

**ABSTRACT**

**BLACK PROTESTANT MILLENNIALS:  
ATTRACTING, ENGAGING, DISCIPLING, AND RETAINING  
THE NEXT GENERATION**

by

Denise R. Page

The historic Black Protestant Churches along with mainline Protestant and Catholic churches throughout the United States have long been alarmed by statistics that show the shrinking percentage of young adults in their congregations. Churches of all types are actively engaged in studying and addressing this pattern of steady loss by reevaluating their effectiveness in engaging, discipling, and retaining the millennial generation.

While Protestant millennials have much in common in general, there also exists quite a bit of cultural, social, racial, economic, and religious diversity. This diversity makes it impossible to address the needs of this generation, or any other, as a monolith while still accounting for some of the significant differences among its members. Therefore, this research specifically studied the factors relevant to attracting, engaging, discipling, and retaining African American Protestant millennials in the state of Florida that attend the following churches: the African Methodist Episcopal Church; the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church; the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church; the National Baptist Convention, USA, Incorporated; the National Baptist Convention of

America, Unincorporated; the Progressive National Baptist Convention, and the Church of God in Christ.

Ministry implications for pastors seeking to attract, engage, disciple, and retain African American Protestant millennials include the finding that that holistic Christian faith-based discipleship discussions and ministries should address faith as a lifestyle and include how to deal with social justice issues, faith in the marketplace including work, vocations, callings, career choices, and unemployment, and faith as it relates to good stewardship of available resources and personal economic matters including money and debt.

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THE NEXT GENERATION

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of  
Asbury Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Ministry

by

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May 2020

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the following people who impacted the successful completion of this research project over the last three years:

The late Rev. Dr. James M. Proctor for his friendship, advice, encouragement, wisdom, knowledge, editing, and tireless reading and re-reading of this document. He was the one who breathed air under my wings when I was too weary to continue.

Dr. Chris Kiesling whose advice, patience, advocacy, encouragement, suggestions, and knowledge inspired me to dig deeper than I thought possible to go.

Dr. Milton Lowe who first encouraged me four years ago to apply to the DMIN program and has always been available for my many questions over the years.

Dr. Ellen Marmon for all of her thoughtfulness and encouragement.

The DMIN staff and professors at Asbury Theological Seminary whose kindness, attentiveness, and encouragement throughout this journey will be missed.

My Asbury Theological Seminary DMIN classmates for their friendships and encouragement.

The pastors and church staff members who supported and participated in the research.

The millennials that participated in the research.

Last but not least, my family, Frederick, Gail, David, Daniel, and Kevin, whose patience, encouragement, and support made this journey so much sweeter.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **Overview of the Chapter**

This chapter provides the framework for investigating if a reemphasis on the whole-life integration of faith, work, and economics as part of Christian discipleship by historic Black Protestant Churches in Florida can have a positive impact on the millennials that they are seeking to attract, engage, and retain. The researcher provides a rationale for the project evolving from personal experience supported by research.

Included in the overview of this research project are the research design, purpose statement, questions, and information about participants as well as the methods used to collect and analyze the research data. To add support for this type of project, themes of the literature review and contextual factors are identified. Further discussion of the anticipated project results establishes the significance for and impact on the practice of ministry.

### **Personal Introduction**

I have been a member of a historic Black Protestant Church for several decades, and I am currently ordained clergy in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The African Methodist Episcopal Church is one of several historical Protestant, primarily African American churches in North America that found its origin in the theological belief that God is the God of all humanity. Although inclusive to all, the Black Protestant churches remain overwhelmingly African American, but, like most mainstream churches in the United States, they find themselves increasingly racially diverse (Lipka). In addition, like most mainstream churches in the United States, they also find themselves struggling to attract, engage, and retain young adults.

I have attended many workshops, heard many lectures, and read many studies that highlight the problem that the church attendance of millennials has been steadily dropping for some time. Services are increasingly catering to the needs of the youngest and oldest members of many churches, which leaves an enlarging hole in the offerings that cater to young adults, including the parents of the children in attendance. As a result, young adults are finding less and less opportunities for ministries that are attractive to them in the historic Black Protestant Churches in their communities, which very often are the same churches they grew up in.

As a parent of millennial aged sons and working in the marketplace alongside a large number of millennials, I have listened to and participated in conversations in which young men and women in their 20s and 30s describe what appears to me to be a lack of value in the church for their present lives. It is not just that they appear to perceive the church as old fashioned, but they do not see the relevance of it. Some are married, and many are single. Very few appear to attend church on a regular basis and when they do it is initiated by others, often their parents. At the same time, I have listened to and participated in conversations where these very same young people discuss the lack of guidance or direction from the church when it comes to an appropriate lifestyle including religion, spirituality, marriage, social issues, work, career choices, and the management of money. It appears that they are seeking a role for the church in their lives at a time when they are making some of the most important decisions of their lives, but the churches they attend, if they attend one, do not appear to know how to fill this need.

As these millennials are a representation of their peers, solutions need to be found to address the growing disconnect between the modern church and its ability to grow the

Christian faith in modern young adults. There is much at stake for all churches, including Black Protestant Churches, because when Jesus instructed His followers in Mark 16:15 to preach the gospel to all creations, it is clear that He intended that the gospel be spread, not just among contemporary believers but also to succeeding generations.

The modern churches are also impacted financially by the declining number of young adults because millennials are not contributing to charity, including churches, to the same extent as previous generations. Whereas in 2017, baby boomers, those persons born between 1946 and 1964, gave on average of \$1,212 to charity, millennials gave an average of only \$481 (Nonprofits Source). With millennial aged adults, currently the largest living age group, contributing less, the loss of revenues to local churches is negatively impacting how some churches pay their expenses and fund their ministries.

This project is important to me because The Christian Bible tells all humanity that the church was created by God as a significant component of His missional plan for the redemption of His creation. As a Christian, I have an obligation to actively help keep the Church a thriving and effective entity unhindered in its ability to disciple new believers in every community in the world. Over the last 2000 years, changes in human lifestyles have created changes in how the Church accomplishes its goal of participating in God's mission. My intent is to assist in the efforts to find solutions for the modern church as it works to transform the lives of millennials seeking the fulfillment that is only found with a relationship with Christ as part of one's daily life. At the conclusion of this research, the expectation is that this information will be made available to the pastors and other leaders within Black Protestant Churches and to other church leaders as well who are seeking to attract, engage, disciple, and retain millennials.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The millennial generation, having recently surpassed the baby boomers in size, is now the nation's largest living generation, according to the U.S. Census Bureau (US Census, "Millennials"), and they are not going to church. In the United States today, church attendance overall has shrunk while the average age of congregations has increased. Not only has the attendance of the younger generation steadily declined, but the number of people who say they are Christian also decreased (Pew Research Center, "America's Changing Religious Landscape"). As a result of the decline in attendance and aging, many modern-day churches appear to be engaging in a slow death spiral. To combat this negative trend, Protestant church pastors throughout the United States have been seeking answers.

Mainstream Black Protestant Churches in the United States are included among these churches seeking answers. Despite their diversity in theologies, their millennial-aged parishioners share some of the same characteristics as other Christian millennials in the United States that are not African American, most notably, the issue of the decline in church attendance. However, they have some significant differences. The religious views of Mainstream Protestant African American millennials as well as their relationship with their church has been impacted by the history and traditions unique to the mainstream Black Protestant Churches as well as the unique social experiences of young African American adults in the United States in modern times. Therefore, to be most effective, the solutions to engage, disciple, and retain millennials in Black Protestant Churches must recognize, account for, and address these differences.



## **Purpose of the Project**

The purpose of this research was to determine if pastors of historic Black Protestant churches in Florida could be more effective at contextualizing and emphasizing a lifestyle that includes the integration of faith, work, and economics as part of their Christian discipleship for the millennials they are seeking to attract, engage, and retain.

## **Research Questions**

### **Research Question #1**

In the opinion of ministers that pastor historic Black Protestant churches in the state of Florida with more than twenty-five millennials in regular attendance, how are they currently contextualizing and emphasizing a holistic lifestyle that integrates the components of faith, work, and economics as part of their Christian discipleship for the millennials they are seeking to attract, engage, and retain?

### **Research Question #2**

In the opinion of millennials that attend historic Black Protestant Churches in Florida, what do they see as the most important, helpful, and relevant aspect of Christian discipleship that addresses their desire for a lifestyle that integrates the components of faith, work, and economics into their everyday lives?

### **Research Question #3**

Based on this research, how could historic Black Protestant Churches in Florida more effectively contextualize and emphasize a lifestyle that includes a holistic integration of faith, work, and economics as part of their Christian discipleship for the millennials they are seeking to attract, engage, and retain?

### **Rationale for the Project**

Historically, it can be said that the Church has played a significant role in shaping the worldview and character of young people as they grew into adulthood. Biblical scripture was the foundation for the spiritual formation that carried a person through their everyday life. It clarified ethics, morality, lifestyle, and modes of behavior. The Christian faith had an impact on how a person viewed their place in their family and their community. It also had an effect on how they viewed their work and their relationship to wealth and money.

The Church, on Christ's mission to share the Gospel throughout the world, is also on God's mission to transform the lives of everyday Christians. God has equipped everyone with natural abilities and gifts for His purposes. The Apostle Paul in Ephesians 4:11-13 (NIV) describes how Christ endowed "apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers to equip the saints" with a specific purpose, for the work of ministry required for building up the body of Christ, the Church. Two thousand years later the work of the Church is unchanged. However, in modern times, many churches throughout the United States are alarmed by their loss of effectiveness in engaging, discipling, and teaching millennials because they know the consequences. Historical Scripture passages illustrate how the failure of people to obey the word of God impacts not just the current generation but also the generations to come. Judges 2:6-10, for example, describes the cost to God's people when they fail to educate and prepare the next generation for its leadership role in participating in the mission of God.

In a recent Barna report, millennials answered questions about why they don't think church is relevant to their lives. Two out of five of the participants said that "church

is not important because they can find God elsewhere: while one in three said they found church “boring” (Barna Group “What Millennials Want”). This feeling of church not being necessary for a spiritual connection and being boring may indicate that previously used methods for stimulating and nurturing spiritual formation are less effective in an environment marked by significant advances in technology and broad exposure to a variety of religious, political, and theological worldviews. The Judeo-Christian values and morals that once permeated American society are slowly becoming forgotten and replaced with values characteristic of non-Christian influence. With easy access to the secular world of the global Internet, the younger generations are understandably less likely to rely solely on the wisdom of the Bible or their Church elders for spiritual guidance in making life decisions.

Mainline Protestant and Catholic churches throughout the United States have become alarmed by statistics that show that the percentage of adult Christians dropped from approximately 78% to approximately 70% in the 7-year span from 2007 to 2014 (Pew Research Center “America’s Changing Religious Landscape”). Out of that same 70% of Adult Christians, 6.5% of them said they were members of “Historically Black Protestant” Churches. This 6.5% accounts for 59% of all African American Christians in the United States (Pew Research Center, *A Religious Portrait of African-Americans*).

Throughout much of the history of the United States the historic Black Protestant Church has been a significant vehicle for the communication of the Gospel to people of African descent. When the norm of exclusion and threats of violence made it dangerous for people with African blood to worship with other people, they formed their own churches where they could worship freely. These churches functioned to provide a place

of worship but also became central to the religious and social framework of a community of people. They developed their own style of worship including preaching and music, and they tended to be involved in addressing the current societal ills of the time. A person who grew up in the Black Protestant Church was not only infused with the foundations of Christianity but was also shaped by the culture of a church born out of the need for people to create their own spiritual identity in a world where they had fewer legal rights and a lower social status than other citizens in the United States. Today the largest Black Protestant Church denominations are the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Church Of God in Christ (COGIC) and the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. (Pew Research Center, “Religious Landscape Study”).

Churches in the United States of all ethnicities and denominations are finding the need to study and address the steady loss their millennial aged members. While Protestant millennials in general have much in common, there exists much cultural, social, racial, economic, and religious diversity. This diversity makes it impossible to address the needs of this generation, or any other, as a monolith without accounting for some of the significant differences among its members. Therefore, this research, although containing valuable information for all millennials, specifically studied the factors relevant to attracting, engaging, discipling, and retaining African American Protestant millennials in the state of Florida in modern times.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

#### **1. African Americans/ Black Americans**

The history of people of African descent in the United States due to forced and voluntary migrations over the past 400 years is very diverse and is subject to many

definitions. For the purpose of this research, African Americans or black Americans are defined as the people of African descent whose ancestors were brought to America as slaves from the continent of Africa during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

## 2. African American Theology/Black Theology

Frederick Ware defines African American theology as a study and interpretation of religious beliefs and practices regarded by African Americans as significant for their existence and quality of life. From a Christian belief perspective, it represents an understanding of God's freedom and the good news of God's call for all humankind to enter life in genuine community, with true human identity and moral responsibility (Ware 3). This definition applies to this research.

## 3. Black Protestant Church

In 2015, The Pew Research Foundation reported that 79% of African Americans counted themselves as Christian, and, of these, 59% identified themselves as members of one of these predominately historical Black Protestant denominations (Pew Research Center "Religious Landscape Study"). The seven major historic Black Protestant denominations in the United States are the African Methodist Episcopal Church; the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church; the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church; the National Baptist Convention, USA, Incorporated; the National Baptist Convention of America, Unincorporated; the Progressive National Baptist Convention, and the Church of God in Christ. The definition for the Black Protestant Church includes these seven major historic denominations recognizing that, although they share many commonalities, they maintain distinct theological and operational differences. This research sought to address what they may share in common, ignoring the differences. The Black Church and

the African American Church for the purposes of this research also refers to the Black Protestant Church.

#### 4. Discipling

The United Methodist Church Communication website page definition of discipleship rings true for most Christians. It describes discipleship as one's response to God's Grace with a focus on actively following in the footsteps of Jesus. Disciples, it says, are not passive spectators but energetic participants in God's activity in the world. A disciple focuses on spiritual formation, living his or her life in ways that embody Christ's ministry in their families, workplaces, communities, and the world (United Methodist Communications). For the purposes of this research project, discipling is the intentional activity of encouraging discipleship as defined above.

#### 5. Engagement

The Merriam-Webster online dictionary definitions of engagement include emotional involvement or commitment (Merriam-Webster *Engagement | Definition*). Churchgoers exhibit a commitment to a church through regular attendance at worship services, financial support, and regular participation in church ministries. The church is an emotional priority for them, and they make room for it in their lives. For the purposes of this research, engagement is defined as a person attending church at least once a month and actively participating in a ministry of the church at least once per month for a minimum of twelve months.

#### 6. Millennials

On April 25, 2016, Richard Fry published a report for the Pew Research Foundation that defined millennials as those persons who were age 18 – 34 in 2015,

estimated to be 74.5 million people. For the purpose of this research, millennials are defined as those persons between the ages 21 -38 in 2019 (Fry “Millennials Overtake Baby Boomers as America’s Largest Generation”).

#### 7. Protestant Church

The Merriam-Webster online dictionary definitions of a Protestant church include a church where a person is a Christian but not of a Catholic or Eastern Orthodox Church. One who is a member of a Christian church denomination that denies the universal authority of the Pope, affirms the Reformation principles of justification by faith alone, the priesthood of all believers, and the primacy of the Bible as the only source of revealed truth (Merriam-Webster *Protestant* | *Definition*). This definition applies to this research.

#### 8. Retention

The Merriam-Webster online dictionary definition of retention includes the state of being retained (Merriam-Webster *Retention* | *Definition*). For this research, this definition applies to the retaining of a millennial-aged person as a participant in any church ministry within the church for at least twelve months.

### **Delimitations**

The research pertinent to this project included participants in the state of Florida. They included ordained ministers of historic Black Protestant Church congregations of various sizes with ministries engaging, discipling, and retaining a minimum of 25 millennial age men and women. This research included African American millennial age Christian men and women who are not ordained clergy that attend historic Black Protestant Churches in the state of Florida. This study excluded all other people, leaders,

and congregations not listed above as this research was focused on Black Protestant churches in Florida and findings may be specific to this distinct population.

### **Review of Relevant Literature**

In addition to theologically relevant literature, the researcher consulted materials published by prominent authors, educators, and research groups as well as the lesser known but highly relevant materials available that were applicable to millennials, African American millennials, America's diverse theologies, American history, the contemporary Protestant Church, Black Protestant Church history, and the contemporary Black Protestant Church. In addition, the researcher consulted materials relevant specifically to the State of Florida. All of these sources were useful in researching the topic of engaging, discipling and retaining millennials in contemporary Black Protestant Church ministries.

### **Research Methodology**

The research methodologies used to collect and analyze the data were impacted by the type and scope of the study.

### **Type of Research**

This research study was descriptive as it sought to identify what is contributing to a phenomenon for which there has not been much research. In response to the questions guiding this descriptive research study, a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods were used including semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and Internet surveys.

### **Participants**

The participants included ordained pastors of historic Black Protestant Church denomination congregations of various sizes with ministries engaging, discipling and



retaining a minimum of 25 millennial age men and women in the state of Florida. It also included African American millennial age men and women who are not ordained clergy that attend a historic Black Protestant Church.

The selection process for the pastors was made from a pool of qualified candidates who expressed a sincere interest in participating in the research study. The pool of qualified candidates included recommendations from senior denominational leaders. The selection process for the millennials included that they attended a historic Black Protestant Church. Some of the millennials were targeted to participate based on the recommendation of their pastor.

### **Instrumentation**

For RQ1, the instrumentation included semi-structured, one-on-one recorded interviews and internet surveys of Black Protestant Church ministers. For RQ2, the instrumentation included online focus groups as well as Internet surveys with the millennials that currently attend a Black Protestant Church. The instrumentation for RQ3 was an analysis of the collected data.

### **Data Collection**

The data was collected through the recording of one-on-one interviews and internet surveys with church ministers and the recording of on-line focus groups and internet surveys with the participating millennials.

### **Data Analysis**

The data that was generated was evaluated using commonly accepted modes of analysis for conclusions that indicate the most effective practices that Black Protestant

Churches can adopt to effectively attract, engage, disciple and retain millennials (Sensing).

### **Generalizability**

This research, while limited to historic Black Protestant churches within the State of Florida, may be found to be applicable to similar churches in other parts of the United States. Recognizing the fact that the Black Protestant Church experience in the United States is unique may delimit some of the findings but does not preclude this research from having significance for millennial-focused ministries in any Protestant denomination as millennials across different ethnic, racial, and social backgrounds share many things in common.

### **Project Overview**

Chapter 2 covers the Literature Review for this research project. The chapter begins with an overview. It incorporates themes for both Biblical and Theological Foundations as well as additional applicable themes. Also included is a summary of all the literature reviewed for this research project. The chapter concludes with a summary of the chapter.

Chapter 3 covers the Research Methodology for the Project. The chapter begins with an overview. It includes the nature and purpose of the project as well as the three Research Questions that guided this project. It includes the ministry context, the participant information, and the criteria for their selection. It also includes the instrumentation of the study and the details regarding data collection and analysis. The chapter concludes with a summary of the chapter.

Chapter 4 covers the Findings for the Project. The chapter begins with an overview. It includes the results related to the participants and a description of the findings regarding each of the three Research Questions. The chapter concludes with a summary of the chapter.

Chapter 5 covers what was learned, the Implications of the Research Report for the Project. The chapter begins with an overview. It reveals the resulting ministry implications based on the research. It also includes study limitations, recommendations, and unexpected observations. The chapter concludes with a summary of the chapter.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE PROJECT**

#### **Overview of the Chapter**

The problem of attracting, engaging, discipling, and retaining millennials in Black Protestant Church ministries is complex, and this chapter includes literature that was found to be pertinent to the understanding of this issue. In addition to theologically relevant literature, the researcher consulted materials published by prominent authors, educators, and research groups as well as the lesser known but highly relevant materials available that were applicable to millennials, African American millennials, America's diverse theologies, American history, the contemporary Protestant Church, Black Protestant Church history, and the contemporary Black Protestant Church. In addition, the researcher consulted materials relevant specifically to the State of Florida. All of these sources were useful in researching the topic of engaging, discipling and retaining millennials in contemporary Black Protestant Church ministries.

This chapter incorporates themes for both Biblical and Theological Foundations as well as the additional applicable themes related to millennials, African American millennials, America's diverse theologies, American history, the contemporary Protestant Church, Black Protestant Church history, and the contemporary Black Protestant Church as well as themes relevant specifically to the State of Florida. It concludes with a summary of the literature reviewed that was found relevant to this research project.

### **Biblical Foundations**

Christopher Wright writes that The Bible tells “one continuous story of God’s mission through the engagement of His people for the sake of the whole world that He created.” From Genesis to Revelation, it is a grand narrative that includes the historical past, the present, and what will occur in the future (Wright, *The Mission of God’s People*).

Dr. Anne Bradley states that the Old Testament tells Christians what God’s intentions are for their lives. Christians, she said, are called to embrace a “whole-life stewardship” in order to fulfill the biblical mandate found in Genesis 1:28 of good stewardship over God’s creation. This “whole-life stewardship” includes how they are individually and collectively to live their lives. It has implications for how Christians interact with their families, churches, and communities as well as commerce, trade and the world at large. She says that human beings have a role in God’s perfect creation for kingdom building in all aspects of their lives (Bradley).

Hugh Whelchel states that God is a worker, and man, made in God’s image, is therefore also a worker. Work, he says is central to God’s character and is so important that it “is mentioned more times in the Bible than worship, praise, and singing

combined.” God placed humanity in the Garden of Eden, as told in Genesis 2, to work in it and be a good steward over it, and God’s intention still is that human beings care for all God’s creation on the earth. All human beings have a holy calling to work (Whelchel).

In Genesis 3, Adam and Eve demonstrated how disobedience to God’s instructions can be hugely catastrophic, but still work, a gift from God, was not taken away. They were cast out of the Garden, and, as a curse, work would be harder, but human beings were to still use their God-given skills to work to glorify God while caring for all that God created (Whelchel).

When Abram responded with obedience to the call of God in Genesis 12, he illustrated for all humanity that submission to the will of God brings blessings. From him, God created a holy people, a chosen people with a mission to show and tell the world of the one true God, so that all would know and believe. He gave his chosen people the laws by which they should live. God’s expectation was that they would be set aside, not to be as the other people in the world, but as a light for all the world to see. Sadly, however, from Genesis to Malachi, the Old Testament illustrates how the generations passed and God’s holy people could not live according to God’s laws (NIV).

In the second chapter in the Book of Amos, God’s people become so complacent and self-assured in their heritage as God’s people that they forget that the covenant that they so valued was two-sided, and they could not continue to ignore their side of the agreement. They were to be God’s people, and He would be their God, but to be God’s people included behaving in the manner God required. Instead they had become a corrupt people who would “sell the innocent for silver, the needy for a pair of sandals, who trampled on the heads of the poor and denied justice to the oppressed” (Amos 2:6-7). As

Gary V. Smith points out, their deceptive and self-serving world-view resulted in an expectation of their historical blessing regardless of their present behavior (Smith). Amos tries to warn them of their pending destruction because of God's wrath, but few would listen until it was too late. This pattern of disobedience is displayed over and over again in the Old Testament. However, God, knowing the inability of his chosen people to keep his laws makes a way for them to be restored.

In the New Testament, John 3:16 says that God sent His son, His only son, to be the sacrifice, to propitiate for all the sin inside humanity so that all who believed could be redeemed back to Him. The son of God, Jesus, came to earth and fulfilled the requirements for the sacrifice that resulted in His death. However, during His ministry, He taught many and specifically trained several men, His Disciples, to initiate the spread of the knowledge that He had taught them to others. This knowledge, the Good News, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, was to be preached to all people, Jew and Gentile alike. In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus tells his Disciples that they are to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."

Romans 10:17 states that "faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ." All the nations would not know about the Gospel unless they were told, so the Disciples did as Jesus instructed them until their deaths and in the process created more disciples for Jesus Christ, who told others. This process has continued to this day with new disciples preaching the word and creating new disciples and is expected to continue until the end time. Matthew 24:14 states that "the

gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come”.

The Bible includes a multitude of lessons and insights about how one is to live. Biblical concepts regarding the relationship between faith, money, work, and economics can be found throughout the Old Testament, for example, in Malachi 3:10 and Deuteronomy 15:7. Lessons can also be found in the New Testament, most notably in the teachings of Jesus and Paul. Klaus Issler writes that Jesus considered attitude towards money as an indication of sincerity in faith when He said in Matthew 6:21, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” This is also illustrated in the story of the rich young man in Matthew 19:16-22 who pondered giving up his possessions in order to follow Jesus (Issler).

Whelchel says that when Jesus was teaching his Disciples about what they were to do after His death, He was giving instructions for all Christians to make the most of the opportunities that God has entrusted to them. Through the parable of the Talents in Matthew 25:14-30, Jesus illustrated for all the value of hard work and good stewardship (Whelchel).

The letters from Paul in the New Testament contain much advice on how Christians should view their work. In Colossians 3:1, Paul tells new Christians to “work heartily for the Lord and not for men.” In Ephesians 4:28, he tells the men of Thessalonica “to try to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.” In 2 Thessalonians 3:6-11, he issues the command, “if anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.”

For two thousand years, the disciples of Jesus Christ have been preaching and making new disciples as Jesus instructed. However, in contemporary times, there appears to be special challenges that are hindering the spread of the Gospel in the United States. A nation with a proud heritage of Judeo-Christian values and traditions is finding it difficult to keep its churches full and its young adults interested, not only in their faith but also in discipling others. The church is especially challenged to find in the millennial generation disciples willing as described in 2 Timothy 2:2 to “teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others.” Without willing disciples to teach and disciple others from generation to generation, the transmission of the Gospel from generation to generation as God intended is in peril and the ability to spread the Gospel as instructed by Jesus is correspondingly diminished.

### **Theological Foundations**

There has been much written about the relationship between one’s faith, employment, and economic beliefs. Walter Brueggemann says that Christians in contemporary times are ignorant about what the Bible says about money and economic issues because they are no longer being taught about it in the church. The issue, he says, is not related to hermeneutics because Scripture is clear on the matter. The problem is that many churches in the Western capitalist environment have been willfully negligent by disregarding the Biblical instruction on economic matters in favor of a more modern focus on individual sin and blessings distinctly apart from a community of believers. This has been harmful, Brueggemann says, because a focus on individual well-being runs counter to the Biblical theme of well-being for all (Brueggemann).



In ancient Israel, Christopher Wright says, God instituted moral and ethical practices that were compassionate and allowed for the care and thriving of all people in the community. There were limits on debt, Leviticus 25:8-10, limits on accumulation, Deuteronomy 19:14, and prohibitions on interest, Leviticus 25:37. There was no need for anyone to be poor, for in the land that the Lord had given all will be richly blessed, Deuteronomy 15:4. These moral and ethical laws shaped the economic view of the people and were inseparable from their theology and world-view. Wright laments that in modern times, it appears that the same demonic forces that caused the original fall of humankind have taken over “every aspect of humanity’s economic life” including work and its relationship to the community at-large (Wright *Old Testament Ethics*).

Jurgen Moltman agrees with Wright that work had a theological meaning for the ancient people of Israel. People worked and then rested as God had done and while doing so, “took part in the creative world process and in the joy of the Creator.” Work included the goal of rest, and there was joy in observing the Sabbath, which was not seen as an interruption of work, but instead, something that helped a person to understand and define their work. Men and women were able to earn their living and then to glorify God when they presented themselves to Him on the Sabbath. Moltmann says this is significant because it shows that anthropologically, work contains, for humans beings, not only production value but existence value (Moltmann).

Miroslav Volf wrote that the early church fathers, including Clement of Alexandria, agreed with the Apostle Paul that work was not only good for a Christian but also required. Laziness was said to be “an enemy of the soul,” and manual work,

considering the goal of sanctification, was a spiritual discipline, useful as a penitential practice to ward off the “passions” of the flesh (Volf, *Work in the Spirit* 73).

Volf believes that God’s intention for work before and after the fall has come to be misunderstood. He agrees with some other notable theologians that Genesis 1:26 leaves little doubt that the creation of humankind in the image of God is related to God’s purpose for work for the people He created. As this is the case, only through their work, Volf says, can men and women live a life closely aligned to God’s original intentions. Over the long historical period of time, however, the connection between faith and work has diminished, and, says Volf, after the Christian Church came into being it too eventually went astray on the true relationship between faith and work including the role of what would eventually come to be accepted as the “vocation” of a Christian (Volf, “Human Work, Divine Spirit, and New Creation” 179).

Around the third century, Whelchel tells us, the influences of Greek culture impacted the view of Christianity regarding work. Greek culture denigrated work as demeaning and not a noble aspiration. According to the writings of the Greek historian Eusebius, there were two ways a person could live as a Christian, either by living a life contemplating God without physical labor or by working. One way encouraged the development of the religious orders, and the other encouraged working in what would become a secularly influenced manner. St. Augustine later adopted this position accepted by the Church, which resulted in the role of professional religious orders as the only true religious vocation. Whelchel says that this “sacred-secular divide.” which acknowledged that work outside the church had less value than the professional religious work within

the church, shaped much of the subsequent Christian thinking regarding work vocations until the Protestant Reformation (Whelchel)

The United States of America was impacted from its infancy by various Protestant Christian groups who immigrated from Europe seeking religious freedom. With them was brought the concept of the “Protestant Ethic.” Max Weber states that prior to the advent of capitalism in the 16<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> century Europe, work was seen as a drudgery. It was a means to an end, and people worked under compulsion in order to sustain their lives. During the rise of capitalism, however, under the Lutheran and Calvinistic influences of the Protestant Reformation, all work vocations came to be seen as a noble calling, not just the vocation of a Roman Catholic priest. An ascetic lifestyle became popular that encouraged a person to work hard at all endeavors, to be frugal, and to practice discipline. This lifestyle, later termed by Weber as the “Protestant Ethic,” was adopted by many Protestants, most notably the Quakers, Pietist, Puritans, Baptist, and Methodists who brought it to the United States when they emigrated from Europe (Weber et al.).

Apparently, however, during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the position that all work had a religious component and a significance in the lives of men lost its appeal for some Christians. In his writings, Whelchel references the work of Dorothy Sayers. shortly after WWI,. Sayers wrote that the manner in which Christians view their work was contributing to a loss in the percentage of people living as Christians. The Church, she said, by allowing work to be divided up into secular and non-secular vocations had encouraged secular work to be seen as for purely selfish gains. The Church, when it separated Christianity from the every-day lives of individuals, diminished its importance

(Whelchel). The culture had changed but the Church did not adapt its teachings to stay relevant.

Contemporary church leaders of every denomination can look at Biblical and world church history to see that the “equipped” leaders that were most effective adapted to the culture, the location, and the times without changing the mission to spread the Gospel. This should give today’s leaders encouragement that it is possible for them to make adaptations to reach the millennial generation, not only to make them understand that their eternal salvation is at stake, but also to teach them the value of a Christian lifestyle while one is alive. They must also make millennials aware that Scripture teaches that disobedience comes with a price and that they cannot be saved without obedience and a willful surrender to God’s sovereignty.

Charlie Self states that discipleship should be holistic, integrating one’s faith, work, and economic day-to-day activities. He says that a holistic approach to discipleship encourages flourishing of community, state, and nation because Christians view their excellence in work as part of the bigger picture of God’s design for the world in which they live (Self). To make the necessary adaptations to be most effective in their ministries targeting millennials, Black Protestant Church leaders, like all church leaders of today, must understand the millennials they want to engage, disciple, and retain. They must understand the current state of millennials in general, the current state of the Church in the United States, the historic Black Church historically and today, and the current state of African American millennials in the United States. They may also find it necessary to include concepts found in a theology of work in their efforts for holistic discipleship of the millennials they are trying to reach.

## The Millennial Generation

Today's American millennials, adults aged 21-38 in 2018, can count themselves among the nation's largest living generation. Like the preceding generations, their experiences are different from their parents because the world around them is different. For millennials, one difference is that they are coming of age during a time of one of the most rapid and radical social and technological changes impacting human existence in human history.

Another difference is that, more so than in previous generations, the parents of millennials paid more attention to them as they grew up, investing, comparatively, more time and money into their futures, encouraging them to be anything they wanted to be. Consequently, they are perceived as spoiled with a feeling of entitlement. They are also better educated, marrying later, parenting later, and more racially and ethnically diverse (Frey, *The Millennial Generation*).

Millennials are not in a rush to leave their parent's homes and are more likely to live at home than previous generations; 15% of adults 25 – 35 years old lived at home with their parents in 2016 (Fry, "It's Becoming More Common for Young Adults to Live at Home"). Previous generations moved onward from adolescence to adulthood fairly quickly and routinely with most people married in their twenties and raising a family in their thirties. However, for this generation, there is no longer the expectation that one graduates high school, finds a job and a spouse, perhaps goes into the military or gets a 4-year degree, and then finds long-term employment. Today's young adults of the same age attend college longer and are taking their time as they explore career options.

Teenaged girls are growing into their twenties with many more choices than in the past. They are no longer encouraged to grow up to be just good wives and mothers, but they can now choose the same career paths as their male peers. Young men and young women have much more freedom of choice in their decision-making to custom design the lives they want to live when they grow up. Consequently, they are delaying adulthood while they explore the possibilities. Arnett calls this new in-between stage as “emerging adulthood” (Arnett 4).

Millennials are more often living in multi-adult households with 82% living with two or more adults other than their parents. This is 36%, higher than for n other generations (Gallup, Inc.). Millennials are not in a hurry to marry. In 2014, according to Gallup, 59% of millennial-aged adults had never been married, and 60% did not have any children (Gallup, Inc.). Millennials may be delaying marriage because of the concern with marrying the right person the first time. According to research conducted by Thom Rainer and Jess Rainer, 86% of the millennials they polled viewed marriage as a lifetime commitment and expected to marry only once. The millennials polled were also more open to a racially mixed marriage, 87%, and same sex marriage, 40%, than previous generations (Rainer and Rainer).

Millennials do not shy away from single parenting either. A recent Pew Research FactTank Report states that in 2016, for the first time, millennials became the generation with the highest number of single mothers (Fry, “5 Facts about Millennial Households”). It was also the year of the highest number of single fathers as they accounted for 17% of single-parent households with children in 2016, according to the report by the U.S. Census, “Facts for Features: Father’s Day: June 18, 2017” (US Census Bureau). The

number of stay-at-home fathers raising their children while their wives earn the family income is also increasing. The estimated number in 2012 was slightly over 2 million, dramatically different than in any prior year (Livingston).

Jeff Fromm and Marissa Vidler believe that the percentage of stay-at-home fathers is increasing because millennial fathers want to contribute more than just financial security to their children. They believe that parenting is a partnership, but they are also re-defining the meaning of fatherhood (Fromm and Vidler).

Rainer and Rainer found in their research that millennials are more prone to financial stressors than their parents. They were raised with lofty educational and career goals, but they found themselves entering the work force during one of the worst economic downturns in US history. Consequently, they found lower-paying jobs than expected, if they could find one, which put them in a difficult situation when their student loan payments came due six months after graduation. During the financial downturn they saw their parent's owing more on their homes than they were worth, their parent's losing their jobs, and their parent's 401(k)s dropping significantly in value within a decade of their parent's retirements. As homeownership, a good job, and the ability to save for retirement are significant means for attaining the American Dream for the middle-class, this situation impacted the views of millennials regarding their own financial future (Rainer and Rainer).

The stress that millennials feel regarding their finances may be somewhat misplaced according to recent research by Bank of America. According to their *2018 Better Money Habits Millennial Report*, millennials are better at their finances than they realize when compared to other generations. Millennials, per the report findings, are more

likely to set savings goals and then meet them despite their own perception that they are not good at managing money and that their generation overspends, especially on non-necessities. The report found that 20% worried about not being able to afford a home, 19% about the cost of health care, 17% about repaying student loans, and 17% about losing their jobs. The same report also indicated that financial concerns were an important consideration in starting a family and raising children for millennials, with 30% finding this a significant factor versus only 9% for baby boomers (Bank of America).

Unlike older generations, millennials are harder to categorize politically and are less likely to vote. In the 2016 Presidential Election, according to the report, “Voting in America: A Look at the 2016 Presidential Election,” 49.4% of millennials voted, compared to 62.6% of Gen X, 68.7% of baby boomers, and 70.1% of the Silent Generation (U.S. Census Bureau). During this year, 37% of millennials identified themselves as Democratic, 27% Republican, and 35% Independent (Hendrickson and Galston). Although millennials tend to identify themselves more often as “liberal,” they do not readily identify consistently with the more liberal Democratic Party. Abby Kiesa of CIRCLE notes that the inconsistency may lie in the fact that neither major political party neatly addresses the issues and opinions that are important to millennials (Hendrickson and Galston).

Millennials spend their leisure time differently than the older generations. A recent Coresight Research report found that they take shorter vacations because they have lower income. They prefer to dine out but spend less among more diverse choices. They spend less on “stuff” and more on experiences. They are inclined to be more physically



active than previous generations. They are said to be the most stressed-out generation due to their “always on the go” lifestyle and financial stress, and meditation is becoming increasingly popular. Television watching and the internet are also popular with millennials for reducing stress (Weinswig 19).

In 2016, when millennials grew to be the largest generation of the US they accounted for 35% of Americans in the work force (Fry, “Millennials Are the Largest Generation in the U.S. Labor Force”). This has been challenging to employers as millennials have a different mindset than older workers. Raised with quite a bit of attention, encouragement, guidance, and approval from their parents, they tend to carry these behavioral expectations into the workforce. Their managers have been known to complain that millennial workers tend to expect them to relate to them in a manner similar to their parents. Also as they were raised to focus on the outcome rather than the process, they can be frustrating to older workers used to operating under fixed hours, rules, and procedures (Thompson and Gregory).

Ronald Alsop found that millennials find push-back in many traditional work environments because they struggle with the concept of seniority at work as a basis for pay and promotions. They prefer, instead, the concept of meritocracy, allowing them to be rewarded for performance, regardless of seniority. They do not want to work their way up in an organization and will job hop frequently if they feel it will move their career aspirations along quicker (Alsop).

Millennials are said to view success differently than prior generations. According to a recent survey by Wells Fargo, 88% of millennials indicated that success was defined

more by “happiness,” which they said was found more in love and relationships, than “material prosperity” (Wells Fargo).

Like previous generations, the American Dream, including earning a high income, is important to millennials, but what they do to earn that income may be just as important. The research by Rainer and Rainer indicates that millennials want to make a difference with their lives, serving society and making a positive impact on the future while earning a good living (Rainer and Rainer). Research by Cone Communications confirms this sentiment. According to the “Millennial Employment Engagement Study,” 75% of millennials would take a reduced salary to work for an employer they perceived as socially and environmentally responsible with 83% saying they would be more loyal to such a company (Cone Communications).

Hershatter and Epstein note that while all employees prefer work-life balance and adequate family time, millennials may be the first generation to demand it from their employers through flexible work hour schedules and the work from home arrangements afforded by modern technology. They are less likely than their baby boomer parents to describe themselves as “work-centric,” and more likely to describe themselves as “family-centric”(Hershatter and Epstein).

Millennials appear to be the most socially responsible generation to date and they are not only raising awareness and encouraging action on a variety of social issues, but they are also transforming the definition of what it means to be a socially responsible corporation. The Case Foundation has been monitoring the millennial generation’s engagement in causes since 2015 and publishes its findings in its “Millennial Impact Report.” The report’s founder, Derrick Feldman, believes that between 2015 and 2017

millennials evolved in their social consciousness from “a cursory interest to activism reflecting a maturation of the generation’s inherent desire to do good” (The Case Foundation ii). The most recent report, the “2017 Final Report,” indicates that dissatisfaction with the direction of the country since the election of President Donald Trump bears some responsibility for the increased activism among millennials with 51% expressing the sentiment that the country is “currently off track” 12 months after the election (The Case Foundation 7).

The Report found that the social causes and issues most important to millennials are those that improve the quality of life for a group of people including those related to civil rights, employment, health care, climate change, immigration, education, and more. They tend to engage more in supporting local activities than in national ones, and they participated in multiple actions for change including voting, signing petitions, posting/sharing on social media, boycotts, marches, protests, and providing financial support (The Case Foundation).

### **Millennials, Diversity, and Globalization**

The millennial generation is the first generation to feel the full impact that the digital revolution has had on everyday American life. Through tablets, personal computers, the Internet, mobile phones, and social media, this generation has experienced global human connectivity in ways unimagined by the generations before them. Their relationships are not just local and among people they have personally met, but they also have virtual relationships with people similar or very different from themselves, local and over great distances, that they may never personally meet. Their purchasing choices from the most basic needs to the most exotic are marketed to them in the digital age like never

before. Consequently, their ease of accepting differences, their willingness to try new experiences in food, music, and travel, and their sense of their place in a global, more secular world setting is very different from the earlier generations.

William H. Frey says that “racial diversity will be the most defining and impactful characteristic of the millennial generation in the United States.” In 2015 it was 56% White, 21% Hispanic, 14% Black, 6% Asian, and 3% other groups, with 25% speaking a language other than English at home (Frey, *The Millennial Generation*). He asserts that today’s millennial generation is living at a time when the United States is experiencing a “diversity explosion” as it transforms from the mostly white baby boomer generation into a more globalized, multi-racial country (Frey, *Diversity Explosion*). Millennials are associating and marrying more outside their own race than in previous generations and tend to be more tolerant, in general, of people different from themselves. They are more accepting of gay marriage, with 74% in favor of it, which is significantly higher than all previous generations (Pew Research). Millennials are also more comfortable self-identifying with non-traditional genders, and 7.3% of millennials identified themselves as LGBT in 2016, more than in any previous year (Gallup, Inc.).

### **Millennials and the Modern Protestant Church**

Delayed adulthood, freedom of personal choice and acceptance of the personal choices of others, diversity, and the forces of globalization all impact what it means to be a millennial, and these elements are also impacting how millennials relate to their faith. When the Pew Research Center released its “America’s Changing Religious Landscape” study in May 2015, the data, based on over 35,000 interviews, showed that the number of people who identified themselves as Christian had declined significantly from 78.4% in

2007 to 70.6% in 2014 (Pew Research Center, “America’s Changing Religious Landscape”). In 2016, after surveying over 100,000 people in the United States, the Public Religion Research Institute published findings that said that approximately 34% of American adults between the ages of 18 and 30 years old identified themselves as atheist, “agnostic,” or “nothing in particular” (“America’s Changing Religious Identity”).

Barna Group surveys of millennials identified several reasons that some millennials have stopped going to church. Personal reasons included the following: 39% said that “because God can be found everywhere, church is not important;” 33% said that church is “not relevant to them,” and 31% said church is “boring.” The church-related reasons included: 20% said that “God is missing from church;” 35% cited moral failures of church leadership; 91% cited the church’s stance on homosexuality; 87% said the church is “judgmental,” and 85% said the church is “hypocritical” (*Making Space for Millennials*).

Setran and Kiesling note that millennials, being much more mobile in their careers than previous generations, find it hard to find a new church and form attachments each time they are in a new city. They also noted that delayed marriage and parenting were some of the most significant factors for single younger adults’ low-church attendance as marriage and raising a family tend to promote settling down and establishing roots within a community. Also, the fact that churches, in general, tend to focus more on children and family life and frown upon the activities associated with young single lifestyles, makes them less attractive to millennials (Setran and Kiesling).

Armand Boehme blames some of the millennial laxity in Christian beliefs on an increasing lack of general knowledge in contemporary US culture, including historical

and religious facts. This growing lack of religious knowledge, he says, can be tied to the fact that public schools have distanced themselves from the teaching of anything religious in fear of lawsuits. He also notes that many contemporary churches are moving away from religious doctrinal literacy and focusing more on ethics, personal experience, and personal feelings (Boehme).

Christian Smith writes that the contemporary pattern of emerging adults delaying adult-type choices of career, marriage, and having children explains also their tendency to delay making firm decisions and commitments related to religion (Smith and Snell).

The millennials who are continuing to go to church often leave the church of their parents. According to the Pew “Changing U.S. Religious Landscape” report, 34% of Americans are in a different religious identity than the one they grew up in (Pew Research Center, “America’s Changing Religious Landscape”). Setran and Kiesling believe that millennials may feel they are expressing their independence from their parents and their parents’ religion when they do not attend the church of their parents. Millennials prefer to pick and choose what they find acceptable while they “construct” their own religious beliefs, looking for a more genuine spiritual experience and less pretense of “going through the motions” (Setran and Kiesling).

Boehme believes that consumerism impacts the reason that people today, including millennials, move from church to church as they expect that the right church experience can be found by shopping around ((Boehme). Barna agrees, saying like it or not, contemporary consumer culture has had an impact on what millennials expect from a church experience. If expectations are not met, they will continue to look for the church that does meet their expectations (Barna Group, Making Space for Millennials).

Millennials are looking for authenticity and are “deeply suspicious” of churches they perceive as trying to sell them something (Barna Group, *Making Space for Millennials*). Many said that what they desire is an experience that transcends their everyday lives through worship, prayer, and teaching, and 54% felt that church is relevant to their lives. The reasons many cited for attending church included: 44% wanted to be closer to God, 27% wanted to learn more about God, and 65% wanted to find answers to live a meaningful life (Barna Group, *Making Space for Millennials*).

### **Black History and the Black Church**

The oldest and most influential institution on the lives of people of African descent in the United States has been the Black Church (Pinn and Pinn). The imprint that African slaves, freedman, and former slaves in the United States stamped on Christianity when it was first introduced to them still resonates within the Black Protestant Church today. Although the Black Protestant Church is denominationally diverse among its member churches, it has a distinct theological history that is common to all.

The cruel system of captivity, enslavement, discrimination, inferior legal status, and inhumane treatment of Africans and people of African descent forged a perspective on Christianity that was dissimilar to other groups of people due to these unique experiences. Lynda Morgan states that the experience of slavery formed the basis for the development of distinct ethical codes among slaves and freed people of color (Morgan). Stephen C. Finley says that African American history is one of the central issues in black theology because the African American historical experience was the lens through which Christianity was viewed (Finley) Frederick Ware says that history is important because it

functions as a grand narrative that integrates events, movements, and ideas into a format that is not only comprehensive but manageable as well (Ware).

During the years since slavery through the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Black Church was the central institution in the lives of most African Americans. Most churches were in small rural communities where everyone was known to everyone else. Mamiya and Lincoln remark that after 250 years of slavery and 100 years of Jim Crow, the Black Church was the only stable, cohesive, and independent institution available for African Americans. It covered all aspects of daily life including education, politics, moral, social, and religious matters (Lincoln and Mamiya).

The Great Migration of African Americans from the rural South to the northern and western cities had a big impact on all aspects of African American life, including the Black Protestant Church. It is estimated that between the years 1916 and 1970, 6.2 million people relocated, becoming one of the largest internal migrations experienced in history of the United States (Lincoln and Mamiya).

The reasons for relocation varied, but better job opportunities and better quality of life were a big draw for many. Others were looking to escape from the terrorism, lawlessness, and violence associated with the Jim Crow laws of the South. An estimated 3,959 people were lynched between the years 1877 and 1950 in the South. Of these, 331 were in Florida, the most per capita of any other state (Downs).

The transition from the South to the North was easier for some who moved with family or friends at once or over a period of time, but for others the churches were the only social agency available for assistance. The churches flourished in the cities where the migrants moved as church memberships grew quickly, and the church was no longer



the only institution for African American life. As their members left the South, the rural churches struggled for members and a full-time pastor.

The mass migration changed the economic condition of many African Americans, and a small middle class soon emerged of doctors, lawyers, schoolteachers, business owners, and other professionals. By the 1980's, one-third of the African American population had moved into what could be described as living a middle-class lifestyle, and this access to capital fueled the growth of bigger and bigger black churches.

Lincoln and Mamiya state that a significant change was brought to the Black Church as a result of the Civil Rights Movement from 1954 – 1968. The movement, which highlighted the importance of civil rights for all people in the United States, galvanized people from all walks of life to work together for a common goal. When fear and terror were the intended effects in the rural South with the burning and bombing of nearly 100 black churches, killing people, including children, inside, instead these actions inspired non-violent resistance. Although not all churches and pastors participated, there was much pride in those who did participate in marches, sit-ins, voter registration drives, and other public displays of support for the movement. The Southern black churches, most of them in rural areas, were critical to igniting and fueling the successful Civil Rights Movement (Lincoln and Mamiya).

Lincoln and Mamiya state that the Black Church benefitted from the black consciousness movement that emerged as part of the Civil Rights Movement. People of African descent no longer wanted to be referred to as “colored” or “Negro” because those names were considered by some as derogatory slave names but preferred instead to be called “black.” While understanding that they were in the business to win converts, the

Black Church embraced this era of heritage-pride and ethnic affirmation. According to a survey of 2,150 black clergy by Lincoln and Mamiya that was published in 1990, most said that they taught about the distinctiveness of the Black Church, had black figures in their Sunday school lessons, and preached sermons that included topics such as black power, black is beautiful, and black pride. The distinctiveness of the Black Church was based on the fact that the Black Church had to address the needs of black people that were not addressed anywhere else in society; topics addressed included racism and the cultural, economic, and social conditions specific to black life (Lincoln and Mamiya).

A high percentage of black churches support historically black colleges, some of whom they started after slavery ended in the United States. The primary purpose of these institutions was the education of African Americans who were legally denied education elsewhere. As they were founded in the hostile environment of legal segregation and isolation from mainstream higher education, they have maintained a very close relationship with the struggles that still exist for African Americans. In more recent years, these historically black colleges and universities, (HBCUs) continue to serve a population of students who might not otherwise have attended college, in addition to students that are well-prepared academically for college (Bracey).

Edward Waters College in Jacksonville, Florida is an HBCU. This college, started in 1866 by the A.M.E Church, was the first institution of higher education open to people of African descent in the state of Florida. It is also currently the oldest private college in the state of Florida. "The History of Edwards Waters College" states that it was established by the A.M.E. Church bishop, Daniel Payne, in response to the lack of public education available to Florida's newly emancipated black population. The Presiding

Elder he dispatched, Rev. Charles Pearce, along with the states' first A.M.E. pastor, Rev. William G. Steward, raised the funds and built the school which included elementary, high school, college, and seminary courses of study (Edward Waters College) .

Steward briefly pastored Midway A.M.E. Church in what is today Jacksonville, FL. As the first A.M.E. church in the state, it is recognized as the "Mother" A.M.E. Church. Steward organized the church in June 1865, shortly after the Confederate Army surrendered during the Civil War. He then went on to establish other congregations in central and western Florida. Mother Midway A.M.E. Church is still in existence in Jacksonville, FL. (*"Mother" Midway A.M.E. Church*)

The first black Baptist church in Florida, Bethel Baptist Church, is also the oldest Baptist church in Florida. It originated in 1838 as a white church with black slave members. Some of the local plantation owners had allowed their slaves to attend and by the time of the Civil War the black members significantly outnumbered the white. In 1861, a new church was completed, which the Union army used as a hospital during the Civil War. Following the Civil War, the white members moved to take control of the church and oust the black members. The black members sued and a local judge sided with them as they were the majority of the church membership. Although the black members were awarded the church and the church name, they sold the physical church structure to the white membership and built a new church. This new church, Bethel Baptist Church, is still in existence in Jacksonville, FL and claims over 14,000 members (Bethel Baptist Institutional Church).

The first Church of God in Christ congregation formed in South Miami in 1918 following a revival. Known originally as the Church of God, the congregation merged

into a Church of God in Christ congregation. This congregation, A. M. Cohen Temple, Church of God in Christ, was founded in 1923 and is named after its founder, A.M. Cohen. It is still in existence in Miami, Florida (Florida Eastern Jurisdiction COGIC).

### **Black Protestant Church History**

In the early history of the United States there were debates about whether or not enslaved Africans were human beings. There were also debates about whether the Great Commission included Africans if they were in-fact found to be human beings. European Christians who had arrived on the American continent in search of religious freedom soon found themselves among other European Christians who disagreed on whether or not evangelizing efforts should include slaves. This was significant as there was a prevailing unofficial opinion that Christians could not be slaves. Evangelizing slaves would undermine the premise that slaves had no rights as men. That they were unable to comprehend Christianity, were not fully human, but were instead animals in the same capacity as livestock (Woodson).

In the North, despite the efforts among the Quakers and others in New England there was comparatively little impact on the millions of slaves held in captivity during the colonial period prior to the establishment of the United States of America because most slaves lived in the Southern United States. In the early 1700s, during the revivals of the First Great Awakening that included various denominations, non-slave holders and slaveholders alike in the North and the South began to understand the need to evangelize all peoples. During this time, many slaveholders, now understanding that their salvation was impacted by their behavior towards their slaves, allowed Christian instruction of their slaves (Pinn and Pinn).

In 1784, the Methodist Episcopal Church was established in the United States by Bishop Francis Asbury, and by 1787, Africans and people of African descent accounted for 1/4 of the church membership. Asbury opposed slavery and required slaveholders to free their slaves within one year or leave the church (Pinn and Pinn). In Virginia, in 1789, Baptist churches officially rejected slavery as a “violent deprecation of the rights of nature” (Woodson).

In the latter 1700s after the Second Great Awakening, various Baptist and Methodist groups found much success in converting slaves to Christianity while traveling as missionaries, preaching to blacks and whites, free and enslaved, property owners and the poor throughout the South (Woodson). The fact that many of these missionaries preached against slavery caused much division in the new United States. In the mid-1800s, those divisions caused the Baptist, Presbyterian, and Methodist Churches to split along pro and anti-slavery positions (“Broken Churches, Broken Nation | Christian History Magazine”).

Christianity was introduced to enslaved and free Africans through stories and other methods that did not require literacy. As they made these stories their own, the Africans found that it was to their advantage to have their own services, outside the earshot and control of slaveholders. Alone at “camp meetings” or other types of worship services, some which were illegal, they could freely speak, shout, sing, listen to sermons, pray and otherwise worship as they pleased. Pinn and Pinn writes that they embraced Christianity on their own terms, rejecting the hypocrisy they witnessed daily and made Christianity a liberating religious experience within which they were no longer enslaved but free people of God. The terms included remorse for past sinful behavior, a conversion

experience followed by expectations of morality and ethical behavior. The secular activities of drinking alcohol, dancing and playing some types of music were said to be incompatible with a Christian life-style that required discipline and self-denial (Pinn and Pinn).

Overtime, independent black church congregations developed, sometimes in secret, and sometimes in response to bigotry. In his autobiography, the Right Reverend Richard Allen, a former slave who became the founder and first Bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) writes about the incident in 1787 that led to the founding of the church in Pennsylvania. After the majority white church that he attended, St. George Methodist Episcopal Church, found that the black population was growing too large, there were attempts to segregate church seating. When some black members, including Allen, resisted, they were told by trustees during prayer to stop praying and leave or assistance would be called to remove them. Allen and the others, finished praying, left the church and did not return. Shortly afterwards, Allen and others who had established a religious mutual aid society for black members of the community decided to create their own separate church. He describes in his autobiography knowing that the dear Lord was with them as they were 'filled with fresh vigor to get their own house erected to worship God in' (Allen). The new church opened its doors in 1794 in an old blacksmith shop purchased by Allen. He named it the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church and resolved to remain Methodist. Bishop Asbury supported his efforts and in 1799, he ordained Allen as a deacon under the leadership of white elders (Allen).

In other mid-Atlantic and Northern cities, other African Methodist Churches formed as separate entities of white congregations. However, the Bethel A.M.E.

congregation eventually desired autonomy from ‘interfering white Methodists’ and in 1807 and 1815 successfully sued the Methodist Church for the right to exist independently while simultaneously inviting other black congregations to join them. In 1816, Allen became the first bishop of these united congregations under the name of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The church grew significantly during the Civil War and Reconstruction era of 1861 – 1877 as the result of A.M.E. ministers aggressively evangelizing newly freed slaves throughout the South. In 1880, membership reached over 400,000 (Dickerson). Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church has the distinction of being on the oldest continuously owned land of people of African descent in the United States. It is also honored as being the mother church of the first black denomination in the United States (Visit Philadelphia).

The African Methodist Episcopal Church currently claims over 2.5 million members among its 7000 churches in North America, South America, Africa, Europe and the Caribbean (WCC, African Methodist Episcopal Church — World Council of Churches). Despite its 200+ year history its vision is to remain true to the spirit of the Free African Society from where it originated, ‘to seek out and save the lost and to serve the needy.’ Its beliefs do not differ in any significant way from what all Methodist believe. However, in its Articles of Faith, there is an additional article not found elsewhere. This additional Article acknowledges that the A.M.E. Church and its members are ‘loyal to the United States of America or other national government for which they are a citizen obeying just laws and upholding the Constitution.’ It further acknowledges that all just governments can ‘rightfully expect obedience, loyalty, support and defense of the Christian men and women that they control’ (AME Church, “Our Beliefs”).

Like many of the churches that were formed by former slaves, A.M.E. Church property became the location of primary and secondary schools and also institutions of higher education. The A.M.E. Church currently has 6 colleges and 6 seminaries in the United States and 4 colleges and 3 seminaries in Africa (AME Church, “Institutions of Higher Education”).

The African Methodist Episcopal Church was not the only African church to separate from the Methodist Episcopal Church in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. There was also the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (AME Zion) and the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church started organizing in 1796 under similar circumstances as the A.M.E. Church. James Varick, who was to become its first bishop, and others simply wanted a place to worship where they were not subjected to racism. They built their own church in 1800 and tried to create a separate conference within the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1820 but became an independent denomination in 1821 after there was disagreement as to the equality of this new conference with the other conferences. This church, states Pinn and Pinn, also grew significantly in the southern United States during the Civil War and Reconstruction era of 1861 – 1877, however, being a primarily Northern denomination, it also experienced much growth during the Great Migration during the 20<sup>th</sup> century when large numbers of people of African descent left the rural Southern United States and moved to the Northern cities (Pinn and Pinn).

The A.M.E. Zion Church website states that it formed as the result of the merciless treatment of its African forefathers who were kidnapped from their homelands and shipped like beasts of burden to a strange land. These forefathers were comforted by



the Lord, God through Jesus Christ in the cotton fields and elsewhere. They eventually united in fellowship with the John Street Methodist Church in New York City until bigotry prevailed. The Spirit of the Lord then led them to establish their own church, Zion Chapel which became the mother church of a new denomination, Zion Methodism. It has four institutions of higher education in the United States and also two in Africa (AME Zion Church). The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church currently counts 1.4 million as members within its 3,336 congregations in the North America, the Caribbean, South America and Africa (WCC, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church — World Council of Churches).

The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (C.M.E.) was not created out of a protest. It was created in 1870 in Jackson, Tennessee out of the desire of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South to retain as many former slaves as possible within the Church after the Civil War ended. At first named the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, the expectation for this new denomination was that it would slow the large membership losses resulting from missionaries from African American churches from the North and South. The C.M.E. Church started with over 40,000 members and the financial support of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. In 1956, the church name was changed to the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. Unlike the A.M.E. and A.M.E. Zion churches, the C.M.E. Church did not believe that social or political issues should be addressed from the pulpit, as the pulpit was reserved for the preaching of the Gospel (Pinn and Pinn). The C.M.E. Church today counts 1.2 million members in the United States, the Caribbean, and Africa. It also has four institutions of higher education in the United States (CME Church).

Williams L. Banks said that blacks became Baptist because they believed in the Gospel when they heard they would be saved. By 1865, however, he says, perhaps 10% were nominally Christian. On Southern plantations when enslaved Africans had been permitted to attend camp meetings, revivals, and other church related activities, they were often Baptist. With no national headquarters, the local Baptist church was more often freer from outside influences making it a better fit for the existing local community (A. M. | R. N. Banks).

As the Baptist churches did not require literacy or educational requirements for preaching, some slaves were allowed to preach to others. The Baptist denomination historically placed value on freedom and the fact that the Baptist preached against the evils of slavery made them very attractive to slave and free Africans alike. Some slaveholders, often concerned about their own salvation, permitted conversions of their slaves on their plantations as long as it did not pose any danger to the plantation. The first Baptist church for African slaves may have started in Silver Bluff, SC based on the date of a church's cornerstone of 1750 (Pinn and Pinn). However, this church disbanded and some of its members including Rev. George Leile, a freed slave who may have been the first African licensed to preach in Georgia, started what was to become the First Colored Baptist Church of Savannah. Starting in 1773, this church is recognized as the first independent black congregation in North America. In 1788, the 3<sup>rd</sup> pastor, Andrew Bryan, officially organized the church, purchased the land where the current sanctuary still resides and changed the name to the First African Baptist Church. Over its own history, this church has contributed much to the history of Savannah, GA (FABC).

Woodson states that as part of the Great Awakening, black Baptist missionaries converted people everywhere throughout the United States. Many churches were organized in the years to come which were under the oversight of white Elders. The Baptist churches were organized differently from the Methodist. Whereas the Methodist churches were governed as part of a national conference, the Baptist churches were self-governed and this helped them to grow in numbers at a greater pace than the Methodist churches. However, this lack of national cohesion became a challenge in the early decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when, due to prejudices against people of African descent, it was determined that the Negro Baptist needed a conference of their own (Woodson).

The first black Baptist convention, the American Baptist Missionary Convention was organized in 1840 in New York. Its primary focus was missionary activity and it attempted to make every black pastor a missionary. It was multi-state and limited in its agenda. The forming of national conferences emerged after the end of the Civil War and they reckoned with the challenges inherent in governing a largely diverse church body including the issues of tenure of office, the relationships among state and national boards, individual powers on a board, politics, and interaction with white boards (W. L. Banks).

The first national conference, the Baptist Foreign Mission Convention was organized in 1880, a second, National Baptist Convention of America, was organized in 1886, and then a third, National Baptist Education Convention, was organized in 1893. In 1895, these three agreed to merge into one national conference in Atlanta, GA. This new convention, the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc., has an estimated 7.5 million members and claims to be the largest African American religious organization in the United States (National Baptist Convention, USA).

In 1919 after a controversy regarding the incorporation the ownership of the publishing house of the convention, another convention was formed. In 1987, this convention incorporated in Shreveport, LA as the National Baptist Convention of America, Incorporated (NBCA). NBCA claims 3.5 million members in the United States, Panama, Haiti, the Virgin Islands, and Ghana (National Baptist Convention of America, Incorporated).

After another disagreement during the Civil Rights Movement, another national convention was formed. During this time of social, political, and religious turmoil in the United States, some National Baptist Convention leaders felt that the Church should be actively involved in the Movement while many others felt the Church should not get involved. A group of the leaders who wanted action met in Cincinnati, OH in 1961 and formed the Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc. (PNBC). This convention felt that the church clearly needed to be involved in the fight for civil and human rights and determined that it would be a 'living African American organization committed to the social gospel for the transformation of U.S. society.' After its formation, other leaders joined the PNBC including the late Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. considered to be the centerpiece of the Civil Rights Movement. The PNBC currently lists 2.5 million members ([pnbc.org](http://pnbc.org)).

The Baptist Conventions were instrumental in founding several colleges and seminaries in the United States and elsewhere including Morehouse College founded in 1867 in Atlanta, GA (Morehouse College | Morehouse Legacy).

Of all the historic Black Church denominations, says Lincoln and Mamiya, the Black Pentecostal Church is unique in that it does not trace its origins to a white

denomination but to a movement led by a single black minister, William J. Seymour, who was a black Holiness preacher. It did not begin in protest or as a separatist movement but as an intentional interracial movement (Lincoln and Mamiya).

The Church of God in Christ (COGIC) may be the largest Pentecostal denomination in the United States. Its earliest members came out of the Methodist and Baptist Churches in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century at a time when the influence of Holiness movements were impacting Protestant churches throughout the United States. As the Christian leaders tried to reconcile the place of the holiness traditions in the Church, friction developed between those embracing the stricter Holiness doctrines and those who did not. Adding fuel to the fire, at the turn of the century, another movement, the Pentecostal movement swept the country. This movement, also focusing on outwards sign of sanctification embraced speaking in tongues as a sign of that one was saved (Pinn and Pinn).

COGIC historian, Ithiel Clemmons states that although the issue of sanctification played a significant part in the founding of the COGIC, in addition to doctrinal concerns, there were also cultural and class issues. Charles H. Mason and Charles Jones, who started the church were both black Baptists who became dissatisfied with the church. Mason, a champion for preserving the spirituality found in slave religious experiences, felt that the Baptist Church was leaning too far towards emulation and assimilation and away from the slave and Afrocentric components of the African American Christian experience. Excluding the popular Southern slave “ring shout” dance, was an example he cited. Jones, felt that the Baptist Church downplayed the importance of the holiness lifestyle that followed conversion. The two men also felt that as both the Baptist and

Methodist Churches were entering the battle against racism and white supremacy without adequate spiritual resources, they could not expect to prevail. Due to this and other opinions, both Mason and Jones were expelled from the National Baptist Convention in 1899. Clemmons states that ‘from the perspective of poor black people, the COGIC offered a radical alternative to the majority European world-view culture.’ From 1906-1914 the COGIC was inter-racial including both poor blacks and poor whites until the forces of racism caused a separation and the white leaders left to form the Assemblies of God Church. Clemmons remarks that Pentecostalism is the only Christian denomination in the United States founded by African Americans (Clemmons).

The Church of God in Christ supports a seminary in Atlanta, GA and boasts 6.5 million members in 63 countries around the world. (cogic.com)

In addition to the black Methodist, Baptist, and Pentecostal denominations there were also black Catholics, Presbyterians, and United Methodist whose histories do not appear in this research.

### **African American Theology**

African American theology is defined by Frederick Ware as the study and interpretation of religious beliefs regarded by African Americans as significant to them. It represents an understanding of the good news or Gospel including freedom and salvation for all. Despite the variations among the denominations that are included as components of the historic Black Church, there are elements that are common to them all. One such element is a shared history, and Ware emphasizes that the history of people of African descent in this country forms a common background story, or Grand Narrative, for how and why the historical Black Protestant Church developed to become the single most

important institution for African Americans in the United States. The common background story created a unique theology, an African American theology that impacted the beliefs of African Americans across denominations and generations (Ware).

Ware says that there are four phenomena that can explain the uniqueness of African American theology: resistance to discrimination and oppression, the “body-soul problem,” religious humanism, and black ethnic identity (Ware). Resistance to discrimination and oppression in all of its forms required enslaved and free Africans, and then later African Americans, to frame their response through religion. Through the lens of Christian stories, slaves could find the comfort of knowing they would be freed from their bondage, if not in this life but for all eternity. James Cone reminds us that slaves believed that, just as God had delivered the Israelites from Egypt, He would deliver them from slavery (Cone and Wilmore).

The “body-soul problem” was first described by R. Earl Riggins. Riggins said African American theology emerges from the attempt to reconcile the fact that the Western dualism of body and soul has had tragic consequences for oppressed people. Considered as bodies without souls, oppressed people were perceived as of lesser value, not human, but commodities and tools useful for the enrichment of others. Considered as souls without bodies, the oppressed did not receive justice for the ill-treatment of their bodies but there may be consideration for their souls. African American theology addresses the issue that the oppressed want to be treated as whole: souls with bodies (Ware).

Religious humanism addressed the challenges presented by seeing the daily suffering of slavery and racism and other forms of oppression and weighing this situation

against the belief in an almighty God who is allowing the situation to exist. Although large numbers of enslaved or free Africans and African Americans in the United States throughout history converted to Christianity, many did not. There were questions asked as to why God allowed oppressive conditions to exist, and Church leaders were often challenged with the need to separate the reality of current human experiences from the truths found in Scripture (Ware).

The black racial identity component of African American theology addresses the ethnicity and social grouping of African Americans in the context of their religious experience. Racial consciousness, Ware says, is fundamental for understanding one's place in the world and one's connection to it. It also impacts how one's religion is structured (Ware).

Cone states that African Americans, for example, must read the Bible from their perspective in light of their own racial interest because other races cannot do it for them. Black theologians he said, need to explore the truth of the realities of black people not found in theological textbooks. He challenges black theologians and preachers to explore the black experience in all of its dimensions while taking theological risks that call into question everything said in the past to be right and good (Cone).

Keri Day describes the reaction of enslaved Africans who asserted their dignity and self-worth in spite of their forced servitude under the most oppressive of circumstances. Although their humanity was denied by their oppressors, they rejected this perception, claiming their humanity and maintaining that they were made in the image of God (Day).



Morgan also writes of this assertion of dignity and self-worth when she describes how pre-Civil War enslaved and free people of African descent believed that salvation and emancipation were inevitable. They based this belief on the book of Exodus, and when emancipation did occur in 1865, they believed this was the fulfilment of prophecy. She states that as Africanized Christianity held to the belief that as Christianity was as much concerned with life on earth as it was in heaven, it would therefore be concerned with the condition of God's people on earth in contemporary times. It was, therefore, a protest religion. Africanized Christianity also understood the importance of what the slaves called "honest labor," which called for all people to labor for the common good. Living off the labor of others was considered not only unbiblical but also a direct contradiction to what the Bible taught (Morgan).

Morgan writes that many notable African American leaders recognized segregation and lynching as being not just moral and spiritual concerns but also economic matters as Christianity continued to be used as an instrument of protest. She further acknowledges that there has been much debate about a better future for African Americans, and this debate, for which the role of labor is often central, has been impacted by the experience of slavery in the United States (Morgan).

### **White Protestant Theology Regarding American Slavery**

Cone states that American's best-known theologians interpreted the Gospel according to cultural and political interests of whites, and this impact is still felt in America's churches in modern times. During slavery, he says, the social limitations for white theology regarding slavery included: ignoring it, justifying it, or, less commonly, speaking out against it. In the early history of the colonial era of what was to become the

United States, the major denominations critiqued theology as if slavery did not exist. Jonathan Edwards and others considered slavery a political matter and did not address it. During the same time, Cone notes, notable theologians such as Cotton Mather urged slaveholders to teach their slaves that they were to serve their masters as they might serve Jesus Christ. After the Revolutionary War, there were increasing debates surrounding slavery which resulted in denominational splits. In 1780, the Methodists condemned slavery and then reversed themselves a few years later. Other denominations faced similar indecisive actions and reactions. A third group, theologians who spoke out against slavery, fueled the abolitionists, Cone says, and should be commended for their bravery (Cone).

### **The Modern Black Protestant Church**

There are many characteristics that African American Christians have in common with all Christians in the United States. However, there are some differences. For example, recent research findings suggest that African Americans may be the most religious ethnic group in the United States. In the Pew Religious Landscape Study of 2014, 79% of African Americans identified as Christian, more than any other ethnic group, with 53% stating they belonged to an historically Black Protestant denomination. (Pew Research Center, “Religious Landscape Study”) Similarly, as published in the fall of 2017, the PRRI report, “America’s Changing Religious Identity” states that in 2016, 75% of the African American population in the United States claimed to be Christian with 67% saying they were part of a Protestant denomination (prri.org).

Survey findings in 2017 also revealed that Christian African Americans as an ethnic group are more likely than any other Christian ethnic or religious group to believe

in a “consistent ethic of life” in regards to the pro-life issues and to be anti-abortion, anti-death penalty, and anti-assisted suicide (Burge).

Black Christians more than white Christians prefer spiritual formation and discipleship activities in a group rather than in an individual setting, according to Barna Research findings released in 2017. This group study or mentoring is perceived as valuable because of the opportunity to learn from the diverse experiences of a group as opposed to the views of one person. This same report also stated that Black Christians are more likely to believe that their spiritual lives have an impact on others, for example family, friends and society in general, than white Christians (Barna Group, “Racial Divides in Spiritual Practice” ).

The modern version of the historic Black Church is as diverse in style and operation at the local church level as any other church group, even within the same denomination in the same town. Some churches are large and some small. Some are old and proudly historic while others are newly built with the latest architectural touches. Some are traditional; some are contemporary, while many are a combination of the two. However, they all grew from a common heritage that is unique to their history in America, and this common heritage continues to shape their unique worldview.

Some have argued that 150 years after the end of slavery, there is no longer a need for the Black Church, especially the historic denominations. Eddie Glaude, in a post written in 2012, pronounced the Black Church as dead for several reasons including that it is too conservative and that other secular organizations fill some needs that the church used to fill in member’s lives. In addition, while revering its past, it has lost its prophetic voice, which has resulted in it becoming alienated from its present. The Black Church of

today, he asserts, appears to have turned its back on African Americans while not mobilizing to address the host of social issues currently plaguing America (Glaude, Jr.).

Others have argued that the Black Church is not only alive and well and as relevant as ever but has much to offer all churches. Black preaching is said to be one of the strengths of the Black Church. Different from other styles, black preaching, says William Crouch, Jr. and Joel Gregory, “uses energy and spirit to take the Word of God and bring it to life in a way that changes lives because it not only requires one to listen but to think about what has been said and respond” (Crouch, Jr and Gregory). Cleophus LaRue agrees about the value of black preaching to the Black Church citing the admiration he has heard over the years for the vitality, relevance, and communicational effectiveness of black preaching through its use of stories, emotion, and call-and-response techniques (LaRue).

### **Black Protestant Church Statistics in Florida**

According to the Association of Religious Data Archives, there were 333,390 Black Protestant Church members in the State of Florida in 2010. The two largest included the National Baptist Convention, USA with 122,811 members among its 172 churches and the African Methodist Episcopal Church with 111,300 members among its 453 churches. In third place and fourth place were the National Missionary Baptist Convention with 26,877 members among its 119 churches and the Church of God in Christ with 22,375 members among its 144 churches. The number of Black Protestant Churches combined were approximately 10% of the number of Evangelical Protestant Churches and were 38% the size of Mainline Protestant Churches. This report did not

have prior statistics available for comparison for the Black Protestant denominations (*The Association of Religion Data Archives*).

### **African American Millennials**

According to a Nielsen African American Consumer Report published in fall 2016, in 2014 there were 83.1 million millennials in the United States, and 11.5 million of these were African American. These 11.5 million millennials accounted for 25% of the African American population overall. African American millennials tended to be more technologically engaged, and African American millennials were 25% more likely than other millennials to say they were the first of their associates to try new technology. Ninety percent owned smart phones, and African American millennials were 21% more likely than the millennial population overall to expect that the video quality on their phones be comparable to that of their TV. African American millennials spent 6% more time each day on social media sites than the overall millennial population, with 64% stating that they regularly updated their social media pages (Nielsen).

Ebony Marketing Systems says that in 2016, 53% of African American millennials had attended college with 13% having earned at least a bachelor's degree, as compared to 60% of all U.S. millennials having attended college with 22.3% having earned a bachelor's degree. Twenty-five percent of all millennials, African American millennials included, were enrolled in 2016 in an undergraduate or graduate degree college program. This firm states that, for the year 2016, eight in ten African American millennials had never been married compared to sixty-five percent of all U.S. millennials (Ebony Marketing).

In 2016 Ebony Marketing Systems also published statistics regarding the number of millennials in the State of Florida. In the Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach area, African American millennials numbered 319,000 and made up 25.3% of the millennial population. In Jacksonville, FL, African American millennials numbered 81,223 or 24.2% of all millennials. In the Orlando-Kissimmee area, African American millennials numbered 95,420 or 17.6% of all millennials. In Tampa-St Petersburg-Clearwater area of Florida, African American millennials numbered 87,719 or 15.4% of the total millennial population (Ebony Marketing).

In their “Black Millennials in America” report, Rogowski and Cohen state that African American millennials face unique challenges including employment, health, gun violence, and criminal justice. Statistically, they face substantially higher unemployment rates and more discrimination in the workplace. They have more trouble finding and maintaining affordable health insurance. They are much more likely to say they are afraid of gun violence and 17% more likely to be a victim of a homicide. Young women are much more likely to be obese. The incarceration rates for young men are seven times higher than white young men, and 54% report that they or someone they know has been harassed by or experienced violence from the police in their community (Rogowski and Cohen).

African American millennials were more supportive of an increase in the federal minimum wage than their white peers. They were more likely than white millennials to believe gun control is more important than gun owner rights. Nearly 82% supported the Affordable Care Act, compared to 34% of white millennials, and they were more supportive than their white peers regarding immigration reforms (Rogowski and Cohen).

Like all millennials in the United States, African American millennials are impacted by news about school shootings, immigration issues, climate change, LGBT matters, un-affordable health care, and other problems. They also regularly see in the news their innocent peers arrested or killed driving while black, walking while black, sitting while black, shopping while black, studying while black, barbecuing at the park while black, playing while black, etc. They realize that while millennials in general are more supportive of the “Black Lives Matter” movement than other generations, most people in the United States feel that racism is no longer a big issue. For example, in a recent Barna survey 59% of all African Americans polled felt that racism was not a thing of the past while 39% of the white Americans polled felt that it was (Barna Group, “Black Lives Matter and Racial Tension in America”).

African Americans millennials appear to be as likely as other groups to vote, but the participation varies. According to Rogowski and Cohen, the black youth turnout rate was 52.3% in 2008 and 45.9% in 2012, higher than for other millennial groups (Rogowski and Cohen). However, according to Jens Krogstad and Mark Lopez, during the 2016 presidential election, although a record number of votes were cast, the black vote in a presidential election declined for the first time in 20 years and the number of African American millennial voters declined to a level lower than white millennial voters (Krogstad and Lopez).

In the *Millennial Impact Report* published in 2017, African American millennials differed significantly from their white peers on their satisfaction with the current U.S. President, Donald Trump, with 69% saying they were “unsatisfied” or “extremely unsatisfied” versus 39% of white millennials saying they were “unsatisfied” or

“extremely unsatisfied.” Eleven percent of African American millennials said they were “satisfied” or “extremely satisfied” while 35% of white millennials said they were “satisfied” or “extremely satisfied” (The Case Foundation).

### **African American Millennials and the Modern Black Protestant Church**

In their “America’s Changing Religious Landscape” report of 2015, the Pew Research organization published statistics that noted that the historic Black Protestant Churches were one of the groups not showing a significant loss in overall membership (Pew Research Center, “Religious Landscape Study”). However, the Black Church, like most churches in the United States, seeing fewer young people in its pews, was still very concerned with retaining its younger members. In 2018, writing about additional Pew research, David Masci stated that older African Americans, the Silent Generation, at 63%, were more likely to say they attend historically Black Protestant Churches than younger African Americans, the millennials, at 41% (Masci).

Sharon Cobbins notes in her research that the Black Church will not be able to rely on the traditions of its past to remain relevant and will struggle if it is not intentional in its methodology to connect to and engage the millennial generation. The millennial generation, she says, is more passive and is less concerned about their church participation than they are concerned about their spirituality. To connect and engage them, they want the church to provide them with the opportunity for spiritual growth through mentoring programs and activities like retreats and outreach ministries that allow them to actively use and live out their faith (Cobbins).

Joshua Mitchell agrees that the opportunity for spiritual growth is essential. From his research he found that black millennials living in a world of adversity need to know



that God has a plan for them. They need to be given the tools to help them develop their faith to the point that they can wait in faith on God until they see what they are expecting by faith. To develop these tools, he said, the black millennials he studied found the teachings on discipleship, the spiritual disciplines, and basic Christian living principles to be the most helpful. To encourage growth in the area of spiritual formation, his research found the teachings on healthy relationships with family and friends, preparation for marriage, and human sexuality to be most useful (Mitchell).

Brianna Parker says that African American millennials are not put off by the traditional nature of the historic Black Church because they are looking for a more authentic experience. After collecting data on 1000 millennials, she concluded that African American millennials, contrary to popular belief, desire a return to the “core” of the Black Church. She acknowledges that the exodus of millennials from the black traditional church is slower than from other churches. Black millennials, she says, love and appreciate the church of old because they see it as a holistic place of worship. She also says that pulpits “devoid of faith and politics will be devoid of black millennials (1) (1).” In these troubling times for African American millennials, what they are seeking “is a faith that speaks to societal realities that mark historical and contemporary black life.” They are also seeking spaces of refuge. This is why they have remained, and that is why there is hope for the Black Church (Parker 1).

One of the proud traditions of the Black Church in the 50s and 60s was social activism. However, in contemporary times, many African American millennials feel the Black Church has given a weak response to a variety of social justice issues in the United States, including gay rights, controversial immigration policies, police brutality, and the

killing of unarmed civilians. Instead, secular organizations such as Black Lives Matter are taking the lead; Black Lives Matters, whose leaders are often at odds with the leadership of the modern Black Church, remind the Black church of its heritage and its need to again take action in the face of injustice (Blumberg and Kuruvilla). The tension between the Black Lives Matter leaders and church leaders may be their approach. While Black Lives Matter focuses more on resistance to oppression, the Black Church is more likely to see a solution to society's social ills through faith. A combination of the two approaches, however, may be attractive to African American millennials, as millennials, in general, are more sensitive to social justice issues. In a recent article published by the Black Youth Project, it was noted that the Black Church is likely to engage more millennials by bringing politics back into the pulpit (Black Youth Project).

### **Research Design Literature**

This was a descriptive research study to determine if ministers that pastor historic Black Protestant churches in the state of Florida could be more effective at contextualizing and emphasizing a lifestyle that includes an integration of faith, work, and economics as part of their Christian discipleship for the millennials they are seeking to attract, engage, and retain.

Qualitative research methods included semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Interviews were used for discussions with church pastors, while focus groups were used for discussions with millennials. The interviews were conducted in person, online and by telephone. The focus groups were all conducted online. The qualitative research was most appropriate for uncovering insight into issues and trends that may not have been otherwise identified.

Quantitative research methods included surveys, which provided evidence for the reasons for the research questions. They indicated trends and patterns in the thoughts, opinions, and behaviors of the church pastors and the millennials that participated in the study. This was also useful in providing explanations for the research results at the conclusion of the study. The surveys were conducted electronically using [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com).

### **Summary of Literature**

The millennial generation, like the generations that preceded it, will leave a distinctive mark on American culture. The millennial generation, currently the largest in the United States, is more technologically savvy, more introspective, and more accepting of personal differences than previous generations. It also appears that a Christian-based lifestyle is perceived as less relevant than in previous generations and is decreasing church attendance in this generation when compared with previous generations at the same age. As a result, Christian leaders in all denominations, including the Black Protestant Church, are seeking ways to attract, engage, and retain the millennials in their churches.

However, while seeking to attract, engage, and retain millennials, the Black Church recognizes that although it shares many things in common with other church groups, it has distinct historical, theological, sociological, and cultural differences primarily resulting from the former enslavement and associated racism that impacts people of African descent in the United States. As it shares a grand narrative shaped by the circumstances unique to black people in this country, the solutions to its problems related to black millennials will most likely need to be reflective of its uniqueness. It is

not just the church for a people, for African Americans, it may be one of the most influential institutions in their lives.

The contemporary Black Church is felt by many to be a safe place where African Americans can be at home and be themselves without judgement from the outside world. Members meet regularly and can participate in a variety of ministry activities for which they have an interest. Their family and friends may also be members, sometimes for generations. The Black Church is primary to the education of black children about the Gospel and biblical truths, but it is also where they learn public speaking, self-pride, and African American history. It is where they can participate in activities and events culturally relevant to them. It is where black teenagers not only receive encouragement, nurturing, and mentoring from the congregation as they travel through high school to college but where they also receive scholarships and much celebration when they return from school during breaks. The Black Church is seen by some to still be the protector of black lives in a world that refuses to believe that black lives are just as relevant, valuable, beautiful, and sacred as every other. It may still be the place that many black millennials go to find refuge from a world that not only finds them lacking but also seems devoid of Christian values.

Understanding millennials in general and African American millennials specifically is essential to understanding what is relevant for developing effective discipleship ministries that attract, engage, and retain African American millennials. The Black Church, like all churches, needs to be actively working to reverse the trend of a decline in the numbers of Christians in the United States. This is important because the Christian Church needs the next generation, including all of its millennials, to have a

solid foundation in the essentials of their faith including spiritual formation, a clear understanding of Scripture, an understanding of Christianity, and a strong spiritual relationship with Christ. Not only for their own salvation but for the salvation of the generations to come.

### **CHAPTER 3**

#### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE PROJECT**

##### **Overview of the Chapter**

This Chapter describes the research methodology used for this project as well as the methods for choosing the participants and conducting the research necessary to complete the purpose of the project. It includes the cultural context, the research questions, and the instrumentation used to solicit answers to those questions. It also includes how the data analysis was conducted and the measures used to ensure the reliability and validity of the project design.

##### **Nature and Purpose of the Project**

The discipleship of younger adults is of critical concern to most churches in the United States. The millennial generation is not attending church in the same proportion as previous generations. Church attendance overall has decreased while the average age of congregants has increased. As a result of the decline in attendance and the aging of their congregations, many modern-day churches appear to be engaging in a slow death spiral. Protestant church pastors and leaders throughout the United States have been seeking answers to combat this negative trend.

Mainstream Black Protestant Churches in the United States are included among the churches seeking answers. Despite their diversity in theologies, their millennial-aged

parishioners share some of the same characteristics as other Christian millennials in the United States that are not African American, most notably decline in church attendance. However, there are some significant differences. The religious views of mainstream Protestant African American millennials as well as their relationship with their church has been impacted by the history and traditions unique to the mainstream Black Protestant Churches and the unique social experiences of young African American adults in the United States in modern times. To be most effective, the solutions to engage, disciple, and retain millennials in Black Protestant Churches must recognize, account for, and address these differences.

The purpose of this research was to determine if ministers that pastor historic Black Protestant Churches in the state of Florida could be more effective at contextualizing and emphasizing a lifestyle that includes an integration of faith, work, and economics as part of their Christian discipleship for the millennials they are seeking to attract, engage, and retain. In order to determine the extent of the effectiveness, data was collected and analyzed from both pastors that lead congregations and millennials that attend church at historic Black Protestant Churches in Florida.

### **Research Questions**

**RQ #1. In the opinion of ministers that pastor historic Black Protestant churches in the state of Florida with more than twenty-five millennials in regular attendance, how are they currently contextualizing and emphasizing a holistic lifestyle that integrates the components of faith, work, and economics as part of their Christian discipleship for the millennials they are seeking to attract, engage, and retain?**

This research question sought to determine how pastoring ministers were framing the integration of one's faith into all aspects of one's life including career choices, work, social relationships, and the use of money in their discipleship of millennials. The emphasis of this integration in the history of the historic Black Protestant Church was explored as was its relevancy to contemporary times. An online survey was used along with semi-structured interviews.

Instruments: An online survey and semi-structured interviews.

The online survey: The initial question in the online survey asked if the participant gave his or her consent to participate in the survey. The next five questions qualified the opinion for the research. Participants that did not meet the requirements were immediately directed out of the survey to a "disqualification page." They were not able to answer any further questions. The last question asked the participant if they would like to be interviewed.

Questions 1-5 qualified the opinion for this research. (See Appendix A)

Questions 6- 9 asked the participant to read the following paragraph and then to answer questions regarding their opinion about the historic Black Protestant Church from an historical perspective and its relevancy to contemporary times. (See Appendix A)

The paragraph for questions 6 – 9 stated:

After 250 years of slavery and 100 years of Jim Crow, one-third of the African American population had moved into what they would describe as living a middle-class lifestyle by the 1980s. The Black Church, being the only stable, cohesive, and independent institution available for African Americans, was a major part of this transformation. During the years from slavery through the early 20th century, the Black

Church was the central institution in the lives of African Americans. It covered all aspects of daily life including education, politics, moral, social, and religious matters (Lincoln and Mamiya).

Questions 10 - 14 asked the participant to read the paragraph below and then to answer questions regarding their opinion on work, stewardship, and faith. (See Appendix A)

The paragraph for questions 10 – 14 stated:

As God was a worker, man, made in God’s image, is therefore also a worker. Work then is central to God’s character. Work is so important that it “is mentioned more times in the Bible than worship, praise, and singing combined.” Welchel says that all human beings have a holy calling to work and that modern-day Christians have lost the biblical metanarrative of Scripture that applied to work, calling, and vocation. God placed humanity in the Garden of Eden, as told in Genesis 2, to work and be a good steward over it, and God’s intention still is that human beings care for all God’s creation on the earth. (Welchel)

Questions 15-20 addressed opinions regarding the integration of faith, work, and economics as part of Christian discipleship for millennials. (See Appendix A)

Question 21 asked the participants if they would like to be considered to be interviewed regarding this research. (See Appendix A)

Following the surveys, the semi-structured interviews were conducted.

Semi structured Interviews: The request for an interview was based on recommendations and interest expressed as a question on the survey. All interviewees signed a consent form prior to the interview. The interviews were facilitated



electronically using anymeeting.com. The interviews took between 45 and 60 minutes, were recorded and then professionally transcribed by GoTranscript.

During the interview, the interviewees discussed the questions and why they felt that the pastors had answered the questions in the manner that they did.

Questions 1-5 confirmed the qualifications the opinion for this research. (See Appendix A)

Questions 6- 9 involved the interviewee listening to the reading of the paragraph below and then critiquing the answers to the questions by their peers. The questions were about the role of the historic Black Protestant Church from an historical perspective. (See Appendix A)

The paragraph for questions 6 – 9 stated:

After 250 years of slavery and 100 years of Jim Crow, one-third of the African American population had moved into what they would describe as living a middle-class lifestyle by the 1980's. The Black Church, being the only stable, cohesive, and independent institution available for African Americans, was a major part of this transformation. During the years from slavery through the early 20th century, the Black Church was the central institution in the lives of African Americans. It covered all aspects of daily life including education, politics, moral, social, and religious matters. (Lincoln and Mamiya).

Questions 10 - 14 involved the interviewee listening to the reading the paragraph below and then responding to the answers to the questions by their peers. The questions were regarding an opinion on work, stewardship and faith. (See Appendix A)

The paragraph for questions 10 – 14 stated:

As God was a worker, man, made in God's image, is therefore also a worker. Work then is central to God's character. Work is so important that it "is mentioned more times in the Bible than worship, praise, and singing combined." Hugh Whelchel says that all human beings have a holy calling to work and that modern-day Christians have lost the biblical metanarrative of Scripture that applied to work, calling, and vocation. God placed humanity in the Garden of Eden, as told in Genesis 2, to work and be a good steward over it and God's intention still is that human beings care for all God's creation on the earth (Whelchel).

Questions 15-20 addressed opinions regarding the integration of faith, work and economics as part of Christian discipleship for millennials. (See Appendix A)

Question 21 asked if there was anything additional that should be discussed or explored in a future Focus Group. (See Appendix A)

**RQ #2. In the opinion of millennials that attend historic Black Protestant Churches in Florida, what do they see as the most important, helpful, and relevant aspect of Christian discipleship that addresses their desire for a lifestyle that integrates the components of faith, work, and economics into their everyday lives?**

This research question sought to determine what millennials that attend historic Black Protestant churches believe is most important regarding how their faith should be lived out in their lives, including its impact on determining a career, work, relationships, and their use of money. An online survey was used. A focus group was anticipated but proved too difficult to coordinate.

Instruments: Survey There was an initial question prior to accessing the survey in which the participant gave his or her consent to participate. There was also a question

during the survey asking if the age of the participant was between 21 and 38 years.

Participants that did not meet the minimum age -specified requirements were immediately directed out of the survey. Thus, no children, age 17 or under, were able to participate. The last question asked the participant if they would like to participate in a focus group for this research.

Questions 1-4 qualified the opinion for this research. (See Appendix A)

Question 5 determined that ratio of genders. (See Appendix A)

Questions 6-12 addressed opinions regarding discipleship and faith as a component of a holistic faith-based lifestyle. (See Appendix A)

Questions 13-18 explored the desires of millennials regarding discipleship as it relates to faith, work, and economics. (See Appendix A)

Question 19 asked the participants if they would like to be considered for participation in a Focus Group related to the research. (See Appendix A)

**RQ #3. Based on this research, how could historic Black Protestant Churches in Florida more effectively contextualize and emphasize a lifestyle that includes a holistic integration of faith, work, and economics as part of their Christian discipleship for the millennials they are seeking to attract, engage, and retain?**

To answer this research question, findings from the Pastor and Millennial Surveys and the Pastor Interviews were analyzed and compared.

### **Ministry Context**

In 2015, The Pew Research Foundation reported that of the African Americans that described themselves as Christian, 59% identified themselves as members of one of the predominately historical Black Protestant denominations (Pew Research Center,

“Religious Landscape Study”). Although it shares many things in common with other church groups, the historic Black Protestant Church has distinct historical, theological, sociological, and cultural differences.

The millennial generation, having recently surpassed the baby boomers in size is now the nation’s largest living generation(US Census, “Millennials Outnumber Baby Boomers”), Sadly, differing from the previous generations, they are not going to church as often and the Christian share of the U.S. population is declining (Pew Research Center, “America’s Changing Religious Landscape”). Although Pew Research noted in 2015 that the historically Black Protestant Churches were one of the groups not showing as significant a loss in overall membership (Pew Research Center, “Religious Landscape Study”), the Black Church, like most churches in the United States, is seeing less young people in its pews and is seeking to improve its discipleship of younger church members. At the same time, social conditions for African American millennials have many seeing the church as “a refuge (1)” and a place where they can find “a faith that speaks to societal realities that mark historical and contemporary black life (1)” (Parker).

In a recent Barna survey 59% of all African Americans polled felt that racism was not a thing of the past (Barna Group, “Black Lives Matter and Racial Tension in America”). Rogowski and Cohen state that African American millennials face unique challenges related to employment, health, gun violence, and criminal justice. Statistically they face substantially higher unemployment rates and more discrimination in the workplace. Young women are much more likely to be obese. Their incarceration rates for young men are seven times higher than for white young , and 54% report that they or

someone they know has been harassed by or experienced violence from the police in their community (Rogowski and Cohen).

The religious views of mainstream Protestant African American millennials, as well as their relationship with their church, has been shaped by the history and traditions unique to the mainstream Black Protestant Churches as well as the unique social experiences of young African American adults in the United States. Therefore, to be most effective, the solutions to engage, disciple, and retain millennials in Black Protestant Churches must recognize, account for, and address the differences that these millennials experience in their lives.

## **Participants**

### **Criteria for Selection**

The pastors and millennials that participated in this research study were included because they met the criteria associated with each research question. The pastors that participated included ordained ministers from historic Black Protestant Churches in Florida. Their selection intentionally included representation of churches in rural, suburban, and urban areas, where possible. Ordained pastors were invited to participate because they were known to pastor congregations that included 25 or more millennials. All pastors agreed to participate after receiving a letter of invitation by email, text, or verbal request.

The millennials that participated were included because they were African American millennial-aged adults currently attending a historic Black Protestant denomination church at least twice per month. They also stated that they lived in Florida. An attempt was made to include representation of churches in rural, suburban, and urban

areas. They agreed to participate upon recommendation from a church leader, by invitation through social media, text, or verbal request.

For each of the denominations, an email was sent to the presiding bishop of the denomination applicable to the state of Florida to notify them of the survey.

### **Description of Participants**

Seven church pastors participated in the survey. The results of six pastors qualified them to be included in the research. The pastors that participated were all African American men and women that were ordained clergy in their respective denominations, and all were the lead pastor at their church. One was female; the other six were male. The denominations represented included the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. All of the churches were in the state of Florida. The results of six pastors qualified to be included in the research.

A pastor of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church expressed interest in participation, but his church did not have the required minimum number of millennial-aged congregants. One of the pastor's surveys was disqualified when the pastor said he did not have 25 or more millennials as regular members at his church. This appeared to be an error as the church that he pastors is quite large and is known for significantly more than 25 millennial-aged adults in regular attendance. None of the Church of God in Christ or the Baptist denomination pastors participated, and they did not respond after direct personal requests or repeated requests by email or telephone messages.

Three church pastors were interviewed. The pastors that participated were all African American men and women that were ordained clergy in their respective denominations, and all were the lead pastor at their church. One was female, the other

two were male. The denomination represented was the African Methodist Episcopal Church. All of the churches were in the state of Florida. All of the interview results qualified to be included in the research.

The African American millennials that participated in the Millennial Survey included twenty-seven people. Five were blank responses including one that could not take the survey because he did not give consent. Of the twenty-two people who did take the survey, nine were men, and thirteen were women. They ranged in age from 21 – 39 years old. All were African American except one who said he was of African descent but was not American. Twelve stated that they attend worship services, Bible study, or Sunday school at least twice per month in Florida. Seven said they attended a Black Methodist church; six said they attended a Black Baptist church, and two stated they attended a Church of God in Christ church. Seven said they attended another denomination. The results of eight of the millennial aged participants qualified to be included in the research. Four were male, and four were female.

### **Ethical Considerations**

A confidentiality agreement and informed consent letter were provided to all participants. For the church pastors, this was included in the invitation emailed or texted to them and was required to be reviewed and accepted prior to their participation in taking the survey or being interviewed. For the millennials, the confidentiality agreement and informed consent letter were included in the invitation emailed or texted to them and was required to be reviewed and accepted prior to their participation in taking the survey. A copy of the confidentiality agreement and informed consent are included in Appendix B.

To maintain the confidentiality of the participants, no names, denominational information, or other distinguishing characteristics of individual participants are reported in the study. All electronic data including transcripts, interview recordings, and survey data were secured on the researcher's laptop computer and password protected. The researcher is the only one with access to this data. The interview data is password protected and encrypted via Google docs. The survey data is password protected and SSL encrypted via Survey Monkey. Physical data including handwritten notes, transcripts, printed copies, and any additional forms of physical data are locked in the researcher's file cabinet for which only she has access to the key. All data will be permanently deleted or shredded one year after the dissertation is approved.

### **Instrumentation**

The instrumentation used for this research project was both quantitative and qualitative. For the church pastors, the instrumentation included a quantitative survey and a qualitative semi-structured interview. Both instruments were designed by the researcher.

The quantitative instrumentation of an Internet survey was used to identify trends in attitudes and behaviors that was pertinent to the research project of senior pastors from historic Black Protestant Churches in Florida with congregations with 25 or more millennials that regularly attend worship. The church pastors determined how they defined the status of "regular attendance" for their congregation. The survey was conducted using [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com). The pastor survey was longitudinal with data collected over a three-month period. The survey question types included single-answer, multiple choice, and open comment.



The survey was sent to over 60 pastors through email and text. Seven pastors accessed and took the survey. After all the surveys were completed, they were analyzed quantitatively for common practices and opinions among the church pastors that were relevant to the research. The survey protocol can be found in Appendix A.

After all the surveys were completed, a semi-structured interview was used to gather further insights as to why the church pastors may have collectively answered the survey questions in the manner that they did. Four pastors agreed to be interviewed, but only three were actually interviewed. The three pastors interviewed were the senior pastor in their respective historic Black Protestant Church congregation. They were interviewed using the online technology of anymeeting.com which allowed for two-way voice interaction and recording. Creswell states that an interview should include open-ended questions to solicit opinions, and these types of questions were used (Creswell and Creswell Loc 5502).

After all the interviews were completed, they were analyzed qualitatively for common opinions among the church pastors that were relevant to the research. The interviews were conducted over a one-month period. The interview protocol can be found in Appendix A.

For the millennials, the quantitative instrument of an internet survey was used to identify trends in attitudes, desires, and opinions of African American millennials in Florida who said that they regularly attended church at least twice a month. The survey was sent to over 50 millennials by email and text. It was also posted on social media. The survey was conducted using surveymonkey.com. Twenty-seven surveys were accessed, and twenty-two were taken. After all the surveys were completed, they were studied for

common practices and opinions among the millennials that were relevant to the research. The survey was longitudinal with data collected over a three-month period. The survey question types included single-answer, multiple choice, and open comment. The survey protocol can be found in Appendix A.

For the millennials, the qualitative instrumentation of a focus group was planned to gather further insights as to why the millennials may have collectively answered the survey questions in the manner that they did. It was expected to be conducted using the online technology of anymeeting.com which allows for two-way visual and voice interaction among the participants as well as the recording of the session. Creswell states that a focus group should include open-ended questions to solicit opinions and these types of questions were included (Creswell and Creswell Loc 5502). The focus group was not completed because of the difficulty in scheduling with sufficient attendance. The focus group protocol can be found in Appendix A.

The data collected from the church pastors and millennials in the surveys and semi-structured interviews was analyzed to determine where there may be differences between the intent and teachings of the church pastors vs the needs and desires of the millennials seeking a holistic integration of faith, work, and economics in their everyday lives.

### **Pilot Test and Expert Review**

The researcher obtained two expert reviewers to corroborate that the research project design and instruments were feasible. The researcher also conducted a pilot test of the semi-structured interview, focus group, and surveys. This offered the opportunity for clarity in question formation and also allowed for the testing of the technology used.

### **Reliability & Validity of Project Design**

The research project design model for this research study was “mixed method” because it combined the ability to collect data using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative surveys measured trends in patterns of thoughts and opinions while the qualitative instruments of interviews and focus groups allowed for a deeper understanding of the general thoughts and opinions expressed by the pastors and the millennials.

Credibility of the research findings is strengthened when the researcher can demonstrate both reliability and validity of the research findings. Creswell states that reliability is indicated when the researcher is careful to document each step of each procedure used to conduct the research including consistency in defining each step and procedure. Validity indicates that the findings are accurate and it includes the fact that the researcher confirm that the data notes, transcripts, and numerical findings are accurately recorded (Creswell and Creswell Loc 5803-5811).

### **Data Collection**

The research design for this pre-intervention project employed mixed-method instrumentation including two quantitative surveys and a qualitative interview. Creswell states that mixed method research integrates the two types of data gleaned from quantitative and qualitative research which then provides a stronger understanding of the questions than each could provide on its own (Creswell and Creswell Loc 6161).

To collect the data required for this research from church pastors there was a two-step process involving both a survey and a semi-structured interview. Both instruments were designed by the researcher.

To collect the data required for this research from the millennials, the intent was for a two-step process involving both a survey and a focus group. Both instruments were designed by the researcher.

Prior to starting the research, a letter was sent to all the applicable bishops for each of the five denominations impacted in the State of Florida notifying them of the survey.

The Pastors Survey invitation was accompanied by a confidentiality and non-disclosure letter which also introduced the purpose of the letter and the nature of the research. The Pastors Survey invitation was sent three times to 54 emails identified as belonging to pastors of historic Black Protestant churches in Florida. These emails were taken from denomination rosters as posted by the denominations, found at individual church websites, given as a referral from another pastor, or given over the telephone after a call to a church. The survey invitation was also texted or sent by email directly to six pastors after a direct conversation with that pastor in a church or at a church conference. In total, sixty individuals received an email or text request to take the survey. The Pastors Survey was conducted using [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com). Seven pastors took the survey, spending 6 minutes on average to answer the questions. The response rate was 12% using this methodology.

The Millennial Survey was sent to 35 millennials by text. The text included a link to the survey invitation that contained the confidentiality and non-disclosure letter which also introduced the purpose of the letter and the nature of the research. The millennials who received the survey invitation by text were requested to take the survey personally either at a church, in a park, in a mall food court, or at a church convention. Direct

contact with a participant yielded the highest likelihood of a survey completion as they received a \$5 Starbucks card for their participation. A text requesting participation was also sent to telephone numbers identified by various church leaders as belonging to millennials who had agreed to participate. They also received a \$5 Starbucks card for their participation. The survey was posted on social media and received only 1 response there. The Millennial Survey was conducted using [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com). Twenty-two millennials took the survey with an average time of 5 minutes spent answering the questions. The response rate was 63% using this methodology.

The qualitative interview of the pastors was semi-structured. The pastors who agreed to be interviewed had either volunteered when they took the Pastors Survey or agreed to be interviewed upon request after taking the Pastors Survey. The ability to volunteer was the last question on the survey. The interviews were scheduled individually to fit the schedule of the pastor and lasted between 45 minutes to 1 hour. The three interviews of the pastors were conducted using [anymeeting.com](https://www.anymeeting.com). The pastors participated by telephone while the researcher participated on her laptop. The sessions were recorded by [anymeeting.com](https://www.anymeeting.com) and then transcribed by GoTranscript.

The data collected from the church pastors and millennials to the questions in the surveys and semi-structured interviews were analyzed to determine where there may be differences between the intent and teachings of the church pastors versus the needs and desires of millennials seeking a holistic integration of faith, work, and economics in their everyday lives.

## **Data Analysis**

The mixed-method quantitative and qualitative data was analyzed using applicable methods. The quantitative survey data collected from the pastors and the millennials was analyzed to determine trends in opinions, attitudes, behaviors, and desires. SurveyMonkey.com collected, tabulated, and presented the data in a format suitable for further statistical analysis, including the calculation of the mean and standard deviation relevant to each response.

The qualitative data of the interviews was recorded through anymeeting.com and then transcribed by GoTranscript. The transcripts were presented in a format suitable for evaluation in order to uncover major themes that could provide further insight into the data collected from the pastors in the surveys.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT**

#### **Overview of the Chapter**

The millennial generation is now the nation's largest living generation, and they are not going to church. In the United States today, church attendance overall continues to shrink while the average age of congregations has increased. Not only has the attendance of the younger generation steadily declined but the number of people who say they are Christian has also decreased.

Like other pastors in the United States, pastors of Black Protestant Churches have been seeking answers. Their millennial-aged parishioners share some of the same characteristics as other Christian millennials in the United States that are not of African American, but they also have some significant differences. The religious views of

Mainstream Protestant African American millennials as well as their relationship with their church has been impacted by the history and traditions unique to the historic Black Protestant Churches as well as by the unique social experiences of young African American adults in the United States in modern-times. Therefore, to be most effective, the solutions to engage, disciple, and retain millennials in Black Protestant Churches must recognize, account for and address these differences.

The purpose of this research was to determine if pastors of historic Black Protestant churches in the state of Florida could be more effective at contextualizing and emphasizing a lifestyle that includes the integration of faith, work, and economics as part of their Christian discipleship for the millennials they are seeking to attract, engage, and retain.

### **Participants**

There were seven participants in the Pastors Survey. They were all over the age of fifty. There were six men and one woman. The men were all married. The woman was not married. To qualify to have their survey data included in the results, the participants had to be the lead pastor of their respective church; they had to be affiliated with one of the targeted denominations, and they had to pastor in Florida and have 25 or more millennial aged adults in regular attendance at their church. Six of the participants met the required qualifications.

There were twenty-two participants that took the Millennial Survey. Nine were men, and thirteen were women. They ranged in age from 21 – 39 years old. All were African American except one who said he was of African descent but was not American. Twelve stated that they attend worship services, Bible study, or Sunday school at least

twice per month in Florida. Seven said they attended a Black Methodist church; six said they attended a Black Baptist church, and two stated they attended a Church of God in Christ church. Seven said they attended another denomination. To qualify to have their survey data included in the results, the participants had to be between 21 and 38 years of age, be African American, live in Florida, and attend church at least twice per month at one of the targeted denominations. The results of eight of the millennial aged participants qualified to be included in the research.

### **Research Question #1: Description of Evidence**

The Pastor Survey and Semi-structured Interviews gathered research data related to Research Question #1: In the opinion of ministers that pastor historic Black Protestant churches in the state of Florida with more than twenty-five millennials in regular attendance, how are they currently contextualizing and emphasizing a holistic lifestyle that integrates the components of faith, work, and economics as part of their Christian discipleship for the millennials they are seeking to attract, engage, and retain?

The Pastor Survey included twenty-two questions. The first six questions confirmed that the participant met the requirements for their opinion to be included in the research data. The last question, question 22, asked the participant if they would like to volunteer to be interviewed.

During the Semi-structured Interview, the pastors were given the Pastor Survey results as completed by all the pastors who had taken the survey and asked to explain why they and the other pastors collectively answered Questions 7 - 21 in the manner that they did.



### The Pastor Survey:

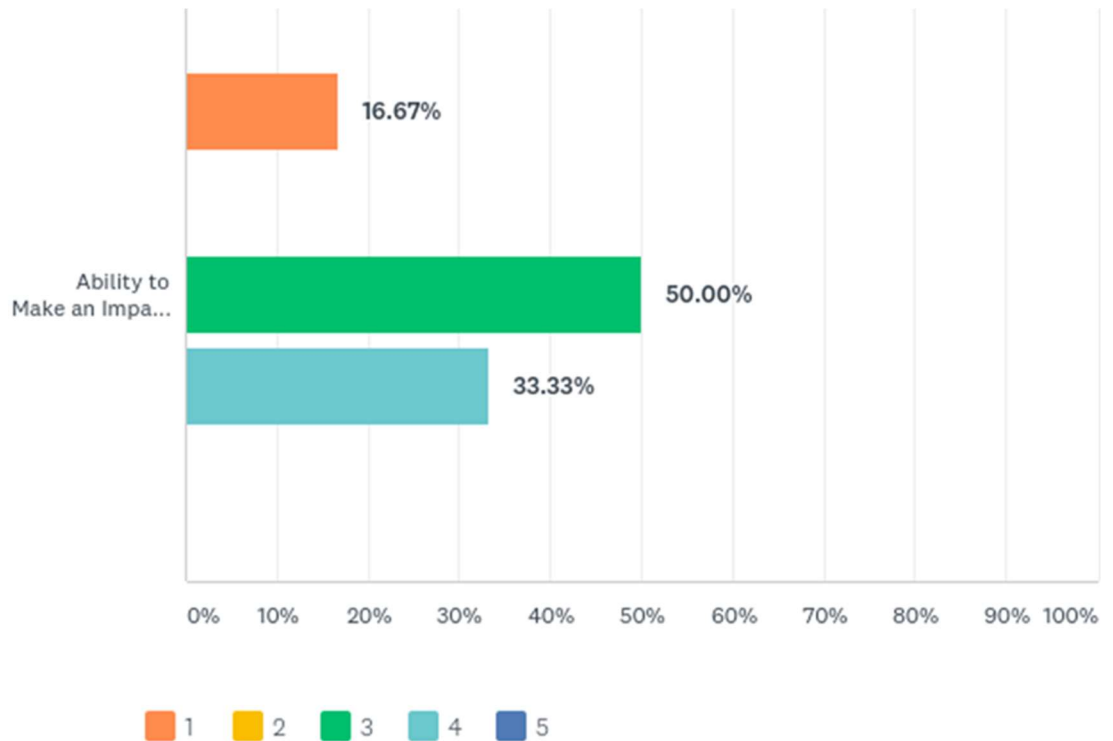
Questions 7-10 asked the participant to read a paragraph and then to answer questions on the role of the historic Black Protestant Church acknowledging its historical perspective. Their responses were ranked with 1 meaning not important and 5 meaning most important, on a scale of 1 – 5.

	Questions	N	Median	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
7	With 1 meaning less impactful and 5 meaning more impactful: On a scale of 1-5, do you think that the historic Black Church denominations today have the ability to make as much of an impact on their members in the area of economic empowerment in their communities as they did in the past?	6	3.00	3.00	1.00	1	0	3	2	0
8	With 1 meaning they should make less effort and 5 meaning they should make more effort: On a scale of 1-5, do you think that the historic Black Church denominations should try to make more of an effort in the area of economic empowerment for their members and their surrounding communities?	6	5.00	4.67	0.47	0	0	0	2	4
9	With 1 meaning not important and 5 meaning most important: On a scale of 1-5, is it as important today as it was in the past for the church to cover the aspects of daily life of education, politics, moral, and social matters in addition to religious matters?	6	5.00	4.50	0.76	0	0	1	1	4
10	With 1 meaning not important and 5 meaning most important: On a scale of 1 – 5, how important is it to the millennial aged adults in your church that you cover the aspects of daily life of education, politics, moral, and social matters in addition to religious matters?	6	4.50	4.17	1.07	0	1	0	2	3

Table 4.1

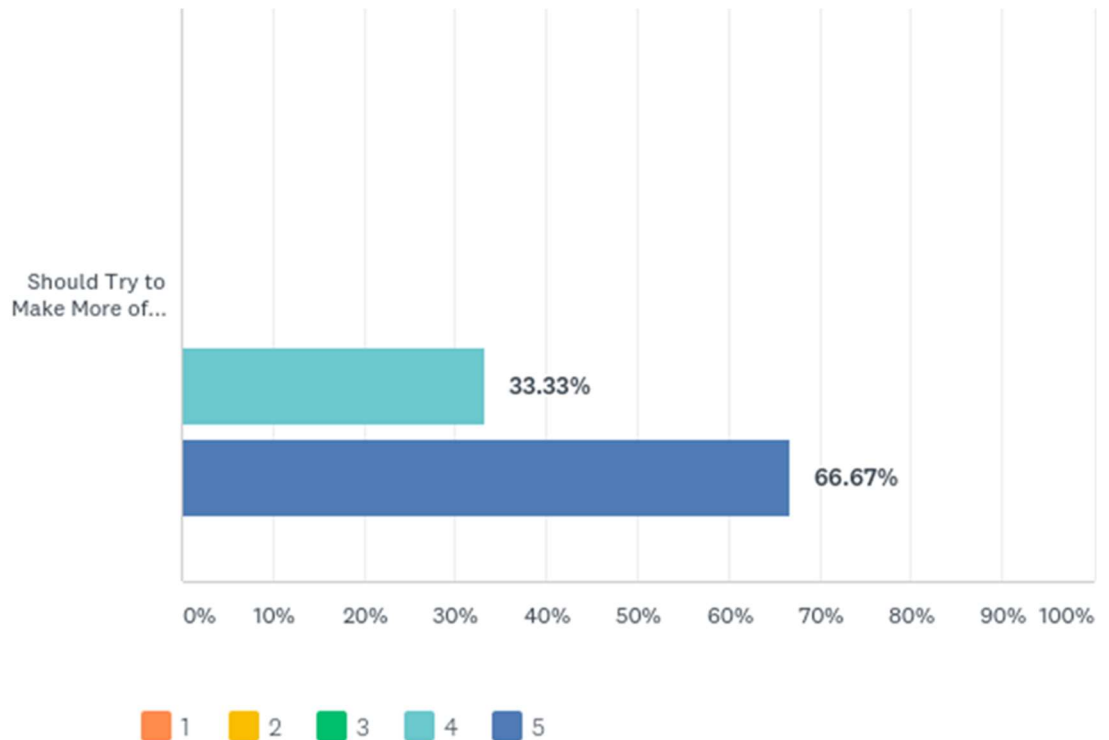
When asked in Question 7, “do you think that the historic Black Protestant Church denominations today have the ability to make as much of an impact on their members in the area of economic empowerment in their communities as they did in the past?”, 50% of the pastors gave an answer of 3 on a scale of 1 to 5, and 33% gave it a 4. This suggests that most of the pastors do not think the historic Black Protestant churches of today can have the impact of the historic Black Protestant churches of the past. The comments during the interviews supports this view. For example, Pastor 2 felt that “The difference today is that people just have so many more options in which to access

information. It not just reduces the church's impact, but it just reduces the avenues by which the church has to impact the lives of its members” (Pastor 2).



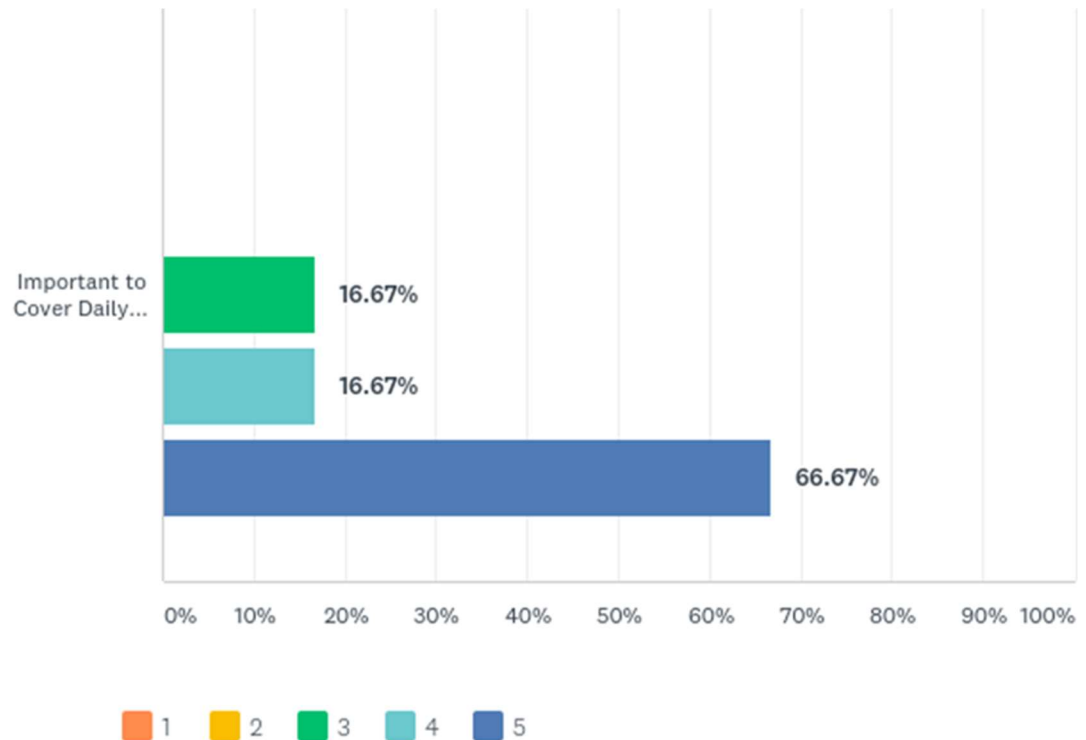
Graph 4.1

When asked in Question 8, “do you think that the historic Black Protestant Church denominations should try to make more of an effort in the area of economic empowerment for their members and their surrounding communities?”, 67% answered 5 on a scale of 1-5. This suggests that the pastors feel that the historic Black Protestant Church denominations should be doing more in the area of economic empowerment. This sentiment was captured in the words of Pastor 2. “The fact that there are so many different resources available does not diminish the church's requirement to be viable or viable commodity in terms of educating parishioners as well as the community in terms of economic development” (Pastor 2).



Graph 4.2

When asked in Question 9, “is it as important today as it was in the past for the church to cover the aspects of daily life of education, politics, moral, and social matters in addition to religious matters?”, 66.67% gave the question a 5 on a scale of 1 to 5, which suggests that they do feel that the churches of today should find it important to cover the aspects of daily life of education, politics, moral, and social matters in addition to religious matters. Pastor 2 was again best able to express what the findings suggest. “Churches that have really, really comprehensive ministries are more or less the growing churches because they're dealing with practically every aspect of the human being's life” (Pastor 2).

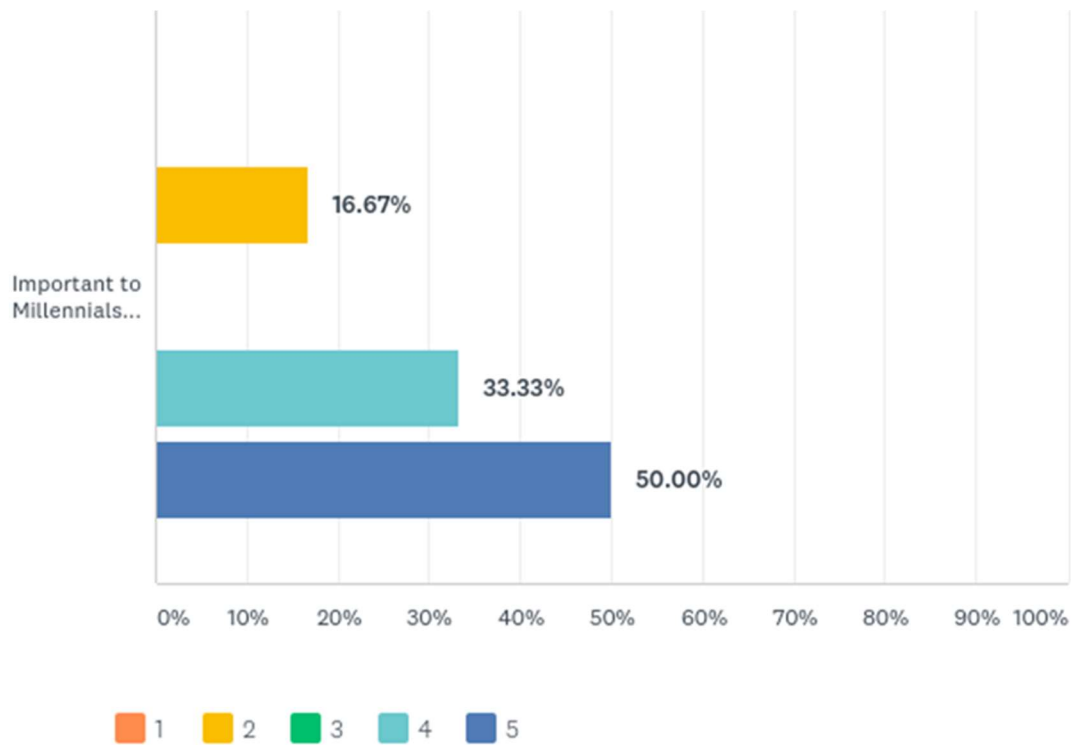


Graph 4.3

When asked in Question 10, “how important is it to the millennial aged adults in your church that you cover the aspects of daily life of education, politics, moral, and social matters in addition to religious matters?”, 50% gave the question a 5 on a scale of 1-5, and 33.33% gave it a 4. This suggests that most pastors feel strongly that for millennial aged adults in their church, they should cover the aspects of daily life of education, politics, moral, and social matters in addition to religious matters. Pastor 2 said that he thinks this is true because:

Millennials look for the church to be more engaged and more than just the religious aspects. Yes, they want to come in and get a Word. They want spiritual formation. They want to be taught the word of God, but then how does that word of God apply to my life? How does that word of God impact my interpersonal relationships, my relationship with my friends, my relationships with my co-

workers, my relationship on my job, handling my money, dealing with the social justice issues that we encounter every day. (Pastor 2)



Graph 4.4

Questions 11 - 15 asked the participant to read a paragraph and then to answer questions regarding their opinion on work, stewardship and faith.

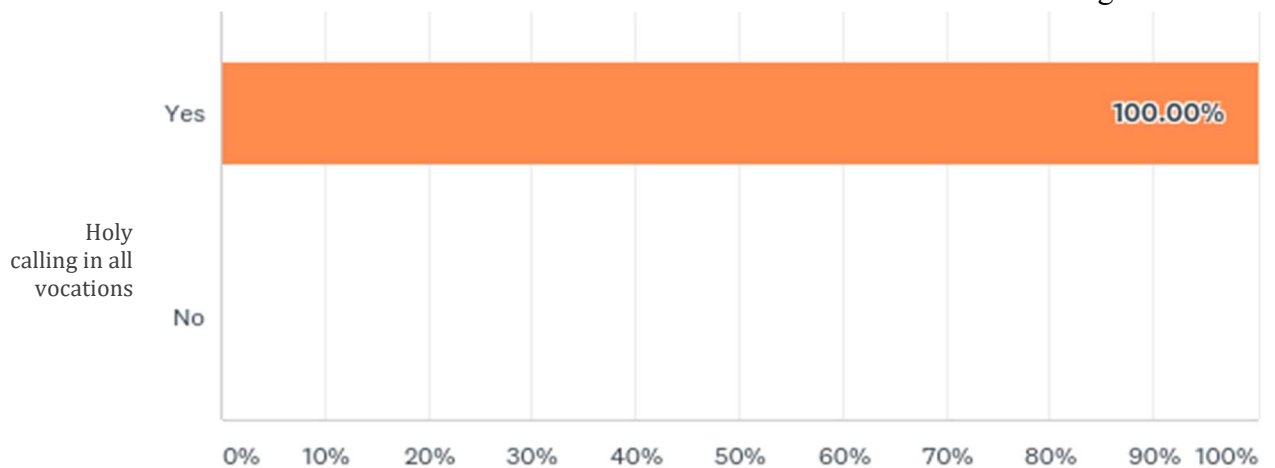
	Questions	N	Median	Mean	SD	Yes	No			
11	Do you believe that there can be a holy calling in all vocations? Yes or No.	6	1.00	1.00	0.00	6	0	Yes		
	Questions	N	Median	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
12	With 1 meaning not important and 5 meaning most important: On a scale of 1-5, how important do you think one's work or vocation is to one's sense of worth or value?	6	5.00	4.33	1.11	0	1	0	1	4
13	With 1 meaning no connection and 5 meaning the highest connection: On a scale of 1 – 5, do you believe there is a connection between one's faith and one's stewardship of all creation including one's family, church, and community?	6	5.00	4.83	0.37	0	0	0	1	5
14	With 1 meaning no connection and 5 meaning the highest connection: On a scale of 1-5, do you believe there is a connection between one's faith and how one uses the available financial resources?	6	4.50	4.50	0.50	0	0	0	3	3
15	With 1 meaning no connection and 5 meaning the highest connection: On a scale of 1-5, do you believe there is a connection between one's faith and how one is able to mentally handle the challenges one faces in life including racism, sexism, and classism?	6	5.00	4.83	0.37	0	0	0	1	5

Table 4.2

When asked in Question 11, “Do you believe that there can be a holy calling in all vocations? Yes or No.” 100% answered yes. The pastors all agreed that all vocations can be approached as a calling from God. Pastor 3 commented:

I think it's obvious. It lets us know that wherever you're called and wherever you're assigned, you're representing God. We're ambassadors. God called us to do his work. We're not just called to simply do it in the church. Wherever God has assigned us in life and how he gifted us, and whatever it is, we're to use those gifts as ambassadors. I think everybody was on the right page with those concerns.

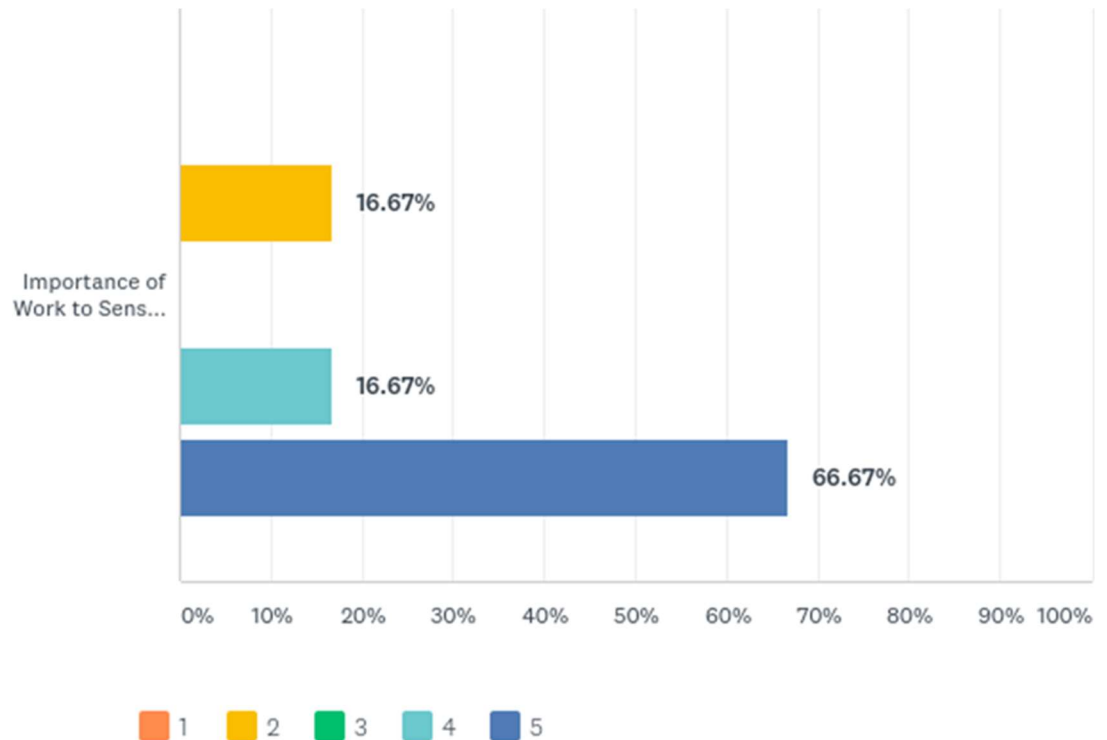
(Pastor 3)



Graph 4.5

When asked in Question 12, “How important do you think one’s work or vocation is to one’s sense of worth or value?”, 66.67% answered 5 on a scale of 1 to 5. This suggests that most of the pastors believe that one’s work or vocation impacts a person’s sense of worth or value. Pastor 2 explained:

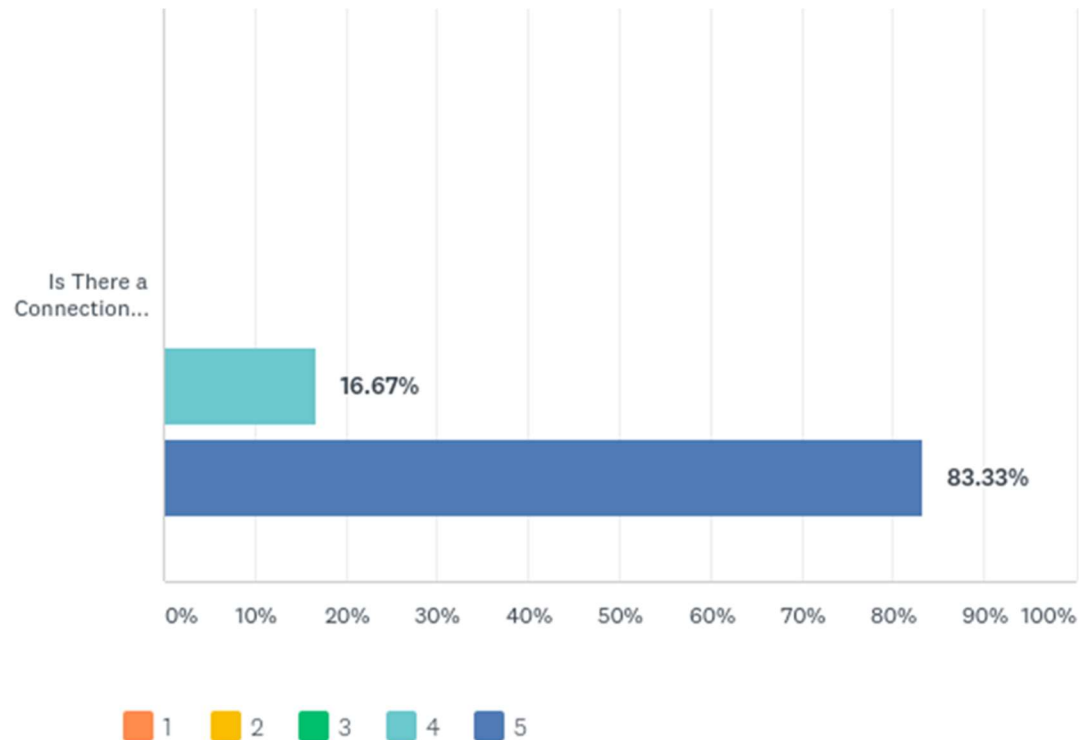
Because we live in a westernized culture, a capitalistic culture that emphasizes and teaches the accumulation of wealth and things and material things as being the most important thing, and the way that we get those is through our vocations, many times we identify who we are with what our vocations are. As opposed to understanding that who we are, are created beings of God. (Pastor 2)



Graph 4.6

When asked in Question 13, “Do you believe there is a connection between one’s faith and one’s stewardship of all creation including one’s family, church, and community?”, 83% gave the question a 5 on a scale of 1 to 5. This suggests that the vast majority of the pastors believe there is a connection between one’s faith and one’s stewardship of all creation including one’s family, church, and community. Pastor 1 summed up this sentiment with, “If you know the Word and dealing with God's Creation, you know that it is meant for us to tend and take care and till the land to take care of God's earth. It is our faith because you believe that and know that we have been charged with that responsibility, then you understand that none of this is ours, but it's on loan to us and we are to be stewards over it” (Pastor 1).



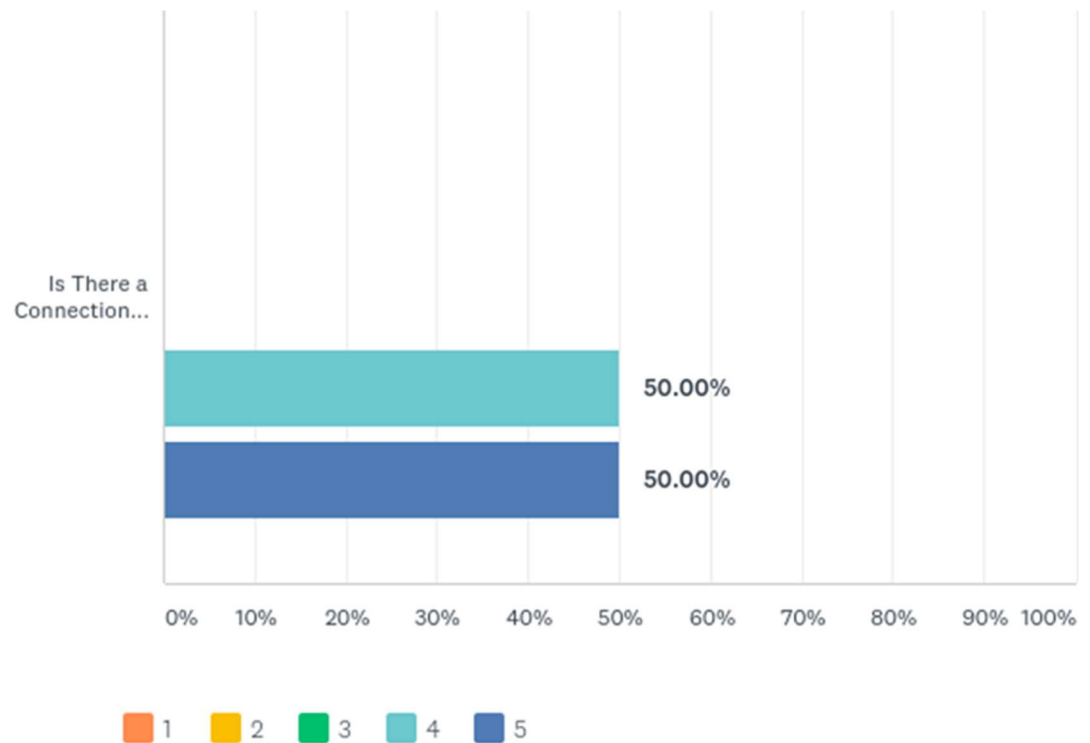


Graph 4.7

When asked in Question 14, “Do you believe there is a connection between one’s faith and how one uses the available financial resources?”, 50% gave the question a 5, and 50% gave it a 4 on a scale of 1 to 5. This suggests that the pastors find a significant connection between faith and the use of financial resources. Pastor 2 said:

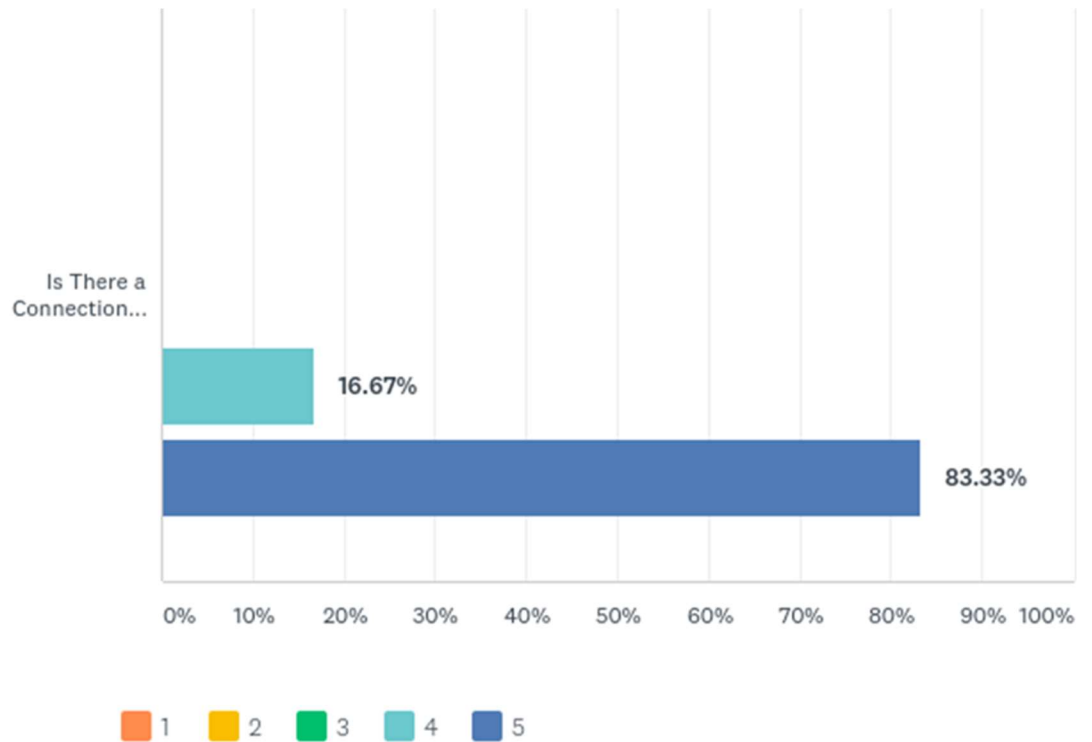
Whether those be interpersonal resources, human resources, financial resources, the natural mineral resources of the earth. We're going to do it in a manner that honors God, that protects this beautiful creation that God has given us and put into our hands. Also, to understand that we are pilgrims passing through. There are others that are coming behind us. The generations that are coming behind us, we have a responsibility by managing well ourselves to ensure that they have the

beauty of the earth and its natural resources to enjoy just like we have. That's because we are led by our faith in terms of managing God's resources. (Pastor 2)



Graph 4.8

When asked in Question 15, “Do you believe there is a connection between one’s faith and how one is able to mentally handle the challenges one faces in life including racism, sexism, and classism?”, 83.33% answered five on a scale of 1 to 5. This suggests that a significant majority of the pastors believe faith has a positive impact on a person’s ability to mentally handle the challenges one faces in life including racism, sexism, and classism. Pastor 1 captured this opinion when she said, “It does affect you mentally if you don't trust God to be God and know that God is a big God, that He's an omnipotent God, He knows everything. So you have to give it to Him, even as it deals with classism, racism, and knowing who you are and whose you are” (Pastor 1).



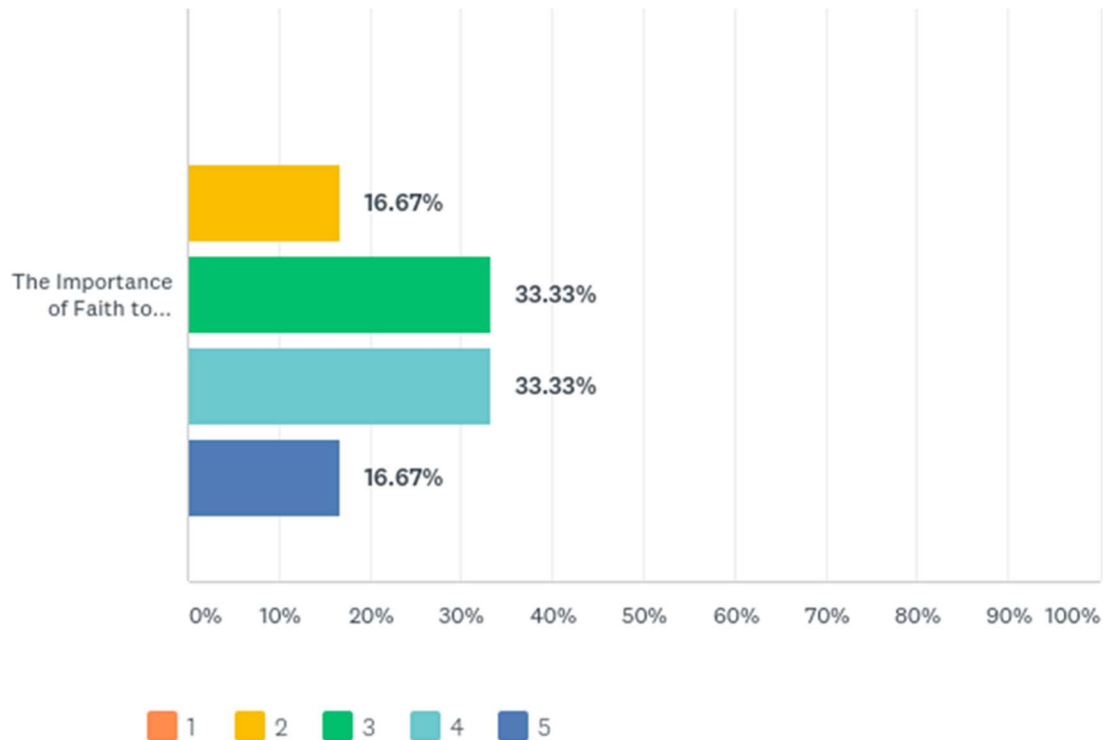
Graph 4.9

Questions 16-21 addressed opinions regarding the integration of faith, work, and economics as part of Christian discipleship for millennials.

	Questions	N	Median	Mean	SD	Yes	No			
16	With 1 meaning not important and 5 meaning most important: On a scale of 1-5, how important is one's Christian faith in deciding a career path or vocation?	6	3.50	3.50	0.96	0	1	2	2	1
17	With 1 meaning no difference and 5 meaning a big difference: On a scale of 1-5, what difference do you think being a Christian should make in the workplace?	6	4.00	4.17	0.69	0	0	1	3	2
	Questions	N	Median	Mean	SD	Yes	No			
18	Do you think the integration of one's faith regarding career choices, occupations and work should be addressed in the faith training and discipleship of young adults that are 21 – 38 years of age? Yes or No.	6	1.00	1.17	0.37	5	1			
19	Do you think the integration of one's faith regarding the use of money and debt should be presented in the faith training and discipleship of young adults that 21 – 38 years of age? Yes or No.	6	1.00	1.00	0.00	6	0			
20	Do you or your individual church currently assist young adults with their career choices, occupation and/or work in the context of their Christian faith? Yes or No.	5	1.00	1.40	0.49	3	2			
21	Work has been said to foster dignity and self-respect. For young adults that are 21 – 38 years of age and chronically unemployed, have you or your individual church used ministry or Christian discipleship to keep them encouraged? Yes or No.	6	1.00	1.00	0.00	6	0			

Table 4.3

When asked in Question 16, “How important is one’s Christian faith in deciding a career path or vocation?”, 33.33% gave the question a 4, and 33.33% gave it a 3 on a scale of 1 to 5. This suggests that most of the pastors do not feel that faith is a critical factor in deciding a career path. The words of Pastor 3 support this opinion when he said, “When people are establishing careers, that's not a real big portion of the body of the church. I think even those numbers are probably a little bit more optimistic. I don't think that many people actually choose a career based on their faith because that's not a major portion of the church teaching” (Pastor 3).



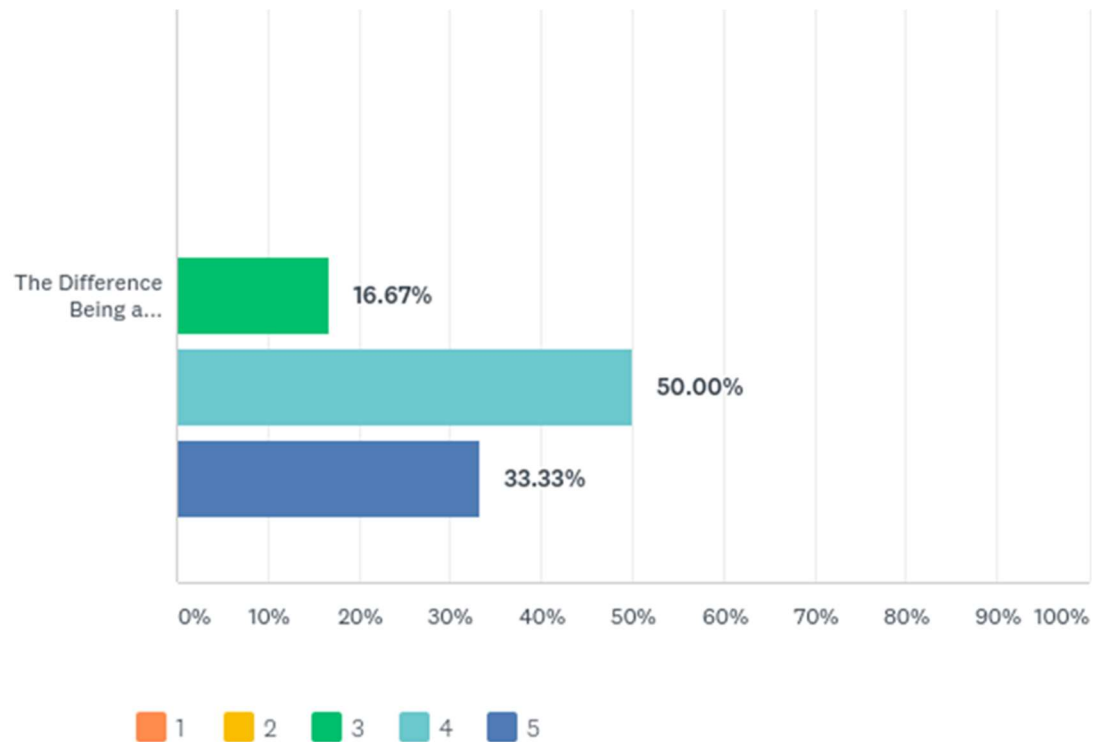
Graph 4.10

When asked in Question 17, “What difference do you think being a Christian should make in the workplace?”, 50% gave the question a 4, and 33% gave it a 5 on a scale of 1 to 5. This suggests that most pastors feel that being a Christian does make a difference in the workplace. Pastor 3 explained

We've got to understand that it's not necessarily us going there trying to transform the place, but I think just the addition of us brings something positive. I'm not saying it transforms them, but it transforms the little space that we're in.

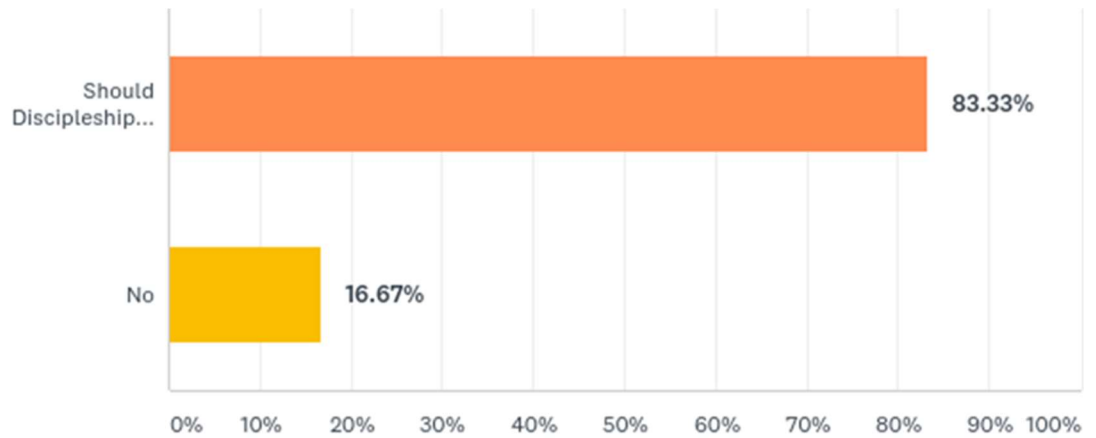
Sometimes you appreciate what it is and do your piece to make sure that you represent Christ well. When people are looking for answers and maybe they are frustrated by what the culture looks like, but they see something different in you and they open different opportunities for people to ask questions, first of all, what makes you different from all of this? Sometimes, it's trendy to be different. I

think it just gives other people an opportunity that wouldn't normally be attracted or drawn to a completely Christian culture, that gives an opportunity to the other culture to see what's special or unique about being a Christian. (Pastor 3)



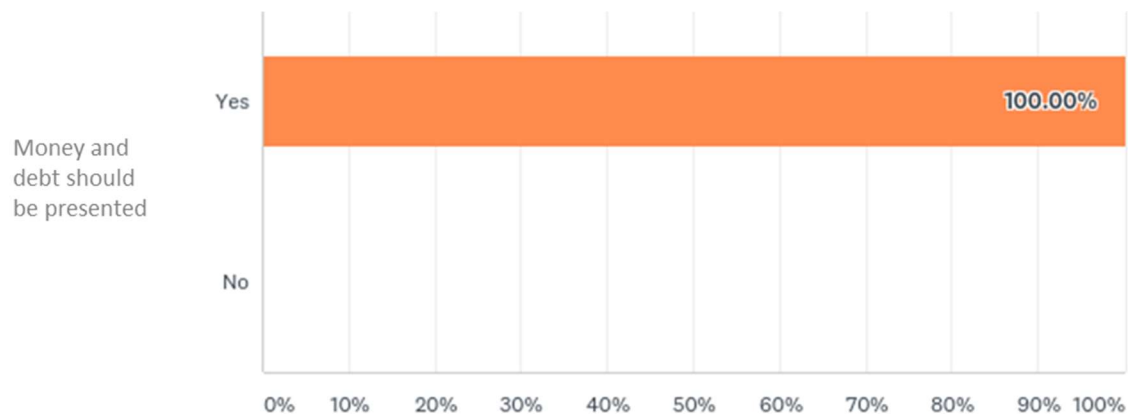
Graph 4.11

When asked in Question 18, “Do you think the integration of one’s faith regarding career choices, occupations and work should be addressed in the faith training and discipleship of young adults that are 21 – 38 years of age? Yes or No,” 83% said yes. This suggests that most pastors feel that they should include discussions regarding career choices, occupations, and work in the faith training and discipleship of young adults. Pastor 1 said that this is because, “They need to know the proper way or the Christian way, godly way of doing it and handling it. It's part of their lifestyle and everything, God should be in the midst of everything” (Pastor 1).



Graph 4.12

When asked in Question 19, “Do you think the integration of one’s faith regarding the use of money and debt should be presented in the faith training and discipleship of young adults that 21 – 38 years of age? Yes or No,” 100% said yes. This suggests that most pastors strongly believe that the faith training and discipleship of young adults should include the use of money and debt. Pastor 1 explained why this is true when she said, “The Bible tells us not to owe anybody any debt. We really should be living in our means in what we do and the people already in debt, it’s up to the church to help provide workshops, do books, reference books and different things that they could do to help them to get out of debt” (Pastor 1).

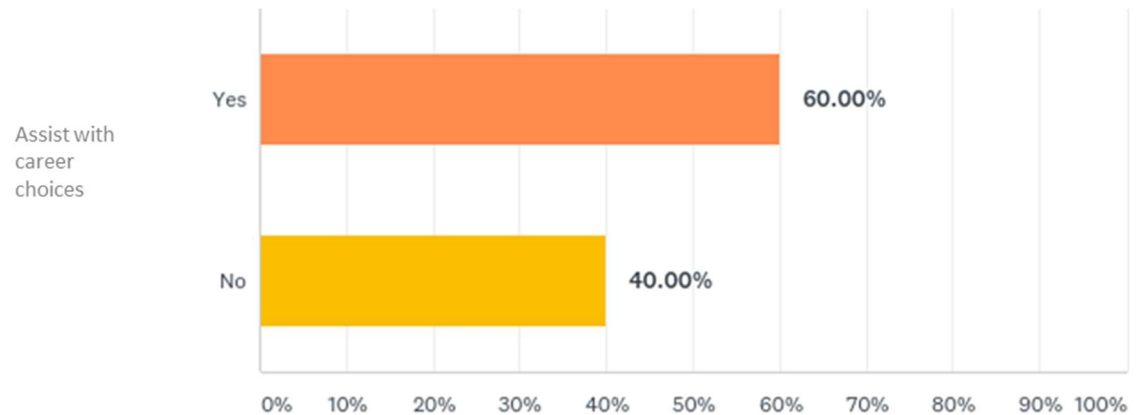


Graph 4.13

When asked in Question 20, “Do you or your individual church currently assist young adults with their career choices, occupation, and/or work in the context of their Christian faith? Yes or No,” 60% said yes. This suggests that a significant amount of churches are not assisting young adults with their career choices, occupation choices and/or work in the context of their Christian faith. Pastor 1 said that her church provides counseling for young adults “in the context of their Christian faith” (Pastor 1). While Pastor 3 said that his church does not provide counseling but instead helps support a person after a decision is already made. He said:

When they decide they want to go through a door, I assist them to open that door, to get that door open. I don't assist in trying to tell them, "You should do this or you should do that." I think that's their choice. I think church comes in handy to use in our influence when we know someone. If I know someone's applying for a job to be a city attorney and I know the city manager, I can go and make a phone call and help this person, or if someone feels that they were denied and just felt like something was not right about it, I can go have a conversation and say, "Hey, I'm concerned about how this was handled." I think that we should definitely assist in helping get the doors open, but not necessarily direct them what door they should go through. (Pastor 3)



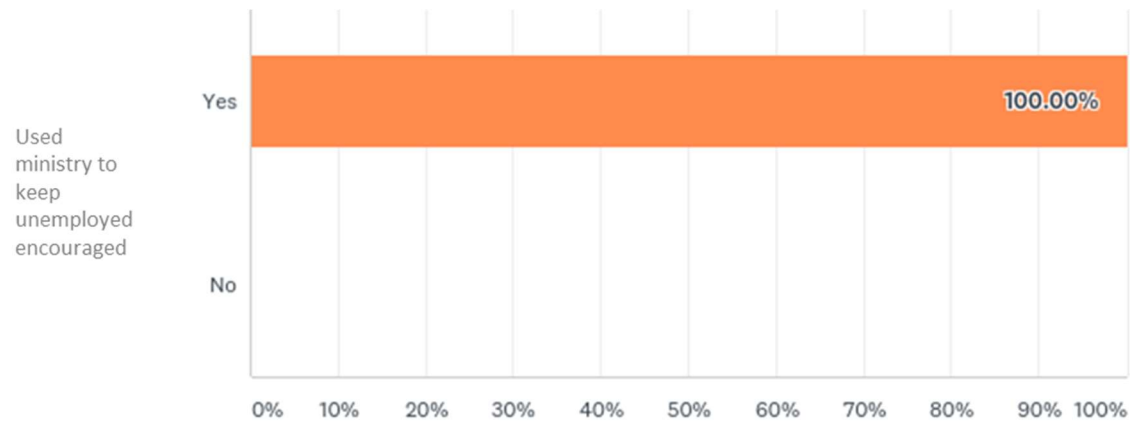


Graph 4.14

When asked in Question 21, “For young adults that are 21 – 38 years of age and chronically unemployed, have you or your individual church used ministry or Christian discipleship to keep them encouraged? Yes or No,” 100% said yes. This suggests that the pastors are ministering to the needs of the chronically unemployed. Pastor 2 explained how he handles this situation. He said:

You really have to have a viable and vibrant young adult ministry in order to touch the lives of those young people and to keep them encouraged doing those types of challenges. The reason being is because I'm 63 years old and a 25 to 30-year-old, their parents may come to me and say, "I'm going through this and I'm going through that. The 25-year-old may not come to me. I might not know that they've lost their job. They may just suffer in silence. Unless I'm real keen and astute to come and talk to them and challenge them on that and find out what's going on, I probably wouldn't know. Whereas if there's a young adult ministry, they're going to share those kinds of challenges with each other, which then gives them an opportunity to minister to each other or to then bring this to the pastor to say, "Pastor, we really have a growing number of our young people who are

losing their jobs. How can the church help?" Which then enables the pastor to work with young people in terms of developing those kinds of ministries. (Pastor 2)



Graph 4.15

### The Semi-Structured Interviews:

The Semi-Structured Interview data was categorized according to five themes in order to shed further light on the pastors' opinions as related to this research. The themes were "The Role of the Black Church," "Millennials," "Faith," "Work," and "Economics."

The category of "The Role of the Black Church" revealed that the pastors of these churches accepted the fact that the role of the Black Church had evolved since its inception. Pastor 2 said:

In the 19th and the 20th century, the church was such a central role in the lives of African Americans. Practically, everything that happened in African American lives evolved around the church. The difference today is that people just have so many more options in which to access information. It not just reduces the church's

impact, but it reduces the avenues by which the church has to impact the lives of its members. (Pastor 2)

However, despite this, Pastor 2 said:

We serve God and God always wants to minister to the whole of human beings. God is always concerned about the mind, the body, the spirit and so the church has to have the same type of approach as we seek to model ministry after God, touching on every aspect of human beings' lives. That's why we find in today's culture that churches that have comprehensive ministries that deal with young people, children, middle-aged people, mature adults, the aged. Churches that have really, really comprehensive ministries are more or less the growing churches because they're dealing with practically every aspect of the human being's life. (Pastor 2)

Pastor 3 indicated that some of the change in the Black Church had not been positive when they said, "I think that they probably said the church has been unfortunately swayed from focusing on its purpose, which is building people and empowering people. We've gotten really caught up in, I guess, the theatrics of church, and we've gotten caught up in the whole production and not really trying to transform people's lives to the core" (Pastor 3).

The category of "Millennials" included comments that appeared applicable to millennials in general as well as to African American millennials. Pastor 1 stated that:

Our millennials, they go through a phase of life where they're still trying to find themselves. They find themselves faced with all kinds of challenges, peer-pressure. It's important that we teach them what the Word of God says. They're

searching for that. They're looking for those things to help them with their everyday situations, their living, their jobs. how can I balance my life and every aspect of my life. (Pastor 1)

Pastor 2 expressed the importance of allowing the young adults in his church to have some autonomy. He said:

I know the young adult ministry that I have, they operate autonomously with my supervision, but I don't go to their meetings. I get them organized and so I don't go to their meetings, I don't go to their Bible studies. I let them have that time to dialogue with each other in the language that they communicate with, with a person who I know has some spiritual grounding that can guide the conversations in a godly, biblical manner. I think if there's a vibrant young adult ministry, they'll have those conversations and they'll encourage each other and try to help come up with solutions or they'll share it with the leader in charge who then can help bring the whole church and the whole church's resources to bear on the problems that the young adults might be having. (Pastor 2)

In addition, Pastor 2 expressed the importance of keeping church life relevant to everyday life. He said:

I think millennials look for the church to be more engaged and more than just the religious aspects. Yes, they want to come in and get a word. They want spiritual formation. They want to be taught the word of God, but then how does that word of God apply to my life? How does that word of God impact my interpersonal relationships, my relationship with my friends, my relationships with my co-workers, my relationship on my job, handling my money, dealing with the social

justice issues that we encounter every day? I think the more the church engages millennials here, again, comprehensively, the more they are likely to reciprocate and be engaged in the church and to be engaged in ministries of the church.

(Pastor 2)

Pastor 3 also discussed the importance of real-life relevancy as important to attracting African American millennials to church. They said:

Most of them think the church is not relevant because we're just too religious and that we don't deal with what they deal with, raising children, and working, and dealing with issues that they have to deal with in everyday life. We don't deal with those realities, the conflicts. In the Bible, the way it seems like it's contradicting itself, we don't touch those and they're concerned about those issues. It's important to them. White supremacy and just European influence for a selfish agenda, they see these things and they see the church not dealing with them, and so many instances-- they do believe in God, but they're forced to go to beliefs and they're forced to go into directions that that's really not their primary choice but they see the Christian Church and the Black church not dealing with real-life issues. Literally, our Bible study last year, we changed it from just traditional Bible study to real talk, what we deal with, real type current issues that are going on. Then so now, what does faith and what does Scripture have to say about these issues? Whatever the issues are. Most times the church won't deal with it. Homosexuality, things that scriptures won't deal with it, the millennials will be like, Okay, well, I'll go find somebody that's willing to at least talk about it. So,

we have to talk about it where they are concerned or (they will) find somewhere (else) where they can have those conversations. (Pastor 3)

The category of “Faith” did not reveal any surprises regarding the role and nature of faith in the life of a Christian. Pastor 1 said:

The word of God, it helps teach us the way that we should live, the way we should carry ourselves, what kind of character we should have, as it also helps us socially to know how to deal with every situation that we're faced with every day. If you seek Him, He will direct you. He will guide you and open up the door for you to walk through for that, that he has called you to and equipped you for.

(Pastor 1)

Pastor 1 further said:

It does affect you mentally if you don't trust God to be God and know that God is a big God, that He's an omnipotent God, He knows everything. So, you have to give it to Him, even as it deals with classism, racism, and knowing who you are and whose you are. Because you have that faith, you understand because you're in a crisis, it doesn't mean that it's the end of the world. It just means that you're going through a crisis, but God is going to bring you through. No matter whether it's economical or whether it is relational or whether it is medical or mental or whatever it is, God is going to see you through it. I might not be able to see it, I might not be able to explain it, but we know that because God is sovereign and that God causes all things to work together for good, we can celebrate and praise God even in the midst of crisis and trauma. (Pastor 1)

The pastors had a lot to say regarding the category of “Work.” When asked about the topic of a “calling” as it relates to a career path or vocation, the pastors had varying opinions. They all agreed that everyone had a calling but did not agree on how that calling would manifest. Pastor 1 said it is important to identify one’s calling, “Because if you're out of your calling, what you're called to do, then many people tend to lose their sense of worth and value. While as when you're in your calling, your vocation that you're meant to be in, you're going to have a zeal” (Pastor 1). They also said, “You need to consult God. The Bible tells us that God knows the plans he has for us. Therefore, he knows why we are created and where he is putting us. We need to be asking God, what is it that He has called us to” (Pastor 1)?

Pastor 3 said, “Wherever you're called and wherever you're assigned, you're representing God. We're ambassadors. God called us to do his work. We're not just called to simply do it in the church. Wherever God has assigned us in life and how he gifted us, and whatever it is, we're to use those gifts as ambassadors” (Pastor 3).

Pastor 2 said:

Well, I think probably because when it comes to a career path, I think there is just no set pattern, no set formula. I think it happens in a number of different ways. I think that would probably be a toss-up between a three and a four about faith because many times even in church, in Sunday school, young people will be taught about their value and the fact that they are created for a divine purpose, and that God has a purpose for your life. They may even talk about careers and things of that nature and they may be led by way of some church school teacher or some pastor, but I just think it just happens in many different ways. I do believe that no

matter how it happens that it eventually or most of the time leads back to God. It leads back to that foundation with God. (Pastor 2)

However, Pastor 2 said that a calling or purpose is tied to a spiritual relationship.

They said:

It's not until we have that relationship and develop that relationship with God that we realize this is what we've been seeking all along and we feel fulfilled. When we develop that relationship with God, we come to the understanding that we are created for a divine purpose, we're created for a divine purpose. We're not just created to work and make a whole lot of money. We're not just created to shoot a basketball. We're not just created to be an engineer or to be a builder, but we were created for a divine purpose. (Pastor 2)

A vocation, Pastor 2 said, may have little to do with a calling:

Because we live in a westernized culture, a capitalistic culture that emphasizes and teaches the accumulation of wealth and things and material things as being the most important thing, and the way that we get those is through our vocations, many times we identify who we are with what our vocations are. As opposed to understanding that who we are, are created beings of God. We are divine, we are gifted, we are graced with gifts and graces from almighty God, we have purpose. All of those things that has nothing to do with our vocation. Even if I don't have a job, I'm still a man of God. I'm still an individual that is created in God's image. I've got God's anointing on me. I've got God's purpose in me. I'm somebody even if I don't have a job. But because we live in this western society that connects



human value with financial worth, we tend to lift up the vocation as being the most important thing. (Pastor 2)

Pastor 3 agreed that Christians may place too much value on vocation. He said: It's probably, unfortunately reality that we are judged by the doors that we're allowed to walk through, because unfortunately, not a large enough number of us are able to choose and do what it is that we feel that we want to do. We do what we're allowed to do. We do whatever opportunity happens to come our way. Then unfortunately, we do value ourselves based on that thing. The church's responsibility is one, to help open up doors so that people can live in an equitable society where they can fulfill their heart's desires and do what it is that they want to do and still be able to take care of themselves. Still, if they're not in that place, the church lets them know that their work is not tied to the doors that just happen to open up for their lives. (Pastor 3)

The pastors differed on the role of the Church in influencing a career choice.

Pastor 1 said that they provide career guidance to members, “in the context of their Christian faith” (Pastor 1). Pastor 3 said:

I don't think that many people actually choose a career based on their faith because that's not a major portion of the church teaching. I think you got to trust people, then you teach people what it means to look like Christ. You got to allow them to hear from God themselves and not try to influence it. I don't really trust us. In our flow of thinking, we could redirect and push people away from places where God needs to be. I think our job is to put Christ in them and then let them figure out how God will use them in whatever place God sends them. I think we

try to be God when we try to tell people what to do and where to go. We have to carefully set ourselves in people's hands for them to talk with God and decide for themselves. (Pastor 3)

Pastor 2 felt that the Church should take more of an active role. They said:

One of the things that we (his local church) have been doing the last few years is really developing our educational ministry starting with kindergarten to acknowledge the success of our young people and to encourage our young people to be hard workers inside of the classroom and to develop annual career and educational days where we talk about scholarships, college applications. We have mentorships for fledging students that are going to college as well as to help talk about career choices and that type thing. I just think it's just so important here again that there is a comprehensive effort of the church to touch every aspect of the human life, those things which are important to molding and to help shape the future leaders and the future Christians that are going to be the people who are now being stewards of God's resources. The earlier you're able to do that, the earlier you're able to plant those seeds, the more, I think, impactful it will be. There's value in addressing career choices within the spiritual formation and training of those people in that age range. I just think that age range (millennials) is too late. It will be better if it started happening somewhere around the mid-teens, say, 15 to 20. Maybe even 14 to 20 because here again people are within those formative years between about 12 to 18 to 20 years old. You are making those decisions about life and career choices and what kind of person you are going to be. (Pastor 2)

On the topic of unemployment, Pastor 2 felt that it was very important to provide support within the context of a young adult ministry. They said:

You really have to have a viable and vibrant young adult ministry in order to touch the lives of those young people and to keep them encouraged during those types of challenges. The reason being is because I'm 63 years old and a 25 to 30-year-old, their parents may come to me and say, I'm going through this and I'm going through that. The 25-year-old may not come to me. I might not know that they've lost their job. They may just suffer in silence. Unless I'm real keen and astute to come and talk to them and challenge them on that and find out what's going on, I probably wouldn't know. Whereas if there's a young adult ministry, they're going to share those kinds of challenges with each other, which then gives them an opportunity to minister to each other or to then bring this to the pastor to say, Pastor, we really have a growing number of our young people who are losing their jobs. How can the church, help? Which then enables the pastor to work with young people in terms of developing those kinds of ministries. (Pastor 2)

Pastor 1 agreed when they said:

(We) try to help encourage them because it's so easy to get discouraged because you can't get a job and even especially those who may have gone to school, got degrees, and can't find a job or even just those who have not gone to school or not going to school and they're just trying to make it from day-to-day. It's important because especially with suicide rates being high and as people get lost in all kinds of other things in the world, drugs, gangs, things, it's just important to help them

to stay focused, to help them to know, okay, that door was shut for a reason, that the right door is going to open. (Pastor 1)

Pastor 3 had a different approach. They said:

I think it's good to keep them encouraged, but you need to encourage them to get a job. If there are obstacles in the way, go and remove those obstacles, but help them to be able to feed themselves and you have to empower them. To advise them. The encouragement is good as long as the encouragement involves actually being able to get in a situation to where you take care of your family, you're responsible and you take care of your debt, and all of that kind of stuff. If there are obstacles getting in the way, you go and you remove those barriers. You just don't encourage them by saying, Everything's going to be alright, but you put them in a position to catch the fish. (Pastor 3)

The pastors were somewhat in agreement on the difference being a Christian should make in the marketplace. Pastor 1 said:

Being a Christian is a lifestyle every day. It should make a difference on your job and even how you handle life situations, someone's always watching you. You'll be able to make an impact in the lives of others to help lead them to Christ. In some instances, you can talk about God, in some you can't. If you live it, people are going to always see and it will help draw others, which our main goal is to win souls for Christ every day anyways. It may help someone else in their walk, whether they may be struggling with issues or struggling with some challenges but they see how you handle it and how you deal with it or know what you've gone through but you didn't, you didn't fall. (Pastor 1)

Pastor 2 said:

If I'm a Christian in the workplace, I should carry myself in such a way that everybody understands and respects that I'm a Christian, and because they understand that I'm a Christian, they are going to respect my opinions, they are going to respect my values, they are going to respect my methods of conduct because they know that I'm a Christian, and that there are just certain things that I don't do, certain things that I don't involve myself in. Now, does that mean because I'm a Christian I'm going to change them and their behavior and the way that they do things? Maybe not, but by the same token, maybe so because somebody is going to want to know why I'm like I am. Especially during situations where they may know that I'm going through crisis. I'm going through crisis, but again still I'm walking with my head up high. I come to work every day. I have a boldness about myself and a confidence about myself even when it looks like the world is crumbling down. (Pastor 2)

Pastor 3 said:

We've got to understand that it's not necessarily us going there trying to transform the place, but I think just the addition of us brings something positive. I'm not saying it transforms them, but it transforms the little space that we're in. Sometimes you appreciate what it is and do your piece to make sure that you represent Christ well. When people are looking for answers and maybe they are frustrated by what the culture looks like, but they see something different in you and they open different opportunities for people to ask questions, first of all, what makes you different from all of this? Sometimes, it's trendy to be different. I

think it just gives other people an opportunity that wouldn't normally be attracted or drawn to a completely Christian culture, that gives an opportunity to the other culture to see what's special or unique about being a Christian. (Pastor 3)

The pastors also had a lot to say regarding the category of "Economics." All of the pastors indicated that they felt that the Black Church could do more regarding economic development. Pastor 1 said that "The Black church does not emphasize as much on the economics as they used to back then (in its earlier years)" (Pastor 1). Pastor 3 said, "The Black churches could do more if they emphasized entrepreneurship as this is how communities were built up in the past. Money is now flowing out of the community" (Pastor 3). Pastor 2 agreed when they said, "I think that the fact that there are so many different resources available does not diminish the church's requirement to be viable or a viable commodity in terms of educating parishioners as well as the community in terms of economic development" (Pastor 2).

The pastors were also in agreement regarding stewardship. Pastor 1 said, "If you know the word and dealing with God's creation, you know that it is meant for us to tend and take care and till the land to take care of God's earth" (Pastor 1).

Pastor 2 said:

Whether those be interpersonal resources, human resources, financial resources, the natural mineral resources of the earth. We're going to do it in a manner that honors God, that protects this beautiful creation that God has given us and put into our hands. Also, to understand that we are pilgrims passing through. There are others that are coming behind us. The generations that are coming behind us, we have a responsibility by managing well ourselves to ensure that they have the

beauty of the earth and its natural resources to enjoy just like we have. That's because we are led by our faith in terms of managing God's resources. (Pastor 2)

Pastor 3 said that, "We also have responsibility to make sure that we leave this earth and this world in a better position than we found it" (Pastor 3).

Pastor 3 expressed concern that the Church is not doing more to encourage good stewardship over the earth's resources. "Our Church is one big example," they said:

You have all this technology where you don't have to use all the paper and things like that. When you're (having a) meeting, that can help the world and the earth, but we have leaders in our church. They are people of great faith, but because of their unwillingness to attest to a current world that we operate in and the needs that our earth has, their faith and their stewardship over the earth doesn't seem to match up. They don't connect those two, but I don't think it has anything to do with their faith, I think it's all connected to what they (churches) are teaching. (Pastor 3)

Pastor 2 tied stewardship over personal resources to faith when they said:

God entrusts us all at different levels, and the level in which we are entrusted doesn't mean that God values us any differently. It just means this is the level in which God trusts us to handle and manage God's stuff. Those of us who have a relationship with God and understand that "I don't own anything. I'm just put in trust of God's things," then we handle God's things in the manner that God would dictate. When we have money because God has given us life and health and strength and given us a job, we in turn give generously back to God a portion of that which God has entrusted unto us. We are good stewards of God's resources

by taking care of our family, providing a home, providing food and shelter and basic creature comforts. (Pastor 2)

Pastor 2 felt that church teaching related to finance should have started years before a person was of millennial age. They said that:

Real-world application has to be connected to the nuts and bolts of Mathematics and Science and that type of thing. It needs to happen starting around 13, 14, 15 years old on through 21, 25. Those to me are the most critical times when people need to understand the value of money, the importance of managing money well and of being the stewards of God's money. (Pastor 2)

Pastor 3 agreed but felt that “we have to make sure we use the appropriate people to do it. Maybe it can't be me doing it if that's not my expertise. I have to get someone that's an expert in that area, that understands that area, that's not just teaching from a testimony, that they're a teacher from a knowledge base with proven resources, reliable resources” (Pastor 3).

Pastor 1 said that:

I teach people about the finances, what the Word of God says about it. I also remind them the Bible says, "Owe no one any debt but love." “The Bible, they said, “tells us not to owe anybody any debt. We really should be living in our means in what we do and the people already in debt, it's up to the church to help provide workshops, do books, reference books and different things that they could do to help them (people) to get out of debt. (Pastor 1)

### **Research Question #2: Description of Evidence**

The Millennial Survey gathered research data related to Research Question #2:



In the opinion of millennials that attend historic Black Protestant Churches in Florida, what do they see as the most important, helpful, and relevant aspect of Christian discipleship that addresses their desire for a lifestyle that integrates the components of faith, work, and economics into their everyday lives?

The survey included twenty questions. The first six questions confirmed that the participant met the requirements for their opinion to be included in the research data and also identified their gender. The last question, question 20, asked the participant if they would like to volunteer to participate in a focus group.

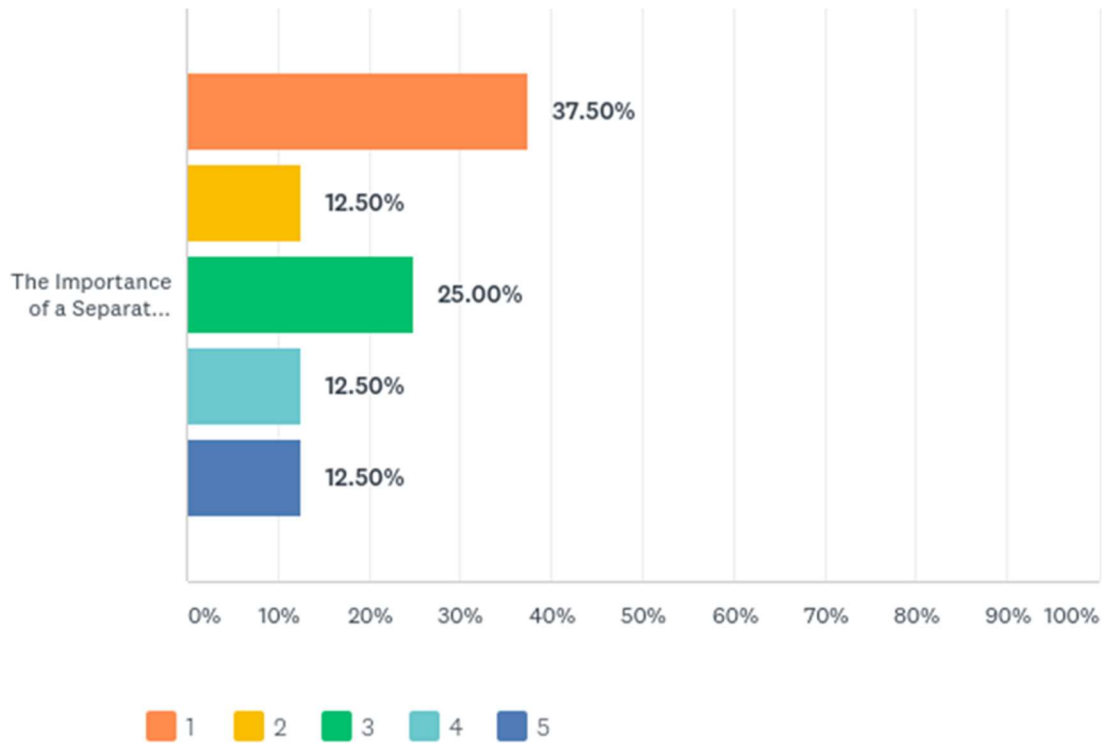
Questions 7-13 addressed opinions regarding discipleship and faith as a component of a holistic faith-based lifestyle.

	Questions	N	Median	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
7	With 1 meaning not important and 5 meaning most important: On a scale of 1-5, how important is it to you that a church have a separate discipleship program or ministry specifically for adults ages 21 – 38 years of age?	8	2.50	2.50	1.41	3	1	2	1	1
8	With 1 meaning not important and 5 meaning most important: On a scale of 1-5, how important is it to you that the church teachings emphasize a holistic faith-based lifestyle to you as a part of its Christian training, education or discipleship?	8	4.00	3.63	1.11	1	0	1	5	1
9	With 1 meaning no impact and 5 meaning most impact: On a scale of 1-5, what impact should a person's Christian faith have on their choices of work, occupation or career?	8	3.00	2.63	1.11	2	1	3	2	0
10	With 1 meaning no difference and 5 meaning a big difference: On a scale of 1-5, what difference do you think being a Christian should make in the workplace?	8	3.50	3.38	1.32	1	1	2	2	2
11	With 1 meaning no impact and 5 meaning most impact: On a scale of 1-5, what impact should a person's Christian faith have on their personal economic matters including money and debt?	8	4.00	3.68	1.27	1	0	1	3	3
12	With 1 meaning no connection and 5 meaning the highest connection: On a scale of 1-5, do you believe there is a connection between one's faith and one's stewardship of all creation including one's family, church, and community?	8	4.00	4.00	1.00	0	1	1	3	3
13	With 1 meaning no connection and 5 meaning the highest connection: On a scale of 1-5, do you believe there is a connection between one's faith and how one is able to mentally handle the challenges one faces in life including racism, sexism, and classism?	8	5.00	4.50	0.71	0	0	1	2	5

Table 4.4

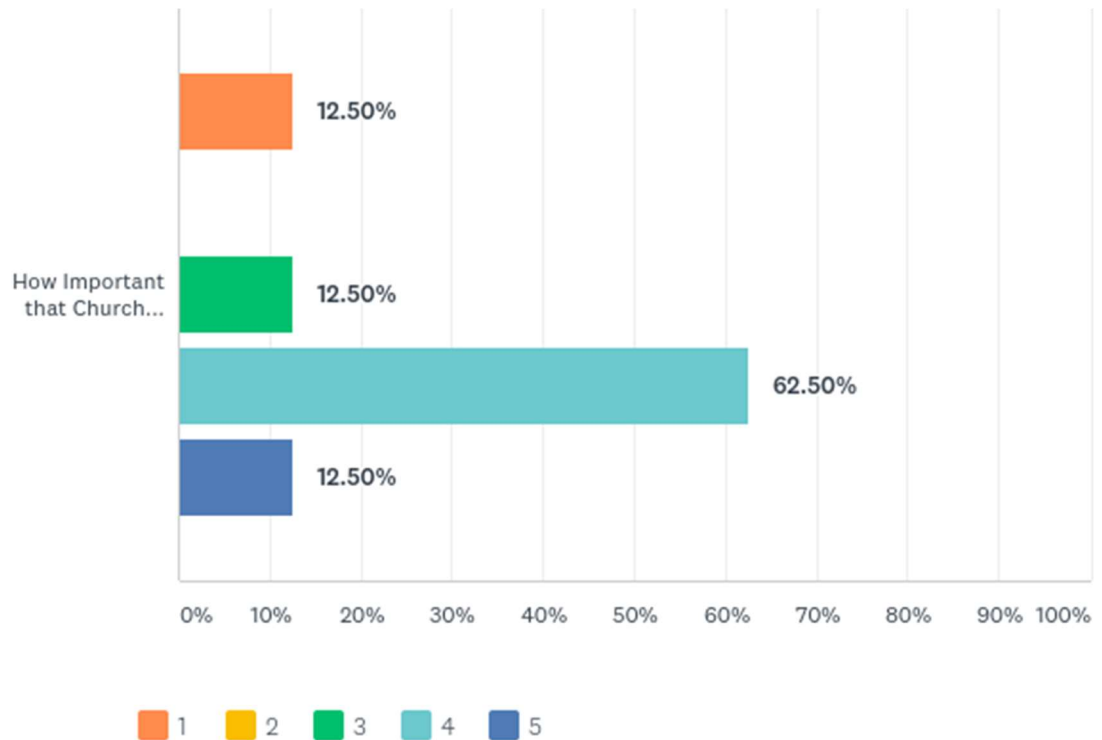
When asked in Question 7, “How important is it to you that a church have a separate discipleship program or ministry specifically for adults ages 21 – 38 years of age?”, 37.5% gave the question a 1, and 25% gave it a 3 on a scale of 1 to 5. This

suggests that a separate discipleship program for Black Protestant millennial aged adults is not important to many of them and may be very important for only 25%.



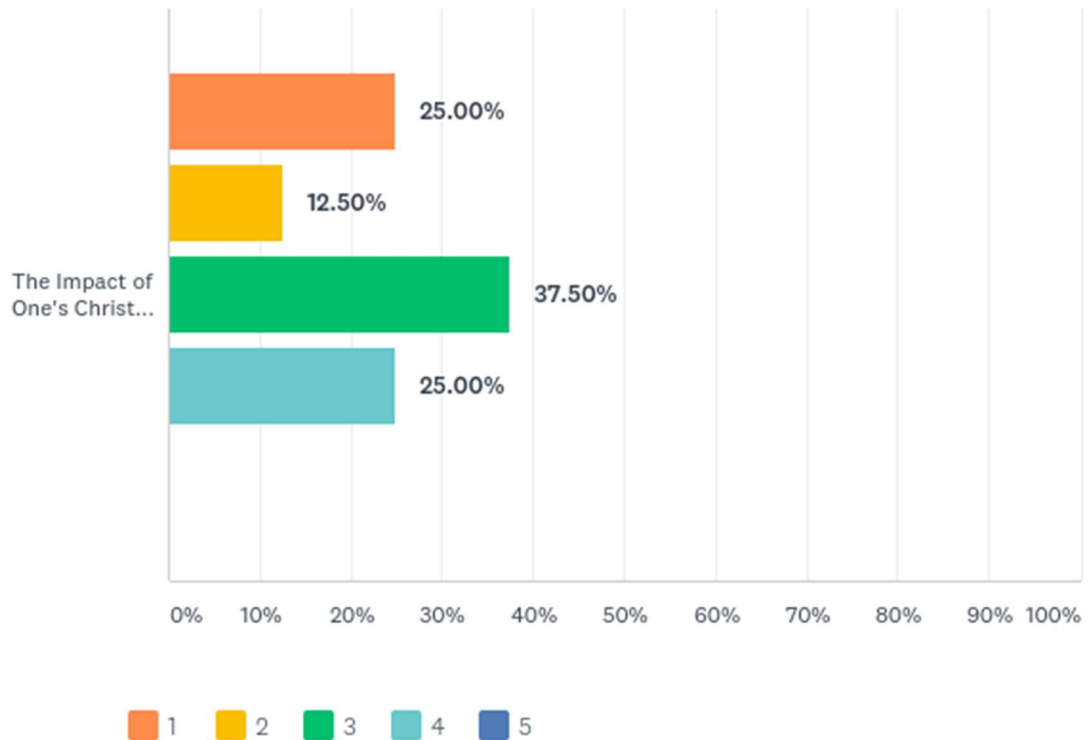
Graph 4.16

When asked in Question 8, “How important is it to you that the church teachings emphasize a holistic faith-based lifestyle to you as a part of its Christian training, education or discipleship?”. 62.5% answered 4 on a scale of 1 to 5. This suggests that a holistic faith-based lifestyle as a part of its Christian training, education, or discipleship may be very important to Black Protestant millennial aged adults.



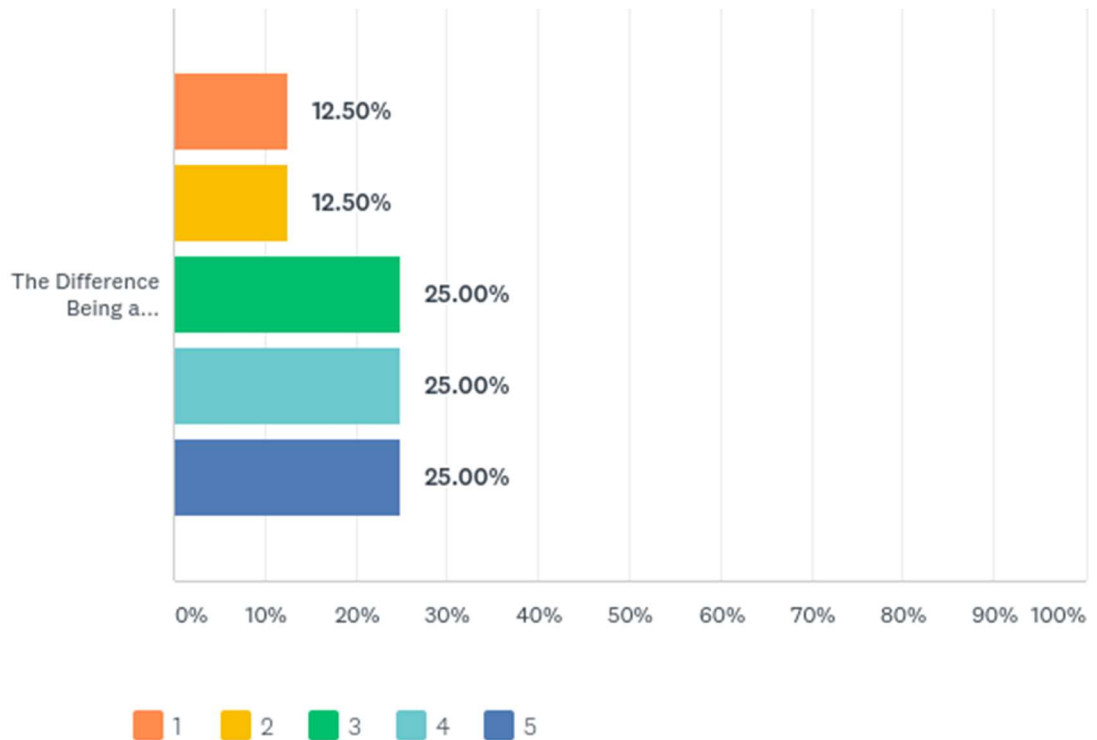
Graph 4.17

When asked in Question 9, “What impact should a person’s Christian faith have on their choices of work, occupation or career?”, 37.5% gave the question a 3, 25% gave it a 4, and 25% gave it a 1 on a scale of 1 to 5. This suggests that Black Protestant millennials may have mixed feelings regarding the impact of their faith on their choices of work, occupations, or careers.



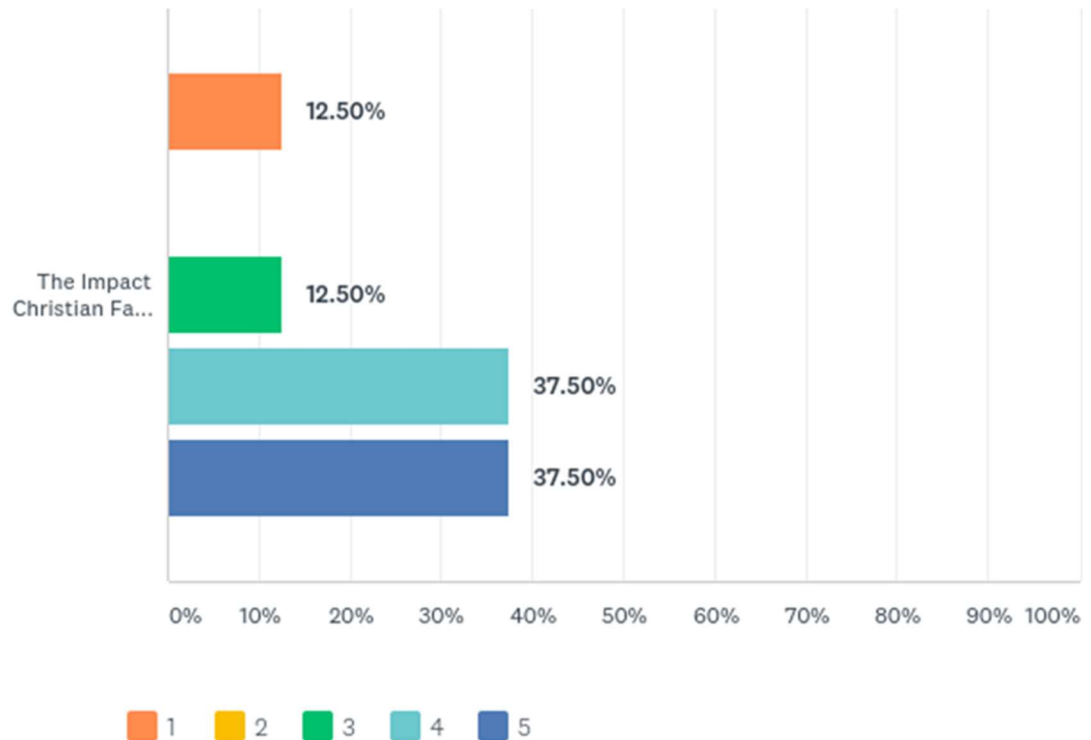
Graph 4.18

When asked in Question 10, “What difference do you think being a Christian should make in the workplace?”, 25% gave the question a 5, 25% gave it a 4, and 25% gave it a 3 on a scale of 1 to 5. This suggests that Black Protestant millennials may have mixed feelings regarding the difference being a Christian should make in the workplace.



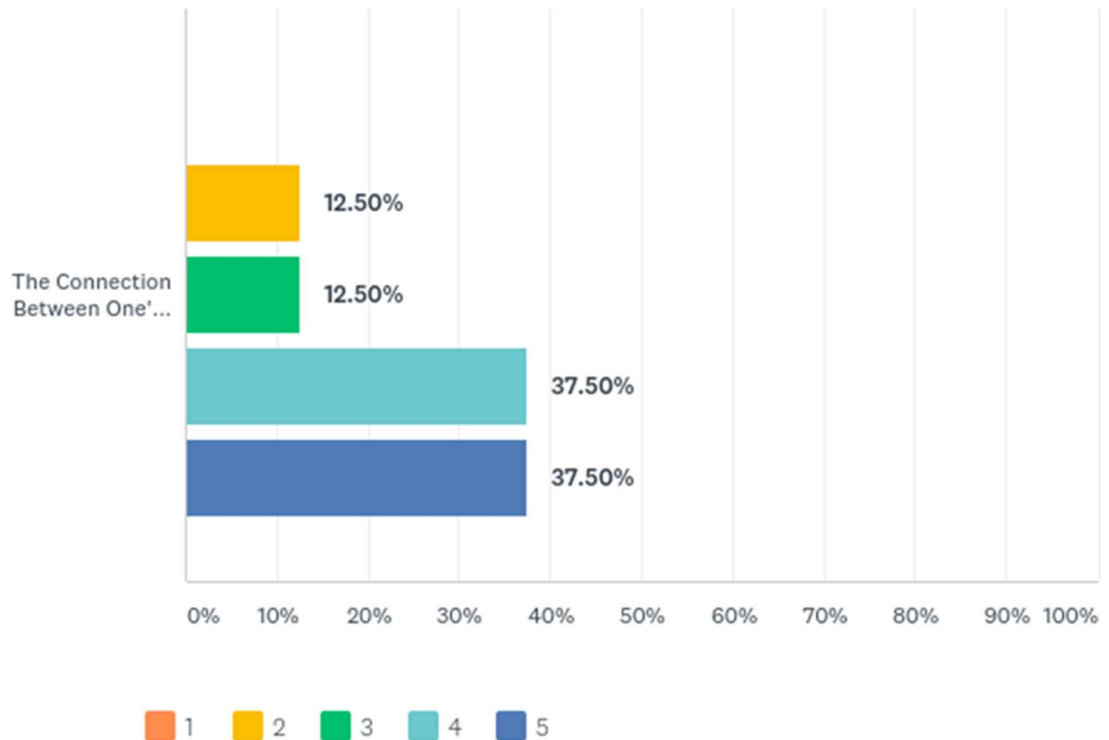
Graph 4.19

When asked in Question 11, “What impact should a person’s Christian faith have on their personal economic matters including money and debt?”, 37.5% gave the question a 4, and 37.5% gave it a 5 on a scale of 1 to 5. This suggests that most Black Protestant millennials may believe that their Christian faith should have an impact on their personal economic matters including money and debt.



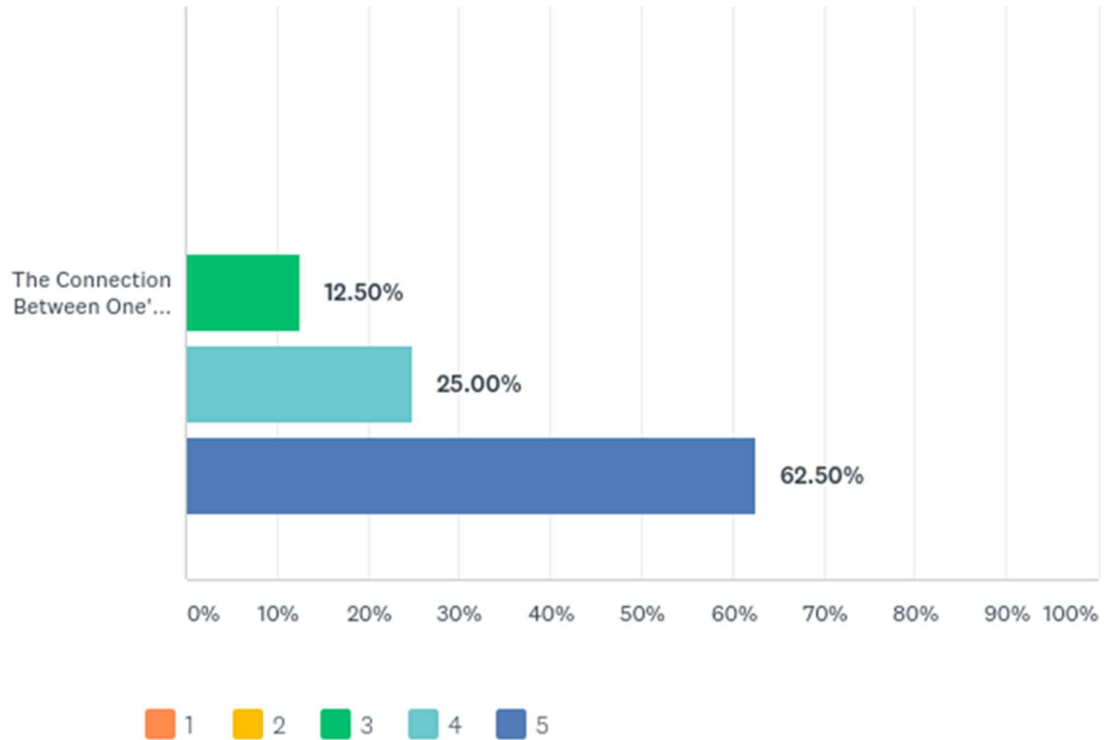
Graph 4.20

When asked in Question 12, “Do you believe there is a connection between one’s faith and one’s stewardship of all creation including one’s family, church, and community?”, 37.5% gave the question a 5, and 37.5% gave it a 5 on a scale of 1 to 5. This suggests that most Black Protestant millennials may believe that there is a connection between one’s faith and one’s stewardship of all creation including one’s family, church, and community.



Graph 4.21

When asked in Question 13, “Do you believe there is a connection between one’s faith and how one is able to mentally handle the challenges one faces in life including racism, sexism, and classism?”, 62.5% answered 5 on a scale of 1 to 5. This suggests that faith is significant to some but not all Black Protestant millennials in regard to handling the challenges one faces in life including racism, sexism, and classism



Graph 4.22

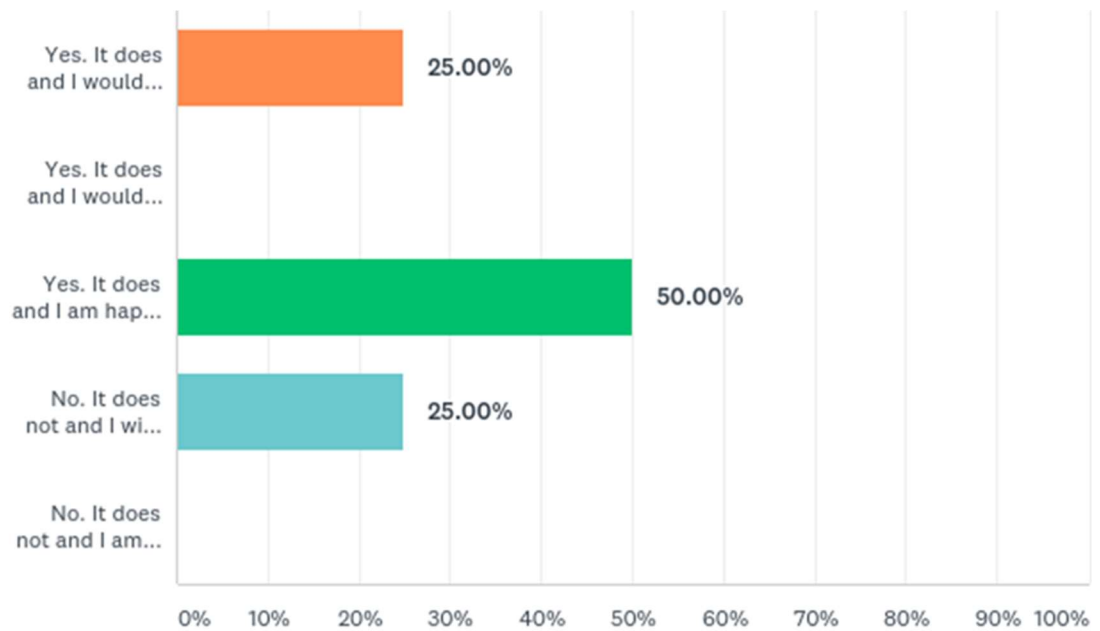
Questions 14-19 explored the desires of millennials regarding discipleship as it relates to faith, work, and economics.

	Questions	N	Median	Mean	SD	Yes. It does and I would like more of this.	Yes. It does and I would like less of this.	Yes. It does and I am happy with that.	No. It does not and I wish that it did.	No. It does not and I am happy with that.
14	Does the church you attend discuss the impact of faith on choices of work, occupation or career?	8	3.00	2.75	1.09	2	0	4	2	0
15	Does the church you attend discuss how one relates to personal economic matters including money and debt is impacted by one's Christian faith?	8	3.50	3.13	1.36	2	0	2	3	1
16	Does the church you attend provide you with any Bible-based training to help you deal with unemployment?	7	4.00	3.00	1.31	2	0	1	4	0
17	Does the church you attend provide you with any Bible-based training to help you deal with the social issues such as racism and discrimination that you may encounter at work and elsewhere in your daily life?	8	3.50	3.50	1.22	1	0	3	2	2
18	Does the church you attend emphasize a holistic lifestyle to young adults as part of faith training, education or discipleship?	8	2.50	2.50	1.12	2	2	2	2	0
19	Does the church you attend have a separate discipleship program or ministry specifically for adults ages 21 – 38 years of age?	8	4.00	3.25	1.39	2	0	1	4	1

Table 4.5

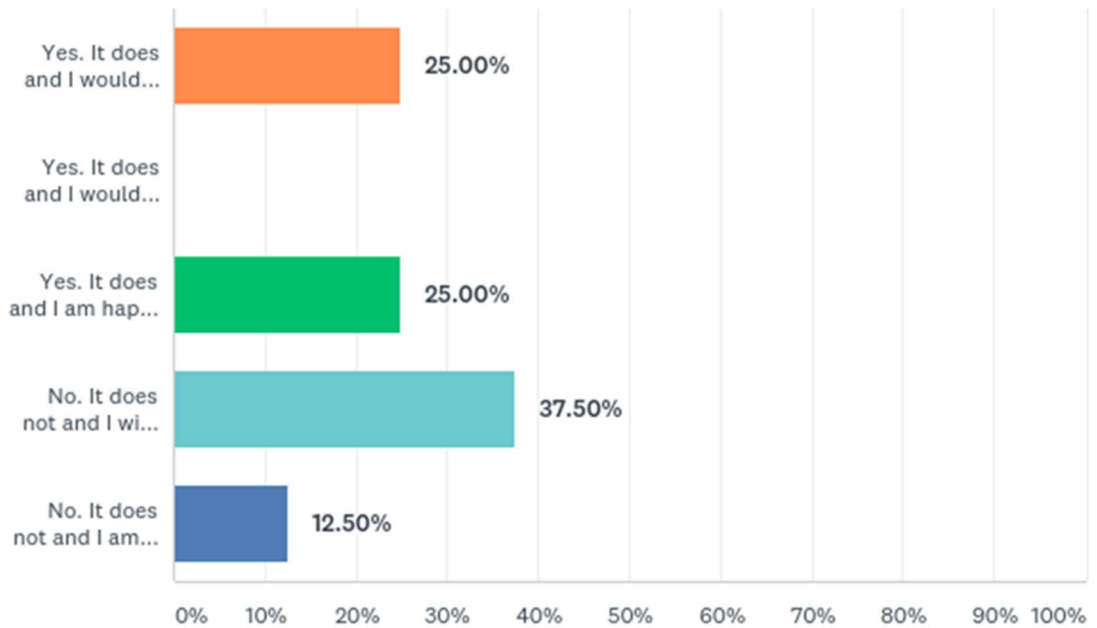


When asked in Question 14, “Does the church you attend discuss the impact of faith on choices of work, occupation or career?”, 50% said, “Yes. It does, and I am happy with that; 25% said “Yes. It does, and I would like more of this,” and 25% said “No. It does not, and I wish that it did.” This suggests that discipleship discussions regarding the impact of faith on choices of work, occupation, or career are important to most Black Protestant millennials.



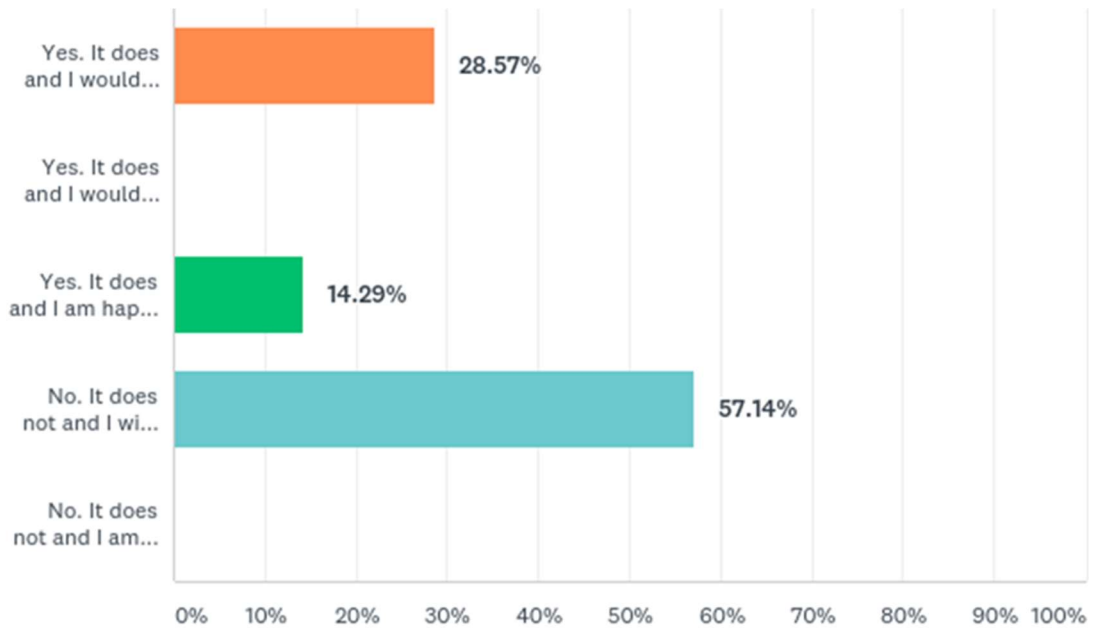
Graph 4.23

When asked in Question 15, “Does the church you attend discuss how one relates to personal economic matters including money and debt is impacted by one’s Christian faith?”, 37.5% said, “No. It does not, and I wish that it did;” 25% said “Yes. It does, and I am happy with that,” and 25% said “Yes. It does, and I would like more of this.” This suggests that discipleship discussions regarding how one relates to personal economic matters including money and debt are important to most Black Protestant millennials and over one-third are not hearing these things discussed in the church that they attend.



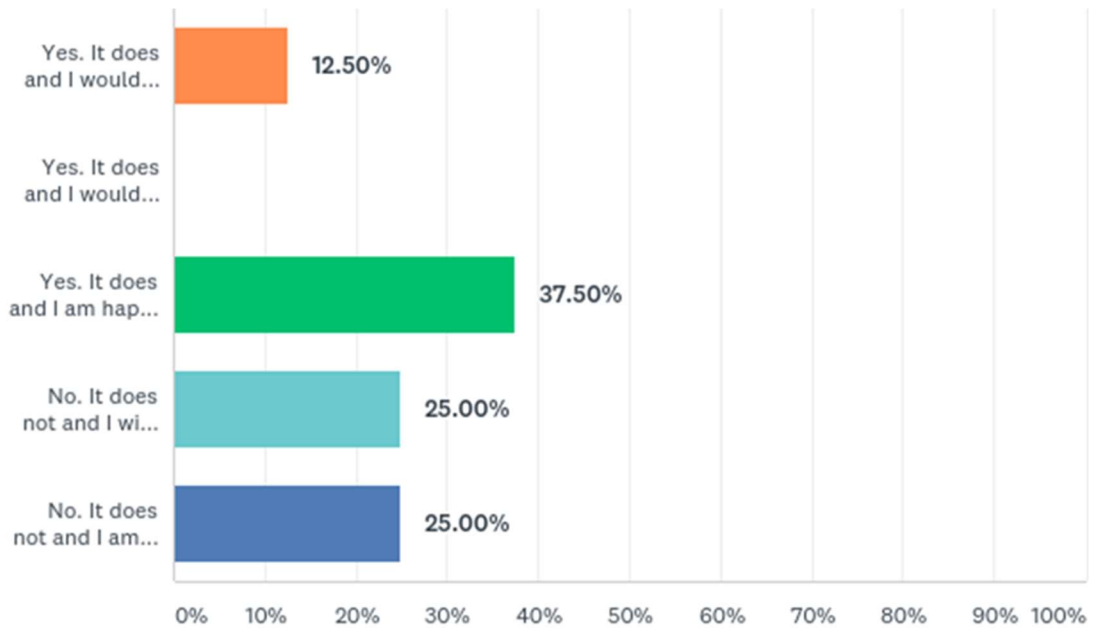
Graph 4.24

When asked in Question 16, “Does the church you attend provide you with any Bible-based training to help you deal with unemployment?”, 57.14% said, “No. It does not, and I wish that it did,” and 28.57% said “Yes. It does, and I would like more of this.” This suggests that Bible-based training to help deal with unemployment is important to most Black Protestant millennials, and most are not receiving this in the church that they attend.



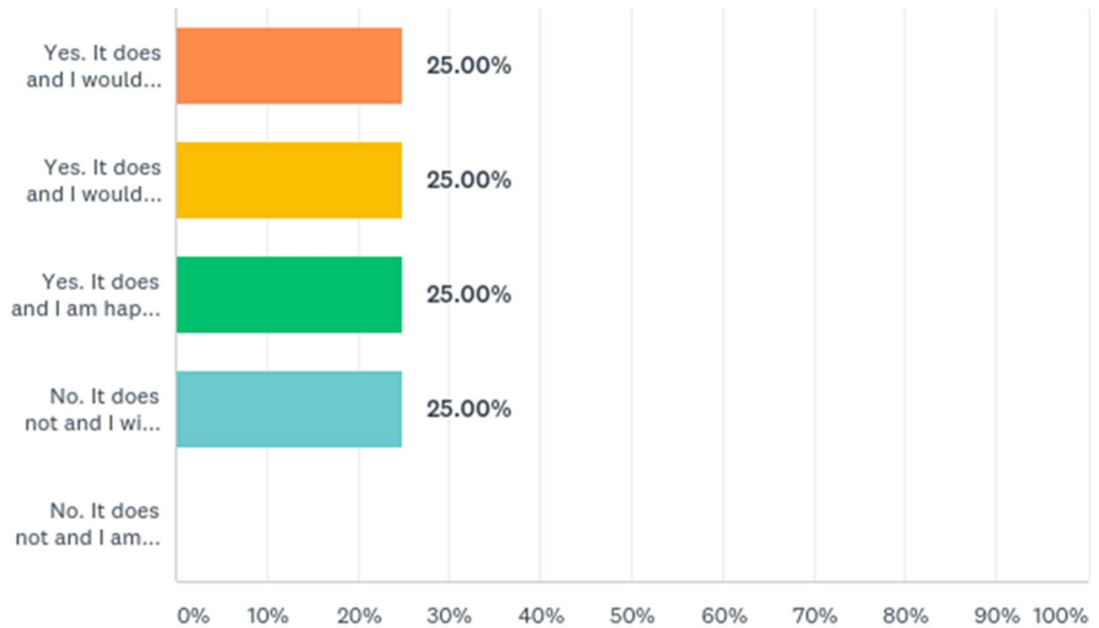
Graph 4.25

When asked in Question 17, “Does the church you attend provide you with any Bible-based training to help you deal with the social issues such as racism and discrimination that you may encounter at work and elsewhere in your daily life?”, 37.5% said, “Yes. It does and I am happy with that;” 25% said “No. It does not, and I wish that it did,” and 25% said “No. It does not, and I am happy with that.” This suggests that over half of Black Protestant millennials find value in Bible-based training to help deal with the social issues that they may encounter at work and elsewhere in their daily life and that a significant number are not receiving this training at the church that they attend.



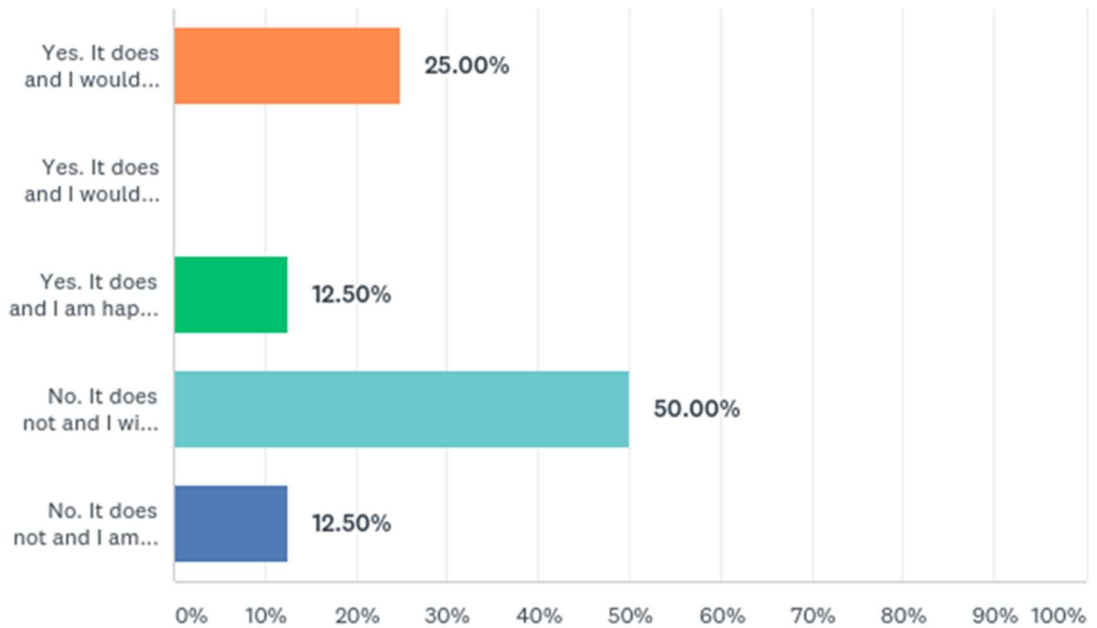
Graph 4.26

When asked in Question 18, “Does the church you attend emphasize a holistic lifestyle to young adults as part of faith training, education or discipleship?”, 25% said, “Yes. It does, and I am happy with that;” 25% said “Yes. It does, and I would like more of this;” 25% said “No. It does not, and I wish that it did,” and 25% said “Yes. It does, and I would like less of this.” This suggests that Black Protestant millennials may have mixed feelings regarding a holistic lifestyle to young adults as part of faith training, education, or discipleship. While most find it to be important to varying degrees, a significant percentage do not feel it is important at all.



Graph 4.27

When asked in Question 18, “Does the church you attend have a separate discipleship program or ministry specifically for adults ages 21 – 38 years of age?”, 50% said, “No. It does not, and I wish that it did,” and 25% said “Yes. It does and I would like more of this.” This suggests that most Black Protestant millennials would prefer to have a separate discipleship program or ministry specifically for adults ages 21 – 38 years of age.



Graph 4.28

### Research Question #3: Description of Evidence

Research Question #3: Based on this research, how could historic Black Protestant Churches in Florida more effectively contextualize and emphasize a lifestyle that includes a holistic integration of faith, work, and economics as part of their Christian discipleship for the millennials they are seeking to attract, engage, and retain?

The data collected from the pastors was compared to the data collected from the millennials to see where there were opportunities for historic Black Protestant Churches in Florida to better understand the discipleship needs of the millennial aged adults that they are seeking to attract, #engage, and retain. The data provided insight on both similar and separate matters related to the ministries of the pastors and millennials that were studied and revealed that on some matters the pastors and millennials had similar opinions and on others they didn't.

Regarding faith as it relates to the whole-life discipleship needs of their millennial aged adults, the pastors that participated in the research indicated that their church should play a significant role in addressing these needs. The millennials that participated in the research agreed. When the pastors were asked in the survey, “Is it as important today as it was in the past for the church to cover the aspects of daily life of education, politics, moral, and social matters in addition to religious matters,” 83.33% answered 4 or 5 on a scale of 1 – 5 indicating that they strongly felt that it is still important for a church to cover these aspects of daily life. On the importance that church teachings emphasize a holistic faith-based lifestyle as part of Christian training, education, or discipleship, 75% of the millennial participants gave it a 4 or 5 on a scale of 1 to 5, indicating this is of significant importance to them.

When the pastors were asked in the survey, “Do you believe there is a connection between one’s faith and how one is able to mentally handle the challenges one faces in life including racism, sexism, and classism,” 100% of the pastors answered 4 or 5 on a scale of 1 to 5, indicating they felt that there is a strong connection between one’s faith and how one is able to mentally handle the challenges one faces in life including racism, sexism, and classism. When the millennials who took the survey were asked if they believe there is a connection between one’s faith and how one is able to mentally handle the challenged one faces in life including racism, sexism, and classism, 87.5% of participants gave it a 4 or 5 on a scale of 1 to 5, indicating this is of significant importance to them. When the millennials were asked if the church that they attend provides them with any Bible-based training to help them deal with the social issues such as racism and discrimination that they may encounter at work and elsewhere in their daily

lives, 37.5% answered, “Yes. It does, and I am happy with that;” 25% answered, “No. It does not, and I wish that it did,” and 12.5% answered, “Yes. It does and I would like more of this.” This indicates that Bible-based training to help deal with the social issues was important to 75% of the millennials that took the survey.

When the pastors were asked in the survey, “How important is it to the millennial aged adults in your church that you cover the aspects of daily life of education, politics, moral, and social matters in addition to religious matters,” 83.33% answered 4 or 5 on a scale of 1 – 5 indicating that they felt it is still important for a church to covers these aspects of daily life. This indicates that they are aware of the level of this desire of the millennials within their own congregations. When the millennials were asked if the church that they attend emphasizes a holistic lifestyle to young adults as part of faith training, education or discipleship, 25% answered, “Yes. It does, and I would like more of this;” 25% answered, “Yes. It does, and I am happy with that,” and 25% answered, “No. It does not, and I wish that it did.” This indicates that an emphasis on a holistic lifestyle was important to 75% of the millennials that took the survey.

Regarding the importance of separate discipleship programs for millennials, the data revealed an inconsistency in the survey answers. Fifty percent of millennials gave it a 1 or 2 on a scale of 1 to 5, indicating this is not of significant importance to them. However, when asked if the church that they attend has a separate discipleship program or ministry specifically for adults 21 – 38 years of age, 50% answered, “No. It does not, and I wish that it did;” 25% answered, “Yes. It does, and I would like more of this,” and 12.5% answered, “Yes. It does, and I am happy with that,” indicating that a separate discipleship program was important to 87.5% of the millennials who took the survey.



Regarding work as it relates to the whole-life discipleship needs of Christian millennial aged adults in historic Black Protestant Churches, the pastors and millennials that participated in the research most often agreed among themselves and with each other. The pastors' results showed that they felt work was a significant discipleship topic but had widely varying opinions on the importance of one's Christian faith in deciding a career path or vocation. The millennials similarly felt that work had a prominent place in discipleship but also had widely varying opinions on the importance of one's Christian faith in deciding a career path or vocation.

When asked in the survey, "Do you believe that there can be a holy calling in all vocations," 100% of the pastor participants said yes, they did. When asked in the survey, "How important do you think one's work or vocation is to one's sense of worth or value," 83.34% of the pastor participants answered 4 or 5 on a scale of 1 to 5, indicating they felt that one's work or vocation is strongly correlated to one's sense of worth. When they were asked in the survey, "Do you or your individual church currently assist young adults with their career choices, occupation and/or work in the context of their Christian faith," 60% of the pastors said yes and 40% said no. When asked in the survey, "How important is one's Christian faith in deciding a career path or vocation," 33.3% of the pastors answered 4; 33.33% answered 3; 16.67% answered 5, and 16.67% answered 2 on a scale of 1 to 5, indicating widely varying opinions among the pastors on the importance of one's Christian faith in deciding a career path or vocation.

On what impact a person's Christian faith should have on their choices of work, occupation, or career, the answers for the millennial participants were mostly mid-range with 37.5% giving it a 3 and 25% giving it a 4, indicating widely varying opinions on this

topic. When asked in the survey, “Do you think the integration of one’s faith regarding career choices, occupations and work should be addressed in the faith training and discipleship of young adults that are 21 – 38 years of age,” 83.33% of the pastors answered yes, these things should be addressed. When the millennials were asked if the church they attend discusses the impact of faith on choices of work, occupation, or career, 50% answered, “Yes. It does, and I am happy with that;” 25% answered, “Yes. It does, and I would like more of this,” and 25% answered, “No. It does not, and I wish that it did.” This indicates that this type of discussion may be very important to the millennials that took the survey.

When they were asked in the survey, “For young adults that are 21 – 38 years of age and chronically unemployed, have you or your individual church used ministry or Christian discipleship to keep them encouraged,” 100% of the pastors surveyed answered yes. When the millennials were asked if the church they attend provides Bible-based training to help deal with unemployment, 57.5% answered, “No. It does not, and I wish that it did,” and 28.57% answered, “Yes. It does, and I would like more of this.” This indicates that this type of training may be significant to millennials.

The pastors and millennials did not agree on the difference being a Christian made in the marketplace. When the pastors were asked in the survey, “What difference do you think being a Christian should make in the workplace,” 100% answered 4 or 5, indicating the pastors feel that the fact that one is a Christian should matter in the marketplace. On what difference being a Christian should make in the workplace, the answers for the millennial participants were widely disbursed with 25% giving it a 5;

25% giving it a 4, and 25% giving it a 3, indicating widely varying opinions among millennials on this topic.

Regarding economic matters as it relates to the whole-life discipleship needs of their millennial aged adults, the pastors that participated in the research indicated that their church should play a significant role in addressing these needs for their millennials and their communities. The millennials that participated in the research indicated that discussions around economic matters were important to them. When the pastors were asked in the survey, “Do you think that the historic Black Church denominations today have the ability to make as much of an impact on their members in the area of economic empowerment in their communities as they did in the past,” 50% answered 3, and 33.33% answered 4 on a scale of 1 to 5, indicating that most felt that the historic Black Church denominations today have less of an ability to make as much of an impact on their members in the area of economic empowerment as they did in the past. When the pastors were asked in the survey, “Do you think that the historic Black Church denominations should try to make more of an effort in the area of economic empowerment for their members and their surrounding communities,” 100% answered 4 or 5 on a scale of 1 – 5 indicating that they felt it is still important for the church should try to make more of an effort in the area of economic empowerment for their members and their surrounding communities

When the pastors were asked in the survey, “Do you believe there is a connection between one’s faith and how one uses the available financial resources,” 100% of the pastors answered 4 or 5 on a scale of 1 to 5, indicating they felt that there is a strong connection between one’s faith and how one uses the available financial resources.

Regarding the impact a person's Christian faith should have on their personal economic matters including money and debt, 75% of the millennial participants gave it a 4 or 5 on a scale of 1 to 5, indicating this is of significant importance to them.

When asked in the survey, "Do you think the integration of one's faith regarding the use of money and debt should be presented in the faith training and discipleship of young adults that 21 – 38 years of age," 100% of the pastors said yes, they think the integration of one's faith regarding the use of money and debt should be presented in the faith training and discipleship of young adults. When the millennials were asked does the church you attend discuss how one relates to personal economic matters including money and debt, 37% answered, "No. It does not, and I wish that it did;" 25% answered, "Yes. It does, and I would like more of this," and 25% answered, "Yes. It does, and I am happy with that." This indicates that this type of discussion is very important to millennials and it is a discussion that was not available to over one-third of the participants.

Stewardship of all of God's creation was also addressed in the surveys and both pastors and millennials felt there was a significant connection between one's faith and one's view on stewardship. When asked in the survey, "Do you believe there is a connection between one's faith and one's stewardship of all creation including one's family, church, and community," 83.33% of the pastor participants answered 5 on a scale of 1 to 5, indicating they felt that there is a strong connection between one's faith and one's stewardship of all creation. Regarding if they believe there is a connection between one's faith and one's stewardship of all creation including one's family, church, and community, 75% of the millennial participants gave it a 4 or 5 on a scale of 1 to 5, indicating this is of significant importance to them.

## **Summary of Major Findings**

The major findings of the research indicate that the pastors that participated in this research may be achieving success in attracting, engaging, and retaining their millennials because they are somewhat in sync to the needs of their millennial-aged congregants.

1. Christian discipleship for Black Protestant millennials in Florida should include discussions and ministries that support a holistic, faith-based lifestyle including how to deal social justice issues.

2. Christian discipleship for Black Protestant millennials in Florida should include discussions and ministries that address faith in the marketplace including work, vocations, callings, career choices, and unemployment.

3. Christian discipleship for Black Protestant millennials in Florida should include discussions and ministries related to good stewardship of the available resources as well as the role of faith in personal economic matters including money and debt.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT**

#### **Overview of the Chapter**

The purpose of this research was to determine if pastors of historic Black Protestant churches in the state of Florida could be more effective at contextualizing and emphasizing a lifestyle that includes the integration of faith, work, and economics as part of their Christian discipleship for the millennials they are seeking to attract, engage, and retain. The research involved the opinions of both the pastors and the millennials they are seeking to ministering to. The research confirmed some previously held assumptions and also uncovered new opportunities for consideration to enhance the discipleship

experience for Black Protestant millennials. The results of the program suggest the following findings.

### **Major Findings**

**First Finding: Christian discipleship for Black Protestant millennials in Florida should include discussions about faith as it relates to a holistic faith-based lifestyle, including dealing with social justice issues.**

It was not surprising that the research findings indicated that faith plays an important role in one's ability to navigate social justice issues. As a middle-aged African American woman, the researcher personally knows this to be true and also personally knows that her faith has been a major factor in mitigating the effects of bigotry and prejudicial behavior. For many people who are racial, ethnic, or religious minorities within a majority culture, women living in a male dominant culture, lower income people living among people with more wealth, and people who are otherwise outside of the culture's norm, prejudicial attitudes and behavior from other people may be something that impacts their daily life at home, in the marketplace, and in the church.

The pastors and the millennials in this study agreed that one's faith is significantly important in helping a person to mentally handle some of the social challenges in life related to racism, sexism, and classism. As pastors pointed out in their interviews, "the role of the Church is to build and empower people, to transform lives to the core" (Pastor 3), and "through the Word of God, the Church teaches one the way they should live, the kind of character they should display, and help one socially to know how to deal with every situation that they face each day" (Pastor 1).

Dr. Anne Bradley states that embracing a faith-based holistic lifestyle is a Biblical requirement because it is essential for Christians to fulfill the biblical mandate of “good stewardship over all of God’s creation found in Genesis 1:28. Being a good steward has implications for how we live and guides our interactions as individuals, communities and nations” (Bradley). Bradley is correct. Lacking Christian faith and an understanding of God’s purpose for one’s life leaves a person vulnerable to the social justice issues that challenge a person’s existence, self-worth and value in the eyes of God. Without the foundations of faith, self-worth, ethics, and values found in Church teachings, people of all ages are less equipped to navigate the immorality, self-centered thinking, and misplaced values inherent in the contemporary pop-culture of the United States. Without the counter-voice of the Church as a light in the darkness there is less opportunity for people to know the Word of God and to understand their place in God’s plan to present the opportunity for eternal salvation to all the people of the Earth. The Christians who truly understand that they are children of God are good stewards of God’s people, animals, and the world that He created. They are better able to weather life’s challenges because, through their faith, they know that the only thing that truly matters is eternal salvation. Everything else, including life in a body made of flesh, is only a temporary situation.

The early Black Protestant Church was instrumental in helping African Americans understand the connection between faith and the ability to persevere through life’s challenges. During the Great Migration of African Americans from the rural South to the Northern United States between the years 1916 and 1970, the historic Black Protestant Church is said to have played a significant role in helping people of African

descent, most notably former slaves, move from rural poverty to a middle-class lifestyle (Lincoln and Mamiya). The Church at that time was holistically involved in the daily lives of its members, providing schools for education, information on general news and political matters, and teachings on moral and social matters in addition to religious matters. The Black Church also played a prominent role in the Civil Rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s, which highlighted the importance of the civil rights of all people in the United States (Lincoln and Mamiya).

Although the Black Church in the 21st century is no longer the primary source of education and information for the vast majority of African Americans, 75% of the millennials who took the survey felt that it is important that contemporary Black Church teachings continue to emphasize a holistic faith-based lifestyle as part of Christian training, education, or discipleship. They also indicated that teachings should include how faith relates to social justice issues as 87.5% percent of the millennials that took the survey felt one's faith was instrumental in helping them face challenges in life, including racism, sexism, and classism.

Today's African American millennials have criticized the contemporary Black Church for forgetting its social justice championing past because of their perception of a weak response to a variety of social justice issues in the United States while allowing other organizations, for example Black Lives Matter, to take lead on these matters (Blumberg and Kuruvilla). Just as the Black Protestant Church did in its past, its contemporary pastors must recognize the importance of including holistic faith-based lifestyle discussions in their ministries and include the social justice issues that are important to their millennials.



Pastor 3 has a successful ministry that provides a good example of how this could be done. Within a multi-generational congregation, this pastor addresses social justice issues important to young adults weekly at a regularly scheduled Bible-study meeting titled “Real Talk” where no topic is off-limits. He said he has found it important to maintain real-life relevancy when attracting millennials to his church because “most millennials think the church is too religious and not willing to deal with the conflicts and issues that they deal with including raising children, working and other real issues of everyday life like racism, white supremacy, and homosexuality that Scripture does not appear to them to address.” Not all of the young adults that attend the “Real Talk” Bible-study are present for Sunday morning worship, he said, but many regularly attend this ministry and participate in a contextualized faith-based lifestyle discipleship discussion tailored specifically for them (Pastor 3).

As discussions about faith as it relates to a holistic faith-based lifestyle are very important to millennials, Christian discipleship for Black Protestant millennials in Florida should include discussions and ministries that address faith as it relates to a holistic Christian faith-based lifestyle. These discussions and programs should also address the social justice issues that impact the lives of these millennials.

**Second Finding: Christian discipleship for black Protestant millennials in Florida should include ministries that address the topics of work, career choices, and unemployment.**

The pastors and millennials that participated in this research agreed that the role of work or lack of work were very important topics to be included in discipleship and Biblical training. However, they were not always in sync as to how these topics should be

addressed. All the pastors agreed that being a Christian in the workplace should make a difference. All the pastors also believed that there is a holy calling potential in all vocations, and 83% believed that the integration of one's faith regarding career choices, occupations, and work should be addressed in discipleship. However, their opinions were varied on how important one's faith is to deciding upon a career or vocation. One pastor felt that "a vocation may have very little to do with a calling as a calling is tied to a spiritual relationship" (Pastor 2). Another felt that it was important to identify one's calling for a sense of "worth and value in their vocation" (Pastor 1). While the third said they did not think that a person should choose their career based on their faith because it is "not a major portion of church teaching" (Pastor 3).

The millennials that participated in the research had varying opinions on the difference being a Christian made in the workplace and also widely varying opinions on what impact a person's Christian faith should have on their choices of work, occupation, or career. What they agreed upon among themselves and with the pastors was the importance that the church that they attend discusses the impact of faith on choices of work, occupation, or career. One hundred percent agreed that it was important, with 25% stating they wanted more discussions, and 25% stating that their current church does not have this and that they wish that it did.

Eight-three percent of the pastors felt work was important to one's sense of self-worth, and 100% said they provide ministerial and discipleship support to chronically unemployed millennials. However, as more than 57% of the millennials said that "their church does not provide Bible-based training to help deal with unemployment and they wish that it did," there may be a disconnect between what the pastors say they are giving

and what the millennials are receiving. Perhaps pastors are providing verbal encouragement or including the topics of work and unemployment in sermons or Bible-study when millennials are seeking assistance in finding a job. This topic is worthy of future research.

Sixty percent of the pastors that took the survey said they currently assist young adults with their career choices, occupation, and/or work in the context of their Christian faith. Pastor 2 described a successful educational ministry at the church that they pastor where adolescents ages 15 – 20 can participate in career development and college application assistance. They felt that planting the seeds at this age was most impactful for future success (Pastor 2). However, based on the research in this study, it appears that millennial-aged adults continue to desire and need these types of educational services.

Whereas the other two pastors said they focused on career counseling within their ministries, Pastor 3 said that they do not do much career counseling but instead try to help people with the careers they have already chosen and to get into the companies in their local area where they might want to work. They try to have good relationships with the local businesses, they said, “to help open doors but not to necessarily direct which doors a person should go through” (Pastor 3).

It is no surprise that both the pastors and millennials found discussions surrounding work to be of great value. Hugh Whelchel says that as God is a worker, human beings made in the image of God are also workers, and man was created, according to Genesis 2:15, to work in the garden and take care of it. Before His death, Jesus illustrated this point using the Parable of the Talents, Matthew 25:14-30, to show the importance of hard work and good stewardship to the Disciples. Sadly, Whelchel

says, Christians no longer understand the Biblical metanarrative of Scripture that applied to work, calling, and vocation (Whelchel).

Jurgen Moltman states that the ancient people of Israel understood that the theological meaning of work including the joy of the sabbath, which was not an interruption of work, but a time to glorify God, the creator of everything. Work, he said, “anthropologically at that time contained both production and existence value” (Moltmann). The Apostle Paul believed that Christian men should work and should keep away from idle men. He also believed that no man should burden another, and those not willing to work should not expect to eat (2 Thessalonians 3:6-10, NIV). Miroslav Volf writes that Clement of Alexandria and other early church fathers agreed with Paul, believing work “to be a spiritual discipline and laziness an enemy of the soul” (Volf, *Work in the Spirit* 73).

Kinnaman, Matlock, and Hawkins agree with the finding that churches discipling young adults should discuss the impact of faith on their working lives. They believe that work-related training is significant to the discipleship of young adults because the marketplace is where one’s faith is tested and refined while a young person is learning to cultivate relationships, use discernment, live out their identity, and pursue significance in the world. They said that the millennials that most successfully live out their faith holistically in their work lives tend to do so because of the skills they learned in church. According to their research, these millennials incline to be more God-centered in how they view their work and their calling in life. No matter what career direction or mode of work they choose, they believe that God has designed them for a unique purpose and all work is important to God. They tend to be more satisfied in their careers and believe that

integrity matters. They are also the ones most likely to regularly attend church (Kinnaman et al.).

While working is considered a natural state of being for human beings, forced idleness and laziness are enemies of the soul that can lead unemployed people down the path of temptation that they would not consider if they were busy and working. Statistically, African American millennials face substantially higher unemployment rates than other American millennials, and, as the pastors agreed, unemployment negatively impacts self-worth. Based on the research data, the pastors and the millennials agree and recognize the importance of spiritual and Biblical guidance for people who are unemployed.

Based on the research in this study, educational ministries that address career planning and occupational choices and work within the context of one's Christian faith are important to church ministries seeking to address the work-related needs of their millennials. Building relationships outside the church that can open doors to jobs and careers is essential too, especially when seeking to assist the unemployed.

As topics related to work were important to the millennials surveyed, and work is essential to a holistic faith-based lifestyle, Christian discipleship for Black Protestant millennials in Florida should include discussions and ministries that address faith in the marketplace including work, vocations, callings, career choices, and unemployment.

**Third Finding: Christian discipleship for black Protestant millennials should include discussions related to personal economic matters including money and debt.**

The historic Black Protestant Church had a large role in the economic empowerment of their communities in the past, and the data indicates that the pastors believe they do not feel that the Church can have as big of an impact in the future. In their

interview, Pastor 2 said this opinion is based on the fact that the world is a different place now, and “people just have so many more options to choose from which reduces the church's impact” (Pastor 2). Despite their reduced role as an influencer in the area of economic impact, all the pastors who participated in the research felt it was important for the Church to not give up but to make more of an effort in this area. For example, encouraging “local entrepreneurship to encourage the flow of financial resources within the community instead of outside of it” (Pastor 3).

In Luke 18:18-23, it is clear that Jesus considered one’s attitude about money as an indication of their faith. It is, therefore, not surprising that all of the pastors believed there was a connection between one’s faith and how one uses the available financial resources. One hundred percent of the pastors surveyed said yes, they think the integration of one’s faith regarding the use of money and debt should be presented in the faith training and discipleship of young adults

Most of the millennials also felt strongly that a person’s Christian faith should have an impact on their personal economic matters including money and debt. However, while 50% said that their church does have discussions about personal economic matters including money and debt, 37% said that their church did not have these types of discussions and they wish that they did.

Like most traditional Christian denominations, the historic Black Church has a history of encouraging tithing through preaching and teaching (Barnes). Although millennials, in general, give less in total dollars to their church than older generations, a higher percentage, 84%, give to charity overall (Neon). If Black Protestant millennials give at the same rate as their peers and are wanting more discussions in church related to

money and other personal economic matters, the churches they attend have a financial incentive in helping their millennials understand the biblical tradition of tithing as a component of living a faith-based lifestyle.

According to Rainer, millennials, in general, feel more stress regarding their finances than their parents because many of them witnessed the worst financial downturn in modern history at the same time they were entering the work force. They saw the impact on their parents' retirement savings, and their parents may have owned a home with a mortgage higher than the value of the home. Having witnessed how their parents may have worked hard and saved well but were the victims of circumstances beyond their control, millennials find it difficult to believe in a rosy financial future in the same way as their baby boomer parents (Rainer and Rainer). They also base success "more on what makes them happy which they said was found more in love and relationships than in material possessions" (Wells Fargo).

Walter Brueggemann says that Christians in modern times are ignorant about what Scripture says about money because these things are not being taught in church. Instead of a focus on the biblical blessing and economic well-being for all of God's people, the modern church in a Western Capitalist society prefers to conveniently focus on individual blessings (Brueggemann).

Most of the millennials that participated in the research believe there is a strong connection between one's faith and one's stewardship of all God's creation. This belief may explain why millennials, said to be the generation most focused on being good stewards of all creation, desire to connect their faith to their stewardship of the resources

available to them. They also felt that their Christian faith played a role in how they managed their personal economic affairs.

As the millennials surveyed feel very strongly about being good stewards of the available resources and that their faith played a role in their personal economic matters, a holistic, faith-based lifestyle Christian discipleship program for Black Protestant millennials in Florida should include discussions and ministries related to good stewardship of the available resources and the role of faith in personal economic matters, including money and debt.

### **Ministry Implications of the Findings**

There were three implications for historic Black Protestant Churches in Florida seeking to more effectively contextualize and emphasize a lifestyle that includes a holistic integration of faith, work, and economics as part of their Christian discipleship for the millennials they are seeking to attract, engage, and retain.

1. As discussions about faith as it relates to a holistic faith-based lifestyle are very important to millennials, Christian discipleship for Black Protestant millennials in Florida should include discussions and ministries that address faith as it relates to a holistic Christian faith-based lifestyle. These discussion and ministries should include a focus on the social justice issues that impact the lives of these millennials.

2. As topics related to work were important to the millennials surveyed, and work is essential to a holistic faith-based lifestyle, Christian discipleship for Black Protestant millennials in Florida should include discussions and ministries that address faith in the marketplace including work, vocations, callings, career choices, and unemployment.



3. As the millennials surveyed feel very strongly about being good stewards of the available resources and that their faith played a role in their personal economic matters, a holistic, faith-based lifestyle Christian discipleship program for Black Protestant millennials in Florida should include discussions and ministries related to good stewardship of the available resources and the role of faith in personal economic matters, including money and debt.

### **Limitations of the Study**

There were several limitations that impacted this study.

1. Only the Methodist denomination pastors responded. As the Baptist and Pentecostal denominations that were targeted for research typically do not ordain women, and the researcher was a woman, that may have been a factor in the inability to either get a response or to get follow through after a commitment to respond.
2. The difficulty in getting pastor participation was underestimated.
3. The difficulty in getting millennial participation was underestimated.
4. The sample size of the pastors and millennials was smaller than expected.

### **Unexpected Observations**

There were two significant unexpected observations.

1. Some of the millennials did not consider the denomination of the church they attended as an historic Black Protestant Church when it actually was. This may be due to the fact that they were not aware of the history of their denomination. Perhaps they had forgotten, or the church history in some churches is no longer a priority to be taught. For future research, a brief explanation of the definition of what the label “historic” actually means is recommended.

2. A separate discipleship program or ministry may be significant to Black Protestant millennials in Florida but is not critical to their church attendance overall. There is a perception that millennials want their own space, but the research showed that this desire may not be as significant if their overall needs can be adequately addressed within the general church body. This topic is worthy of additional research as it has important implications for smaller congregations.

### **Recommendations**

There are a few recommendations for the future research.

1. It may be helpful for a female researcher to have a male partner to get participation from denominations that do not ordain women.
2. It may be helpful to enlist the help of higher-level church officials to encourage higher participation in future research.
3. The millennial survey should be designed in a manner that is clearer for them to understand. For example, it should include a definition of a historic Black Protestant Church.
4. More millennial-aged adults should be engaged to determine the best route for survey participation.

### **Postscript**

This journey was one I never saw coming but I am so grateful to God for the journey. As the people of God in churches throughout the world have a responsibility to see that the Church passes intact to the next generation until the mission of the Gospel is complete, I pray that this research has helped in some small way. I also pray that the

historic Protestant Black Church with its celebrated past, through the grace of God, will find a glorious place in the future.

## **APPENDIXES**

A. Survey/Interview Questions

B. Ethical Considerations Worksheets

## APPENDIX A

### The Research Project Questions

#### Research Question #1

In the opinion of ministers that pastor historic Black Protestant churches in the state of Florida with 25+ millennials in regular attendance, how are they currently contextualizing and emphasizing a holistic lifestyle that integrates the components of faith, work and economics as part of their Christian discipleship for the millennials they are seeking to attract, engage, and retain?

This research question sought to determine how pastoring ministers were framing the integration of one's faith into all aspects of one's life including career choices, work, social relationships, and the use of money in their discipleship of millennials. The emphasis of this integration, in varying degrees in history of the historic Black Protestant Church, was explored and its relevancy to contemporary times. An online survey was used along with semi-structured interviews.

Instruments: An online survey and semi-structured interviews

The Pastor Survey:

The initial question in the online survey asked if the participant gave his or her consent to participate in the survey. The next five questions qualified the opinion for the research. Participants that didn't meet the requirements were immediately directed out of the survey to a "disqualification page." They were not able to answer any further questions. The last question asked the participant if they would like to be interviewed. Questions 1-5 qualified the opinion for this research.

1. Are you affiliated with a historic Black Protestant Church denomination?
2. What is your denomination?
  - a. Baptist - National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Incorporated, the National Baptist Convention of America, Unincorporated, the Progressive National Baptist Convention
  - b. Methodist - African Methodist Episcopal, Christian Methodist Episcopal, African Methodist Episcopal Zion
  - c. Pentecostal - Church of God in Christ
  - d. None of the above
3. Is your church located in Florida?
4. Are you the lead pastor-in-charge at your church?
5. Are there more than 25 young adults between the ages of 21 and 38 years of age regularly attending worship at your church?

Questions 6- 9 asked the participant to read the next paragraph and then to answer questions regarding their opinion about the historic Black Protestant Church from an historical perspective and its relevancy to contemporary times.

After 250 years of slavery and 100 years of Jim Crow, one-third of the African American population had moved into what they would describe as living a middle-class lifestyle by the 1980's. The Black Church, being the only stable, cohesive, and independent institution available for African Americans, was a major part of this transformation.

During the years from slavery through the early 20th century, the Black Church was the central institution in the lives of African Americans. It covered all aspects of daily life including education, politics, moral, social and religious matters (Lincoln and Mamiya).

6. With 1 meaning less impactful and 5 meaning more impactful: On a scale of 1-5, do you think that the historic Black Church denominations today have the ability to make as much of an impact on their members in the area of economic empowerment in their communities as they did in the past?
7. With 1 meaning they should make less effort and 5 meaning they should make more effort: On a scale of 1-5, do you think that the historic Black Church denominations should try to make more of an effort in the area of economic empowerment for their members and their surrounding communities?
8. With 1 meaning not important and 5 meaning most important: On a scale of 1-5, is it as important today as it was in the past for the church to cover the aspects of daily life of education, politics, moral, and social matters in addition to religious matters?
9. With 1 meaning not important and 5 meaning most important: On a scale of 1 – 5, how important is it to the millennial aged adults in your church that you cover the aspects of daily life of education, politics, moral, and social matters in addition to religious matters?

Questions 10 - 14 asked the participant to read a paragraph and then to answer questions regarding their opinion on work, stewardship and faith.

This paragraph applies to the next 4 questions. As God was a worker, man, made in God's image, is therefore also a worker. Work then is central to God's character. Work is so important that it 'is mentioned more times in the Bible than worship, praise, and singing combined.' Welchel says that all human beings have a holy calling to work and that modern-day Christians have lost the biblical metanarrative of Scripture that applied

to work, calling and vocation. God placed humanity in the Garden of Eden, as told in Genesis 2, to work and be a good steward over it and God's intention still is that human beings care for all God's creation on the earth. (Hugh Whelchel)

10. Do you believe that there can be a holy calling in all vocations? Yes or No.

11. With 1 meaning not important and 5 meaning most important: On a scale of 1-5, how important do you think one's work or vocation is to one's sense of worth or value?

12. With 1 meaning no connection and 5 meaning the highest connection: On a scale of 1 – 5, do you believe there is a connection between one's faith and one's stewardship of all creation including one's family, church, and community?

13. With 1 meaning no connection and 5 meaning the highest connection: On a scale of 1-5, do you believe there is a connection between one's faith and how one uses the available financial resources?

14. With 1 meaning no connection and 5 meaning the highest connection: On a scale of 1-5, do you believe there is a connection between one's faith and how one is able to mentally handle the challenges one faces in life including racism, sexism, and classism?

Questions 15-20 addressed opinions regarding the integration of faith, work and economics as part of Christian discipleship for millennials.

15. With 1 meaning not important and 5 meaning most important: On a scale of 1-5, how important is one's Christian faith in deciding a career path or vocation?



16. With 1 meaning no difference and 5 meaning a big difference: On a scale of 1-5, what difference do you think being a Christian should make in the workplace?
17. Do you think the integration of one's faith regarding career choices, occupations and work should be addressed in the faith training and discipleship of young adults that are 21 – 38 years of age? Yes or No.
18. Do you think the integration of one's faith regarding the use of money and debt should be presented in the faith training and discipleship of young adults that 21 – 38 years of age? Yes or No.
19. Do you or your individual church currently assist young adults with their career choices, occupation and/or work in the context of their Christian faith? Yes or No.
20. Work has been said to foster dignity and self-respect. For young adults that are 21 – 38 years of age and chronically unemployed, have you or your individual church used' ministry or Christian discipleship to keep them encouraged? Yes or No.

Question 21 asked the participants if they would like to be considered to be interviewed regarding this research.

21. Would you be interested in being interviewed regarding this research? If so, please provide your email address below.

Following the surveys, the semi-structured interviews were conducted.

The Pastor Semi-structured Interviews:

The request for an interview was based on recommendations and interest expressed as a question on the survey. All interviewee signed a consent form prior to the

interview. The interviews were facilitated electronically using anymeeting.com. The interviews took between 45 and 60 minutes, were recorded and then professionally transcribed by GoTranscript.

During the interview, the interviewee discussed the questions and why they felt that the pastors had answered the questions in the manner that they did.

Questions 1-5 confirmed the qualifications the opinion for this research.

1. Are you affiliated with a historic Black Protestant Church denomination?
2. What is your denomination?
  - a. Baptist - National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Incorporated, the National Baptist Convention of America, Unincorporated, the Progressive National Baptist Convention
  - b. Methodist - African Methodist Episcopal, Christian Methodist Episcopal, African Methodist Episcopal Zion
  - c. Pentecostal - Church of God in Christ
3. Is your church located in Florida?
4. Are you the lead pastor-in-charge at your church?
5. Are there more than 25 young adults between the ages of 21 and 38 years of age regularly attending worship at your church?

Questions 6- 9 involved the interviewee listening to the reading of a paragraph and then critiquing the answers to the questions by their peers. The questions were about the role of the historic Black Protestant Church from an historical perspective.

After 250 years of slavery and 100 years of Jim Crow, one-third of the African American population had moved into what they would describe as living a middle-class lifestyle by

the 1980's. The Black Church, being the only stable, cohesive, and independent institution available for African Americans, was a major part of this transformation. During the years from slavery through the early 20th century, the Black Church was the central institution in the lives of African Americans. It covered all aspects of daily life including education, politics, moral, social and religious matters. (C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya).

6. When asked the following question below, your peers answered (The most common answer from the matching survey). Why do you think they mostly answered this way?

Do you think that the historic Black Church denominations have the ability to make as much of an impact on their members in the area of economic empowerment in their communities as they did in the past?"

7. When asked the following question below, your peers answered (The most common answer from the matching survey). Why do you think they mostly answered this way?

Do you think that the historic Black Church denominations should try to make more of an effort in the area of economic empowerment for their members and their surrounding communities?

8. When asked the following question below, your peers answered (The most common answer from the matching survey). Why do you think they mostly answered this way?

Is it as important today as it was in the past for the church to cover the aspects of daily life of education, politics, moral, and social matters in addition to religious matters? Please answer and explain the reason for your answer.

9. When asked the following question below, your peers answered (The most common answer from the matching survey). Why do you think they mostly answered this way?

How important is it to the millennial aged adults in your church that you cover the aspects of daily life of education, politics, moral, and social matters in addition to religious matters?

Questions 10 - 14 involved the interviewee reading a paragraph and then responding to the answers to the questions by their peers. The questions are regarding an opinion on work, stewardship and faith.

As God was a worker, man, made in God's image, is therefore also a worker. Work then is central to God's character. Work is so important that it 'is mentioned more times in the Bible than worship, praise, and singing combined. Hugh Wheelchel says that all human beings have a holy calling to work and that modern-day Christians have lost the biblical metanarrative of Scripture that applied to work, calling and vocation. God placed humanity in the Garden of Eden, as told in Genesis 2, to work and be a good steward over it and God's intention still is that human beings care for all God's creation on the earth.

(Hugh Wheelchel)

10. When asked the following question below, your peers answered (The most common answer from the matching survey). Why do you think they mostly answered this way?

Do you believe that there can be a holy calling in all vocations? Yes or No.

11. When asked the following question below, your peers answered (The most common answer from the matching survey). Why do you think they mostly answered this way?

How important do you think one's work or vocation is to one's sense of worth or value?

12. When asked the following question below, your peers answered (The most common answer from the matching survey). Why do you think they mostly answered this way?

Do you believe there is a connection between one's faith and one's stewardship of all creation including one's family, church, and community?

13. When asked the following question below, your peers answered (The most common answer from the matching survey). Why do you think they mostly answered this way?

Do you believe there is a connection between one's faith and how one uses the available financial resources?

14. When asked the following question below, your peers answered (The most common answer from the matching survey). Why do you think they mostly answered this way?

Do you believe there is a connection between one's faith and how one is able to mentally handle the challenges one faces in life including racism, sexism, and classism?

Questions 15-20 addressed opinions regarding the integration of faith, work and economics as part of Christian discipleship for millennials.

15. When asked the following question below, your peers answered (The most common answer from the matching survey). Why do you think they mostly answered this way?

How important is one's Christian faith in deciding a career path or vocation?

16. When asked the following question below, your peers answered (The most common answer from the matching survey). Why do you think they mostly answered this way?

What difference do you think being a Christian should make in the workplace?

17. When asked the following question below, your peers answered (The most common answer from the matching survey). Why do you think they mostly answered this way?

Do you think the integration of one's faith regarding career choices, occupations and work should be addressed in the faith training and discipleship of young adults that are 21 – 38 years of age? .

18. When asked the following question below, your peers answered (The most common answer from the matching survey). Why do you think they mostly answered this way?

Do you think the integration of one's faith regarding the use of money and debt should be presented in the faith training and discipleship of young adults that 21 – 38 years of age?

19. When asked the following question below, your peers answered (The most common answer from the matching survey). Why do you think they mostly answered this way?

Do you or your individual church currently assist young adults with their career choices, occupation and/or work in the context of their Christian faith?

20. When asked the following question below, your peers answered (The most common answer from the matching survey). Why do you think they mostly answered this way?

Work has been said to foster dignity and self-respect. For young adults that are 21 – 38 years of age and chronically unemployed, how have you or your individual church used your ministry or Christian discipleship to keep them encouraged?

Question 21 asked if there was anything additional that should be discussed or explored in a future Focus Group.

21. Is there was anything additional that should be discussed or explored in a future survey or interview related to this research?

## **Research Question #2**

In the opinion of millennials that attend historic Black Protestant Churches in Florida, what do they see as the most important, helpful, and relevant aspect of Christian discipleship that addresses their desire for a lifestyle that integrates the components of faith, work and economics into their everyday lives?

This research question sought to determine what millennials that attend historic Black Protestant churches believe is most important regarding how their faith should be

lived out in their lives including its impact on determining a career, work, relationships, and their use of money. An online survey was used. A focus group was anticipated but proved too difficult to coordinate.

Instrument: Millennial Survey

There was an initial question prior to accessing the survey where the participant gave his or her consent to participate. There was also a question during the survey asking if the age of the participant is between 21 and 38 years of age. Participants that didn't meet the minimum age -specified requirements were immediately directed OUT of the survey. Thus, NO CHILDREN, age 17 or under, were able to participate. The last question asked the participant if they would like to participate in a focus group for this research.

Questions 1-4 qualified the opinion for this research.

1. Are you between 21 and 38 years of age?
2. Are you African-American?
3. Do you attend worship services, Bible Study or Sunday school at a Black Protestant Church at least twice per month in Florida?
4. What is the denomination of the church you attend?
  - a. Baptist - National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Incorporated, the National Baptist Convention of America, Unincorporated, the Progressive National Baptist Convention
  - b. Methodist - African Methodist Episcopal, Christian Methodist Episcopal, African Methodist Episcopal Zion
  - c. Pentecostal - Church of God in Christ



Question 5 determined that ratio of genders.

5. Which gender do you identify with?

Questions 6-12 addressed opinions regarding discipleship and faith as a component of a holistic faith-based lifestyle.

6. With 1 meaning not important and 5 meaning most important: On a scale of 1 – 5, how important is it to you that a church have a separate discipleship program or ministry specifically for adults ages 21 – 38 years of age?
7. With 1 meaning not important and 5 meaning most important: On a scale of 1-5, how important is it to you that the church teachings emphasize a holistic faith-based lifestyle to you as a part of its Christian training, education or discipleship?
8. With 1 meaning no impact and 5 meaning most impact: On a scale of 1- 5, what impact should a person's Christian faith have on their choices of work, occupation or career?
9. With 1 meaning no difference and 5 meaning a big difference: On a scale of 1-5, what difference do you think being a Christian should make in the workplace?
10. With 1 meaning no impact and 5 meaning most impact: On a scale of 1- 5, what impact should a person's Christian faith have on their personal economic matters including money and debt?
11. With 1 meaning no connection and 5 meaning the highest connection: On a scale of 1 – 5, do you believe there is a connection between one's faith and one's stewardship of all creation including one's family, church, and community?
12. With 1 meaning no connection and 5 meaning the highest connection: On a scale of 1-5, do you believe there is a connection between one's faith and how one is

able to mentally handle the challenges one faces in life including racism, sexism, and classism?

Questions 13-18 explored the desires of millennials regarding discipleship as it relates to faith, work, and economics.

13. Does the church you attend discuss the impact of faith on choices of work, occupation or career?

- a) Yes. It does and I would like more of this.
- b) Yes. It does and I would like less of this.
- c) Yes. It does and I am happy with that.
- d) No. It does not and I wish that it did.
- e) No. It does not and I am happy with that.

14. Does the church you attend discuss how one relates to personal economic matters including money and debt is impacted by one's Christian faith?

- a) Yes. It does and I would like more of this.
- b) Yes. It does and I would like less of this.
- c) Yes. It does and I am happy with that.
- d) No. It does not and I wish that it did.
- e) No. It does not and I am happy with that.

15. Does the church you attend provide you with any Bible-based training to help you deal with unemployment?

- a) Yes. It does and I would like more of this.
- b) Yes. It does and I would like less of this.
- c) Yes. It does and I am happy with that.

- d) No. It does not and I wish that it did.
- e) No. It does not and I am happy with that.

16. Does the church you attend provide you with any Bible-based training to help you deal with the social issues such as racism, sexism and discrimination that they may encounter at work and elsewhere in your daily life?

- a) Yes. It does and I would like more of this.
- b) Yes. It does and I would like less of this.
- c) Yes. It does and I am happy with that.
- d) No. It does not and I wish that it did.
- e) No. It does not and I am happy with that.

17. Does the church you attend emphasize a holistic lifestyle to young adults as part of faith training, education or discipleship?

- a) Yes. It does and I would like more of this.
- b) Yes. It does and I would like less of this.
- c) Yes. It does and I am happy with that.
- d) No. It does not and I wish that it did.
- e) No. It does not and I am happy with that.

18. Does the church you attend have a separate discipleship program or ministry specifically for adults ages 21 – 38 years of age?

- a) Yes. It does and I would like more of this.
- b) Yes. It does and I would like less of this.
- c) Yes. It does and I am happy with that.
- d) No. It does not and I wish that it did.

e) No. It does not and I am happy with that.

Question 19 asked the participants if they would like to be considered for participation in a Focus Group related to the research.

19. Would you be interested in participating in an on-line Focus Group related to this research? If so, please provide your email address below.

### **Research Question #3**

Based on this research, how could historic Black Protestant Churches in Florida more effectively contextualize and emphasize a lifestyle that includes a holistic integration of faith, work and economics as part of their Christian discipleship for the millennials they are seeking to attract, engage, and retain?

To answer this research question, findings from the Pastor and Millennial Surveys and the Pastor Interviews were analyzed and compared.

**APPENDIX B**

Informed Consent Letters

Confidentiality Agreement

**INFORMED CONSENT LETTER**  
**for**  
**Research Study**

**BLACK PROTESTANT MILLENNIALS:  
ATTRACTING, ENGAGING, DISCIPLING AND RETAINING THE NEXT GENERATION**

You are invited to be in a research study being done by Denise Page, a student at Asbury Theological Seminary. This research intends to benefit the congregational life of millennials in historic Black Protestant Churches by exploring the role of faith, work and economics in Christian discipleship. You are invited because you minister to Black Protestant millennial aged adults as part of your regular duties in an historic Black Protestant Church denomination.

If you agree to take part in the study, you will participate in a survey and will be asked to answer questions specific to Black Protestant millennials aged adults and/or church ministries related to Black Protestant millennial aged adults. The time required to participate is approximately 15 minutes and there is no payment for participation. You can refuse to respond to any or all of the questions, and you will be able to withdraw from the process at any time.

The information collected from each individual is confidential and will not be publicly shared except as used collectively to indicate research findings. If anyone else is given information about you or this study, they will not know your name. A number or initials will be used instead of your name.

The online survey facilitator [surveyMonkey.com](http://surveyMonkey.com) will be used to administer survey questions over the Internet. Their privacy policies can be found at [surveyMonkey.com](http://surveyMonkey.com).

Research team members will be assisting with coding survey themes. The research team members have signed a confidentiality agreement.

Although confidentiality will be encouraged it cannot be guaranteed.

If you have any questions about the research study please contact:  
Denise Page at [denise.page@asburyseminary.edu](mailto:denise.page@asburyseminary.edu)

Signing this document electronically means that you have read and understand the aforementioned terms, or that the aforementioned terms have been read to you and that you understand them, and that you wish to participate in the study. If you do not wish to participate in this study, please do not sign this document or proceed further with this survey. Participating in this study is entirely optional and you may opt out at any time. By signing this document and proceeding further, you agree that this study, its purpose, and your role as a willing participant, have been explained to you.

Please be aware that your survey has not been completed and submitted until you click the "Done" button after the last question.

---

Signature of Person Agreeing to be in the Study

---

Date Signed

**INFORMED CONSENT LETTER**  
**for**  
**Research Study**

**BLACK PROTESTANT MILLENNIALS:  
ATTRACTING, ENGAGING, DISCIPLING AND RETAINING THE NEXT GENERATION**

You are invited to be in a research study being done by Denise Page, a student at Asbury Theological Seminary. This research intends to benefit the congregational life of millennials in historic Black Protestant Churches by exploring the role of faith, work and economics in Christian discipleship. You are invited because you minister to Black Protestant millennial aged adults as part of your regular duties in an historic Black Protestant Church denomination.

If you agree to participate in the study, Denise Page will interview you and you will be asked to answer questions specific to Black Protestant millennials aged adults and/or church ministries related to Black Protestant millennial aged adults. The time required to participate is 1 hour and there is no payment for participation. You can refuse to respond to any or all of the questions, and you will be able to withdraw from the process at any time.

The information collected from each individual is confidential and will not be publicly shared except as used collectively to indicate research findings. If anyone else is given information about you or this study, they will not know your name. A number or initials will be used instead of your name. The interview will be in person or online using the online Intermedia meeting platform anymeeting.com. The privacy policies for Intermedia can be found at intermedia.net.

The interview will be recorded and later transcribed by the transcription service, gotranscript.com. Gotranscript.com has signed a confidentiality agreement for their services.

Research team members will be assisting by coding themes uncovered in the research data. The research team members have signed a confidentiality agreement.

Although confidentiality will be encouraged it cannot be guaranteed.

If you have any questions about the research study please contact:  
Denise Page at [denise.page@asburyseminary.edu](mailto:denise.page@asburyseminary.edu)

Signing this document electronically means that you have read and understand the aforementioned terms, or that the aforementioned terms have been read to you and that you understand them, and that you wish to participate in the study. If you do not wish to participate in this study, please do not sign this document or proceed further with this survey. Participating in this study is entirely optional and you may opt out at any time. By signing this document and proceeding further, you agree that this study, its purpose, and your role as a willing participant, have been explained to you.

---

Signature of Person Agreeing to be in the Study

---

Date Signed

**INFORMED CONSENT LETTER**  
**for**  
**Research Study**

**BLACK PROTESTANT MILLENNIALS:  
ATTRACTING, ENGAGING, DISCIPLING AND RETAINING THE NEXT GENERATION**

You are invited to be in a research study being done by Denise Page, a student at Asbury Theological Seminary. This research intends to benefit the congregational life of millennials in historic Black Protestant Churches by exploring the role of faith, work and economics in Christian discipleship. You are invited because you are a Black Protestant millennial aged adult and you attend an historic Black Protestant Church denomination.

If you agree to take part in the study, you will participate in a survey and will be asked to answer questions specific to Black Protestant millennials aged adults and/or church ministries related to Black Protestant millennial aged adults. The time required to participate is approximately 15 minutes and there is no payment for participation. You can refuse to respond to any or all of the questions, and you will be able to withdraw from the process at any time.

The information collected from each individual is confidential and will not be publicly shared except as used collectively to indicate research findings. If anyone else is given information about you or this study, they will not know your name. A number or initials will be used instead of your name.

The online survey facilitator [surveymonkey.com](http://surveymonkey.com) will be used to administer survey questions over the Internet. Their privacy policies can be found at [surveymonkey.com](http://surveymonkey.com).

Research team members will be assisting with coding survey themes. The research team members have signed a confidentiality agreement.

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If you have any questions about the research study please contact:  
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Signing this document electronically means that you have read and understand the aforementioned terms, or that the aforementioned terms have been read to you and that you understand them, and that you wish to participate in the study. If you do not wish to participate in this study, please do not sign this document or proceed further with this survey. Participating in this study is entirely optional and you may opt out at any time. By signing this document and proceeding further, you agree that this study, its purpose, and your role as a willing participant, have been explained to you.

Please be aware that your survey has not been completed and submitted until you click the "Done" button after the last question.

---

Signature of Person Agreeing to be in the Study

---

Date Signed



### Confidentiality Agreement

This form may be used for individuals who will be assisting the researcher with a variety of research tasks (e.g., audio or video recording, transcribing data, etc.)

I, \_\_\_\_\_, will be assisting the researcher by \_\_ observing and assisting in coding focus group and survey themes \_\_\_\_ (specific job description, e.g., being an interpreter/translator)

I agree to abide by the following guidelines regarding confidentiality:

1. Hold in strictest confidence the identification of any individual(s) that may be revealed during the course of performing research tasks throughout the research process and after it is complete.
2. Keep all the research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) with anyone other than the *Researcher(s)*.
3. Keep all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) secure while it is in my possession (e.g., using a password-protected computer).
4. Return all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) to the *Researcher(s)* when I have completed the research tasks.
5. After consulting with the *Researcher(s)*, erase or destroy all research information in any form or format regarding this research project that is not returnable to the *Researcher(s)* (e.g., information stored on computer hard drive) upon completion of the research tasks.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Print Name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

*Researcher(s)*

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Print Name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

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