godliness and obedience. The children are under the authority of both of their parents, understanding that they are to learn from their father and mother what is most important in life, all the while obeying their parents with joy and gladness.”⁵³ Block lists eight ways in which a wife/mother influenced an Israelite home and family:⁵⁴

1. Husbands and wives related to one another as equals in dating and sex (Song of Solomon).⁵⁵
2. In many cases wives/mothers named their children (a sign of authority) (Gen 29:32; 30:6; 35:18; 38:29; Judg 13:24; 1 Sam 1:20; 4:21; Isa 7:14).⁵⁶
3. Children must honor both fathers *and mothers* (Exod 20:12; Lev 19:3; Deut 5:16).⁵⁷

⁵³Bruce A. Ware, “The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,” in *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective*, ed. Randy Stinson and Timothy P. Jones (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2011), 68.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 66–68.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 67n152; Richard M. Davidson, “Theology of Sexuality in the Song of Songs: Return to Eden,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 27, no. 1 (1989): 8–10. Song of Solomon represents an egalitarian picture of love and romance between a man and a woman.

⁵⁶Gerhard von Rad says, “Let us remind ourselves once more that name-giving in the ancient Orient was primarily an exercise of sovereignty, of command.” Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), 83. Grudem also comments on this, “in Old Testament thought the right to name someone implied authority over that person (this is seen both when God gives names to people such as Abraham and Sarah, and when parents give names to their children).. The fact that mothers sometimes give their children names in the Old Testament does not contradict the idea of name-giving as representing authority, since both mothers and fathers have parental authority over their children.” Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 462.

⁵⁷As Sarna notes, “The command applies equally to son and daughter irrespective of their age, and it holds for *both* parents” (emphasis mine). Nahum M. Sarna, *Exodus*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 113. Interestingly, Lev 19:3 reverses the order and places the mother as the first recipient of honor. Levine comments on this saying, “More significant is the fact that mother precedes father, whereas elsewhere father usually comes first, as one would expect in a patrilineal society. There are a few exceptions to the normal pattern, however, suggesting that in familial contexts, deference is shown to the mother. In 21:2, one’s mother comes first in a list of consanguineal relatives. In Gen 35:18 we observe that the name given a newborn child by its mother is recorded prior to the name given by the father. The traditional resolution of the unusual order evident in our verse is based on a comparison with the Fifth Commandment, where father precedes mother. The two statements, when

4. Both fathers *and mothers* were to defend their falsely accused daughter (Deut 22:13–18).⁵⁸
5. Wisdom literature often places the instruction of mothers on equal level with that of fathers (Prov 1:8; 6:20; 31:1).⁵⁹
6. Proverbs 31:10–31 describes a noble wife/mother as one who takes initiative and demonstrates creativity and energy. She is subordinate, but not subservient.⁶⁰

combined, amount to an equitable estimation of both parents.” Baruch A. Levine, *Leviticus*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 125.

⁵⁸As Craigie notes, “When such charges were made, the legal responsibility for defending the young woman rested on her parents. They were responsible because they had given their daughter to the man in marriage, and by that act they had indicated that the girl was qualified for marriage (i.e., a virgin). The parents of the woman took their case to the elders of the city, to whom, it may be assumed, the man made his initial charge (v. 14); the role of the parents was to present a proper defense for their daughter against the charges that had been laid.” Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976), 292. Tigay makes the point that “the mother joins the father here, though only the father speaks, because it was women who kept the cloth after the consummation of the marriage.” Jeffrey H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 205.

⁵⁹Roger N. Whybray, *Wisdom in Proverbs* (Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1965), 42. Whybray observes that Hebrew wisdom literature adapts an Egyptian tradition and places both father and mother “on exactly the same footing as teachers of their children.” Whybray believes that father and mother *shared* the responsibility for educating children. See also William Barclay, *Train Up a Child: Educational Ideals in the Ancient World* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1959), 17. Barclay states that “it is relevant to note the place of the mother in this parental education. She is mentioned again and again; and King Lemuel, that sage, passes on the prophecy ‘that his mother taught him.’ In the Jewish home father and mother shared responsibility for the education of the child.” Waltke addresses this saying, “Significantly, *your mother* (*’immekā*) is mentioned at this seam in the book (see 10:1), pointing to both parents as having an authoritative voice with reference to the children in their home-schooling.” Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 1–15*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 186–87. In addressing the role of Lemuel’s mother, Waltke says, “Lemuel’s sayings (see esp. vv. 4, 8–9) resemble the Egyptian and Babylonian wisdom literature that also aim to equip rulers to discharge their duties as wise and just kings (see 1:1). Verset B qualifies the royal sapiential genre as also a prophetic *oracle* (*maššā*’, see 30:1) and modifies Lemuel’s burden as that which *his mother* (*’immo*, see 1:8; 30:11a) *taught him* admonished (*’a-ser-yiss^erattô*, see 9:7; 19:18; 29:17, 19; cf. Ps. 2:10). *Yāsar* means, ‘to communicate knowledge in order to shape specific conduct.’ Queen mothers influenced the policies and theological stance of the king (see 30:23), but no parallel exists in ancient Near Eastern literatures of a mother’s wise sayings to her son (see 1:8; 4:3; 6:20).” Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 15–31*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2005), 503. See further comments pp. 8–9 of this dissertation.

⁶⁰As Waltke notes, “Verset A asserts the teacher’s vigilance over her household, and verset B re-enforces it by asserting her unstinting diligence. The initial participle *one who watches* vigilantly over (*sopiya*, lit. “keep a lookout”) links v. 27 with v. 26, explaining that as teacher she keeps a sharp lookout over the *affairs* (*h^alikot*) of her household (*betah*, see v. 21) promptly to right any irregularities (see 15:13) and to maintain its orderly arrangement. With regard to the children, the aristocratic wife turns over to her

7. Wives often exert great influence over their husbands (both positive and negative) (Gen 16:1–6; 21:8–21; 28; 1 Sam 1 [note v. 23]; 19:11–17 to note a few examples).⁶¹
8. Although women were usually excluded from leadership roles, they often filled *ad hoc* roles for God through prophecy and religious affairs (Judg 4–5; Esther; Ruth; Exod 15:20; Isa 8:3; 2 Kgs 22:14; Neh 6:14; 1 Sam 2:2–10).⁶²

servant girls much of the routine work in rearing the children but assumes responsibility for their instruction and retains final authority (see 1:8). *With regard to her wise husband, he celebrates her wisdom (cf. vv. 28–29, 30–33), and, like Adam who celebrated his wife’s equality with him, encourages her to share her loving and wise teaching with him (cf. Eph 5:21)* (emphasis mine). Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 15–31*, 532–33.

⁶¹One of the most notable occurrences of this is found with King Solomon. Two specific commands given by Moses were not followed by Solomon: (1) Do not marry foreign women “for they will turn your sons away from following me to serve other gods” (Deut 7:4), and (2) the king is not to have many wives “or his heart will be led astray” (Deut 17:17). Instead, Solomon chooses to have many wives from different nations, and therefore “his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been” (1 Kgs 11:4). House stresses, “What occurs in this passage must have sickened the author of 1, 2 Kings and any original readers committed to the Lord. In Solomon’s old age *his wives influence* his devotion to God, and he worships ‘other gods’ (emphasis mine).” Paul R. House, *1, 2 Kings*, The New American Commentary, vol. 8, (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 167.

⁶²Many women held roles as prophetesses. Stuart remarks on these women in reference to Miriam: “Several other godly women bear this same title ‘prophetess’ in the Old Testament (or its Greek equivalent in the NT): Deborah (Judg 4:4), Huldah (2 Kgs 22:14), Isaiah’s wife (Isa 8:3), and Anna (Luke 2:36); a couple of not-so-godly women do as well (Noadiah in Neh 6:14 and ‘Jezebel’ in Rev 2:20). Micah confirms Miriam’s leadership role in the exodus (Mic 6:4), which, on the analogy of how Moses and Aaron exercised their leadership and how prophets in general do so, would have meant that she received instructive words from God to relay to the people as a way of guiding them. We do not know what these were apart from the present context any more than we know what sorts of prophetic oracles, say, Huldah may have uttered over time to make her the prophet of choice for King Josiah to consult in the crisis of 2 Kgs 22:11–20. *Nevertheless, the leadership of the exodus was clearly a family affair*, as confirmed also by the specific mention of the death and burial of Miriam (Num 20:1), an honorable sort of mention accorded otherwise only to Moses (Deut 34:5–6) and Aaron (Num 20:28; Deut 10:6; 32:50)” (emphasis mine). Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 2 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 362–63. Ackerman addresses this, saying, “The Bible thus does admit the possibility that women could assume the role of prophet within Israelite society and, in the case of Zipporah, may even intimate the possibility of a woman taking on priest-like functions. But the biblical record also suggests that the Israelites could imagine women as occupying these sorts of roles only within the context of some very specific conditions. Historically, the conditions required were the kind of period of destabilization or decentralization during which women can generally achieve a more elevated status and find opportunities for a greater exercise of power. Literarily, the conditions required were a narrative containing a liminal phase in which the characteristically liminal experience of anti-structure allowed women to be depicted as holding positions within their communities that in the reaggregated sections of the text they would otherwise be denied.” Susan Ackerman, “Why Is Miriam Also Among the Prophets? (And Is Zipporah Among the Priests?),” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 121 (2002): 80.

There were three ways in which a wife fulfilled her role to her husband in an Israelite family: (1) the most noble contribution a wife could make was to bear a child (specifically a son); (2) to manage the household through gardening, harvesting, cooking, and clothing the family; and (3) to provide companionship to her husband, often functioning as a confidant and true friend.⁶³ Each of these responsibilities is detailed in Proverbs 31:10–31. When fulfilled, they were considered marks for the most noble of wives and mothers. These were characteristics and responsibilities that Israelite women aspired to fulfill and that brought them great honor in the family and among the community of Israel. As mentioned earlier, the roles of bearing children and motherhood were to be the most coveted of all the responsibilities of a wife.

In Proverbs 31, a noble wife and mother would tend to the daily care of her husband and children by providing them with food, clothing, and shelter. However, there was a great deal more to the role of mother than simply providing for the domestic needs of the children. Mothers took a prominent role in the Israelite home. They were involved in the naming of the child (as mentioned earlier), which often meant the passing on of faith as names were often indicative of the parent's faith.⁶⁴ It was not uncommon for mothers to take the initiative in the home in directing the affairs of the family. As C. J. Vos points out, "Sarah insisted on the expulsion of Hagar despite Abraham's misgivings (Gen 21:10); Rebekah instigated the shift of the blessing from Esau to Jacob (Gen 27:5–17); Abigail interceded on behalf of her household (1 Sam 25:14–35); Bathsheba intervened on behalf of her son Solomon (1 Kgs 1:11–31)."⁶⁵ These instances demonstrate the great influence a mother had in the family (even in a patricentric culture).

⁶³Block, "Marriage and Family in Ancient Israel," 72–76.

⁶⁴Ibid., 76.

⁶⁵Vos, "Mother," 3:427.

Through the first decade of life, the mother held a primary role of nurturer to her children and aided in their education, because the home was the primary means of pedagogy.⁶⁶ Block points out, “In laying the foundations for civilized behavior, excellent performance and responsible decision-making, the mother’s role was as important as the father’s.”⁶⁷ Although no one would argue that the father was to take a primary role in the education and faith formation of his children (as outlined earlier), the mother aided greatly in this process and was at times left alone to do so (as will be evidenced in the discussion on Timothy). At adolescence, sons would begin to spend a great deal more time with their fathers, because the fathers were to pass on to their sons the skills and character necessary to be responsible male adults.⁶⁸ However, mothers were not absent during those years, and Scripture indicates their continued instruction: “Listen, my son, to your father’s instruction and do not forsake your mother’s teaching” (Prov 1:8). “My son, keep your father’s command and do not forsake your mother’s teaching” (Prov 6:20). “The eye that mocks a father, that scorns an aged mother, will be pecked out by the ravens of the valley, will be eaten by the vultures” (Prov 30:17). “The sayings of King Lemuel—an inspired utterance his mother taught him” (Prov 31:1).

Peter Gentry believes that the book of Proverbs is a manual for parents.⁶⁹ He discusses the uniqueness of the biblical teachings in Proverbs concerning parents (and especially mothers) in comparison with other ancient Near East wisdom texts by noting the following:

⁶⁶Block, “Marriage and Family in Ancient Israel,” 76.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Peter J. Gentry, “Equipping the Generations: Raising Children, the Christian Way,” *Journal of Discipleship & Family Ministry* 2, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 2012): 99.

But one thing that is absolutely unique to the book of Proverbs is the instruction or teaching of the mother. She is mentioned specifically in five instances: 1:8, 4:3, 6:20, 31:1, and 26. This is absolutely unparalleled anywhere else in all of the wisdom literature we have from the ancient Near East. In Proverbs, the teaching of the mother is placed side by side with the teaching of the father. It shows us the importance the Bible places on the mother's teaching and the fact that both parents must be believers in order to bring up the children in the faith.⁷⁰

These passages indicate an elevated role of motherly instruction and teaching in the Israelite family. Bruce Waltke comments on Proverbs 1:8 and notes, "Significantly, *your mother* (*'our mo*) is mentioned at this seam in the book (see 10:1), pointing to both parents as having an authoritative voice with reference to the children in their home-schooling."⁷¹ Not only is the instruction and teaching of a mother seen as authoritative, it is also seen as wisdom. Rowland Murphy comments that "the teaching of the mother and father are paired with the words of Wisdom."⁷² A mother's instruction is also so influential that it directs a king's thoughts on the moral requirements for good government (Prov 31:1).⁷³ All these instances demonstrate how powerful a mother's influence was in an Israelite family.

Role of mother in the New Testament. The New Testament does not appear to indicate a different pattern for wives and mothers. In fact, Paul stresses the continued importance of mothers and the role in the home. Andreas Köstenberger and David Jones stress this point by saying:

The apostle Paul taught that one of the primary roles of women is that of "childbearing," that is, not only the act of giving birth but their domestic role related

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs. Chapters 1–15*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 186–87.

⁷²Rowland E. Murphy, *Proverbs*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 22 (Dallas: Word, 2002), 11.

⁷³Duane A. Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, The New American Commentary, vol. 14 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 246.

to the upbringing of children and managing of the home (1 Tim 2:15; cf. 5:14). Thus, motherhood is not disparaged in biblical teaching; contrary to many in modern society, it is held up as the woman's highest calling and privilege. In fact, in his first letter to Timothy, the apostle intimates that, for women, straying from the home is yielding to the devil's temptation in a similar way to Eve overstepping her bounds at the original Fall (1 Tim 2:14–15).⁷⁴

This quote illuminates the importance of mothers not only in the Old Testament, but also in the New Testament family. Mothers held a vital role in the raising and nurturing of children in the home that did not supersede that of the father, but instead evidenced a role of complementarity and equality.

The important and necessary role of mothers in discipling their children is clearly demonstrated in the life of Timothy. One reads in 2 Timothy 1:5, “I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.” Here, Paul is discussing the faith of Timothy in light of its origins. This evidence of inherited faith clearly demonstrates the impact mothers have on the faith discipling of their children. Paul here remembers Timothy's ἀνυποκρίτου πίστεως. ἀνυπόκριτος, “genuine, sincere” (literally “without hypocrisy”) is used here and in 1 Timothy 1:5 concerning faith.⁷⁵ Paul refers to those who have proved to have a disingenuous faith (i.e., Demas, 4:10). Therefore, Paul thanks God in remembering Timothy as one in whom (ἐν σοί) there was a genuine faith that neither wavered nor was double-minded.⁷⁶

What Paul commends in Timothy is found as a part of Timothy's spiritual heritage through the discipling of his mother and grandmother. Such a faith (ἥτις) “dwelled” (ἐνώκησεν) “first” (the neuter adjective πρῶτον used as an adverb) as a

⁷⁴Andreas J. Köstenberger with David W. Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 120.

⁷⁵George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 1992), 369.

⁷⁶Ibid.

spiritual reality in his grandmother and his mother. μάμη (a New Testament hapax legomenon) is used in Greek literature to refer to one's "mother" or "grandmother," but its use here with μητήρ makes it clear that "grandmother" is intended.⁷⁷ This mention is the only New Testament reference to Timothy's grandmother Lois (Λωΐς), probably his maternal grandmother, because she is mentioned here with his mother. Eunice (Εὐνίκη), his mother, is not named elsewhere in the New Testament but is mentioned in Acts 16:1 as "a Jewish woman who was a believer" (πιστῆς), apparently meaning that she was a Christian.⁷⁸

Paul adds for emphasis and as an encouragement to Timothy πέπεισμαι δὲ ὅτι καὶ ἐν σοί. The perfect passive of πείθω is used here with a present meaning and with a ὅτι following (as in Rom 8:38; 14:14; 15:14; 2 Tim 1:5, 12, the other Pastor Epistle occurrences). "I am convinced that" expresses Paul's certainty that a genuine faith is "also" (καί) a continuing spiritual reality in Timothy (with the verb ἐνοικέω being understood from the previous clause with the prepositional phrase ἐν σοί), as it was in his mother and grandmother.⁷⁹

No mention of Timothy's father is made here, but in Acts 16:1 the text states, "Paul came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was Jewish and a believer but whose father was a Greek." This implies that the father was not a believer and would, therefore, mean that Timothy grew up in a home where his faith was primarily influenced by his mother and (as 2 Tim 1:5 indicates) his grandmother. This was a unique situation as it was more common for a child to take on the religion of the father.⁸⁰ Here, the mother takes on the foundational discipling role

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰William F. Cook III, "When Only One Spouse Believes: Hope for Christian Women in

rather than the unbelieving father (Acts 16:1–3, 15).⁸¹ As William Cook III points out, “Although Timothy was the child of a mixed marriage, God used the godly influence of his mother and grandmother and the truth they taught him to draw him to faith in Christ despite an unconverted father.”⁸²

Though this is the extent of the knowledge we have surrounding Eunice and Lois, they seem to have inherited a Jewish faith that found its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Thomas Lea and Hayne Griffin note the following:

Paul commended the spiritual heritage Timothy had received. This faith in the God of the Bible had first lived in his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. Their faith was the expression of the faith of a “true” Jew (Rom 2:28–29) which found its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. The pair had a genuine expectant faith for the Messiah of the Old Testament. When they heard the gospel, they believed upon Jesus Christ as the Messiah for whom they had hoped. They passed their faith on to Timothy. Paul was tracing the faith of Timothy back to its roots.⁸³

Timothy found himself in this environment, and it was the impetus for his Christian formation. Philip Towner comments that “we know only that Timothy’s grandmother and mother apparently came to faith in the Messiah prior to Timothy and provided an environment crucial to his conversion and spiritual development.”⁸⁴

Paul further references this spiritual development in 2 Timothy 3:14–15, “But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the

Mixed Marriages,” *Journal of Discipleship & Family Ministry* 2, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 2012): 19.

⁸¹Robert L. Plummer, “Bring Them Up in the Discipline and Instruction of the Lord,” in *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective*, ed. Randy Stinson and Timothy P. Jones (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2011): 52.

⁸²Cook, “When Only One Spouse Believes,” 19.

⁸³Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *I, 2 Timothy, Titus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 185.

⁸⁴Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 454.

Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” By contrasting δέ with emphatic σύ and the verb μένε, “remain,” set in opposition to προκόψουσιν, “they will progress,” Paul places Timothy and what he should do in sharp contrast with the progressive error of the false teachers. Timothy is to “remain” in the sense of “continuing” in the things that he has learned.

οἷς is dative by attraction to the case of its unexpressed antecedent in its position following the preposition ἐν. Precisely what Timothy is to remain in is not indicated, except that it is what he has learned and in what he has found assurance. ἔμαθες (aorist of μανθάνω; see 1 Tim 2:11) is used here of what Timothy has “learned” through being taught, as the following clause demonstrates. ἐπιστώθης (aorist of πιστόω, a New Testament hapax legomenon), “have become convinced of,” indicates that what Timothy learned he embraced as true and reliable. With this verb, we see that Paul appeals not to traditionalism or to the status quo but to adherence to what Timothy has become convinced is true.

The encouragement to remain in such teaching is based on Timothy’s knowledge of his teacher. (Later Paul will appeal to the source from which Timothy was taught, “the holy scriptures” [vv. 15–17].) The participle εἰδώς, “knowing,” is used here, as often by Paul, to ask the recipient to recall what he knows quite well (in the Pastoral Epistles: 1 Tim 1:9; Titus 3:11; 2 Tim 2:23). παρά with the genitive is used after ἔμαθες (and other verbs of learning) to designate the person(s) from whom one has learned. Here those persons are represented by plural τίνων. The further statement in v. 15 implies that his childhood teachers, Lois and Eunice (1:5), are included in this plural and does not exclude Paul. Furthermore, the statement here recalls the beginning of this section, where Paul says that Timothy has followed his teaching (v. 10). Paul surely intends here to appeal to Timothy to continue in Paul’s teaching since, as verses 10–11 make clear,

Timothy has known well the reality in Paul's life of the truth he teaches. Others who are included in that plural are then added in verse 15.

First Timothy 3:15 adds another object of the participle εἰδώς (v. 14), as the conjunctions καί and ὅτι indicate. Timothy also understands that (καὶ ὅτι) he has known (οἶδας) from childhood not only his teachers but also the source of the teaching itself, the "holy scriptures." βρέφος is used for both the "unborn child" (Luke 1:41, 44) and the "infant" (Luke 2:12, 16; 18:15; Acts 7:19; 1 Pet 2:2). ἀπὸ βρέφους, used in Greek literature with the meaning "from childhood," implies that Timothy has known the scriptures from then until now. The Mishnah tractate *Pirke Aboth* (5:21), from the end of the first century A.D., gives five years of age as the time that a Jewish child is fit for Scripture.⁸⁵

This reference demonstrates how, from his childhood, Timothy had received instruction in the Holy Scriptures from his mother and grandmother (this teaching would follow typical Jewish upbringing). Paul was more than likely referring to both the instruction and teaching Timothy received from both his mother and grandmother and Paul himself. However, he is witnessing to the moral and spiritual affect of Timothy's mother and grandmother.⁸⁶ Towner makes an important statement regarding this passage:

Paul apparently draws on his knowledge of Timothy's upbringing in traditional Jewish fashion. From the account in Acts 16:1, which identifies Timothy's father as being a Gentile, we should probably conclude in conjunction with 1:5, that his Jewish mother and grandmother would have been mainly responsible for his learning of "the holy Scriptures" in the early years.⁸⁷

All these references lead one to conclude that mothers, both in the Old and New Testaments, played a vital role in discipling their children. Although fathers were to

⁸⁵Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 442–43.

⁸⁶Lea and Hayne, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 233.

⁸⁷Towner, *Timothy and Titus*, 582.

play a primary role in that endeavor, mothers were to work in a complementary and equal fashion to the fathers to help children grow in their faith in every facet of life. As Gary Parrett and Steve Kang state,

The reference to fathers (in Eph 6:4) affirms the principle we noted in Jewish thought—that fathers are to take final responsibility as spiritual heads of their households. But elsewhere, Paul makes it clear that the formative role of mothers is also critical. Children are to obey both their parents in the Lord (see Eph 6:1; Col 3:20), and younger women in the church are exhorted to love their husbands and children with a view to the formation of a spiritually sound household (see Titus 2:4–5; see also 2 Tim 1:5).⁸⁸

Scriptural evidence undoubtedly points to an influential role of mothers in the discipling of children and adolescents and is further evidenced in the writings of the early church.

Role of mother in the early church. As Barclay notes, there is little information provided in the New Testament regarding how to train a child in the Lord. There is no curriculum, nothing about religious education, and nothing about schools. What is clear from the New Testament is that the only training that mattered took place in the home and that there were no better teachers suited for the task than the parents (both father and mother).⁸⁹ This sentiment appears to have carried into the early church and the Apostolic Fathers. Once again, there is little written material on the subject. But from what is available, children were clearly an important part of the church, and it was “the duty and obligation of the parent to bring up the child in the knowledge and the love and the fear of God.”⁹⁰ Yet, over and over again, parents are called to train and disciple their children in the Christian faith. Here are some examples from the Apostolic Fathers:

⁸⁸Gary A. Parrett and S. Steve Kang, *Teaching the Faith, Forming the Faithful: A Biblical Vision for Education in the Church* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 154.

⁸⁹Barclay, *Train Up a Child*, 235–36.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, 236.

You must not waver with regard to your decisions. “You shall not take the Lord’s name in vain.” You shall love your neighbor more than your own life. You shall not abort a child nor, again, commit infanticide. You must not withhold your hand from your son or your daughter, but from their youth you shall teach them the fear of God (*Epistle of Barnabas* 19.5, late first or early second century).⁹¹

Let us fear the Lord Jesus Christ, whose blood was given for us. Let us respect our leaders; let us honor our elders; let us instruct our young with instruction that leads to the fear of God. Let our children receive the instruction which is in Christ: let them learn how strong humility is before God, what pure love is able to accomplish before God, how the fear of him is good and great and saves all those who live in it in holiness with a pure mind (*1 Clement* 21.6–8, late first or early second century).⁹²

You shall not withhold your hand from your son or your daughter, but from their youth you shall teach them the fear of God (*Didache* 4.9, first or second century).⁹³

Fathers, “bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord”; and teach them the holy Scriptures, and also trades, that they may not indulge in idleness. Now [the Scripture] says, “A righteous father educates [his children] well; his heart shall rejoice in a wise son (Ignatius, *To the Philadelphians* 4.5, long version, late first early second century).”⁹⁴

Then instruct your wives to continue in the faith delivered to them and in love and purity, cherishing their own husbands in all fidelity and loving all others equally in all chastity, and to instruct the children with instruction that leads to the fear of God (Polycarp, *To the Philippians* 4.2, second century).⁹⁵

These writings from the early Apostolic Fathers demonstrate an emphasis on the responsibility of discipleship resting on parents (both father [primary] and mother [complementary/partner]). Of special note from these writings is the one from Polycarp to the Philippians. The instructions that were given to husbands to be passed on to wives demonstrate how the wife or mother is to partner with the husband or father in instructing

⁹¹Michael William Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, updated ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 321.

⁹²*Ibid.*, 55.

⁹³*Ibid.*, 257.

⁹⁴Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, eds., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 81.

⁹⁵Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 211.

and disciplining their children with the “instruction that leads to the fear of God.” Undoubtedly, mothers played (and still do today) a vital role in the discipleship of their children. Yet, it is evident that the discipleship of children is intended to be carried out through a partnership between husband and wife, with the father being primarily responsible. As Barclay says eloquently, “It is the parent who is responsible for bringing the child into the world; and it is the parent who is responsible for bringing the child to God. The child is the gift of God to the parent, and the child must be the gift of the parent to God.”⁹⁶

Social Scientific Perspectives on Motherhood

Motherhood has been a source of research and study over recent decades as is evidenced in the recent publication of the “Encyclopedia of Motherhood.”⁹⁷ In fact, in the past decade, the study of motherhood has emerged as a distinct and established field of scholarship.⁹⁸ Andrea O’Reilly comments on this by saying the following:

A cursory review of motherhood research reveals that hundreds of scholarly articles have been published on almost every motherhood theme imaginable. The *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering* alone has examined motherhood topics as diverse as sexuality, peace, religion, public policy, literature, work, popular culture, health, care-work, young mothers, motherhood and feminism, feminist mothering, mothers and sons, mothers and daughters, lesbian mothering, adoption, the motherhood movement, and mothering, race and ethnicity to name a few. The publication of this encyclopedia on motherhood—the first ever on the topic—helps to both demarcate motherhood as a scholarly field and an academic discipline and to direct its future development.⁹⁹

⁹⁶Barclay, *Train Up a Child*, 262.

⁹⁷Andrea O’Reilly, ed., *Encyclopedia of Motherhood* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2010).

⁹⁸Andrea O’Reilly, “Introduction,” in *Encyclopedia of Motherhood*, ed. Andrea O’Reilly (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2010): 3:vii; Terry Arendell, “Conceiving and Investigating Motherhood: The Decade’s Scholarship,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 62, no. 4 (November 1, 2000): 1192, 1201.

⁹⁹O’Reilly, “Introduction,” 3:vii.

O'Reilly coined the term “motherhood studies” in an effort to distinguish motherhood as a legitimate and distinctive field of scholarly study.¹⁰⁰ As noted, these studies on motherhood are found not only in encyclopedic articles, but also in journals and other publications marking a distinct field of research in the social sciences. The study of motherhood has focused primarily on the relational and logistical work of raising children. A common theme in these scholarly studies emerges when defining motherhood/mothering: the social practices of nurturing and caring for dependent children.¹⁰¹ Linda Forcey defines mothering as “a socially constructed set of activities and relationships involved in nurturing and caring for people.”¹⁰² Forcey is so bold to express that mothering is particularly significant because it is “the main vehicle through which people first form their identities and learn their place in society.” Whether one agrees with the conclusions of some of these researchers or scholars, it is evident that motherhood/mothering has become a valid field of study and research in the social sciences. It is important to this research to consider the social science perspectives on motherhood, particularly in the areas of religious/spiritual development and of mother nurturance and involvement.

Religious and spiritual development and motherhood. The role that mothers play in the transmission of religious and spiritual beliefs to their children has become an important field of inquiry in the social sciences. Children’s religion and spirituality are thought to be a product of either a correspondence model (socialization theory) that would espouse that children’s religious beliefs strongly imitate those of their parents or

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

¹⁰¹Arendell, “Conceiving and Investigating Motherhood,” 1192.

¹⁰²Linda Rennie Forcey, “Feminist Perspectives on Mothering and Peace,” in *Mothering: Ideology, Experience, and Agency*, ed. Evelyn Nakano Glenn, Grace Chang, and Linda Rennie Forcey (New York: Routledge, 1994), 357.

an independence model (cognitive theory) that would suggest that children actively construct and assimilate their own religious beliefs and reality.¹⁰³ According to Chris Boyatzis, these are the two dominant approaches in the field of religious and spiritual development (RSD) of children and adolescents, and therefore, he champions further research and study on these two seemingly opposing theories.¹⁰⁴ He goes on to address several research studies in both correspondence and independence theories by saying the following:

The findings reveal ample correspondence *and* independence between parent and child beliefs. There is evidence for both. Now, one's choice to prioritize either correspondence or independence will reflect one's core presumptions about children, families, and RSD. To advance our thinking, the position here is that the independence model of parent-child belief is theoretically more illuminating and stimulating, and for this reason: it confirms children's active role in their own RSD and thus raises serious doubts about the depiction in socialization theories of the child as a passive recipient in top-down transmission of parental belief.¹⁰⁵

This statement is important to this study because it highlights that parents play a vital role in the RSD of their children, yet children (and especially adolescents) have an active role in the development of their religious beliefs. However, religious socialization of children and adolescence and its influence on the development of religious beliefs cannot be denied. Social science researchers recognize that parents are the primary overseers and caretakers in a child's life and that they play a strong role in their development of spirituality and religiosity.¹⁰⁶ As Michael Levenson, Carolyn Aldwin,

¹⁰³Chris J. Boyatzis, "Religious and Spiritual Development in Children," in *Handbook of the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, ed. Raymond F. Paloutzian and Crystal L. Park (New York: Guilford Press, 2005), 129.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 131.

¹⁰⁶Ross A. Mueller and Pamela Ebsytne King, "Parental Influence on Adolescent Religiosity," in *Encyclopedia of Religious and Spiritual Development*, ed. Elizabeth M. Dowling and W. George Scarlett (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2006), 335.

and Michelle D'Mello note, "There is no doubt that the influence of one's parents, as well as of one's peers, is important in the acquisition and maintenance of religious beliefs and behavior."¹⁰⁷ Ross Mueller and Pamela King speak to this by saying, "Given the degree to which parents shape the religiosity of their children, parental religious influence, or *religious socialization*, appears to be a critical area of investigation."¹⁰⁸

Much study and research in the area of parental influence in child and adolescent RSD has focused on the specific roles of mothers and fathers.¹⁰⁹ Social science research in this area has provided a better understanding of the perceived role of the mother in a child and adolescent's RSD. Chris Boyatzis, David Dollahite, and Loren Marks (in citing research) speak to the mother's role in child and adolescent RSD with the following:

Based on research, it is axiomatic to say that in most families the mother is the primary figure in children's religiosity. This finding has emerged in the United States, England, and Australia, and the mother's prominence has been confirmed in Jewish intermarriages and other religious groups. Even in interfaith families,

¹⁰⁷Michael R. Levenson, Carolyn M. Aldwin, and Michelle D'Mello, "Religious Development from Adolescence to Middle Adulthood," in *Handbook of the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, ed. Raymond F. Paloutzian and Crystal L. Park (New York: Guilford Press, 2005), 149.

¹⁰⁸Mueller and King, "Parental Influence on Adolescent Religiosity," 335.

¹⁰⁹Example studies include Alan C. Acock and Vern L. Bengtson, "On the Relative Influence of Mothers and Fathers: A Covariance Analysis of Political and Religious Socialization," *Journal of Marriage & the Family* 40, no. 3 (1978): 519–30; Christopher Bader and Scott A. Desmond, "Do as I Say and as I Do: The Effects of Consistent Parental Beliefs and Behaviors Upon Religious Transmission," *Sociology of Religion* 67, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 313–29; Gina M. Brelsford and Annette Mahoney, "Spiritual Disclosure Between Older Adolescents and Their Mothers," *Journal of Family Psychology* 22, no. 1 (February 2008): 62–70; Douglas L. Flor and Nancy Flanagan Knapp, "Transmission and Transaction: Predicting Adolescents' Internalization of Parental Religious Values," *Journal of Family Psychology* 15, no. 4 (December 2001): 627–45; Dianne K. Kieren and Brenda Munro, "Following the Leaders: Parents' Influence on Adolescent Religious Activity," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 26, no. 2 (June 1, 1987): 249–55; Todd F. Martin, James M. White, and Daniel Perlman, "Religious Socialization: A Test of the Channeling Hypothesis of Parental Influence on Adolescent Faith Maturity," *Journal of Adolescent Research* 18, no. 2 (March 2003): 169–87; for a more extensive listing of these studies and more, please refer to the bibliography.

children's denominational affiliation is more similar to the mothers' than the fathers', especially when the mother is Catholic.¹¹⁰

These findings date back to 1978, when Alan Acock and Vern Bevis reported that, when analyzing the differences in influence of both mother and father in a child's life, the mother was a substantially more important influence in a number of variables, including Maintenance of Status Quo, Work Ethic, Traditional Religious Beliefs, and Militarism.¹¹¹ They concluded from their research that "contrary to much previous commentary and research, mothers are more predictive of the child's orientations than are fathers. The only exception is with respect to Religious Behavior. On Religiosity, Tolerance, and Sexual Norms, fathers' scores are slightly more predictive than mothers'."¹¹² Further research has indicated why mothers are so influential in children and adolescent RSD:¹¹³

1. Women tend to be more religious than men and attend worship services more regularly.¹¹⁴
2. Adults report witnessing their mothers praying more often than their fathers.¹¹⁵
3. Mothers tend to speak more often with their children than fathers, especially in regard to religious conversations.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁰Chris J. Boyatzis, David C. Dollahite, and Loren D. Marks, "The Family as a Context for Religious and Spiritual Development in Children and Youth," in *The Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence*, ed. Eugene C. Roehlkepartain et al. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2006), 302.

¹¹¹Acock and Bengtson, "On the Relative Influence of Mothers and Fathers," 525.

¹¹²Ibid.

¹¹³Boyatzis, Dollahite, and Marks, "Family as a Context for Religious and Spiritual Development," 302.

¹¹⁴Ralph W. Hood, Peter C. Hill, and Bernard Spilka, *The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Approach*, 4th ed. (New York: Guilford Press, 2009), 116.

¹¹⁵Robert Wuthnow, *Growing Up Religious: Christians and Jews and Their Journeys of Faith* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999).

¹¹⁶Campbell Leaper, Kristin J. Anderson, and Paul Sanders, "Moderators of Gender Effects on

4. Mothers tend to be more involved in religious conversations with their children than fathers.¹¹⁷
5. Mothers tend to be more open with and discuss emotions.¹¹⁸
6. Children tend to rate their mothers higher than their fathers as a confidante and self-disclosure partner.¹¹⁹
7. Because of the intimate nature of religious and spiritual subjects, children tend to be drawn more toward the more communicative and intimate parent (often the mother) as the “cognitive anchor.”¹²⁰

These studies and findings underscore the importance of a mother’s role in the RSD of children and adolescents. They also demonstrate the need to continue developing ways in which to measure the parental role in RSD and what it is that parents (especially mothers in regard to this research) provide that aid their children in developing spiritually. Some recent research has been assessing the role of parents in terms of parental involvement and nurturance.

Mother nurturance and involvement. Recent social science research has demonstrated significant benefits in the lives of children and adolescents when parents are involved in their lives. In the past few decades, research in parental involvement has evolved in method and focus. These studies have shown how the benefits of parental

Parents’ Talk to their Children: A Meta-Analysis,” *Developmental Psychology* 34, no. 1 (January 1998): 3–27.

¹¹⁷Boyatzis, Dollahite, and Marks, “Family as a Context for Religious and Spiritual Development,” 302; Hood, Hill, and Spilka, *The Psychology of Religion*, 116.

¹¹⁸Janet Kuebli, Susan Butler, and Robyn Fivush, “Mother-Child Talk about Past Emotions: Relations of Maternal Language and Child Gender Over Time,” *Cognition and Emotion* 9, nos. 2 and 3 (1995): 265–83.

¹¹⁹Duane Buhrmester and Wyndol Furman, “The Development of Companionship and Intimacy,” *Child Development* 58 (1987): 1101–13.

¹²⁰Elizabeth Weiss Ozorak, “Social and Cognitive Influences on the Development of Religious Beliefs and Commitment in Adolescence,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 28, no. 4 (December 1989): 448–63.

involvement are immense and affect every aspect of a child's development. Some of the research has confirmed that people are genetically and biologically designed to connect with others and find meaning. In 2003, a commission of 33 distinguished children's doctors, research scientists, and mental health and youth service professionals was formed because of the concern over the rising rates of mental illness, behavioral problems, and emotional distress among U.S. children and teens. The study had six distinct findings. Of particular note to this study are the following findings:¹²¹

1. Humans are hardwired to form relationships. Human biology predisposes individuals to form and sustain enduring, nurturing relationships.
2. During childhood, the presence or absence of a nurturing environment shapes a child's psychological and emotional development and also alters the development of the brain in ways that can affect long-term health.
3. Primary nurturing relationships influence early spiritual development, and spiritual development can influence individuals biologically in the same ways that primary nurturing relationships do.
4. Religiosity and spirituality significantly influence well-being.

This study confirmed that relationships are paramount for a child's well-being as they develop. Fathers and mothers can provide the primary nurturing relationships for children and adolescents and, therefore, have significant influence on RSD. The study found that human beings are biologically "primed" to seek moral and spiritual meaning, and nurturing relationships are a *central* foundation for positive moral and spiritual development.¹²² There are three things to consider with this statement: (1) this research indicates that humans have a biological tendency to seek moral meaning and a connection to the spiritual or transcendent, (2) this research indicates a powerful correlation between

¹²¹Commission on Children at Risk, *Hardwired to Connect: The New Scientific Case for Authoritative Communities* (New York: Institute for American Values, 2003).

¹²²Ibid.

the brain and the environment, and (3) this research indicates that nurture (or lack thereof) plays a fundamental role in shaping a child's moral and spiritual belief system.

Other studies have been conducted in the past decade to determine the impact of father/mother nurturance and involvement. For instance, Eirini Flouri and Ann Buchanan found that father and mother involvement is positively related to the psychological well-being of their adolescents (with the father's involvement having a stronger effect).¹²³ Another study examined mother involvement and its influence on father involvement during early adolescence. The researchers hypothesized that a mother's involvement will have a direct impact on a father's involvement. Rather than studying the *consequences*, Joseph Pleck and Sandra Hofferth examined a mother's involvement in regards to a *source* of modeling and mediation. They found that father involvement was predicated by mother involvement, yet the reciprocal influence was not significant.¹²⁴ Therefore, a father's involvement has a direct correlation with that of the mother. The study indicated that a mother tends to model and influence a father's involvement in the home.¹²⁵

Alan Hawkins and Rob Palkovitz conducted research on varied father involvement concepts. Their study introduced several different domains in the area of father involvement. There are 20 domains that included providing income, caregiving, monitoring schoolwork, encouraging independence, disciplining, developing responsibility, offering companionship, and others.¹²⁶ With their study, Hawkins and

¹²³Eirini Flouri and Ann Buchanan, "The Role of Father Involvement and Mother Involvement in Adolescents' Psychological Well-Being," *British Journal of Social Work* 33, no. 3 (2003): 399, 406.

¹²⁴Joseph H. Pleck and Sandra L. Hofferth, "Mother Involvement as an Influence on Father Involvement with Early Adolescents," *Fathering* 6, no. 3 (Fall 2008): 267–86.

¹²⁵*Ibid.*

¹²⁶Alan J. Hawkins and Rob Palkovitz, "Beyond Ticks and Clicks: The Need for More Diverse and Broader Conceptualization and Measures of Father Involvement," *Journal of Men's Studies* 8 (1999): 11–32.

Palkovitz expanded research in the area of father involvement to new heights. Their research influenced a new perspective considered in measuring father involvement created by Gordon Finley and Seth Schwartz.

Using the work of Talcott Parson and Robert Bales¹²⁷ and Hawkins and Palkovitz,¹²⁸ Finley and Schwartz developed two instruments to measure the retrospective perception of adolescents and adult children concerning their fathers' nurturance and involvement.¹²⁹ Finley states, "In the applied and practice domains involving children, many decisions regarding children are based on judgments of 'the best interests of the child.' Only rarely, however, are the best interests of children assessed from the child's point of view. Retrospective instruments may help to tap into this perspective."¹³⁰ Therefore, they designed the Nurturant Father Scale (NFS) to evaluate the affective quality of fathering while the Father Involvement Scale (FIS) included Hawkins and Palkovitz's 20 domains to evaluate adolescent and adult children's retrospective perceptions of their fathers' involvement.¹³¹

Later, they recognized a need to assess mother nurturance and involvement as well. Gordon Finley, Sandra Mira, and Seth Schwartz commented, "Although scholars long have recognized that parents are among the most important contributors to child development, more research is needed regarding the differential contributions of fathers

¹²⁷Talcott Parsons and Robert Freed Bales, *Family, Socialization, and Interaction Process* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1955). Parsons and Bales examined the division of parenting roles and placed them into two categories: instrumental and expressive. They went further to divide these roles by parental gender: instrumental (fathers) and expressive (mothers).

¹²⁸Hawkins and Palkovitz, "Beyond Tick and Clicks," 11–32.

¹²⁹Gordon E. Finley and Seth J. Schwartz, "The Father Involvement and Nurturant Fathering Scales: Retrospective Measures of Adolescence and Adult Children," *Psychological Measurements* 64 (2004): 143–64.

¹³⁰*Ibid.*, 146.

¹³¹*Ibid.*

and mothers to developmental outcomes.”¹³² In 2008, Finley, Mira, and Schwartz conducted a follow-up study to (1) replicate the factor structure of the NFS and FIS, (2) determine the extent to which the scales were unique to fathers or instead represented parenting scales applicable to both fathers and mothers, and (3) examine the applicability of Parsons and Bales’ theoretical perspective to mothers.¹³³ To test whether Parsons and Bales’ perspective was applicable to both mothers and fathers, they needed to identically measure both mother and father involvement.¹³⁴

Using their two previous instruments (NFS and FIS), they created two identical instruments to assess mothers: the Nurturant Mother Scale (NMS) and the Mother Involvement Scale (MIS). The development of these parallel measures of mother nurturance and involvement provided them with a needed opportunity to make direct comparisons between perceived mothering and fathering.¹³⁵ Their study viewed parental involvement as “a highly differentiated construct with many different domains of a child’s life in which a parent may or may not be involved.”¹³⁶ They went on to explain, “Involvement refers to the extent to which parents participate in various aspects of their children’s lives.”¹³⁷ In addition, they studied parental nurturance, which refers to “warmth and acceptance received from parents.”¹³⁸

¹³²Gordon E. Finley, Sandra D. Mira, and Seth J. Schwartz, “Perceived Paternal and Maternal Involvement: Factor Structures, Mean Differences, and Parental Roles,” *Fathering: A Journal of Theory, Research, and Practice about Men as Fathers* 6, no. 1 (Winter 2008): 62–63.

¹³³*Ibid.*, 77.

¹³⁴*Ibid.*, 63.

¹³⁵*Ibid.*

¹³⁶*Ibid.* Using the measurements of Parsons and Bales, *Family, Socialization, and Interaction Process*, and Hawkins and Palkovitz, “Beyond Tick and Clicks.”

¹³⁷Finley, Mira, and Schwartz, “Perceived Paternal and Maternal Involvement,” 64.

¹³⁸*Ibid.*

The 2008 study found that the NFS and FIS replicated in the new sample yielded Cronbach's alphas that were virtually identical to those reported in their 2004 study and the comparison of the mothering and fathering scales appear to demonstrate isomorphic factor structures. This finding indicates that the scales assess *parenting* functions that are structurally equivalent for mothers and for fathers. They comment on this finding by saying the following:

Although mothers and fathers clearly play different roles within the family system, the array of functions in which mothers and fathers *can* engage appears to be isomorphic. As a result, the list of domains compiled by Hawkins and Palkovitz (1999), with additional domains added by Finley and Schwartz (2004), appears to be appropriate for assessing involvement from mothers, from fathers, or from both. ... Thus, the instrumental-expressive distinction, with a mentoring/advising factor representing the overlap between the instrumental and expressive dimensions (as originally reported by Finley & Schwartz, 2004, for fathers), is applicable to both mothers and fathers. The factor structures appear to strongly correspond to Parsons and Bales' (1955) division of parenting roles into instrumental and expressive domain clusters.¹³⁹

Finally, the study found that in regard to mean differences between parents (as well as across parenting functions *within* each parent) mothers were typically rated as more involved than fathers in all domains studied (except in the domain of providing income).¹⁴⁰

These studies in mother nurturance and involvement, the role of a mother in RSD, and social science perspectives on mothers and motherhood demonstrate a necessity for continuing research. Although a great deal of study has been conducted thus far, there is still a need to determine in what areas/domains that a mother most positively impacts her children. For this study, it is imperative to determine in what areas/domains a mother most positively impacts her children and adolescents in RSD.

¹³⁹Ibid., 77.

¹⁴⁰Ibid.

Adolescent Christian Formation

Although spiritual formation and development is becoming an accepted field of study in the social sciences and humanities, this acceptance does not mean that the term is defined in the same way that the Bible defines it. Therefore, it is necessary to examine *adolescence* and *Christian formation* respectfully to understand their meaning as used throughout this study. Christian formation can only be understood in light of Scripture and its guidance. Accordingly, this section includes a general overview of adolescence, spirituality, and development and formation separately. Terms will be discussed from both biblical and social science perspectives.

Adolescence

Jeffrey Arnett defines adolescence as “a period of the life course between the time puberty begins and the time adult status is approached, when young people are preparing to take on the roles and responsibilities of adulthood in their culture.”¹⁴¹ The word *adolescent* is defined as being “in the process of developing from a child into an adult.”¹⁴² Its origin is “Middle English: via French from Latin *adolescent-*, *adolescere*, from *ad-* ‘to’ + *alescere* ‘grow, grow up.’”¹⁴³ This word is associated with the word *adult* that also originates from the Latin term *adolescere*.¹⁴⁴

Although the term *adolescence* has only been around since the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this stage of life was recognized long ago in Western cultures. Plato and Aristotle recognized this stage and viewed it as a third distinct life

¹⁴¹Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, *Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood: A Cultural Approach*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007), 4.

¹⁴²Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson, “Adolescent,” in *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, 11th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

¹⁴³*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴*Ibid.*, s.v. “Adult.”

stage that took place after infancy and childhood and extended from 14 to 21. They both viewed this stage as one in which the ability of reason first developed.¹⁴⁵ Through time there has been a basic understanding of a difference between youth and adult. The difficulty has always been in how to define where one stops and the other begins.

G. Stanley Hall is one of the most well-known figures in studies of adolescence. In 1904, he authored a two-volume work titled *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion, and Education*. In his work, Hall espouses a two-stage view of adolescence. He defined the adolescent age range as being 14 to 24 and divided it into early and late adolescence.¹⁴⁶ Yet, over time, the age range and stages of adolescence have been a source of discussion and often confusion. It is generally accepted that puberty serves as the entrance into adolescence, while full autonomy of an individual indicates leaving adolescence and entering adulthood. John Santrock has defined adolescence as thus, “The developmental period of transition from childhood to adulthood; it involves biological, cognitive, and socioemotional changes. Adolescence begins at approximately 10 to 13 years of age and ends in the late teens.”¹⁴⁷ As is evident, there is still a great deal of ambiguity and discrepancy on how many stages of adolescence there are and when those stages begin and end. The following are a best attempt at understanding the ages and stages according to recent research. These definitions will serve to clarify what is meant by specific adolescent terms in this study.

¹⁴⁵Arnett, *Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood*, 4–6.

¹⁴⁶G. Stanley Hall, *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, and Religion* (1904; reprt., New York: Hesperides Press, 2006), xix.

¹⁴⁷John W. Santrock, *Adolescence*, 13th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2010), Kindle ed., loc. 1892-94.

Early adolescence. This is a period during adolescence development between the ages of 10 and 14.¹⁴⁸ This stage is characterized by an adolescent's effort to exercise some level of independence. Puberty is a part of this stage and corresponds to the middle school or junior high school years.¹⁴⁹

Late adolescence. This is a period during adolescence development between the ages of 15 and 18.¹⁵⁰ It is characterized by a "shift from concrete consciousness of the world around them to a more nuanced awareness."¹⁵¹ Some label this stage as Middle Adolescence or midadolescence.¹⁵² Harold Wallbridge and Timothy Osachuk recognize this very important stage in life by saying the following:

Midadolescence generally corresponds to grades 9 through 12 and ages 15 through 18. Many of the developmental changes of early adolescence are extended and refined during midadolescence. This period also presents new challenges and changes for high school students. As students move through high school, they are progressively faced with important decisions regarding future schooling, career paths, and related options. This is both exciting and stressful for many adolescents. The exhilaration of new opportunities and freedoms is often coupled with a sense of isolation and vulnerability ("What if I make the wrong choice?"). Adolescents "face leaving the world that they have always known and stepping out on their own."¹⁵³

Santrock gives this definition, "The developmental period that corresponds approximately to the latter half of the second decade of life. Career interests, dating, and

¹⁴⁸Arnett, *Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood*, 16.

¹⁴⁹Santrock, *Adolescence*, loc. 1904-05.

¹⁵⁰Arnett, *Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood*, 473.

¹⁵¹Chap Clark, *Disconnected: Parenting Teens in a Myspace World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 133.

¹⁵²Chap Clark, *Hurt 2.0: Inside the World of Today's Teenagers* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), Kindle ed., loc. 675.

¹⁵³Harold R. Wallbridge and Timothy A. G. Osachuk, "Therapy with Adolescents," in *Basics of Clinical Practice*, ed. David G. Martin and Allan D. Moore (Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks Cole, 1995), 208.

identity exploration are often more pronounced in late adolescence than in early adolescence.”¹⁵⁴ This stage of adolescence corresponds to the high school years. For this study, *Late Adolescence* will be used.

Emerging adulthood. This is a period of adolescence between the ages of 18 and 25 in industrialized parts of the world. It is characterized by adolescents becoming more independent and exploring avenues to take in life before making lasting commitments.¹⁵⁵ Arnett states, “Emerging adulthood exists only in cultures in which young people are allowed to postpone entering adult roles such as marriage and parenthood until at least their mid-20s.”¹⁵⁶

Some refer to this stage as Late Adolescence¹⁵⁷ making this the most difficult of the three stages to define. Regardless of the title, the stage appears to conclude when an individual reaches a point of autonomy and is willing to assume adult responsibilities. As Parker notes, “Modern assessments of adolescence demonstrate that the adolescent period continues to lengthen.”¹⁵⁸

Biblical theological foundations for adolescence. Scripture does not use the term *adolescent*. However, the life stage of adolescence is often referred to. The stages of development often described in Scripture are childhood, young adult (youth), and adulthood. Various Hebrew terms are used to describe the life stage of adolescence. The NIV uses the word “youth” 55 times and the term “young man” 41 times translated from

¹⁵⁴Santrock, *Adolescence*, loc. 1906-07.

¹⁵⁵Arnett, *Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood*, 469.

¹⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁵⁷Clark, *Hurt 2.0*; Santrock, *Adolescence*.

¹⁵⁸Andrew Clyde Parker, “An Analysis of the Relationship Between Adolescent Spiritual Development and Father Involvement” (Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010), 37.

different words in Hebrew.¹⁵⁹ As David Keehn notes, “The commonality of these words often obscures the true understanding of this age range.”¹⁶⁰ For instance, the Hebrew word *na·ar* (נָעַר), occurs 235 times in Old Testament with the basic meaning of “youth.” In certain instances it is used to denote a very young child (Isa 7:16), but it generally means a “young man” who is of “marriageable age but is still a bachelor.”¹⁶¹

Another passage that adds to the difficulty can be found in Ecclesiastes 11:9: “Be happy, young man (בָּחֹרִיךָ), while you are young (יְלָדוּתְךָ) and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth (בְּחֹרֶתְךָ).” In one sentence, three different Hebrew words are used to reference this stage in life (adolescence). The Hebrew *yāl·dūt* (יְלָדוּת),¹⁶² indicates the time in a person’s life when they are young. It is different from *bē·hū·rôt* (בְּחֹרֶת), which is describing a time or age in one’s life, not a definite period of time¹⁶³ and can also indicate a group of young men. The latter word has its root in the first Hebrew word used *bâchûr* (בָּחֹר), which commonly describes a “young man” in the prime of manhood.¹⁶⁴ Keehn states,

The variety of these three terms used in the Old Testament adds to the difficulty often associated with making definitive declarations. However, we can also look to biblical narratives to bring more clarity regarding God’s desire for youth to enter

¹⁵⁹David Keehn, “Youth Ministry from a Family Perspective,” in *A Theology for Family Ministries*, ed. Michael Anthony and Michelle Anthony (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011), 227.

¹⁶⁰*Ibid.*

¹⁶¹W. E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, and William White, Jr., *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville: T. Nelson, 1996), 1:299.

¹⁶²James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)*, electronic ed. (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997).

¹⁶³*Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles Augustus Briggs, *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, electronic ed. (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2000), 104.

into a relationship with Him as early as possible and to serve Him throughout the days of their lives.¹⁶⁵

What can be learned from the Old Testament usage of the word “youth” is that it refers to the years beyond childhood, yet before mature adulthood. As Parker points out, “Accountability and responsibility are equated with the years of early adulthood”¹⁶⁶ in reference to the statement found in Ecclesiastes 11:9.

In the New Testament, John portrays three stages of Christian formation among his readers using the phrases “children” (τεκνία; παῖδια), “young men” (νεανίσκοι), and “fathers” (πατέρες) (1 John 2:12–14). “Children” indicates the infantile years of the spiritual life and the growth that must take place during these years. As Daniel Akin points out, “Spiritual maturity moves us into a deeper and fuller knowledge of our God with the result being familial resemblance. Children should resemble their Father.”¹⁶⁷ “Young men” depicted believers who had matured beyond spiritual childhood, but had not yet reached spiritual maturity. Akin comments on this group by saying, “We must note that while it is likely that the term ‘young ones’ refers to a specific group within the community, this reality should be a part of the life of every believer at any stage of spiritual development, for the Christian life is characterized by a constant battle against evil.”¹⁶⁸ Those who had spiritually grown and reached a stage of spiritual maturity were called “fathers” of the community, and John reminds them that they have known the one who is from the beginning, that is, Jesus Christ.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁵Keehn, “Youth Ministry from a Family Perspective,” 228.

¹⁶⁶Parker, “Adolescent Spiritual Development and Father Involvement,” 48.

¹⁶⁷Daniel L. Akin, *1, 2, 3 John*, The New American Commentary, vol. 38 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 106.

¹⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 105.

¹⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 104–05.

As indicated by this passage, growth and development are characteristic of adolescence. In Luke 2:53, Jesus is described as having grown in wisdom (cognitive development), stature (physical development), and favor with God and man. The extended passage in Luke (specifically v. 47) also describes social and spiritual development as Jesus reasoned through the Scriptures and amazed those who were gathered around Him. This one verse (Luke 2:52) describes Jesus' life from age 12 through age 30. As Parker aptly points out,

Over that span of time his physical body developed strength, agility, height, and muscular tone. His facial hair and vocal pitch would have altered significantly. Jesus would have learned a skill from his earthly father so his intellect would have been sharpened. At the tender age of 12, he was already in dialogue with religious teachers, demonstrating that he possessed a keen sense of mental competence. Bridging the gap between childhood and adulthood also would have given him social graces and an awareness of the needs of others.¹⁷⁰

Paul also addresses youth and Christian formation when writing to his student Timothy. First Timothy 4:12 reads, "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity." Paul uses the Greek word, νεότης, "youth," here. Although Timothy's exact age at the time of his ministry in Ephesus cannot be determined, he was at an age that some might discount his ability and ministry.

Timothy started working with Paul during his second missionary journey (somewhere around A.D. 49; Acts 16:1). With that journey, the third journey, the imprisonments, and the time required for release and time in Ephesus, around thirteen or more years had passed. This indicates that Timothy was probably in his late twenties to mid thirties.¹⁷¹ This age would have still had Timothy on the cusp (or coming out of) of

¹⁷⁰Parker, "Adolescent Spiritual Development and Father Involvement," 48.

¹⁷¹William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Dallas: Word, 2000), 258.

what would be considered late adolescence or emergent adulthood today. All these examples demonstrate a biblical theological understanding of a period of life following childhood but before mature adulthood: *adolescence*.

Social scientific perspectives on adolescence. Adolescence is a relatively new sociological phenomenon. Before the Civil War, teenagers were largely considered adults and lived and worked with their families in agrarian societies. As Mark Cannister notes, “For most of human history, the lifecycle was divided only into childhood and adulthood—the transition between these being marked by puberty.”¹⁷² Work, church, school, and family often occurred exclusively in the home.¹⁷³ The new frontier was hard living and required work from every family member. Mark Senter comments,

Life in early America was hard. Virtually every person above seven years of age worked to contribute to the welfare of the family. It was commonly understood that children owed their parents the labor they could render. Frequently children essentially skipped adolescence and functioned as adults before entering their teenage years.¹⁷⁴

Where formal schooling was available, many families considered it an auxiliary activity and luxury. David Nasaw further comments, “The household...remained in the New World the basic unit of organization. It was home, workplace, church, and school all rolled into one.”¹⁷⁵ When the Industrial Revolution and

¹⁷² Mark W. Cannister, “Youth Ministry’s Historical Context: The Education and Evangelism of Young People,” in *Starting Right: Thinking Theologically about Youth Ministry*, ed. Kenda Creasy Dean, Chap Clark, and Dave Rahn (Grand Rapids: Youth Specialties Academic/Zondervan Pub. House, 2001), 81.

¹⁷³ As Jones and Stinson state, “Prior to the eighteenth century nuclear and extended families had worked together on farms and then in cottage industries centered in homes.” Timothy P. Jones and Randy Stinson, “Family Ministry Models,” in *A Theology for Family Ministries*, ed. Michael Anthony and Michelle Anthony (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011), 161.

¹⁷⁴ Mark Senter, *When God Shows Up: A History of Protestant Youth Ministry in America* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 6–7.

¹⁷⁵ David Nasaw, *Schooled to Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 10.

urbanization occurred, however, enormous pressure was put on the family. Children (and especially adolescents) were vital to agrarian society and the survival of the family. Yet, with the invention of the industry system, families migrated to cities to work in the factories, and adolescents often worked separated from their parents. Families became fragmented and new roles began to take shape within the home.¹⁷⁶ Therefore, from the mid-nineteenth century on, people began to view youth differently. Yet, the word *adolescence* was seldom used. Instead, the word *youth* described those who were not infants but could not yet support themselves or a family.¹⁷⁷

As time moved on and with the rise of publicly funded high schools, the word *adolescence* emerged again, due in large part to the publication of *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, and Religion* by G. Stanley Hall in 1904. Hall wanted to demonstrate that adolescence was a distinct stage in life between childhood and adulthood marked by turbulence and stress. Understanding this would provide a scientific basis for the public school movement.¹⁷⁸ As Senter notes, “The word *adolescence* began to work its way into the American vocabulary. The culture started to view the time between the end of childhood and the assumption of adult responsibilities as a distinct stage in life.”¹⁷⁹

Adding to the fragmentation of the family and the definition of a distinct stage of adolescence, child labor laws were enacted in three sets of legislative acts. The legislation dealt with child labor, required school attendance, and an established juvenile judicial system.¹⁸⁰ This process of defining adolescence and removing them from the

¹⁷⁶Jones and Stinson, “Family Ministry Models,” 163.

¹⁷⁷Senter, *When God Shows Up*, 27.

¹⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 30. Senter goes on to summarize these three sets of legislation: “Child labor laws went

workplace further ostracized them from society and made them irrelevant to the culture. As Anthony Campolo states, “We must face the fact that children were necessary when we lived in a basically agrarian society, but are unnecessary in the urban industrial system.”¹⁸¹

In 1875, the Supreme Court authorized tax revenue to be spent on high school education. This act led to the availability of education to more adolescents than ever before (regardless of economic status), and by 1918, every state in the union had compulsory school attendance laws through the age of 16.¹⁸² Compulsory education aided in fragmenting the family and placed education in the hands of the government (which had for centuries been the responsibility of parents). This extended adolescence from puberty through graduation from high school and further delayed entrance into the work force.¹⁸³ With parents at work and adolescents with more idle time, moral decay became evident among children and adolescents.

The rise of moral decay gave way to a rise in youth- or adolescent-related criminal offenses. Therefore, a juvenile justice system was established with the aim of correcting and training (as opposed to punishing). Since adolescence was a stage of turbulence and stress, adolescents were deemed “salvageable when properly

through three phases. In the first (1830–60), states primarily in New England and to a lesser extent in the Middle Atlantic region, required employers of children to provide education of various types. This was followed by a period (1860–1929) when various states limited the employment of children, primarily in factories, starting with age ten and gradually raising the minimum age to sixteen. Federal legislation just before World War I, while not taking away the authority of states to regulate labor practices within their borders, prevented the interstate shipment of products produced or manufactured by children. Though the act was later declared unconstitutional by the United States Supreme Court, the process of removing adolescents from the workplace had begun.”

¹⁸¹ Anthony Campolo, “The Youth Culture in Sociological Perspective,” in *The Complete Book of Youth Ministry*, ed. Warren S. Benson and Mark H. Senter III (Chicago: Moody Press, 1987), 38.

¹⁸² Cannister, “Youth Ministry’s Historical Context,” 82.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

managed.”¹⁸⁴ An additional reaction to this moral decay was the establishment of young people’s associations, which began to emerge for the purpose of assisting young people in their Christian walk. Francis E. Clark’s stated objective for the *Society for Christian Endeavor* was “to promote an earnest Christian life among its members, to increase their mutual acquaintance, and to make them more useful in the service to God.”¹⁸⁵ The Society for Christian Endeavor and others like it¹⁸⁶ provided a boost toward Christian formation for adolescents; however, it continued to divide the family in regard to the parental responsibility of faith formation. As Parker suggests, “Two major components were instrumental in the crisis of adolescent spiritual development. The move from an agrarian society to urbanization migrated teenagers from farms and the family into idle time and extended separation from families.”¹⁸⁷

Adolescence as viewed through this historical social science lens sets the stage for current research and study in the field of life span development in adolescence. *Adolescence* as understood from a social science perspective is similar, but not synonymous, to a biblical view of *youth*. As noted earlier, *youth* as used in Scripture refers to the young and can mean children, adolescents, and on through young

¹⁸⁴Senter, *When God Shows Up*, 31; William H. De Lacy, “Juvenile Courts,” in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton, 1910), 8:586–87.

¹⁸⁵Francis E. Clark, *World Wide Endeavor: The Story of the Young People’s Society for Christian Endeavor for the Beginnings and in All Lands* (Philadelphia: Gillespei, Metzgar & Kelly, 1895), 57.

¹⁸⁶For a more in-depth view into these young people’s associations and societies, see Mark W. Cannister, “Youth Ministry’s Historical Context: The Education and Evangelism of Young People,” in *Starting Right: Thinking Theologically about Youth Ministry*, ed. Kenda Creasy Dean, Chap Clark, and Dave Rahn (Grand Rapids: Youth Specialties Academic/Zondervan Pub. House, 2001), 77–90; Timothy P. Jones and Randy Stinson, “Family Ministry Models,” in *A Theology for Family Ministries*, ed. Michael and Michelle Anthony (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011), 155–80; Mark Senter, *When God Shows Up: A History of Protestant Youth Ministry in America* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010).

¹⁸⁷Parker, “Adolescent Spiritual Development and Father Involvement,” 51.

adulthood.¹⁸⁸ Whereas, a modern view of adolescence through the social sciences is better understood as a stage of development in the life span of an individual who lies between childhood and adulthood. This distinction is important to note in regard to this review and research.

Spirituality

It is very difficult to find a working definition for spirituality that is commonly accepted among scholars in both theological and social science/humanities fields of study. As Gross points out, “An examination of research on spirituality yields three distinct approaches to the relationship between spirituality and religiosity. There are researchers who view spirituality as an integral part of religiosity; those who view spirituality as separate from religiosity; and those who view spirituality as synonymous with religiosity.”¹⁸⁹ Several researchers have explored the subject yet a consensus has yet to surface.¹⁹⁰ Confusion comes in defining the words spiritual, spirituality, religious, religiosity, and religion. A 1997 study conducted by Brian Zinnbauer and colleagues led them to state the following:

Whereas religiousness historically included both individual and institutional elements, spirituality is now commonly regarded as an individual phenomenon and identified with such things as personal transcendence, supraconscious sensitivity, and meaningfulness. Religiousness, in contrast, is now often described narrowly as formally structured and identified with religious institutions and prescribed theology and rituals.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸As old as the late twenties to mid-thirties as evidenced in the life and ministry of Timothy.

¹⁸⁹Zehavit Gross, “Spirituality, Contemporary Approaches to Defining,” in *Encyclopedia of Religious and Spiritual Development*, ed. Elizabeth M. Dowling and W. George Scarlett (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2006), 424.

¹⁹⁰Eugene C. Roehlkepartain et al., “Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence: Moving to the Scientific Mainstream,” in *The Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence*, ed. Eugene C. Roehlkepartain et al. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2006), 4–6.

¹⁹¹Brian J. Zinnbauer et al., “Religion and Spirituality: Unfuzzifying the Fuzzy,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36, no. 4 (1997): 551.

Two of the same researchers from the earlier work, Brian Zinnbauer and Kenneth Pargament, coauthored a chapter in the *Handbook of Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* in 2005¹⁹² where they had opposing views of spirituality and religiousness within the same chapter. Zinnbauer championed viewing spirituality as a broader construct than religiousness and Pargament argued for religiousness as a broader construct. Both recognized strengths and weaknesses of each view. In the end, Zinnbauer and Pargament agreed that

presenting any scholarly definition of religiousness or spirituality runs the risk of contradicting a given individual's self-definition. There may well be times when scholars define these terms differently from believers. It becomes necessary in these cases to be explicit about the meanings of the terms, to explicate and operationalize the constructs clearly in research and writing, and to remain aware that over time the constructs may continue to change or evolve.¹⁹³

With this in mind, this research must clearly define these terms so that there is no misunderstanding as to how they will be used and understood throughout.

Spirituality and social scientific research. A traditional view of spirituality and religion is that “spirituality” is more personal and psychological, whereas, “religion” is more institutional and sociological. The two terms are therefore not synonymous but distinct. From this viewpoint, spirituality includes an individual's beliefs, values, and behavior, and religion is tied to an individual's commitment and involvement with a particular religious tradition or institution.¹⁹⁴ Others have tried to find a common

¹⁹²Raymond F. Paloutzian and Crystal L. Park, *Handbook of the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* (New York: Guilford Press, 2005).

¹⁹³Brian J. Zinnbauer and Kenneth I. Pargament, “Religiousness and Spirituality,” in *Handbook of the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, ed. Raymond F. Paloutzian and Crystal L. Park (New York: Guilford Press, 2005), 37–38.

¹⁹⁴Ralph W. Hood, Jr., Peter C. Hill, and Bernard Spilka, *The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Approach*, 4th ed. (New York: Guilford Press, 2009), 9.

denominator that binds spirituality and religion together yet allows for differences. John Hull's view is an example:

The key concepts are spirituality, religion and faith. These are best depicted as a series of three concentric circles with the outside, largest circle being spirituality, the middle ring being religion and the inner circle being faith. Spirituality includes religion but is more comprehensive. Religion as a whole is concerned with spirituality but not all spirituality is concerned with religion. Everything that is truly religious is also spiritual but there may be spirituality outside religion. Similarly, the concept of religion is larger than that of faith. Faith is a category within the religious. Faith may be thought of as trustful response to the object of religious worship. It is included within religion. However, there are many aspects of religion which are not best thought of as being concerned with faith.¹⁹⁵

Other researchers believe that the common ground for spirituality and religion is found in the concept of sacredness (concept of God, transcendence, divinity, reality, etc.). For instance, Eugene Roehlkepartain and colleagues suggest that “spirituality refers to one’s engagement with that which she or he considers holy, divine, or beyond the material world. Religion also seeks the sacred, creating the doctrine, beliefs, and rituals that bind believers to it and to each other.”¹⁹⁶ Beyond a “common ground” approach, others have sought to define spirituality without any reference to or search for the sacred or transcendence, but instead focus on human qualities (i.e., insight and understanding, awareness of human connection to other life forms, experiencing mystery and awe, posture of gratitude and generosity).¹⁹⁷

Another view has focused on spirituality and religion as an aspect of human development that is integrated into the cognitive, social, emotional, and moral areas of development.¹⁹⁸ This is known as *spiritual development* and is hypothesized “to be a

¹⁹⁵John M. Hull, “Spiritual Development: Interpretations and Applications,” *British Journal of Religious Education* 24, no. 3 (June 2002): 171–72.

¹⁹⁶Roehlkepartain et al., “Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence,” 5.

¹⁹⁷Ibid.

¹⁹⁸Ibid.

developmental wellspring out of which emerges the pursuit of meaning, connectedness to others and the sacred, purpose, and contributions, each and all of which can be addressed by religion or other systems of ideas and believe.”¹⁹⁹ Spiritual development allows for spirituality and religion to coexist and recognizes that both play a part in human development. Although it is difficult to solidify a single definition of spirituality and spiritual development, the following definition espoused by Peter Benson, Eugene Roehlkepartain, and Stacey Rude will serve as a starting point and reference throughout this research:

Spiritual development is the process of growing the intrinsic human capacity for self-transcendence, in which the self is embedded in something greater than the self, including the sacred. It is the developmental “engine” that propels the search for connectedness, meaning, purpose and contribution. It is shaped both within and outside of religious traditions, beliefs and practices.²⁰⁰

As Parker notes, “The definition provides a solid bridge for finding common ground between the generalities of social science research and the specificity necessary to define spirituality for biblical scholars.”²⁰¹

Christian (biblical) spirituality. The social science attempts at defining spirituality have great difficulty as they seek to define it in the broadest sense. Spirituality from a secular view must include all forms, including Buddhism, Islam, Wiccan, Pantheism, and all others. Yet, this research focuses on a much more specific spirituality: Christian. The Bible is the fundamental source of truth and revelation from God for the Christian and, thus, provides the proper description for understanding Christian

¹⁹⁹Ibid.

²⁰⁰Peter L. Benson, Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, and Stacey P. Rude, “Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence: Toward a Field of Inquiry,” *Applied Developmental Science* 7, no. 3 (2003): 205–06.

²⁰¹Parker, “Adolescent Spiritual Development and Father Involvement,” 40.

spirituality. Therefore, Christian spirituality could also be labeled “biblical spirituality.”

As Parker expresses,

The Biblical connection with the previously stated definition includes the recognition of God as the creator of the intrinsic human capacity for self-transcendence as well as the object of the search for connectedness, meaning, and purpose. The specifically Christian view of spirituality is fundamentally shaped by the Biblical text versus religious traditions, beliefs and practices though it is recognized by this researcher that religious traditions and practices play a part in shaping any individual.²⁰²

From a biblical perspective, Christian spirituality must be understood in light of connecting the human spirit to the Holy Spirit for the purpose of conforming the individual into the image of Christ. Kenneth Boa provides his readers with the following definition of Christian (biblical) spirituality:

Biblical spirituality is a Christ-centered orientation to every component of life through the mediating power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. It is a journey of the spirit that begins with the gift of forgiveness and life in Christ and progresses through faith and obedience. Since it is based on a present relationship, it is a journey with Christ rather than a journey to Christ. As long as we are on this earth we never arrive; the journey is not complete until the day of our resurrection, when the Lord brings us into complete conformity with himself.²⁰³

Christian (biblical) spirituality is simply “the increasing vitality and sway of God’s Spirit in us.”²⁰⁴ It is the work of the Holy Spirit to form, conform, and transform individuals into the image of Jesus Christ. Paul instructs the Corinthian Christians in this way, “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit” (2 Cor 3:17–18).

²⁰²Ibid.

²⁰³Kenneth Boa, *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), Kindle ed., loc. 292-296.

²⁰⁴Marjorie J. Thompson, *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 6.

Humankind was created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26–27), yet humankind obscured and distorted that likeness in the Fall. Paul states that Christ is “the image of the invisible God” (Col 1:15) in all His original holiness and purity. When one is “clothed with Christ” (Gal 3:27), the truth of humanity is restored to that individual and the image of the Creator begins to surface. In Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit, individuals are reshaped according to the pattern they were created to bear.²⁰⁵ Thompson clarifies Christian (biblical) spirituality by saying the following:

If the Christian spiritual life has to do with Christ being “formed in us,” what is spirituality? In one sense spirituality is simply the capacity for a spiritual life—the universal human capacity to receive, reflect, and respond to the Spirit of God. But in a more practical sense, spirituality is the way we realize this spiritual potential. It involves conscious awareness of, and assent to, the work of the Spirit in us. Spirituality points to a path—to choices of belief, value commitments, patterns of life, and practices of faith that allow Christ to be formed in us.²⁰⁶

Paul uses the term “spiritual” to indicate a level of maturity in the Corinthian Christians, “Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly—mere infants in Christ” (1 Cor 3:1). He also tells the Romans to be spiritually minded (Rom 8:6) and the Colossians to be filled with spiritual understanding (Col 1:9). Christian (biblical) spirituality refers to the aspect of an individual’s personality that can have communion with God through the indwelling and work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, spirituality in this research will be uniquely *Christian* and will, henceforth, be referred to as such.

Development and Formation

With the words *adolescent* and *spiritual (Christian)* defined, *development* and *formation* are the final terms to be explored. The Oxford dictionary defines the word *develop* as to “grow or cause to grow and become larger or more advanced.”²⁰⁷ It also

²⁰⁵Ibid., 7.

²⁰⁶Ibid.

²⁰⁷Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson, “Develop,” in *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*,

depicts the idea of expansion of size, capability, or maturity. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the word *development* means “the process of developing or being developed: a specified state of growth or advancement.”²⁰⁸

A fundamental connotation of the word *development* is a process of growth over time. For instance, development is a natural process in the human body. Over time, an individual develops naturally. That growth and development can be enhanced through exercise and proper nutrition. Development is also seen in humans in terms of life stages. In terms of human development theories, George Scarlett says, “Most often, development has referred to change over time in separate processes occurring within persons.”²⁰⁹ Scarlett goes on to expand the meaning by using Bernard Kaplan’s definition as “movement towards perfection, as variously as that idea may be constructed.”²¹⁰

In using this normative definition of development, Scarlett recognizes the challenge “to define perfection in light of multiple notions of perfection.”²¹¹ Perfection has various meanings among various groups, cultures, and faith traditions. So, the challenge is to “define development (the vertical) with an understanding of the individual and group differences (the horizontal) in how perfection is conceived.”²¹² With this in mind, this research recognizes that development is to move toward an ultimate end—perfection.

11th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

²⁰⁸Ibid., “Development.”

²⁰⁹George W. Scarlett, “Toward a Developmental Analysis of Religious and Spiritual Development,” in *The Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence*, ed. Eugene C. Roehlkepartain et al. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2006), 21.

²¹⁰Bernard Kaplan, “Genetic-Dramatism: Old Wine in New Bottles,” in *Toward a Holistic Developmental Psychology*, ed. Bernard Kaplan (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1983), 53–75.

²¹¹Scarlett, “Toward a Developmental Analysis of Religious and Spiritual Development,” 22.

²¹²Ibid.

However, it is important to clearly define what will be understood as *perfection* throughout this study. Perfection will be defined as it is understood through the biblical text. The words used in Scripture to denote *perfection* are תָּמִים (*tāmîm*), שְׁלֵמָה (*šālām*) in Hebrew and τέλειος (*téleios*) in Greek. The cognates typically mean “complete,” “whole,” “mature,” “unblemished,” or “undivided.”²¹³ Jeffrey Lamp summarizes the New Testament understanding of perfection:

Christians stand perfect in relation to God as partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet 1:4). They are given the Spirit and embrace God’s wisdom in Christ crucified (1 Cor 2:6–16) and are enabled to appear before God by virtue of Christ’s perfect priestly work (Heb 7:19; 10:1). *Perfection is also understood in terms of maturity, defined as living and growing in the power of the cross and resurrection of Christ* (Rom 12:2; 1 Cor 2:6; 14:20; Eph 4:13; Phil 3:15). *Perseverance is thus crucial for progressing in maturity and perfection* (Jas 1:4), and *producing this maturity is the goal of Paul’s apostolic ministry* (Col 1:28). Perfection is related to sanctification, suggesting that relative perfection is presently attainable. While absolute sinless perfection is available only in eternity, perfection in the present *is a goal worthy of aspiration* (Phil 3:12–15). Paul’s dictum in Phil 3:16 is programmatic: “Only let us live up to what we have already attained.” (emphasis mine)²¹⁴

Therefore, the word *development* according to Scripture means to enhance or progress from a lower level of spiritual maturity to a higher, more complex stage. As evidenced earlier, a biblical view recognizes Christian development as a process of sanctification.²¹⁵ According to Genesis 1:27–28, humankind was created in the image of God (*imago Dei*) and was without sin. Sin entered the world through the disobedience of Eve and Adam and, therefore, corrupted the image of God in man.

²¹³William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 995–96; Jeffrey S. Lamp, “Perfection,” in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. David Noel Freedman, Allen C. Myers, and Astrid B. Beck (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000), 1028; James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)*, electronic ed. (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 9459.

²¹⁴Lamp, “Perfection,” 1028–29.

²¹⁵See further discussion on sanctification later.

Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit restoring God's image in humankind. "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers" (Rom 8:29). Also, "And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 Cor 3:18). Therefore, sanctification or Christian development is a process. It is not a momentary transformation but is instead a life-long journey finding completion (perfection) when Christ returns.

Another term often used to describe development is formation. As discussed earlier, "spiritual formation" can come in many forms and is not uniquely Christian. Many people would claim to be spiritual but have little to no belief in the God of the Bible or Jesus His Son. Dallas Willard reaffirms this assertion by saying the following:

In any case, we may be sure of this: the formation and, later, transformation of the inner life of man, from which our outer existence flows, is an inescapable human problem. Spiritual formation, without regard to any specifically religious context or tradition, is the process by which the human spirit or will is given a definite "form" or character. It is a process that happens to everyone. The most despicable as well as the most admirable of persons have had a spiritual formation. Terrorists as well as saints are the outcome of spiritual formation. Their spirits or hearts have been formed. Period.²¹⁶

Consequently, formation will be understood from a uniquely Christian perspective in this research. It will be distinguished from the broader sense of spiritual formation that "refers to all cultural forces, activities, and experiences that shape people's spiritual lives."²¹⁷ Consider some of the following definitions of spiritual formation from a Christian viewpoint:

²¹⁶Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002), Kindle ed., loc. 169-72.

²¹⁷James C. Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as If the Church Mattered: Growing in Christ Through Community* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 23.

1. Christian spiritual formation refers to the intentional communal process in growing in our relationship with God and becoming conformed to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.²¹⁸
2. The grace-driven developmental process in which the soul grows in conformity to the image of Christ.²¹⁹
3. Spiritual formation is a process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others.²²⁰
4. “Spiritual formation” is conformation to the image of Christ by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.²²¹
5. Spiritual formation for the Christian basically refers to 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.²²²
6. Spiritual formation is the holistic work of God in a believer’s life whereby systematic change renders the individual continually closer to the image and actions of Jesus Christ.²²³

These definitions all demonstrate spiritual formation from a Christian view. They all point to a process of transformation into the image of Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit and the willingness of the believer. Christian spiritual formation is entirely focused on Jesus. Its goal (perfection) is “an obedience or conformity to Christ that arises out of an inner transformation accomplished through purposive interaction with the grace of God in Christ.”²²⁴ Parker points out, “Spiritual formation does not

²¹⁸Ibid.

²¹⁹Boa, *Conformed to His Image*, loc. 10139.

²²⁰M. Robert Mulholland, *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 12.

²²¹Thompson, *Soul Feast*, 7.

²²²Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, loc. 215-16.

²²³Paul Pettit, ed., *Foundations of Spiritual Formation: A Community Approach to Becoming Like Christ* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2008), 19.

²²⁴Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, loc. 218-20.

always follow a smooth methodical pattern, yet there is a developmental flow from a lower maturity level to a higher maturity level over time.”²²⁵ Christian spiritual formation is the “*ongoing* process of the believer’s actions and habits being continually transformed (morphed) into the image of Jesus Christ. Make no mistake: maturing as a Christian is a process.”²²⁶

For this research, the terms *development* and *formation* are analogous. However, *Christian formation* is the preferred terminology throughout. Therefore, the working definition used throughout this study is as follows: Christian formation is the process in which an individual is formed, conformed, and transformed into the image of Christ.²²⁷ Timothy Paul Jones indelibly links the process of Christian formation to discipleship and, therefore, defines the whole process as follows:

Discipleship: A personal and intentional process in which one or more Christians guide unbelievers or less mature believers to embrace and to apply the Gospel in every part of their lives. Discipleship is a process that begins with and includes personal profession of faith in Jesus. Discipleship involves developing perspectives and practices that reflect the mind of Christ, as revealed to us in the New Testament. The Gospel, expressed and applied in the context of the community of faith, is the centerpoint of discipleship; conformity to Jesus Christ is the goal of discipleship; “spiritual development” and “Christian formation” describe progress toward this goal.²²⁸

Christian formation and sanctification. Sanctification is a term referring to the process of Christian formation. Sanctification is the result of God’s Spirit working on an individual. Millard Erickson describes sanctification as “a process by which one’s moral condition is brought into conformity with one’s legal status before God. It is a

²²⁵Parker, “Adolescent Spiritual Development and Father Involvement,” 43.

²²⁶Pettit, *Foundations of Spiritual Formation*, 21.

²²⁷Mulholland, *Invitation to a Journey*, 12, 25; Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 14–15.

²²⁸Timothy P. Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Pub. House, 2011), 17.

continuation of what was begun in regeneration, which a newness of life was conferred upon and instilled with the believer.”²²⁹ Sanctification comes from the Greek word ἁγιασμός (*hagiasmōs*), which means to make holy, purify, or consecrate.²³⁰ The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* sheds an important light on sanctification:

In Christ is made possible δικαιοσύνη τε καὶ ἁγιασμός καὶ ἀπολύτρωσις (1 C. 1:30), and it is by Him or by the Spirit (2 Th. 2:13; 1 Pt. 1:2: ἐν ἁγιασμῷ πνεύματος) that it comes into effect in Christians, so that the ἁγιασμός or sanctifying effected by the Spirit is the living form of the Christian state. In the phrase ἐν ἁγιασμῷ πνεύματος the emphasis does not fall on the character of the Spirit described as πνεῦμα ἅγιον, but on His operation, which consists in sanctification. If atonement is the basis of the Christian life, ἁγιασμός is the moral form which develops out of it and without which there can be no vision of Christ. The term ἁγιασμός is always distinguished from ἅγιος and ἁγιάζειν by the emphasis on the moral element.²³¹

This statement clearly delineates a process that is taking place between both Christ/Holy Spirit and the individual. Salvation is both an instantaneous event and a process. Justification describes the momentary transition from a state of legal guilt to legal innocence before God. However, sanctification is progressive and ongoing. Although one’s “legal status” is altered at salvation, the influence of sin is not completely erased. Sanctification depicts the course of transformation of the individual. As Wayne Grudem defines it, “Sanctification is a progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and like Christ in our actual lives.”²³²

Sanctification is a fundamental biblical truth to which all Christians adhere. It is difficult to comprehend sanctification apart from an understanding of redemptive

²²⁹Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 1998), 968.

²³⁰James Strong, *The New Strong’s Dictionary of Hebrew and Greek Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996).

²³¹*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964–), 113.

²³²Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 746.

history as the two are indelibly linked. For instance, in the beginning God created humankind. Both man and woman alike were created in the image of God (*imago Dei*). This image was in essence holy and “set apart” from the beginning. God saw what He had created in man and woman and it was “very good” (Gen 1:31). Yet, that holiness was to be marred and distorted when humankind decided to take things into their own hands. At the Fall, the image of God was distorted from its original intent. Humankind was no longer “set apart” by God, but by human decision was “separated” from God. God did not desire for His people to be separated from Him. Therefore, He instituted a means by which His holiness would not keep Him separated from His children: the Law.²³³

Israel was to be “separated” from other peoples by devotion to God alone and adherence to His Law. This Law required that atoning sacrifices be made for the purpose of sanctification. Yet, those sacrifices (though made year after year) could not take away the guilt of sin. They were merely an outward cleansing, and the guilt remained according to Hebrews 9:13. The blood of Christ cleanses humankind from both the sin and the guilt. This cleansing grants individuals the ability to serve the living God (Heb 9:14).

The Hebrew writer reminds his readers that the blood of animals can never take away the sins and guilt of people, nor could it ever make them perfect (Heb 10:1–4). Only through Christ and His sacrifice (made possible by the Holy Spirit—Heb 9:14) could humankind be made holy and perfect (Heb 10:10). Therefore, it is through union with Christ that one is sanctified. God is the one who brings about sanctification and that is accomplished through His Son. Therefore, union with Christ is necessary for sanctification to occur.

²³³David Peterson, *Possessed by God: A New Testament Theology of Sanctification and Holiness* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 19–20.

It is through this union that the image of God can be renewed and progressively restored so that the believer can bear the likeness of God and His Son.²³⁴ The Spirit aids in this union as a part of the washing and renewal. Paul tells Titus, “But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:4–7).

For union to take place, the believer must take an active role. It is necessary for one to believe (Mark 16:15–16; John 3:16; and other passages) and confess (Matt 10:32; Luke 12:8) that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Confession moves one to repentance (Acts 20:21; 2 Cor 7:10; and other passages) and commitment through baptism (Matt 28:19; Mark 16:15; Acts 2:38; Rom 6:1–10; 1 Cor 6:11; and other passages). David Peterson says that baptism is “regularly associated with commitment to Christ and the beginning of the Christian life.”²³⁵ Baptism symbolizes the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ according to Paul in Romans 6. He goes on to share that all those who have been baptized have died to sin and have been raised to a new life united with Christ. Paul says that sin must no longer reign, but instead Christ and His grace which saves (Rom 6:1–14).

This commitment leads one from slavery to sin to slavery to righteousness. Slavery to righteousness (obeying Christ and what He desires for one’s life) progressively leads one to holiness (Rom 6:19). Although Christ sanctifies and makes one holy, the process of sanctification is lifelong and will only find its completion at the end of

²³⁴Stanley N. Gundry, ed., *Fives Views on Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 66.

²³⁵Peterson, *Possessed by God*, 45.

redemptive history: consummation. The Hebrew writer says, “because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are *being made holy*” (Heb 10:14, emphasis mine). As Sinclair Ferguson states, “Sanctification is therefore the consistent practical outworking of what it means to belong to the new creation in Christ.”²³⁶ He goes on to say to “live now in a manner that conforms to your final destiny!”²³⁷ Though humankind’s pursuit of becoming more like Christ starts on this side of eternity, it is only worked on and not completed until glorification (1 Cor 15:49; 1 John 3:2–3).

Having outlined sanctification, Timothy Jones and Michael Wilder provide a sufficient working definition for sanctification that is used throughout this research: “Sanctification is *the process of being set apart for God’s purposes and restored to the image of God by means of the Holy Spirit’s gracious work in the believer’s life from regeneration through glorification* (Rom 8:29–30; 2 Cor 3:18; Eph 4:20–4; Col 3:10).”²³⁸

Social scientific perspectives on spiritual development. Social science research often frames its understanding of the spiritual development of adolescents in developmental terms. One of the most notable names in this area of research is James Fowler. Fowler believes that in the search for meaning, adolescent faith is connected with the ability to reason. In his research, he discovered this process to begin in adolescence around the time of puberty. He labeled this “stage of faith”²³⁹ *Synthetic-Conventional*. By this label, Fowler means that it is in the early years of adolescence that people begin to

²³⁶Donald L. Alexander, ed., *Christian Spirituality: Five Views of Sanctification* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 60.

²³⁷*Ibid.*

²³⁸Timothy P. Jones and Michael S. Wilder, “Faith Development and Christian Formation,” in *Christian Formation: Integrating Theology and Human Development*, ed. James R. Estep and Jonathan H. Kim (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 193.

²³⁹The third stage in Fowler’s six stages of faith development.

synthesize what they believe with what others believe in their group or context (synthetic), and yet they are not highly critical of the faith community in which they find themselves (conventional). Fowler focuses less on content of faith and more on how faith happens.²⁴⁰ Jones and Wilder comment on this stage:

Persons in the synthetic-conventional stage deal with life's increasing complexity by conforming to the conventions of a particular group. During this stage, individuals begin to develop the capacity to distinguish their group's beliefs from the beliefs of others. The perspectives of their group—or of a significant leader within the group—mold the individual's beliefs and values. The individual perceives these beliefs and values as having a logical internal structure and consistency.²⁴¹

Adolescents struggle with various levels of doubt in this stage as they attempt to conform their belief system to a widening worldview in relation to those they interact with (including peers, teachers, coaches, etc.) while attempting to maintain the beliefs held by their parents, family, and faith community.²⁴² Senter states, “The struggle results in a creation of a hierarchy of social authority in the teenagers’ lives whereby the values and convictions of one group gain a dominant influence on their beliefs and actions.”²⁴³

John Westerhoff, a professor of Christian nurture at Duke, suggests that “faith (understood as a way of behaving) can, if provided with the proper interactive experiences, expand through four distinctive *styles* of faith.”²⁴⁴ Westerhoff goes on to comment, “Faith is an action which includes thinking, feeling, and willing and it is transmitted, sustained, and expanded through our interactions with other faithing selves

²⁴⁰James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith* (New York: HarperCollins, 1981), 151–73; Senter, *When God Shows Up*, 51–52.

²⁴¹Jones and Wilder, “Faith Development and Christian Formation,” 172.

²⁴²Senter, *When God Shows Up*, 52

²⁴³*Ibid.*

²⁴⁴John H. Westerhoff III, *Will Our Children Have Faith?* 3rd rev. ed. (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 2012), Kindle ed., loc. 1434-35.

in a community of faith. To describe each style of faith is to understand the faith pilgrimage possible for us all.”²⁴⁵ He compared his four styles to the rings of a tree trunk. As a tree matures, more rings become evident in its trunk. Westerhoff’s styles of faith, moving outward from the core, include (1) experienced faith, (2) affiliative faith, (3) searching faith, and (4) owned faith.²⁴⁶ The style of faith most common to adolescence is affiliative faith. This style is characterized by (1) a “need to feel that we *belong* to a self-conscious community and that through our active participation can make a contribution to its life,” (2) the “dominance of the religious *affections*” (not just religion of the head, but also of the heart), and (3) a “sense of *authority*” (drawn for the faith community’s story).²⁴⁷

Some have criticized stage model theories of RSD because of cultural insensitivity.²⁴⁸ Scarlett responds to these criticisms by providing a framework for RSD and by examining current approaches in the field. Scarlett provides five key distinctions when defining RSD:

1. *Development Versus Change Over Time*. Generally viewed as a process occurring over time in separate processes, development has been relocated to an acquisition of knowledge and skill along with transactions of individuals between people and society. A vital part of this view of development is a “movement toward perfection.”²⁴⁹
2. *Domains Versus Persons*. This distinction understands development as a movement of persons toward “spiritual exemplars” rather than (but not to the exclusion of)

²⁴⁵Ibid., loc. 1455-57.

²⁴⁶Ibid., loc. 1436-37.

²⁴⁷Ibid., loc. 1494-1510.

²⁴⁸Scarlett, “Toward a Developmental Analysis of Religious and Spiritual Development,” 31.

²⁴⁹Ibid., 21–22.

domains. RSD involves acquiring knowledge that leads to the ability to model moral behaviors.²⁵⁰

3. *Perception and Reason Versus Religious and Spiritual Imagining.* A third distinction focuses on reason versus “spiritual imagining.”²⁵¹ “Spirituality goes beyond a rational affirmation of thought and is manifested in mannerisms often specific to the individual.”²⁵²
4. *Structural Versus Content Analysis.* With this distinction, Scarlett proposes that content is just as important as structural criteria in spiritual development analysis.²⁵³
5. *Faith Versus Belief.* Scarlett proposes that the Enlightenment initiated the idea that religion can be reduced to belief or feeling. He believes that faith is “about involvement and response, not simply belief or feeling.”²⁵⁴

In light of these five distinctions, Scarlett proposes four approaches to explaining RSD. These approaches are *nonnormative* in that they do not consider RSD in terms of stage-structural models. They criticize such models for failing to address nonlinear changes that occur in RSD, for failing to address the diverse ways in which individuals express themselves religiously and spiritually, and for forcing Western values upon others.²⁵⁵

1. *Kwilecki Substantive-Functional Approach.* The focus of Susan Kwilecki’s approach is on adult religious experience. Kwilecki defines development as occurring when “ideas and experiences of the supernatural become increasingly salient and functional to the individual.”²⁵⁶

²⁵⁰Ibid., 22–23.

²⁵¹Ibid., 23.

²⁵²Parker, “Adolescent Spiritual Development and Father Involvement,” 53.

²⁵³Ibid., 23–25.

²⁵⁴Ibid., 25–26.

²⁵⁵Ibid., 26.

²⁵⁶Susan Kwilecki, *Becoming Religious* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Press, 1999), 32–33; Parker, “Adolescent Spiritual Development and Father Involvement,” 26–28.

2. *The Spiritual Child Movement*. The spiritual child movement theory argues that stage-structural theories are “too cognitive.”²⁵⁷ It is based on the idea that RSD is rooted in personal experience, feeling, and biology.²⁵⁸
3. *Cognitive-Cultural Theories*. The third approach seeks to explain RSD from an ever-branching bush rather than a stairway to maturity mindset. Who is to say which branch is better? It also strives to understand the nuances of cultural influence on development.²⁵⁹
4. *Developmental Systems Theories*. Developmental systems theories focus on the interaction between individuals and the context in which they live.²⁶⁰

This review of pertinent literature demonstrates a significant difference between a Christian view of development and formation and that of a social science perspective. Social science research exhibits a vague and impersonal approach to development and formation. In contrast, Christian formation is intended to lead individuals toward holiness and perfection. It is also evident that social science research tends to focus more on the measurable constructs of RSD rather than the content. This is important to note because this research assumes that content is revealed and directed by God’s Word whereas constructs are determined by humankind and its stated measures.

Conclusion

The Christian view of motherhood is grounded in Scripture. Responsibility for caring, nurturing, training, and instructing children as a biblical mandate is given to *both* father *and* mother. A mother provides a complementary role to that of the father in the Christian home. As evidenced in Scripture, the mother can have a tremendous influence

²⁵⁷Parker, “Adolescent Spiritual Development and Father Involvement,” 28.

²⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 28–29.

²⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 29–30.

²⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 30–31.

over the home in either a positive or negative way, and therefore, a closer examination into that role and its influence is necessary.

Social science research has provided considerable evidence supporting the value of mother nurturance and involvement. This research has demonstrated the powerful influence of mothers as they care for and nurture their children. Of note is the influence that mothers have in the area of spiritual development and more specifically Christian formation. Research has provided findings that reveal that mothers are often the primary spiritual influence in the modern home. Although this does not coincide with God's intent for the home, many families find themselves in this state today. Even with elevated attention on parents and the care of children in Western society, there still remains a general perception among adolescents of a sense of abandonment. Studies have shown that many adolescents feel disconnected from the segment of the population that provides the primary guidance and nurture toward Christian formation: *parents*.

Evidence demonstrates that adolescent development is enhanced in the areas of academic achievement, positive behavior modification, emotional stability, and a variety of other measurable categories of development when mothers are involved in their teens' lives. With mother involvement connected to the academic, emotional, behavioral, and spiritual aspects of adolescent development, one can reasonably study a possible correlation between mother nurturance and involvement and adolescent Christian formation.

Spiritual development or Christian formation is a natural part of growth and development during the life span of an individual. Spiritual birth inaugurates a process of spiritual maturation for an individual in the same way that conception and birth are the beginning stages of physical development. Likewise, Christian formation requires instructing, training, and nurturing through relationships that are supportive and that enhance development just as physical growth requires environment, nutrition, exercise,

and rest. Adolescents can discover that sort of nurturing and supportive environment primarily in the family and then from the larger family (community) of faith.

Numerous studies demonstrate a correlation among faith, spirituality, and values transmission in the social science field. Often these studies point toward mothers as a greater influence in a child's spirituality. As quoted earlier, "in most families the mother is the primary figure in children's religiosity."²⁶¹ In fact, in a 1990 study of 3,000 mainline Protestant youth, adolescents reported having regular dialogue with their mothers on faith issues almost 2.5 times more often than with their fathers.²⁶² Motherhood can enhance adolescents' searching for meaning beyond the mediocre components of life.

The studies mentioned throughout this literature review were directed at adolescent religiosity and spirituality and some form of parental influence. Predictors for retention of faith and characteristics of religious behavior were assessed. Research has also explored the transmission of religious values in both directions of mother and father. Yet, with all this research and study, an important distinction must be made between the social science perspective of RSD and that of Christian formation as outlined in Scripture and within the Christian community.

First, the meaning of faith and the transmission of values is viewed and defined differently between the social science and Christian community. As defined earlier, the social science community defines spirituality as "a process of growing the intrinsic human capacity for self-transcendence."²⁶³ This definition differs significantly from an

²⁶¹Boyatzis, Dollahite, and Marks, "Family as a Context for Religious and Spiritual Development," 302.

²⁶²Peter L. Benson and Carolyn H. Elkin, *Effective Christian Education: A National Study of Protestant Congregations: A Summary on Faith, Loyalty, and Congregational Life* (Minneapolis: Search Institute, 1990), 51.

²⁶³Roehlkepartain et al., *Handbook of Spiritual Development*, 5

understanding of “spiritual birth and a personal God being intricately involved in maturation of the spirit of an individual toward a certain goal.”²⁶⁴

Second, the object of Christian formation in adolescence is the understanding of God, developing Christlike characteristics consistent with biblical truth, and expressing the principles of God’s Word through actions and behavior over the life span. Yet, the social science aim of spiritual development and its link to positive youth development is often focused on producing well-adjusted adolescents who can function in and contribute positively to society.²⁶⁵ The key distinguishing characteristics of Christian formation require research based on Scriptural truth with emphasis in Christian principles.

Third, social science research in adolescent RSD and mother nurturance and involvement has intentionally neglected the elements of spiritual development that are uniquely Christian, such as knowledge of God, worship and service, seeking God, and the sharing of faith through the gospel. Instead, the goal of social science is to provide research that is sensitive to all religious faiths and backgrounds. However, an important link between mother nurturance and involvement research and the Christian formation of adolescents is still missing. Little research currently exists that is particular to the Christian faith and addresses this field of inquiry.

Based on the examination of the biblical view of a mother’s responsibility for the family, the Christian community should take note and lead the way in the research and study of mother nurturance and involvement and adolescent Christian formation. The God-given mission of mother, father, family, and church community is to train up a child

²⁶⁴Parker, “Adolescent Spiritual Development and Father Involvement,” 63.

²⁶⁵Peter L. Benson, Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, and Kathryn L. Hong, eds., *Spiritual Development: New Directions for Youth Development* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008); Richard M. Lerner, Robert W. Roeser, and Erin Phelps, eds., *Positive Youth Development & Spirituality: From Theory to Research* (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Foundation Press, 2008).

in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Mothers need to interact with their children in ways that effectively communicate and instruct their adolescents toward this mission.

This research provides information that will aid mothers, fathers, families, and Christian communities with valuable insight into what specific role a mother plays in developing and nurturing Christian formation during adolescence.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

The purpose of this concurrent mixed methods study was to explore the relationship between adolescent Christian formation and mother nurturance and involvement. In determining whether a relationship exists between maternal qualities and adolescent Christian formation, four questions guided this research.

Research Question Synopsis

1. What is the relationship, if any, between the Christian formation of adolescents and mother nurturance?
2. What is the relationship, if any, between the Christian formation of adolescents and perceived mother involvement?
3. What is the relationship, if any, between the Christian formation of adolescents and desired mother involvement?
4. What is the correlation, if any, between gender, Christian formation in adolescents, and mother nurturance and involvement?

Research Design Overview

This study combined quantitative and qualitative methods of research. The research study was designed to explore the perceptions of adolescents toward maternal nurturance and involvement and the spiritual maturity level of those adolescents surveyed. These assessments were intended to evaluate whether there exists a relationship between the level of maternal nurturance and involvement and the process of Christian formation in adolescents. The level of maternal nurturance and involvement was assessed from the participants' retrospective. The Mother Involvement Scale (MIS) and the

Nurturant Mother Scale (NMS) was used to quantify maternal nurturance and involvement. Spiritual maturity was assessed using the Spiritual Formation Inventory (SFI).

The quantitative component of this research came from participating Churches of Christ across the United States. An email containing information on how to take the surveys was sent to Church of Christ congregations throughout the United States with email capability. Each of the congregations were asked to make the online surveys (or printed surveys if needed) available to all students between 12 and 18 years of age. Participants from churches were surveyed using the instruments mentioned. Parents of adolescents 18 years of age and younger were given sufficient opportunity to opt out of the study.

Representatives from participating churches were supplied with the necessary information to distribute to all adolescents in the specified age range to allow them to complete the online survey (or, if necessary, in paper format). Information on how to complete the surveys was given to representatives from participating churches through email by providing the appropriate web site and contact information. Congregations choosing to use the paper format were supplied with an original copy of the survey and were given authorization to make copies according to their needs. Additionally, church leaders were given detailed instructions concerning the administration of the surveys and available incentives for youth groups and individual participants.

The qualitative component of this study included an online video conference interview with willing participants from the respondent youth groups. Once those select adolescents expressed interest in participating in the online interview, they were then contacted to set up a time in which to conduct the interview and to provide instructions on how the interview would take place. Instructions regarding the technology were given to those who lack knowledge in this area. The first question asked respondents to explain

specific ways their mothers were involved in their lives. The second question was designed to assess the affective component of the mother-child relationship by asking, “When have you felt closest to your mother?” The third question asked respondents to list characteristics that describe their mothers. And finally, the fourth question asked participants to recall the most significant way their mother had impacted their life.

Population

This study focused on the adolescent community. For this research, adolescence was defined as beginning at age 12 and ending at age 18.¹ The population for this research was adolescents from Churches of Christ in the United States.

Sample

This study used a sample from Churches of Christ across the United States. The Churches of Christ ranked fifth in the ten largest protestant denominations in the United States according to a Pew Forum survey conducted in 2008.² As noted in the *Handbook of Denominations in the United States*, “The Churches of Christ represent the most conservative branch of the Restorationist movement.”³ They are located throughout the nation but are concentrated in the South and the Southwest. They reject the idea of

¹This study does not include emergent adulthood through the age of 25. However, because of some overlap at the age of 18, the topic of emergent adulthood surfaced at times according to the number of respondents at that age. Therefore, this study provided a cursory overview of the emergent adult phenomenon.

²Pew Research Center and Pew Forum on Religious & Public Life, *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey—Religious Affiliation: Diverse and Dynamic* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, February 2008), 15–16 [on-line]; accessed November 2011, <http://religions.pewforum.org/pdf/report-religious-landscape-study-chapter-1.pdf>; Internet.

³The *Handbook of Denominations in the United States* goes on to say, “Increasingly Churches of Christ congregations are adopting the style of other American evangelical denominations.” Craig D. Atwood et al., *Handbook of Denominations in the United States*, 13th ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010), Kindle ed., loc. 5046.

denominationalism and have no central headquarters; therefore, accurate statistics are impossible to attain, but they appear to have declined since 1970. This group has no governing bodies.”⁴ However, recent statistics show that the Churches of Christ have 12,580 congregations and comprise 1,210,546 members and 1,554,777 adherents across the United States.⁵

Church of Christ congregations across the United States with an office email were invited to participate in this study. Adolescents attending those churches were invited and encouraged to complete the online surveys (or by using paper format if needed). The target sample was 383⁶ participants for effective sampling. Participants were given 15 days to complete the survey. After 15 days, if the desired quota of participants had not been reached, additional correspondence with the nonparticipating congregations was sent. The cycle continued until the necessary 383 surveys were completed.

Delimitations

This study was delimited to adolescents ranging in age from 12 to 18. Precedent literature defines adolescence as a period in life between the point when puberty begins and when adulthood is approached. It is when young people are preparing

⁴Ibid., loc. 5025-28.

⁵Carl H. Royster, *Churches of Christ in the United States: Statistical Summary by State/Territory* (Nashville: 21st Century Christian, December 2012) [on-line]; accessed March 2013; available from http://www.21stcc.com/pdfs/ccusa_stats_sheet.pdf; Internet.

⁶The sample size of 383 participants was calculated by the number of members currently in the Churches of Christ (1,210,546) and calculating 14 percent of that membership (169,476) as adolescents ages 12–18 (based on the recent U.S. census reports of adolescents in that age range: U.S. Bureau of the Census, “Age and Sex Composition: 2010” [on-line]; accessed April 9, 2013; available from <http://census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-03.pdf>; Internet) to achieve a confidence level of 95 percent with a confidence interval of 5.

to take on the roles and responsibilities that are expected for adults in a given culture.⁷ Jeffrey Arnett states that adolescence ends upon a young person's departure from home. He further comments, "Virtually all adolescents (10–18) live at home with one or more parents."⁸

For this research, early adolescence is understood as the period during adolescence development between the ages of 10 and 14.⁹ This stage is characterized by an adolescent's effort to exercise some level of independence. Late adolescence refers to a period during adolescence development between the ages of 15 and 18.¹⁰ It is characterized by a "shift from concrete consciousness of the world around them to a more nuanced awareness."¹¹ Finally, emerging adulthood is a period of adolescence between the ages of 18 and 25 in industrialized parts of the world. Adolescents becoming more independent and exploring avenues to take in life before making lasting commitments characterize this stage.¹²

This research was delimited to adolescents in the Churches of Christ. As the fifth-largest denomination in the United States, congregates will understandably have a significant role in U.S. religiosity. Although correlations can be made with other denominations, this research focused its study exclusively on adolescents in Church of Christ congregations.

⁷Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, *Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood: A Cultural Approach*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007), 466.

⁸Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 18.

⁹Arnett, *Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood*, 16.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 473.

¹¹Chap Clark, *Disconnected: Parenting Teens in a Myspace World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 133.

¹²Arnett, *Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood*, 469.

Another delimitation was the perception of adolescents in regards to maternal nurturance and involvement. The data were collected from adolescent perspectives from a moment in time. Therefore, respondent's answers were heavily influenced based on their current emotional state in relation to their mothers. Early adolescents may have responded to survey questions according to the most recent positive or negative maternal interaction and, therefore, exhibited a more uncertain perception of maternal nurturance and involvement. In comparison, late adolescents may have possessed a more refined and consistent perception of maternal nurturance and involvement.¹³

Limits of Generalization

This research was limited in generalization to the Christian community and specifically the Churches of Christ. Christian faith groups generally hold the view that the maternal role has substantial influence over the Christian formation of children. However, the structure of this study may not generalize to denominations and Christian faith groups other than those in the Churches of Christ. Other faith traditions (outside of Christendom) would benefit from this research in maternal nurturance and involvement. However, this study defines spiritual formation from a uniquely Christian perspective (Christian formation) and is generalized to the faith traditions of the Churches of Christ.

In addition, individuals and groups who deemphasize intentional spiritual formation practices and familial responsibility will benefit little from this study. Since this study was intended to examine faith transmission from generation to generation, this research was limited in generalization to Christian faith groups that focus on individual and communal Christian formation.

¹³Andrew Clyde Parker, "An Analysis of the Relationship Between Adolescent Spiritual Development and Father Involvement" (Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010), 70.

An additional limit of generalization may have resulted from the necessity of parental authorization. Because of the potentially sensitive nature of the questions involved in the research instruments, some parents may have guarded against potential exposure of family dynamics (regardless of assured confidentiality). As a result, families with diminished parental support may ultimately be missing from the data. This issue could lead to a potential void of adolescents who have experienced limited maternal nurturance and involvement.

Additionally, this research was limited to the adolescent period of development. Consequently, individuals who begin Christian formation beyond adolescence may not experience correlations between Christian formation and maternal nurturance and involvement as an adolescent would. It should also be understood that correlations and generalizations made in terms of age and gender cannot be extrapolated beyond the sample itself.

Instrumentation

This study combined three instruments into a single online survey with three distinct sections to gather data. One of the instruments was used to evaluate Christian formation in conjunction with two maternal nurturance and involvement social science instruments. Each instrument was carefully chosen to provide a thorough perspective of an adolescent's perception of Christian formation and maternal nurturance and involvement.

Christian formation was assessed using the Spiritual Formation Inventory (SFI) developed by Brad Waggoner.¹⁴ Waggoner developed the SFI through extensive

¹⁴Brad J. Waggoner, *The Shape of Faith to Come: Spiritual Formation and the Future of Discipleship* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2008).

research¹⁵ and categorizes spiritual formation into seven domains. Waggoner assigns the first domain in the SFI as the *learning* quotient. He states that “the essence of being a Christian is...learning the truth of God.”¹⁶ The focus of the second domain is *obedience and self-denial*. The third domain quantifies *service* as in essential aspect of spiritual formation. The fourth domain of the SFI is the *evangelism* quotient, which consists of “seven agree/disagree questions and three questions related to the frequency of certain activities.”¹⁷ The *faith* quotient encompasses the fifth domain and is intended to assess evidence of a living faith. Waggoner then focuses on the *worship* quotient in the sixth domain and intends to assess an individual’s level of desire to exalt God. The final domain of spiritual formation (according to the SFI) considers *relationship building*.

Waggoner demonstrates how each domain emerges through Scripture and, therefore, how he developed this research tool to measure important components of spiritual formation. The SFI provides individuals with a quantifiable look at personal spiritual formation. The SFI also provides a multifaceted perspective of an individual’s level of spiritual maturity as it broadly assesses the seven domains. The SFI is a highly reliable instrument for measuring quantifiable characteristics of discipleship with a Cronbach alpha of 0.96.¹⁸

The second portion of the survey instrument was intended to assess an adolescent’s perceived maternal nurturance and involvement. Maternal qualities and

¹⁵Brad J. Waggoner, “The Development of an Instrument for Measuring and Evaluating the Discipleship Base of Southern Baptist Churches” (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1991).

¹⁶Ibid., 55.

¹⁷Ibid., 148.

¹⁸Waggoner, “The Development of an Instrument for Measuring and Evaluating the Discipleship Base of Southern Baptist Churches.”

characteristics were studied using two scales: MIS and NMS.¹⁹ Parental nurturance and involvement are differentiated as follows: (1) parental nurturance refers to warmth and acceptance received from parents and (2) parental involvement refers to the extent to which parents participate in various aspects of their children's lives.²⁰ The NMS has nine questions using a Likert scale to assess personal perceptions of the affective domain of mothering. A sample item on this scale is "When you needed your mother's support, was she there for you?"²¹ The NMS has produced high internal consistency in research sampling an ethnically diverse population. The Cronbach alpha coefficient for the NMS was 0.90.²²

The MIS is unique in that it assesses the adolescent from a retrospective point of view. The MIS evaluates an adolescent's *reported* and *desired* maternal involvement. A participant rates maternal involvement using a Likert scale of 1 to 5 in 20 separate domains of mothering (e.g., intellectual development, developing responsibility, caregiving, providing income, etc.). Maternal involvement is evaluated by answering two overarching questions: "How involved was your mother in the following areas of your life and development?" and "What did you want your mother's level of involvement to be, compared to what it actually was?"²³ Cronbach's alpha coefficients for *reported* maternal involvement were 0.80 for instrumental mother involvement, 0.86 for expressive mother involvement, and 0.82 for mother mentoring and advising.²⁴ The

¹⁹Gordon E. Finley, Sandra D. Mira, and Seth J. Schwartz, "Perceived Paternal and Maternal Involvement: Factor Structures, Mean Differences, and Parental Roles," *Fathering: A Journal of Theory, Research, and Practice about Men as Fathers* 6, no. 1 (Winter 2008): 62–82.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 64.

²¹*Ibid.*, 67.

²²*Ibid.*, 72.

²³*Ibid.*, 67.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 73.

internal consistency for the *desired* maternal involvement was 0.89 (expressive) and 0.88 (instrumental).

In addition to the combined survey, a random sample of adolescents (18 years of age) was interviewed online. Each individual was asked the following questions:

1. What are some specific ways in which your mother has been involved in your life?
2. When have you felt closest to your mother?
3. What are some characteristics that describe your mother best?
4. What is the most significant way your mother has impacted your life?

Procedural Overview

This concurrent mixed methods study was conducted by surveying adolescents between the ages of 12 and 18.²⁵ The study used the three distinct instruments described earlier in conjunction with the SFI, NMS, and MIS. These surveys were intended to determine an adolescent's perception of and desired level of mother involvement, to establish an adolescent's perception of mother nurturance, and to assess the level of spiritual maturity. Spiritual formation was evaluated by using seven domains of faith: Learning, Obedience, Service, Evangelism, Faith, Worship, and Relational.

Church leaders who work with adolescents in Churches of Christ across the United States were contacted and invited to have students from their youth ministries participate in this research project. Churches that expressed interest were provided with information and the supplies necessary to invite students to participate.

Church leaders who demonstrated interest in participating were directed to a website that had all the appropriate information, instructions, and surveys. Church leaders were instructed to inform students between the ages of 12 and 18 of this website and the

²⁵As replicated by Parker, "Adolescent Spiritual Development and Father Involvement."

time frame in which the surveys were to be completed. Demographic information was collected from students while still maintaining the confidentiality of the minors.

Church leaders were also offered a hard copy of all materials in case of an instance where Internet was unavailable. Congregations choosing to use hardcopies were encouraged to have students complete the surveys at a meeting designated by the church leader. Once hardcopy surveys were completed, the leader was instructed to collect and return them to the researcher.

Of those who participated in the study, a random sample of adolescents (18 years of age) was drawn for an interview. These individuals were asked to answer four open-ended questions concerning maternal behaviors and memorable characteristics.

The data were analyzed for corresponding relationships between maternal involvement and nurturance and the seven assessed domains of Christian formation. Data were evaluated to determine what specific roles mothers play in the Christian formation of their children.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Research data was analyzed to determine if any relationship exists between the Christian formation of adolescents and maternal nurturance and involvement. Analysis of the findings are presented in the following four sections: (1) a review of the compilation protocol, (2) a descriptive analysis of the demographics, (3) findings based on data analysis according to the guiding research questions, and (4) an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses the research methods employed.

Compilation Protocol

Two phases of data collection were used in this research. Phase 1 was quantitative in nature and used data gathering through a compilation survey distributed to Church of Christ congregations across the United States. Participants completed an online version (or paper format if necessary) of the survey. Phase 2 was qualitative and was accomplished through online interviews. Interview questions from the qualitative phrase were open-ended and designed to allow respondents to expound on multiple aspects of maternal nurturance and involvement.

Research data were compiled using the online survey tool and interview. Data from participants who completed the online survey were automatically stored. Survey answers from those completing the paper format were manually added to the final collection of data. Once all information was collected, the results were downloaded into a software database for storage and statistical analysis. The software application will allow for categorization and sorting of data according to specific demographic information,

such as age, gender, and grade level. Variables from the SFI, NMS, and MIS were statistically assessed using statistical analysis software.

Phase 1

The survey that was used in phase 1 was a combination of three instruments. Christian formation was quantified using the SFI—a 76-question survey providing an assessment of spiritual formation in seven domains of spiritual maturity. Participants were rated between 1 and 5 (5 being the highest available rating in each domain).

The second and third parts of the survey include the Nurturant Mothering Scale (NMS) and the Mother Involvement Scale (MIS). The NMS consisted of nine questions that rate a participant's perception of maternal nurturance. Scores for the NMS range from 9 to 45. The MIS assessed a participant's perception of mother involvement using a 1 (*not very involved*) to 5 (*very involved*) rating scale. The MIS gave participants a chance to rate maternal involvement in 20 separate domains. The MIS allowed participants to rate their perception of *reported* maternal involvement as well as the *desired* level of maternal involvement. An example of the MIS is *Intellectual* _____ (1-5 *reported*) *Intellectual* _____ (1-5 *desired*).

The research instrument for this study was a compilation of the SFI, the NMS, and the MIS (*reported* and *desired*). The compiled research instrument was uploaded to the online survey collection website. Adolescents between the ages of 12 and 18 were invited to go to the website and complete the survey. Some participants (upon request) were given the survey in paper format based on preference. Once at least 383¹

¹The sample size of 383 participants is calculated by the number of members currently in the Churches of Christ (1,210,546) and calculating 14 percent of that membership (169,476) as adolescents ages 12–18 (based on the recent U.S. census reports of adolescents in that age range: U.S. Bureau of the Census, “Age and Sex Composition: 2010” [on-line]; accessed April 9, 2013; available from <http://census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-03.pdf>; Internet) to achieve a confidence level of 95 percent with a confidence interval of 5.

participants complete the survey, the information was downloaded to a spreadsheet file and analyzed with the assistance of statistical analysis software. Participants were assessed from Church of Christ congregations in the United States.

Churches of Christ in the United States with an office email were invited to participate in the research project. Congregational leaders who demonstrated interest were provided with the appropriate online survey information (including the website address, contact information, and a list of study incentives). Church leaders were instructed to distribute the information to all potential respondents in the congregation between the ages of 12 and 18 and to encourage the respondents to complete the online survey. Potential respondents under 18 years of age were instructed to gain an electronic parental authorization before completing the online survey. Those churches desiring to use the paper format were given a copy of the survey and were authorized to make copies of the survey as needed. Approximately 138 churches agreed to distribute information to potential respondents.

There were 306 surveys initiated online along with 80 surveys completed in paper format for a total of 386 participants. Surveys submitted on paper were thoroughly reviewed for completion and entered through the online portal for analysis. When the total number of surveys reached the threshold for statistical reliability,² the data were downloaded from the online data collection site and reviewed for completion. The final number of surveys included in the study was 386. A larger percentage of surveys were completed online (N = 306, 79 percent) than paper (N = 80, 21 percent). Based on the data collected, responses were coded into scales and were subsequently added whenever necessary. Main statistical procedures consisted of correlational and analysis of variance (ANOVA) techniques. Descriptive statistics on demographics were first presented followed by discussions on statistical findings for each research question. All statistical

²See previous footnote.

analyses were performed at a significance level of 5 percent, that is, probability of Type I error is 0.05 and using a statistical software.

Phase 2

The qualitative phase was designed to gather specific information from participants regarding behaviors and characteristics demonstrated by mothers. Participants from phase 1 who were 18 years old were invited to briefly answer four questions during an online interview. Twenty participants submitted answers. The majority of phase 2 respondents were female (N = 13, 65 percent), while 7 male respondents participated (N = 7, 35 percent). Responses were evaluated for common behaviors, as well as characteristics and personality traits.

Demographics and Sample Data

The online survey retrieved demographic information during the initial portion. Demographic characteristics of participants were used to describe the samples considered in this study. A post hoc comparison was conducted of the samples according to the information gathered in the online survey. The participants of the survey were asked to submit their name, church they attend, age, grade, gender, city or town, and email. One-way analysis of variance was conducted to test the differences between the demographic groups. The demographic data collected included adolescent type distribution (see Figure 1), gender type distribution (see Figure 2), frequency and percentages according to adolescent type (see Table 1), age according to adolescent type (see Table 2), and church distribution (see Table 3).

Figure 1 shows that early adolescents (ages 12–14) were the smaller group (N = 108, 28 percent) of the population. The larger portion of the population came from the late adolescent group (N = 278, 72 percent) defined as ages 15–18.

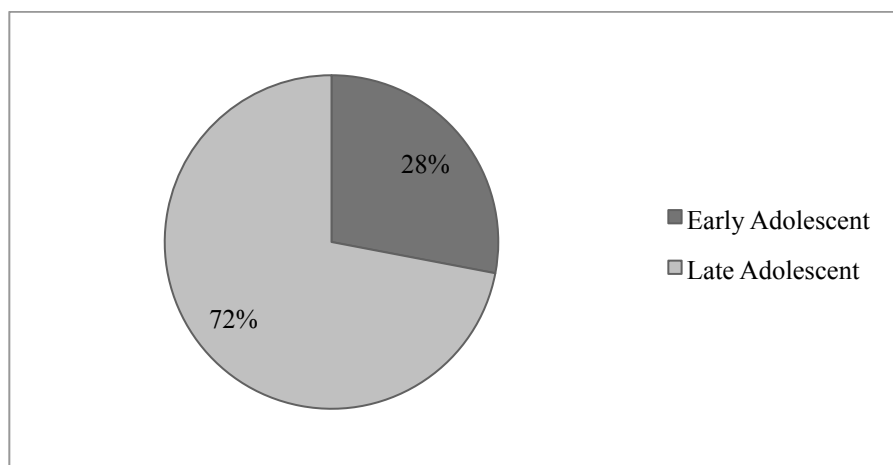


Figure 1. Adolescent type distribution

Females outnumbered the males in both adolescent categories (Table 1). Figure 2 shows that there were 230 females (59.6 percent) and 156 males (40.4 percent). The early adolescent category was the most evenly divided with 51.9 percent females and 48.1 percent males. Table 1 shows that the majority of the early adolescents were in grade 7 ($N = 47$, 42.7 percent) and the majority of the late adolescents were evenly divided among grades 10 ($N = 66$, 23.9 percent), 11 ($N = 64$, 23.2 percent), and 12 ($N = 67$, 24.3 percent). Grade 9 overlapped between early and late adolescence and held the highest number of responses out of the 386 participants ($N = 70$, 18.1 percent).

A small percentage of the sample ($N = 25$, 6.5 percent) falls into the post high school group because it covers a transitional year where some 18-year-old participants were still in high school while others had already entered college. Participants in grades 6 through 9 who fell into the early adolescence category accounted for 28.5 percent ($N = 108$) of the total sample, while those from grades 9 through 12 in the late adolescence category accounted for 71.5 percent ($N = 278$).

Table 1. Frequency and percentages according to adolescent type

		Type of Adolescent				Total	
		Early Adolescent		Late Adolescent			
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Gender	Female	56	51.9	174	62.5	230	59.6
	Male	52	48.1	104	37.5	156	40.4
Total		108	100.0	278	100.0	386	100.0
Grade	6	17	15.5	0	0.0	17	4.4
	7	47	42.7	0	0.0	47	12.2
	8	30	27.3	0	0.0	30	7.8
	9	16	14.5	54	19.6	70	18.1
	10	0	0.0	66	23.9	66	17.1
	11	0	0.0	64	23.2	64	16.6
	12	0	0.0	67	24.3	67	17.4
	College	0	0.0	25	9.1	25	6.5
Total		110	100.0	276	100.0	386	100.0

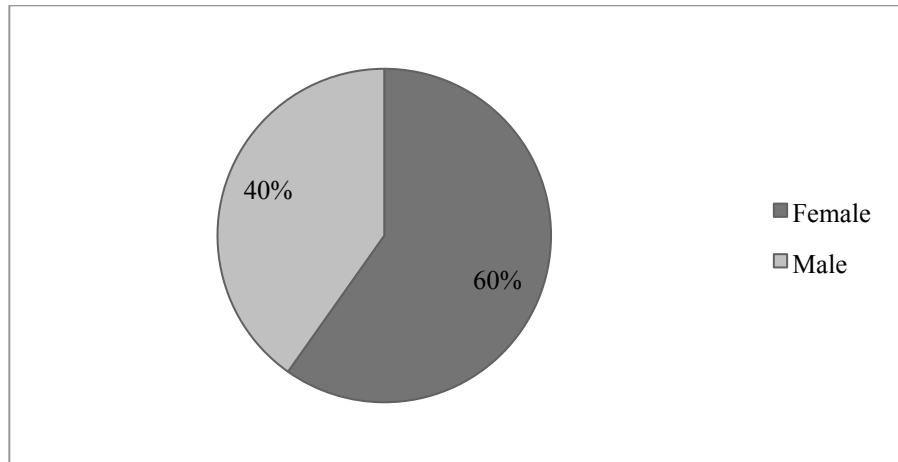


Figure 2. Gender type distribution

Participants came from a variety of ages across the adolescent spectrum. Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics for the age of the participants. As mentioned, early adolescents range from 12 to 14 years old while late adolescents range from 15 to 18 years old. Overall, the mean age for the sampled participants is 15.51 years old with a

standard deviation of 1.85 years. The late adolescents had the highest number of respondents with 278 and the early adolescents had only 108 participate.

Table 2. Age according to adolescent type

		N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Age	Early Adolescent	108	13.06	0.75	12.00	14.00
	Late Adolescent	278	16.45	1.14	15.00	18.00
	Total	386	15.51	1.85	12.00	18.00

Demographic analysis also showed that participants came from a wide variety of congregations (see Table 3). A total of 138 congregations were represented. Of those congregations, an overwhelming number of 132 churches were represented by less than 10 participants (96.4 percent of total congregations). These churches had an average number of 1.59 participants per congregation. A total of 210 participants came from these churches, accounting for 53.9 percent of the total participants. On the other hand, six congregations were represented by 10 to 50 participants (4.3 percent of total congregations). These churches had an average number of 29.17 participants per congregation. A total of 176 participants came from these churches, accounting for 45.3 percent of the total participants. None of the churches were represented by 50 or more participants.

Findings and Displays

This section displays an assortment of tables and charts presenting the quantitative values from the surveys. First, the descriptive statistics display the number of participants (N), the mean, standard deviation, and the minimum and maximum values for each adolescent type. Second, correlation data were displayed according to research

Table 3. Church distribution

	# of congregations	% of total congregations	Average # of participants per congregation	% of total participants
Category 1 < 10 participants	132	95.7	1.59	53.9
Category 2 > 10 and < 50 participants	6	4.3	29.17	46.1
Category 3 > 50 participants	0	0.0	N/A	0.0

questions. An analysis of Brad Waggoner's domains of spiritual formation was made to discover correlations (if any) with perceived and desired mother involvement. Nurturant mothering domains were analyzed and displayed separately. Any significant correlations are noted in the data tables provided. If no correlation exists, then the null hypothesis was the explanation. For values of $p < .05$, the null hypothesis will be rejected.

Phase 1

This study considered three independent variables. These variables included mother nurturance, perceived mother involvement, and desired mother involvement. These were collected from the sum of the responses from the participants' survey answers. Table 4 shows an assessment of the three independent variables according to adolescent types. Table 5 presents the findings of a correlation (if any) between mother nurturance and the two types of mother involvement. Table 6 provides the descriptive statistics of the SFI and its eight subscales.

Mother nurturance and involvement. Each of the responses in the NMS survey was coded into scale scores, with 5 being the highest and 1 being the lowest. For the MIS survey, perceived mother involvement responses were scaled as 5 being always involved down to 1 being never involved. However, for desired mother involvement

responses being a “Just Right” scale, a score of 5 was assigned for “it was just right,” 4 for “a little less involved,” 3 for “a little more involved,” 2 for “much less involved,” and 1 for “much less involved.” These scores were summed for each of the variables. The summary statistics of each variable, for both adolescent types as well as for the overall sample, are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Independent variables according to type of adolescent

		N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Mother Nurturance	Early Adolescent	108	38.05	4.61	23	45
	Late Adolescent	278	36.54	6.66	9	45
	Total	386	36.96	6.18	9	45
Perceived Mother Involvement	Early Adolescent	108	85.23	11.08	47	100
	Late Adolescent	278	81.28	15.15	20	100
	Total	386	82.39	14.22	20	100
Desired Mother Involvement	Early Adolescent	108	76.56	24.40	20	100
	Late Adolescent	278	76.83	23.43	20	100
	Total	386	76.75	23.68	20	100

Table 4 shows that higher mother nurturance and perceived mother involvement scores were observed among early adolescents. However, the differences (1.51 and 3.95, respectively) may be considered minimal. These differences may be because of a distancing between mother and child in a move toward independence in the later years of adolescence.

Also, mother nurturance and perceived mother involvement scores were found to be more dispersed among late adolescents, as evidenced by higher standard deviations.

However, statistically no differences were found in desired mother involvement mean scores and standard deviation between early and late adolescents. A Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test of Normality was performed on each variable. Results³ revealed that the null hypotheses must be rejected (that is, p-value < 0.05 for each of the tests). Hence, none of the variables followed a normal distribution.

Because none of the variables were normally distributed, Spearman's rank correlation was used to determine the correlations of mother nurturance with both perceived mother involvement and desired mother involvement. Table 5 shows the summary of these correlations and their corresponding significance.

Table 5. Correlation between MN and MI

		Mother Nurturance
Perceived Mother Involvement	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>	<i>0.726*</i>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	< 0.001
	N	386
Desired Mother Involvement	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>	<i>0.375*</i>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	< 0.001
	N	386

Note: *Significant at $\alpha = 0.05$

Results from Table 5 showed that both correlation coefficients were positive. This may indicate that with increased mother nurturance there may be stronger perceived mother involvement. The same was true with giving the right amount of desired mother involvement. In relation to the strength of the correlations, mother nurturance was found to be strongly correlated with perceived mother involvement (with the coefficient being between 0.60 and 0.80) while the same variable was found to be weakly correlated with desired mother involvement (with the coefficient being between 0.20 and 0.40).

³Kol/Sm. Z of 3.197, 2.118, and 3.871, respectively, with all p-values < 0.001.

Moreover, these correlations were found to be significant, meaning that both perceived and desired mother involvement had significant associations with mother nurturance. The positive correlation coefficient implied that high levels of perceived and desired mother involvement also might result in high levels of mother nurturance.

Adolescent Christian formation. The responses in the SFI survey were coded into scale scores. The coding was as follows: (1) 1 – 5 for “Agree/Disagree Scales” with 5 being “Strongly Agree” and 1 being “Strongly Disagree,” with each increment/decrement denoting one level increase/decrease in agreement; (2) 1 – 6 for “Everyday/Rarely Scales” with 6 being “Everyday” and 1 being “Rarely/Never,” with each increment/decrement denoting one level increase/decrease in regularity; (3) 1 – 5 for “Frequency Scales” with 5 being “10 or More Times” and 1 being “Zero,” with each increment/decrement denoting one level increase/decrease in frequency; and (4) 1 or 2 for “Yes/No Scales” with 1 for “No” and 2 for “Yes.”

These scores were summed for each of the Christian formation domains. The highest possible scores for each domain were as follows: 37 for “Learning,” 43 for “Obeying,” 32 for “Serving,” 51 for “Sharing,” 30 for “Exercising Faith,” 48 for “Seeking God,” 51 for “Building Relationship,” and 75 for “Doctrine.” To obtain scores for SFI, the scores for each domain were added (hence, a possible perfect score of 367 for SFI). The summary statistics of each variable, for both adolescent types as well as for the overall sample, are presented in Table 6.

It can be observed in Table 6 that early adolescents had higher mean scores in all eight domains/subscales, except the fourth domain (Sharing). The maximum difference between mean scores of early and late adolescents was 1.20, found from the Learning domain; while the minimum difference was 0.31, from the Exercising Faith domain. Nevertheless, all these differences were quite small. Early adolescents were found to have higher (overall) SFI scores, with a difference of about 4.11.

Table 6. Dependent variables according to type of adolescent

		N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Domain 1— Learning	Early Adolescent	108	28.01	4.79	15	36
	Late Adolescent	278	26.81	5.42	8	37
	Total	386	27.15	5.28	8	37
Domain 2— Obeying	Early Adolescent	108	31.20	3.63	23	42
	Late Adolescent	278	30.56	3.81	14	43
	Total	386	30.74	3.77	14	43
Domain 3 – Serving	Early Adolescent	108	23.72	4.22	12	32
	Late Adolescent	278	23.40	4.53	9	32
	Total	386	23.49	4.44	9	32
Domain 4 – Sharing	Early Adolescent	108	29.65	6.18	12	44
	Late Adolescent	278	30.47	6.19	10	51
	Total	386	30.24	6.19	10	51
Domain 5 – Ex Faith	Early Adolescent	108	21.42	3.19	12	27
	Late Adolescent	278	21.01	3.60	8	30
	Total	386	21.12	3.49	8	30
Domain 6 – Seeking God	Early Adolescent	108	33.44	5.01	15	40
	Late Adolescent	278	32.57	6.21	9	46
	Total	386	32.81	5.90	9	46
Domain 7 – Building Relationship	Early Adolescent	108	37.44	4.26	24	46
	Late Adolescent	278	37.11	5.19	16	51
	Total	386	37.20	4.95	16	51
Doctrine	Early Adolescent	108	61.78	6.14	30	73
	Late Adolescent	278	60.61	8.09	23	75
	Total	386	60.94	7.60	23	75

Table 6—Continued. Dependent variables according to type of adolescent

		N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
SFI	Early Adolescent	108	266.65	28.44	147	312
	Late Adolescent	278	262.54	34.21	110	365
	Total	386	263.69	32.71	110	365

Interestingly, despite having smaller mean scores in all domains as well as overall SFI, late adolescents' scores were generally dispersed more away from the corresponding means than early adolescents' scores (as evidenced by larger standard deviations). In other words, early adolescents' scores in all domains as well as overall SFI were more clustered around the corresponding means (hence, the spread of the distribution was narrower) as compared to late adolescents' scores (hence, the spread of the distribution was wider). The higher mean scores imply that early adolescents agree and use the domains of Learning, Obeying, Serving, Exercising Faith, Seeking God, and Building Relationship as opposed to late adolescents. However, late adolescents possess more of the Sharing domain as opposed to early adolescents.

Table 7 provides formal test results to check whether the scores were normally distributed. Again, Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test of Normality was performed on each variable. Results revealed that the null hypotheses must be rejected (that is, $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ for each of the tests) for all domains except for the Sharing domain. Hence, none of the dependent variables except the Sharing domain involved normally distributed data. However, the opposite was observed for the Sharing domain; that is, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected ($p\text{-value} > 0.05$ for both tests). Hence, this variable was found to follow a normal distribution.

Table 7. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for SFI and SFI subscales

Domain	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Doc.	SFI
<i>Kol/Sm^a Z</i>	<i>1.577*</i>	<i>1.771*</i>	<i>2.004*</i>	<i>1.140</i>	<i>2.103*</i>	<i>2.541*</i>	<i>2.495*</i>	<i>3.410*</i>	<i>2.379*</i>
Asymp. Sig. ^b	0.014	0.004	<0.001	0.149	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001

^aKol/Sm – Kolmogorov-Smirnov

^bAsymptotic Significance (2-Tailed)

*Significant at $\alpha = 0.05$

Adolescent Christian formation and mother nurturance. Since mother nurturance was found to be not normally distributed, Spearman's rank correlation was used (even for domain 4) to determine the correlations of mother nurturance in each SFI domain/subscale and the overall SFI. Table 8 shows the summary of these correlations and their corresponding significance.

Results from Table 8 showed that all correlation coefficients were positive. This indicated a possible correlation between higher SFI subscales and overall SFI scores with increased mother nurturance. In other words, it is possible that the higher the mother nurturance the more spiritually mature the adolescent may be. In relation to the strength of the correlations, mother nurturance was found to be very weakly correlated with Sharing and Exercising Faith domains, with the coefficients being between 0.00 and 0.20. However, mother nurturance was found to be weakly correlated with all other domains (except the Building Relationship domain) as well as with the overall SFI score, with the coefficients being between 0.20 and 0.40.

The ranking (in decreasing order) of the respective strengths of correlation of significant variables with mother nurturance were as follows: (1) Seeking God, (2) Serving, (3) Doctrine, (4) Learning, (5) Obeying, (6) Sharing, and (7) Exercising Faith. However, again with the Building Relationship domain, virtually no correlation was found. Finally, results showed that mother nurturance was significantly correlated with all SFI subscales, except with the Building Relationship domain. Mother nurturance was

likewise significantly correlated with overall SFI. These results suggest that increased mother nurturance could possibly lead to significant increases in SFI subscales and overall SFI scores. Therefore, higher mother nurturance may potentially aid in developing more spiritually mature adolescents.

Table 8. Spearman's correlation analysis between
MN and SFI subscales

		Mother Nurturance
Domain 1—Learning	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>	<i>0.244*</i>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<0.001
	N	386
Domain 2—Obeying	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>	<i>0.205*</i>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<0.001
	N	386
Domain 3—Serving	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>	<i>0.309*</i>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<0.001
	N	386
Domain 4—Sharing	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>	<i>0.162*</i>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<0.001
	N	386
Domain 5—Ex Faith	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>	<i>0.146*</i>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.004
	N	386
Domain 6—Seeking God	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>	<i>0.311*</i>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<0.001
	N	386
Domain 7—Building Relationship	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>	<i>0.092</i>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.072
	N	386
Doctrine	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>	<i>0.281*</i>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<0.001
	N	386
SFI	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>	<i>0.299*</i>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<0.001
	N	386

*Significant at $\alpha = 0.05$

Adolescent Christian formation and perceived mother involvement.

Similar to the previous section, because perceived mother involvement was earlier found to be not normally distributed, Spearman's rank correlation was used to determine the correlations of mother nurturance in each SFI domain and the overall SFI. Table 9 shows the summary of these correlations and their corresponding significance.

Table 9. Spearman's correlation analysis between PMI and SFI subscales

		Perceived Mother Involvement
Domain 1—Learning	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>	<i>0.216*</i>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001
	N	386
Domain 2—Obeying	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>	<i>0.200*</i>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001
	N	386
Domain 3—Serving	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>	<i>0.303*</i>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001
	N	386
Domain 4—Sharing	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>	<i>0.134*</i>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.008
	N	386
Domain 5—Ex Faith	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>	<i>0.175*</i>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001
	N	386
Domain 6—Seeking God	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>	<i>0.335*</i>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001
	N	386
Domain 7—Building Relationship	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>	<i>0.129*</i>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.011
	N	386
Doctrine	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>	<i>0.292*</i>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001
	N	386
SFI	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>	<i>0.296*</i>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001
	N	386

*Significant at $\alpha = 0.05$

Results from Table 9 showed that all correlation coefficients were positive. These results indicate that higher SFI subscales and overall SFI scores may correlate with higher perceived mother involvement. When adolescents perceived that their mothers were more involved in their lives, they scored higher in terms of spiritual maturity and development. In relation to the strength of the correlations, PMI was found to be very weakly correlated with the Sharing, Exercising Faith, and Building Relationship domains, with the coefficients being between 0.00 and 0.20. However, PMI was found to be weakly correlated with all other domains as well as with the overall SFI score, with the coefficients being between 0.20 and 0.40.

The ranking (in decreasing order) of the respective strengths of correlation of significant variables with mother nurturance were as follows: (1) Seeking God, (2) Serving, (3) Doctrine, (4) Learning, (5) Obeying, (6) Exercising Faith, (7) Sharing, and (8) Building Relationship. Finally, results suggested that PMI was significantly correlated with all SFI subscales/domains. PMI also appeared to be significantly correlated with overall SFI. These results suggest that higher perceived mother involvement could potentially lead to significant increases in SFI subscales and overall SFI scores.

Adolescent Christian formation and desired mother involvement. Similar to the previous two sections, because desired mother involvement was earlier found not to be normally distributed, Spearman's rank correlation was used to determine the correlations of mother nurturance with each of the SFI domains and the overall SFI. Table 10 shows the summary of these correlations and their corresponding significance.

Results from Table 10 demonstrated that almost all correlation coefficients were virtually zero. Moreover, none of the correlations between DMI and SFI subscales/domains were found to be significant. DMI was also not significantly correlated with overall SFI. This indicates that SFI subscales and overall SFI scores may not be associated with DMI.

Table 10. Spearman's correlation analysis between
DMI and SFI subscales

		Desired Mother Involvement
Domain 1—Learning	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>	<i>0.047</i>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.360
	N	386
Domain 2—Obeying	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>	<i>0.081</i>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.112
	N	386
Domain 3—Serving	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>	<i>0.066</i>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.197
	N	386
Domain 4—Sharing	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>	<i>-0.093</i>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.068
	N	386
Domain 5—Ex Faith	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>	<i>-0.053</i>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.298
	N	386
Domain 6—Seeking God	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>	<i>0.091</i>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.075
	N	386
Domain 7—Building Relationship	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>	<i>-0.025</i>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.626
	N	386
Doctrine	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>	<i>0.064</i>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.210
	N	386
SFI	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>	<i>0.018</i>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.718
	N	386

*Significant at $\alpha = 0.05$

Adolescent Christian formation and gender, age, and adolescent type. In an effort to study whether the demographic variables, such as gender, age, and adolescent type, affect the scores of participants on the SFI questionnaire, an ANOVA was employed on each variable.⁴ Moreover, the correlations between gender and perceived

⁴It should be noted that any findings on age and gender must be understood as affecting only those participants contained within the sample. Findings based on age and gender cannot be extrapolated

mother involvement as well as SFI scores were investigated. Table 11 shows the correlations of gender with perceived mother involvement as well as with SFI subscales and overall SFI scores.

Table 11. Relationship of gender and SFI with PMI

	Gender
Perceived Mother Involvement	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>
	N
Domain 1—Learning	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>
	N
Domain 2—Obeying	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>
	N
Domain 3—Serving	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>
	N
Domain 4—Sharing	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>
	N
Domain 5—Ex Faith	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>
	N
Domain 6—Seeking God	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>
	N
Domain 7—Building Relationship	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>
	N
Doctrine	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>
	N
SFI	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>
	N

*Significant at $\alpha = 0.05$

beyond the sample.

Results from Table 11 showed that the correlation coefficients were negative for the Learning, Exercising Faith, Seeking God, and Doctrine domains, suggesting that the females in the sample had higher mean scores in such subscales than males. However, correlation coefficients were positive for the Obeying, Serving, Sharing, and Building Relationship domains. This suggests that the males in the sample had higher mean scores in such subscales than females. In totality, the correlation between overall SFI score and gender within the sample was found to be positive. This implies that males may have, on average, higher overall SFI scores than females within the sample. In other words, this suggests that spiritual development may tend to be higher for males than females studied in this sample. The same was true with perceived mother involvement. Males tended to find their mothers more involved than females did. However, all the correlations were rather insignificant as the observed differences between male and female scores were virtually zero. Thus, it can be concluded that gender within the sample as well as the SFI scores were not significantly related with the PMI scores of participants.

Table 12 shows a summary of the ANOVA results of gender on the scores of participants on the SFI questionnaire. Consistent with correlation results presented in Table 11, results revealed that gender did not exert a significant effect on all SFI domains/subscales. Hence, there was no significant difference between males and females in this sample on all domains/subscales of SFI. Results likewise showed an insignificant difference for the overall SFI score between males and females. These results indicate that gender within the sample is not related to the subscales of SFI or the overall SFI scores of participants.

Table 13 shows a summary of the ANOVA results of age on the scores of the participants in the sample on the SFI questionnaire. In this analysis, the participants were grouped according to their age, with the groups defined as the age groups 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18. Results from Table 13 showed that age did not significantly differentiate

the domains of Learning, Obeying, Serving, Sharing, and Exercising Faith domains. However, it was observed that there were small but statistically significant effects of age of participants within the sample in the Seeking God, Building Relationship, and Doctrine domains/subscales.

Table 12. ANOVA of SFI scores according to gender

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Domain 1— Learning	Between Groups	0.533	1	0.533	0.019	0.890
	Within Groups	10714.050	384	27.901		
	Total	10714.583	385			
Domain 2— Obeying	Between Groups	38.742	1	38.742	2.743	0.098
	Within Groups	5422.866	384	14.122		
	Total	5461.609	385			
Domain 3— Serving	Between Groups	1.213	1	1.213	0.061	0.805
	Within Groups	7593.246	384	19.774		
	Total	7594.459	385			
Domain 4— Sharing	Between Groups	72.018	1	72.018	1.885	0.171
	Within Groups	14674.055	384	38.214		
	Total	14746.073	385			
Domain 5— Ex Faith	Between Groups	3.107	1	3.107	0.255	0.614
	Within Groups	4680.170	384	12.188		
	Total	4683.277	385			
Domain 6— Seeking God	Between Groups	43.376	1	43.376	1.245	0.265
	Within Groups	13375.819	384	34.833		
	Total	13419.194	385			
Domain 7— Building Relationship	Between Groups	75.694	1	75.694	3.112	0.079
	Within Groups	9339.946	384	24.323		
	Total	9415.640	385			
Doctrine	Between Groups	37.317	1	37.317	0.645	0.422
	Within Groups	22216.063	384	57.854		
	Total	22253.381	385			
SFI	Between Groups	86.950	1	86.950	0.081	0.776
	Within Groups	411930.120	384	1072.735		
	Total	412017.070	385			

*Significant at $\alpha = 0.05$

Table 13. ANOVA of SFI scores according to age

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Domain 1— Learning	Between Groups	232.670	6	38.778	1.402	0.213
	Within Groups	10481.913	379	27.657		
	Total	10714.583	385			
Domain 2— Obeying	Between Groups	161.299	6	26.883	1.922	0.076
	Within Groups	5300.310	379	13.985		
	Total	5461.609	385			
Domain 3— Serving	Between Groups	159.313	6	26.552	1.353	0.232
	Within Groups	7435.145	379	19.618		
	Total	7594.459	385			
Domain 4— Sharing	Between Groups	152.162	6	25.360	0.659	0.683
	Within Groups	14593.910	379	38.506		
	Total	14746.073	385			
Domain 5— Ex Faith	Between Groups	30.057	6	5.010	0.408	0.874
	Within Groups	4653.220	379	12.278		
	Total	4683.277	385			
Domain 6— Seeking God	Between Groups	471.425	6	78.571	2.300*	0.034
	Within Groups	12947.770	379	34.163		
	Total	13419.194	385			
Domain 7— Building Relationship	Between Groups	597.390	6	99.565	4.279*	<0.001
	Within Groups	8818.250	379	23.267		
	Total	9415.640	385			
Doctrine	Between Groups	1364.813	6	227.469	4.127*	<0.001
	Within Groups	20888.568	379	55.115		
	Total	22253.381	385			
SFI	Between Groups	16924.462	6	2820.744	2.706*	0.014
	Within Groups	395092.608	379	1042.461		
	Total	412017.070	385			

*Significant at $\alpha = 0.05$

These results implied that for the former set of domains/subscales, there were no significant differences between the mean scores of different age groups. Yet, for the latter set of domains/subscales, there were significant differences between the mean scores of different age groups. For overall SFI score, a slight but statistically significant

effect of age was observed in participants in the sample. This suggested that some age groups had a significantly different mean score for the overall SFI score.

A decline in the Seeking God, Building Relationship, Doctrine domains and overall SFI scores was observed as participants within the sample grew older. This was a slight but statistically significant decline. An analysis of the standard deviations indicated that there was no ceiling effect present, further establishing the significance of the decline in relation to the age of the participants within the sample. To understand the slight but statistically significant effect of age on these SFI domains/subscales and the overall SFI, scatterplots with the best-fit-line were generated (See Figures 3–6). For all variables, decreasing linear progressions were observed. This suggested that for such spiritual development domains, they decreased slightly with the aging of adolescents.

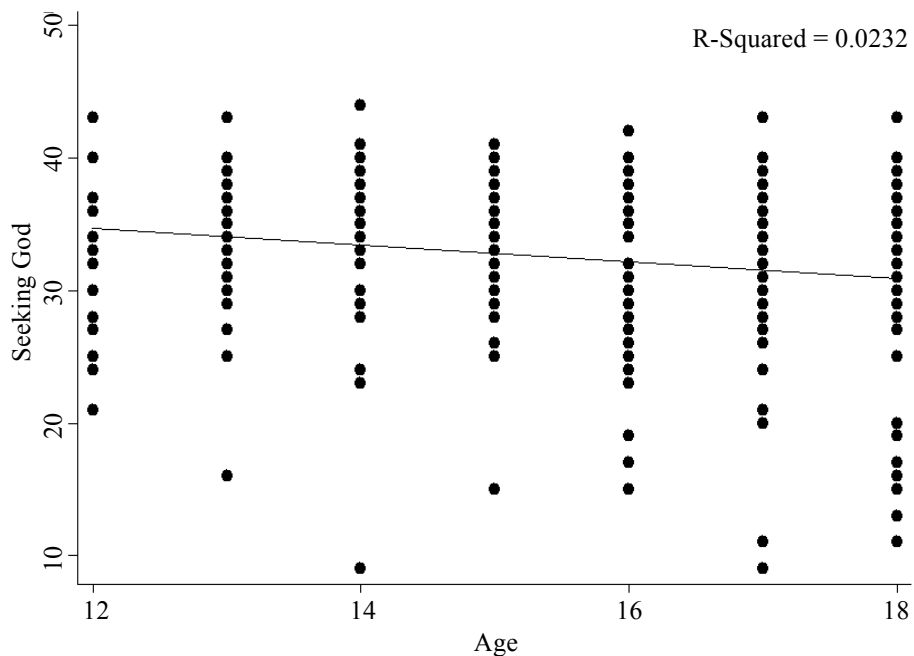


Figure 3. “Seeking God” domain score by age

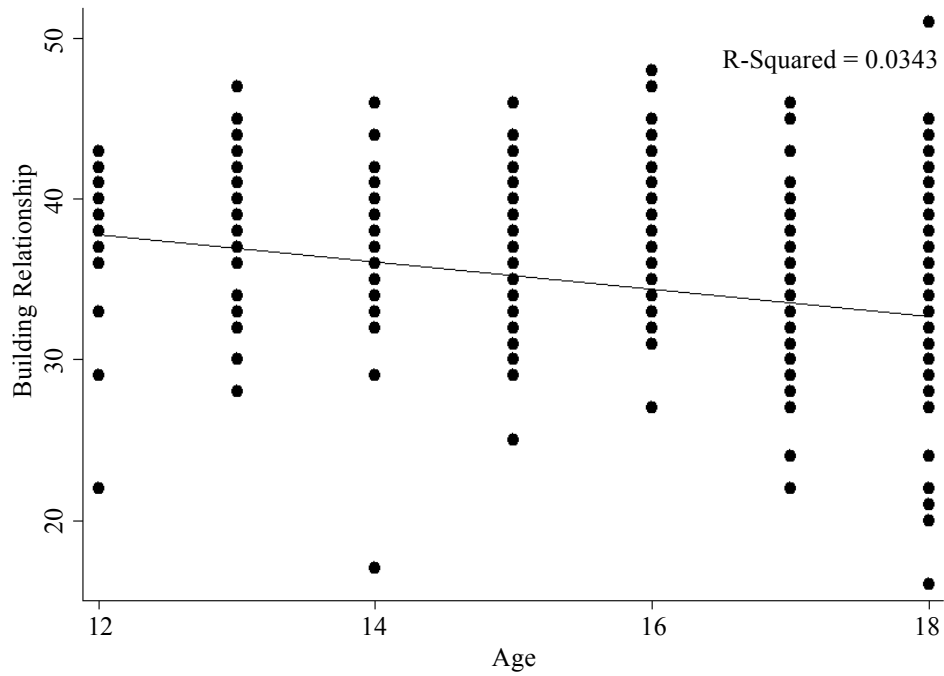


Figure 4. “Building Relationship” domain score by age

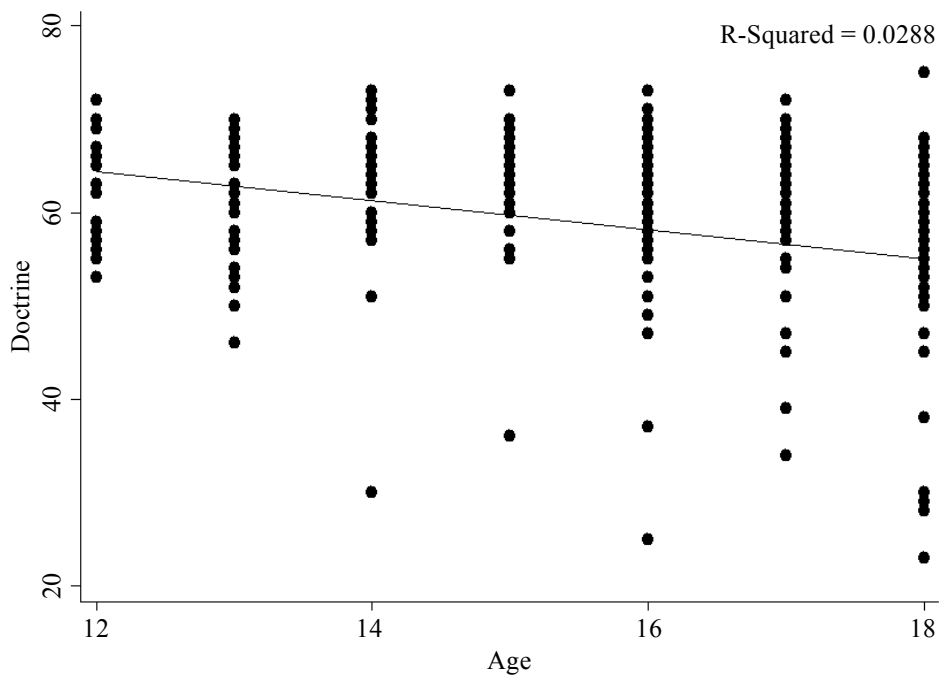


Figure 5. “Doctrine” subscale score by age

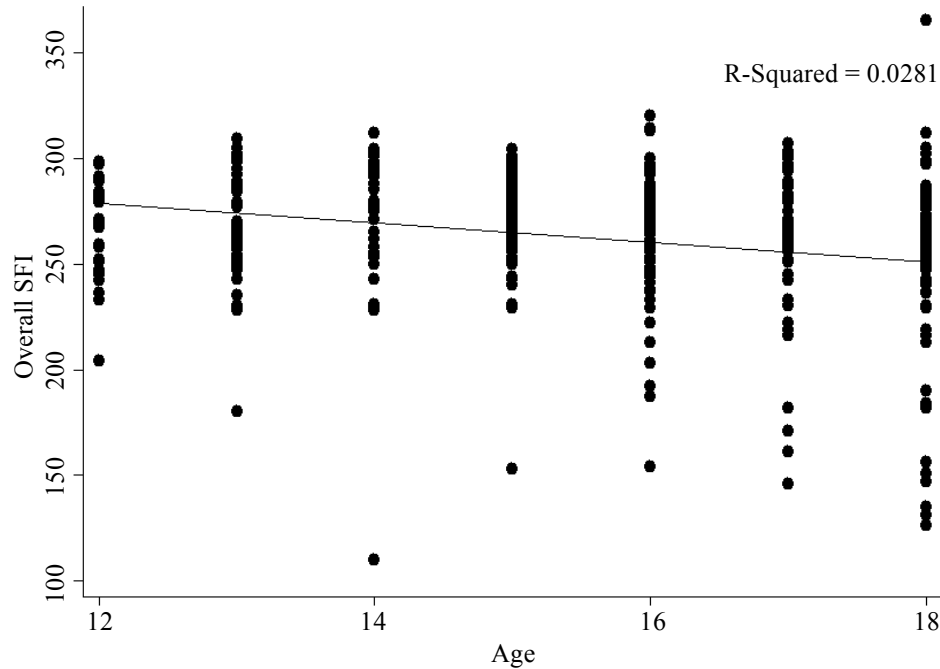


Figure 6. Overall SFI score by age

Table 14 shows a summary of the ANOVA results of age on the scores of participants in the sample on the SFI questionnaire. With the type of adolescence (early among those aged 12–14; late among those aged 15–18) being directly affected by age, the results were consistent with Table 13. Results from Table 14 showed that type of adolescence did not exert a significant effect on Learning, Obeying, Serving, Sharing, and Exercising Faith domains. However, the contrary was observed on Seeking God, Building Relationship, and Doctrine domains/subscales (difference of 0.87, 0.33, and 1.17, respectively). These results meant that in reference to Table 6, the differences between early and late adolescents in their Seeking God, Building Relationship, and Doctrine domains/subscales scores were significant within the sample.

For overall SFI score, a significant effect of type of adolescence was observed. This suggested that the observed difference of 4.11 (See Table 6) was significant. In all such domains/subscales, the differences were positive in favor of early adolescents. From

this analysis, it can be drawn that early adolescents in the sample generally had more significant spiritual development scores than late adolescents did.

Table 14. ANOVA of SFI scores according to adolescent type

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Domain 1— Learning	Between Groups	3.313	1	3.313	0.119	0.731
	Within Groups	10711.270	384	27.894		
	Total	10714.583	385			
Domain 2— Obeying	Between Groups	21.269	1	21.269	1.515	0.219
	Within Groups	5440.340	384	14.041		
	Total	5461.609	385			
Domain 3— Serving	Between Groups	19.674	1	19.674	0.997	0.319
	Within Groups	7574.784	384	19.726		
	Total	7594.459	385			
Domain 4— Sharing	Between Groups	1.220	1	1.220	0.032	0.859
	Within Groups	14744.853	384	38.398		
	Total	14746.073	385			
Domain 5— Ex Faith	Between Groups	0.009	1	0.009	0.001	0.978
	Within Groups	4683.268	384	12.196		
	Total	4683.277	385			
Domain 6— Seeking God	Between Groups	172.524	1	172.524	4.973*	0.026
	Within Groups	13246.670	384	34.690		
	Total	13419.194	385			
Domain 7— Building Relationship	Between Groups	110.041	1	110.041	4.523*	0.039
	Within Groups	9305.599	384	24.329		
	Total	9415.640	385			
Doctrine	Between Groups	230.650	1	230.650	3.992*	0.048
	Within Groups	22022.731	384	57.778		
	Total	22253.381	385			
SFI	Between Groups	19417.678	1	6009.554	5.623*	0.018
	Within Groups	392599.392	384	1068.745		
	Total	412017.070	385			

*Significant at $\alpha = 0.05$

Summary of phase 1. The main purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between adolescent Christian formation and mother nurturance and

involvement. Specifically, the goal was to assess the amount of involvement mothers have in the Christian formation process experienced during the adolescent years (as perceived and desired by the adolescents studied). With this, interrelationship among Christian formation of adolescents, mother nurturance, and perceived and desired mother involvement were investigated. Also, the relationships of several demographic variables to Christian formation of adolescents were also considered in this study. In way of summary, the following was observed.

First, the research results suggested that mother nurturance may be significantly associated with both perceived (strong correlation) and desired (weak correlation) mother involvement. That is, mother nurturance potentially increased with stronger perceived mother involvement and under the right amount of desired mother involvement.

Second, although the association was ranging from very weak to weak, it was observed that virtually all spiritual development domains/subscales may be significantly associated individually with both mother nurturance and perceived mother involvement. The opposite was observed with desired mother involvement.

Third, overall spiritual development (given by the overall SFI score) was implied to be significantly associated only with both mother nurturance and perceived mother involvement, where in both cases the correlations were weak. These results suggested that spiritual development among adolescents may increase with higher mother nurturance and perceived involvement. In light of the effect of the demographic variables, differences in SFI (overall and by domains/subscales) scores were found to be virtually zero across genders.

Fourth, regarding age within the sample, gradual decreases in Seeking God, Building Relationship, and Doctrine domains/subscales scores were observed as age increases. This small decrease may reflect the path toward independence that is observed

in adolescents as they grow older. A similar observation was found for the overall SFI score. It was also implied that, in consistently being a direct consequence of the age of participants in the sample, the effect of type of adolescence was also observed to be statistically significant for such domains; that is, early adolescents had higher scores in these domains than late adolescents. These results suggested that, in general, spiritual development among the participating adolescents slightly decreased as they aged.

Phase 2

The qualitative phase of the research was designed to gather specific information from participants regarding behaviors and characteristics demonstrated by mothers. Participants from phase 1 who were 18 years old were invited to briefly answer four questions during an online interview. Responses were evaluated for common behaviors, as well as characteristics and personality traits. The questions asked during the interview process were as follows:

1. What are some specific ways in which your mother has been involved in your life?
2. When have you felt closest to your mother?
3. What are some characteristics that describe your mother best?
4. What is the most significant way your mother has impacted your life?

Responses to these questions were assessed for common themes and are presented in this section. Twenty participants submitted answers. The majority of phase 2 respondents were female (N = 13, 65 percent), while 7 male respondents participated (N = 7, 35 percent). The large number of female participants versus male participants in phase 2 could influence the results of the data from this phase.

All 20 participants who responded for phase 2 of the research provided answers to all 4 questions. Participants had the ability to answer as thoroughly or as briefly as they desired. On average, female respondents provided answers that were more

detailed while the male respondents gave very brief single sentence or single word answers.

The first question of the phase 2 questionnaire asked, “What are some specific ways in which your mother has been involved in your life?” Most of the respondents’ answers included descriptions of a mother who was involved in the spiritual, day-to-day, and emotional aspects of their development. A common theme among the answers was presence at extracurricular activities. Mothers were described as always being present and offering support when the respondents needed it most. Several respondents indicated that their mothers had home-schooled them for varied lengths of time. A primary theme in the answers to this question described mothers as a constant presence in the respondents’ lives.

The second question was designed to assess the affective component of the mother-child relationship by asking, “When have you felt closest to your mother?” Three specific themes surfaced from respondents’ answers to the second question. First, respondents mentioned they felt close to their mothers during difficult times. When life became difficult and problems arose, respondents affirmed their awareness of their mothers’ closeness, availability, and support. “When I was at rock-bottom.” Second, respondents shared they felt closest to their mothers when they (or others in their family) were sick. It was their mother who cared for and tended to their physical hurts. Finally, several of the respondents indicated that during long talks with their mother they felt closest to her. It was during these talks that discussions about the future, God, morals, and simply life surfaced and were discussed at length.

The third question asked, “What are some characteristics that describe your mother best?” The overwhelming majority of participants described their mothers as “caring” (N = 12, 60 percent). The second most noted trait or characteristic was “loving” (N = 8, 40 percent) followed closely by “willing to help” (N = 6, 30 percent). Other

common responses were “hard working,” “good listener,” “kind,” “nurturing,” “intelligent,” “fun or funny,” and “open or approachable.” Male participants offered mainly single word depictions of their mothers while female participants related narratives. Not all character traits supplied by participants positively described their mothers. Some described their mothers as “overprotective,” “small fuse and blows up at the smallest infraction,” “influenced by others,” “scared,” “stubborn,” “nosy,” and “takes things too seriously.”

The final question from the qualitative section asked, “What is the most significant way your mother has impacted your life?” Responses were varied and came primarily in narrative form. However, five common themes emerged from the respondents’ answers: (1) “She was there for me when I needed her,” (2) “She helped shape my character,” (3) “She taught me how to live,” (4) “She helped shape my faith,” and (5) “She was supportive of me.” Responses ranged from shared activity times to opportunities to talk and learn about biblical principles. Several of the responses focused on presence, support, teaching, and accessibility, in general rather than specific events in their lives. Though answers varied, the three central themes were presence, support, and teaching.

Evaluation of the Research Design

The purpose of this research was to evaluate the correlation between adolescent Christian formation and mother nurturance and involvement. The research was assessed from the adolescent’s perception in these areas. In any research, there are areas discovered through the process in which improvement can be made or validation of the research design is determined. Therefore, the following paragraphs address the strengths and weaknesses in the research design.

First, a strength in this research design is its ability to assess the adolescent's perspective. Participants rated their personal perception of mother nurturance and involvement and Christian formation, thus maintaining a consistent paradigm for assessment. Adolescents' perspective plays a significant role in their relationship between them and their mother, especially in the early adolescent years.

Second, this research was designed to assess a large and significant sample. The large sample allows for meaningful conclusions to be drawn and generalized for the population in question. The sample drawn included a variety of geographic locations across the United States and multiple cultural contexts. A large sample such as this provides an opportunity to distinguish significant patterns in the data.

Third, the availability of the survey being accessible online proved to be a strength in the research design. Today's adolescents prefer accessing a survey online rather than taking a hand-written survey. This research design provided online access while remaining consistent with security, confidentiality, and verification of data. This sort of research design can open doors of opportunity for all ages of adolescence.

In regards to weaknesses of this research design, the first weakness lies in the "snapshot" format of the survey instruments. Responses to these surveys are taken in a moment and may change from one day to the next based on the current (and fluctuating) state of the relationship between adolescents and their mothers. Any number of circumstances in an adolescent's life could affect or change the answers to survey questions. Such circumstances could include having an argument with the mother before taking the survey, having a difficult week in school and the mother is hard on them, or even coming off of a good conversation or event with the mother. All these circumstances can affect the answers that adolescent give in the moment of taking the surveys.

Second, the cognitive level of the survey instruments may also have exceeded the capacity of some of the early adolescents. The vocabulary used in the instruments (as well as some of the concepts being explored) may have reached beyond the cognitive level of development for some of the participants. Further study in this area and using these instruments may necessitate modified instruments for early adolescent participants to reach them at their current stage of development.

Third, another weakness lies in the singularity of measuring mother nurturance and involvement from the adolescent perspective. Further study could include a 360-degree assessment of mother nurturance and involvement that would include evaluations from the perspectives of spouse, other children, and personal assessments from the mothers. More significant data could be obtained if the research design allowed for adolescent, maternal, and paternal assessment. Furthermore, there are many other influences outside the family environment that impact Christian formation that are not accounted for in this research design. Further study could also include assessing the influence of the church community and other significant adults.

Finally, the most noted weakness of this research design is the length of the survey instruments. There were 49 questions focused on mother nurturance and involvement and 74 questions in the Christian formation category. The paper format of the survey was 13 pages long and the average student took 15–20 minutes to complete the survey. Adolescents had a difficult time completing the survey without continual motivation.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

The focus of this study was to the role of a mother's nurturance and involvement in the Christian formation of an adolescent. A mixed methods research study was conducted to explore the relationship between maternal qualities and adolescent Christian formation. The Mother Involvement Scale (MIS) and the Nurturant Mother Scale (NMS) were used to quantify maternal nurturance and involvement of participants while spiritual maturity was assessed using the Spiritual Formation Inventory (SFI). Survey questionnaires were administered to participants online while interviews for the qualitative portion of this study were also conducted online. Responses of participants were assessed using correlation analysis and analysis of variance (ANOVA). Qualitative data were assessed through content analysis.

This chapter considers the findings from the research and presents the conclusions according to the statistical analysis with special consideration to the implications surfaced in the precedent literature review. The research purpose is recapitulated in light of the stated research questions followed by a treatise of the implications of the research. A presentation of the applications for the research findings is made and a discussion of the research limitations ensues. Finally, the chapter concludes by giving attention to potential areas for further research.

Research Purpose

This concurrent mixed methods study explored the relationship between adolescent Christian formation and mother nurturance and involvement. The goal was to assess the amount of involvement mothers have in the Christian formation process

experienced during the adolescent years (as perceived by the adolescents studied) and to ascertain whether there exists a correlation between the two. Recent research has shown a positive correlation between parental involvement and Christian formation.¹ Additionally, Andrew Parker's research has demonstrated a positive relationship between father nurturance and involvement and Christian formation.² However, there remains a need in the research and literature base to study the role mothers play in the Christian formation of adolescents.

The positive relationship between father involvement and Christian formation has prompted the need to explore the roles of mothers in the Christian formation of adolescents. Through understanding and determining the impact of mother nurturance and involvement in the spiritual development of adolescents, a holistic perspective could be drawn to develop programs that will enhance the spiritual formation of adolescents. Moreover, this study bridged the gap in literature, which lacked the exploration of the role of mothers in the spiritual development of adolescents.

This research was guided by four research questions in order to study the relationship between adolescent Christian formation and mother nurturance and involvement. The questions were assessed using the Spiritual Formation Inventory (Waggoner), the Nurturant Mothering Scale (Finley, Mira, and Schwartz), the Mother Involvement Scale (Finley, Mira, and Schwartz), and interview questions. What follows are the questions that served to focus this research:

1. What is the relationship, if any, between the Christian formation of adolescents and mother nurturance?

¹Christian Smith with Melinda Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 261.

²Andrew Clyde Parker, "An Analysis of the Relationship Between Adolescent Spiritual Development and Father Involvement" (Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010).

2. What is the relationship, if any, between the Christian formation of adolescents and perceived mother involvement?
3. What is the relationship, if any, between the Christian formation of adolescents and desired mother involvement?
4. What is the correlation, if any, between gender, Christian formation in adolescents, and mother nurturance and involvement?

Research Implications

This section provides a discussion of the examination of research findings to connect the results of this study to precedent literature. The research findings were presented based on the results of the statistical analyses and the qualitative analysis. The results were related to existing literature to provide insights, such as similarities and differences of findings with literature. The research implications also determine whether existing literature could be expanded or negated through the results of empirical data.

The four research questions considered in this study guided the discussion in this section. Moreover, this study also considered the relationship of mother nurturance with perceived and desired mother involvement. Based on the results of the Spearman's correlation analysis, mother nurturance was strongly correlated with perceived mother involvement. However, a weak correlation was observed between mother nurturance and desired mother involvement. The correlations were also found to be significant. This means that both perceived and desired mother involvement had significant associations with mother nurturance.

The Relationship between the Christian Formation of Adolescents and Mother Nurturance

The first question of the research examined the relationship between Christian formation and the affective aspect of mother nurturance. Based on the results of the Spearman's correlation analysis, all correlation coefficients were positive. The positive correlation coefficients imply that higher SFI subscales and overall SFI scores may result

from increased mother nurturance. Mother nurturance was weakly correlated with spirituality domains of Sharing and Exercising Faith.

Moreover, mother nurturance was weakly correlated with all other domains (except the Building Relationship domain) as well as with the overall SFI score. The ranking (in decreasing order) of the respective strengths of correlation of significant variables with mother nurturance were as follows: (1) Seeking God, (2) Serving, (3) Doctrine, (4) Learning, (5) Obeying, (6) Sharing, and (7) Exercising Faith. However, again with the Building Relationship domain, virtually no correlation was found.

These results demonstrated that mother nurturance was significantly correlated with all SFI domains/subscales except with the Building Relationship domain and the overall SFI score. These results may indicate that increased mother nurturance could lead to significant increases in SFI subscales and overall SFI scores. Therefore, the results may indicate that the more a mother nurtures her children the more spiritual maturity is fostered in the adolescent.

Implications. An important implication of the results provided on this question is that a mother's level of nurturance toward her children may be an important factor in adolescent Christian formation. The precedent literature review demonstrated that many components contribute to an adolescent's spiritual development. From pregnancy, childbirth, and child growth, the development of a child is highly dependent on his or her mother's nurturance and involvement. Likewise, the nurturance of a mother may prove to be a critical element in the spiritual development of a child especially in adolescent years. According to the Commission on Children at Risk,³ young people are attached to people around them, such as their mothers, fathers, and other family

³Commission on Children at Risk, *Hardwired to Connect: The New Scientific Case for Authoritative Communities* (New York: Institute for American Values, 2003).

members. However, based on this research, adolescent Christian formation may be significantly impacted by mother nurturance.

Mother's who desire a spiritually healthy adolescent should carefully consider the data from this research. Although a healthy church community, an adolescent's friends, and the influence of extended family certainly play a key role in spiritual development, the role of parents (and in this case mothers) must be elevated and enhanced. The value of a mother's role in adolescent Christian formation cannot be overstated.

As mentioned in the precedent literature, research demonstrates that young people are "hardwired for close attachments to other people, beginning with our mothers, fathers, and extended family."⁴ The study also found that it is through authoritative communities that the need for connectedness is met.⁵ The biblical model is for fathers to be the primary spiritual authority in an adolescent's life. Yet, Scripture and current research has demonstrated the mothers play a vital role in this process as well. The mother partners with the husband to ensure that the children can acquire the faith followed by the parents. As noted earlier by Gentry in a comment on the book of Proverbs:

But one thing that is absolutely unique to the book of Proverbs is the instruction or teaching of the mother. She is mentioned specifically in five instances: 1:8, 4:3, 6:20, 31:1, and 26. This is absolutely unparalleled anywhere else in all of the wisdom literature we have from the ancient Near East. In Proverbs, the teaching of the mother is placed side by side with the teaching of the father. It shows us the importance the Bible places on the mother's teaching and the fact that both parents must be believers in order to bring up the children in the faith.⁶

⁴Ibid., 14.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Peter J. Gentry, "Equipping the Generations: Raising Children, the Christian Way," *Journal of Discipleship & Family Ministry* 2, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 2012): 99

Therefore, another implication is that mothers must take an active role in the Christian formation process in their adolescent's life. Nurturing relationships are a pivotal factor in adolescent Christian formation,⁷ and when a mother expresses nurturance through compassion, care, and love, her adolescent's spiritual development may be positively impacted. When a mother fosters a safe and secure environment where her adolescent can communicate genuine emotions, the spirituality of that adolescent may grow exponentially.

Although it is believed that a father should lead his family to being actively involved in church, the mother assists in enforcing the practices built by the father. Thus, both the father and the mother play roles that complete an adolescent's development in his or her spiritual faith. The best planned Bible studies and programs or events in the local church cannot substitute the presence and role of a mother in the spiritual development of her child.

The Relationship between the Christian Formation of Adolescents and Perceived Mother Involvement

The second research question focused on examining the relationship between perceived mother involvement and Christian formation. The results of the Spearman's correlation analysis determined that all correlation coefficients were positive. This implies that higher SFI subscales and overall SFI scores may result from higher perceived mother involvement. In relation to the strength of the correlations, PMI was very weakly correlated with Sharing, Exercising Faith, and Building Relationship domains. PMI was also weakly correlated with all other Christian formation variables as well as with the overall SFI score. The ranking (in decreasing order) of the respective strengths of correlation of significant variables with mother nurturance were as follows: (1) Seeking

⁷Commission on Children at Risk, *Hardwired to Connect*, 15.

God, (2) Serving, (3) Doctrine, (4) Learning, (5) Obeying, (6) Exercising Faith, (7) Sharing, and (8) Building Relationship. Finally, results showed that PMI was significantly correlated with all SFI subscales/domains and the overall SFI score. These results suggest that higher perceived mother involvement could lead to significant increases in SFI subscales and overall SFI scores. Therefore, mother involvement in her adolescent's life could lead toward spiritual growth.

Implications. The demonstrated correlation between perceived mother involvement and adolescent Christian formation implies a need for mothers to be more intimately acquainted with their adolescent. A mother's level of involvement may differ for each of her children. This is often because of the differences in personality and the uniqueness of the child. While one child may enjoy long periods of time with their mother, another teen might prefer spontaneous activities and lessened exposure to their mother. Some adolescents may prefer continual verbal affirmation and constant involvement from their mother while another may find this amount of involvement smothering and controlling. This research suggests that mothers may need to take their involvement more seriously and approach it with intentionality according to the specific needs of each of her children.

Another implication from the results of this question, as demonstrated by the significant correlation determined between perceived mother involvement and the spiritual formation of adolescents, suggests that mothers should build their relationship with their adolescent children.⁸ Mothers should know their adolescent children in terms of their needs and wants to ensure that their development is in line with the spiritual faith of the family.⁹ Adolescent children should feel the presence of their mother in their life

⁸Daniel I. Block, "Marriage and Family in Ancient Israel," in *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World*, ed. Ken M. Campbell, 33–102 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003).

⁹Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, "Adolescent Storm and Stress, Reconsidered," *American Psychologist*

especially during difficult times.¹⁰ A mother becomes more of a confidante or a friend to their children rather than playmates. However, this research implies that mothers should develop a good harmonious relationship with their children over the years. Christopher Bader and Scott Desmond demonstrated that mothers who enter the lives of their children during adolescent years experience difficulty because their children have already established their relationships with friends and other people who could play the role of a “mother.”¹¹ However, mothers who have practiced being involved with their children during their early years may sustain the good relationship with their children through the adolescent years.

As evidenced through the results of the study, the perceived mother involvement is positively related to the spiritual formation of their adolescent children. Thus, the involvement of mothers in their adolescent children’s lives is very important in ensuring the spiritual development of the child. The data demonstrate that when teens perceive their mother as being involved they tend to grow spiritually and their Christian formation appears to be positively impacted. A mother must know her children and the way in which her involvement with them will positively impact their spiritual development. Although the task is great, the spiritual rewards are endless. Understanding how adolescents think can be frightening to parents. Yet, no one is better suited to the task of intimately knowing the heart of an adolescent than a parent (and specifically a mother) who invests his or her life in helping his or her adolescent grow toward spiritual maturity.

54, no. 5 (May 1999): 317–26.

¹⁰Robert Wuthnow, *Growing Up Religious: Christians and Jews and Their Journeys of Faith* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999).

¹¹Christopher Bader and Scott A. Desmond, “Do as I Say and as I Do: The Effects of Consistent Parental Beliefs and Behaviors Upon Religious Transmission,” *Sociology of Religion* 67, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 313–29.

The Relationship between the Christian Formation of Adolescents and Desired Mother Involvement

The third question focused on the examination of Christian formation of adolescents as it relates to desired mother involvement. The results of the Spearman's correlation analysis revealed that almost all correlation coefficients were virtually zero. Thus, DMI was not significantly related with SFI subscales/domains and the overall SFI.

Implications. As opposed to the perceived mother involvement, the desired mother involvement measures the level of involvement the participant wanted from their mothers. As strengthened from the results of this study, adolescent children may be affected more by the perceived level of involvement of their mothers rather than their desired level of involvement. The reason for this could be because adolescent children are more affected by what they receive from their mothers rather than what they want. According to Wesley Black, mothers should know their children in terms of their needs and their wants.¹² Although mothers could not give all their time to their children, a significant amount of time may need to be allotted to let their children know that they are there for them especially during difficult times.

The Correlation between Gender, Christian Formation in Adolescents, and Mother Nurturance and Involvement

The fourth research question focused on examining the affect the gender of the sample participants¹³ had on the relationship between mother nurturance and involvement

¹²Wesley Black, "Youth Ministry That Lasts: The Faith Journey of Young Adults," *Journal of Youth Ministry* 4, no. 2 (Spring 2006): 19–48.

¹³It should be noted that any findings on age and gender must be understood as affecting only those participants contained within the sample. Findings based on age and gender cannot be extrapolated beyond the sample.

and the Christian formation of adolescents. A negative correlation existed between domains/subscales of Learning, Exercising Faith, Seeking God, and Doctrine with gender. This suggested that females within the sample had higher mean scores in such domains/subscales than males. However, correlation coefficients were positive for the Obeying, Serving, Sharing, and Building Relationship domains/subscales, suggesting that males in the sample had higher mean scores in such domains/subscales than females.

The correlation between overall SFI score and gender was positive. This implies that male participants had, on average, higher overall SFI scores than females in the sample. Therefore, in those studied, spiritual development tended to be higher for males than females. Likewise, the same was true with perceived mother involvement. For instance, participating males tended to find their mothers more involved than females did. However, all the correlations were rather insignificant. Therefore, the observed differences between male and females scores within the sample were virtually zero.

The participants were also grouped according to their age, with the groups defined as the age groups 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18. The results of the analyses suggested that the age of participants in the sample was not significantly related to domains of Learning, Obeying, Serving, Sharing, and Exercising Faith. However, slight but statistically significant effects of age were observed in Seeking God, Building Relationship, and Doctrine domains/subscales. For the overall SFI score, a small but statistically significant effect of age in the research participants was also observed. This suggested that some age groups within the sample had significantly different mean overall SFI score. With age, gradual and slight decreases in the Seeking God, Building Relationship, and Doctrine domains/subscales scores were observed as age increases. Similar observations were found for the overall SFI score. This appears to consistently be a direct consequence of age. The effect of type of adolescence was also observed to be

significant for such domains (that is, early adolescents had higher scores in these domains than late adolescents in the sample).

Implications. These results implied that, in general, spiritual development among the participating adolescents appeared to slightly decrease as they aged. This may indicate that the level of involvement from mothers (specifically in the area of spiritual formation) perhaps needs to be heightened rather than decreased during the late adolescent years in order to continue to foster spiritual growth. This small decrease may be related to the road toward independence often found in aging adolescents. If mothers decrease their level of nurturance and involvement during late adolescence, then it may directly influence the adolescent's spiritual growth as the teen also pulls away from their mother during these years.

Qualitative Interviews

The qualitative portion of the study revealed several themes regarding the role of mothers. Mothers were described as always being present and offering support when the adolescents needed it most. Several respondents indicated that their mothers had home-schooled them for varied lengths of time. A primary theme in the answers to the interview described mothers as a constant presence in the respondents' lives. Adolescent respondents also mentioned that they felt close to their mothers during difficult times. When life became difficult and problems arose, respondents affirmed their awareness of their mothers' closeness, availability, and support. Moreover, long talks between adolescents and their mothers increased their closeness. It was during long talks that discussions about the future, God, morals, and life surfaced and were discussed at length.

Adolescent participants also described their mothers as "caring," "loving," and "willing to help." Other common descriptions of mothers were "hard working," "good listener," "kind," "nurturing," "intelligent," "fun or funny," and "open or approachable."

However, on the negative end, some participants described their mothers as “overprotective,” “small fuse and blows up at the smallest infraction,” “influenced by others,” “scared,” “stubborn,” “nosy,” and “takes things too seriously.”

Overall, five common themes emerged from the respondents’ answers: (1) “She was there for me when I needed her,” (2) “She helped shape my character,” (3) “She taught me how to live,” (4) “She helped shape my faith,” and (5) “She was supportive of me.” Responses ranged from shared activity times to opportunities to talk and learn about biblical principles. Several of the responses focused on presence, support, teaching, and accessibility in general rather than specific events in their lives. Though answers varied, the three central themes were presence, support, and teaching.

Implications. The results of this study have strengthened existing social science research that has demonstrated significant benefits in the lives of children and adolescents when parents are involved in their lives. Because the nurturance and the involvement of mothers appear to be related to the Christian formation of adolescents, this study has focused the findings on adolescents and mothers. In particular, the results of the study have emphasized the influence of mother’s nurturance and involvement in the spiritual development of their adolescent children.

In the past few decades, research in parental involvement has evolved in method and focus. These studies have shown how the benefits of parental involvement can be immense and affect every aspect of a child’s development. Some of the research has suggested that people are genetically and biologically designed to connect with others and to find meaning. The results of this study have supported the findings of previous research. However, this study has primarily focused on the benefits of a mother’s nurturance and involvement in the spiritual development of an adolescent.

Studies in mother nurturance and involvement have explored the role of a mother in RSD, and social science perspectives on mothers and motherhood demonstrate

a necessity for continuing research. The results of this study have implied that all spiritual development domains/subscales were significantly associated individually with both mother nurturance and perceived mother involvement. The opposite was observed with desired mother involvement. Thus, this study suggests that a mother's nurturance and involvement are important elements of adolescent Christian formation.

Research Applications

Families are one of the primary building blocks of society, and a mother's role and presence can deeply impact the dynamics and environment of the relationships within the family. As adolescents mature and prepare to enter society, they carry with them the lessons learned from their families. Therefore, the implications of mother nurturance and involvement research may prove to permeate all aspects of family life and culture at large. The findings of this research may potentially be applied in many areas of parenting, family, and ministry. The results could strengthen the concept of the role of parents (specifically the role of mothers) in an adolescent's life.

First, this research has provided evidence of the importance of mother nurturance and involvement in life of the adolescent and specifically in the area of spiritual development. The results suggest that increased mother nurturance could possibly lead to significant increases in SFI subscales and overall SFI scores. Therefore, higher mother nurturance may potentially aid in developing more spiritually mature adolescents. This research highlights the important influence a mother may have on her adolescent's spiritual development. Mothers should be cautious in allowing worldly interests and pursuits to distract them from their responsibilities as a mother.

Therefore, the results of this research could be used to campaign and encourage mothers to be involved in the lives of their adolescents. The influence of mothers on their adolescents' Christian formation was strongly indicated in this study.

Thus, church leaders could develop programs that would enhance the relationships of mothers to their adolescent children with specific training in discipleship.

These results have also implied that a mother's influence on faith should be added to the list of benefits of strong mother nurturance and involvement. This is often an overlooked element in secular studies. This research demonstrates that the spiritual influence of a mother should be taken more seriously in the social sciences as a legitimate area of research and study.

Second, the results of the study could be used as a guide to future mothers or mothers who are about to have adolescent children. The research suggested that spiritual development among adolescents may increase with higher mother nurturance and perceived involvement. Therefore, mothers should not begin to decrease their role as the adolescent grows older, but instead should look to how they can continue and adapt their influence with the child in light of the changes taking place during the most difficult phase of adolescence. Because changes in various aspects of an individual's life happen during adolescence, parents (or mothers in particular) find it difficult to deal with their children. Thus, this study could help support mothers in taking their role as a spiritual influence with intention and purpose and to perhaps aid in equipping and training them for the task.

Third, the results of this study could also encourage adolescents to improve their relationship with their parents, particularly with their mothers. The overall common themes that emerged from the interviews were: (1) "She was there for me when I needed her," (2) "She helped shape my character," (3) "She taught me how to live," (4) "She helped shape my faith," and (5) "She was supportive of me." These responses suggested that the involvement and nurturance of mothers have a positive impact on the spiritual development of adolescents (as they perceived themselves). Moreover, a closer relationship between the mother and the adolescent provides love, care, and support

especially during difficult times in the adolescent's life. Therefore, adolescents could be educated on the importance of this mother-child relationship and how to foster a deeper connection them.

Fourth, another application of this research is for the community of faith. Churches and church leaders could be encouraged to train and teach parents to assume the primary role of discipleship for their children. As Wright noted, parents have often given over their God-given role of discipling their children to church leaders.¹⁴ Instead, churches can function in a supportive role toward the spiritual development of adolescents who have parents that can adequately supply spiritual discipling. Recent research has indicated that the single most important social and spiritual influence in the lives of adolescents is their parents. Although extended family, friends, and youth ministers have an important influence on adolescents, parents still remain the most important forming influence in their adolescent's religious and spiritual development.¹⁵

Church families should seek to partner with parents to provide spiritual mentoring, biblical teaching, and adults who will model the faithful Christian walk.¹⁶ Church leaders can equip mothers by providing them with the necessary resources for discipling their adolescents in Christ. Training and encouragement from the church family are needed to assist mothers in this God-given task. This is often a difficult task on the part of church leaders as it is easier to assume the parent's role of discipleship rather than develop mothers for the task. Yet, the rewards of training mothers (and fathers) for the role of discipling their children will stretch far beyond their adolescents to their children's future family and their families to follow.

¹⁴Steve Wright with Chris Graves, *reThink* (Wake Forest, NC: InQuest, 2008), 75.

¹⁵Christian Smith with Melinda Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 56.

¹⁶Wright and Graves, *reThink*, 75.

Therefore, the findings of this research may be applied in many aspects of church life and ministry. Church leaders could use these research findings in determining ways in which to develop strong, biblically sound families. Leaders who are tasked with developing family and adolescent ministries could use this research to develop objectives and goals in efforts to integrate parents in church ministry and to better equip them for discipling at home.

Fifth, this research may also help churches in evaluating the influence of mothers within their fellowship. The study indicated that increased mother nurturance could lead to significant increases in SFI subscales and overall SFI scores. The results indicate that the more a mother nurtures her children the more spiritual maturity is fostered in the adolescent. Ministries aimed at developing women could use these research findings to design training programs to help mothers in spiritually nurturing their children toward spiritual growth. Mothers often feel inept to know how to properly train and spiritually nurture their own children in the fear and admonition of the Lord. They often face the ominous task of developing their children spiritually without the help of their spouse and without experiencing training for the task. Therefore, ministry to women in the local church could focus on providing encouragement, support, and training. This could take the form of developing and cultivating mother-nurturant faith communities within the church.

One of the unique aspects of this research is connecting nurturance with spiritual development. As mentioned previously, nurturing relationships are a pivotal factor in adolescent Christian formation.¹⁷ The results of this study demonstrated that when a mother expresses nurturance (often through compassion, care, and love) her adolescent's spiritual development might be positively impacted. Though nurturance may

¹⁷Commission on Children at Risk, *Hardwired to Connect*, 15.

often be considered something that is innate in mothers, too often there is little education and training done in this area to adequately prepare mothers for the task.

Currently, mother-nurturant communities are being cultivated in schools and local communities. These communities are being developed with the understanding that “nurturance means providing the basic necessities of life for children, but in a wider sense, it denotes general support, love, and cultivation for the growing child.”¹⁸ Chandler Barbour, Nita Barbour, and Patricia Scully go on to say,

Few adults are actually trained for nurturing roles, but our society expects certain minimums of support and effectiveness from parents as they rear children. The assumption is that nurturance, in its general and wider sense, has been modeled by preceding generations and is refined by an individual’s experience and participation in society. The range of nurturing competence in U.S. homes, however, is wide, indeed.... The nurturer accepts responsibilities not only for giving children basic physiological care, guidance, and love, but also for stimulating a child’s investigations of the world and monitoring the child’s social relationships with others. The nurturing parent is one who is grounded in humane practice and who has a vision of what children can become.¹⁹

Although these mother-nurturant communities provide a viable service, they do not include the spiritual nurturance needed to bring children and adolescents up in the Lord and toward discipleship. Therefore, local churches could begin to recognize the need to develop mother-nurturant communities that focus on helping mothers tend not only to the care, guidance, love, and vision of what their child can become, but also to what their child can become in the Lord and His family. These communities could perhaps provide mothers the needed encouragement, support, and training mentioned earlier.

Finally, another application of this research is in the area of family ministry and enrichment. The church can glorify God through biblical instruction for the family by

¹⁸Chandler Barbour, Nita H. Barbour, and Patricia A. Scully, *Families, Schools, and Communities: Building Partnerships for Educating Children*, 4th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Merrill Prentice Hall, 2008), 88–91.

¹⁹Ibid.

training mothers and fathers to understand their roles and accomplish their work. This sort of instruction aids in strengthening and unifying the family. Marriage enrichment is an important aspect in this training. The union between a man and woman is the foundation of the family and establishes the home. The health of a marriage tremendously impacts children in every stage of development (both spiritual and physical). Healthy communication between a husband and wife and clarity of God-given roles are key to developing strong marriages.

As highlighted through the results of this study, the level of mother nurturance and involvement should be a primary expectation that is emphasized and considered before entering marriage. Spiritually healthy marriages promote positive environments for adolescent Christian development. When churches and church leaders invest in the training and equipping of parents, it positively impacts the home and the church as a whole.

Research Limitations

There are definitive limitations on the scope of this research that should be considered when interpreting the data so that the findings discussed will not be misunderstood. First, this study isolated the influences in adolescents' lives to mother involvement. Christian formation has many influential factors. Isolating one of those factors will ultimately limit or perhaps neglect other factors involved in the process. Adolescents have many relationships that play a vital role in Christian formation (that is, fathers, siblings, grandparents, church family, friendships, and others). Yet, this research studied only the role of mothers in this crucial process.

Second, the influence of a father can neither be overstated nor underestimated. Studies in Scripture and social science research affirm the crucial influence and impact of fathers in the Christian formation of a child. Scriptural directives regarding parental responsibility for the Christian formation of children are given to both mother and father.

Although cultural expectations for nurturance and care tend to be aimed at the mother, the role of father should never be diminished. Although the role of father is vital in the Christian formation process, this study limited its exploration to mothers and provided only a cursory overview of the father's role.

Third, the influence of the church family is important to Christian formation. The church family often functions as an extended family for a child (and sometimes is their only spiritual influence). Youth ministers, Bible class teachers, and several others within the church family play a very important role in the Christian formation of adolescents. However, as in the case of fathers, this study did not provide an in-depth exploration of the role and influence of the church in the Christian formation process and limited its examination to the influence of mothers.

Fourth, there are other motivating factors (both internal and external) that contribute to the Christian formation of an adolescent that were not addressed (or only in passing) in this study. Self-efficacy is an internal motivating factor for further development that is different for everyone. Self-efficacy is that internal motivator that compels an individual to want to learn or grow in a particular area. External motivation is seen when an individual sees the reward for further development in a particular area that pushes them toward development. These sorts of factors were addressed only in a limited fashion.

Fifth, measuring Christian formation is a limitation in and of itself. It is very difficult to apply quantitative value to spiritual development. Giving some quantifiable value to this development entails assessing knowledge, behavior, and an individual's perceptions, which is problematic and limiting. Also, attempting to measure an individual's perception of mother involvement among varying individual and cultural expectations and norms is limiting. This research was limited to the tools and surveys

administered (and their findings) and did not make any determinations beyond their results.

Sixth, this research is limited to assessing the emotions and feelings of adolescents based on their responses to the surveys and interviews administered. Emotions and feelings toward a mother during adolescence can change from moment to moment based on parent-child interaction. Therefore, the objectivity of the individual's response can be problematic and questionable. This study did not make any determinations beyond those responses supplied by the adolescents who participated in the research.

Seventh, this study is limited to Christian formation and did not address spiritual development among other religions and faiths. Therefore, any finding may or may not have any correlation with adolescent spiritual formation among Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, and others.

Finally, this study confined its sampling of Christian adolescents to those within the Churches of Christ, which will prove to be limiting, because it is not necessarily indicative of all adolescents across Christian faiths. Christian formation is sometimes handled and perceived differently from one Christian faith to the next. This decision limited the ability to present findings in a general way across denominations and faiths.

Further Research

This research, by its very nature, was limited in scope and, therefore, offers additional avenues of exploration in this field of study. For example, this study has focused on the mother's nurturance and involvement in the adolescents' spiritual formation. Future studies could seek to explore the interaction of both the father and the mother in the spiritual development of their children. The focus of succeeding studies could explore how roles of mothers differ from fathers in developing the spirituality of

adolescents. Moreover, succeeding studies could also focus on the progression of the changes in the role and involvement of the father and the mother in the development of their adolescent.

Further research is also needed in terms of other aspects of the adolescent's life. Future studies could explore how nurturance and the involvement of mothers affect the overall formation of their children. This could include the emotional, psychological, and spiritual aspects of a child's life. Through this study, mothers have an overall view of how they impact their adolescent's spiritual development. Succeeding studies could also explore how the mother's role has also influenced the direction of their adult children in terms of career and family life. The role of parents has been strongly linked to the development of their children. Thus, it is critical to explore how parents, mothers in particular, affect the future of their children.

More important, succeeding studies could explore the perspectives of mothers on how they contribute to the spiritual formation of their adolescent child. A qualitative study could be conducted to explore activities done by mothers to influence the spirituality of their children. This study has focused on the perspectives of adolescents. Succeeding studies could focus on the perspectives of parents to explore differences in spiritual development of children considering various parenting styles.

APPENDIX 1
INITIAL CORRESPONDENCE EMAIL TO CHURCHES

Dear Church Leadership,

My name is Philip L. McKinney II. I am a PhD student at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, and I also serve as the full-time Spiritual Formation/Student Minister at the Fairfax Church of Christ in Fairfax, Virginia. I am writing to invite students from your congregation to participate in a research project that could significantly impact our understanding of the role of mothers in the process of Christian formation in adolescents.

The research is focused on the adolescent Christian formation as it correlates with a mother's level of nurturance and involvement. All students between the ages of 12 to 18 are welcome to participate in this research. Participation in the research will require only limited time for church leaders and all necessary materials will be provided through an online survey or by printed materials upon request. Students who desire to participate in the research will be given an online link that will provide all the necessary information and instructions.

Although the survey will be completed online, church leaders will still need to provide information to families and to distribute the link (or printed materials) to students. For students under 18 years of age, permission from parents will be requested at the beginning of the online survey.

As a full-time minister to students for more than 20 years, I understand the need to carefully guard the privacy and security of personal information, especially of adolescents. Thus, the only information needed from students will be church affiliation, FIRST name, age, grade, gender, and email address for correspondence until the research is complete. **Neither LAST names nor addresses will be needed for individual participants.**

Finally, participating churches will be provided with results of the research at no cost. If you would be willing to participate in this important research or simply need more information about the study, please contact me by email at *****@gmail.com or by phone at ***-***-****. Thank you for your careful consideration regarding participation in this research.

Philip L. McKinney, II
Ph.D. Candidate
--**** (Cell)
*****@gmail.com

APPENDIX 2
MOTHER INVOLVEMENT AND SPIRITUAL
DEVELOPMENT SURVEY

Mother Involvement & Spiritual Development Survey [ONLINE]

Please read instructions before completing the survey.

This survey takes approximately 15 minutes to complete. Answer questions as honestly as you can. Complete all demographic data before beginning survey questions. All individuals under 18 years of age must have a parent's or guardian's permission before completing the survey. Please read and agree to the "Agreement to Participate" below before proceeding.

FOR MINORS

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to assess a mother's role in the spiritual formation of teens during the adolescent years. Philip L. McKinney II is conducting this survey for purposes of dissertation research. In this research, you will be asked to describe your mother and your relationship with her. You will also be asked questions to assess where you are at in regards to how you are growing spiritually. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential* and at no time will your name be reported or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By your completion of this *Mother Involvement and Spiritual Development Survey* and by checking the appropriate box below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

☐ I agree to participate

☐ I do not agree to participate

FOR PARENTS

Agreement to Participate

You are being requested to give permission for a minor or member of a vulnerable population under your legal supervision to participate in a study designed to assess a mother's role in the spiritual formation of teens during the adolescent years. Philip L. McKinney II is conducting this study for purposes of dissertation research. In this research, your minor will be asked to describe his or her mother and the relationship with her. The minor will also be asked questions to assess where he or she is at in regards to how he or she is growing spiritually. Any information provided will be held *strictly confidential* and at no time will a person's name be reported or name be identified with his or her responses. *Participation in this study is completely voluntary, and the person you are giving approval to participate in this study is free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By entering your email address below, you are giving informed consent for the designated minor or member of a vulnerable population to participate in this research if he or she desires.

Participant Name _____

Parent/Guardian Name _____

Parent/Guardian email _____

Date _____

Demographic Information

First name only: _____

Church that you attend: _____

Age: _____ Grade: _____ Gender: _____

City/Town: _____

Email Address: _____

MOTHER QUESTIONNAIRE

This short, anonymous questionnaire will help us to understand how adolescents feel about their mothers. Please complete the entire questionnaire. Basically, we want to know how you felt about your mother when you were growing up during childhood and adolescence.

Today, some children grow up with the same mother throughout their lives while others have more than one mother. If you had only one mother, the choice below is simple. However, if you had more than one mother, please answer the questionnaire for the mother who had the most influence on you during childhood and/or adolescence. Please check the box below for the mother you will be completing the questionnaire for.

- ☐ biological mother
- ☐ adoptive mother
- ☐ stepmother
- ☐ adoptive stepmother
- ☐ other mother figure (please specify) _____

Please answer the following questions from your perspective as an adolescent (considering both childhood through your current age) unless a particular age is specified in the question. Please answer for the mother checked above.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1. How much do you think your mother <u>enjoyed</u> being a mother?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> a great deal<input type="checkbox"/> very much<input type="checkbox"/> somewhat<input type="checkbox"/> a little<input type="checkbox"/> not at all <p>2. When you needed your mother's <u>support</u>, was she there for you?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> always there for me<input type="checkbox"/> often there for me<input type="checkbox"/> sometimes there for me<input type="checkbox"/> rarely there for me<input type="checkbox"/> never there for me <p>3. Did your mother have enough <u>energy</u> to meet your needs?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> always<input type="checkbox"/> often<input type="checkbox"/> sometimes<input type="checkbox"/> rarely<input type="checkbox"/> never <p>4. Did you feel that you could <u>confide in</u> (talk about important personal things with) your mother?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> always<input type="checkbox"/> often<input type="checkbox"/> sometimes<input type="checkbox"/> rarely<input type="checkbox"/> never | <p>5. Was your mother available to spend <u>time</u> with you in activities?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> always<input type="checkbox"/> often<input type="checkbox"/> sometimes<input type="checkbox"/> rarely<input type="checkbox"/> never <p>6. How emotionally <u>close</u> were you to your mother?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> extremely close<input type="checkbox"/> very close<input type="checkbox"/> somewhat close<input type="checkbox"/> a little close<input type="checkbox"/> not at all close <p>7. When you were an <u>adolescent</u> (teenager), how well did you get along with your mother?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> very well<input type="checkbox"/> well<input type="checkbox"/> ok<input type="checkbox"/> poorly<input type="checkbox"/> very poorly <p>8. Overall, how would you <u>rate</u> your mother?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> outstanding<input type="checkbox"/> very good<input type="checkbox"/> good<input type="checkbox"/> fair<input type="checkbox"/> poor <p>9. As you go through your day, does your mother <u>influence</u> your daily thoughts and feelings?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> always<input type="checkbox"/> often<input type="checkbox"/> sometimes<input type="checkbox"/> rarely<input type="checkbox"/> never |
|---|---|

MOTHER INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE

How involved was your mother
in the following aspects of
your life and development?

Please place the appropriate
number on the line before
each of the following items.

5. always involved
4. often involved
3. sometimes involved
2. rarely involved
1. never involved

What did you want your mother's
level of involvement to be
compared to what it actually was?

Please place the appropriate
number on the line after
each of the following items.

5. much more involved
4. a little more involved
3. it was just right
2. a little less involved
1. much less involved

10. _____ intellectual development _____
11. _____ emotional development _____
12. _____ social development _____
13. _____ ethical/moral development _____
14. _____ spiritual development _____
15. _____ physical development _____
16. _____ career development _____
17. _____ developing responsibility _____
18. _____ developing independence _____
19. _____ developing competence _____
20. _____ leisure/fun/play _____
21. _____ providing income _____
22. _____ sharing activities/interests _____
23. _____ mentoring/teaching _____
24. _____ caregiving _____
25. _____ being protective _____
26. _____ advising _____
27. _____ discipline _____
28. _____ school/homework _____
29. _____ companionship _____

SPIRITUAL FORMATION INVENTORY

Please respond to the following 74 questions. Each question contains a group of choices; select the one that best describes you. While responding, keep your focus on your current attitudes and behavior. Be as honest as possible.

Section 1

1. I desire to please and honor Jesus in all that I do. Do you:

- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐ Somewhat Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

2. How often do you set aside time for private worship, praise, or thanksgiving to God?

- ☐ Every Day ☐ A few times a week ☐ Once a week ☐ A few times a month
☐ Once a month ☐ Rarely / Never

3. Often during the worship part of the church service (singing or prayer), I find myself just “going through the motions.” Do you:

- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐ Somewhat Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

4. About how often, if at all, do you personally read the Bible? Do not include any times that are part of a church worship service.

- ☐ Every Day ☐ A few times a week ☐ Once a week ☐ A few times a month
☐ Once a month ☐ Rarely / Never

5. When I sing at church, my thoughts are usually focused right on God. Do you:

- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐ Somewhat Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

6. I often express praise and thanksgiving to God for who He is and for what He has done. Do you:

- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐ Somewhat Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

7. A Christian must learn to deny himself / herself in order to serve Christ Do you:

- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐ Somewhat Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

8. In the past six months, about how many times have you, personally, fasted (going without eating for a certain period of time to concentrate on prayer or meditation)?

- ☐ 10 or more times ☐ 6–9 times ☐ 3–5 times ☐ 1–2 times ☐ Zero

Section 2

1. If a person is sincerely seeking God, he / she can obtain eternal life through religions other than Christianity. Do you:

- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐ Somewhat Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

2. God is the all-knowing, all-powerful, perfect Deity who created the universe and still rules it today. Do you:

- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐ Somewhat Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

3. There is a literal place called Hell. Do you:

- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐ Somewhat Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

4. The Bible is the written Word of God and is totally accurate in all that it teaches. Do you:

- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐ Somewhat Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

5. About how often, if at all, do you personally study the Bible (more in-depth than just reading it)? Do not include any times that are part of a church worship service.

- ☐ Every Day ☐ A few times a week ☐ Once a week ☐ A few times a month
☐ Once a month ☐ Rarely / Never

6. The Bible is the authoritative source of truth and wisdom for daily living. Do you:

- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐ Somewhat Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

7. Jesus may have committed sins while in human form on earth. Do you:

- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐ Somewhat Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

8. The Bible teaches that participation in a local church is a necessity for any believer who desires to be truly obedient to God. Do you:

- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐ Somewhat Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

9. Jesus died on the cross and was physically resurrected from the dead. Do you:

- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐ Somewhat Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

10. We are all born with a sin nature. Do you:

- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐ Somewhat Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

11. I am open and responsive to those in my church who teach the Bible. Do you:

- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐ Somewhat Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

12. In the past six months, about how many times have you, personally, attended Sunday school or Christian education classes at your church?

☐10 or more times ☐6–9 times ☐3–5 times ☐1–2 times ☐Zero

13. How often do you memorize Scripture?

☐Every Day ☐A few times a week ☐Once a week ☐A few times a month
☐Once a month ☐Rarely / Never

14. Christ will return a second time to gather believers to Himself. Do you:

☐Strongly Agree ☐Somewhat Agree ☐Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐Somewhat Disagree ☐Strongly Disagree

15. Satan is a real being, not just a symbol of evil. Do you:

☐Strongly Agree ☐Somewhat Agree ☐Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐Somewhat Disagree ☐Strongly Disagree

16. I tend to accept the constructive criticism and correction of other Christians. Do you:

☐Strongly Agree ☐Somewhat Agree ☐Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐Somewhat Disagree ☐Strongly Disagree

Section 3

1. With reference to my values and priorities, I can honestly say that I try to put God first in my life. Do you:

- ☐Strongly Agree ☐Somewhat Agree ☐Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐Somewhat Disagree ☐Strongly Disagree

2. I am generally a different person in public than I am in private. Do you:

- ☐Strongly Agree ☐Somewhat Agree ☐Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐Somewhat Disagree ☐Strongly Disagree

3. When I come to realize some aspect of my life is not right in God's eyes, I make the necessary changes. Do you:

- ☐Strongly Agree ☐Somewhat Agree ☐Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐Somewhat Disagree ☐Strongly Disagree

4. I have made a serious attempt to discover God's will for my life. Do you:

- ☐Strongly Agree ☐Somewhat Agree ☐Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐Somewhat Disagree ☐Strongly Disagree

5. How often over the past six months have you made a decision to obey or follow God with an awareness that choosing His way might be costly to you in some way?

- ☐10 or more times ☐6–9 times ☐3–5 times ☐1–2 times ☐Zero

6. I try to avoid situations in which I might be tempted to think or do immoral things. Do you:

- ☐Strongly Agree ☐Somewhat Agree ☐Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐Somewhat Disagree ☐Strongly Disagree

7. When I realize that I have a choice between "my way" and "God's way," I usually choose my way. Do you:

- ☐Strongly Agree ☐Somewhat Agree ☐Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐Somewhat Disagree ☐Strongly Disagree

8. Have you been baptized?

- ☐Yes ☐No

9. Reading and studying the Bible has NOT made significant changes in the way that I live my life. Do you:

- ☐Strongly Agree ☐Somewhat Agree ☐Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐Somewhat Disagree ☐Strongly Disagree

Section 4

1. The fruit of the Spirit (love, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, etc.) is evidence of a genuine relationship with God. Do you:

- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐ Somewhat Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

2. I consistently give financially to God's purposes even if I am not sure I have enough money. Do you:

- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐ Somewhat Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

3. Have you ever identified your primary spiritual gifts, as defined in the Bible? This might be done through a class, a spiritual gifts inventory, or another process.

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

4. In the past six months, about how many times have you, personally, attended a worship service at your church?

- ☐ 10 or more times ☐ 6–9 times ☐ 3–5 times ☐ 1–2 times ☐ Zero

5. Do you give 10 percent or more of your pretax income to charities, church, or ministries?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

6. How often do you set aside time for prayer of any kind?

- ☐ Every Day ☐ A few times a week ☐ Once a week ☐ A few times a month
☐ Once a month ☐ Rarely / Never

7. I regularly use my gifts and talents to serve / help people in need who are not part of my church. Do you:

- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐ Somewhat Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

8. Do you currently volunteer your time to serve in any capacity or role within your church?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

9. It is necessary for a Christian's spiritual well-being to give time on a regular basis to some specific ministry within his / her church. Do you:

- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐ Somewhat Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Section 5

1. How often during the past six months have you shared with someone how to become a Christian?

☐10 or more times ☐6–9 times ☐3–5 times ☐1–2 times ☐Zero

2. It is every Christian's responsibility to share the Gospel with non-Christians. Do you:

☐Strongly Agree ☐Somewhat Agree ☐Neither Agree nor Disagree

☐Somewhat Disagree ☐Strongly Disagree

3. I feel comfortable that I can share my belief in Christ to someone else effectively. Do you:

☐Strongly Agree ☐Somewhat Agree ☐Neither Agree nor Disagree

☐Somewhat Disagree ☐Strongly Disagree

4. How often do you pray for the spiritual status of people you know who are not professing Christians?

☐Every Day ☐A few times a week ☐Once a week ☐A few times a month

☐Once a month ☐Rarely / Never

5. You have a personal responsibility to share your religious beliefs about Jesus Christ with non-Christians. Do you:

☐Strongly Agree ☐Somewhat Agree ☐Neither Agree nor Disagree

☐Somewhat Disagree ☐Strongly Disagree

6. While interacting with others on a normal, daily basis, I seek opportunities to speak out about Jesus Christ. Do you:

☐Strongly Agree ☐Somewhat Agree ☐Neither Agree nor Disagree

☐Somewhat Disagree ☐Strongly Disagree

7. How often during the past six months have you invited an unchurched person to attend a church service or some other program at your church?

☐10 or more times ☐6–9 times ☐3–5 times ☐1–2 times ☐Zero

Section 6

1. How often do you pray for your church and / or church leaders?

- ☐Every Day ☐A few times a week ☐Once a week ☐A few times a month
☐Once a month ☐Rarely / Never

2. During difficult circumstances, I sometimes doubt that God loves me and will provide for my life. Do you:

- ☐Strongly Agree ☐Somewhat Agree ☐Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐Somewhat Disagree ☐Strongly Disagree

3. Christians must continually work toward their salvation or risk losing it. Do you:

- ☐Strongly Agree ☐Somewhat Agree ☐Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐Somewhat Disagree ☐Strongly Disagree

4. About how often, if at all, do you personally pray in a group with other Christians? Do not include any times that are part of a church worship service.

- ☐Every Day ☐A few times a week ☐Once a week ☐A few times a month
☐Once a month ☐Rarely / Never

5. About how often, if at all, do you personally confess your sins and wrongdoings to God and ask for forgiveness? Do not include any times that are part of a church worship service.

- ☐Every Day ☐A few times a week ☐Once a week ☐A few times a month
☐Once a month ☐Rarely / Never

6. I express praise and gratitude to God even in difficult circumstances. Do you:

- ☐Strongly Agree ☐Somewhat Agree ☐Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐Somewhat Disagree ☐Strongly Disagree

7. I believe everything I have belongs to God. Do you:

- ☐Strongly Agree ☐Somewhat Agree ☐Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐Somewhat Disagree ☐Strongly Disagree

8. My life is often filled with anxiety and worry. Do you:

- ☐Strongly Agree ☐Somewhat Agree ☐Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐Somewhat Disagree ☐Strongly Disagree

9. You have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in your life today. Do you:

- ☐Strongly Agree ☐Somewhat Agree ☐Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐Somewhat Disagree ☐Strongly Disagree

10. I believe that although He wants me to grow and improve, God has still accepted me as I am today and has forgiven me of my sin. Do you:

- ☐Strongly Agree ☐Somewhat Agree ☐Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐Somewhat Disagree ☐Strongly Disagree

11. Your Christian faith is very important in your life today. Do you:

- ☐Strongly Agree ☐Somewhat Agree ☐Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐Somewhat Disagree ☐Strongly Disagree

12. I believe that God has a purpose for all events in my life, regardless of whether I perceive each event as being good or bad. Do you:

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐ Somewhat Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

13. Eternal salvation is possible through God's grace alone; nothing we do can earn salvation. Do you:

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐ Somewhat Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Section 7

1. A Christian should consider himself / herself accountable to other Christians. Do you:

- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐ Somewhat Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

2. When I am wronged by others, I often have trouble responding with a forgiving attitude.

Do you:

- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐ Somewhat Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

3. I have developed significant relationships with people at my church. Do you:

- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐ Somewhat Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

4. I feel sorrow and regret when I realize I have sinned. Do you:

- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐ Somewhat Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

5. I generally DO NOT share personal things, such as feelings, joys, struggles, and needs, with my Christian friends. Do you:

- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐ Somewhat Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

6. I intentionally make time in my schedule to fellowship and interact with other believers.

Do you:

- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐ Somewhat Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

7. Spiritual matters DO NOT tend to come up as a normal part of my daily conversations with other Christians. Do you:

- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐ Somewhat Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

8. I intentionally spend time building friendships with non-Christians for the purpose of sharing Christ with them. Do you:

- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐ Somewhat Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

9. Many people who know me are not aware that I am a Christian. Do you:

- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐ Somewhat Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

10. When I become aware that I have wronged someone, I go to that person to admit and correct my wrongdoing. Do you:

- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐ Somewhat Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

11. I am careful in my relationships to avoid being influenced by people or situations that may negatively impact my Christian values and principles. Do you:

- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐ Somewhat Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

12. I am hesitant to let others know that I am a Christian. Do you:

- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐ Somewhat Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

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ABSTRACT

ADOLESCENT CHRISTIAN FORMATION AND MOTHER NURTURANCE AND INVOLVEMENT: MIXED METHODS STUDY

Philip Lee McKinney II, Ph.D.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013
Chair: Dr. Timothy Paul Jones

This research study was an examination of the relationship between mother nurturance and involvement and the Christian formation of adolescents. Mother involvement was measured according to the adolescent's perception in twenty domains of motherhood. Eight domains of Christian formation were evaluated using the Spiritual Formation Inventory (SFI) developed by Brad Waggoner. The literature review includes a biblical theological foundation for motherhood, mother nurturance and involvement literature, and an examination of adolescence. The chasm between the sociological and biblical theological fields of research was bridged through the presentation of mutual perspectives on adolescent development.

The research produced several important results. First, the results suggest that mother nurturance was significantly correlated with all SFI domains/subscales except with the Building Relationship domain and the overall SFI score. Second, the results suggest that higher perceived mother involvement could lead to significant increases in SFI subscales and overall SFI scores. Third, the results suggest that desired mother involvement was not significantly related with SFI subscales/domains and the overall SFI. Fourth, the results imply that males have, on average, higher overall SFI scores than females. Fifth, with age, gradual decreases in the Seeking God, Building Relationship, and Doctrine domains/subscales scores were observed as age increases. Similar

observations were found for the overall SFI score. This appears to consistently be a direct consequence of age. The effect of type of adolescence was also observed to be significant for such domains (that is, early adolescents had higher scores in these domains than late adolescents).

Finally, the qualitative interviews suggested five common themes from the respondents' answers: (1) "She was there for me when I needed her," (2) "She helped shape my character," (3) "She taught me how to live," (4) "She helped shape my faith," and (5) "She was supportive of me." Though answers varied, the three central themes were presence, support, and teaching.

Key Words: Adolescent, Adolescence, Spiritual Development, Christian Formation, Mother Involvement, Mother Nurturance, Mothering, Youth Ministry, Parenting, Spiritual Formation, Teen, Teenager

VITA

Philip Lee McKinney II

EDUCATIONAL

GED, Bentonville, Arkansas

B.A., Harding University, Searcy, Arkansas, 1997

M.A., Harding School of Theology, Memphis, Tennessee, 2004

MINISTERIAL

Youth Minister (Volunteer), Bentonville Church of Christ, Bentonville, Arkansas, 1993–1995

Youth & Family Minister, Downtown Church of Christ, Searcy, Arkansas, 1995–2008

Spiritual Formation/Student Minister, Fairfax Church of Christ, Fairfax, Virginia, 2008–

ACADEMIC

Adjunct Professor, Harding University, Searcy, AR, Fall 2000/Spring 2001

Adjunct Professor, Harding University, Searcy, AR, Fall 2011–

Adjunct Professor, Toccoa Falls College, Toccoa Falls, GA, 2012–

Adjunct Professor, Harding School of Theology, Memphis, TN, 2013–

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