

GROWING IN FAVOR WITH GOD: YOUNG CHILDREN'S SPIRITUAL  
DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

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Experts do not agree on the definition of spiritual development although positive spiritual development benefits society in many ways. Without agreement on the definition of spiritual development and a common understanding of spiritual development, parents, teachers, and pastors who are entrusted with the task of fostering positive spiritual development in Christian settings face the challenges of determining what spiritual development is (definition), the desired goals (culmination) of spiritual development, and the most effective ways to meet those goals (context and content). The purpose of this study was to use data, from the social sciences and Christian points of view, to inform Christian education programs and arrive at recommendations for fostering young children's spiritual development. Data sources include textual literature from the social science and Christian points of view. In addition, the researcher gathered interview data from twenty children's pastors. Research results included: 1. It is possible that spirituality is associated with sensory awareness. 2. Examining spirituality as sensory awareness may lead to focusing on innate qualities of spiritual capacity with a more focused inclusion of children with special needs in faith-based programs, a God-given conscience, and consideration that children may be born with spiritual gifts to express their spiritual nature. 3. Congregations/parishes under utilize intergenerational activities, time for quiet and reflection, and opportunities to talk to children about spiritual matters.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

It was quite a somber event with the family gathered around the bedside of the failing grandfather. The family members talked in hushed tones as they looked helplessly on, wondering how to bring comfort and how to ease the imminent passing of this beloved man. One hardly noticed the little 3 ½ year old great grandson as he crawled quietly onto the bed along with his favorite baby quilt. Without a word he began to spread the small satin-edged quilt over great grandfather. He whispered, “Here, Grandpa, do you want my cover?” A hush fell over the room, but only for a moment as the mother hurriedly removed the child from the bed so as not to jostle Grandpa. This extraordinary occasion passed with hardly a notice.

Years later, as this researcher reflected on children’s spiritual development, this event came to mind. Here was a young child willing to share his favorite baby quilt to comfort his dying great grandfather. This is a perfect demonstration of the spiritual nature demonstrated by a young child. After all, sharing and giving comfort are signs of positive spiritual development even though these signs of spiritual development are not expected in a child who is so young. The possibility of a young child comprehending abstract ideas of empathy and comfort along with the sharing of a precious quilt contradicts theorists in the field of faith and religious development who identify young children as preresligious, premoral, and mystic in their thinking (Goldman, 1964; Kohlberg, 1984; Piaget, 1929). One is thus led to conclude that the young boy could not have possibly been showing characteristics of spiritual development. That

conclusion seems to be counterintuitive, since there are other examples of young children who demonstrate spirituality (Cavalletti, 1992; Coles, 1990).

While spirituality is considered to be an innate quality (Coles, 1990; Hay, Reich & Utsch, 2006), stage theories also posit young children as deficient in spiritual ability. The research on religious education by both Piaget and Goldman led to restrictions on what young children should be taught. In the United States, Piaget's "developmental stages" continue to impact religious education today (Gottlieb, 2006).

Coupled with the perception that young children are incapable of expressing their spiritual nature are the definitional controversies surrounding spiritual development. It is common to hear a concert, a ball game, a relationship, all described as a spiritual experience. Using the term spiritual to describe these dissimilar events is one of the ways that the definition of spiritual is changing in modern society (Hay, 2006).

Other pertinent theories, as well as stage theories impact the study of child spirituality, and the way religious education is viewed today (Roehlkepartain, Benson, King, & Wagener (Eds.), 2006b). These theories center on the context of learning. Ecological systems theory, (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), defines context as "nested arrangement of concentric structures, each contained within the next (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 19). The child is influenced by the activities and interactions in the immediate surroundings, which might include family, school, and church. Not only is the child influenced by the immediate activities and interactions; the family, school, and church also interact with each other and in turn influence the child. For instance, the parent's dedication to the church will influence the child. Outside influences also come to bear on the family, school, and church, such as the parent's work context. Finally, culture and

society influence the child as well. The context for this study of child spirituality includes the role of parents, teachers, children's ministry programs, congregational settings, and culture and society.

Another prevalent learning theory, socio-cultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978), emphasizes the connection between the learner and the environment, with an emphasis on social interaction in learning. The mental tools, such as language, writing, body language, symbols, and art, work together to expand mental capacities. Learning is accomplished through social interactions with others. In Vygotsky's theory, learning takes place in the zone of proximal development, which is described as the place between what the child can do now and where the child can be with assistance from an adult or more capable peer (Vygotsky, 1978). This theory is relevant to study on child spirituality in that it examines the role of parents, teachers, pastors, and others in the context of learning and emphasizes the role of interaction with the child.

Parental influence is a part of the context in which children learn. Early attachment of the child with the parent (Bowlby, 1969) is predictive of the child's concept of God (Tamminen, 1994). Even as children go to church and interact with other adults, including teachers, their primary attachment remains to parents and primary caregivers (Granqvist, 2006).

The influence of learning theory on Christian education is an example of how ecological systems work together to influence the child. As the study of child spirituality becomes more prevalent, the relevance of these learning theories is taken into question (Hay, 2006).

At the same time, in the field of Christian education, there is an apparent lack of biblical studies on children although children and family are mentioned 8,000 times in the Bible (Zuck, 1996, p.13). The Bible places children in a positive light and as models for those who desire to enter into the Kingdom of God (Matthew 18:3-4; Mark 9:36; Luke 9:46, New International Version (NIV)). Those who influence children to sin are accountable for those actions, although the responsibility of the child is not discussed (Mark 9:42; Matthew 18:6). The value placed on children by society around 30 A. D. is exemplified by the disciple's reaction when children came to see Jesus. The disciples rebuked the parents. However, Jesus received the children, "Let the little children come to me, do not forbid them for of such is the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:15; Luke 18:15; Mark 10:15). Jesus recognized the value of children to their parents as evidenced by several children being healed and raised from the dead (Matthew 9:25; Matthew 17:18; Luke 7:11; Luke 4:47; John 4:43). At least two children were filled with God's Spirit from birth (Matthew 1:24; Luke 1:26; Luke 1:15).

Social science research on child spirituality tends to focus on the nature of spirituality, not on how to nurture spirituality (Nye, 2006). Little research exists on young children's spirituality, especially children who are three years old (Morgenthaler, 1999; Ratcliff, 1988). Just as the stage theorists posit children as deficient in ability to experience God (Goldman, 1964; Kohlberg, 1984; Piaget, 1929), other research studies and accounts find that children have innate spiritual capacity and a desire to know more about the Divine (Berryman, 1991; Cavelletti, 1992; Hardy, 1979).

Consequently, religious educators who want to have developmentally sound programs for young children while at the same time effectively fostering positive spiritual



development in young children face several challenges. These include 1) definitional controversies, 2) popularity of spirituality and spiritual development in the culture, 3) lack of research on biblical perspectives of spiritual development in young children, and 4) lack of research on children's spirituality in the social sciences.

#### Need for the Study

Spirituality, along with spiritual development, may become the next major theme in child and adolescent development (Roehlkepartain, King, Wagener, & Benson, 2006a). The recent growing popularity of spirituality and spiritual development in the social sciences as well as the increased interest in child spirituality in the medical field is due to the work of Harold Koenig and David Larson that ties religion to health benefits and greater life satisfaction, happiness, positive affect, and morale (Koenig, McCullough, & Larson, 2001). Other evidence of the increased interest in spirituality are special issues of peer-reviewed journals including *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, *Review of Religious Research*, *Journal of Health Psychology*, *Journal of Personality*, and *American Psychologist* (Mills, 2002), were published along with an increased number of medical journal articles (Thoresen, 1999), and a chapter on spiritual development in the 6<sup>th</sup> edition of *Handbook of Child Psychology* (Oser, Scarlett, & Bucher, 2006), among others.

Other evidence of the increased attention to spirituality includes recent reviews of literature about child and adolescent religion and spirituality (Hay, Nye, & Murphy, 1996; Miller & Thoresen, 2003; Mills, 2002). The year 2000 marked the beginning of the International Child spirituality Conference in Great Britain and the year 2003 marked the

beginning of the Child Spirituality Conference in the United States, which meets every three years.

Much of the current popularity of spirituality and spiritual development is due to the documented outcomes of positive spiritual development, including resilience (Crawford, Wright, & Masten, 2006; Werner, 1996), moral integrity (Blakeney & Blakeney, 2006), well-being and thriving (Bridges & Anderson, 2002), physical health (Koenig, McCullough, & Larson, 2001), positive coping skills (Werner, 1995), knowing God (Galatians 4:8-9), eternal life (John 3:16, John 3:34) and love displayed toward fellowman (Matthew 19:19; Romans 3:10; I John 3:16; I John 4:21).

#### Definitional Controversies

First, an examination of definitional controversies reveals the dichotomy of two definitions: one from the social science point of view, and the other from the biblical point of view. Both definitions (childspirituality.org, 2003; Benson, Roehlkepartain, & Rude, 2003) and the resulting volumes (Ratcliff, 2004; Roehlkepartain, 2006) present a picture of child spirituality in the United States today. In an effort to move spiritual development in childhood and adolescence to a mainstream field of inquiry, a definition proposed by Roehlkepartian (Benson, Roehlkepartain, & Rude, 2003), includes both the *secular*, defined as worldly, and the *sacred*, defined as belonging to a religion or a religious ritual,

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. (Benson, et al., 2003, pp. 205-206),

The Search Institute, funded by the John Templeton Foundation, published two volumes, *The Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence* (Roehlkepartain et al., 2006b), designed to map the state of spiritual development in the social sciences and *Nurturing Child and Adolescent Spirituality: Perspectives from the World's Religious Traditions* (Yust, Johnson, Sasso, & Roehlkepartain, 2006), designed to form a foundation of theological knowledge on spirituality in the first two decades of life. Taken together, over 100 scholars from multiple disciplines contributed to these foundational volumes to present theory, quantitative and qualitative research, and proposals for the future study of spiritual development. Both volumes present a picture of the climate of child spirituality from the social science point of view.

In June 2003, Christian researchers, scholars, teachers, and leaders met in Chicago to discuss spirituality in children. Three specific objectives were stated for the Child Spirituality Conference:

1. Networking Christians who are currently conducting research and writing on children's spiritual development and spiritual formation, thus providing a means for sharing research related to the topic.
2. Providing a forum for the integration of biblical, theological, and social science perspectives on children's spiritual experiences, development, and formation.
3. Exploring innovative approaches in children's ministry and providing encouragement to those who oversee and participate in ministry to children.

(Ratcliff , 2004, p. 8)

The planning team formulated a definition of children's spirituality,

Children's spirituality is the child's development of a conscious relationship with God, in Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit, within the context of a community of believers that fosters that relationship, as well as the understanding of – and response to – that relationship (childspirituality, 2003).

*Children's Spirituality: Christian Perspectives, Research, and Applications* (Ratcliff, 2004) is a compilation of 22 of the more than 50 conference presentations from the 2003 Child Spirituality Conference, held in Chicago, Illinois in June 2003. The emergence of this volume provides a picture of the climate of child's spirituality from the Christian perspective.

Although a heightened public awareness of spiritual development in childhood and adolescence is apparent and the results of positive spiritual development are worth pursuing, there remains one missing element that is vital to the understanding of spiritual development. That missing element is a definition of spiritual development on which experts across the disciplines can agree. Rebecca Nye (1999), a leading expert in children's spirituality, cautions: "Attempts to define [spirituality] closely, and derive an adequate 'operational definition' can be sure of one thing: misrepresenting spirituality's complexity, depth and fluidity" (p.58). The hesitancy to define spiritual development contributes to confusion as noted by Ratcliff (2004) during the 2003 Child Spirituality Conference. ". . . one individual . . . complained that this lack of a definition made things very confusing, and that presenters and participants were talking about very different things when they were talking about spirituality" (p.9).

This confusion regarding what constitutes spiritual development is apparent in the general public as well as in the clergy (Barna, 2006). Among the *12 Most Significant Religious Findings from 2006 Surveys*, four noteworthy outcomes regarding spirituality and spiritual development are:

1) Although large majorities of the public claim to be ‘deeply spiritual’ and say that their religious faith is ‘very important’ in their life, only 15% of those who regularly attend a Christian church ranked their relationship with God as a priority in their life. (p. 1)

2) Evaluating spiritual maturity remains an elusive process for clergy as well as individuals. Across the nation, the only measure of spiritual health used by at least half of all pastors was the extent of volunteer activity or ministry involvement. (p. 2)

3) Seven out of ten parents say that they are effective at developing the spiritual maturity of their children, but the survey among 8-to-12-year-olds discovered that only one-third of them say a church has made ‘a positive difference’ in their life. (p. 2)

4) Relatively few people – just one out of every six – believe that spiritual maturity is meant to be developed within the context of a local church or within a community of faith. (pp. 3-4)

Among patterns that are visible, Barna reports that

. . . people do not have an accurate view of themselves when it comes to spirituality. The fact that few people take the time to evaluate their spiritual journey, or to develop benchmarks or indicators of their spiritual health, facilitates

a distorted view of the prominence and purity of faith in their lives. Americans are spiritually lukewarm. Very limited effort is devoted to spiritual growth. Most Americans experience 'accidental spiritual growth' since there is generally no plan or process other than showing up at a church and absorbing a few ideas here and there. Even then, few people have a defined understanding of what they are hoping to become, as followers of Christ. (p. 3)

The confusion proliferates when attempts are made to add definitions from various religious traditions to the equation. Consequently, the focus of this study is the Christian religion since worldwide and in the United States, the majority of the population is Christian. Adherents.com (2007a) reports that, as of 2005, the five major religions of the world with the greatest number of adherents are: Christianity with 33%, Islam with 21%, Secular/Nonreligious with 16%, Hinduism with 14%, and Chinese traditional religion with 12% (p. 1). The five largest religious groups according to the number of adherents in the United States as of 2005 are: Christianity with 224,437,959, Nonreligious/Secular with 38,865,604, Judaism with 3,995,371, Islam with 1,558,068, and Buddhism with 1,527,019 (p. 2).

As the family and congregations/parishes, which include parents, teachers, administrators, and pastors, take on the important responsibility of guiding children in spiritual development, definition and clarity are essential for positive outcomes. Thus, in addition to the social science point of view, spiritual development is examined from the biblical (Christian) point of view. The biblical point of view, which has been centuries in the making, serves to avoid theological controversies regarding children (Allen, 2006). Although the Bible has 8000 references to children (Zuck, 1996), there are relatively few

biblical studies on children. One reason for this lack of attention to children may be a reflection of society's view of children (Bunge, 2001). The Bible is one of the most authoritative Christian sources of information pertinent to spiritual development and the spiritual nature of man and is most commonly overlooked in mainstream definitional discussions. The Bible is the all-time best seller in the world and the ultimate authority for the majority of religious adherents worldwide, noting that the majority of religious adherents worldwide are Christian (Adherents.com, 2007a).

Lack of research in the social sciences regarding the spiritual development of young children is partly due to a quandary about effective research methods with young children (Benson, Scales, Sesma, & Roehlkepartain, 2005; Nye, 2004). It is very difficult to assess children who cannot adequately put their spiritual experiences into words (Hay, 2006). Consequently, much of the research on child spirituality does not study children directly, but studies aspects of spiritual development in the child's environment (Boyatzis & Newman, 2004). Also, by viewing the child with preconceived ideas about what they can and cannot do, it is very possible to overlook evidence of spiritual growth and development (Fowler, 2006). Remember the example of the young boy and the quilt? The sharing, empathy, and comfort displayed by the young child are far beyond those qualities displayed in many adults (Knowles, 2008).

#### Statement of the problem

Experts do not agree on the definition of spiritual development although positive spiritual development benefits society and children in many ways (Koenig, 2008; Roehlkepartain et al., 2006b, p. 399)). Without agreement on the definition of spiritual development and without a common understanding of spiritual development; parents,

teachers, administrators, and pastors who are entrusted with the task of fostering children's positive spiritual development in Christian settings face the challenges of determining what spiritual development is (definition), the desired goals (culmination) of spiritual development, and the most effective ways to reach these goals (contexts and content). Furthermore, Christian educators choose from religious education materials that have little research base as a foundation on the nature of child spirituality, the characteristics of children who are developing in a positive spiritual manner, the most effective contexts to foster spiritual development, and the content that must be taught to foster positive spiritual development (Bunge, 2004).

Consequently, comparing and contrasting definitional conflicts related to spiritual development from two perspectives: the social sciences point of view and the biblical point of view will help identify commonalities of spiritual development, which, in turn may serve as a basis to clarify additional aspects of children's spiritual development. Also the clarification will serve as a means for determining what should be taught to young children to foster their spiritual development (content), the environment in which positive spiritual development is most likely to occur (context); the characteristics of young children who are making positive spiritual development (assessment); and the end goal of positive spiritual development (culmination).

#### Assumptions

There are several underlying assumptions of this study which drive the decision to use the social sciences and the Bible for comparison and to accomplish the comparison by scrutinizing four categories: content of spiritual development, context of



spiritual development, characteristics of spiritual development, and culmination of spiritual development. The underlying assumptions are:

1. Spiritual development proceeds along a sacred or secular path and can become positive or negative on the sacred or secular path of development (Blakeney & Blakeney, 2006; Romans 1:25).
2. The social sciences and the Bible make valuable contributions to the field of spiritual development (Nye, 2004; II Timothy 3:16).
3. The two areas of definitional focus, i.e., social sciences and biblical, have common features as well as unique features.
4. A biblical perspective is intended to be more simplistic and basic than a Christian perspective, in that the biblical perspective does not involve doctrine, creeds, and man-made traditions. It is understood that a Christian perspective is a biblical perspective. Taking a biblical perspective assumes that the Bible holds truth and is viewed as a unified whole, and that biblical truth is simplistic enough for people of all ages and intellectual capacities to understand.

Also, it will be helpful to explain the researcher's preconceived ideas about spiritual development and reveal their source since, ideally, a researcher should be free from bias (Gadamer, 1989). Preconceived ideas come from being raised by Christian parents, serving in the organized church and religious education, being a parent, and teaching kindergarten in the public schools. It is impossible to be completely free from these life influences as a researcher. However, after recognizing these prejudices, it is possible to use one's perspective for effective understanding of the subject being researched. In this case, the research is not designed to prove or disprove religious

teaching, but to investigate ways to foster positive spiritual development in young children through Christian education. Preconceived ideas on the part of the researcher that relate to this study are: (a) Spiritual development is manifest in obedience to God (I Samuel 15:22; Matthew 22:37-39; Matthew 28:20), and in love toward other humans (Matthew 22:37-39; Philippians 2:4; I John 2:9; I John 4:20-21); (b) spiritual development is a process of discernable change (Hebrews 5:7 - 6:3; Titus 1:16; I Peter 2:2; II Peter 1:5-8); (c) those people who are making positive spiritual development will exhibit certain pro-social qualities (Galatians 5:22; I Peter 2:12) and those who are making negative spiritual development will display certain anti-social qualities (I Timothy 3:2); and (d) knowing God and eternal life are goals of spiritual development (John 3:16; John 11:25-26).

#### Significance of the Study

One could hardly imagine defining a field of inquiry without defining the field. For instance, imagine the field of child development without a definition of child development, an understanding of how children develop, or a description of expected progress. The same is true of children's spiritual development. Defining the exact nature of child spirituality sets boundaries for inquiry, promotes common understandings among spiritual development researchers, and contributes to the application of spiritual development research across the disciplines. Additionally, it provides a foundation for practitioners to determine important aspects of the curriculum used in Christian settings. The spiritual characteristics of young children along with the intended outcome of spiritual development (culmination) determine the content of religious programs and the environment (context) in which the positive spiritual development is most likely to occur.

This study adds to the knowledge base by harmonizing information from the social sciences and biblical points of view; views that are usually perceived as being in direct opposition to each other. In the case of this research study, harmonizing information involves comparing social science research and theories with biblical perspective since this research study is designed for those entrusted with the spiritual development of children in Christian settings for the purpose of curriculum planning. Content, context, characteristics, and culmination of spiritual development are areas of focus in this research study from both the social science and biblical point of view.

As an example of how this information might be harmonized, consider the area of context in which spiritual development occurs. Context, or environment, plays an important role in spiritual development from the social sciences perspective through the influence of ethnicity, culture, and race (Mattis, Ahluwalia, Cowie, & Kirkland-Harris, 2004), family and parenting (Boyatzis, Dollahite, & Marks, 2006), mentors, friends, gurus (Schwartz, Bukowski, & Aoki, 2006), and congregations (Roehlkepartain & Patel, 2006). Environment is also an important influence on spiritual development from a biblical perspective in the form of family and parenting (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4). Factors of ethnicity, culture, race, mentors, friends, and congregations are not separate factors for the Jewish people of the Old Testament or for Christian people of the New Testament (Galatians 3:28). The results of taking the research from the social sciences on family and parenting and comparing it to the biblical perspective on family and parenting is a greater understanding of how the social science and the biblical perspectives work together.

Information from the other areas of focus in this study such as characteristics of spiritual development, content of spiritual development, and culmination of spiritual development can be treated in the same manner, that being, finding the themes from the social science perspective and from the biblical perspective and then comparing those themes. It is very important to note that there are times that social science and biblical views are not easily harmonized and in fact, attempting to so will not serve to advance positive spiritual development in young children due to the nature of children's spirituality.

### Research Questions

Social science has, and continues to influence religious education in the United States today (Bunge, 2004; Gottlieb, 2006). In order to investigate the influence of social science on the climate of Christian education and practices regarding positive spiritual development in young children, the research questions are broad in scope in order to gain as much information about as many aspects of children's spirituality as possible.

- 1) What is the definition and end goal (culmination) of spiritual development?
- 2) What are the characteristics of spiritual development in young children?
- 3) What contexts foster positive spiritual growth in young children?
- 4) What content must be taught to foster positive spiritual growth in young children?

## Delimitations

This study compares information from social sciences and from a biblical perspective. The biblical view represents Christianity, which is the most prominent religion in the United States. The biblical viewpoint is chosen for comparison purposes instead of Christianity in an effort to avoid controversial issues regarding doctrine and theology which center on the definition of sin and baptism (Bunge, 2001). The Bible holds pertinent information regarding spiritual development and is useful for several purposes. "All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." (II Timothy 3:16) The Bible is also considered to be the ultimate authority for Christians.

The study is designed to gain information on the basic aspects of spiritual development, including content, context, characteristics, and culmination of spiritual development and to present the findings in a simple but useful manner for greater understanding in the field of children's spiritual development. This study did not look into other major world religions, since the researcher does not assume that Western religious thought applies readily to other major world religions and attempting to do so would do an injustice to those traditions.

## Definition of Terms

Terms used throughout this research study are defined as follows:

*Characteristics* of spiritual development are the defining traits of those who are developing in a positive or negative spiritual manner (Galatians 5:22-23)

*Content* of spiritual development is the knowledge, both cognitive and experiential that children must understand to develop in a positive spiritual manner. Content is organized into curriculum, which is specifically “how and what knowledge is acquired and how it should be paced, sequenced, and assessed” (Young, 2008, p. 7).

*Context* of spiritual development is the interrelated conditions or environment in which spiritual development occurs. The environment includes people as well as materials. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Montessori, 1965).

*Culmination* of spiritual development is the final outcome or end goal of spiritual development toward which effort is directed.

*Phenomena* are observable facts or events.

*Resilience* refers to positive patterns of adaptation or development manifested by individuals who have experienced a heavy burden of risky or adverse conditions (Crawford, Wright, & Masten, 2006).

*Sacred* refers to things set apart for service or worship of a deity. More commonly, this phrase is used in the social sciences literature to mean something that is highly valued or important according to individual preference (Durkheim, 1995).

*Schema* is a mental codification of experience that includes a particular organized way of perceiving cognitively and responding to a complex situation or set of stimuli.

*Secular* relates to the temporal or worldly (Durkheim, 1995).

*Spiritual development* is the life-long process in response to an awareness of a relationship to God.

## Summary

The study of child spirituality and spiritual development is of increasing interest due to the ties between religion and its positive effect on mental and physical health (Koenig, 2008). In order to frame the field of child spirituality for further study, four areas warrant additional attention; definition and goals of spiritual development (culmination) of spiritual development, the characteristics of spiritual development in young children, the contexts in which positive spiritual development occurs, and the content that children must be taught to develop in a positive spiritual manner.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Review of literature encompasses both historical and current readings and research regarding child spirituality from the social science and biblical (Christian) perspectives. These readings and research are organized around definitional controversies of spiritual development, which includes culmination or the end goal of spiritual development; characteristics of spiritual development that include the spiritual nature of mankind, and specifically, the spiritual nature of young children; the context of spiritual development which are the environments in which spiritual development occurs; and the content of what children should know for positive spiritual development. These particular areas are included in the review of literature as a historical and contextual foundation for the study.

#### Historical Background of the Study of Spiritual Development

The historical background of the study of spiritual development serves as a framework to show how the study of religion and the study of child spirituality relate to the social sciences. Pioneers in the social sciences, G. Stanley Hall, Max Weber, William James, and Emile Durkheim considered spirituality and religiousness to be an integral part of the social sciences (Lerner, 2002). William James has the distinction of being the founding father of the psychology of religion. James recognized “that religion had both institutional aspects such as belief systems and rituals as well as experiential aspects such as feeling, perception and sensation” (“Timeline of development theory”,



n. d., p. 1). From the social scientists perspective, Christianity is a subcategory of religion, which is a subcategory of the social sciences.

Little attention was given to religion and spirituality during much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Benson, Roehlkepartain, & Rude, 2003; Roehlkepartain, et al., 2004) and to spiritual development in childhood (Nye, 1999). The apparent neglect of the spiritual and religion in the social sciences came as a result of bias against religion (Wulff, 1997). Only in recent years has spirituality and spiritual development received much public attention along with increased scholarly examination of the topic (Ratcliff, 2004). This attention is due to the documented benefits of spiritual well-being. (Emmons & Paloutzian, 2003; Koenig, McCullough, & Larson, 2001; Larson, Swyers, & McCullough, 1998; Matthews, 2004).

#### *First Four Phases in Children's Spirituality Research*

The scholarly examination of the spiritual development of children is also a neglected area in the field of the social sciences (Ratcliff, 2008). Ratcliff presents a framework, *First Four Phases in Children's Spirituality Research*, in which to organize the phases of the history of research regarding children's religion and spirituality, as 1) Early Holism, 1892-1928, 2) De-Emphasis on Spiritual Experience, 1928-1961, 3) Cognitive Religious Development, 1961-1990, and 4) Children's Spirituality, 1990 – present.

The hallmark of the Early Holism phase is that the child is viewed in a holistic manner. Religion is connected to every aspect of the child's life (Ratcliff, 2008). A representative study from the Early Holism phase is a 1892 research study, *The Theological Life of a California Child* (Barnes & Boring, 1892), that included data from

1,091 compositions written by children ages six to 26 of age in California schools on the subjects of heaven and hell, 16 written accounts by adults recalling their early beliefs, and 27 interviews by teachers and parents of young children with prescribed questions. The purpose of the study was to determine the theological atmosphere in which the children lived and to determine how the attitudes toward the theological atmosphere vary by age. The study concluded that children are ignorant of the most basic theological conceptions of Christianity and that children should be given the information in which to develop sound theology, if not for religious reasons, then for the purpose of becoming informed about literary and artistic life in general. During the latter part of the Early Holism phase 1920-1928, there exists a gap in research based books partly due to circumstances surrounding World War I, and the shift in emphasis from mentalistic to behavioral psychology (Ratcliff, 2008).

*Studies in Deceit* (Hartshome & May, 1928) ushered in the next phase of research on children's spirituality, De-Emphasis on Spiritual Experience, 1929-1961. This publication, based on exemplary research methods is most cited for one finding; that children who attend Sunday school are no less deceitful than children who never attended Sunday school. Reactions included disconnecting faith from understanding children, abandoning biblical foundations to study children, or viewing the researchers as being biased against religion (Ratcliff, 2008). At this point, research in children's spirituality shifted toward making good citizens in the mainline churches, external behavior, and away from inward Christian experience and doctrine. This shift was partly due to the writings and research of Harrison Elliott (as cited in Harrison Elliott, 2008) and W. C. Bower (as cited in Harrison Elliot, 2008) who were leaders of the progressive

school of religious education. *The Curriculum of Religious Education* (as cited in Harrison Elliott, 2008) was based on the scientific method of the study of religion along with values education. Bower and Elliott promoted curriculum reform centered on life experiences with graded curriculum for all ages, group Bible study, group discussions, human and moral development, and social action. The individual goal for individuals in the progressive curriculum was to live Christ-like lives in the world. Elliott contributed *Process of Group Thinking* (1928), *Group Discussion in Religious Education* (1930), and *Can Religious Education Be Christian?* (1940), which are among the few studies and books on children's spirituality published during the 1920's and the 1930's. After the death of Elliott, his religious educational methods continued to have an influence since "religious educators viewed educational method as theologically neutral, rather than inherently expressive of a theological vision" (as cited in Harrison Elliott, 2008, p.1), in opposition to the philosophy that religious educational process must be congruent with theological understanding.

The 1940's marked the beginning point of the shift from making good citizens and the focus on outward behavior to developmental stages of religious growth as emphasized in the third phase of children's spiritual studies, Cognitive Religious Development, (1961-1990), in which studies of children focused on religious development. Elkind published a series of three studies, in 1961, 1962, and 1963 regarding children's understanding of religious denomination using nearly 800 Catholic, Jewish, and Protestant children. These studies were conducted using Piaget's semi-clinical interview process (Elkind, 1964), and were summarized in *The Child's Reality: Three Developmental Themes* (Elkind, 1978). Because Elkind focused on spontaneous

religion, defined as “all those ideas and beliefs that the child has constructed to interpret religious practices and terms that are beyond his level of comprehension” (Elkind, 1964, p. 40), instead of acquired religion defined as “religious ideas and beliefs that the child acquires directly from adults either through imitation or instruction” (Elkind, 1964, p. 40), renewed interest in research studies on children’s religious development resulted. The emphasis shifted from the adult role in spiritual development to the child’s role in the process of spiritual development. The developmental aspects of Elkind’s work gave support to an already influential developmental theory of Jean Piaget.

Piaget’s cognitive development theory (1968) focused on the progression through stages of body- based knowing, as observed in infancy, to increasingly abstract stages of cognition. Piaget concluded that children lack the ability to reason and reflect with any degree of sophistication. Piaget’s cognitive developmental theory influenced the work of Laurence Kohlberg (1961) in moral development and that of James Fowler (1981) in faith development.

Robert Coles advanced child spirituality research into the fourth phase, Children’s Spirituality, 1991 – present, with the publication of *The Spiritual Life of Children* (1990). Coles studied children from diverse cultures and religions and determined that children regardless of religious faith and tradition have spiritual experiences. Spirituality was holistic, a part of the whole child and experienced by the child in the arena of everyday life. The emphasis in the fourth stage of children’s spirituality was on spiritual experience rather than religious cognition and development thus creating renewed interest in children’s spirituality. The latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw an increased number of studies on children’s spirituality along with a

declining number of children's religious studies. This decline in interest in religion was noted by Howard Gardner in *The Disciplined Mind* (1999b) "Religion, once seen as the final arbiter of truth, now cedes ascertainment of truth to the sciences, and takes the moral sphere as its central concern" (p. 33).

David Hay and Rebecca Nye are among the leaders in the field of child spirituality research. The central category of children's spirituality is relational consciousness, a heightened awareness of relationship with God, self, things, and others (Hay, 2006). This grounded research identified three areas in which children are likely to be spiritually sensitive: awareness-sensing, mystery-sensing, and value-sensing. Awareness-sensing refers to concentration that is focused and intense, much like "flow" as described by Csikszentmihalyi, where action and awareness become merged (1975). Mystery-sensing involves awe and wonder about the ultimate mystery of life, including imagination that transcends life itself. The third area in which children are likely to be spiritually sensitive is the area of value-sensing marked by delight and despair, ultimate goodness, and meaning (Hay, 2006).

In recent years, a new movement emerged called the child theology movement. The roots of the child theology movement come from the writings of classical theologians, such as Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Bushnell, and Barth, and in regard to children, center around the doctrine of original sin (Bunge, 2001). These writings on child theology assist researchers by providing a historical basis of the changing attitudes toward children over time, and, in turn inform our current attitudes toward children (Bunge, 2001).

## Spiritual Development as a Process

### *Definition*

First, the terms spirituality, spiritual development, religious development, and faith development are often used interchangeably without clarity as to the meaning (Hay, 2006). One of the root causes of the definitional confusion is the meaning of the term religion. William James viewed religion as having an institutional (pertaining to beliefs and rituals) and an experiential dimension (pertaining to feelings and experiences). While the meaning of the word religion changed to emphasize the institutional side, the term spirituality came to be associated with the experiential side (Wulff, 1997). Religion soon became a category under spirituality. Recent attempts to define spirituality include: 1) using the common element between religion and spirituality, that being the sacred, to create definitions; 2) defining spirituality without reference to the sacred or transcendent; and 3) using a holistic approach in which the quest for meaning, purpose and connectedness drives spiritual development (Roehlkepartain et al., 2006b).

A few people see no difference between spirituality and religion “people use religion and spirituality interchangeably, referring to the same side of human experience (Koenig, 2008, p.5). However, many identify religion with institutional aspects while the word spirituality is more innocuous in meaning in that it can refer to human awareness of a relationship with God or describe an aesthetic awareness of poetry, music, or being sensitive to the needs of another (Hay, 2006). From the diversity of meanings, one aspect is common to all uses, and that is the aspect of increased awareness or attentiveness. “Each of us has the potential to be much more deeply aware of ourselves

and of our intimate relationship with everything that is not ourselves” (Hay, 2006, p. 22). In Christian terms, the heightened awareness begins with the awareness of a relationship with God and a response to that relationship.

### *Spiritually as a Universal Trait*

The spiritual nature of man is considered to be a universal (Coles, 1990; Hay, Reich, & Utsch, 2006). From the social sciences point of view, the spiritual part of man is not always connected to a form of religion or to divinity, God, gods, or the sacred in any way, but is the driving force that propels mankind to search for meaning and purpose. (Roehlkepartain et al., 2006a).

From a religious perspective, with the definition of religion being that of Emile Durkheim, “a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community” (p.2), along with the recent reformulation of the definition that describes religion as “the ultimate concern with transformational/motivational effect” (p.2), classical world religions and primary identity sub-cultures and movements serve the same sociological functions (Adherents, 2007b). Certain identifiable aspects of religions and primary-identify sub-culture groups are that they:

1. Provide a source of group identity, individual identity, and social interaction,
2. Provide a philosophical and ethical framework and the language through which philosophy, ethics and community issues can be discussed,
3. Inspire imagination, art, literature and other creative outlets,
4. Serve as a source of goals, effort, volunteerism and accomplishment for individuals and the group,

5. Provides a source of unity necessary for defense of the community and the community ideals, and

6. Address universal experiences such as death, sexuality, family life, etc.

(Adherents, 2007b, p. 1)

By taking these identifiable aspects of religion broadly, it would be possible for nationalism or a sports team to qualify as a religion. This is a departure from the 1950's common belief (Wineburg, Mosborg, Porat, & Duncan, 2007) definition of religion as pertaining to God.

From a biblical perspective, man is depicted as a complex being, possessing a body, a soul, and a spirit (I Corinthians. 6:20; I Corinthians. 7:34). In order to define spiritual development from a biblical perspective, three prominent Christian views regarding the nature of mankind are relevant, those being, the dichotomous view, the trichotomous view, and the poly-partite unitary view. The dichotomous view represents humans as having a body (*soma*) and a soul or spirit (*pneuma*) (Barclay, 1958; Grider, 1994; Smith, 1973). The trichotomous view of the nature of mankind represents humans as having a body (*soma*), a soul (*psuche*), and a spirit (*pneuma*). The soul (*psuche*) comes from the Greek word meaning the principle of physical life or the element that makes both humans and animals alive (Barclay, 1958; Grider, 1994). The third point of view on the nature of mankind is the poly-partite unitary view that views the nature of mankind as a unity, not broken up into the body, soul, and spirit (Grider, 1994). The trichotomous view of man is generally accepted from the social sciences point of view (Grider, 1994). However, for this study, the dichotomous view is embraced in defining



the spirit (*pneuma*) of humans as the part of humans that is not the physical part or the body (*soma*).

In addition, Genesis 1:27 states that “God created man in his own image. . .” F. G. Smith (1973) postulates that “in his image” implies that man has attributes of God, a spiritual nature, freedom of will, and intellect to think and reason. The biblical view also positions the body as mortal (Hebrews 9:27) and the spirit as immortal (Ecclesiastes 12:7). The spiritual man spoken of in Genesis is spoken of throughout the Bible. The spiritual man is likened to the physical man in some regards. The spiritual man experiences birth (John 3:3-8), needs spiritual milk as a spiritual infant (I Peter 2:2), has a spiritual body (I Corinthians 15:44), exhibits spiritual abilities (gifts) and attributes (fruit) (Galatians 5:22; I Corinthians 12:20), needs spiritual food (bread, water) (John 4:13; John 4:43; John 6:35), uses spiritual senses (blindness) (John 10:39-41), and participates in spiritual activities (worship) (John 4:23-24).

Some social scientists as well as some theologians take the position that not everyone is suited for spiritual development. First, in the sciences, a growing number of scientists suggest that spirituality has biological roots (Hay, Reich, & Utsch, 2006). This neurobiological approach, with emphasis on locating a site of spiritual awareness in the brain, leads to conjecture that some people have a capacity for spiritual awareness and some people do not have a capacity for spiritual awareness. Other researchers believe that the brain is involved in spiritual activity (May & Ratcliff, 2004) during activities such as prayer and meditation along with awareness of the spiritual, and that all humans have the same capacity for this awareness sensing. Until neuroscientists locate the site in the brain responsible for spiritual awareness, Howard Gardner, the author of *Multiple*

*Intelligences*, expresses hesitancy to add spiritual intelligence to the existing intelligences (Gardner, 1999a).

Calvinists, who base doctrinal ideas centered around original sin, on the early writings of theologians Pelagius and Augustine, do not believe that all mankind has equal ability to know God while the Wesleyan-Arminians believe that all of mankind has equal ability to know God. These two perspectives are mentioned, since in 2001, in the United States, the Baptists (Calvinists) are the largest Protestant denomination while the Wesleyan/Methodists (Wesleyan-Arminians) are the second largest denomination.

The biblical stance includes two important references to the universal opportunity for people to have an awareness of God and His invisible qualities (Psalm 19; Romans 1:20-25). In reference to Psalm 19, creation, meaning the heavens and the earth and all therein, shows the invisible qualities of God. Creation transcends language and geographical location and is available for all to see. Romans 1:25 indicates that man makes one of two choices in regard to God; either worshipping the Creator or worshipping created things. Psalm 19 also describes man's response to the awareness of God. Every person has the ability to become aware of God and to choose how they will relate to Him. One might conjecture regarding the person who has not had the opportunity to hear the Christian message or to distinguish between right and wrong. Romans 2:12-16 speaks to this situation in saying that the law is written in the hearts of man. This is sometimes called "instinctive knowledge of right and wrong" or a "God-given conscience" (Barclay, 1955, p. 41).

Taking biblical text literally causes one to assume that people with mental challenges are not excluded from those who have spiritual capacity. People who are

mentally challenged are subjects of studies regarding spiritual awareness. Two such studies that document spiritual awareness in the mentally challenged are Henri Bissonnier (1965) and Jean-Marie Jaspard (1994). Bissonnier's study found profound spiritual awareness among persons with mental deficiency and Jaspard's study documented the importance of religious ritual among male and female mentally handicapped adults. Religious ritual is the expressive dimension of religion and has developed over thousands of years and is related to the holistic nature of spiritual development (Hay, 2006). A ritual can be seen as a pattern or a way of doing things. The use of ritual begins very early in the child's life as the parents care for the baby. The care falls into a pattern to which the baby becomes accustomed. The baby finds comfort in knowing what to expect (Stonehouse, 1998). The rituals are repeated in games and other activities that the baby likes to do over and over again, and in turn the baby learns to interact with others. "This comfort and joy in ritual prepares the way for later satisfying experiences with God through meaningful rituals of the faith" (Stonehouse, 1998, p. 152.).

Several resources, books, articles and church websites focus on the child with special needs (Dollahite, 2003; Mauro, 2008; prestonwood.org, 2008; Adkins, 2003; Rapada, 2007). However, although the focus is on the special needs child, the resources consist mainly of ways for the parents to cope with the challenges of caring for the child by offering topics such as how to get through a worship service, how to make sense of having a child with disabilities, inclusion in regular programs, special needs classes in the congregations/parishes, respite care, and how to make the child's family feel welcome at church.

### *Child Spirituality*

Spirituality is about the whole child according to Rebecca Nye (2004). “We had to take the child as a whole to get a feel for her spiritual life, which flies like a bird through their intellectual life *and* their emotional life, *and* their social life *and* their cultural life *and* their moral life “(p. 93). Perhaps this attribute of involving the whole self is the essence of what is referred to in Matthew 18:2-5,

He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said, ‘I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me.

Christian theologian Karl Barth describes the characteristics of “being a child” as “. . . unashamed neediness, a beginner’s readiness to learn, self-forgetting play, and youthful objectivity...” (Werpehowski, 2001, p. 392).

In describing the spirituality of children Nye designates relational consciousness to express the capacity that children have for conscious relationships. Further observations by Nye (2004), posit children as unique in their spiritual response, able to use cognitive ability to express spiritual perceptions, and although children recognize their spiritual thoughts as profound, children believe their spiritual perceptions to be isolated and feel that it is necessary to inhibit their spiritual thoughts. Spiritual or religious knowing is very different from knowledge of factual information, or speculation about religion. It is much more like direct sensory awareness (Hay, 2006, p.59). Given that spiritual or religious knowing is more like sensory awareness, one might conjecture

about when a child knows right from wrong. Knowing, in some cases may signify a cognitive knowing. However, Romans 2:15 indicates that there is an instinctive knowing of right and wrong, “Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature the things required by law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, their thoughts now accusing, even defending them.” The unwritten law spoken of is called “the instinctive knowledge of right and wrong” (Barclay, 1955, p.40) or a “God-given conscience” (Barclay, 1955, p.41).

Children have the capacity to distinguish between knowing about God and knowing God as demonstrated in the research on children in intergenerational congregational settings, conducted by Holly Allen (2004). Children mentioned prayer and talking to an older person about their spiritual experiences as very important (Allen, 2004).

From a developmental theory point of view, children are usually seen as too immature in their thinking to display reflective or spiritual thinking, and when assumptions about young children’s thinking are guided by Piaget’s stage model of cognitive development, it follows that children do not possess the abstract thinking and language ability to have a genuine spiritual life (Hart, 2006). Cognitive development theory in the field of religious education is being challenged by child spirituality researchers who view cognitive development theory as placing too much emphasis on intellectual ability, while at the same time, underestimating spiritual capacity of young children (Bunge; 2001; Hay, 2006). Hay proposes that children’s spirituality be viewed through a different lens “spiritual or religious knowing is very different from knowledge of

factual information, or speculation about religion. It is much more like sensory awareness” (p.59), and directs attention to a 1962 lecture, *Ideas for a Theology of Childhood* by Karl Radner, a Catholic theologian (Hinsdale, 2001).

Radner’s theology of childhood speaks to the very issues that researchers are challenging regarding cognitive development theory: that spiritual development is a linear process over the life span with ages and stages making up the sum total of life. The prevalent view of human existence subrogates childhood and youth as a time to prepare for maturity, at which time childhood disappears. Counter to this view is Radner’s view, that for the Christian, a child is fully human from the beginning of that child’s existence. The child has all the spiritual capacity needed, regardless of ability or cultural context. Spiritual capacity only has to be realized over the life span (Hinsdale, 2001).

Theologian J. B. Phillips (1955) makes the following statement regarding spiritual development as a life-long process, “Long preparation, careful planning, and slow growth, would seem to be leading characteristics of a spiritual life” (p.55). The apostle Paul recognized the linguistic, cognitive, reasoning, and behavioral changes in humans over time and writes “When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me” (I Corinthians 13:11).

Social scientists such as Julia Keller recognize that “Spiritual development takes place over a lifetime and is a result of our interaction with our environments” (Keller, 2005, p. 1). Whether viewed from a social science standpoint or a Christian standpoint, it is noteworthy that “Spirituality, like religion, can have both positive and negative

expressions and outcomes” (Roehlkepartain, 2004, p.125), as evidenced by negative outcomes from a Christian perspective such as genocide, terrorism, slavery, insecurity, harming others, mental illness, substance abuse, depression, anxiety, and strife (Ratcliff, 2004). Added to that list by the social scientist is delusions, trauma, delinquency, risky behaviors, destructive behaviors, alternative spiritual movements, and reincarnation (Roehlkepartain et al., 2006b).

### Contexts of Spiritual Development

Much of the research on spirituality is focused on the individual quest rather than the ecological systems in which spirituality is fostered (Mattis & Jagers, 2001). Theoretical foundational understanding of the role of the contexts in which children’s spirituality occurs is grounded in Bronfenbrenner’s “*ecological systems theory* views the child as developing within a complex system of relationships affected by multiple levels of the surrounding environment” (Berk, 2005, p. 27). Ecological systems theory, (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), defines context as “nested arrangement of concentric structures, each contained within the next (Bronfenbrenner, 1997, p. 19). The child is influenced by the activities and interactions in the immediate surroundings, which might include family, school, and church. Not only is the child influenced by the immediate activities and interactions, the family, school, and church also interact with each other and in turn influence the child. For instance, the parent’s dedication to the church will influence the child. Outside influences also come to bear on the family, school, and church. For example, an outside influence may be the parent’s work context. Finally, culture and society influence the child as well. Unique in the ecological perspective is the conception of the environment as a set of embedded structures, with smaller

systems embedded inside larger systems. Also, there is emphasis on the interconnections of the systems. The systems approach emphasizes the relationship between entities or the five levels of environmental systems and how the relationships in turn influence individual development. Criticism of ecological systems theory is that little attention is given to biological influences or cognitive processes (Estep & Breckenridge, 2004).

Another prevalent learning theory, socio-cultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978), emphasizes the connection between the learner and the environment, with an emphasis on social interaction in learning. Mental tools, such as language, writing, body language, symbols, and art, work together to expand mental capacities. One of the mental tools is language and specifically the use of inner speech. Vygotsky describes the point at which pre-verbal thought and pre-conceptual speech are brought together as the point where there is a change of consciousness in the child. This is described as the emergence of inner speech which Vygotsky describes as “so saturated with sense that many words would be required to explain it in external speech (Vygotsky, 1962, p. 119). However, “inner speech should not be confused with the running dialogue one has in one’s head when thinking about something” (Hay, 2006, p. 183). A child’s self-directed speech is used to plan and guide behavior and is called private speech (Berk, 2005, p. 337). Private speech is transformed into silent verbal thought as the child gets older (Duncan & Pratt, 1997). Children with learning and behavior problems engage in private speech for a longer period of time to help compensate for impairments in attention and cognitive processing (Berk, 2005, p. 329).



According to Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory, learning takes place in the zone of proximal development, which is described as the place between what the child can do now and where the child can be with assistance from an adult or more capable peer (Vygotsky, 1978). This theory is relevant to study on child spirituality in that it highlights the role of parents, teachers, pastors, and others in the context of learning and emphasizes the role of interaction with the child. One of the important features of socio-cultural theory is competent peers and adults in the environment and the interactive role of talking with children and listening to children. Keen observation of children is essential, much like the observation required of the teacher in Montessori method (Montessori, 1965) and is also that is found in two curricula based on the Montessori method; *The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd* (Cavalletti, 1992) and *Godly Play* (Berryman, 1991).

Attachment theory is concerned with the early relationship between the child and the parent (Bowlby, 1969). Attachment is predictive of the child's concept of God (Tamminen, 1994). As children go to church and interact with other adults, including teachers, their primary attachment remains to parents and primary caregivers (Granqvist, 2006).

The psychosocial theory of Erik Erikson also pertains to the spiritual development of young children. First of all, Erikson views children in a holistic manner and uses stages to describe challenges that are faced by children at specific age ranges (Erikson, 1985). Conflicts and crisis are hallmarks of each developmental stage. For instance, in stage one, trust versus mistrust, with an age range of birth to 1 year, children need an environment that is dependable, loving, and secure. "The ability to trust is fundamental

to health, wholeness, faith, and maturity in all of life” (Stonehouse, 1998, p.51). At about two years of age, the child enters stage two with the challenges and crisis of autonomy versus shame and doubt. Successful resolution of this stage of development results in “the strength of will that equips a person to take on the challenges of life and to keep going in the hard times ...” (Stonehouse, 1998, p.55). Around age four, the child begins to add initiative to autonomy. “Initiative involves understanding, planning, and attacking a task. It is self-designed and purposeful activity” (Erikson, 1985, p. 255). Stage four is called initiative versus guilt. The development of a healthy conscience that serves as a guide to what is permissible along with play, to assist children in trying out adult roles, allows the child to find out what is possible and results in purpose (Stonehouse, 1998). Purpose gives the child a sense of direction. Then around age six, the child enters the industry versus inferiority stage of development. At this time, formal instruction in reading and writing begins. Successful negotiation of this a stage of development leads the child to a feeling of competence. “Competence is the freedom to use skills and intelligence in completing serious tasks uninhibited by a sense of inferiority. It leads persons to willingly participate with others in productive work, confident that they can learn and serve the community (Erikson, 1968, p. 126).

From a biblical perspective, the context for spiritual development in young children was a way of life for the parents and Israelite nation. In the Old Testament, Moses was instructed by God to teach the people to observe, keep, and carry out the commands of the Lord (Deuteronomy 6:1-3, 6, 17-18, 24-25). The resulting outcome was a way of life in which the children are a part. Deuteronomy 6:4-7:

The Lord is our God alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,

with all your soul and all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children.

First, the people must believe in God. Second, the people must love God. Third, God's commands must be internalized and become a part of everyday life. Finally, at this point, the adults are ready to teach the children. The adults were instructed to teach the children in the course of everyday events.

Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deuteronomy 6:7-9)

Although the contexts of child spirituality include the influence of parents, teachers, pastors, and administrators at home, in children's ministry programs, congregational settings, and culture and society, the parents are the primary teachers of children because of their close involvement with their children in daily life. Children see and experience faith in action through the actions of their parents. At the same time, parents can make the best use of the teachable moment. As a child asks questions about various events, the parents can naturally respond to the child with truthful and pertinent answers.

### *Parents*

The home environment and the relationship between the child and the parents have the most influence on the spiritual development of young children (Bunge, 2001). However, it should be noted that Christian contexts, no matter how good they are, do not insure that children will be Christian children or that children will develop in a

positive spiritual manner. Contexts provide conditions that are more likely to foster positive spiritual growth in children.

Historically, one of the earliest works on the religious lives of young children and infants is *Christian Nurture* (1847) by Horace Bushnell. Bushnell's writing acts as a precursor to modern day Christian ideas on spiritual nurture of the child in a warm loving home with nurturing parents. Speaking in opposition to the revivalism of the day, in which conversion was a one-time emotional experience, Bushnell believed that the child is born with the seeds of faith in its heart and it is the responsibility of the parents to nurture that faith in the child (Bendroth, 2001).

From a biblical stance, Ephesians 6:1-4 is a guide for the nurture and education of children. The role of both father and child is specified in this passage.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor you father and mother', this is the first commandment with a promise, that it may go well with you and that you may live long upon the earth. Fathers, do not exasperate your children, instead, bring them up in the training of the Lord.

Parents retain the primary responsibility in training children and the lifelong effect of that training, "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

It is evident that the parenting role is a full time commitment as expressed in Deuteronomy 6:6-9:

And these commandments I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on

your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the door-frames of your house and on your gates.

Other biblical imperatives indicate that parenting is a role to be taken seriously as in the example of Eli, who failed to confront and correct his children (I Samuel 3: 12-13). Theologians such as Luther, Wesley, and Calvin acknowledged the role of the parents in the spiritual education of children with admonitions to read the Bible to children, pray with children, and be a good example to children (Bunge, 2001).

Two recent studies document the influence of parents on the beliefs of the child. One study (Boyatzis & Janicki, 2003), documented the effects of parent-child communication on the spiritual development of the child. The study found that the most common themes in the Christian home were God, Jesus, prayer. The mysterious nature of the Divine seemed to be of greatest interest to children in religious conversation. The mother was the parent most likely to talk with the child in religious/spiritual conversations (Boyatzis & Newman, 2004).

There is evidence that not all Christian families discuss spiritual matters with their children. A study of 8000 adolescences from 11 Catholic and Protestant congregations found that only 10% of families discussed spiritual matters on a regular basis and in 43% of the families, spiritual matters were not a topic of conversation (Strommen & Hardel, 2000). In an exit interview with children after a research study (Nye, 2004) designed to learn about children's spirituality, the researcher "tried to get the children to identify another person – a family member, a schoolteacher, a faith representative – with whom they could go on articulating their spiritual feelings, experience, ideas and

values. They laughed at me; no one they felt, least of all the religious people they knew, had time or an interest in spirituality” (p. 104).

The role of religion in the father’s life has a positive impact on commitment to children and family and that of marriage. Religious belief, practice and community particularly helped fathers of children with special needs meet the challenges associated with parenting the child (Marks & Dollahite, 2001).

A study to determine the influence of ecological systems upon the child resulted in the conclusion that the family exerts the primary influence on the child and the parent’s views were often reflected in the answers of the children. The parents as well as the congregation deliberately avoided subjects about God’s wrath and focused on God’s love and acceptance. One implication of the study is that talking with children is more beneficial than talking to children (Hood, 2004).

### *Congregations*

Congregational participation is consistently found to be a positive influence on the spiritual development of children (Roehlkepartain & Patel, 2006). Not only does the child interact with the rituals, practices, and traditions of the faith tradition in the congregational setting, but the child also interacts with the other people in those settings. To date, most of the research uses religious participation as an indicator of religiosity and spirituality. Little is known about how the interaction between the child and the congregation affects the child’s spiritual development.

A study conducted to answer the question regarding how congregations influence children (Mercer, Matthews, & Walz, 2004) found that the *Godly Play* curriculum used in the children’s programs encouraged reflective thinking and

discourse. At the same time, many resources were dedicated to the children's ministry program in money, time, and space. One inconsistency was noted in that the children were excluded from the worship and proclamation of the Word, creating a mixed message about the role of children in the congregational life (Campagnola, 2004). The practice of offering a children's sermon in the adult worship service is a practice that can be viewed in an either positive or negative manner (Mercer, et al., 2004). On the positive side, if the purpose of the children's sermon is to simplify the message, it is useful. However, if the purpose of the children's sermon is to put children on display for the gratification of adults, it is viewed in a negative manner.

Characteristic of an environment that fosters a sense of security and safety in children is an environment that provides staff, schedules, space and materials that are consistent and predictable (Ruppell, 2004). The sense of security and safety fosters trust, without which a child will never develop the capacity to trust in a loving God (Erickson, 1963).

The organization of the congregation and access by children to adults in the congregation and the effect on children's awareness of relationship with God is a topic of study in the spiritual development of children. Such a study (Allen, 2004) found similarities and differences in children's responses from both intergenerational and non-intergenerational settings. Findings included that both groups of children spoke of prayer frequently, had an understanding of the difference between knowing God and knowing about God, named people that they perceived as knowing God, and the criteria for naming those people (p. 280). The significant difference was that intergenerational

children mentioned prayer more frequently and mentioned more relational aspects of knowing God (p.281).

Research with kindergarten children as subjects studies the effects of the quality of parent/teacher relationships and religious socialization on children's religiosity. A positive teacher-child relationship is connected to a more loving concept of God among kindergarten children. When children have a negative relationship with both parents, a teacher can influence the child to have a positive, loving concept of God. Finally, kindergartners perceive God a more powerful, helping, and loving when parents and teachers stress the traditional goals of Christian education, which include: be in awe of God, get converted, be a good Christian, know the Bible, and learn to pray. (Bellous, de Roos, & Summey, 2004).

Christian educational programs and the way those programs are implemented is part of contextual study. Criticisms of educational programs center around inappropriate instruction, weak educational materials, lack of teacher training, management of large groups, inconsistent goals, atmosphere for learning, and lack of communication between parents and the church regarding the purposes of the children's programs (Bunge, 2001; Ruppell, 2004; Berryman, 1991; Cavelletti, 1992; Hay, 2006; Ratcliff, 2004).

### *Society and Culture*

The society and culture influence the spiritual growth of children (Johnston, 1997). The influence is not always positive. David Hay, a British researcher states: "The adult world into which our children are inducted is more often than not destructive



to their spirituality” (Hay, 2006, p.33). Even more chilling is the question, “Could spirituality become expressed or even repressed out of the consciousness” (p.52)?

Although faith-based entities influence the culture through individuals, culture cannot be wholly mediated by faith-based individuals. Without enumerating malevolent influences in culture, which gains much of our attention, a better place to start is the culture of faith-based programs for children. While every faith-based ministry with young children does not fit into this pattern, there are many faith-based programs for children that employ inappropriate practices with young children (Bunge, 2001; Ruppell, 2004). Children are given left-over basement rooms with shoddy materials, uninspiring curricula chosen with teachers in mind who do not have enough grasp of the faith to teach faith principles to children, large groups instruction without interactive engagement, little time for silence and meditation, and little access to adult mentors. This faith-based culture results in providing inaccurate conceptions of God and may cause children to disconnect spiritual matters from religion. A disconnect of spirituality with religion is one of the causes of 44% of American adults leaving the faith of their childhood (Gorski, 2008). This culture within faith-based ministries can actually lead to harmful consequences for children and it is this culture that faith-based programs can control.

### Content to Foster Positive Spiritual Development

The content for religious instruction includes doctrines, creeds, traditions, rituals, practicing of spiritual disciplines, Bible knowledge, patterns of Christian living, methods of service to others, among other things according to descriptions of the congregational

setting (Bunge, 2001). Much of the content to foster Christian spiritual development is found in the Bible. Much religious instruction focuses on the study of the Bible. Study that fosters spiritual development rather than religious knowledge is the study of ourselves in the light of the Bible (Nye, 2004). In this manner, the curriculum becomes more holistic and incorporated into the curriculum is opportunities for living encounters with the living God (May & Ratcliff, 2004).

It is exactly that kind of holistic environment, in which a child can relate to God that is provided through *The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd* in the space called the atrium. The atrium is characterized by symbols of the faith (cross, altar cloth, prayer book) and silence, for it is in silence that a child can relate to God (Cavalletti, 1992). Key values that Cavalletti has observed in children as they interact with the symbols of faith in the atrium are joy, dignity, and essentiality. Another Montessori based program is *Godly Play* (Berryman, 1991), based on *The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd*. Berryman distinguishes between Godly laughter, that of creation and play, and carnival laughter, which is described as raucous, mocking, and generally trivializing to religion. A carnival-like atmosphere characterizes many children's ministries today. In both *Godly Play* and *The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd*, the content is closely tied to the pedagogy and attitude of the teacher in interaction with children.

Promoting a sense of awe and wonder is an essential part of a curriculum that fosters child spirituality. One such approach that promotes a sense of awe and wonder is an adaptation of the Reggio Emilia approach, which is an early childhood development program with a Piagetian constructivist influence. Since the Reggio Emilia is not a Christian education method, Emilio Marrero (2000) added a theological

dimension to the approach to nurture Christian spirituality in the Latino child. The basis for the possibility of a child constructing his own knowledge about God comes from the Christian belief that the child is created in the image of God, thus God can reveal Himself to the child. The child, in turn, uses art forms to express his reflections on God. The environment is another avenue through which the child can come to see God (Boyd Cadwell, 1997). The content is not specified, but is considered to be fluid, generative, and dynamic.

There is biblical basis for a holistic approach to the content of spiritual education. The holistic approach is supported by Matthew 22:36-40:

Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law? Jesus replied:” Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.

Theologians such as Barth advocate the simplification of the content of what children should be taught how to: pray, keep the Sabbath holy, maintain an active Bible literacy, and actively promote human justice and righteousness (Werpehowski, 2001).

Foundational research and literature that inform the study of child spirituality supplies a broad range of information concerning the definition and end goal (culmination) of spiritual development, the characteristics of spiritual development in young children, the contexts that foster positive spiritual development and the content of what children need to know.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative study is to find, analyze, compare, and organize data from two points of view on the child spirituality: the social science point of view and the biblical or Christian point of view. The categories for analysis are content (what should be taught), context (environment in which spiritual development is fostered), characteristics (assessment to determine spiritual progress), and the culmination (final outcome) of spiritual development. The initial data set derived from template analysis of existing textual material served as a basis to formulate interview questions for children's pastors. The second data set, derived from interviews of 20 children's pastors, serves as a foundation to make informed decisions regarding Christian education for young children in Christian settings.

In the initial stages of this study, spiritual development in young children was gaining increasing attention in educational circles in the United States and globally (Roehlkepartain et al., 2006a). The increased attention resulted due to the documented benefits of positive spiritual development in the medical field (Koenig, et al., 2001). Several exhaustive volumes, journals, and articles were published in the interim, all from varying points of view; but lacking a consensus on the definition of spiritual development. This lack of clarity on the definition of spiritual development, how and where to teach spiritual development, what spiritual progress looks like, and the expected outcome of spiritual development prompted this research study with a specific focus on child spirituality.

While considering the planning and implementation of this research study, the author considered research design, data collection, formal means of systematic analysis, and a procedure that is clear to understand and easy to replicate. The researcher selected a qualitative approach because “Qualitative research is open and subtle, and one of its strengths is that it incorporates philosophies, theories, and research designs and methods as diverse as post positivist multi-methods approaches and postmodernist social critiques” (Freeman, deMarrais, Preissle, Roulston, & St. Pierre, 2007, p. 25). “*Qualitative data* begins with the “rough materials researchers collect from the world they are studying” (Bogden & Biklen, 2006, p.117), and in this study, includes textual data collected from three documents, two recent and one historical, as well as data collected from interviews conducted with 20 children’s pastors. The two recent documents represent the current climate for spiritual development in young children; one from the social sciences point of view *The Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence* (Roehlkepartain et al., 2006b) and the other from the Christian point of view *Children’s Spirituality: Christian Perspectives, Research, and Applications* (Ratcliff, 2004). The third document, the *Bible*, represents a historical point of view on spiritual development from a Christian perspective. The *Bible* is examined without additional writings regarding theological perspectives on children, particularly those of original sin and infant baptism. All three documents served as a basis in the formulation of the questions that were asked of the children’s pastors, who are deemed to be experts in the field of spiritual development in young children. By subjecting all three documents to a formal means of systematic analysis that includes examination of the text to discover information found

therein that pertains to the definition of spiritual development, the content for fostering spiritual development, the context in which spiritual development is fostered, the characteristics of spiritual progress, and the final outcome of spiritual development.

Interviews were conducted with 20 children's pastors, who are responsible for the planning and implementation of children's ministry programs for young children in the greater Houston area. Pastors were selected with several criteria in mind: representatives of diverse faith traditions from Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox perspectives, representatives of congregations with diverse ethnic groups, and availability and willingness to participate in an interview. See Appendix B for demographic and congregational information about the children's pastors. The interview questions (Appendix A) were formulated after conducting the template analysis of the *Bible*, *The Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence* (Roehlkepartain et al., 2006b), and *Children's Spirituality: Perspectives, Research, and Applications* (Ratcliff, 2004). Responses to the interview questions to gain information on definitions of spiritual development, views of spiritual development in young children, and ideas for fostering spiritual development in young children were transcribed and analyzed using the same procedure that was used to analyze the textual data, that is, template analysis. The analysis of the transcriptions of the interviews with pastors in the field of spiritual development in young children along with the pre-existing textual analysis serves as a basis to advance the field of child spirituality by clarifying various aspects of spiritual development in young children in the areas of content of spiritual development, context of spiritual development, characteristics of spiritual development, and culmination of spiritual development.

## Data Collection

The first data set for this research study comes from pre-existing texts and the second, from the analysis of the transcriptions of interviews with 20 children's pastors on spiritual development in young children. The first data set was used to formulate questions for the interviews with children's pastors.

The first data set for the research from pre-existing texts comes from two recent documents; *Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence* edited by Eugene Roehlkepartain et al. in 2006, and *Children's Spirituality: Christian Perspectives, Research, and Perspectives* edited by Donald Ratcliff in 2004, and one historical document, the *Bible* (New International Version). The recent volumes from 2004 and 2006 are representative of the current climate in children's spirituality from the social science point of view and from the Christian point of view. The *Bible* represents the biblical or Christian point of view. The *Bible* contains 66 books written by various writers over a period of many centuries. The *Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence* (Roehlkepartain et al., 2006) containing contributions from 67 scholars representing multiple disciplines, is a result of a grant from the John Templeton Foundation to the Search Institute in 2003. *Children's Spirituality: Christian Perspectives, Research, and Perspectives* (Ratcliff, 2004) contains 22 of the more than 50 conference presentations from the 2003 Children's Spirituality Conference.

The second data set for transcriptions of interviews comes from interviews with twenty children's pastors in the greater Houston, Texas area over a period from March through June 2008. The data was primarily gathered through semi-structured interviews spanning one to two hours in length. Semi-structured interview is defined as:

...a method of research used in the social sciences. While a structured interview has a formalized interview has a formalized limited set [of] questions, a semi-structured interview is flexible allowing new questions to be brought up during the interview as a result of what the interviewee says. The interviewer in a semi-structured environment generally has a set of themes to be explored (Wikipedia, 2008).

### Procedure

In order to investigate ways to foster spiritual development in young children in Christian settings, the researcher collected textual data from over 75 sources that included 58 book chapters, various Biblical passages, and interview transcripts.

*Template analysis* is the particular method used in this study to thematically analyze the resulting qualitative data. Template analysis is part of the methodology known as qualitative metasynthesis. “Qualitative metasynthesis is part of a tradition of metaresearch that involves synthesizing the results of qualitative studies to gain a better understanding of the general nature of the given phenomenon” (Au, 2007, p. 259).

Template analysis technique involves 7 steps: (a) define priori themes, (b) read through the textual data, (c) identify data that encompasses the priori themes, (d) produce the initial template, (e) develop or refine the template to accommodate all data, (f) use the final template to write the findings, and (g) provide for some kind of quality check during the process. Defining *priori* themes is the first step of the technique of template analysis. Priori themes are those themes that are expected to arise in a research project due to the phenomena being investigated (King, 2006). In this study, the initial priori themes are: 1) content, what information children must know to develop spiritually, 2) context, what environments (including people and materials) are needed to foster



spiritual development, 3) characteristics, how spiritual development is measured, and 4) culmination, the final outcome of positive spiritual development. A fifth *priori* theme, comments, was added after coding 15 of the chapters in *The Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence* (Roehlkepartain et al. 2006). Next, the 34 chapters in *The Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence* (Roehlkepartain (Ed.) et al. 2006), the 24 chapters in *Children's Spirituality: Christian Perspectives, Research, and Applications* (Ratcliff, 2004), various passages from the *Bible* (New International Version), and transcripts from interviews of 20 children's pastors on spiritual development in young children are examined and coded according to the predetermined *priori* themes. The coded *priori* themes along with the coded sub-themes become the template for analysis. The template is then applied to all textual data and the template is refined as new themes arise. The final template is used to interpret the textual data and formulate the 24 questions for the semi-clinical interviews. Appendix A gives additional details regarding the method used to refine the questions along with the questions. The questions centered on the main *priori* themes of the definition, goals (culmination), the nature of spiritual development in young children (characteristics), the context in which spiritual development is fostered, and the content of what children should know along with the pedagogy for teaching the content.

Scheduling of interviews was accomplished by telephone calls and emails, with emails being the most effective method of scheduling. The interview questions and the Institutional Review Board Approval were emailed to the pastor before the interview. It was necessary to contact five children's pastors for every interview scheduled. Pastors declined an interview due to busy schedules, perceived lack of knowledge of spiritual

development in young children, and suspicion that the research was designed to “debunk” Christianity.

The interviews were semi-structured and typically spanned between one to two hours. The exception was a telephone interview lasting 29 minutes. Interviews were recorded with the permission of the children’s pastor being interviewed. The names of the pastor’s and churches/parishes are not included in the transcripts which are archived. Eighteen of the interviews took place in the pastor’s office within the church/parish. One interview took place by telephone and one during a lunch meeting at a local eatery. Factors that impacted the quality of the interviews included ringing phones, people coming into the office, and general background noise.

As noted in Appendix B, the pastors represented seventeen faith traditions in congregations and parishes with as few as seven children in Sunday morning children’s ministry and as many as 1500 children. All pastors with the exception of two are full-time paid staff members having served in the present congregation/parish from less than one month to as many as 26 years. The participants included five males and 15 females ranging in age from 28 – 61 years old. The ethnic make-up of the congregations/parishes reflects that of the greater Houston, Texas area where no ethnic population is in the majority. It is not assumed that the ethnic make-up of the greater Houston area is representative of other areas of the United States.

The data set resulting from the pastoral interviews included 201 pages of interview transcriptions. The transcriptions were made within days of the data collection and then organized into word tables according to the *priori theme* being analyzed. The tables are located in the appendices of the study. Since it is the purpose of this study to

determine implications for curriculum in Christian settings, the focus is on current practices in children's ministry today and not evaluation of individual pastors or programs.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

#### Data

Data set 1, derived from template analysis of textual data, was used to formulate interview questions for semi-clinical interviews with children's pastors regarding spiritual development in young children. Specific comments on priori *themes* that markedly influenced the formulation of the interview questions are found in Appendix C. The information from the template analysis is integrated into Chapter 2, *Review of Literature*.

There are commonalities between the social science and Christian textual information. First, both view spirituality as a universal trait defined as transcendent in nature. Individual ability and environments affect spiritual development with outcomes that can be either negative or positive. The spiritual nature develops both inside and outside religion, with a very important difference. The social scientist states that positive spiritual development can be either sacred or secular in nature, while the Christian view is that spiritual development outside the sacred is negative spiritual development. Both agree that there is little research foundation for developing child spirituality with one of the biggest factors being how to assess young children. Most of the research on children's spirituality examines nature, not the nurture of spirituality (Nye, 2004, p. 90).

Spiritually is more like sensory awareness rather than cognitive development (Nye, 2004). To date, cognitive theory has a heavy influence on religious education in the United States (Gottlieb, 2006).

Data set 2 includes the data generated from interviews of children's pastors. The transcriptions of the semi-clinical interviews are organized into tables located in the Appendices E through L of this research report.

### Definition and Culmination of Spiritual Development

The definition of spiritual development and the goals of spiritual development are foundational for an understanding of the study of child spirituality (Hay, 2006; Ratcliff, 2004; Roehlkepartain, 2006). At the same time, definitions proposed by Christian leaders and social scientists come from very different perspectives. Children's spirituality is the development of a conscious relationship with God (childspirituality.org, 2003), while the social scientist posits that spiritual development is a process that can proceed along either a sacred or secular path (Roehlkepartain et al., 2006b). Children's pastors reflect the view presented by the Christian leaders as stated in representative responses to the question posed; whether it is possible to have a definition of spiritual development that both social scientists and Christian leaders can agree upon. ( Details of all responses are found in Appendix D.)

Pastor 1 - Definition of spiritual has to include the process of understanding who God is. Spiritual development has to include the person of God. Without the sacred, there is not spiritual development. Worship of God is part of the definition of spiritual development. Without God the person becomes the object of spiritual development. That is secular humanism. Being a good person is not enough.

Pastor 11 - I can't give you an educated answer. Christianity is not about being a good person. It's about a relationship with Christ. It wouldn't be incorrect to say

that development outside of Christ, who we consider to be the ultimate Truth, would be purposeless, misleading, and actually detrimental to the child.

Embedded in both responses is the phrase “being a good person”. Pastors state that being a good person is desirable, while at the same time, Christian spiritual development has as its starting point God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

The reference to being a good person also emerges in the lone response of a children’s pastor who states that a mutually agreed upon definition is possible. The response is recognized by Pastor 10 as being a humanistic approach.

Pastor 10 - I think it is possible. If we can raise people to be more kind, loving, accepting, nonjudgmental, all those types of things. I guess that’s more of a humanistic approach, but it would create a more spiritual people. Love is spiritual development.

Just as God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit is the starting point for spiritual development, the end goal of spiritual is a relationship with God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, or the sacred:

Pastor 5 - I don’t see how it is possible [to have a definition that both social scientists and Christian leaders can agree upon] because we are not like-minded. When I talk about spiritual, I think of the children coming to know the one true God. It’s more than doing good acts and being a good person.

It is common to assess spiritual development by observable behavior that includes verbalization and actions as did Pastor 14 when identifying “Biblical knowledge, understands the concepts of Christianity, and the role of the church in the community” as end goals of spiritual development. Finally, Pastor 10 identified “create

heaven on earth, peace, love people, be better people” as end goals of spiritual development. This response is quite out of the norm for this group of pastors.

### Characteristics of Spiritual Development in Young Children

The understanding of the age spiritual development begins, the age of expression of a spiritual concept, whether all children have the same spiritual capacity, the evidence of spiritual growth and whether spiritual development follows ages and stages is foundational in planning Christian education programs for young children. Appendix E details the responses from children’s pastors to the questions. Appendix F details the comments from pastors regarding characteristics of spiritual development in children.

The nature of children and characteristics of spiritual development is crucial in understanding child spirituality. From the responses of the children’s pastors, spiritual development starts early, if not at birth or young infancy as identified by 15 children’s pastors, then by the age of 2 -5 years old. Pastors make connections between nature and nurture to the beginning of spiritual development in young children. Such connections are reflected in these comments:

Pastor 9 - Start early so the child can have a proper foundation.

Pastor 10 - Provide an environment where a child can express their spiritual development.

Pastor 12 - Adults hinder the early start of spiritual development.

Pastor 4 - Begin early. Don’t wait until the child can speak to talk about spiritual things. A child’s first words will be words they have heard.

From a nature perspective, which emphasizes the child's ability, comments reflect that children are born with spiritual sensitivity, with children being more spiritual than adults, and girls being more spiritually connected than boys. Pastors had more to say about the nurture of spiritual development.

Pastors cited evidence of spiritual growth as a mixture of observable behaviors, verbalized information, participation in worship activities, and participation in the traditions of the church such as baptism, communion, and confirmation. Two pastors not only stated the expected observable behaviors and information, they also identified the age at which those behaviors should occur. For example, Pastor 4 states that the child should be able to verbalize something you taught them after becoming aware of God/Jesus from birth through kindergarten. Additionally, from 1<sup>st</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> grade, the child should understand the concepts of faith, prayer, witnessing, and the Holy Spirit and live out the things they have learned. Two pastors said that children should know three things by the time they go to kindergarten: God made you, God loves you, and God wants to be your forever friend. The statements reflect the influence of cognitive development theory both in the simplicity of what children should know and how the child's spiritual development is assessed.

One pastor cautioned against assessing children's spiritual development by what children say or do as reflected in several statements, "Be careful about assessing spiritual things on what children say." "Who can know the heart of a child?" "Spiritually is a heart matter and only God knows." Other evidences of spiritual growth that are difficult to assess included "a sense of others" and "questions, in awe". One pastor



assessed children's spiritual development by asking the child to picture God in their mind and describe Him. This is the response from an 8 year old:

I asked Hannah how she sees God. She said, "I see God in brown rags. He doesn't need jewels or the crown because that doesn't matter to Him. He's love. He needs nothing."

Theologians and child spirituality researchers take two different perspectives on spiritual capacity, one being that spiritual capacity is linear and progresses from little to more, or, a more holistic approach that children are born with all the spiritual capacity they need to become aware of God and respond to Him. When asked if all children have the same spiritual capacity, 14 pastors answered in the affirmative while Pastor 1 expanded the answer with "even the special needs child" has the same spiritual capacity. Three responses indicated that spiritual capacity varies according to the nature and nurture of the child. One pastor said "all have a capacity for a relationship with Christ ". Another responded that "all have a spiritual center".

In speaking of the nature versus nurture of spiritual development, only one pastor said a relationship with God is initiated by God. A few pastors said that nature plays a part in the spiritual development of children with the child's ability being foremost. Most other pastors, identified factors in the nurture of children with much emphasis on the parental role: "Parents should begin spiritual instruction as soon as the child knows right from wrong." "Peripheral parents are inconsistent in attendance and find no value in Sunday school." "Parental lack of participation – bring children to landmark events and we never see them again."

Other factors mentioned that impact the spiritual development of children is the secularization of society and the worldly influence on the church, the limited time of one hour a week that the children's pastors see the children during the year and the lack of an environment where children can express their spiritual nature.

Although the expression of spiritual concepts is not a measure of spiritual capacity, the responses to this question about the age that a child first expressed a spiritual concept, indicate that most children's pastors are looking for observable behaviors in children. Five pastors responded that spiritual concepts are expressed beginning at two years old, eight pastors at three years old, four pastors at four years old, and one pastor at five years old. Pastor 16 makes a statement that addresses the expression of spiritual concept and alludes to the stage theories of child development, "Some state that children cannot understand spiritual concepts until they can talk. I think the talking is more for our benefit than for that of the child. What about the child who can never talk? Another pastor states "There is no way to prove a relationship with God". One pastor gave an example of a child remembering an event that occurred when the child was ten weeks old, long before the child had the language ability to express the event.

Stage theories have a great influence on religious education, thus the responses from the pastors regarding ages and stages of spiritual development is insightful. 19 pastors responded that spiritual development cannot be predicted by the age of the child due to factors of the child's individual ability, the environment, and the child's maturity level nor do children go through specified stages. At the same time, nine pastors responded that spiritual development follows stages; however, those stages do

not coincide with age, but begin at different ages due to the child's individual ability, maturity, and the environment. Pertinent comments include: Pastor 6 "Spiritual development is not like cognitive development." "Spiritual development is birth to afterlife, not age related." Pastor 4 "A three year old can know as much as an eight year old spiritually. It depends on the child's ability and nurture."

Although pastors do not connect ages with the stages of spiritual development, and at the same time, stating that there are definite stages, none of the pastors could identify stages and a few said they would have to think about it. Three pastors had charts of what children should be able to understand about God by a specified age.

#### Content: What Must Be Taught

Christian education teaches the foundational knowledge that people need to know to develop in a positive spiritual manner. Appendix G summarized the over 200 responses to the question of what should be taught to children to foster positive spiritual growth.

"The traditional goals for religious education tend to include objectives such as: to become good Christians, to get converted, to be in awe of God, to get to know stories of the Bible, and to learn to pray" (Bellous, de Roos, & Summey, 2004, p. 212).

Children's pastors answered in much the same way, with different names to describe the categories.

1. God - Children should be taught who God is and how to properly respond to God in reverence, worship, obedience, and relationship, along with prayer as a method of talking to and listening to God.

2. Jesus - Who Jesus is and the child's relationship to Him through understanding the gospel message and the plan of salvation.

3. Holy Spirit - Pastors did not specify what the child should know about the Holy Spirit, although Pastors named this category.

4. Christian behavior – Spiritual growth as exemplified by Christ-like behavior with selflessness, virtue, wise choices, and gratefulness as personal attributes, and exhibiting kindness toward others and sharing the faith. At the same time, children should practice the disciplines of prayer and fasting. Bible reading was not specifically mentioned although pastors said children should know the Bible and Bible stories.

5. Institutional aspects – Children need to be familiar with Liturgy, Catechism, and doctrines such as the Trinity, Baptism, and Communion.

It should be noted that every pastor did not specify the categories in which their responses are placed, but the information is organized to parallel the traditional goals for religious education cited in Bellous (2004). A holistic relational approach to pastor's response might categorize responses as a) who God is and the child's response, b) who Christ is and the child's response, c) who the Holy Spirit is and the child's response, and d) who others are and the child's response.

### Contexts of Spiritual Development in Young Children

The contexts for spiritual development in young children include the environments and the people in those environments that impact the child's spiritual growth. Environments include religious education programs for children and information on lesson format, materials, and criteria for choosing curriculum, teacher qualifications

and training, parent participation, congregational organization and additional comments from children's pastors. Details of pastor's responses are found in Appendices H and I for educational programs and comments, appendices J and K for parents and comments, Appendix L for teachers and comments.

### *Educational Programs, Curriculum, and Comments*

Educational programs for children are one of the main ways that faith-based communities pass on the traditions of the faith as well as teach biblical truths and equip the children for works of service.

The congregations/parishes represented by the children's pastors interviewed in this study minister to from seven children to 1500 children in Sunday morning ministries on a weekly basis. 100% of the congregations/parishes offer a Sunday morning event called Sunday school or Sacramental Preparation, where the children gather in groups according to age for appropriate instruction. Children's Church/Power Church/Super Church/Children's worship/Children's Liturgy of the Word is offered in 50% of the congregations/parishes on Sunday and can be described as a worship service for children apart from the adult worship service. 50% of the congregations/parishes also offered Bible clubs/Bible Hour/Bible Quiz as a vehicle toward greater Bible literacy. Other educational programs for children that are not as prevalent among the congregations/parishes interviewed are Vacation Bible School in four congregations/parishes, Children's Choir in two congregations/parishes, and Missions and service projects in two congregations/parishes. One lone congregation has a program for children on Sunday evening that is an extension of the morning Sunday

school. The other 19 congregations/parishes do not offer programs of any kind on Sunday evening.

Nursery care is provided for children in 17 out of 20 congregations/parishes. Formal instruction and curriculum begins at two years of age in 11 of the congregations/parishes and at three years of age in six congregations/parishes. Three congregations/parishes encourage the parents to keep their young children with them and provide no programs for those children. Although children's pastors did not specify this, a warm loving environment in the nursery could be considered a curriculum for children.

The curriculum for children's educational programs is prescribed for four of the parishes by the Synod/Archdiocese/Church/Parish priest. Other congregations choose curriculum with the needs of the children in that particular congregation in mind, with the permission of the Senior Pastor. The foremost reason given for the curriculum selection is that the curriculum is teacher friendly and easy to teach without extensive preparation. In fact, two of those curricula were scripted so as to allow a teacher to walk into a class and start reading. Children's pastors assured me that this did not happen often, but there were times that they taught in such a manner because of an emergency among their teaching staff.

Pastor 1 comments: The curriculum needs to be intentional and fit the purpose of the church so everyone understands what you are doing. We use wisdom, stature, favor with God and favor with man. We reinforce the same material in every children's session for the week. We only have them for 300 hours a year.

Pastor 20 – Programs have to take on the role of fostering spiritual development

in young children. Children don't need elaborate stories. Keep it simple...I have been struggling with that myself because large group instruction seems to be the in thing, the huge entertainment, the flashy screen, high level drama, high impact drama and I just can't bring myself to do that. It's one-on-one where you make the most impact.

Another criterion for choosing curriculum is the eye appeal of the curriculum for the students. Also, the use of music, activities, DVD, and interactive blogs are attractive to a few children's pastors. Supplemental materials include puppets, symbols of the faith, maps, books, charts, take-home pages for parents. It happens at times that the curriculum does not support the doctrines of the particular congregation, in which case, the children's pastor informs the teachers and makes adjustments.

Three pastors are in the process of writing their own curriculum to fit the doctrines and goal of their particular congregation and the theology of the senior pastor. One congregation uses curriculum that the children's pastor has already written and published.

Typically the curriculum follows a two or three year cycle, progressing from simple to complex. In many programs, all children and adults in Sunday school use the same scripture text for the day. One pastor noted that the curriculum uses complicated stories that have no meaning to the child and the curriculum is "a mile wide and an inch deep". Many programs do not allow for the children to ask questions, due to the large numbers of children. Also, children's pastors indicate that they do not have time to talk with children individually. Most of their observations of children come from direct interaction with their own children.

The size of the groups in the Sunday morning ministries varies from seven children to 1500 children. Eight programs utilize large group instruction for children's ministries. Eight programs also use large group instruction to start the sessions and then break into smaller groups. Two ministries use small group instruction exclusively. Two children's pastors have recently instituted a rotation program where children stay in the same learning area for a specified period of time and then rotate to the next. The rotation cycle usually takes six weeks. Pastors who have very large groups of children in their ministry face organizational and facility challenges:

Pastor 4 – You have to take the large groups and make them as small as possible by assigning ten adults to every 150 kids. The team leader takes on the role of pastor for those team members and for the children in the group. I [the children's pastor] take care of the team leaders and rarely have time to talk to the children in the children's ministry.

The kind of programs and the perceived competition with other church groups weighs on the mind of children's pastors. Although the high energy, interactive is popular and effective in attracting children, pastors express mixed feelings about the long-term effect of such programs. Silence and the documented spiritual benefits are ignored in most programs. Also, the high energy programs do not incorporate a time for prayerful reflection. Three pastors mention that the children have corporate prayer with an equal number of pastors mentioning that the children have a time for prayerful reflection and listening for God to speak to them. These comments reflect four pastors' comments on high energy programs:

Pastor 14 - In one year we have the children 52 hours. Large churches try to be



small in the way they interact with children. We have to be careful about children's programs, some programs are a mile wide and an inch deep. We create Disneyland. I have heard this through many children's pastor who have said we can't do Nickelodeon any more. We have spent so much money on sets and paints and theater seating and sound systems and our kids don't know Christ. They just come to be entertained. And we have focused on that. It is a big concern. Wasting time. Christian education must change in the next few years.

Pastor 10 – There is a conflict with the idea that children's ministry has to be fun, fun, fun. When the children choose and plan activities for the coming year, they are all about service and missions. The children need a purpose and must feel needed. The message we give children needs to be simple.

Pastor 12 – The church needs to wake up to the fact that young children have great spiritual potential. In society, psychic and paranormal programs are infiltrating television and subtly influencing children...I realize we have to step it up. We've got to get busy you know. We can't do "Patty Cake, Jesus Loves You" anymore. It's got to be a real reaching down for their souls.

Finally Pastor 15 commented - ...now don't take this wrong, but in most Protestant churches, what goes on inside the church is a show. The Reverend gets up and he preaches. There's some fabulous choir music, video, noise. It's entertainment. Using the same curriculum over and over prepares the child for what they need to know. Historical roots of our tradition is important and they learn that as well.

One other organizational aspect of children's programs emerged in two pastor's responses, the use of intergenerational programs in the church. Such programs have been shown to positively affect children's concept of God and prayer (Allen, 2004) and the intergenerational programs have the added benefit of serving as a mentoring program for young parents and as a way for single and seniors to be a part of the church life.

### *Parents*

Parents play a key role in the spiritual development of children, if for no other reason, because they spend so much time with their children compared to other adults. Children's pastors respond that the parent is primarily responsible for the spiritual development of their child, with the congregation/parish in a supporting role. In this supporting role, 12 congregations/parishes offer resources to equip parents while 8 congregation/parishes do not offer parent resources. Those resources included: individual help in 9 congregations/parishes, reading materials in four congregations/parishes, classes/conferences in nine congregations/parishes, disciplining in four congregations/parishes, and reorganizing the church structure to maximize the parents' time in one congregation. Parent education classes in six congregations used books on parenting, sex education, and how to relate to children. Two congregations use Bible based materials, and two congregations use materials written specifically for the needs of the individual congregation about how to influence the child for God.

Children's pastors on the role of parenting:

Pastor 1 – No matter how much time a children's pastor spends with a child, the

parents have more influence since I don't have nearly the love that their parents have and the relationship they share...

Pastor 4 – It is the parents job to be sure they are fostering a spiritual environment at home, giving them opportunities to come to church, be involved in groups, to go to Bible study, to be a Christian atmosphere, to give them opportunities to do outreach, go down to the soup kitchen, teaching them those things.

Pastor 8 – Children who are raised by parents of faith, whose parents pray, and rely on God have a greater inclination toward spiritual things.

Pastor 16 - Children have an advantage if they have a Christian upbringing and have had a Christian community, church, Sunday school and that kind of education. It's very hard on adults who become Christians.

Pastor 17 - The parents are the primary catechists and it is up to them to decide when their children are ready for Reconciliation and Communion. We also interview each child to determine if they understand the concepts. Just this year we started doing some supplemental instruction in the regular season of the class because the level of commitment of the parents varies greatly, not to mention their level of expertise. Now we always tell them that we are right here if they have any questions, but we are real concerned that probably the night before they are working through the book, even though we give them months to prepare.

The level of commitment on the part of parents is mentioned by several pastors

as a huge concern, not only because of the effect on the children, but because the church is taking on the role of primary teacher of the child and thus, the church finds itself in the role of providing remediation to make up for the children's lack of information.

Pastor 2 – “The majority of our parents are caring and loving and participating, but we do have some peripheral ones. Let me address the ones who go to church but who are peripheral. We call them Christmas and Easter,...we haven't [sic] seen their child all year and they will immediately show up for Confirmation Class or First Communion Class. And then we don't [sic] see the child again. It just breaks my heart to know as parents, we are all about signing them up for soccer or the swim team. We don't [sic] miss those practices, but we see no value in Sunday school.

Pastor 7 – Some parents don't [sic] get it. Some parents don't [sic] take time to talk with their children about spiritual things. Others feel that it is the responsibility of the church to teach spiritual things. Others are too busy. Some parents are not Christians themselves.

Pastor 9 – I think a spiritual background starts right from birth because they have to depend on their parents for care and as they cry and their parents answer that, they communicate, and they learn love from their parent's reaction. In those earlier times, the kids who were going to be confirmed came to Sunday school every week. About five years ago, we added 6<sup>th</sup> grade Confirmation. The only reason we did was to teach basic Bible stories because parents would bring their kids to Confirmation who had never been to Sunday school, never picked up a

Bible. Never picked up a Bible story book, did not know your basic Bible stories. You can't [sic] exactly teach them the doctrines of the Lutheran Church, the catechism. You can't [sic] teach them when they have no foundation at all. So we're [sic] trying to build in one year what should take three. The responsibility for spiritual development has transferred from the father of the home to the mothers, if at all. You know, with all this [society] and only 24 hours in a day, seven days in a week, people don't [sic] give even a day anymore to spiritual development.

Pastor 11 – We only have 40 hours a year with a child. That doesn't [sic] even start to begin to be enough time to be with each child to cause a life change. It's absolutely in the parent's control. We understand that a lot of parents are not taking the lead in their children's spiritual development. We understand that most parents are not meeting their children's spiritual needs. Most parents think they are meeting their children's spiritual needs by taking them to church. This just isn't [sic] true. Although it's [sic] a good thing and we do everything to be creative and engaging in our presentation, anything is just going to be surface level.

Pastor 14 – I think the church family has to be a community that comes in and steps in for the child who gets dropped off for baby-sitting on Sunday morning. It changes the whole perspective. Parents are working with their children. I agree that it has fallen to second place although they know the need is there. It's [sic] a very apathetic and undisciplined process. They really don't see how important it is. People are too busy.

Pastor 15 – A Bishop that I know reprimanded parents who came and dropped their children off for Sunday school and left to go eat breakfast. He said, “Stop doing that. If you are not putting all the pieces together for the children, you are not doing them any favors. It’s [sic] showing the children that church is not important.

Pastor 20 - Unfortunately, the thing I see for children’s ministry and the realization that I had to come to was that our ministry is really controlled by our parents and that’s [sic] why I think we are seeing more family ministry attached to children’s ministry because of that very reason. It is a rotating door around churches now. You don’t [sic] get a child from infancy through high school. You only get them for a year or two here, and it’s a sporadic year or two. It’s [sic] not even a consistent year or two. The parents are the same way. They show up on Sunday morning once, maybe twice a month and then occasionally will visit a Bible study and you never see them again. So we’re [sic] not getting the opportunity to do the age and stage because we are not getting the age and stage.

The changing role of the church in assuming primary responsibility for fostering spiritual development in children is only one of the changing roles of the church in society. The influx of unchurched people into congregations also poses challenges as expressed in this comment:

Pastor 18 - Our area is kind of diverse and so we are getting.... We’re [sic] not white middle class anymore so we are getting other ethnicities and some people who

have not grown up in the church so it is an interesting concept for those who don't have fathers or a significant father figure in their lives. In the society, the kids are with a blended family or just parents and the priority of the church is not there. So they feel like they are full time members if they come just twice a month. That gives us two hours. And so the issue is we need to be nurturing the child but also nurturing the family. So what we've gone to is a whole different understanding of the family system and their attendance at church and things. Parents feel inadequate because the expectations are so high. Since the white flight to the Woodlands or to Conroe, we are getting a different group coming in. Most of the people coming in have not been churched before. They are not coming because they are Methodist. They only come here because of their social needs. It's interesting because people will shop around now. I see families that will leave the church to go where the children are satisfied. I think that when you are shopping around and you don't develop those relationships [church family], it's harder to get to the owned faith. It just takes longer.

The comments on parenting reflect the changing cultural patterns in society today that directly affects the church, the children's pastor, and the child.

#### *Teachers and Comments Regarding Teachers*

Teachers are part of the environment as well. It has been shown that a child's positive relationship with a teacher affects the child's concept of God. The relationship between the teacher and the parent is also a factor in fostering positive outcomes (Belloos, de Roos, & Summey, 2004). Questions 12 – 14 generated data regarding

teacher qualifications, recruiting methods, teacher training, teacher – student ratios, and general comments that can be found in Appendix L.

The majority of teachers are recruited after the children’s pastor prays, looks for qualified people and asks them to serve. One pastor begs people and three pastors have enough people without recruiting. The pastors noted that the age group that it is most difficult to get volunteers for is the nursery and toddler children because it takes so much energy on the part of the adult to care for these children. One children’s pastor mentioned that for the children’s Sunday morning ministry with 700 children, he needs 187 volunteers.

Qualifications for teachers fall into three general categories: Category 1 – Steps to Protect Children – includes criminal background check, preventing child abuse training, being a member of the congregation, priest/pastor approval; Category 2 – Teacher Attributes – includes Godly, team member, Christian, likes children, manages children, willingness to serve, and Category 3 – Meet the institutional requirements including take the required training, fill out the application, interview with the children’s pastor.

Although 4 congregations/parishes do not provide teacher training, those who provide teacher training offer diverse topics: classroom management, curriculum training, moral relativism, heaven and hell, how to plan a service, church guidelines, teacher tips, fun things, discipline, ages/stages, abuse prevention, certification for *Catechesis of the Good Shepherd*.

Children are placed in classes with differing classroom teacher to student ratios. A few pastors responded with general statements such as; “two non related adults at all



times”, “no ratio”, “smaller ratio for younger children”, “the group size makes the difference”. The pastors who gave specific ratios for this question are reflected the following: Nursery – 1:1 – 1:3; Age Two – 1:5; Age Three – 1:3 – 1:5; Kindergarten – 1:3 – 1:9; Grades I – 5 – 1:6 – 1:12; Older – 1:6 – 1:15. It should be noted that the ratio for the smaller congregations tends to be smaller and the larger congregations had higher teacher to student ratios.

Children’s pastors see a great need for teacher training, however, pastors said that teachers do not attend teachers meeting and most have stopped having teacher training and now train one-on-one or with a mentor teacher. Teacher communication and tips are communicated through email or newsletters. One pastor expressed concern that she will lose teachers when the pastor starts requiring teacher training because she doesn’t feel that the commitment is there.

#### Additional Results

The research questions yielded a broad array of information pertaining to the climate that exists in children’s ministry programs in the Houston, Texas area in 20 churches. The study also yielded additional information that is very pertinent to this study and reveals something of the climate in children’s ministry in the greater Houston area.

First of all, at least seven pastors indicated that their ministry had changed or would change due to the interview. The interview questions caused pastors to see weaknesses in their programs and four pastors told me about the steps they were taking to correct those weaknesses in program assessment, teacher training, parent education, and abuse prevention training.

One pastor called a staff meeting to be held in the near future, planning to use the questions as a guideline for planning the ministry. This particular children's pastor was new to the church and to children's ministry having been a church school director. The senior pastor was also new and was writing a new church philosophy since the church "was reorganizing". The pastors were very open in talking about the challenges and weaknesses in their children's ministry.

Another outcome is reflected in the comment made by a children's pastor who was preparing to go on a two-week mission trip. She relayed to me that, at first, she viewed the interview as a big disruption in her already too busy schedule, however, as the interview progressed, she indicated that it was not very often that she had an opportunity to sit down and have a Christian conversation. She was grateful for the opportunity because as she said, "It causes me to slow down and remember why I am doing all of this in the first place."

Finally, pastors expressed concern regarding the number of young adults who leave the church when they exit high school. One pastor stated that the number leaving her faith tradition is 82%. Although the numbers vary according to faith tradition, one pastor indicated that they have to change the trend and are searching for ways to change that trend.

## CHAPTER 5

### IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Child spirituality is a complex and complicated subject in a time when every aspect of spirituality is being examined under a microscope (Hay, 2006; Ratcliff, 2004; Roehlkepartain et al., 2006b). In the case of this study on young children's spiritual development and implications for Christian education, the researcher was successful in finding a broad array of information from the social science, Christian, biblical, and children's pastor's perspectives. The information is insightful when considering the climate of spiritual development from the perspective of the social scientist, Christianity, and children's pastors. Not only did the children's pastors provide information in the areas of definition and end goals (culmination) of spiritual development in young children, characteristics of young children who are developing spiritually, contexts that foster positive spiritual development in young children and the content that children must be taught to foster positive spiritual development, the children's pastors also cited areas of perceived weaknesses in Christian education programs for young children.

Fortunately, the process of pre-reading the interview questions and participating in the interview caused the pastors to reflect upon their children's ministry programs and identify areas in which they perceived weaknesses. The majority of pastors expressed concern over the changing role of the church in society. Pastors perceive that parents are not taking the primary responsibility of fostering children's spiritual development in the home, causing the congregations/parishes to assume the primary role of spiritual teacher of the child. The new role for the congregations/parishes comes at a time when

attendance in the congregations/parishes is irregular. Children's pastors state that many children attend the congregation/parish one hour per week, or 52 hours per year, while other children attend the congregation/parish once in a lifetime. Children's pastors comment on the limited amount of time available to make a positive influence on the children. Due to the decreased parental role in the spiritual development of children in the home along with the limited time children spend in ministry programs, congregations/parishes find themselves in the position of remediating children who know little about spiritual matters, the Bible, and do not incorporate spiritual development into everyday life. The decline in parental responsibility for children's spiritual development is also reflected in research that supports a lukewarm attitude towards spiritual matters in general (Barna, 2006). Congregations/parishes employ several strategies to impact the situation a positive manner. One strategy is to offer parent education classes. The classes experience marginal success since parent education classes have relatively few parents in attendance. Another strategy is to offer teacher education classes to enhance the effectiveness of teachers. However, the majority of teachers do not participate in the training classes. At the same time, pastors hesitate to require teacher training since they need to fill the classes with teachers and state that will lose teachers if such a requirement is put into place. The one exception is the Montessori based programs in which intensive teacher training, resulting in a teaching certificate, is required to teach those classes.

All of the children's pastors interviewed have a heavy responsibility for the administrative duties involved in coordinating effective children's ministry. The majority of children's pastors prepare budgets, select or write curriculum, conduct one-on-one

teacher training, attend weekly staff meetings, solicit and train volunteers, interview potential teachers, plan and conduct staff training, counsel with parents, along with other administrative duties assigned by the senior pastor. Few pastors have time for theological and biblical reflection on child spirituality, and little time to talk with the children in the ministry programs.

Data collected from the interviews with children's pastors along with the information gained from the textual sources, that include the *Bible*, *Children's Spirituality: Christian Perspectives, Research, and Applications* (Ratcliff, 2004), *The Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence* (Roehlkepartain, 2006), and the review of literature proved to be a rich resource for informing the field of spiritual development in young children.

Following a brief summary statement regarding each area of research inquiry: definition and culmination of spiritual development, characteristics and assessment of children who are developing in a positive spiritual manner, the contexts that foster positive spiritual development in young children, and the content of what children need to know to develop in a positive manner, the researcher will offer recommendations for effective Christian education and propose topics for future research regarding spiritual development in young children.

First, in the area of definition and end goal of spiritual development (culmination), the researcher learned that it is very unlikely that social scientists and children's pastors can agree on a definition of spiritual development since from the social scientists' point of view, spiritual development can take place in the sacred or the secular arena (Roehlkepartain et al., 2006b), and from the children's pastor's point of view and biblical

point of view, all positive spiritual development is Christ centered. Without an agreement as to the definition of positive spiritual development, it is also unlikely that the social scientist and children's pastor can agree on the end goal (culmination) of spiritual development.

Second, the characteristics of young children who are progressing in a positive spiritual manner are closely tied with the manner in which children's spiritual development is assessed (Hay, 2006). Both the characteristics of the children who are developing spiritually and the assessments of those characteristics rely heavily on cognitive development theory (Ratcliff, 2004; Hay, 2006). The most common method of assessing spiritual growth in young children is observation, with focus on cognitive skills such as recall and verbalization of information, demonstration of positive social skills, and participation in the life of the congregation/parish/community (Barna, 2006). With a cognitive focus, knowing about God is the focus of such assessments instead of knowing God, although research supports the premise that children can differentiate between knowing God and knowing about God (Allen, 2004). Because: 1) spirituality is considered an innate quality common to mankind (Roehlkepartain et al., 2006b); 2) spirituality may be more like sensory awareness rather than a cognitive skill (Hay, 2006); and 3) the majority of children's pastors state that all children have the same spiritual capacity, one is led to examine spirituality of the child with special needs in a different light. Little attention is given to the spiritual development of the child with special needs while much attention is given to the inclusion of the children and their families in the congregation/parish (Rapada, 2007; Dollahite, 2003; Mauro, 2008). Taking spiritual development out of the realm of cognitive development also causes one

to surmise that knowing the difference between right and wrong is not a cognitive skill but also an innate quality as well (Romans 2:15). At the same time, both children's pastors and social scientists agree that the child's natural abilities and the child's environment mediate the progress of spiritual development (Erickson, 1963; Montessori, 1965; Vygotsky, 1978).

Third, the contexts for spiritual development in young children, from the perspective of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, is a "complex system of relationships affected by multiple levels of the surrounding environment" (Berk, 2005, p.27). The environments and the relationships include the home with the child/parent relationship, the congregation/parish with the child/parent, child/teacher, child/pastor, child/educational programs relationships, and the society and culture with numerous other relationships (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The quality of the relationships within each environmental system influences the child. Parents have the primary responsibility of fostering positive spiritual development in children (Roehlkepartain et al., 2006b; Ratcliff, 2004; Deuteronomy 6:4-9). Parent-child communication influences child spiritual development (Boyatzis & Janicki, 2003), while the mother is the parent most likely to engage in spiritual conversation with the child (Boyatzis & Newman, 2004). Not all Christian families discuss spiritual matters on a regular basis with their children (Strommen & Hardel, 2000). Children do not have access to someone with which they can discuss spiritual matters (Nye, 2004).

The congregation/parish environment, along with the relationships the child encounters therein, plays a vital role in the child's spiritual development. Congregations/parishes that offer intergenerational activities produce children who pray

with greater frequency and with children who have better God concepts (Allen, 2004). Educational programs that allow for quiet, meditation, and prayer also produce children with better God concepts (Cavalletti, 1992 ; Berryman, 1991).

Children report that it is rare to have someone to talk to about spiritual matters (Hay, 2006), while at the same time, such spiritual mentors enhance positive spiritual development in children (Vygotsky, 1978). Children's pastors state that heavy administrative responsibilities leave little time to talk to children in the children's ministry or to engage in theological or Christian conversation with other adults.

As congregations/parishes note a decline in parental involvement in children's spiritual development (Barna, 2006), parenting classes are offered, with low parent participation. As the congregations/parishes take on a greater responsibility for fostering spiritual development in young children, teachers need additional preparation and training for the new role of remediation. However, the challenges of teacher recruitment and training are compounded by the fact that few teachers attend the teacher training classes.

Assessment of children who are making positive spiritual development rely heavily on cognitive skills such as recall and verbalization of facts, participation in congregation/parish activities, and the child's social skills (Hay, 2006). The criterion used for assessing adult spiritual maturity in congregations/parishes is participation in activities of the church (Barna, 2006).

Fourth, the content of what children should be taught to develop in a positive spiritual manner is varied whether one views content from the social scientist or Christian point of view. Social scientists identified family tradition as the content that



should be taught to children to foster spiritual development (Roehlkepartain et al., 2006b) while God/Christ/Holy Spirit, faith traditions, and the Bible are identified by Christian leaders and children's pastors as the content that must be taught (Ratcliff, 2004) to foster spiritual development.

Addressing the challenges presented result in recommendations in the following areas for maximum spiritual development in young children: 1) The definition and goals (culmination) of spiritual development; 2) the characteristics and assessments of children who are developing in a positive spiritual manner; 3) The contexts, including religious programs, parents, teachers, pastors, administrators, in which to foster positive spiritual development; and 4) the content that children should know to develop in a positive spiritual manner.

## Recommendations

### Definition and Culmination of Spiritual Development

The definition of spiritual development along with the end goal (culmination) of spiritual development is a key component to defining the field of children's spirituality (Hay, 2006; Ratcliff, 2004, Roehlkepartain et al., 2006b). Yet the definition and end goal (culmination) of spiritual development is the area in which there is the most diversity of opinions when considering the social science and Christian perspectives. While both the social sciences and the Christian perspectives see spiritual development as a growing process with the person actively constructing a view of self-in-context (Hay, 2006; Ratcliff, 2004, Roehlkepartain et al., 2006b), the social science perspective identifies the positive end goals of spiritual development as well-being, social justice, avoidance of risky behaviors, coping, resilience, mental health, to name a few (Roehlkepartian,

2006), and posit that positive spiritual development can occur in relation to the sacred or the secular (Roehlkepartain et al., 2006b). At the same time, negative end goals of spiritual development might include risky behaviors, mental illness, suicide, genocide, or terrorism (Roehlkepartain et al., 2006b).

Children's pastors view children's spiritual development as being either positive or negative as well. However, the very important difference is that children's pastors view all positive spiritual development as Christ-centered, with knowing God and becoming Christ-like as the primary goals which culminate in being united with God/Christ/Holy Spirit in the afterlife. Support is found for this premise both from the Christian perspective (Ratcliff, 2004), and from the biblical perspective (Romans 7:22). Children's pastors acknowledge that there are many good people as defined by good works and positive effect upon the society, while at the same time raising a voice of caution that being a good person is not an end in itself. That is not to say that one would not expect the Christian to display good deeds or actions as well (James 2:14-18). However, in a Christ-centered approach, good deeds toward fellowman result from the primary relationship with God, through Jesus Christ (Ratcliff, 2004; I John 2:9).

Formulating a definition of spiritual development upon which both the social scientist and the children's pastor can agree proves to be challenging, if not impossible. Furthermore, attempting to formulate such a definition may be counterproductive since it is unlikely that the social scientist will agree to a God/Christ/Holy Spirit-centered definition and that the children's pastor will define positive spiritual development without some aspect of God/Christ/Holy Spirit. The elements of the definition of spiritual development from a Christian perspective includes an awareness of God the Creator, a

response to that awareness that is positive, resulting in becoming more Christ-like, culminating in being united with God/Christ/Holy Spirit in the afterlife or a negative response to the awareness of God the Creator, resulting in becoming less Christ-like and culminating in separation from Christ in the afterlife. Acknowledging that compromise regarding the definition of spiritual development is unlikely, Christian education is free to focus on that which is unique to Christianity, Christ. Just as the children's pastors identify God/Christ/Holy Spirit as the beginning point of spiritual development, so is God/Christ/Holy Spirit the end goal as stated by children's pastors using phrases such as knowing Christ and becoming Christ-like (Ephesians 4:13).

#### Characteristics and Assessment of Child Spirituality

Christian education must concern itself with holistic development of the child including the spiritual, cognitive, social/emotional, and physical development of the child. The holistic approach to children's spirituality changes not only the current perspective on spiritual development, which primarily focuses on cognitive skills, but also solves some of the quandaries regarding the assessment of spiritual development. One of the greatest challenges, in assessing children's spiritual development is knowing what to assess and how to assess it.

First of all, it would be helpful to view the spiritual more like sensory awareness (Hay, 2006) rather than cognitive awareness by shifting the focus from knowing about God to direct knowing of God. One must consider that direct knowing is independent of cognitive and emotional capacity (Hay, 2006). For example, consider the eye. The eye depends on sensory input. The seeing is innate. One would not expect children to wait

until they learn all about the functions of the eye, the optic nerve and neurological processes before they start seeing. The eye has the seeing capacity it needs just as the spirit has the spiritual capacity it needs. As it happens, one sometimes talks about the trained eye, which implies that the eye is particularly perceptive to specified sensory input or that the eye is discriminating in drawing conclusions from sensory input.

Although one would hardly think of the child's spirit as a trained spirit, the concept of a perceptive and discriminating spirit is pertinent to the subject of child spirituality. For instance, children need instruction on how to discern the voice of God. The example of the child Samuel and the priest Eli as found in I Samuel 3:7-10, tells of the child Samuel, who is described as "not knowing the Lord" or "having the revelation of God's Word" (verse 7). Eli tells Samuel that it is the Lord's voice that is calling him and instructs Samuel in the proper way to respond to God's voice. Samuel speaks the message from God with boldness to Eli even though the message is not favorable to Eli in that God predicts his death as well as the death of his sons since Eli "honored his sons above God" (I Samuel 2:29).

Taking into consideration that the spiritual may be more like direct sensory awareness rather than cognition, one might conjecture that knowing the difference between right and wrong is also a direct knowing rather than a cognitive ability. Such conjecture is based on Romans 2:14-15:

(Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even

defending them.)

The law on the heart is God-given just as the conscience is God-given (Barclay, 1955), in which case the knowing of right and wrong is also an innate, universal quality of mankind.

Finally, at least one other aspect of children's spirituality might be considered in a different light when the spiritual is more like sensory awareness than cognitive ability. That aspect of spirituality is spiritual gifts. Assuming that children are born with spiritual capacity and are innocence before God because the child has not willfully transgressed God's law, the matter of spiritual gifts is worthy of investigation. Perhaps children are born with spiritual gifts that should be identified and developed. As the child develops and becomes aware of God the Creator and responds to that awareness, spiritual gifts are either developed in the child or extinguished in the child depending upon the child's response. The presence of spiritual gifts from birth may explain events like the boy with quilt and the empathy and sharing shown to the dying grandfather. Children's pastors also give examples of young children showing compassion, comfort, and sharing. Emphasis needs to focus on helping children recognize and develop spiritual gifts in an environment that honors the spiritual nature of the child. Keen observation on the part of adults is essential for assisting young children develop spiritual gifts. Not every child has the same spiritual gifts. However, once the spiritual gifts are identified, it is most helpful to talk with children about their spiritual gifts.

Cognitive development theory impacts religious education is seen in both the presentation of the curriculum from simple to complex and in the repeating cycles of the curriculum every two to four years. The lack of formal instruction or planning for children

under age three is also telling, even though very young children can recall events that occurred before being old enough to verbalize the event. Both aspects of the curriculum, simple to complex and repeating cycles are based on the assumption that children are too immature in their thinking to understand abstract things. Contrary to this notion is the curriculum *Godly Play* (Berryman, 1991) and *Catechesis of the Good Shepherd* (Cavalletti, 1992). Recently, this researcher had the opportunity to talk to the boy who offered his dying grandfather the baby quilt. In response to a question about the event, he recalled the event and when asked how he could have felt empathy, he replied that although he could not have defined empathy, he knew how it felt to be sick and how his quilt gave him comfort. Consequently, he offered the quilt to grandfather because it was all he had. The direct knowing of the young boy could be easily overlooked, particularly in an environment that does not provide opportunities for a child to express their spirituality and there is little or no opportunity to interact with adults or to reflect and listen to God (pray).

When considering that the spiritual is more like sensory awareness, knowing the difference between right and wrong may be innate, and children may be born with spiritual gifts, the assessment of children's spiritual development needs to shift emphasis. Most frequently, the assessment of children's spiritual progress depends on observed public behavior and verbalization of Bible stories and facts that were covered in the children's program. In other words, the child is assessed on knowing about God rather than knowing God, when knowing God is one of the Christian goals of spiritual development.

Assessment of knowledge has more than one difficulty when viewing the spiritual as a sensory awareness, and continuing to assess spiritual development based on cognitive ability may be misleading. First of all, this type of assessment depends directly on the child's linguistic and cognitive ability, thus excluding children who have limited language or intellectual ability. This precludes many children, although spiritual capacity is considered to be a universal innate trait. Pastors name other evidence of spiritual growth in children as participation in worship activities and traditions of the church. Again, children depend on adults to take them to church and support such activities. Children are precluded if they do not have supportive adults in their lives.

Other resulting problems may occur when the attempts to assess spiritual development depend on such superficial abilities in young children. For instance, when recall and verbalization of Bible stories, books of the Bible, social skills, participating in a food drive, and attending church three times a week are the criteria for assessing children's spiritual development, all of which can be carried out without knowing God, the child is at risk for developing false perceptions of spiritual development. At the same time, spiritual activities are congregation/parish centered and unconnected to daily life. A disconnect between the spiritual and daily living may account for the large numbers of young people leaving their faith tradition at exit of high school.

Although it is apparent that assessments that are based on observable behaviors are to be avoided for the best outcomes, the focus of assessment becomes more closely tied into the definition and end goals of spiritual development, those being, an awareness of God the Creator, a proper response to that awareness of God, and Christ-centered living. Programs are assessed, not individuals. That is to say, the Christian

education program should be evaluated on specified criteria such as providing opportunities for children to express their spiritual nature, incorporating time in the ministry for silence and reflection, supporting Bible literacy, an awareness of God and His attributes, Jesus Christ and His role in creation and salvation, the Holy Spirit's role, and a response to that awareness. Jesus made it clear that one cannot make a proper assessment on outward appearances. It is the inward attitude of the heart that reveals the true person:

Ye have heard that it was said of them of old time, Thou shall not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say to you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment... (Matthew 5 21-22a).

This scripture passage identifies the action of killing as well as the attitude that leads to killing as deeds that separate man from God.

### Context

Interactions with adults in the environment play a vital role in the spiritual development of the child. For very young children, interactions occur mostly with parents in the home and with pastors and teachers in the congregation/parish. Following comments about observations regarding parents, pastors and teachers are the specific recommendations to effectively foster spiritual development in young children. First of all, biblical example posits parents as primarily responsible for fostering spiritual development in their children with the emphasis on the spiritual being a daily, morning to night subject (Deuteronomy 6:6-9). This kind of holistic approach to



fostering spiritual development requires an understanding of the spiritual nature of children, an understanding of the law and decrees one should be talking about to children, and time spent with the child in conversation. While some parents carry out the role of primary spiritual teacher of their children, other parents are negligent in doing so and present their children to the congregation/parish in need of remediation. At the same time, the congregation/parish faces the challenge of remediating the child who is rarely in attendance.

Children's pastors work largely in isolation from other children's pastors and are extremely busy managing the everyday administrative duties of the children's ministry. The role of pastor as caretaker of the flock has become the role of administrator with little time to engage in theological and Christian conversations with adults or with children.

Sunday school teachers are usually too busy managing children to talk with individual children in the class about spiritual matters. At the same time, children's pastors report that Sunday school teachers do not know enough about the Bible and the doctrines of the church to recognize parts of the curriculum that does not agree with the doctrines of the church. Some teachers arrive late to teach their class on Sunday morning. This behavior on the part of the teachers gives an underlying message that teaching is not important. Teacher training is relegated to a one-on-one activity because teachers do not attend teacher's meetings. Lack of teacher ability and preparation may drive the choice of curriculum for the children in that one of the foremost criteria for selecting curriculum is teacher friendliness. The other criterion is eye-appeal. Such a criterion for selection might cause one to think that the purpose of curriculum is

entertainment, not substance. Such curriculum is described by a children's pastor as a mile wide and an inch deep.

The behavior of parents and teachers send children a mixed message about the importance of spiritual matters. Congregations also send mixed messages about the importance of children in their midst. Congregations compete to attract large numbers of children and proceed to keep the children out of view of the congregation and participation in congregational activities by keeping the children out of the adult activities, so as not to disturb adults in the worship services, while, at the same time, assuming that the children are too young to understand the sermon/Liturgy.

Congregations and neighborhoods change and faith based education adapts to the changes. However, the Christ-centered message of the church must remain the same, and declared in a simple understandable manner for the church to be effective. In order to educate children to become followers of Christ, recommendations are the following:

1. Seminaries –

- Need to require courses regarding children's spirituality for those studying for the ministry
- Need to emphasize the pastor's role as being in direct contact with the flock, including the children
- Need to examine aspects of spirituality if it is more like sensory awareness and the implications for spiritual capacity, knowing the difference between right and wrong, and the presence of spiritual gifts in young children

2. Congregations/parishes –

- Need to do a better job of informing parents of their primary role of providing an environment that fosters children's spiritual development
- Teach parents about the spiritual nature of children
- Offer strategies for talking with children about spiritual matters and how to incorporate spiritual conversation into daily life
- Emphasize that the most effective method to teach the child to become Christ-like is to be Christ-like
- Provide intergenerational opportunities for children
- Create an environment that encourages the child to express their spiritual nature
- Touch the spiritual nature of the child with special needs
- Provide a time of silence for the child to reflect, meditate, and pray
- Support the child's faith and avoid planting doubt in the child's mind
- Talk with children

The following is an example of how to talk to children using the Bible story of Daniel and the lions found in Daniel 6. Daniel was taken into captivity from his homeland and served in the conquering king, Darius. Daniel was known for his integrity and work ethic. Daniel is also described as highly esteemed by God (Daniel 9:23). Daniel was put into a den with lions because he prayed openly after King Darius decreed that no one could petition a man or a God for thirty days. Daniel lived throughout the night in the lion's den without a wound. Daniel and King Darius acknowledged that the God of Daniel, the living God had rescued Daniel.

In talking with children about the story, parents or teachers can choose to focus on God the Creator and His power or to focus on created things. The focus on God supports faith and the focus on created things plants doubt, if one does not reorient the child to focus on God. At the same time, when children ask questions that indicate that the child has doubts regarding the story, one can acknowledge that the child is thinking about spiritual things and discuss the child's concerns.

Focus on God the Creator	Focus on Created Things
God is all powerful. He can close the lion's mouths, if He chooses.	The story could not have happened. Real lions would eat you.
God honors obedience	Daniel could have hid to pray. The King would never know.
People can serve God anywhere, in a Christian or non-Christian nation.	The law was not fair. The King could have cancelled the law.

Another example that demonstrates the effect that the words spoken by an adult has on the child revolves around the boy who spread his favorite quilt over the dying grandfather. Not only is this an example of how to talk to children, it is a response to a child's expression of his spiritual nature. The adult response can encourage the expression of that spiritual nature or suppress that spiritual nature in the child.

Encourage the expression of spiritual nature	Discourage the expression of the spiritual nature
I see that you are willing to share your favorite quilt with grandfather.	Don't do that, if you give your quilt away, you won't have a quilt of your own.
	What a silly thing to do, that little quilt won't help him. He needs a bigger quilt.
	Forget it, grandfather is going to die anyway.

When a child asks questions that indicate the child is trying to clarify points of the story, a response that acknowledges that the child is thinking about spiritual things encourages further conversation about the subject. For instance, consider the story of Jonah and Nineveh found in Jonah. Jonah was called by God to preach to the great city of Nineveh. Jonah resisted the call and tried to run from God by boarding a ship. When Jonah was thrown overboard from the ship during a fierce storm, a great fish, prepared by God (Jonah 1:17) swallowed Jonah. At the end of three days, Jonah was released from the great fish and went on to Nineveh to preach. When children ask about the fish and how this could happen with such words as “Did a big fish really swallow Jonah?”, our response either points children to God or plants doubt in the mind of the child.

Focus on God and Building Faith	Focus on Created Things and Planting Doubt
That is an incredible story that I have wondered about also. But when I remember that God is powerful enough to create the heavens and the earth, a big fish is no problem for Him!	Well, I don't think that Jonah really was swallowed by a big fish. It's just a made-up story to teach a lesson. Fish can't swallow people and the people live for three days. Besides, big fish don't even live in the area where it happened.

These are just a few examples of ways one can respond the children. As Christian education builds a foundation of faith in God, positive spiritual development will be the result.

## Content

Since children's ministries have the children for such a relatively small amount of time per year as voiced by several children's pastors, an effective curriculum should be selected and used with the child that provides a framework for the children to categorize the many bits and pieces of information they hear, not only at church, but also in society. Such scripture based themes might be "Love God – Love Your Neighbor" (Matthew 22:37), "Wisdom, Stature, Favor with God, Favor with Man" (Luke 2:52), "Worship the Creator or Worship Created Things" (Romans 1:20-22a, 25). Whatever the theme, the message must be clear and simple with the purpose in mind of pointing children toward God.

As mentioned previously, children's pastors and Christian leaders state that children should be taught the traditions and rituals of the faith, Bible literacy, and information about God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. While each faith tradition varies in theology regarding the content of what children should be taught to foster positive spiritual development, the researcher recommends that content include some very broad principles that serve to guide the child to mature spiritually.

First of all, the child needs to understand that God reveals himself to us through His Word, which for the Christian is the Bible, and through the Creation. Then consider guiding principles that should be taught to children regarding God's Word: 1) "All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." (II Timothy 3:16). 2) Taking some parts of scripture as truth and some parts as false leads to a break-down of the entire scripture. 3) Instead of studying scripture,

study yourself in the light of the scripture. 4) Misunderstanding and confusion about the scripture comes as a result of our human limitations, not God's limitations. 5) Scripture is best viewed as a unit. Scripture will not be in conflict with itself. For instance, "For it is by grace that you have been saved through faith – and this not of yourselves, it is a gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast." (Ephesians 2:8), is true for people in the Old Testament just as it is true for people in the New Testament.

Psalm 19 and Romans 1:20 mention Creation as a way God has provided for men to know about Him. Genesis 1:1 speaks of God as Creator. The study of the Creation shows God's attributes when properly presented to children. Congregations/parishes are challenged to use this resource in a more effective manner in pointing children to God.

Two additional areas that should be taught to children to foster positive spiritual development is how to recognize and use their spiritual gifts and how to be sensitive to their God-given conscience. Reference to the God-given conscience was made in the section on context and how adults should talk with children about expressing their spiritual nature. Assuming that the adults with which the child interacts has properly guided the child in expressing their spiritual nature, the child should be taught to check themselves since checks on conduct should come from within and not as a result of the fear of adult anger. Children should learn to recognize the voice of the God-given conscience. Personal observation of young children tells me when children are trying to hide what they are doing. First, there is the looking to see if you are watching, hiding forbidden objects, and lying about events. The child needs to come to identify those

behaviors in themselves and realize that they might be disregarding their God-given conscience.

Children also need to be taught how to recognize and develop and use their spiritual gifts. Adults must assist children in doing this by closely observing children and talking to them about spiritual matters and then providing opportunities for children to express those spiritual gifts.

#### Areas for Further Study

Children's spirituality is considered to be a universal trait and when considering the definition of spirituality, one must know exactly what is meant by spiritual, spirituality, spiritual development, and spiritual formation. Are these terms interchangeable? The application of research is difficult without a clear understanding of the definitions.

In regard to the characteristics of children's spirituality, considering the viewpoint that spirituality is more like sensory awareness than cognitive ability opens the way for additional research on the spirituality of children with various mental and physical challenges. How do these children display their spirituality? What are the prevalent attitudes toward the spirituality of children with mental and physical challenges? What do we look for in very young children if we do not depend on linguistic and cognitive ability to assess spiritual development? What are the various ways that children express their spiritual nature in daily life?

The spiritual nature of children is nurtured and given expression in various contexts. For young children, how does the home nurture the child's expression of their spiritual nature? How does the home discourage the expression of the child's spiritual nature? How does the congregation/parish encourage the expression of the child's



spiritual nature? Does the congregation/parish suppress the child's spiritual nature? Does the congregation substitute traditions and doctrines of the faith tradition (knowing about God) for spiritual development (knowing God)? How does the congregation/parish acknowledge the significance of the child's spirituality? How do the children's programs in the congregation/parish affect the child's expression of their spiritual nature? How does the large group high energy programs compare to the small group, quiet reflective programs for children in spiritual outcomes? How do the organizational aspects (separating into age groups for worship and Bible study) of the congregation/parish affect spiritual development?

The content of what children should know needs a balance of knowledge about God (Bible literacy), while at the same time, teaching children how to express their spiritual nature (knowing God). Does the curriculum help the child understand the unity of the Bible or present material in such a way as to create confusion? Is there essential content across all faith traditions that children should know? Is the spiritual nature of children a consideration in planning curriculum? A careful examination of various faith traditions and how the doctrines and theology affect children might be helpful in making comparative studies to find aspects of spirituality in children not present in all faith traditions.

The study of spirituality as an innate trait common to mankind is important to the holistic development of children. As the field of child spirituality advances and certain aspects of spirituality, such as definition of spirituality, characteristics of the spiritual nature of children, the nurturing contexts of spirituality, and the content that should be taught, are clarified, the child will benefit, as well as society as a whole.

APPENDIX A  
QUESTIONS

Questions used in the semi-clinical interview were derived from the template analysis of two recent texts that depict the current climate in child spirituality from the social sciences and the Christian/biblical perspectives, along with the Bible. Questions were refined by conducting practice interviews with children's pastors to determine if questions were too complex or redundant to answer in an interview spanning about one hour. Three such practice interviews were conducted. Twenty resulting questions are designed to discover the current climate on child spirituality from the children's pastor perspective.

#### Questions for Spiritual Development Interview in Faith-based Settings

1. When does a child begin to develop spiritually? What age was the youngest child who expressed a spiritual concept to you?
2. Do all children have the same capacity for spiritual growth?
3. What is the evidence of spiritual growth in young children?
4. Are characteristics of spiritual growth predictable according to the age of the child and the stage of development?
5. Who is primarily responsible for fostering spiritual development in young children?
6. How do you equip those who are primarily responsible for the spiritual development of young children?
7. What educational programs do you have for young children (birth through eight years old) in this congregation?
8. How do you choose the curriculum for the educational programs for young children?
9. Describe a typical educational session for young children.
10. Describe the materials used in educational settings for young children.
11. Do you incorporate time in the educational session for children to engage in reflection, contemplation, meditation, prayer, awe, wonder, and mystery?
12. What basic qualifications are required of teachers of young children?
13. How do you recruit teachers for young children?
14. How much teacher training is required for teachers of young children?

15. What is the student/teacher ratio?
16. How do you measure the success of educational programs for young children?
17. Is parent education part of your programs?
18. What topics do you offer to parents of young children in educational settings?
19. What is the end goal of spiritual development?
20. Other comments pertinent to spiritual development?

Because I obtained the answers for the preceding questions in 45 minutes, I asked some of the more complex questions to get a feel for the complexity in answering those questions. Questions asked:

1. Is it possible to have a definition of spiritual development that both the social scientist and religious leaders agree upon?
2. What are the essential principles, ideas, traditions, and practices (institutional aspects) that must be taught to foster positive spiritual development?
3. Describe the instruction you use to enable children to describe their spiritual experiences (experiential aspects)?
4. How do you help children go from knowing about God to knowing God?

APPENDIX B  
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Pastor #	Gender	Age	Education Level of Pastor	Years <sup>a</sup>	Ethnicity of Congregation	Children in Sunday Morning Ministries	Faith Tradition
			Ordained –				
1	M	38	Ministry Degree	11	M	75	Church of Christ
2	F	57	Ministry Degree	6	Caucasian	50	Episcopal
3	M	60	Education Degree	3	M	30	Church of God
4	F	38	Ministry Degree	12	M	1500	Interdenominational
5	F	36	Ministry Degree	4	M	375	Baptist
6	F	37	Ministry Degree	3	M	300	Methodist
			Ordained –				
7	F	28	Ministry Degree	2	M	425	Nazarene
8	F	40	Ministry Degree	2	M	900	Baptist
9	F	52	Ministry Degree	6	Caucasian	50	Lutheran
10	F	43	Ministry Degree	14	M	200	Disciples of Christ
			Ordained –				
11	M	35	Ministry Degree	4	M	500	Bible Church
			High School Degree				
12	F	35	Degree	2	M	150	Pentecostal
			Ordained –				
13	M	59	Ministry Degree	12	M	1200	Baptist
14	F	45	Ministry Degree	2	Caucasian	50	Nazarene
				> 1			
15	M	61	Ordained Priest	month	Arab/Greek	30	Christian Orthodox
			Ordained –				
16	F	55	Ministry Degree	1	Caucasian	75	Episcopal
17	F	44	Secular Degree	2	M	450	Catholic
18	F	61	Ministry Degree	26	M	90	Methodist
			Ordained –				
19	F	38	Ministry Degree	8	Black	7	Church of God
20	F	32	Ministry Degree	1	M	120	Presbyterian

<sup>a</sup>Years in congregation; M = Caucasian/Hispanic/Black/Asian;

APPENDIX C

DATA SET 1: PERTINENT TO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

*Template analysis* of textual material yielded information that is very pertinent to formulating the interview questions for semi-structured interviews with children's pastors. Pertinent information is:

*Research and Method:*

Most research on children's spirituality examines the nature of children's spirituality, not how to nurture it (Nye, 2004, p. 90).

"To understand the more specific task of researching children's spirituality through Christian lenses, it is important to receive guidance about the nuances of spirituality understood in specifically Christian terms" (Nye, 2004, p. 90).

Assessment of spiritual development is usually tied to cognitive and linguistic skills (Ratcliff, 2004; Roehlkepartian, 2006)

*Definition:*

Religious concepts are not the same as spiritual capacity. Focus on developmental theory and cognition does not measure spiritual capacity. (Nye, 2004, p. 92).

Spiritual development follows along the lines of sensory development instead of cognitive development (Nye, 2004).

*Context:*

It is infrequent for a child to have an adult to talk to about spiritual matters (Allen, 2004, p. 104).

Cultural influence can "snuff out the spiritual spark" (Benson, 2004, p.489).

Spiritual experience can occur outside of organized religion (Scott & Magnuson, 2006, p.446).

Children need time for quiet meditation (Berryman 1991, Cavalletti, 1992, Montessori, 1965).

Religious education tends to develop parts of the child's faith instead of using a holistic approach. (Ratcliff, 2004; Roehlkepartian, 2006).

Holistic approach advocated (Deuteronomy 6:5).

Children have better God concepts when involved in intergenerational groups in the church (Allen, 2004, pp. 266-283).



## APPENDIX D

### DEFINITION AND GOALS OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT IN YOUNG CHILDREN

Pastor	Question complex 1 Definition both social scientists and religious leaders can agree upon?	Question 19 End goal of spiritual development? God is the concrete goal of spiritual development
1	Definition of spiritual has to include the process of understanding who God is. Spiritual development has to include the person of God. Without the sacred, there is not spiritual development. Worship of God is part of the definition of spiritual development. Without God the person becomes the object of spiritual development. That is secular humanism. Being a good person is not enough.	
2	No, because we are not of the world. Unfortunately the church is becoming secularized and we spend our time on things that have nothing to do with the Gospel of Christ. We need to get busy. The church is in a mess.	Heaven Know Jesus Truth
3	It would be very difficult since we come from different starting points. The religious leader could not think of positive spiritual development without the sacred. The term spirituality is vague and could even apply to the oneness you can feel at a ball game. That is not what I think of.	Christian Christ-like
4	The idea of spiritual development either being secular or sacred is another example of man trying to make the things of God common. That's part of our culture today, taking the sacred and imitating it using secular ideas. Such attempts lead people into a sort of false hope that being a good person is enough.	Move into where God has called you.
5	I don't see how it is possible because we are not like-minded. When I talk about spiritual, I think of the children coming to know the one true God. It's more than doing good acts and being a good person.	Relationship with God/Christ
6	I don't think so. As far as I am concerned, spiritually has everything to do with God.	Followers of Christ Serve others Evangelize Bring hope
7	No. Probably not. Science deals with the concrete and physical. Spiritual development depends on faith. There can be no positive spiritual development without the sacred. It sounds like the social scientist is trying to change the definition. The Holy Spirit working with the child is the unknown variable.	Eternity with Christ

Pastor	Question complex 1 Definition both social scientists and religious leaders can agree upon can agree upon?	Question 19 End goal of spiritual development
8	I would not agree to that. You don't have Christian spiritual development in a secular way. So I would say because is you are not talking about Christianity, there's no spiritual development at all. Without Christ there is nothing so there is no reason to discuss it.	Know Christ
9	That's difficult. I personally cannot think of being spiritual without God. The definition changes when people arrange it so they make up their own gods and it is their own self and selfishness. They live for themselves.	Person becomes a self-sufficient Christian who grows on their own
10	I think it is possible. If we can raise people to be more kind, loving, accepting, nonjudgmental, all those types of things. I guess that's more of a humanistic approach, but it would create a more spiritual people. Love is spiritual development.	Kingdom of God Create heaven on earth Peace Love people Be better people
11	I can't give you an educated answer. Christianity is not about being a good person. It's about a relationship with Christ. It wouldn't be incorrect to say that development outside of Christ, who we consider to be the ultimate Truth, would be purposeless, misleading, and actually detrimental to the child.	Committed to Christ
12	I definitely believe there is a secular spiritual development. It's not Christ centered spiritual development. It falls along the lines of the New Age. I think there are two different paths of spiritual development.	Hear God's voice Get connected to God
13	No. There cannot be positive spiritual development in a secular way. The Christian has a different starting point.	To be like Jesus Glorify God
14	I do. The methods of the church must change but the message of the church cannot change. Without Christ we are just a public school	Biblical knowledge Understand the concepts of Christianity Role of the church in the community

Pastor	Question complex 1 Definition both social scientists and religious leaders can agree upon can agree upon?	Question 19 End goal of spiritual development
15	I don't think so. Both sides are not going to have the same perspective, so to get them to agree. There would have to be compromise on someone's part.	Man can become like God
16	It's absurd.	Relationship with God Know God
17	As a Catholic, I would say no. As Catholics, ultimately, we believe that without God, there is nothing. You can be a nice person and not have a sacred basis for it. Can you have positive spiritual development without the sacred? I don't think so. This is part of secularization. When you're a nice person secularly, that is all you have. I think it is impossible to be a spiritual person if you don't believe in God.	Be united with God in the afterlife Pass on the faith
18	We definitely have a spiritual component in each human that needs to be filled. My direction is toward God, not towards myself. The goal of spiritual development is to know God.	Personal relationship with God
19	Not from my vantage. You know you see people all the time in he workplace that are good people and they make the right decisions, but they don't give reverence to God. These who don't believe spend a lot of time on earthly things because that's all there is.	Save their souls
20	I don't think we can simply because God has to be at the center of it.	Goal is to handle world view in a Christian manner

APPENDIX E

CHARACTERISTICS OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT IN YOUNG CHILDREN

Pastor	Question 1: Age begins?	Age expressed?	Questions 2: Do all have the same spiritual capacity?	Question 3: Evidence of spiritual growth?	Does spiritual development follow Ages?	Stages?
1	Day 1-Birth	3 years	Yes – even special needs child	Behavior – age 2 – contrition knows right and wrong age 4 – relational behavior – how to treat others age 5 - authority	No According to nurture	Yes
2	Birth	very young 10 weeks old	Yes – mediated by nurture	Baptism Communion Confirmation	No	Yes
3	Birth	3 years	Yes – with the right nurture	Sense of others	No Prefer benchmarks	No
4	Birth	2-3 years	Yes – child made in the image of God	Verbalize – Tell you something you taught them Birth – Kindergarten Awareness of God/Jesus 1 <sup>st</sup> -5 <sup>th</sup> grade Faith/prayer/witness/Holy Spirit Behavior – Live out what they have learned	No Varies by child according to their uniqueness a nurture	---

Pastor	Question 1: Age begins?	Age expressed?	Questions 2: Do all have the same spiritual capacity?	Question 3: Evidence of spiritual growth?	Does spiritual development follow Ages?	Stages?
5	Birth	2-3 years	Yes – But who can know this? Every child must be treated the same.	Behavior – Make the right choices/ treat others Who can know the heart of the child?	No – varies according to a child's ability and parental influence (Mentions charts that tell what a child should know.)	
6	Birth	2-3 years	Yes	Word and action	No – Spiritual development is not like cognitive development	
7	2-3 years	3 years	Yes and no – depends on the family	Verbalize – recall stories	No	--- Depends on nurture
8	Birth	4-5 years	Yes	Asks questions Thinks about spiritual things Conversion Baptism class	----	---
9	Birth	Pre-school Example: grocery store	Yes Innate ability Intelligence Education Hindered by lack of verbal ability	Actions Sing songs Fingerplays Pray for strangers	No	Yes

Pastor	Question 1: Age begins?	Age expressed?	Questions 2: Do all have the same spiritual capacity?	Question 3: Evidence of spiritual growth?	Does spiritual development follow Ages?	Stages?
10	--	4 years	Varies with child Girls have more spiritual connection than boys	Questions/awe Actions toward others Comfort to others	Yes Qualified answer to apply to adults	Yes
11	Birth	2 ½ years	All have a capacity for a relationship with Christ	Change in the way they live	No All children don't start the same way	Yes
12	4-5 years	3-5 years	Yes – all do not exercise their spiritual aspect	Behavior - pray	No Depends on the environment	Yes
13	Varies	5 years	Varies according to environment	Child's speech will give evidence	No Children are different and mature at different rates	No
14	Infancy	4-5 years	Yes - environment	Verbalize Transformed life	Stages vary pretty much Concrete to abstract varies	
15	40 days	3 ½ years	Yes	Verbalize	No Full members of the church at 40 days	No
16	Birth	3 years	Yes	Self-correcting behavior	I don't know – only what people tell me Christian home vs. secular home	



Pastor	Question 1: Age begins?	Age expressed?	Questions 2: Do all have the same spiritual capacity?	Question 3: Evidence of spiritual growth?	Does spiritual development follow Ages?	Stages?
17	Birth	3 years	Yes	Love one another Share	Yes Pretty much follows a path	Yes
18	Birth	2 years	All have a spiritual center	Living out faith daily	No	Yes
19	5 years	Named bad behavior as a concept	----	-----	Took ages and stages to mean ages and phases	
20	Birth	4 years	Yes	Way they respond Apply what they have learned	No	Yes Understanding comes with age and maturity

APPENDIX F  
CHARACTERISTICS OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT IN YOUNG CHILDREN:  
COMMENTS

Pastor	Comment
1	<p>Parent should begin appropriate spiritual instruction when the child knows right from wrong.</p> <p>The environment makes all the difference.</p>
2	<p>Example: A child recounted an event that happened when the child was 10 weeks old.</p> <p>Children's programs in the Parish serve to "awaken the child's spirit".</p> <p>Two things inhibit spiritual growth: secular impact on the church and parental influence.</p> <p>Peripheral parents – inconsistent in attendance – no value in Sunday school</p> <p>Parental lack of participation – bring children to landmark events and we never see them again.</p> <p>Tend to align Christian education with worldly standards: example junior high</p> <p>Stages are created by worldly thinking and deny the uniqueness of the individual.</p> <p>Role of the Christian educator is to provide "spiritual markers" for the child's path and to look out for the spiritual safety of the child.</p>
3	<p>Have to measure spiritual development by things the child can demonstrate.</p>

Pastor	Comment
4	<p>Children carry memories of early experiences.</p> <p>A three year old can know as much as an eight year old spiritually. It depends on the child's ability and nurture.</p> <p>Begin early. Don't wait until the child can speak to talk about spiritual things. A child's first words are words they have heard.</p> <p>Give the child the benefit of the doubt</p>
5	<p>God initiates the relationship with the child.</p> <p>Some children stand out as being more tuned in spiritually.</p> <p>Difficult to communicate with those who are not people of faith.</p> <p>Be careful about judging spiritual things on what children say.</p> <p>Spiritually is a heart matter and only God knows.</p>
6	<p>Spiritual development is not like cognitive development.</p> <p>Spiritual development is birth to afterlife, not age related.</p>

Pastor	Comment
7	No comment
8	No class can make a child a Christian.
9	Start early so the child can have a proper foundation. Signs of spiritual development are seen in children's actions.
10	Provide an environment where a child can express their spiritual development. Girls are more "spiritually connected than boys". If a boy is spiritually in tune, it is to the extreme. Children are more spiritually aware than adults. Assessment – Picture God in your mind. Gives an example of an eight year old's picture of God in brown rags.
11	Has little opportunity to talk to children in the ministry. 82% of kids are walking away from faith after high school.
12	Adults hinder the early start of spiritual development. Individual abilities and spirits determine spiritual development.

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Pastor	Comment
	Both nature and nurture influence development
13	Positive spiritual development cannot be secular
14	In one year we only have the child for 52 hours. Large churches try to “be small”.
15	Godparents are accountable for Godchild’s spiritual welfare.
16	Some state that children cannot understand spiritual concepts until they can talk. I think the talking is more for our benefit than for that of the child. What about the child who can never talk? There is no way to prove a relationship with God
17	Ritual helps children develop spiritually. It is a window through which we see God. Holy Spirit draws children
18	Negative effects on positive spiritual development might include parental influence and no church background.

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Pastor	Comment
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19	How can we handle bad behavior in the church? We only have children 2 hours per week.
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20	These are good questions and have helped me plan my ministry.
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APPENDIX G  
CONTENT: WHAT MUST BE TAUGHT



Pastor	Comment
1	<p>Actions have consequences/Difference between right and wrong/Obedience            Purpose of prayer            How to treat other people/Forgiveness/            Christ-like behavior/Your character should match God's character/virtues            God is present/ God loves me/ God has a standard to live by/God's involved in our lives            People need to worship/ How to worship            Wisdom/stature/favor with God/favor with man            Bible</p>
2	<p>Books of the Bible/Bible stories/Gospels/Parables            Armor of God            John the Baptist            Live the faith/Share the faith            Liturgy            Plant seed in child's heart/ Your character should match God's character            Jesus/Gospel</p>
3	<p>Understand what a Christian is – give their life over to God            Trinity</p>
4	<p>God as Creator/ Revere God/Love God first/Fear God/God has a plan for your life            Jesus/Child's relationship to Jesus/Salvation            Holy Spirit /Discern the voice of the Holy Spirit            Trinity            Child made in God's image/Child's worth/ Children can do things for God            Bible/ How to use the Bible            Prayer/How to pray            Baptism            Forgiveness            Guidelines for attending church and adult worship</p>

Pastor	Comment
	Evangelistic/Become aware of the world's needs/Become aware of Christianity worldwide Gratefulness/giving back to God/Tithes and offerings/Serve and obey God
5	God created child/Child's relationship to God/Child has a purpose/Child has spiritual gifts God's attributes/Seek God Knows Jesus Bible Understand doctrines Prayer Relationship to others – nice, helping, forgiving, justice
6	All have sinned/Jesus died for the child Bible/How to use the Bible Prayer Witness Serving/Missions
7	Virtues/Do the right thing/Treat others like you want to be treated God made me/God loves me/Trust God/Jesus wants to be my forever friend
8	Baptism Salvation Who God is/Listen to God/Pray Missions/Do things for others
9	Love/Generosity/Caring/Compassion Jesus and relationship to child/Salvation Liturgy Communion

Pastor	Comment
10	<p>Knowing God/God as a spiritual father/Unconditional love of God/God searches for us            God is with us/Reverence, respect, love for God            Understand Bible stories/Relate to biblical characters/Apply Christian stories            Theme to the Bible – God always wins – God always loves            Man is fully human – don't be critical Humans are all God's children            Consider others (love what they love)/Softer heart/Take care of others/Conflict hurts            Love children with special needs            Church is a safe place            Gospel            Self/self esteem/self worth/ self value            Children can change the world            Missions training</p>
11	<p>God loves you/God made you/ Love God/love others/Love and serve others            Listen to Jesus/Jesus wants to be a forever friend/Trust Christ no matter what            Make wise choices/Do world changing things</p>
12	<p>Bible/ Books of the Old Testament/Beatitudes            Prayer            How to cast out demons            Worship/How a service operates/Dance/perform in worship            Serve others            Salvation/Jesus            Obedience            Selflessness</p>
13	<p>Christ/Sin/Forgiveness/Relationship to Christ            Bible/Discipleship/Virtues            Baptism</p>

Pastor	Comment
14	Pray/ God as Creator
15	Doctrine/ Traditions/Liturgy/Saints Book of Prayer Prayer/Fasting/Worship
16	Faith traditions Know God/ relationship with God/Prayer Scripture Worship Prayer
17	Doctrine Catechism
18	Thankfulness God as Creator Prayer/helps you know God Who God is/Quiet reverence Compassion and empathy/Meet the needs of others/ Work of service to others Missions Live out what you have learned Work of Christ/Personal relationship with Christ/God Faith stories
19	Forgiveness Prayer Avoid punishment Live for Christ Teach a better way God is with you

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Pastor	Comment
20	Bible stories Unity of scripture Guided meditation (thinking) Teach by example Pray Handle worldview in a Christian manner

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APPENDIX H  
CONTEXT OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT IN YOUNG CHILDREN:  
EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Pastor and Children	Question 7: What programs do you have for children?	Questions 8, 9, 10: How do you choose curriculum? Describe a typical educational session. What materials are used?	Question 16: How do you measure success?
1 75	Sunday school Bible Hour VBS	Write curriculum based on Luke 2:52 Curriculum is supplemented with additional resources. Bible oriented. Children age 2 and under are in the nursery with a curriculum that emphasizes Birth of Jesus and Creation. The sessions for age 3 and up consist of large group, then small group activities. A time is allowed for quiet. Materials include stories, charts, pictures, maps, songs, and puppets.	Children live out what is taught
2 50	Sunday school Children's Church VBS	Curriculum varies according to age. Birth to 36 months (3 years) – <i>Gospel Light</i> 3-5 years – <i>Godly Play</i> 1 <sup>st</sup> – 5 <sup>th</sup> grade – <i>Rotation</i> Sessions for 3 years and up are large group, then small group. Materials include books, stories, pictures, religious figures, art and cooking supplies, music.	The children's faces
3 30	Sunday school Bible Kids Club Power Church Children's Choir	Nursery Care and Toddler programs offer a nurturing environment Ages 2-5 years use simple curriculum 1 <sup>st</sup> – 5 <sup>th</sup> grade use curriculum with large group instruction, then activity sheets and music.	Observe classrooms Children engaged Attendance increases Child baptisms
4 1500	Children's Church	Birth – 3 years – curriculum with nurturing atmosphere, 3 years and up – Using <i>Pray Kids</i> curriculum where children meet in a large group worship style setting and then break into groups of 100 kids by age group to begin the prayer center rotations. Materials include globes, maps, Bibles, art supplies, and books. Some centers allow for silent meditation.	Children live out what is taught

Pastor and Children	Question 7: What programs do you have for children?	Questions 8, 9, 10: How do you choose curriculum? Describe a typical educational session. What materials are used?	Question 16: How do you measure success?
5 375	Sunday school Children's Church Bible Quiz	Curriculum chosen is Bible based, communicates to kids, good fit for this group, same lesson for all kids from 3 years group, same lessons for all kids from 3 years and up, communicates with parents, and must fit the four year cycle. Birth – 2 has no formal curriculum except for nurture. 3 - 5 years and use <i>Empowering Kids</i> and <i>KidMo</i> . This curriculum is designed for large group, then small group instruction. A video is used with supplemental materials.	Watch children and look for response
6 300	Sunday school Children's Church Wednesday	Birth – 2 years – curriculum is nurturing environment 3-5 years old use <i>HandsOn Group</i> , <i>Grapple</i> , <i>KidMo</i> , and <i>Learning to Use the Bible</i> . The curriculum is described as very hands-on and suitable for young children with learning centers. The curriculum goes in a two year cycle. Some of the activities are available on an interactive blog. Older children learn Bible skills. Learning centers contain a mixture of secular and religious materials.	Numbers Parent report Accept Christ Life application
7 425	Sunday school Children's Worship Bible Quiz	Birth – 2 years – child care. Curriculum is chosen on the basis of being teacher friendly with more than enough to do and is doctrinally sound. The format is large group instruction, then small group, mostly interactive activities. Materials besides the curriculum are Bible-based materials.	Baptism Parent report Kids and families are growing



Pastor and Children	Question 7: What programs do you have for children?	Questions 8, 9, 10: How do you choose curriculum? Describe a typical educational session. What materials are used?	Question 16: How do you measure success?
8 900	Sunday school Children's Church Missions	Birth – 2 years – curriculum is nurturing environment. 3 – 5 years have a fluid flow and do learning centers with <i>LifeWay</i> which is also used for older children. This curriculum goes from simple to complex and uses the same scripture for every person in Sunday school. There are different applications and different activities. Use <i>Girls in Action</i> and <i>Rural Ambassadors</i> to teach missions and service. A unit on prayer is added once a year.	Changed lives Talk with each child
9 50	Sunday school Children's sermon Liturgy	Nursery children begin learning children's songs at 9 months old. Children to age 2 are provided a nurturing environment. Children 2-3 use <i>Group</i> which is more tactile for young children. Children 4 and up use Concordia Publishing House curriculum from Lutheran Church Curriculum, Missouri Synod.	No conclusion Assessment game is being formulated
10 200	Sunday school Children's Church Sunday 5:50 p.m.	Curriculum is chosen on what out teachers can teach effectively, are most comfortable with, and teaches the theology of the church. Birth to 2 years use <i>I Am Special</i> . Older children use <i>Group HandsOn</i> and grades 3 through five use <i>Godly Play</i> in the Sunday evening time. Instruction is large group, then small group with Bible based materials.	Children are kind, loving, sharing, accepting
11 500	Sunday school Children's worship Wednesday	Several things are considered, one being the level of engagement. For 3 <sup>rd</sup> – 5 <sup>th</sup> , we use <i>KidMo</i> which includes 2 minute video segments followed by talking and an activity. Sunday morning program is described as exciting, loud, emotional, engaging with theatrical lights and media. Large group to small. Birth – 2 years – Nursery – nurturing environment.	Parent report

Pastor and Children	Question 7: What programs do you have for children?	Questions 8, 9, 10: How do you choose curriculum? Describe a typical educational session. What materials are used?	Question 16: How do you measure success?
12 150	Super Church Sunday school Wednesday	We are writing our own curriculum for Super Church based on thematic units. The children who are in the nursery hear Christian music. Toddlers have a brief Bible story and take home a little paper. 2-3 year olds have a regular classroom where they sit down and do a lesson, craft, color, have a snack. At four years they go to <i>Kids Love Jesus 2</i> . This is Super Church where the kids learn all there is to an adult service. By the time the children are in 4 <sup>th</sup> and 5 <sup>th</sup> grade, they are serving as ushers and prayer partners. The new Wednesday night format has children who are 4 years old and up rotating into one of three centers for a 2 month cycle. Their choices are dancing, Bible drill or children's choir.	Good question Monitor classes
13 1200	Sunday small groups Children's worship Wednesday Bible class Service projects Missions	We choose curriculum based on its flexibility and how it fits our needs. We use a different curriculum with the little ones that ties into what we are doing and small group for practice. The worship service is large group. Wednesday night is the time for scripture memory	Observes children Talks to children
14 50	Sunday school Children's Church Bible Quiz	We use the Church of the Nazarene curriculum as a bare bones skeleton. To that we add <i>Group</i> stuff and activities and resource books. Sunday school is small group instruction. Children's church is large group. The 3-5 year olds stay in classrooms during the morning worship service. The elementary age children go into the adult worship service.	Produce a faith-walking disciple

Pastor and Children	Question 7: What programs do you have for children?	Questions 8, 9, 10: How do you choose curriculum? Describe a typical educational session. What materials are used?	Question 16: How do you measure success?
15 30	Sunday school Liturgy	The curriculum comes from the Archdiocese. The children begin Sunday school at age 3. The curriculum goes from simple to complex and the children learn what they should know if they are consistent in attendance. Some children study the Book of Prayers at home. There are no children's programs for children under age three. Those children are considered to be full participating members of the church already. Children are grouped according to grade with one class per grade. Large group, activities, and manipulatives.	Listening to kids
16 30	Sunday school Liturgy	The senior pastor chooses the curriculum according to the needs of the parish. Curriculum starts at Toddlers who use <i>Group HandsOn. Catechesis of the Good Shepherd</i> for age 3 ½ through 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade. The classroom is transformed to an Atrium with crosses, candles, books, altar cloths, biblical figures and scenes. All instruction in small groups.	Internalize teaching
17 450	Faith Formation Sacramental Preparation Children's Liturgy of the Word (Children's Church)	The curriculum is among those prescribed by the Catholic Church. The differences in curriculum is largely cosmetic with varying amounts of resources. We chose one that grabs the children's attention. Birth to 2 are in the nursery with social interaction in a warm loving environment. Formal instruction begins at age 3. Children ages 5 – 9 leave Mass and go to Children's Church for readings and the homily and come back for Eucharist. Large group instruction, an assignment, then family activities. Materials are the teacher's book and the paper with the assignment.	Lacking

Pastor and Children	Question 7: What programs do you have for children?	Questions 8, 9, 10: How do you choose curriculum? Describe a typical educational session. What materials are used?	Question 16: How do you measure success?
18 90	Sunday school Children's Church VBS	The curriculum is from the United Methodist Church. It was chosen because it teaches the doctrines of the church, it is teacher friendly, has a parent component, and goes from simple to complex. The children are divided and choose from two to three offerings each week. Those might include cooking or science or a story, drama, or art. Formal curriculum begins at age 2. The children in the nursery are provided a warm loving environment. The materials vary according to the activities. Large group instruction is followed by small group activities.	Life application
19 7	Sunday school VBS	We write our own curriculum for ages three through eight. First, there is a Bible story followed by arts and crafts and a snack. The children have a worship service prior to the story. There is no curriculum for birth to 2. We try to show a DVD to keep them quiet.	Change in the children
20 120	Sunday school Children's Church Music	We are in the process of writing a curriculum that teaches our doctrines, meets our needs, and is consistent from infants to adults. Right now we use a combination curriculum. Birth to three is considered a child care group with lots of activity and do not attend children's church with the older children. Four and five year olds are together. First through fifth graders form the final grouping for children's church. Children's church is large group. Materials are the teacher's books, manipulatives, Christian toys.	How they behave in the world

APPENDIX I

CONTEXT OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT IN YOUNG CHILDREN:  
COMMENTS ON EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Pastor	Comment
1	<p>Intergenerational organization – due to societal trends – families are scattered and the church becomes the family – 3<sup>rd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> graders do service projects with the senior group. Older parents connected to younger parents. High school kids to younger children. Older seniors with empty nesters.</p> <p>Example of a large mega church near here – there are five worship services to accommodate each age group and worship style along with children’s worship at the same time as the adult services. Family unit never worships together. Lose the benefit of seeing adults in worship. Rare opportunities for the older men and women to teach the younger ones.</p> <p>The curriculum needs to be intentional and fit the purpose of the church so everyone understands what you are doing. We use wisdom, stature, favor with God, favor with man. We reinforce the same material in every children’s session for the week. If a child comes to every available program for children, we only have them for 300 hours a year.</p>
2	Children are given time to reflect and listen for God.
3	No comment
4	<p>In organization of large groups – take large group and make is as small as possible by assigning 10 adults to every 150 kids. The team leader of that group takes on the role of pastor for those team members and for the children in that group.</p> <p>The children’s pastor takes care of the team leaders. The children’s pastor rarely has time to talk to the individual children in the ministry. Because of space limitations, the children’s sessions have to be conducted in large groups, which precludes Montessori based curriculum. The children’s programs are designed to give the message of the gospel every session in case a child has come for the first time and may never come again.</p>
5	Program design is in a four year cycle. Large groups and lack of adequate facilities prohibit placing the children in small learning groups. However, the groups are as small as the facility will allow. Children’s pastor visits each class on a regular basis to get to know the children.

Pastor	Comment
6	The plan of salvation is in every story and session.
7	Children need to be with adults and we need to integrate family ministry. Use intergenerational activities. Not enough time to talk with kids. In the long run, it is the child's choice to follow Christ
8	We pray and have moments of quiet.
9	We need to understand that children are not just tag-a-longs with adults who come to worship.
10	Conflict with the idea that children's ministry has to be fun, fun, fun. When the children choose and plan activities for the coming year, they are all about service and missions. The children need a purpose and must feel needed. The message we give children needs to be simple and understandable.
11	Rarely talk to young children. 82% walk away from the faith after high school. We only have the children 40 hours per year. Volunteers are very hard to find for young children.
12	The church needs to wake up to the fact that young children have great spiritual potential.( Mentions a school for Indigo children where children are taught to use their spiritual side.) In society, psychic and paranormal programs are infiltrating television and subtly influencing children. So when I started reading that (Indigo children) at first, I realized that we have to step it up. We've got to get busy you know. We can't do "Patty Cake, Jesus Loves You" anymore. It's got to be really reaching down for their souls.
13	I talk to individual parents and children on a regular basis. We have a problem getting enough volunteers for the babies (nursery). My personal failings have affected the ministry since I was convicted that I was a hypocrite to stand in front of the children and advocate personal devotions when I was not doing that myself. Started to journal and I have taught the children to do the same. I also taught them how to lead a disciplined life that involved developing good habits. Words are powerful, we need to careful what we say to children. Our example is also teaching.

Pastor	Comment
14	In one year we have the children 52 hours. Large churches try to be small in the way they interact with children. Careful about children's programs, some programs are a mile wide and an inch deep. We create Disneyland. I have heard this through many children's pastors who have said we can't do Nickelodeon any more. We have spent so much money on sets and paints and theater seating and sound systems and our kids don't know Christ. They just come to be entertained. And we have focused on that. It is a concern. It's a big concern. Wasting time. Christian education must change in the next years.
15	...now don't take this wrong, but in most Protestant churches, what goes on inside the church is a show. The Reverend gets up and he preaches. There's some fabulous choir music, video, noise. It's entertainment. Using the same predictable curriculum over and over prepares the child for what they need to know. Historical roots of our tradition is important and children learn this as well.
16	I've worked at churches who are more happy-clappy. Let's do a lot of exuberant activities. You've got to do that large group small group rotate. They want you to do that Baptist thing because they thought they couldn't get anyone to come. I believe the Catechist is very instructive so when the children get old enough to go to Liturgy, it makes sense to them.
17	Ritual helps children develop spiritually. The Holy Spirit is the unknown variable drawing that child to Him. Parents spend 20 hours a day with children and we get them 4 hours a month. Secularization going on in the United States.
18	Maybe 2 hours per month with children. Trend in society that the church is more multicultural, filled with non-churched people, non-Methodist, attracted because the church meets their social needs. Competition with mega churches and jumping from church to group hinders children in their faith journey.
19	Have children a short time – 2 hours on Sunday. Hard to get volunteers.



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Pastor      Comment

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Programs have to take on primary role of fostering spiritual development in young children. Children don't need elaborate stories. Keep it simple. ...I have been struggling with that myself because large group began to be the in thing, the huge entertainment, the flashy screen, high level drama; high impact drama and I just can't bring myself to do that. It's the one-to-one where I feel you make the most impact.

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APPENDIX J

CONTEXT OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT IN YOUNG CHILDREN: PARENTS

Pastor	Question 5: Who is primary responsible?	Questions 6: How do you equip them?	Question 17 and 18:: Do you have parent education?/Topics
1	Parents	Provide individual and group teaching	Yes – <i>Parents in the Pews</i> Teach parents to be the kind of people they want their children to be.
2	Parents	Individual teaching Newsletter articles Take-home page with the curriculum Year end report	No
3	Parents	Model behavior Training articles	No
4	Parents	Individual help	Adult ministries take care of this aspect <i>Growing Kids God's Way</i>
5	Parents	Conferences	Yes – developing a brochure of what children should know
6	Parents	Quarterly event	Yes – Information about the next quarterly Sunday school curriculum
7	Parents	Building relationships Give guidance Provide resources	Yes – use <i>Virtue Pack</i> to gain family involvement
8	Parents	Parenting classes Individual help	Yes – <i>When and How to Tell Your Children About Sex</i> Discipleship Classes

Pastor	Question 5: Who is primary responsible?	Questions 6: How do you equip them?	Question 17 and 18:: Do you have parent education?/Topics
9	Parents	Library resources Parenting classes	Yes – no topics given
10	Parents	Parenting classes	<i>Adults Relating to Kids Class (ARC)</i>
11	Parents	Parent resources Individual help Table with parenting resources	Yes – no topics given
12	Parents	Parenting classes	Yes – <i>Real Life Institute</i> – parenting young children- parenting teenagers- <i>Five Love Languages of Children</i>
13	Parents	Individual help	No – currently writing curriculum for parent education on how to influence kids for God – disciple –teaching – techniques for daily devotions
14	Parents	One-on-one help Parenting classes	Yes – no topics given
15	Parents	Provide Divine Liturgy	Yes – always Bible based
16	Parents	Bible studies Adult education Worship Service	No

Pastor	Question 5: Who is primary responsible?	Questions 6: How do you equip them?	Question 17 and 18:: Do you have parent education?/Topics
17	Parents	Parent supplement and parent education with the Sacramental Preparation materials	-----
18	Parents	Newsletter Information	No
19	Parents	Church really doesn't do this	No
20	Parents	Bring the family unit together	No – this is in the planning stages

APPENDIX J  
CONTEXT OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT IN YOUNG CHILDREN:  
COMMENTS ON PARENTS

Pastor	Comment
1	<p data-bbox="394 264 1923 373">“No matter how much time a children’s pastor spends with a child, the parents have more influence since I don’t have nearly the love that their parents have and the relationship they share...”</p> <p data-bbox="394 410 1923 446">“I think at this moment parents are foundering. That’s an honest opinion based on my own experience.”</p> <p data-bbox="394 483 1923 592">“I believe that parents are not empowered with the proper tools often enough to do this great thing that God has given them and that is to help their children look more like Jesus”.</p> <p data-bbox="394 630 1923 665">“Parents are working one night on spiritual development with what should take months. Or a lifetime.”</p>
2	<p data-bbox="394 703 1923 1104">“The majority of our parents are caring and loving and participating, but we do have some peripheral ones. Let me address the ones who go to church but who are peripheral. We call them Christmas and Easter,...we haven’t seen their child all year and they will immediately show up for Confirmation Class or First Communion Class. And then we don’t see the child again. It just breaks my heart to know as parents, we are all about signing them up for soccer or the swim team. We don’t miss those practices, but we see no value in Sunday school.” Talk about things in front of children they are not equipped to deal with.</p> <p data-bbox="394 1141 1923 1320">“I understand the demands on young parents and how the world is just crushing our parents. They feel compressed. The church should not be a place of nagging. It should be a place of refuge and healing. And so we need to look at what we can do to serve them.”</p>

Pastor	Comment
3	No comment
4	“It is the parent’s job to be sure they are fostering a spiritual environment at home, giving them opportunities to come to church, to be involved in groups, to go to Bible study, to be in a Christian atmosphere, to give them opportunities to do outreach, go down to the soup kitchen, teaching them those things.”
5	“One of my goals this year is to foster sort of an awakening in a way for the parents to say, “Oh, spiritual development is very important. I need to make sure that I am not just helping them physically on the soccer field and other places at school to help them learn, but I need to be specific and spend as much time on this.”
6	“I don’t think parents give children enough credit for what they can understand...and what bothers me most is when I hear parents talking about children who are in the room. You know, kids are going to live up to your expectations you have for them.”
7	“Some parents don’t get it. Some parents don’t take time to talk with their children about spiritual things. Others feel that it is the responsibility of the church to teach spiritual things. Others are too busy. Some parents are not Christians themselves.”



Pastor	Comment
8	"Children who are raised by parents of faith, whose parents pray, and rely on God have a greater inclination toward spiritual things."
9	"I think a spiritual background starts right from birth because they have to depend on their parents for care and as they cry and their parents answer that, they communicate, and they learn love from their parent's reaction. In those earlier times, the kids who were going to be confirmed came to Sunday school every week. About five years ago, we added 6 <sup>th</sup> grade Confirmation. The only reason we did was to teach basic Bible stories because parents would bring their kids to Confirmation who had never been to Sunday school, never picked up a Bible. Never picked up a Bible story book, did not know your basic Bible stories. You can't exactly teach them the doctrines of the Lutheran Church, the catechism. You can't teach them when they have no foundation at all. So we're trying to build in one year what should take three. The responsibility for spiritual development has transferred from the father of the home to the mothers, if at all. You know, with all this (society) and only 24 hours in a day, seven days in a week, people don't give even a day anymore to spiritual development."

Pastor	Comment
10	<p>“It’s the parents who should be teaching spiritual values and not so much taught as lived. Parents need more mindfulness. I think, from observing, and just overhearing conversations between children, fathers are the ones who need the church, because there is a lot of fear coming out of the fathers now and that is scaring the children.”</p>
11	<p>“We only have 40 hours a year with a child. That doesn’t even start to begin to be enough time to be with each child to cause a life change. It’s absolutely in the parent’s control. We understand that a lot of parents are not taking the lead in their children’s spiritual development. We understand that most parents are not meeting their children’s spiritual needs. Most parents think they are meeting their children’s spiritual needs by taking them to church. This just isn’t true. Although it’s a good thing and we do everything to be creative and engaging in our presentation, anything is just going to be surface level.”</p>
12	<p>“Parents hinder the spiritual development of children by thinking they are too young to understand. Compares teaching the child spiritual things at home just like we teach children the ABC’s before they go to school. Parents don’t take advantage of the opportunities offered them regarding parenting classes. Busy society. Parents don’t realize they have a shortfall.”</p> <p>“Young mothers are often by themselves without the counsel of their mother or sisters in child rearing.”</p>

- 13 “The church has failed in their responsibility of teaching parents how to help their children walk with the Lord.”
- 14 “I think the church family has to be a community that comes in and steps in for that child who gets dropped off for baby-sitting on Sunday morning. It changes the whole perspective. Parents are not working with children. I agree that it has fallen to second place although they know the need is there. It’s a very apathetic and undisciplined process. They really don’t see how important it is. People are too busy.”
- 15 “A Bishop that I know reprimanded parents who came and dropped their children off for Sunday school and left to go eat breakfast. He said, “Stop doing that. If you are not putting all the pieces together for the children, you are not doing them any favors. It’s showing children that church is not important.” Parents should not scold their children too much in church because they may get a negative feeling about being there.”
- 16 “Children have an advantage if they have a Christian upbringing and have had a Christian community, church, Sunday school and that kind of education. It’s very hard on adults who become Christians.”

Pastor

Comment

17

“The parents are the primary catechists and it is up to them to decide when their children are ready for Reconciliation and Communion. We also interview each child to determine if they understand the concepts. Just this year we started doing some supplemental instruction in the regular season of the class because the level of commitment of the parents varies greatly, not to mention their level of expertise. Now we always tell them that we are right here if they have any questions, but we are real concerned that probably the night before they are working through the book, even though we give them months to prepare.”

Pastor

Comment

18

“Our area is kind of diverse and so we are getting.... We’re not white middle class anymore so we are getting other ethnicities and some people who have not grown up in the church so it is an interesting concept for those who don’t have fathers or a significant father figure in their lives. In the society, the kids are with a blended family or just parents and the priority of the church is not there. So they feel like they are full time members if they come just twice a month. That gives us two hours. And so the issue is we need to be nurturing the child but also nurturing the family. So what we’ve gone to is a whole different understanding of the family system and their attendance at church and things. Parents feel inadequate because the expectations are so high. Since the white flight to the Woodlands or to Conroe, we are getting a different group coming in. Most of the people coming in have not been churched before. They are not coming because they are Methodist. They only come here because of their social needs. It’s interesting because people will shop around now. I see families that will leave the church to go where the children are satisfied. I think that when you are shopping around and you don’t develop those relationships (church family), it’s harder to get to the owned faith. It just takes longer.”

19

“You know, even sadly, even Christian families, because the church is competing for their time. They have so many other obligations and so many other things that are more important to them than the church.”

20

“Unfortunately, the thing I see for children’s ministry and the realization that I had to come to was that our ministry is really controlled by our parents and that’s why I think we are seeing more family ministry attached to children’s ministry because of that very reason. It is a rotating door around churches now. You don’t get a child from infancy through high school. You only get them for a year or two here, and it’s a sporadic year or two. It’s not even a consistent year or two. The parents are the same way. They show up on Sunday morning once, maybe twice a month and then occasionally will visit a Bible study and you never see them again. So we’re not getting the opportunity to do the age and stage because we are not getting the age and stage.”

APPENDIX L

CONTEXT OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT IN YOUNG CHILDREN: TEACHERS AND  
COMMENTS ON TEACHERS

Pastor	Question 12: Basic Qualifications?	Questions 13 and 15 How do you recruit? Student teacher ratio?	Question 14: Teacher training?	Comment
1	Not set	Find willing people who will serve in a classroom under an experienced teacher 2 adults in each class	Curriculum trains the teacher Conferences with appropriate topics	Teacher training is a big concern
2	Godly people Certified Background Checks <i>Safeguarding God's Children</i> Parish priest approves Grounded in the faith	Pray and ask Not answered	Classroom management Curriculum training	
3	Willingness to serve	Pray and ask Sunday 2:2-8 Power Church 4-5:30-45	None	Teacher training needs improvement
4	Member of a team	.Pray Watch for qualified people 10:150	Curriculum Moral relativism Evangelism Heaven and Hell How to plan a service	Teachers do not attend frequent meetings Use emails Reports

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Pastor	Question 12: Basic Qualifications?	Questions 13 and 15 How do you recruit? Student teacher ratio?	Question 14: Teacher training?	Comment
5	Background check Teacher training	Pray. Look for people Nursery 4:4 Young children 2:10 Older children 2:12-15	Church guidelines Teacher tips Fun things	
6	Background check Willingness	Pray. Ask. email	Curriculum training Discipline Ages/stages	Limit what we teach because “children aren’t old enough to understand that”
7	Background check Willingness Like children Manage children Christian Church participation	Pray. Ask. 1:6	Not required	Teachers do not attend teacher’s meetings
8	Member of the church Interview	Work at it all the time 1 <sup>st</sup> -5 <sup>th</sup> 2:12 Older 2:22	4 hours – church policy Abuse Prevention – curriculum training	-----
9	Member	Watch and ask people 2:class	Learn from experienced teacher	Teachers do not attend teacher’s meetings so I do one-on-one
10	Background checks	Ask. Pray Birth – 10 years 2:10	No formal training	----

Pastor	Question 12: Basic Qualifications?	Questions 13 and 15 How do you recruit? Student teacher ratio?	Question 14: Teacher training?	Comment
11	Passionate about children	It is tough Need 187 volunteers per week. Kdgn – up 1:6-10 Lower for little ones	No formal training Monthly newsletter	Train in the class People don't want to work with the youngest children – too much energy
12	New Member's Class Discipleship Training Background check	Beg them Nursery 3:5 Toddler 3:15 3 <sup>rd</sup> -5 <sup>th</sup> 2-3:40 Older 2:20	No	People don't want to spend time preparing and coming early and staying late
13	Member Background check	Pray. Look 2:5-6	Yes – with a mentor teacher	Past mistake – Put teachers in classes without training Problem getting enough volunteers for the babies
14	Experience Background check	One-on-one recruiting 1:4 for babies 1:12 others	Yes – with a mentor teacher	---
15	Orthodox Christian Faithful	No recruiting 1:3	Parish Life Conference Trainer in Austin	No one is allowed to take children off on their own
16	Be known Interview	People volunteer Birth – 2 years 2:6	Teacher packet Certified for Catechesis	---

Pastor	Question 12: Basic Qualifications?	Questions 13 and 15 How do you recruit? Student teacher ratio?	Question 14: Teacher training?	Comment
	Application	2-3's:: 3-4:10 3-4's: 3:10		
17	Catholic Catechist training <i>Safeguarding God's Children</i>	Varies according to need Younger 2:12-15 Older 2:20-22	Once a year training	---
18	Member Background check Paperwork <i>Safe Sanctuary Training</i>	They are just there – called 2 adults per class	On the job training Use prayerful moments	Use husband/wife teams
19	Christian Old enough	No set ratio	No formal training Teamed with experienced teacher	----
20	Member Commitment	Have enough now.	No – we will begin to require this soon and we are going to lose teachers because of this.	----

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