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ABSTRACT

MINISTRY INVOLVEMENT:

A MEANS OF RETAINING THE YOUTH

OF CURTICI BAPTIST CHURCH

by

Sorin Ignat

Young people are a part of the church of today not only the church of tomorrow. They are blessed with gifts of service and a heart for a change in the community. The church at large has understood the need to retain the young generations, yet researchers reveal that the reality is that a large percentage of youth become disengaged from church. Involvement in ministry seems to play an important role in the development of the spiritual life of teenagers. Both secular and church youth leaders agree that young people's involvement in social service makes a measurable positive impact in the process of spiritual development. The purpose of this research was to evaluate the change in church attendance and spiritual maturity of the young people from the Curtici Baptist Church, Romania.

The study used quantitative and qualitative instruments to measure and observe the change produced by the intervention. The population that participated was composed of twenty young people between the ages of 14 to 23 who were living in Curtici at the time of the intervention.

The literature review paved the way into proving that spiritual formation and practical ministry involvement are linked together. The results of the intervention showed

an increase in church attendance, growth in spiritual maturity, and a feeling of being useful to the larger body of the church.

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OF CURTICI BAPTIST CHURCH

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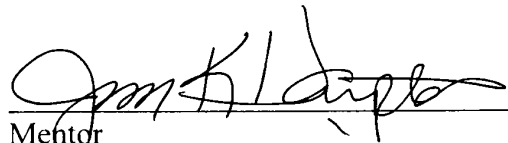
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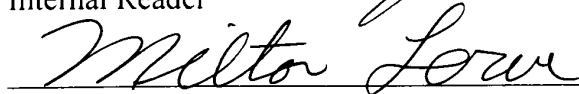
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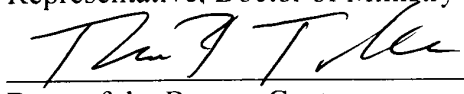
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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM

Introduction

The Curtici Baptist Church is a traditional Romanian Baptist Congregation and one of the oldest Baptist Churches in Romania as it has just celebrated 123 years of existence. During this time the church has served as an important missionary center and as a great reference point for other newer churches. Within time the church has established a traditional way of worship and practice that were effective at first. However, in time these traditions have been challenged due to socio-cultural changes. The present challenge for the church is the need of being relevant to the newer generations without compromising the content of the gospel.

The youth in the church have grown up in a split world. One is the world where they live every day, and the other is church life with all the activities done there. The church understands the importance of retaining youth, but people in the church believe these young adults have to grow in faith and in behavior. Just after they become mature, they can be used in the ministry of the church. The result is that young people have begun to grow apart from the church as they believe they do not belong in the church's life. They are being attracted towards more contemporary churches while the traditional church members are still very reluctant to change. Even though the church understands the need to retain the youth, the church has yet to find an effective method of doing so.

This research intended to evaluate the change in attendance and spiritual maturity of the young people as a result of three months of personal involvement in the different areas of ministry of the local church. This research is important because it can provide

Curtici Baptist Church with a model for retaining the young generation; furthermore, it can be of use to other churches with similar settings. It could help them understand that involving their young people in church ministry can increase youth's church attendance, attitudes, and spiritual lives.

Purpose

The purpose of the research was to evaluate the changes in church attendance and spiritual maturity of twenty adolescents of the Curtici Baptist Church as a result of a three-month involvement in the ministry of the local church.

Research Questions

In order to attain this purpose, the following questions needed to be asked and answered.

Research Question #1

What is the current church attendance and spiritual maturity of the young people in Curtici Baptist Church?

Research Question #2

How does the involvement of the young people of Curtici Baptist Church in the church's ministry change their church attendance and spiritual maturity?

Research Question #3

Which element had most impact on the changes?

Definition of Terms

For a clearer understanding of the actual content of the research, the key terms in the purpose and research questions need defining. The study intended to evaluate the church attendance and spiritual lives of the teenagers before and after the intervention.

Church attendance is defined as physical attendance and participation in a regularly scheduled service at Curtici Baptist Church.

Spiritual life is defined as the measure of the faithfulness of young people's reading of God's Word and prayer.

Ministry involvement is defined as the actual participation of the young people in two areas of the local church's ministry: greeting people, coming to church, and visiting the sick.

The *youth population* the intervention reached includes the attendees of the Curtici Baptist Church between the ages of 14 and 21, living at the time of the intervention in Curtici city. Twenty young people were involved in the process.

Ministry Intervention

This research project employed an intervention concerning the young people in Curtici Baptist Church that monitored changes in their church attendance and spiritual lives.

The process of the research began with the Spiritual Maturity Index (SMI) questionnaire and a preliminary attendance chart that covered four weeks in order to assess the situation at the time. The next step was to start the intervention by getting each young person involved in an area of the church's ministry. This intervention continued for a period of three months. During this time young people were encouraged to keep an Internet-based journal in which they were requested to write each week a half-page entry that speaks about their feelings towards what they were asked to do. During the intervention attendance was monitored with the same attendance observation chart that continued until the end of the research. Following the intervention the young people

again took the SMI and participated in a focus group. The postintervention period lasted one month.

Context

Romania is a religious country as many people take pride in calling Romania a Christian country. According to the last census in 2011, Christianity represents 90 percent of the population of twenty million. Out of these 90 percent, 80 percent are Christian Orthodox. Before any evangelical Protestant churches established themselves in Romania, the Orthodox Church was the only Christian reference point. The influence that the Orthodox Church had on the Protestant churches is evident. The Baptist Church was one of the Protestant churches that remarked itself by being different from the Orthodox Church—in the Romanian context. Still the Baptist Church inherited some things even without being conscious. For instance, in the Orthodox Church the people are not very expressive in worship. They will not participate or show their emotions. In addition, change is a hard process as the Orthodox model never changed. People tend to be reluctant to change.

The Curtici Baptist Church was founded by a young Romanian man who was just returning from Budapest. He went to Budapest to learn a trade as a shoe repairman, and along with that trade he came to learn a new way of life. He met a Baptist missionary who led him through the Scriptures to God. With a new trade and a new faith, this young man came first to Oradea but could not find a place to work. However, he found out about a rich man living in Curtici who was willing to hire a man of his trade. Thus, he was hired and started his work in Curtici, not only repairing shoes but also telling people how they could renew their hearts. He was passionately telling everyone coming into his

shop about his faith. Soon after, a group of men started to gather there for prayer. In a few years, this group grew to be a full congregation of two hundred people with a missionary spirit that led them to plant other churches all over the surrounding cities.

Almost 120 years later, and nine years ago, I was elected to serve as a senior pastor of this church at the age of 25. It was a big challenge for me as I came to take over the responsibility of a five hundred-member church with rich traditions such as the one of the church in Curtici. Presently we have only two people on the paid staff, a janitor and me. Volunteers do most of the work. I am also the young people's leader, and I do believe this ministry is one of the important ministries of our church, along with worship, missions, service, and pastoral care.

Curtici Baptist Church is situated in an agricultural city. Most citizens have a green house in which they cultivate tomatoes. People work hard beyond regular work hours to make some profit from their gardens, too. Most of the time, the young people do not plan to live by working gardens. Most of them go to universities and plan to have good jobs so that they can live better lives. Most of the people are heavily involved with technology. They have Internet access and cell phones; they chat and use Facebook. The differences between the parents and the adolescents today are immense since the tools they use are so different.

The Curtici Baptist Church today is composed mainly of elderly people (55 years old and older) and young people (30 years old and younger; see Appendix E). The middle generations are almost absent from the church as many of the people within those ages have moved either to the United States or to Europe for better living. The result is that the

average age of the church today is rather old and we have very few adolescents. Many of the parents of adolescents who were a part of the church are now living abroad.

For the Romanian Baptist Church, attendance is a big part of spirituality. Taking part in all the services of the church is seen as a sign of a healthy spiritual life and lack of frequency in church attendance is seen as unhealthy spirituality. While spirituality does not only include church attendance, Romanian Baptists believe that coming together as a worshipping community is a means of growing in faith. In the New Testament, the phrases *one another* and *each other* are used fifty-five times. This frequent use is an argument to the fact that spiritual development has to do with the active participation in the community of faith. Moreover, the book of Acts speaks frequently about the believers meeting for fellowship and worship. The phrase *meeting daily* indicates an intense preoccupation with gathering together (Acts 2:46; 5:42).

The research concerned young people from Romania between the ages of 14 and 21. They have been the generation that has experienced the most changes in the last fifty years. Fifteen years ago the Internet was something that people in Romania knew nothing about; however, at the time of the research, all young people in Romania use the Internet quite frequently. Along with other changes in media, lifestyle and education have changed dramatically. As a result the new generation of youth in Romania is quite different in behavior and lifestyle than previous generations.

The youth from Curtici Baptist Church are known to be quite different from other young people, mainly in the way of conduct and habits. For example, this group does not use curse words. They have a decent dress code, and they do not drink alcohol. They are an important part of the church life, but this generation is also different from the other

groups in the church. Therefore, they are criticized and misunderstood because they tend not to be very attached to the old Romanian Baptist tradition and customs. Their preferred music is different; their way of connecting is different. Still, they have gifts and talents that are not used because people think they are either too young or too unspiritual to be a part of the ministry.

Methodology

The intention of this study is to see the change in church attendance and spiritual maturity of the young people of the Curtici Baptist Church. The study used an explanatory, mixed-methods design. It used a quantitative pre-post questionnaire—the Spiritual Maturity Index—and two qualitative instruments—the Internet-based journal (IBJ) and a focus group (FG).

Participants

The participants in this study were a selection of the young people of the Curtici Baptist Church between the ages of 14 and 21 who were living in Curtici at the time of the research. They were chosen voluntarily after a brief description of the project.

Instrumentation

To assess the change in church attendance, attitudes, and spiritual life, the following five instruments were used in the study. The preliminary questionnaire was administered to all the young people in the selected population. After the intervention, the population took the SMI again. During the intervention period, the young people were encouraged to journal thoughts and feelings about the things they were doing as a part of the intervention on an Internet-based journal. During the entire period of the project an attendance observation chart (AOC) was completed. At the end of the two-month

intervention, twelve young people were selected from the population for a focus group that provided feedback.

Variables

The independent variable of this project was the involvement in ministry of the adolescents in Curtici Baptist Church. The dependent variable of this project is the changes that took place in the young people's lives. These changes were categorized into the two aspects as measured by the research instruments—church attendance and spiritual maturity.

Data Collection

The study began with a preintervention phase that lasted one month (April 2012), during which the preliminary situation of attendance and spiritual maturity of the young people were measured using the SMI and the AOC.

The SMI was the first instrument used. As all the participants arrived, I gave them the test, which was printed on letter-sized paper. After they finished the test, I took the time to calculate and analyze the data. Each of the responses on the SMI had a numerical value on a Likert-type scale. I used a simple averaging of responses to each question, separating out the reverse scoring questions and assigning opposite values to them. Then I tallied a total average score. The SMI was not researcher designed, so I did not change its structure.

During the intervention period, September, October, and November 2012, another instrument, the IBJ, required the young people, once a week, to record their experiences during the three months of the intervention. For this purpose participants were asked to send emails with their feedback weekly.

The postintervention period involved taking the SMI questionnaire again. This instrument measured the changes in the researched areas: church attendance and spiritual maturity.

The focus group was the last instrument used at the end of the intervention period. During the focus group meeting, open-ended questions were asked about the experience, and I recorded the answers in my journal.

Data Analysis

The first instrument used in the project was the SMI. This questionnaire has thirty items answered on a six-point Likert scale. The results were analyzed and recoded in keeping with current rigors. Of the thirty questions, twelve had reverse values. I scored and recorded each survey. I averaged each survey, and then I made a comparison between the results of the initial and final SMI scores.

The Internet-based journal data was coded for recurring themes, allowing me to construct a table of results to summarize the findings. The focus group provided feedback as a result of three open-ended questions regarding the previous intervention. The data resulting from the focus group was analyzed by finding recurring main themes and building a table of results to summarize the findings (Sensing 194-209)

The attendance observation chart was used to record the differences and changes in attendance of the population before and during the intervention. The results were averaged and compared.

Generalizability

The results of this research are relevant for the Curtici Baptist Church setting. It can be of interest to other settings but not necessarily a reference point.

Theological Foundation

The theme of God's calling to his mission and purpose is found from the beginning of the Old Testament to the end of the New Testament. It begins with God creating humankind and giving them responsibilities in the newly founded creation even though he knew the risks. The last book of the Bible ends with God reigning victorious with his redeemed people and with the people having still one mission—to worship his glorious majesty. God was and is calling all people to join his purposes.

In this general call to be involved in God's ministries, there is no restriction of age; therefore, young people are not excluded from God's plans. Moreover, the Scriptures speak about many young people who had an important role in God's plans. For the purpose of this research, several young people from the Scripture are enumerated, and four of them are described here as relating and responding to God's call to ministry.

Some of the following young people from Scripture were called to ministry: Joseph, the son of Jacob (Gen.); the young little captive Israelite girl (2 Kings 5); Samuel, the prophet (1 Sam. 1:24-28; 2:18-19, 26; 3:2-21); David the young shepherd (1 Sam.); Josiah (2 Kings 22); Shadrach, Meshak, and Abednego (Dan. 1:3); Jeremiah the prophet (Jer. 1); Mary, the mother of the Lord incarnate (Matt. 1); Jesus, the young teacher at the temple (Luke 2:39-52); and, Timothy, Paul's apprentice (2 Tim. 3). For the purpose of the research, four of these young characters were examined in order to see their calling and involvement in ministry and the effect that this involvement had upon their lives.

The first one is Samuel who went into temple service when he was very young (1 Samuel 1:24-28; 2:18, 19, 26; 3:2-21). Samuel went on to play an outstanding part in history as a prophet. His story is one of promise and miraculous intervention of God in

his mother's life. She fervently prayed for a baby, and when her desire was fulfilled, she promised to give this child back to God in his service. At an early age she brought him to Eli (1:24), though commentators do not exactly know how old he was. Therefore, his mother gave him into the ministry of God as a result of an answered prayer. What commentators do know is the fact that from a very early stage in his life Eli involved him in the Tabernacle worship ministry: "The boy Samuel ministered before the Lord under Eli" (1 Samuel 3:1). Eli desired to use him but also the desire of God who called him even though at the beginning the young boy did not understand the calling or the One who was calling him. He had to be directed, but when he sincerely and fully opened himself to God's word the Lord began to encourage him and use him for a great ministry in Israel. To be fair to the context of the passage and to the purpose of the research, it must be mentioned that the two sons of Eli though they were involved in ministry from a young age did not fear the Lord and did not please God. Something was missing. They were involved, but they were not accountable to their father about their conduct, so that in time they were doing ministry but they were far from God and from their father. This situation leads to the conclusion that involvement in ministry can help in attaining a deeper passion for spiritual things, but if it is not supervised and corrected by mature people of God it can lead to spiritual disaster.

The next example from the Old Testament is David, the youngest son of Jesse of the tribe of Judah, who became the second king of Israel. The Bible speaks about his early years as being elected and anointed as king. This anointing is one of the first things written in the book of 1 Samuel about him. When Samuel came to announce his anointing of one of the boys of Jesse, both the prophet and the father were looking at the most

mature and the most imposing of the sons in Jesse's house, but the Lord prompted the prophet not to look at what humans see but at what God sees. They had to wait for the youngest son, David, to come even though he was the last who expected to be anointed. He had the power of God, and through the toughest of trials he remained faithful to God so that later he was called a "man according to God's own heart" (1 Sam. 13:14).

In the New Testament, one of the first passages (Matt. 1) speaks about a young lady who was making plans for marriage but was called by God to a great ministry. Mary was called as a teenager to be the mother of the incarnate Jesus. She must have been in her teen years according to the bridal traditions of the cultural context.

As soon as the Son of God was conceived in Mary's womb, she left to see Elisabeth. Luke 1:34-40 describes the scene:

Then said Mary unto the angel, "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" And the angel answered and said unto her, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible." And Mary said, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." And the angel departed from her. And Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Judah; and entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth. (KJV)

Mary may have had reasons for her departure. One was to see what the angel had told her that Elisabeth was also expecting in her old age. Another reason would be to give her some time to know how to break the news to Joseph. Joseph did not know that Mary was expecting. Luke 1:56 says, "And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house."

No one knows exactly when Mary told Joseph that she was expecting a baby. This news must have been very difficult to explain after she left quickly for three months and then when she came back after all that time. One might easily assume that she was unfaithful to Joseph in the time that she was in the hill country. God spoke to Joseph and revealed his plans for the child. Even though Joseph wrestled with accepting those plans, he chose to serve God with his life. Mary accepted God's invitation and was used by God in a great way, being an example of service and sacrifice for all believers even today.

The last character on which the research focused is Jesus Christ himself. As a young boy, the evangelists record that he was growing ever more pleasant to God and people. As he visited the temple with his mother and father, he stayed behind to talk to the men in the temple.

The Bible does not say much about the young life of the Lord, but readers do know certain aspects of it. One, as I have just mentioned, was his wisdom seen in his temple visitation at a young age. Luke gives a second aspect in 2:52: "And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man" (ESV). Howard Hendricks found in this verse a pattern of children's development. He formulated four areas in which a child must develop. First is the intellectual development: Jesus grew in "wisdom." The second is the physical development: Jesus grew "in stature." The third is spiritual development: Jesus increased in "favor with God." Last is social development: Jesus increased in "favor to ... man." Hendricks points out that spiritual development should not be isolated from the other three areas of development. In fact, they are correlated and depend on each other (24-25). Jesus' childhood and youth are models for the lives of each child and young person.

Overview

Chapter 2 reviews selected literature and pertinent research. The biblical and theological foundations of young people's call and responsibility to ministry are considered. Chapter 3 presents a detailed explanation of the project's design, the research methods, and the means of data analysis. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study. Chapter 5 discusses the major findings of the study and the practical applications that flow out of the research. It also offers suggestions for further inquiry and study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE

Introduction

For the traditional churches in Romania, retaining youth in the local church has become a serious challenge. The differences between generations and the preconceptions about young people have pushed young people outside of the ministry circles, leaving them on the verge of leaving the church. The feeling of ownership and belonging is almost absent for them. The need of a coherent plan for retaining the youth is imminent. The purpose of the research was to evaluate the changes in church attendance and spiritual maturity of twenty adolescents of the Curtici Baptist Church as a result of their personal ministry involvement over a period of three months.

General Traits of Adolescence

Emilia Albu, a professor at Petru Maior University, Târgu-Mures, Romania, describes in her course notes that adolescence begins at the age of 14 and goes until the age of 24 or 25. For the purpose of this research, I use her divisions of the three adolescence development stages.

Preadolescence (ages 14-16) is a stage of biological maturation when physical growth is at its peak. This period is also identified as a continued puberty when the sense of self as an individual settles. It is an age when the adolescent wants to step up to be noticed by others. The young person at this stage manifests certain restlessness, impulsive decisions, and some extravagant behavior (Albu 69).

The next stage is adolescence or the great adolescence (ages 16-19). This stage is mainly characterized by an intense development of abstract thinking and a changing

towards adult-type behavior. The young person becomes more natural in expressing his or her independence. At this stage the adolescent moves from a mainly familial authority towards a more personal and social environment (Albu 69).

Prolonged adolescence (ages 19-25) is the stage where the young people are either working or in college life. Emotional life is intense but unstable. This period is where young person's begin to think about and even to make plans for married life. It is a stage characterized by many decisions that have to be made; most of them will impact their entire lives (Albu 69-70).

Addressing the issue of human development for the stage of adolescence, Erik Erikson brings into the discussion the problem of adolescent identity crisis (Lerner 422). The search for identity brings forth in the adolescence the need to define their role in life and in society. The identity for which the adolescent searches must feed his or her "biological, psychological and social adaptive demands" (422). In their search for identity, some may observe other adults that they esteem and try to imitate them, including acceptable or unacceptable behavior. Others start with a belong-behave system (a system in which one begins by belonging and only later understands and believes certain doctrines or truths) that will guide them in the roles they choose. They might adopt an ideology and show intense commitment to its beliefs and values; thus, they will "achieve a feeling of having a role" (423). If the adolescent does not find a role in the society he or she will remain in the identity crisis. They may try to play different roles in a very short period of time just to see if these roles are defining for them (423).

The church can play a major role in providing an ideological and practical framework in which adolescents can find their roles. While the teachings and the values

of the church can provide the theoretical-ideological framework, the service of the church can become the practical example and provide the roles that adolescents can try and adopt.

A New Generation

Exploring the adolescents is not an easy task as each generation of adolescents has differing and similar traits that need to be identified. The current generation of adolescents seems to be quite different from previous generations as they have been born into an explosion of technology.

Today's adolescents are named *digital natives* (Yust, Hyde, and Ota 291) in the sense that they have always had access to computers. Digital technology comes naturally and almost instinctively for them. Some have even suggested and researched the idea that their brains have changed to adapt to the new digital environment (Herther; Pink 7-28). Other names have been used for adolescents, such as *Generation Y*, in the sense that they follow Generation X, or *millennials*, "a term that signifies both hope and new beginnings" (Hampton, 7-12).

The first trait of this generation then is that they are computer savvy. For some time experts believed that the use of digital technology has been producing a poorly educated youth; however, digital literacy is increasing with the use of digital technology apart from TV and gaming (Bittman, Rutherford, Brown, and Unsworth 161-75). In fact the digital natives have a desire to research for themselves what they think about a certain matter rather than wanting to be told what and how they should think about issues.

The challenge in education, and religious education, with no exception, is that the people who are teaching these young people have come to be known as the digital

immigrants. N. K. Herther speaks about the problem of the difference between the two generations:

The single biggest problem facing education today is that our Digital Immigrant instructors, who speak an outdated language (that of the pre-digital age), are struggling to teach a population that speaks an entirely new language. This is obvious to the Digital Natives—school often feels pretty much as if we’ve brought in a population of heavily accented, unintelligible foreigners to lecture them. They often can’t understand what the Immigrants are saying. (18)

The challenge for the church thus becomes finding ways to prepare teachers and leaders who would be able to communicate to these adolescents in a language that would be understandable to them. It is a challenge also for the parents who are *digital immigrants*.

Some researchers may argue that social networks and the Internet have brought negative influence to the interpersonal development of adolescents (Masin). However the adolescents view laptops and smart phones as “just another tool they use for spiritual purposes” (Yust, Hyde, and Ota 292). One must note though that the way teenagers socialize today has changed dramatically from previous generations. However, this change does not mean that they do not care about people around them. Having access to worldwide information seems to correlate with their sense of empathy (Cucinelli 64; Stetzer, Stanley, and Hayes 113).

Tolerance is another trait of the present adolescent generation: “Millenials can model for us one of God’s virtues, unconditional acceptance” (Edwards and Hampton 7-12). Tolerance, however, can act as two sides of a coin. On one side is the positive unconditional acceptance, but on the other side is a difficulty in discerning the things that should not be tolerated.

Optimism and realism seem to be a very good combination of traits in young people (Edwards and Hampton 7-12). They look toward the future with hope, but at the same time they want to contribute to the change of the community around them. This generation seems to have an appreciation of the spiritual matters and a sensibility toward the impact that the church must have in the life of the individual and that of society.

Though the last generations of adolescents have had a “strong sense of distaste for monolithic power centers or hierarchical systems” (Barna Group), adolescents today believe they need to be real, not just submissive. They seem to be more interested in the process of getting to a decision rather than passively accepting that decision. All church leaders should understand this fact as they try to retain young people in their churches. Therefore, the involvement of youth in the church service can play an important role in their learning process.

As a result of a case study, Dr. Sarah Dunlop has found three main values of Eastern European young people: *self-expression, freedom, and fun*. As a result she asks and answers a key question:

If self expression, freedom and fun are the top three values of young people, how is the church enabling young people to live out these values? These values are not necessarily Christian values but they are not un-Christian either. These questions are worth bearing in mind when church leaders work to draw young people into their communities. (60)

The church has the task of answering the same question, even when the church needs to discover the place of *fun* in its ministry.

Youth Spirituality

In an attempt to build a case for ministry involvement as a means of retaining youth in the church, one must first define the spirituality or religiosity of the teenagers.

Defining *spirituality* is not always an easy task as many fields of study have different definitions. Charles M. Shelton gives the following definition: “[E]ssentially spirituality is concerned with personal response to and growth in the Lord” (*Adolescent Spirituality* 8). When people speak about spirituality, they usually refer to the following aspects: spiritual disciplines, spiritual confession of faith, and spiritual service.

Many young people today speak about being spiritual but not religious. Ed Stetzer, Richie Stanley, and Jason Hayes give the following statistics:

43 percent of younger unchurched said they were spiritual but not religious. Another 31 percent claimed to be both spiritual and religious. Only 9 percent were religious but not spiritual, and 18 percent said they were neither religious nor spiritual. (20)

If most young people consider themselves spiritual but not religious, the church finds itself in a rather delicate situation since church is perceived by most youth as religious. Ed Stetzer, Richie Stanley, and Jason Hayes notice also that many unchurched young people are open to people but not to church (36). They do not mind talking with friends or family about religious matters, but they may not be ready to go to church.

Faith lies at the foundation of Christian transformational experience. Without faith religious experiences remain empty and unchanging. The Scriptures invite all people to place their faith in God and to trust his Word. The Bible’s well-known definition for faith is recorded in Hebrews 11:1: “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”

Andy Stanley and Stuart Hall give the following definition: “Faith is the confidence that God is who he says he is and he will do all he has promised to do” (35). Stanley goes on to explain faith by applying two attributes to it: Faith has an *object* and a *content*. The object of faith is God, which means people are invited to place their trust in

God, not in any other things or persons. Faith has a precise target and not a fuzzy one.

The target to which the spear of faith must hint is God. The second attribute talks about the content of faith. People are not called to believe what they want or what other people think about God, but they are called to know, to discover what they must believe in God. The content of faith is revealed in the Bible and is the Bible (34-46).

In his book *Adolescent Spirituality*, Shelton draws upon the work of James Fowler to discuss Fowler's faith development theory and stages (Shelton 117-214). The stages are as follows:

1. The *Intuitive-Projective* stage is characteristic of children between the ages of 4-8. At this age the child places a great emphasis on the adults around him or her regarding religious matters. At this stage the child does not understand cause and effect (68-69).

2. The second is the *Mythical-Literal* Stage. It comes upon the threshold of adolescence at ages 7-12. At this stage children begin to distinguish between the real and unreal. They start to have a deeper understanding of cause and effect and they view God as being both faithful and lawful. They start becoming involved in religious belief and ritual in which they can find security (69-70).

3. The third stage is the *Synthetic-Conventional* one. The average age ranges from 12 years old to 17-18 years old or sometimes even later. At this stage the adolescent engages in abstract, hypothetical thinking and deeper reflection. People who are involved in their education need to be sincere, genuine, and truthful. Relating to God becomes more personal at this stage (70-72). However, the danger of this age is that adolescents

adopt values of people whom they admire without too much reflection on those people's values.

4. The *Individuative-Reflective* stage can be reached upon the time of college years or even later. At this stage the person can "entertain the possibility of faith that is both individuating and reflective" (72). Young persons have a faith that is more personally understood, and they find the need to express faith in a consistent way. They start to rely take responsibility for their commitments, and they can critically think of themselves or their faith (72-73).

5. Stage five is *Conjunctive* faith. It is rarely seen before the age of 30, and it "evolves from the person's deepening life experience which includes suffering, loss and injustice" (73). The person at this stage understands that relating to transcendent requires commitment.

6. The sixth stage is the *Universalizing* faith. People at this stage have shown an overwhelming passion for love and justice. They desire to help and serve their fellow humans (73-74).

In light of these stages of faith development, Christian adolescents find themselves in the *Synthetic-Conventional* and *Individuative-Reflective* stages. They are right in the middle of a maturing faith. They have the possibility to believe, and still they take models from people they value without proper consideration:

Students should make sure that they are also investing in these relationships; these people are there to walk with students through all of their experiences as they grow in their relationship with God. As students are in these relationships, they should seek not only to admire (with a desire to model) the life and faith of these influential people in their lives, but also ask these people questions about why their faith looks the way it does. (Fleming and Cannister 85)

Their quest for real faith and real people is a source of both attachment to some and detachment from other persons. They are in a process of developing faith. They are able to start serving others, and they can do so with sincerity. They have a passion for engaging relevant worship since music is an important piece of the puzzle of their youth (Overholt and Penner 74-75). They find themselves spiritually touched and kindled in camps and retreats (Fleming and Cannister 86-87). Prayer is experienced more, and they want to see that their faith makes a difference. Social services and short-term mission trips make them feel that they are part of making a change in the world (88).

Adolescence usually brings the young person to a faith crisis that can take many forms. It usually happens during the high school years or the first years of college. For some adolescents this crisis can bring them to a complete turning away regarding church or religious values. Others question their faith and even the faith of others around them. Shelton found several explanations as to why young people go through a faith crisis at this age: peer pressure, institutional alienation, separation from parents, rebellion, search for meaning, disillusionment, personal difficulty, environment and doubt (143-46). However, faith can be discovered and lived out by young people in a family and church environment that would not abandon them in a time of crisis but continue to love them and nurture and model faith for them: "Researchers have identified that there is a turning in young people's thinking from propositional truth towards experience. However experience must be controlled by the truth that should not be abandoned" (McAllister and Springle 101).

A study done by Laura F. Fleming and Mark W. Cannister demonstrates such a trend in young people's spirituality:

Students were asked how much various spiritual disciplines have helped them connect with and grow closer to God. The spiritual disciplines that most students answered “a lot” to were worship (47%), serving others (47%) and prayer (45%). The highest ranking disciplines in the “good amount” category were giving (42%), studying the Bible with others (39%) and quiet time (39%). (70)

Young people’s spirituality seems to move from mere conceptions and convictions toward actions that reflect their faith.

The tendency is to build a scriptureless spirituality. Youth leaders have found several methods to do youth ministries, and many of those methods have diminished the use of Scripture in the youth meetings. My observation does not go to say that Scripture presentation cannot be done in a relevant way but that it should be a central part of the youth ministry. Spiritual leaders need to make them understand the inerrancy of the Bible and its relevance for today (McAllister and Springle 115-16), and young people will listen. They want to read and study Scripture in a group with others to see how God has worked in the lives of people throughout history and how he continues to work in the lives of people today (Fleming and Cannister 71-72). This type of Bible study is encouraging to their personal relationship with God. Beyond that, it helps them connect to the whole body of believers, further encouraging their spiritual formation. The challenge for the church is to make the millennials hungry for the Scriptures.

Another important aspect of a spiritual life is communication, the dialogue of prayer. The Scriptures describe God as a person who is neither distant nor silent. He speaks to the human beings and calls people to a dialogue in prayer (Luke 18:1). Young people are invited by God to enter such a dialogue themselves. Adolescents are at a stage when questions of faith, the meaning of Jesus Christ become more pressing and genuine. However, prayer does not just happen for the adolescence. Parental and spiritual leaders’

roles must be played in instructing and exemplifying a model of prayer (Shelton, *Adolescent Spirituality* 121-35). Talking about prayer experience can also be a part of the process of mentoring and modeling prayer.

Relationship between Adolescents and Church

The church is the sum of all the believers from all races, all nationalities, all cultures, and all ages. It represents the body of Christ as a witness in a fallen world. The first thing that researchers notice about youth ministries in church is the degree of separation the youth program has from the larger body of Christ: “Large and small congregations alike often construct paradigms that isolate young people to do their ‘own thing’” (Gibson 8). The main reason for this separation is the pragmatic idea that the things that youth ministries do would not bring agreement in the whole congregation. Though such a separation is practical in some aspects, it has enlarged the gap between the church and the youth as it has failed to build a bridge between the generations on either side of it.

In addition to the separation between the youth programs and the church, researchers have discovered other reasons for that large gap. Mark Yaconelli speaks about the fact that adults have generally become unable to relate to adolescents:

[W]e don't know how to be with our kids. We know how to entertain them, market to them, test them and statistically measure them. But we've forgotten how to be with them. As a result, today's youth have become more and more isolated alienated and left to fend for themselves in the molesting arms of the corporate media culture. (19)

Yaconelli's observation drives researchers to conclude that both the family and the church have moved away from trying to reach a close relationship with the teenagers.

Paul McQuillan researched some of the reasons for the distance of youth toward the church, and he found three main reasons:

[They have] a perception that church did not supply anything that they needed at the moment. Church was somewhere where one went when one was in trouble or had a particular need to fulfill. There was also a strong opinion that church failed to practice Christianity in the way that it was presented by Jesus in the gospels. Finally there was the whole question of religious language as not having any significant meaning for them today.
(14)

A way to respond to this finding is by involving youth in a meaningful way in the service of the church towards its members but also to the members of the community around it. Involvement in service of the church might be the fulfillment of their need of community. It could be the imitation of the works of Christ for the world in which they live. It could be a way to understand the spiritual message in a practical way.

The church at large is interested in passing on to the next generations the faith legacy that has been kept over centuries. It has become a worldwide phenomenon that the church is losing a large number of the young people who were once part of their family.

The Barna Group has published some interesting statistics about the engagement of youth with church in the USA:

Overall, more than four out of five teens say they have attended a church for a period of at least two months during their teenage years (81%). This represents substantial penetration and significant prospects for influencing the nation's 24 million teens. ("Barna Group, *Most Twentysomethings*")

However, researchers have reported a disengagement of the young people from church somewhere during, but most often after, adolescent years:

In fact, the most potent data regarding disengagement is that a majority of twentysomethings—61% of today's young adults—had been churchied at one point during their teen years but they are now spiritually disengaged (i.e., not actively attending church, reading the Bible, or praying). Only one-fifth of twentysomethings (20%) have maintained a level of spiritual

activity consistent with their high school experiences. Another one-fifth of teens (19%) were never significantly reached by a Christian community of faith during their teens and have remained disconnected from the Christian faith. (Barna Group *Most Twentysomethings*)

The results of these studies indicate that the dropping out of church by young adults is more preeminent than getting into church. Disengagement happens, most of the time, when they leave the local church and move to colleges far from parental eyes and supervision.

A study conducted in Australia emphasizes the same phenomenon is taking place there. “The authors argue that, for many young people, the process of social maturation is closely allied to a moving away from conventional religious belief” (Rymarz and Graham 62-63). Europe is no stranger to this phenomenon, since the process of secularization has cut deep into the minds and practices of all age representatives.

Romania is a declared Christian Orthodox country with an overwhelming Orthodox confession majority. Romanians find pride in stating that they are a Christian country. Nae Ionescu, a notorious scholar of inter-war Romania, says, “We are Romanians because we are Orthodox and we are Orthodox because we are Romanians” (qtd. in Talos 47). The problem of the Romanian Orthodox believers is nominalism, meaning that even though the majority of the Romanian population declares itself Christian, they are not practicing as shown in the following study.

Carmen Rus, a Romanian researcher has studied the religiosity of three groups of students in Cluj city. The study involved both the students in a confessional high school and in a lay institution. The results of her research show that more than half of the interviewed adolescents considered themselves religious persons (62.4 percent) and believe that they can find support and power in religion (58.2 percent). These statistical

figures show that the Romanian society, including youth, see themselves as Christian. However, speaking about participating regularly in a public worship service, the statistics look quite different, indicating a small minority (15.8 percent).

The disengagement of youth from church is becoming increasingly more evident as they do not think that the church has something significant to offer them and the world around them. The present young generation “tends to legitimize less and less the involvement of the church in social issues and limit its competence to strictly spiritual issues. The legitimate roles that a church can play are shrinking with the younger generations” (Gog 45). Adolescents are in search of meaning that surpasses just pure knowledge (Pink 115), even if that knowledge is of Christian tradition and beliefs. They want to know that they can find meaning, that truth they are taught can make a difference in and around them.

Involving Youth in Ministry

This research intended to measure the change in church attendance and spiritual maturity as a result of a three-month involvement in the local church. I sought research literature that would support the involvement of youth in social service and in ministry service to support my thesis.

Studies indicate that the participation of adolescents in church-related activities such as social or religious service has been a factor in the positive development of their spirituality:

Teenagers’ religious commitment and attendance has been associated with free time activity involvement and peer characteristics. Youth who reported greater importance of religion in their lives and who attended public religious services more were involved in constructive after-school activities. Furthermore, these youth were more likely to have friends with similar religious commitments and conventional value profiles, and who

were similarly involved in formal religion and constructive free-time activities. (King and Roeser 466)

Pamela Ebsteyne King and Robert W. Roeser clearly make the case based on their research that spiritual formation, religious behavior, and service practices are linked together. The young people today believe they need to make a contribution to the society or community around them. They know that the church has the role, among others, to care and show loving service to the communities, so they are asking themselves why the church is not involved in caring for the sick, the poor, and the least.

Involvement in some sort of voluntary service represents a serious trend among the young people and amazingly not only church youth: “66 percent of church young adults rated the opportunity to meet the needs of others (locally and globally) as extremely important in their lives and 47 percent of unchurched adults said the same” (Stetzer, Stanley, and Hayes 111). Through a series of interviews, Ed Stetzer, Richie Stanley, and Jason Hayes have also concluded that this generation is ready to participate on a frequent basis in hands-on outreach in which they want to utilize their talents and energy to meet needs. Young people seem to be energized in some way by the thought that they can make a difference through their involvement: “[W]hether in the church or outside the church, emerging generations are looking for opportunities to serve.... [P]eople want to make a difference in the world,... often putting the needs of others before their needs” (112). This passion for making a change in the world is a key attribute in adolescents today, that the church should understand and use in such a way to achieve both great things in the community and retaining their young people.

However, one aspect that should not be overlooked when speaking about young people’s passion for getting involved in the world around them—their limited and still

immature understanding of social justice and spiritual service. The fact that they are inclined more towards this kind of involvement does not automatically mean that they also understand all the implications and consequences (Shelton, *Morality* 95-105). As a result, the involvement of youth in ministry should be always accompanied by teaching that is both very practical and very effective.

Dana Bates argues that acting and believing are complementary: “[W]e act our way into believing not just believe our way into acting” (10). Now even though from a traditional evangelical point of view, the understanding that salvation comes through faith alone and not through acts should be explored. Theologians must ask themselves whether involvement in doing certain Christian works plays an important role in the spiritual journey of a person. They also must find ways to explain how salvation by grace does not mean that the church would not permit persons who are not yet saved to do good deeds. The centered set theory might assist in explaining things better.

The centered set theory of Christian churches came largely from missional anthropologist Paul G. Hiebert. He uses four categories: bounded set, centered set, intrinsic fuzzy set, and extrinsic fuzzy set (112). This research uses only two of the four.

Hiebert explains that in a *bounded set* case, churches operate on the basis of boundaries that clearly define who is in and who is not in the community. The three operative terms of this paradigm are belief, behavior, and belonging. Thus, in the bounded set, *belonging* is at the center and is the goal of the person entering the system.

“The *centered set* understanding of membership allows for a clear vision of the focal point, the ability to move toward that point without being tied down to smaller diversions, a sense of total egalitarianism with respect for differing opinions, and an

authority moved from individual members to the existing center “ (Hiebert 125-27). The centered set also operates on the basis of belief, behavior, and belonging, but it changes the order, which is profoundly significant. In a centered set, *belonging* comes first. That is to say, when a person enters the community, he or she belongs automatically simply because of the desire to be part of the community. No belief and behavioral rules must be agreed upon before membership is accorded (127).

The centered set is an example that can inform on how to find a way in which adolescents who have either a high level of spiritual maturity or a very low one could be integrated into the church service. The social science has informed the study that the present generation of young people wants to contribute to the community. Some may not yet belong or even believe, but they can behave and in behaving they will grow toward the center, which in this case is spiritual maturity:

The findings of Sherr et al. suggest that in order to help young people develop a rigorous faith life they should be involved in meaningful service. The study indicates that “involving teenagers in authentic service to real needs accompanied by reflection on the connections between service experiences and religious teachings and other practices ... can serve as a fruit bearing path for ministry. (Dekker 51)

In response to this study, Jim Dekker writes, “[S]piritual formation through service projects is clear” (58). At the same time, he brings attention to a very important aspect: “The kind of Faith Skills Development that results from service projects will be influenced by the kinds of theology and sociology understood by the people participating in the project” (64). The conclusion is that service should be always accompanied by teaching and feedback so that the formative experience can be placed in a correct theological and sociological context.

One of the most popular ways of involving youth in ministry has become the short-term mission trip. It is the practice of taking an organized group to a remote area and serve the community in a social-spiritual way. The impact is significant in lives of youth, especially when they come to places where the living conditions are significantly lower than the ones they have at home. Andrew Root warns about the possibility that such a ministry could easily become *global tourism*, and the solution he offers is an emphasis not on what the group does but on the people they serve:

A mission trip focuses on who God is and what God does.... [M]ission trips are about accompaniment, not activity. Mission trips are about seeing the thinness of our sensationalized, always moving world through shared life with others.... [T]hen it is a trip to the cross seeking to go and find the crucified Christ who is revealed in the suffering humanity.... [I]t is about being with, not doing for. (318)

Even though, Root's response to the danger of *global tourism* seems quite mystical, the warning that short-term mission trips can be detoured from their purpose remains valid.

The ministry involvement that I used in this research is slightly different but still close to social work service. I have investigated the changes in spiritual maturity as a result of youth's involvement in the ministry in the local church. The young people were involved in two areas of service. One is greeting people as they came to church, and the second service opportunity that I offered was visiting the sick members of the church in their homes. Both of the services have a social side and both require a certain amount of dedication and even sacrifice. The difference is in the fact that the service is done locally and serves people in the local community surrounding the church.

Involvement in service is thus not only important in the youth ministry but also is something that young people value and want to do. The extreme, however, would be to

focus strictly on service and leave out other important parts of the Christian life, such as prayer, worship, and teaching.

Bringing all researched literature together, the conclusion I found is that social sciences and ministry experience have brought strong arguments in this paper for making the case that involving youth in social or religious service plays an important role in their spiritual development.

Theology and Youth Ministry

The way that the Church understands God and his plans must shape the way Christian workers understand and do youth ministry. Youth work should not become an alternative to the Christian way but should be integrated in the way Christians express their relationship with the Father. The Bible makes the reader understand that God is making himself known to people and inviting them to begin a lifelong journey with him. He restores people and then he invites them into a relationship in which those who were once lost become people who seek others who are lost and invite them nearer to God (e.g., Abraham, Moses, David). All are invited to join in the mission of God (Ward 33; Wright 71). This idea means that youth ministry should embrace such an attitude, joining the mission of God and calling others to do the same. One of the problems often met in youth ministry, and in ministry in general, is the expectancy that young people are only to be served: They need to be provided with programs, camps, and activities; they do not have to do anything but choose to enjoy them or not. However, the lack of involvement and consumerism is not what God intends (Ward 35). God invites people to a mission not just to a program.

Youth ministry, even though it is done separately from other programs in the church, is still an important part of the church. The way the church integrates and understands the role and the responsibility of the adolescents in the service must be derived from theology. For this purpose, I examined several theological arguments that show the validity of the service done by teenagers.

The definition of the church as understood by Christian theologians includes people of all ages and all places that confess Jesus as Lord and follow him through faith. Among many characteristics of the church, most theologians agree to these two aspects. The church is a community of believers and a serving community (Harper and Metzger 19, 155; Grudem 853; Ladd 579-82). Therefore, if the church is a community of all believers, then it definitely would have to include young people with their varying levels of spiritual maturity.

One common belief expressed many times in churches is that the young people of today are the church of tomorrow, that somehow the church needs to keep them in the right place and educate them for a future moment when they will become the church. The reality is rather that the youth of today are the church of today, together with all the other saints no matter the age or maturity (Fields 173). The Lord seemed to make time and give attention to young people (e.g., the young rich man, Luke 18:18-23; the parable of the prodigal son, Luke 16) and even to little children (Matt. 19:14). They were all important to him.

Another important trait of the church is that it is meant to serve God and the people. The Lord has given a clear example of servanthood:

[W]hoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave just as the Son of Man did

not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for.
(Matt. 20:27-28, NIV)

Genuine faith always expresses itself in ministry. As emerging generations observe that faith produces service, the validity of their faith is proved (Stetzer, Stanley, and Hayes 112). Adolescents need to experience not only a faith that works but also works that encourage faith walk. The example of other people not only confessing faith but practicing it in such a way that creates a difference for others makes adolescents pay attention to such a faith.

In order for the church to be able to fulfill the task of service, the Lord has equipped his saints with the gifts of the Spirit. God gives them to his children with the purpose of serving others:

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.... All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines. (1 Cor. 12:4-11)

A word to be noticed in verse 7 is "each" (repeated two times vv. 12-13), which points to the fact that all people of the church are blessed with spiritual gifts they are to use, serving others in love. The use of this word is emphatic (Beet 183; Fee 589), emphasizing the fact that the manifestation of the Spirit and his gifts are for all believers.

A second aspect present in the text is important for this study. It is the phrase, "[T]he manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good..." (v. 7). The reason the gifts of the Spirit are imparted is not personal pride or false glory but because they were given for the purpose that the receiver might serve and build other people with love and

dedication. The fact that these gifts were misused is the reason for Paul's elaboration on the body (vv. 12-27; Harris and Mare 365).

The passage is informing that all believers receive gifts of the Spirit and that all those who receive them must use them not for personal achievements but for the edification of the body of Christ through service. Going further, this gifting of all believers means that if young people believe, they have gifts from the Holy Spirit. As a result they must serve others in the congregation.

Paul and Timothy, Exegesis on 1 Timothy 4:11-16

The example of Paul and Timothy is probably the key model in the New Testament that supports this research. For the purpose of this paper, I have exegeted one of the most significant passages, 1 Timothy 4:11-16.

The first and second letters to Timothy, along with the letter to Titus, are grouped together by scholars as the New Testament's *pastoral epistles*. This name is given because compared to the other letters of Paul addressed to churches, with the exception of Philemon, these letters are addressed to certain coworkers of Paul to give instructions concerning their pastoral duties (Knight 3). In the case of the first letter to Timothy, Paul was writing to his young fellow worker whom he appointed as a minister in the church at Ephesus (1:3-4) with the task to "charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith." The place where the letter was written is most probably Macedonia. The apostle does say that he left Timothy in Ephesus when he left for Macedonia, but experts are not certain that he was there when he wrote this letter (Carson and Moo 372)

Paul established the church at Ephesus from a group of John the Baptist's converts who received the Holy Spirit as a result of Paul's ministry. Paul spoke to the crowds in the Synagogue, but later he taught them in the school of Tyron for a period of two years, a period of great signs and powers through the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:8-20). As he left for Macedonia, the apostle warned the church leaders, "I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them..." (Acts 20:28-31).

Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid writing about this realities asserts that,

[T]he situation of 1 Timothy and Titus differs from that of Paul's earlier Aegean ministry. His mission had extended to Gaul (2 Tim. 4:10), and his congregations around the Aegean had multiplied and encompassed Crete, Miletus, and Nicopolis (Tit. 1:5; 3:12; 2 Tim. 4:20). They were increasingly endangered by a judaizing, Gnostic, counter mission (1 Tim. 1:3-7, 19-20; 4:1-2; 6:20; 2 Tim. 4:3-4; Tit. 1:10-16) that included church leaders and probably former coworkers (2 Tim. 1:15-18; 2:16-17; 3:6-9; 4:10; Tit. 3:9-14). (661)

To meet the problem, Paul adopted a new strategy for his writing. He continued as before to work from a city, perhaps Corinth (2 Tim. 4:20), with several visits to a number of churches, for example, in Macedonia (1 Tim. 1:3), Crete (Tit. 1:5), Nicopolis (Tit. 3:12), Miletus (2 Tim. 4:20), and Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3; 3:14; 4:13; 2 Tim. 1:15-18; 4:19). However, he could not send a letter to each of the many congregations along with a colleague to explain and apply it. Instead, he sent letters to trusted coworkers—Titus in Crete and Timothy in Ephesus, which served both as instruments of personal communication and encouragement to give apostolic authorization for their teaching.

Apostle Paul urges Timothy to stand firm and keep the Word of God in a time of false teachers. After teaching him the qualifications of the church officials (1 Tim. 3), Paul goes on in chapter four to speak about the responsibilities of a good spiritual worker.

Three times in this chapter (4:6, 11, 15), Paul writes that Timothy should pay attention to “these things” (*tauta*). This repetition seems to suggest that “these things” are very important for Timothy as a young minister and so are emphasized in the text. From verses six to eleven, Paul exhorts Timothy to pay attention to what could be summarized as Godliness rather than the desires of the flesh. From verses 12 to 16, Timothy is advised to show the believers by example how they should conduct themselves while Timothy himself is to conduct himself well and to teach sound doctrine.

I. Howard Marshall and Philip H. Towner see this passage as “a bridge between more specific units of church instruction and [it] constitutes a personal appeal to Timothy to be courageous active and diligent. The concentration of imperatives (ten!) is remarkable” (558-59). These verbs are a series of personal and ministry-related advice that are hard to separate and seem to communicate that there must not exist too much of a difference in conduct between the two.

Barth Campbell writes about this text and recognizes that this,

series of ten exhortations, whose imperative verbs are all in the present tense, concludes chapter 4. The injunctions in this exhortation may be classified under the following headings: the pastor’s public ministry (vv. 11, 13), the pastor’s example (v. 12), and the pastor’s personal growth (vv. 14-16). (189-204)

These divisions are going to help see the movement of the text and its composition, based on certain areas of ministry related attributes.

The phrase, “Let no one despise you for your youth” (v.11), does not say how old Timothy was. *The New International Greek Testament Commentary* asserts that according to the word used here (*neos*) and the connections with the book of Acts probably put Timothy around thirty years old. Though not too young, in comparison with the older elders and deacons in Ephesus, he was subjected to “be looked down on” (v.11):

At first encounter he is described in terms suggesting a fair degree of maturity (a disciple well spoken of, Acts 16:1-2). Since then he had functioned as Paul’s chief aide for the rest of Paul’s ministry. That is, if the Pastorals do come from a late phase of Paul’s ministry, then Timothy would have been Paul’s chief coworker for about fifteen years. To call someone already into his thirties a “youth” would be unusual, and after such a period of training and responsibility, was anyone who respected Paul likely to question Timothy’s authority? If, alternatively, the letter was written later, as seems more likely, and if Timothy himself was still in view, then he would probably have been in his fifties at least. It looks, then, as though the writer is working with an image of Timothy drawn from the earlier letters of Paul. Timothy, in other words, may here function as a representative model of the youthful leader, like the younger member of Paul’s mission team of earlier years, someone whose charisma or natural ability brought him to the forefront despite his youth. In an era that venerated the wisdom of age, such a one might well be “despised” (1 Cor 16:11, a different word, written at least ten years earlier). And though Paul never uses the word in reference to himself (cf. Rom 2:4; 1 Cor 11:22), there certainly were those operating within his churches who had scorned him in the past. (Knight 334)

However, the text seems to suggest quite clearly that Paul is talking about Timothy as a young leader in his congregation. A literal interpretation of the text is preferred in this case.

The antidote for Timothy’s youth is “to overcome the tendency of others to look down on youth by demonstrating a maturity in life and conduct. Thus, Timothy is to be an example or pattern...” for the believers (Knight 205). The five areas that the young servant of God must set himself as an example are definitive for his character. The first

two are exterior—"speech and conduct" (v. 12)—while the other three are interior—"in love, in faith, in purity" (v. 12). D. A. Carson writes takes into consideration this text,

But youth need be no hindrance provided the behavior inspires confidence. Paul gives guidance here in five areas. *Speech* is important but must be linked with *life*, that is a combination of right words and right actions. Add to this combination of outward qualities, the inward qualities of *love*, *faith* and *purity* and this sums up the *example* of an acceptable Christian life The debate here is whether the text suggests that Timothy must be an example for the believers or for those outside. George Knight III argues that the original text suggests an example for the believers: "some think that the genitive construction, *ton piston* following *tupos* means that Timothy must be an example of believers (NASAB "an example of those who believe") however the parallel usage in 1 Peter 5:3 ... "be examples to the flock" demonstrates that *to* or *for* is appropriate here. The adjective *piston* is used in active sense here (as in vs. 10) as a substantive designating 'those who believe' in Christ.... [W]ith the definite article *ton* it designates the specific believers among whom Timothy lives." (original emphasis)

Verse 13 brings into young Timothy's attention the things that he should do until the apostle's return: "public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching." Some of these things might be taken over by the apostle when he comes but Timothy is to know that he should be devoted in doing these things:

The *reading of Scripture* is presumably public reading with a view to instruction of the hearers, few of whom would have been capable of reading for themselves. This practice carried on the procedure of the synagogue, where public reading of Scripture formed an important part in Jewish worship. The word translated *preaching* represents the Greek word for "exhortation," while the word for *teaching* is in all probability related to the passing on of Christian doctrine. All three of these activities are of the greatest relevance to the Christian pastor. (original emphasis; 1 Tim. 4:6)

Jerome D. Quinn and William C. Wacker also agree on the idea of public reading.

The relation among the three elements of which Timothy is to take good care until Paul returns and the Word of the Scripture denotes the fact that the foundation for Timothy's ministry was to be the Scriptures and nothing else. Raymond F. Collins

suggests that the Scriptures were to be the basis of Timothy's admonition and teaching (129).

Verse fourteen urges Timothy not to "neglect the gift." This *gift* (*carismata*) refers to the gift of service, to pastor the flock of God, according to the context of the book. The author also specifies the means and circumstances of the receiving of the gift, "which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you." A first observation is that the laying on of hands might be mentioned as an affirmation of Timothy through the fact that he was ordained by the laying on of the hands of the elders: "The approval of the 'presbytery' (KJV, NASB) or 'body of elders' (NIV) also could silence criticisms about his youth (4:12). Mature Jewish teachers ordained other Jewish teachers through laying hands on them; this practice served as official accreditation" (Keener 1 Tim. 4:14). The question is to what gift Paul is referring in this passage. In addition, one wonders if the gifts were conditional on the laying on of hands. As to the first issue, one may conclude from this passage that the gift of service as a pastor is most probable:

The *gift* (*charisma*) is connected with the endowment of Timothy by the Holy Spirit at his setting aside for service. While this took place at the laying on of hands, the most important aspect was the gift itself. There may be a suggestion here that Timothy was not making the fullest use of his spiritual gifts, but since the word is in the singular it is best to suppose that his gift of ministry is particularly in mind. The laying of hands on Saul and Barnabas at the commencement of their missionary labors (Acts 13:1-3) furnishes the background for the present statement, since it was also connected with prophecy and the Spirit. Timothy is reminded of the occasion when he was set aside for ministry and is urged to take courage from it. (Carson 1 Tim. 4:6)

Collins makes the correlation of this text with the one in 2 Timothy 1:6 where the text is similar:

“For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands” the only difference is the lack of mention of the prophecy as in the present text.” Some interpreters have suggested the prepositional phrase means that some form of prophetic oracle designated Timothy as one upon whom hands should be laid. It is preferable to take the prepositional as indicating circumstance: the laying of hands took place in the context of the community at prayer. (131)

Verses 15-16 seem to bring the text toward a concluding proposition. Paul gives the advice to “[p]ractice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress.” The idea that is stressed in these verses is that the attention that the servant must give to these things in order to mature or to grow in such a way that others might observe his or her example. These are not things that come by themselves in the human spirit; rather, they are born out of the constant preoccupation with the things that pertain to personal spiritual life and service. Among all things that Timothy is to observe, Paul stresses in the last verse of this chapter, “Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching” (v. 16). Observing self spirituality and teaching seem to be the most important as they are repeated in the end and also because of the final addition of the apostle: “by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers” (v. 16). The word translated *be diligent* could mean meditate, but the more usual meaning is *practice*, which draws attention to the value of persistence, an echo of the idea of athletic training alluded to in verse 6. The Christian worker cannot avoid being in the public eye,. Paul is expecting Timothy to make real progress. The watching and persevering of verse 16 reemphasize the same point. Paul is not urging self-examination but constant alertness, both in life and doctrine. The two things belong together. Right doctrine without a godly life is of no value, while a godly life without right doctrine is not possible. Paul was aware of the danger of neglecting his own salvation (cf. 1 Cor. 9:27). If the minister does not take care

to persevere, others are unlikely to be influenced by him (Carson). Carson correctly links the theoretical part of the life of the young Christian servant with the practical part, which cannot exist one without the other.

The importance of this text for the research lies in the fact that the Apostle Paul was not afraid to use in ministry and, even more, to give full responsibilities to a man who, though was, most probably, in his thirties, was considered by others too young, and they might even have despised him for his youth (v. 12). The apostle saw a place in ministry for youth. The solution that the apostle had against the *despising* of Timothy by others was spiritual maturity. Even though compared to the elders and deacons in Ephesus, Timothy was young. Paul encouraged him to give evidence of spiritual maturity.

The second important aspect of the text for this study is the emphasis that the apostle makes upon the spiritual gift of Timothy who was told, “Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. Practice these things; immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress” (v. 15). The idea is that every young person has received a gift from the Holy Spirit that is not to be neglected but exercised in the ministry of others. From Paul’s message I also understand that although youth are to be used in ministry they are not to be used without any concern towards their spiritual life. Paul suggests that those who serve are to be mature. The question remains whether the church can find areas of service less public that might allow young people who are not yet born again to do works of service.

Research Design

This research used an explanatory, mixed-methods design with two quantitative instruments (SMI AOC) that provided the main data and two qualitative instruments (IBJ, FG) that explain how the changes occurred. John W. Creswell says about this design: “An exploratory mixed methods design consists of first collecting quantitative data and then collecting qualitative data to help explain or elaborate on the quantitative results” (560). The sequence of the instruments, first quantitative and then qualitative, helps the research explain the quantitative results, giving a more comprehensive image of the findings. The explanatory, mixed-methods design places a priority on the quantitative data, which represents a major aspect of data collection. The qualitative data helps to refine the quantitative data.

As an example, Vicki L. Plano Clark and Creswell describe the use of the explanatory, mixed-methods design in research done by Way, Stauber, Nakkula and London who investigated the relationship between depression and substance abuse. The study used quantitative instruments to collect data about substance abuse and then used qualitative instruments to explain the connection to depression (466-67). Similarly, in this research the quantitative results will provide the data before and after the intervention while the qualitative data will inform the causes of change.

Summary

The need for involvement in ministry has been framed through the literature review by showing the characteristics and values of the today's adolescents and by laying a research foundation from the work contributed by other researchers, making the case that service involvement is a factor in spiritual formation. All this information has then

been brought to the theological and exegetical table, which informed the project with a solid foundation for youth ministry involvement.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Problem and Purpose

A whole new generation of adolescents is rising in the society and in the church. Quite different from previous generations of adolescents, they have come to be called *digital natives*, as they have had access to digital technology ever since they were born. In addition, their relation with their parents and teachers seem to be difficult because their parents and most of their educators are *digital immigrants*. The fact that people observe a difference between these generations, the adolescents today are gifted people with talents and attributes that God can use for his glory.

Cutici Baptist Church is one of the historical Baptist churches of Romania as the church was one of the first to be planted in the western part of the country. It is a medium-sized church with about five hundred members that survived Communism, bearing a good witness in the community. However, the challenge for the Curtici Baptist Church today is to retain youth who have the tendency to become disengaged with church. This phenomenon is not only a local phenomenon but a worldwide one. The church understands the importance of retaining youth but has not yet found a means to do so.

The purpose of the research was to evaluate the change in church attendance and spiritual maturity of twenty adolescents of the Curtici Baptist Church as a result of a three-month involvement in the ministry of the local church. This research is important because it can provide Curtici Baptist Church with a model for retaining the young generation.

Research Questions and/or Hypotheses

The following research questions guided this study and were used as means for evaluation of the process of change in the lives of the young people. The purpose statement asks whether the involvement of the young people in ministry is really helping retain their attendance in the Curtici Baptist Church. I used three questions that described the adolescents' state before and after the intervention. The third question inquired what elements had more impact in the process of change.

Research Question #1

What is the current church attendance and spiritual maturity of the young people in Curtici Baptist Church?

The answer to this question provided information on the young people's personal view of their current church-related practice. The purpose question was concerned with measuring change in two areas: church attendance and spiritual maturity. This question helped inform these aspects as they were measured before the intervention took place.

In order to answer this question, I used a preliminary questionnaire. Participants filled them out at the first meeting. The questionnaire is composed of thirty questions. Each question uses a six-point Likert scale to measure their current status. All questions in the SMI are meant to answer this first research question.

A second instrument that informs this research question is the Internet-based journal. Each participant was asked to enter a fifty-word post once a week. The content of the entries was very diverse as individuals expressed their feelings, changes, and opinions during the intervention. For this first research question, I used the parts of journals that concerned their state before the intervention.

A third instrument answering this research question was the focus group at the end of the intervention. During this focus group, I took journal notes as participants talked about attitudes, enthusiasm, or lack of interest.

Research Question #2

How does the involvement of the young people of Curtici Baptist Church in the church's ministry change their church attendance and spiritual maturity?

In order to answer this question, I used the SMI as a postquestionnaire to evaluate the change after the intervention with the preliminary results. The AOC is a quantitative instrument that measured church attendance of the young people throughout the intervention process. The other two qualitative instruments, the FG and the IBJ, informed me about the attitudes and feelings of the adolescents as a result of the intervention.

Research Question #3

Which element had most impact on the changes?

The IBJ and the FG answered this question using qualitative methodology. They provided data beyond the quantitative instruments.

Population and Participants

The population selected for this research contained twenty young people who are part of the Curtici Baptist Church. The young people ranged in ages from 14 to 21. Students self-selected whether to participate as a response to a public announcement I made during a youth worship meeting on 2 June 2012. I explained what the project involved and for how long. I also explained they were to take this opportunity as a very serious assignment as they would have to participate each week in ministry service and take a pre- and posttest, complete an Internet-based journal entry each week, and

participate in a final focus group. Twenty-four teenagers were present, and sixteen volunteered to participate. After this meeting I followed up with the teenagers who were not present at the youth meeting, letting them know about the project and inviting them to participate, too. A total number of twenty young people signed up for the project.

Design of the Study

The project involved an intervention that evaluated changes in young people's lives concerning their church attendance and spiritual maturity as a result three months direct involvement in the ministry of the church. The group of participants first met at my house. After a brief introduction, I explained why I needed their help. They then took the SMI questionnaire. The last part of the meeting was to assign to each of them a ministry responsibility they were going to have for the three months. Ten of the young people were going to greet people before the church services started, and the other ten would visit members of the church who were sick, once a week. I read their entries on the IBJ each week in order to keep track of their involvement. The population's church attendance was monitored and recorded in the attendance observation chart. The adolescents involved in the project were also asked to write in an Internet-based journal entry every week. After three months of intervention, the group met again at my house. They took the SMI one more time after which we continued with the focus group.

Instrumentation

The explanatory, mixed-method design in this study had two quantitative surveys and two qualitative instruments consisting of one Internet-based journal and one focus group. The explanatory, mixed-method design used quantitative instruments to gather

initial data. Following, it used qualitative instruments to gather data and provide complementary information (Cresswell 562).

To assess the change in church attendance and spiritual maturity, the following four instruments were used in the study. The SMI was administered to all the young people in the selected population two times—as a preintervention and postintervention questionnaire. The two questionnaires were identical because I needed to evaluate changes as a result of the intervention (see Appendix A). The questionnaire is not a researcher-designed instrument; therefore, I have not altered its structure.

During the intervention period, the young people were encouraged to share in the IBJ their thoughts and feelings about the tasks they had. During the entire period of the project, the AOC was used. At the end of the three-month intervention, ten young people were selected from the population for a focus group to provide key feedback.

Variables

The independent variable of this project is the adolescents' involvement in the ministry of Curtici Baptist Church. The dependent variable of this project is the change that took place in the young people's lives. In addition, the two aspects that I want to measure change by, fit into the same category: church attendance, and spiritual maturity.

Reliability and Validity

Finding an instrument that would accurately measure changes in spiritual maturity is a real challenge as the spiritual life of an individual is so complex. However, the Spiritual Maturity Index had already been tested for its reliability. The researchers report an internal consistency coefficient of .87 (Cronbach's alpha). Bassett et al. report the same statistic with a value of .92 (Hill and Hood 202).

Data Collection

The purpose of this research was to evaluate the changes in church attendance and spiritual maturity of twenty adolescents of the Curtici Baptist Church as a result of a three-month involvement in the ministry of the local church. In order to evaluate this change, I planned for an overall period of four months. Three months were used as a time frame for the adolescents' continuous involvement in ministry. The other month was used for the process of selection and invitation to the project.

I started by sending a written invitation that was addressed to all the adolescents between the ages of 14 and 21 to help me in this project by getting involved over a period of three months. I explained in this invitation what was going to happen. I decided to select the first twenty who would respond. The number of young people in the church is a total of about twenty-five to twenty-seven. The first meeting was at my home where we sat, comfortably in a circle so everyone could see each other and feel secure and relaxed. I started by presenting my project. Then I explained to them its process. At the end of the meeting, I asked the twenty participants to take ten minutes to complete the SMI questionnaire.

The last part of the first meeting was spent discussing openly about their view of ministry, what they liked about it, and what they did not like. I asked them open-ended questions regarding areas of ministry where they see themselves involved. While the notes were not part of an instrument for the research, they were a great help for me in the following days when I decided what ministry project fitted everyone. The next week we met again not as a group but individually to talk to each of them about where I thought would be a good place for individuals to serve. Most of them agreed with what I

recommended. Choosing was not a problem because I did not want them to feel pushed into something they did not want to do. Instead, I wanted them to be excited about the things their ministry involvement. The following is a list of ministry opportunities that were chosen. Four people were going to greet people who were coming to church each time. The other six were going to visit visit sick people from the church each week, read the Bible for them, and help around their homes if they had a need.

The intervention lasted three months. During this time each one of the participants were asked to make weekly journal entries of fifty words on a specially designed Web page. In addition, at the same time, I regularly completed the AOC at every public service opportunity.

After the three months, we met again for a focus group (see Appendix D). This FG was an open discussion where questions were asked and answered, and I kept a journal to record emotions, attitudes, and opinions. At the end of the meeting, I gave them the SMI questionnaire to complete.

Data Analysis

The SMI was the first instrument used. As all the participants arrived, I gave them the test, which was printed on letter-sized paper. After they finished the questionnaire, I calculated and analyzed the data. Each of the responses on the SMI had a numerical value on a Likert scale. I used a simple averaging of responses to each question—separating out the reverse scoring questions and assigning opposite values to them. I then tallied a total average score.

During the intervention period of September, October, and November 2012, I asked the young people to complete the IBJ, once a week. The teenagers were writing in

the IBJ about their views on ministry involvement that week and about how it made them feel. The entry had to be about fifty words long. At the end of the intervention period, I collected all the journal entries and coded the important and recurring theme words. Then I created a table of results to summarize my findings (Sensing 207-09).

The postintervention period involved taking the SMI questionnaire again. This instrument measured the changes in the researched areas: church attendance and spiritual maturity.

The focus group was the last instrument used at the end of the period of intervention. During the focus group meeting, I asked open-ended questions about the experience and recorded the answers in my journal.

Ethical Procedures

In order to confer a safe environment and feelings of security for the participants, I prepared for each of them an informed consent that explained the project, their involvement, their confidentiality, and the use of information that they provided in the questionnaires and the focus group. In addition, I explained how the data was going to be used. The informed consent is found in Appendix E.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Problem and Purpose

Research conducted by the Barna Group uncovered that “nearly three out of every five young Christians (59%) disconnect either permanently or for an extended period of time from church life after age 15” in the United States of America (“Six Reasons”). Far away in miles but not in trend, the young people of Romanian churches are following these patterns, leaving church and adopting a worldly lifestyle, seldom returning to the fold of the church.

The purpose of this research was to evaluate the changes in church attendance and spiritual maturity of twenty adolescents of the Curtici Baptist Church as a result of a three-month involvement in the ministry of the local church. With the desire to find out and implement a solution that would retain adolescents in our church, the intervention was seen as a means of experimenting whether involving the teens in the local ministry of the church would result in a higher spiritual life and a higher rate of retention.

Participants

The selected population of the intervention was comprised of twenty adolescents aged between 14 and 23, eleven girls and nine boys. Because of the lack of younger people available for the intervention, I had to accept into the study some older young people. However, the average age of the twenty young people is 16.95.

Research Question #1

In order to find the spirituality of the adolescents interviewed, I had to answer the following question: What is the current church attendance and spiritual maturity of the

young people in Curtici Baptist Church? The Attendance Observation Chart showed that for the month before the intervention the twenty young people had an average church attendance of 7.12 out of twelve services, which meant the twenty young people attended an average of 59.4 percent of the services (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1. AOC before Intervention

Factor	Total services	Average numbers of services attended	% of services attended
AOC	12	7.12	59.40

The second instrument, the Spiritual Maturity Index showed the maturity level of the participants before the intervention. This instrument was developed by Craig W.

Ellison as a tool for measuring the spirituality for a Christian:

He suggests that the spiritually mature person does not rely on support from others to maintain beliefs but develops those beliefs through critical self-reflection. Ellison sees religious practices and beliefs as an integral part of life's daily activities. Ellison believes spiritual maturity, unlike the closely related concept of spiritual well-being, implies meeting attitudinal and behavioral criteria not suggested in the concept of well-being. The spiritually mature person is self-principled and is able to enter into many full relationships with others. Hence, maturity reflects interdependence as well as a strong sense of self. Spiritually mature persons are willing to make sacrifices for the welfare of others as well as cope with suffering and pain. Such individuals define their personal identity in relationship to closeness and communion with God. (Hill and Hood 112)

The questionnaire is composed of thirty self-report questions. Each question uses a six-point Likert scale to measure the current status of the participant. Twelve questions are reverse scored due to negative wording.

The results of my research show an average score of 133.35 (see Table 4.2). The total score is the sum of the scores obtained on all items, making the range of scores 30 to

180. Even though Peter C. Hill and Ralph W. Hood, Jr. do not give a certain standardization of the instrument, considering the examples given by them, it seems that the scores that are between 120 and 150 are considered good to very good scores, and all above 150 to 180 are excellent scores (202).

Table 4.2. SMI before Intervention

Factor	Score	<i>SD</i>
SMI	133.35	11.35

Research Question #2

How does the Curtici Baptist Church young people's involvement in the church ministry change their church attendance and spiritual maturity?

In order to answer the second question the same instruments were administered. The AOC was administered after the three-month period of the intervention to determine the number of services attended during the intervention. It showed a small increase in attendance of 1.44 percent, meaning average attendance of 21.90 out of thirty-six services in three months (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3. AOC before and during intervention

Factor	Percentage of services attended prior to intervention	Percentage of services attended during the intervention	Difference
AOC	59.40%	60.84%	1.44%

The other instrument, the SMI showed an increase of 8.5 (see Table 4.4). The results are very important for the purpose of this research.

Table 4.4 SMI Before and after intervention

Factor	Score	SD
SMI (postintervention)	141.85	11.87
SMI (before intervention)	133.35	11.35
Difference	+8.5	.52

The increase, though not as expected (over 10 points), is still considerable for the study. In the Basset et al. example, the difference was 11.81 points (Hill and Hood 112). However, this difference shows the results after three months of the intervention, and it sustains the idea of spiritual growth in the participants.

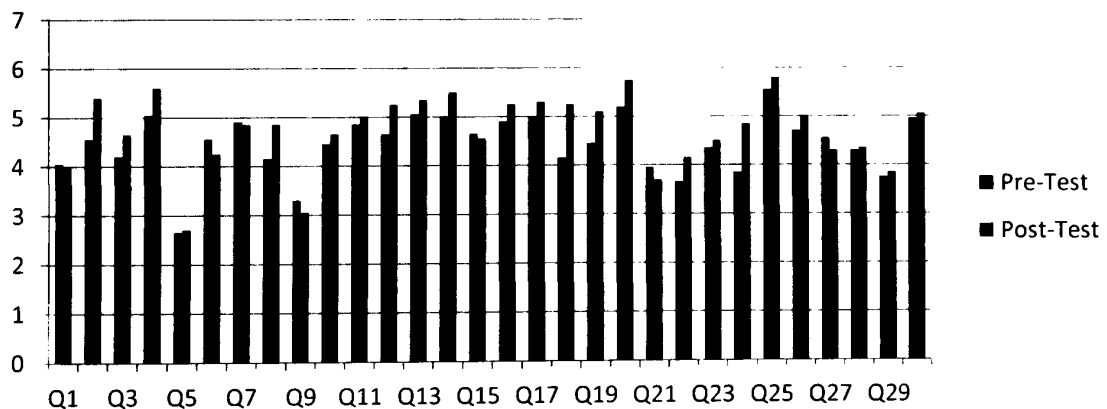


Figure 4.1. Answers compared.

Since the goal of this dissertation is to discover ways to increase youth retention in church by their direct means of involvement in ministry, I will discuss the main

questions that are directly linked to church and church attendance as a part of their maturation. Questions 1, 14, 22, and 26 were directly linked to the young people's perception of the church and their attachment to it.

Question 1, "My faith doesn't primarily depend on formal church for its vitality" showed a small decrease from 4.05 in the pretest to 4.0 in the posttest. This was a surprising find (see Table 4.5).

Table 4.5. Question 1—Compared Answers

Factor	Score
Question 1 SMI, before intervention	4.05
Question 1 SMI, after intervention	4.00

The biblical basis for the importance of the church in the spiritual development process was stressed in Chapter 2. The Bible speaks about the importance of the body of Christ and that each member of the body is linked with another. By their links the body is able to develop (Eph. 4:16). It is important therefore for adolescents to find a place in the church and relations with other Christians that they may grow spiritually.

Question 14 was about the young people's perception and value of their spiritual gifts: "I feel that identifying and using my spiritual gifts is not really important." The data showed an increase from 5.0 in the pretest to 5.5 in the posttest to this question, which seems to indicate that their involvement in ministry brought a new perspective on the value of spiritual gifts (see Table 4.6).

Table 4.6. Question 14—Compared Answers

Factor	Score
Question 14 SMI, before intervention	5.00
Question 14 SMI, after intervention	5.50

Question 22 was concerned with the young people's willingness to witness their faith to others: "I actively look for opportunities to share my faith with non-Christians." The data showed an increase from 3.65 in the pretest to 4.15 in the posttest. This increase seems to indicate that the intervention made the young people more open to sharing their faith with their peers (see Table 4.7).

Table 4.7. Question 22—Compared Answers

Factor	Score
Question 22 SMI, before intervention	3.65
Question 22 SMI, after intervention	4.15

The question that showed the greatest change was question 18: "I feel like God has let me down in some of the things that have happened to me." The data showed an increase from 4.15 in the pretest to 5.25 in the posttest (see Table 4.8). One would expect a decrease in that question after the intervention, since students would have had opportunities to see how God had utilized them to meet the needs of others through their service to them. Instead, the results seem to indicate that students felt more attuned to God's presence or absence in their lives due to the intervention.

Table 4.8. Question 18—Compared Answers

Factor	Score
Question 18 SMI, before intervention	4.15
Question 18 SMI, after intervention	5.25
Difference	1.10

Research Question #3

Which element had most impact on the changes? In order to answer this question, two qualitative instruments were used: an Internet-based journal during the intervention and a focus group after the intervention took place.

The materials gathered during these interviews helped complete the results of the study with qualitative data. In the information gathered in the FG, the adolescents talked mostly about a feeling of being useful. They were most of all impressed as a result of their ministry involvement that they can have a useful role to play in the local church. Someone said, “It feels so good to know that I can be of help to someone even if it is something so small!” They saw the gratefulness of the people being served and they felt valued.

Another theme that came up as a result of the study was a spirit of thankfulness. This is the case especially with the young people who were involved in visiting the homes of the sick people. They were overwhelmed by the positive attitude of the sick persons, by their prayers and smiles. The adolescents spoke about learning to be thankful with what they had: health and their good situation. Someone said, “I was amazed by the power of their faith and the joy on their faces!” Another said, “We are in a far better situation and yet we complain so much....”

They also spoke about a sense of being appreciated for their service by the people they served: “People whom we visited were so grateful to us for visiting!” The young people felt important and useful to the community. This activity gave them a sense of belonging.

One theme that was quite common in the young people’s comments was about being able to spend time with friends they have from church. In other words the ministry opportunity provided not only a means of serving others but also a time to be with their friends: “I am so glad to have friends here and get to spend time with them.” They list this factor as one of the things that also keeps them coming to church—to meet with their friends.

Summary of Major Findings

As a result of the intervention, the literature review conclusion that the involvement of youth in ministry is a means of retaining youth was proven as true by the practice of the intervention in Curtici Baptist Church:

1. As measured by the AOC, the church attendance of the twenty young people of the Curtici Baptist church prior to the intervention was scored at 7.12 out of twelve services, which meant the twenty young people attended an average of 59.4 percent of the services available during that month. As a result of the intervention, the AOC showed a small increase in church attendance (1.44 percent).

2. The maturity of the participants increased 8.5 points compared to the pretest. The spiritual maturity of the young participants was measured with the SMI at a score of 135.5 points, which according to the authors of the instrument is a good score.

3. The element that showed the most impact was the practical involvement of young people in service, which gave them a sense of being useful to the larger body of believers.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Major Findings

The research started from the desire to see as many of the young people of the church being retained in the church instead of lost to the world. The literature review gave support to the idea that the involvement of youth in ministry is a means of retaining them in church. The need for involvement in ministry has been framed through the literature review by showing the characteristics and values of today's adolescents and by laying a research foundation from the work that other researchers have contributed, making the case that service involvement is a factor in spiritual formation.

As a result of the literature review, there are a few notable findings that need to be expressed. The first is that young people are in a process of spiritual maturation. They are already capable of witnessing faith and at the same time they are looking for models for their faith (Fleming and Cannister 54). The maturation of their faith will take place even during their practical involvement.

In addition, adolescents already have the ability to serve and a willingness to do so if they are involved, and they have a lot of passion for the things that they are able to do (Overholt and Penner 105).

Another important find during the literature review is that young people are eager to make a difference in the world. As a result they get involved in practical things such as short-term mission trips (Flemming and Cannister 57).

McAllister makes the point that the young people want to practice what they have come to know in theory about their faith. As Pink asserts, they are in “a search for deeper meaning than just knowledge” (115).

In the theological section of Chapter 2, I have shown that the Lord himself gave attention to youth both in his talk with the young ruler (Luke 18) and in his parable of the prodigal son. Paul also found and sustained Timothy as a young man and a leader who later served the church well.

Observable Increase in Church Attendance

The results of the intervention measured a 1.44 percent increase in church attendance of the twenty young people during the three months of the intervention. This is a small percent compared to the expected result but still a positive one. During the focus group, the participants indicated that they felt closer to the fellowship of the church as they began to serve. One person said, “I felt very good serving in this period.” They expressed that they were developing a sense of ownership concerning the church and its ministries.

As I was observing and monitoring the young people who were involved in the project, I saw a willingness to serve and an openness to do things I did not anticipated they would enjoy. They were talking to their families that they must leave on time (when they traveled to church in the same car as the parents), so that they would not be late for church where they had to serve (the greeters group). In addition, they were asking after the project, “When are we going to do something similar again?” All these were an encouragement to me as their pastor and as a researcher.

This finding is supported by the literature review discussing that involvement in ministry and extracurricular activities are factors in growing the youth's interest in church participation (King and Roeser 466). Young sustains the same idea (112). The fact that other researchers support this finding reinforces the fact that this is not an accidental or circumstantial finding.

Though the Bible does not specifically inform this project, it does so in principle. The book of Acts speaks of a direct connection between the disciples' service and their meetings at the temple (each day; Acts 2) or in different homes of the brothers and sisters. One of the things that fueled their faith was their meetings, which fueled their service and vice versa. Another text that sustains this idea is the sending of the twelve, respectively the seventy disciples, to preach and to do the work of the Gospel during Jesus' time. When they came back they came together to share their experiences and also to ask for wisdom in the things they could not achieve (Luke 17:18-20). These biblical examples give some principles that sustain the idea found in this research that involvement of youth in ministry can be linked to church attendance.

These findings are very important for my church as we have to think about creating opportunities for young people to serve if we want them to be more interested in and present at church services. We are working on finding ways to create ministry opportunities for our youth. We have started music programs with this idea in mind. We also try to do regular social projects to involve young people and take them with us when we do evangelism events on the streets or in other open venues.

Considerable Increase of the Spiritual Maturity

The maturity of the young people was measured by the posttest at a score of 145.85, which meant an 8.5 point increase from the pretest. This difference is comparable to what other researchers found while using the SMI (Hill and Hood 57).

I would love to be able to report that the youth who participated in the project were highly spiritual during the project. However, frequently during the times of service I had to make them understand that they had to behave in a certain way while visiting the sick. They were advised not to laugh and speak among them, for example. I had to teach them a few times how to greet the people who were coming to church and whom they were supposed to greet. Sometimes they would laugh and give the impression to people that they were laughing at them. That was not the case, but I had to make sure that they understood how they were supposed to behave. They understood, and many times they did what I taught them. Other times they did not. They still have to grow and mature a lot, which is typical of adolescents. Certainly this project did not make them perfect, but there are some things I saw that were changing in their behavior. For instance I saw that their ministry impressed them. In other words they were thinking about the experiences they had, which made them realize that they need something more.

Another aspect that I saw changed was their prayers. When we met to prepare for a service, they were praying more specifically and more altruistically. The emphasis of their prayers changed from their direct interest to that of the people that they were going to meet. They were using phrases such as, “that I may be able to serve,” “make us useful,” “bless the people,” and, “guide us.”

The increase in score sustains the idea found in the literature review that the involvement in ministry of the young people is one factor that contributes to spiritual growth. The young people find themselves spiritually touched and kindled in camps, retreats and service (Fleming and Cannister 86-87). In such instances prayer is experienced more, and they want to see that their faith makes a difference. Social services and short-term mission trips make them feel that they are part of making a change in the world (88).

The Bible clearly asserts that ministry is one of the keys to spirituality: "For the Son of God came to serve and not to be served" (Matt. 20:28). This verse implies that the way to grow spiritually is to follow Christ's example and serve oneself. In addition, the Apostle Paul seems to suggest that his spiritual state was the result of his experience in God's service (Phil. 4:12-14).

This finding is another reason why we started to think in our church of ways to offer young people the possibility of doing ministry. We are currently using more young people in our social programs and in our visitation programs. We plan short-term mission trips during summer vacation to remote areas of our country, and we get them to raise money by doing practical things such as crafts or car washes. I have found that taking young people with me when visiting other churches and having them sing and participate in that service is also important.

A Feeling of Being Useful to the Larger Body of Believers

As a result of the intervention, during the assessment of the data from FG and IBJ, I have come to find that the young people developed a sense of ownership in ministry and in being useful to the church. They have come to say that they "felt important" and that

they were “able to bring joy to people.” This find is important in regards to the attitudes they have come to develop. While I was thinking that they would do the project mostly because of their promise to me, I have come to find that they did it because they “felt good doing ministry.”

One of the most surprising observations was that the young people developed a joyous attitude towards serving and that they did not find it a chore. That attitude , in part was determined by the fact that they were in a group with their friends doing things together and because they believed that they were useful.

King and Roeser make the case based on their research that young people today think they need to make a contribution to the society or community around them. They know that the church has the role, among others, to care for and show loving service to the communities, so they are asking themselves why the church is not involved in caring for the sick, the poor, and the least.

Stetzer, Stanley, and Hayes have also come to a conclusion about this generation: “[W]hether in the church or outside the church, emerging generations are looking for opportunities to serve.... [P]eople want to make a difference in the world,... often putting the needs of others before their needs” (112). This passion for making a change in the world is a key attribute in adolescents today that the church should understand and use in such a way as to achieve both great things in the community and retain their young people.

The Bible has a lot to say about serving others, and out of these many passages link the service with the joy of serving others, with a joyous and a fulfilling attitude. What better example than that of the apostle Paul who, in numerous occasions, writing to

the churches he once visited and served, spoke about his experience (though in many cases, not at all an easy service) as a joy. He was grateful to the Lord for the things he was able to do for them. He speaks about the joy of seeing them receive his service (1 Cor. 1:1-4; Eph. 3:8-10; Phil. 1:1-11; 1 Thess. 1:1-5).

This finding encourages my church and me to create more opportunities for young people, not only to serve. We want to see people satisfied in their relationship with the Lord and happy to serve. This means that we need to have each person involved in doing something for others rather than just consuming what others do for them.

Implications of the Findings

The young people of the church are often times perceived as rebellious, different, not submissive, and worldly. As a result we understand them as seeing very small or even no importance in being involved in the ministry of the church. This research intended to show strong arguments towards the fact that the adolescents want to feel that they belong and that they are useful for the community. The young people's are not only expected by the church to grow in spiritual maturity but offers them an opportunity to grow by serving. Serving and maturing seem to go together as the teenagers see that they can be useful.

As the intervention took place, I noticed a sense of empathy in the young people's hearts especially as they were visiting the sick. They saw people who were in difficult situations that were fighting illness and they empathized. In addition, they were overwhelmed by the positive attitude of the suffering Christians who thanked God for their situations and accepted God's will. The sick people's prayers were a point that touched their hearts. In the FG someone said, "They're living in situations that are a lot

harder than we go through, and they were giving thanks to God for all things!” An interesting fact is that the young ladies were expressing this kind of empathy as the boys were just keeping silent after such an experience. This means that the girls were more open to sharing what they felt. This observation informs the church on the potential developing caring hearts in teenagers and it begs for implementing a more constant way of involving youth in ministry.

After the intervention, I started involving the youth people in ministry when I take communion to the sick or elderly. They come voluntarily and so far I had no problem in finding enough young people to take at least a carful each time I went. The elderly love their visits and the young people feel that they are useful and appreciated.

Another observation that I made while working at this project with the teenagers has been a spirit of community that has led the young people to continue to serve following the intervention. They were glad to be with the other young people, to spend time together. This observation is useful to me and the church in Curtici as we involve teenagers in ministry, to use groups of young people in ministries in order to create a good atmosphere rather than making them think of ministry as a chore. The hardships of doing ministry for them are surpassed by the joy of being together.

Similarly, I have noticed that my presence among them was important as a guide on what to do and even as a model on when to speak and what to say. However, at a certain moment after a few visits, I saw them taking initiative in encouraging or touching and comforting the sick. As a follow-up, we want to try to have other adults lead ministry teams so that teenagers would see that ministry is not only for the pastor but for every member of the church, thus developing the role of the adult model.

Limitations of the Study

One of the limitations to the research was the limited number of young people involved in the study—twenty adolescents. Due to a generation of youth in the church that is more limited, I was not able to find more participants. This situation led to limited data.

The second limitation was the time available for the intervention—three months. This amount of time was barely enough to see a change in spiritual status. Change in spiritual maturity does not become definite in such a short period of time. I would recommend a time of one year for further research. In her research, Albu presents adolescence as a period marked by change toward adult behavior that happens in years. She speaks about changes that take place in several years (8). Another study presents six stages of faith development in each person, from the intuitive stage to universalizing faith, which is seen only after the age of 30 (Shelton, *Morality and adolescents* 8). These arguments suggest that a change that would remain with the young people should be observed in a much larger period of time than three months, as was the case for this paper. Another possibility would be a period of six months ministry service followed by a period of six months follow-up that would monitor the young people's ongoing spiritual lives. A follow-up of the study for two to three years would be of great value to see what happens with the future of the participants and their spiritual status.

Unexpected Observations

The first observation was that the engagement to serve for three months was not perceived by the youth as a hard chore but as a great opportunity to serve. Their

willingness and joy to be involved was refreshing. They said about their service, “We should do this more often,” and, “I felt very good to be able to serve.”

A second unexpected observation was the limited increase in church attendance. I expected to see a more evident change, but the change was barely observable. Part of the reason for this is the specific context of our church community, which is in a small town near a larger city. Many of the high school students go to schools in the larger city and have busy weeks, so many times they might miss the midweek service because of travel times or fatigue.

A few questions in the SMI sowed a negative change, for example questions: 1, 6, 7, 9, and 27 (see Table 5.1).

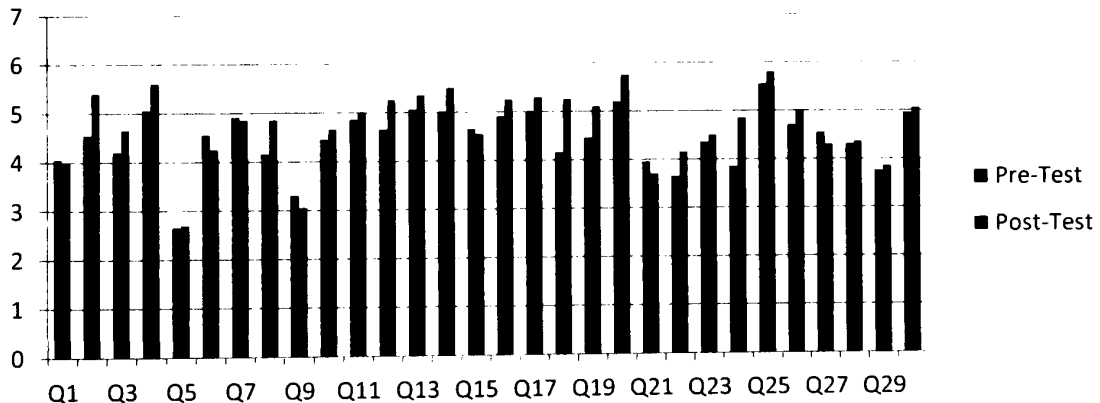


Figure 5.1. Questions compared.

Question 1, “My faith doesn’t primarily depend on formal church for its vitality” showed a small decrease from 4.05 in the pretest to 4.0 in the posttest. This result means a difference of .05 points. The difference is small, but still it is a negative one. The most probable cause for this difference is just the time that passed from the first evaluation to

the second, since they seem to have grown closer to the church and they have increased in their spiritual life. They do not seem to be very dependent in their spiritual life on what the church does since they have found a place where they can be useful and involved for God even if others in the church do or do not grow (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1. Question 1—Unexpected Observations

Factor	Score	Increase/Decrease
Question 1 SMI, before intervention	4.05	
Question 1 SMI, after intervention	4.00	-.05

Question 6, “I feel like I need to be open to consider new insights and truths about my faith”, showed a decrease from 4.55 in the pretest to 4.25 in the posttest. This score means a difference of .30 points. The negative difference to this question may be linked to the perception that young people have that their faith is based on truth; hence, they do not have to change. However, one must keep one’s mind open to what God is speaking through his written Word and through his Spirit using spiritual people (see Table 5.2).

Table 5.2. Question 6—Unexpected Observations

Factor	Score	Increase/Decrease
Question 6 SMI, before intervention	4.55	
Question 6 SMI, after intervention	4.25	-.30

Question 7, “I am convinced that the way I believe spiritually is the right way,” showed a decrease from 4.9 in the pretest to 4.85 in the posttest, a total negative difference of .05 points. I believe that the reason for this negative result is associated with the one concerning question 6, which says that young people may have a strong sense of being right in their faith. In addition, it may be the case that their experiences with others, especially adults, may have actually helped them grow up a bit and recognize that their perspective on issues of spiritual belief are not the only ones (see Table 5.3).

Table 5.3. Question 7—Unexpected Observations

Factor	Score	Increase/Decrease
Question 7 SMI, before intervention	4.90	
Question 7 SMI, after intervention	4.85	-.05

Question 9, “I feel that a Christian needs to take care of his or her own needs first in order to help others,” showed a score of 3.30 in the pretest and 3.05 in the posttest, which makes a total difference of .25 points. Young people are in search of their identity and so it is often the case that they may be involved helping others before even taking care of their own spiritual well-being. They may be looking to Christian life models that they appreciate and try to do what those people do just to see if that kind of behavior suits them or not. (Lerner). Also, the young people may be trying a serving “model” from their desire to resemble their appreciated models (Lerner). While they are in a process of learning how to serve they see needs and they want to make a difference, hence they become interested in becoming an agent of change in the world (Fleming and Cannister),

sometimes even at the cost of the decrease of their personal intimacy with God (see Table 5.4).

Table 5.4. Question 9—Unexpected Observations

Factor	Score	Increase/Decrease
Question 9 SMI, before intervention	3.3	
Question 9 SMI, after intervention	3.05	-.25

Question 27, “It seems like I am experiencing more of God’s presence in my daily life than I have previously,” showed a decrease from 4.55 in the pretest to 4.30 in the posttest. This means a total difference of .25 points. This result was, of course, a surprising negative result that raised attention. The spirituality of the young people is most certainly influenced not only by their ministry involvement but also by their experiences and personal devotion and walk with the Lord. Therefore, while involvement in ministry is surely a useful tool for youth maturation, it must be backed up by spiritual disciplines. Since the primary focus of this research was on church attendance and involvement in ministry, one possible explanation could be that these extra time commitments could, in fact, have made the students busier, thus creating difficulty in recognizing God’s presence in their daily lives. If so, then it will be important, in terms of ministry intervention, to help participants understand how God is present in the midst of their service (see Table 5.5).

Table 5.5. Question 27—Unexpected Observations

Factor	Score	Increase/Decrease
Question 27 SMI, before intervention	4.55	
Question 27 SMI, after intervention	4.3	-.25-

A more holistic approach in which all disciplines of Christianity would be involved should produce more change. Giving lots of attention to practical faith without Bible reading and fellowship is not a way to grow. Discipleship and service should work together. The involvement of youth in ministry should be always accompanied by teaching that is both very practical and very effective (Shelton, *Spirituality* 32). In the New Testament, Paul urged Timothy to flame up the gift that was given to him (1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6) while in the same letters he writes to his young servant-disciple to give special attention to the Word of God (1 Tim. 4:16; 2 Tim. 4:2). These and many other biblical texts are strong arguments to the idea that discipleship and service must go together in order to create spiritual maturity.

Recommendations

The limited amount of participants was one of the greatest limitations of this study. A greater population would show a more accurate change. Researchers that used the same instrument, the Spiritual Maturity Index, reported using samples of 319, 117, or 127 participants (Hill and Hood 47). This is far from my population of twenty adolescents. Other studies have used a smaller sample of participants, but the authors recommended a larger sample as well (Harper and Metzger 22). Although this was the number that I was able to use, the study would have been better with a larger population.

Another recommendation regards the time used for the intervention. The three months should be extended to a full year of ministry so that the group would experience not only the joy of service a few times but also the responsibility of being ready to sacrifice time regularly to serve. This recommendation follows not only the desire to see if it works or not but to see actual lives changed towards service and, by consequence,

become more mature and grounded in the church life. Though the authors of the SMI do not specify a certain time span to use for a reliable study, I believe a longer period of time is needed. The Scripture speaks about change that occurs in time and by being faithful and by “fanning into flame” the gifts given for service (2 Tim. 1:6, 1 Cor. 4:2).

The study could benefit also by including a spiritual formation facet to it. Including in the intervention an inventory of the spiritual disciplines and a Bible study would probably be of great value. Young people need to know not only how to do things but also the reasons behind the need for those things (Shelton 115). More than that, they need to come to know God, through his Word, even if service may come first (Bates 9). Only then faith may appear.

Postscript

I want to say that the results of the study show without any doubt that the involvement of the young people in ministry is a means of retaining them in the church and providing for spiritual growth. The data, however, did not show a spectacular increase but a small one. Young people need to be involved in ministry, but other methods, such as teaching, having group fellowship, going on mission trips, and having Christian models, are very important to their spiritual growth as well. This study was a blessing for me and my church as we have benefited both by the youth's involvement and their spiritual growth.

APPENDIX A

SPIRITUAL MATURITY INDEX (ENGLISH)

Instructions: please circle the option that best indicates the extent of your agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements. Please note that there is no “right answer.” Your response should honestly describe your personal experience. Do not choose an answer that would make you look “spiritual” if it is not true of yourself. All responses will be confidential; please do not put your name on the questionnaire

SA = Strongly agree
 MA = Moderately agree
 A = Agree
 D = Disagree
 MD = Moderately Disagree
 SD = Strongly Disagree

- | | | | | | | |
|--|----|----|---|---|----|----|
| 1. My faith doesn't primarily depend on formal church for its vitality. | SA | MA | A | D | MD | SD |
| 2. The way I do things from day to day is often affected by my relationship with God. | SA | MA | A | D | MD | SD |
| 3. I seldom find myself thinking about God and spiritual matters during each day. | SA | MA | A | D | MD | SD |
| 4. Even if people around me opposed my Christian convictions, I would still hold fast to them. | SA | MA | A | D | MD | SD |
| 5. The encouragement and example of other Christians is essential for me to keep on living for Jesus. | SA | MA | A | D | MD | SD |
| 6. I feel like I need to be open to consider new insights and truths about my faith. | SA | MA | A | D | MD | SD |
| 7. I am convinced that the way I believe spiritually is the right way. | SA | MA | A | D | MD | SD |
| 8. People that don't believe the way I do about spiritual truths are hard-hearted. | SA | MA | A | D | MD | SD |
| 9. I feel that a Christian needs to take care of his or her own needs first in order to help others. | SA | MA | A | D | MD | SD |
| 10. My faith doesn't seem to give me a definite purpose in my daily life. | SA | MA | A | D | MD | SD |
| 11. I find that following Christ's example of sacrificial love is one of my most important goals. | SA | MA | A | D | MD | SD |
| 12. My identity (who I am) is determined more by my personal or professional situation than by my relationship with God. | SA | MA | A | D | MD | SD |

- | | | | | | | |
|--|----|----|---|---|----|----|
| 13. Walking closely with God is the greatest joy in my life. | SA | MA | A | D | MD | SD |
| 14. I feel that identifying and using my spiritual gifts is not really important. | SA | MA | A | D | MD | SD |
| 15. I don't seem to be able to live in such a way that my life is characterized by the fruits of the Spirit. | SA | MA | A | D | MD | SD |
| 16. When my life is done I feel that only those things that I've done as part of following Christ will matter. | SA | MA | A | D | MD | SD |
| 17. I believe that God has used the most "negative" or difficult times in my life to draw me closer to Him. | SA | MA | A | D | MD | SD |
| 18. I feel like God has let me down in some of the things that have happened to me. | SA | MA | A | D | MD | SD |
| 19. I have chosen to forgo various gains when they detracted from my spiritual witness or violated spiritual principles. | SA | MA | A | D | MD | SD |
| 20. Giving myself to God regardless of what happens to me is my highest calling in my life. | SA | MA | A | D | MD | SD |
| 21. I don't regularly study the Bible in depth on my own. | SA | MA | A | D | MD | SD |
| 22. I actively look for opportunities to share my faith with non-Christians. | SA | MA | A | D | MD | SD |
| 23. My relationships with others are guided by my desire to express the love of Christ. | SA | MA | A | D | MD | SD |
| 24. I don't have regular times of deep communion with God in personal (private) prayer. | SA | MA | A | D | MD | SD |
| 25. More than anything in life I want to know God intimately and to serve Him. | SA | MA | A | D | MD | SD |
| 26. Worship and fellowship with other believers is a significant part of my Christian life. | SA | MA | A | D | MD | SD |
| 27. It seems like I am experiencing more of God's presence in my daily life than I have previously. | SA | MA | A | D | MD | SD |
| 28. I feel like I am becoming more Christlike. | SA | MA | A | D | MD | SD |
| 29. I seem to have less consistent victories over temptation than I used to. | SA | MA | A | D | MD | SD |
| 30. On the whole my relationship with Christ is alive and growing. | SA | MA | A | D | MD | SD |

Additional Question for pretest:

In the last year have you been involved in church related ministries?

_____ Yes—How many times? _____

_____ No

APPENDIX B

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Did your feeling of belonging change?
2. How do you perceive your responsibility in the local church?
3. Have you had any changes in your spiritual life in the past two months? If so, could you share what those changes were?
4. Did the presence of the adult person influence your experience? If yes, then how?

APPENDIX C

SPIRITUAL MATURITY INDEX (ROMANIAN)

QESTIONAR

Inventar Nr. _____

Instructiuni: va rog sa incercuiti acea optiune care indica cel mai bine masura in care sunteti sau nu de accord cu urmatoarele afirmatii. Va rog sa retineti ca nu exista "raspunsuri corecte". Raspunsul dumneavoastra ar trebui sa descrie in mod sincer experienta dumneavoastra in momentul de fata. Va rog nu alegeti un raspuns care v-ar face sa parati mai "spiritual" daca acel lucru nu va reprezinta. Toate raspunsurile sunt confidentiale, va rog nu va scrieti numele pe questionar.

AA = Acord Absolut
 AM = Acord Moderat
 A = Acord
 D = Dezacord
 DM = Dezacord Moderat
 DA = Dezacord Absolut

- | | | | | | | |
|---|----|----|---|---|----|----|
| 1. Vitalitatea credintei mele nu depinde in primul rand de o biserica locala. | AA | AM | A | D | DM | DA |
| 2. Modul in care fac lucrurile obisnuite, zilnice, e adeseori influentat de relatia mea cu Dumnezeu. | AA | AM | A | D | DM | DA |
| 3. Pe parcursul unei zile ma gandesc rar la Dumnezeu si la problemele spirituale. | AA | AM | A | D | DM | DA |
| 4. Chiar daca oamenii din jurul meu s-ar impotrivi convingerilor mele crestine, eu as ramane neclintit langa convongerile mele. | AA | AM | A | D | DM | DA |
| 5. Incurajarea si exemplul altor crestini sunt esentiale pentru mine ca sa pot continua sa traiesc pentru Cristos. | AA | AM | A | D | DM | DA |
| 6. Simt ca am nevoie sa fiu deschis sa primesc noi nuante si adevaruri legate de ceea ce cred. | AA | AM | A | D | DM | DA |
| 7. Sunt convins ca este corect felul in care eu cred spiritual | AA | AM | A | D | DM | DA |
| 8. Oamenii care nu cred legat de lucrurile spiritual in felul in care cred eu sunt oameni cu inima inpietrita. | AA | AM | A | D | DM | DA |

- | | | | | | | | |
|-----|---|----|----|---|---|----|----|
| 9. | Eu cred ca un crestin trebuie mai intai sa poate de grija nevoilor sale inainte ca sa poata ajuta pe altii. | AA | AM | A | D | DM | DA |
| 10. | Am impresia ca nu gasesc un scop bine definit pentru viata mea, care sa izvorasca din credinta mea. | AA | AM | A | D | DM | DA |
| 11. | Gasesc ca a urma exemplul dragostei sacrificial a Domnului Isus, este unul din scopurile mele cele mai importante. | AA | AM | A | D | DM | DA |
| 12. | Identitatea mea edeterminata mai degraba de situatia mea personala sau profesionala decat de relatia mea cu Dumnezeu | AA | AM | A | D | DM | DA |
| 13. | A umbla indeaproape cu Dumnezeu, este bucuria cea mai mare a vietii mele | AA | AM | A | D | DM | DA |
| 14. | Mi se pare ca, a identifica si a-mi folosi darurile spiritual nu este chiar asa important. | AA | AM | A | D | DM | DA |
| 15. | Se pare ca nu sunt capabil de a trai in asa fel incat viata mea sa fie caracterizata de roada Duhului. | AA | AM | A | D | DM | DA |
| 16. | Cred ca atnci cand viata mea se va sfarsi, vor mai conta doar acele pe care le-am facut in umblarea mea cu Dumnezeu. | AA | AM | A | D | DM | DA |
| 17. | Cred ca Dumnezeu a folosit cele mai negative sau dificile perioade din viata mea ca sa ma aduca mai aproape de El. | AA | AM | A | D | DM | DA |
| 18. | Ma simt ca si cum Dumnezeu m-a abandonat in unele situatii care mis-au intamplat in viata. | AA | AM | A | D | DM | DA |
| 19. | Am ales sa renunt la anumite castiguri atunci cand acestea imi afectau maturia mea sau atunci cand acestea erau impotriva principiilor mele spirituale. | AA | AM | A | D | DM | DA |
| 20. | Cea mai mare chemare a vietii mele este sa ma daruiesc lui Dumnezeu in totalitate | AA | AM | A | D | DM | DA |
| 21. | Nu studiez Biblia in profunzime in mod regulat de unul singur. | AA | AM | A | D | DM | DA |
| 22. | Caut in mod activ oportunitati de a-mi imprtasi credinta cu cei necredinciosi | AA | AM | A | D | DM | DA |
| 23. | Relatiile mele cu cei din jur sunt calauzite de dorinta mea sa exprim dragostea lui Cristos | AA | AM | A | D | DM | DA |
| 24. | Nu am moment regulate de adanca partasie cu Dumnezeu in rugaciune persoanala. | AA | AM | A | D | DM | DA |

- | | | | | | | | |
|-----|--|----|----|---|---|----|----|
| 25. | Mai mult decat orice in viata vreau sa Il cunosc pe Dumnezeu si sa il servesc. | AA | AM | A | D | DM | DA |
| 26. | A ma inchina si a a avea partasie cu alti credinciosi e o parte semnificativa a vietii mele crestine. | AA | AM | A | D | DM | DA |
| 27. | Mi se pare ca acum experimentez mai mult prezenta lui Dumnezeu in viata mea decat o simteam in trecut. | AA | AM | A | D | DM | DA |
| 28. | Simt ca cresc tot mai mult in asemanare cu Cristos. | AA | AM | A | D | DM | DA |
| 29. | Mi se pare ca acum fata de altadata, am tot mai putine biruinte asupra ispitelor. | AA | AM | A | D | DM | DA |
| 30. | In mare, relatia mea cu Cristos este vie si in crestere | AA | AM | A | D | DM | DA |

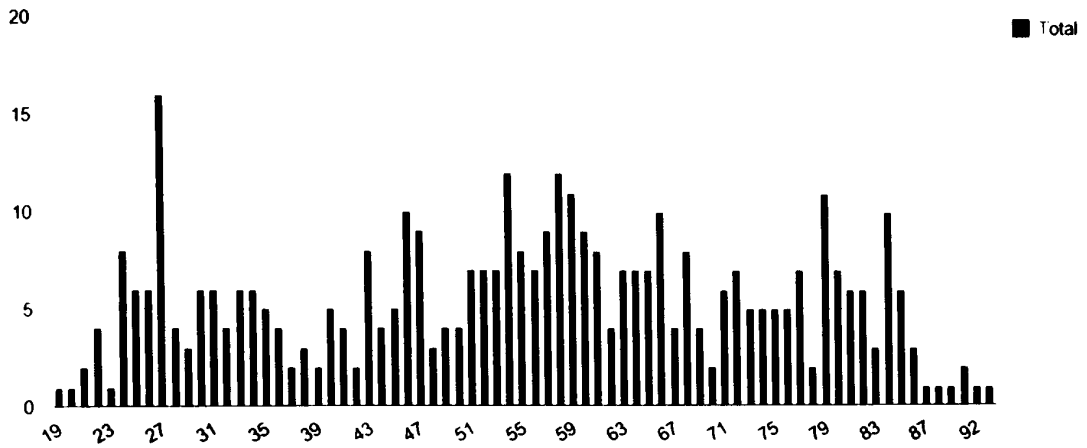
1. Ati fost implicat in slujirea din biserica locala in ultimul an?

_____Da – De cate ori? _____

_____Nu

APPENDIX D

CHURCH AGE GROUPS



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