

WHY SCHOOL LEAVERS ABANDON CHURCH

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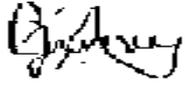
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*The opinions expressed in this thesis do not necessarily reflect the views of
the South African Theological Seminary.*

DECLARATION

I hereby acknowledge that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted to any academic institution for degree purposes.



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SUMMARY

The Church is currently faced with a huge dilemma in that many young adults leave the Church post adolescence. To many of them the experience of attending church is tedious and passé; they feel there is a clash between their ideologies and that of the Church. Several of the respondents attended Sunday school, youth and church when they were still in school.

The purpose of this study is an attempt to investigate the reasons why high school graduates extricate themselves from the Church, not only as a global phenomenon but particularly within South Africa. An empirical, quantitative, deductive research approach was undertaken, using an attitudinal survey method.

The total number of respondents who participated in this study consisted of one hundred individuals. Respondents had to meet the following requirements: they had to be young adults between the ages of eighteen to twenty-three years, attending a tertiary institute and who were faithful church/youth goers until they left High School.

Two of the strongest factors determining why those respondents in this study who left the church did so, were the following: firstly as a result of being put off by hypocritical Christians and secondly finding church or church activities boring. Despite changing social context the Word of God is an unchangeable standard, this study therefore applied relevant scriptural texts to each individual cause.

This research study concluded with a summary of the research findings and proposed practical steps that the Church could take in order to curb the dilemma of individuals abandoning the Church after high school. Each recommendation was outlined in detail in order to contribute to the field of Practical Theology.

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CHAPTER ONE

1. RATIONALE

1.1 Introduction

What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he is happier about that one sheep than the ninety-nine that did not wander off. In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost (Matthew 18:12-14, NIV).

Barna and Brierley (Gibson 2004:7) stipulate that “many youth brought up in the church are likely to stop attending at some point in their lives.” Mark Oestreicher, president of Youth Specialties (Taylor 2006:74) states that “kids seem happy and willing to attend, and engage in our ministries, but five years from now, when they’re in college or post college, they just aren’t connecting with real faith, let alone church.”

When Jesus gave the great commission to go out and “make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19, NIV), He meant that we are to continue to disciple them not just to “save” them. Why is it then that the Church is bringing up young men and women only to “lose” them to the world? According to Mark De Vries (1994:10), “if we don’t wake up in the church and begin to radically alter and change what it is that we’re doing with kids we’ve lost them.”

The 1996 National Census Profile of South Africa indicates that “62.6% of people are under the age of 30”; this works out to approximately twenty-six million children and young adults in South Africa (De Chazel 1999:35). Young adults are influenced by environmental and social factors both within their

church and within their social environment. These factors include communal relationships; the influence of parents/guardians, friends and church leaders (Black 2006:19). Other factors include the area where they grew up, their schooling, culture and the media. Zacharias (2004:167) states that “television and music media are such potent forces because they have within them the capacity to bypass reason and head straight for the imagination.” These factors may influence young adults’ decision to either stay within a church or not. These factors need to be examined for their impact on church attendance.

1.2 Definitions of key concepts

The New International Bible Version (NIV) will be used for the purpose of this research study. The following concepts will be operationally defined: **Abandon** and **The Church**.

1.2.1 Abandon

According to the Oxford dictionary the definition of the term **abandon** is: “to leave something, especially something you are responsible for, with no intention of returning or to stop helping something or to stop believing in something” (Hornby 2003:1).

The term **abandon** in a biblical notion is referred to in Malachi 3.7(NIV) where it stipulates the following: “Ever since the time of your forefathers you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord Almighty.”

For the purpose of this study the term **abandon** will specifically refer to turning away from the Church.

1.2.2 The Church

The Oxford dictionary defines **the Church** as “the institution of the Christian religion” (Hornby 2004:221).

The Concise Dictionary of Christianity in America defines **the Church** as a “spiritual communion of the whole people of God, a living organism of persons closely related to Christ and to one another” (Reid, Linder, Shelly, Stout, Noll 1995:78).

According to the Cassell Dictionary of Christianity **the Church** means “of or belonging to the Lord. It denotes the whole body of Christians”. This meaning stems from the Greek adjective *kuri-akos* (Cooper 1996:53).

From a theological perspective the “body of Christians” is highlighted in Romans 12.5 (NIV) where it states “so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others”. Thus it is essential to emphasise that the meaning of the term **the Church** in the context of this research study goes far deeper than the definition of any physical structure instead it captures the essence of human cohesion within the fellowship of the living God.

1.3 Literature review

Due to the nature of this study the researcher will primarily rely on global published research material to set the foundation for this thesis while incorporating local opinion.

The United States of America is the forerunner in studies of young adult and student ministry. Terry Keehan, pastor of the St Matthias Church in Chicago, did a study in 1998 on young catholic adults and their “reasons for attending or not attending church on Sundays.” It was documented that 28% of the

respondents indicated that they “were too busy” (Cusick and De Vries 2000:12). This could be a contributing factor or possibly just an excuse.

The Barna Research Group of Ventura, California (2003:¶2) conducted research via telephonic interview on the investigation of church attendance. A nationwide survey of 2,660 individuals was taken and the findings indicated that Americans are less prone to attend church services, read their Bibles or even consider the Christian faith in their twenties.

Wesley Black (2006:19), a professor of student ministry at the Southwestern Baptist theological seminary conducted a research study to determine factors that influence young adults in either attending church or not. This study was both a quantitative and qualitative study focusing on over one hundred and fifty respondents between the ages of eighteen and thirty years of age. All questions were based on demographics and the researchers focused on questions that were related to why young adults do or do not attend church. The most prominent reason that the respondents gave for not attending church was that they were put off by Christians who were hypocritical (Black 2006:32).

Although an adequate amount of research on this topic has been conducted in the United States, research undertaken in South Africa is limited. Khauso (2004:7) did a study in South Africa where he analysed the perspectives of the youth and the challenges that they face. Khauso focused on various aspects, among them was their attitude towards church attendance. His study focused on a small number of respondents and it only included black and coloured youth between fourteen to eighteen years. The research results indicated that there was a clear dwindle in church attendance by the adolescents. Khauso pointed out that “the departure from the church during adolescence and young adulthood is widely established in many churches” (Khauso 2004:69).

1.4 Statement of the problem

1.4.1 Summary of the problem

Why do many young adults leave the Church shortly after they finish high¹ school?

1.4.2 Outline of the problem at large

The Church is currently faced with a huge dilemma in that many young adults leave the Church post adolescence. Strommen and Handel (Gibson 2004:7) advocate that “the greatest concern of Christian parents and leaders revolves around whether or not their children will be committed to Jesus Christ and his service upon graduating high school.” According to a nation wide survey conducted by the Barna Research institute in America, “61% of today’s young adults had been churched at one point during their teen years but they are now spiritually disengaged²” (The Barna Group Ltd 2006:¶6).

Young adulthood is characterised by freedom of expression, thought, and action. It is a time of self-discovery and exploration (Bezuidenhout and Joubert 2003:5). To many young adults the idea of attending church is tedious and passé; they feel there is a clash between their ideologies and that of the Church. Several of these people attended Sunday school, youth and church when they were still in school. Most of these young adults probably had good teachings on the Bible but simply having attended these ministries does not guarantee that they will attend church in the future. It is fundamental that this issue be addressed.

¹ Secondary school.

² “Not actively involved in church, reading the Bible or praying” (The Barna Group Ltd 2006:¶8). According to Black (2006:23) “Active church attendance is attending church or church activities two or more times per month.”

1.4.3 Problem delineated in South Africa

South Africa has not been termed “the Rainbow Nation” for nothing. We are a country with many different races, cultures and outlooks (Bezuidenhout and Joubert 2003:5). This situation creates new challenges within the Church in the South African context, as this unique array could play a role in young people abandoning the Church. This study will therefore focus on the reasons why high school graduates extricate themselves from the Church within South Africa.

1.5 Motivation for choice of study

The researcher has been involved in the youth ministry for the past seven years. During this time she has watched dynamic young men and woman leave the Church after they had finished high school. Many of these people were actively involved both within the Church and amongst their peers within their youth groups.

The researcher feels that youth and student ministry are areas within the Church that need constant research and attention especially since many young people no longer find relevance in the Church. According to Scotty Jernigan pastor of the Crossroads Church at Belforest, Alabama, “Young adults are looking for something relevant at Church and are coming up short ” (Campbell 2004:16). This is a great concern not only in South Africa but world wide and it needs to be addressed.

1.6 Objectives of the study

To discover the primary reasons why young adults leave the Church post adolescence, in order to offer practical guidelines to the Church, thus enabling the Church to avoid this predicament in the future. This research paper aims to discover the factors that play a role in young people leaving the Church within the South African context.

CHAPTER TWO

2. WHY DO YOUNG ADULTS LEAVE THE CHURCH

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will focus on the process of gathering information to identify the underlying reasons as to why young adults actually leave the Church.

For the purpose of this study an empirical, quantitative, deductive research approach will be followed, using an attitudinal survey method. The research design will include sampling, data collection and data analysis (Mouton 2001:123).

2.2 The employment of a practical theological approach

Practical theology is a division of theological study which explores theology from a specific point of view. For many years practical theology was not deemed to be a science and many argued that it did not form part of tertiary education as it did not entail adequate theoretical reflection. This misconception has since been resolved. According to Heyns and Pieterse (1990:3), "practical theology is a science because it has its own field of study; it develops its own practical theological theories and applies its own scientific methods." Tucker (2003:3) divides practical theology into three spheres of influence namely: "the individual, society and the church."

For the purpose of this study a practical theological approach will be used and Heitink's definition will be employed. Practical theology is "the empirically orientated theological theory of the mediation of the Christian faith in the praxis of modern society" (Heitink 1999:6). Nel (Khauoe 2004:6) stipulates that "practical theology is a way to teach students how to apply what they have learnt in other theological disciplines." Thus practical theology

encompasses the employment of a theological theory in a practical means either through experiment or experience within Christianity.

2.3 Theory: Faith development theory

Fowler's theory on faith development will be applied to this research study. This theory will be used as a general guideline³ to better understand the faith of the young adults who leave the Church post high school.

2.3.1 Fowler's stages of faith

According to Fowler (1981:12) "faith is interactive and social; it requires community, language, ritual and nurture. Faith is also shaped by initiatives from beyond us and other people, initiatives of spirit or grace." Fowler goes on to say that faith has to be viewed as a dynamic, shifting and developing process. Faith is not stagnant or inactive.

Jamieson (2002:110) relays that Fowler drew on both theology and psychology in order to formulate his theory on faith development. Jamieson (2002:110) stipulates that "although Fowler's theory is now over twenty years old it remains the most significant work in the field.

Fowler sees a person's faith as being made up of different stages; he highlights six stages of faith. He points out that not everyone will experience all six stages. Fowler focuses on "how we believe instead of what we believe" (Jamieson 2002:110). For instance during Stage two an individual may believe in the existence of God just as an individual in Stage four would, however the individual in stage four may experience a closer personal relationship with God (Jamieson 2002:110). According to Jamieson (2002:111) "Fowler makes it clear that no stage is superior or better than the other." Here follows a brief explanation of each stage of faith.

³ Each individual is on a different faith journey hence Fowler's theory can only be used as a guideline and not as a standardised premise.

2.3.1.1 Stage 1: Intuitive-Projective Faith

This stage is generally representative of a child between the ages of three and seven years (preschool). It is highlighted by fantasy, stories, imagery and experience. A child can be strongly influenced by his/her primary caregivers' moods, emotions and actions. At this stage the child becomes aware of self and of issues of gender and death (Fowler 1981:133).

2.3.1.2 Stage 2: Mythical-Literal Faith

This stage is set into motion when a child is approximately seven years old until about twelve years of age. During this stage ideas and stories are interpreted factually. Children at this stage take a keen interest in Bible stories like David and Goliath and Samson and Delilah. They are particularly interested in the detail of these stories (Jamieson 2002:113). Although this stage is predominantly found in children it does not mean to say that an adult will not find him/herself "stuck" in this stage, usually for a short period but sometimes for an extensive time. At this stage a child's principal perception is not only influenced by his/her family but by his/her entire social environment: the media, friends, teachers and even strangers (Fowler 1981:149). It is therefore essential to teach a child Apologetics⁴; how to defend his/her faith against other belief systems and non-Christians at this stage.

2.3.1.3 Stage 3: Synthetic-Conventional Faith

This stage usually commences during adolescence, however many individuals may remain in this stage well into adulthood. Group cohesion and a sense of community are distinctive within this stage (Fowler 1981:173). Individuals have an acute sense of commitment and loyalty and find a sense of identity and reassurance amongst fellow church members. According to Fowler (1981:114) individuals at this stage "are generally unable to tell you how they know something is true except by referring to an external authority

⁴ See discussion in Chapter four (section 4.7.3) for more detail.

outside of them.” For instance, they may argue a point by saying that the Christian channel on television said it or that is what their Pastor told them on Sunday. Group cohesion is vital to them. Any conflict is therefore discomfoting as it upsets their sense of belonging and community (Jamieson 2002:115).

For the relevance of this study it is interesting to note that Stage three typically describes the group dynamics of many youth groups. Teenagers often attend a youth group because they feel loved, safe and secure amongst a group (much like a family). They do not necessarily attend a youth group because they have a heart relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. These teenagers are however loyal and attend regularly. They are readily willing to help with the washing and setting up during youth evenings.

2.3.1.4 Stage 4: Individuative-Reflective Faith

Fowler (1981:182) ascertains that Stage four usually commences in young adulthood. Many individuals may however never experience this stage or may only go through this in mid adulthood. During this stage the Critic will take time examining his/her previous world views; analysing them and determining if he/she wants to maintain them. At this stage an individual finds it easy to debate and question others on aspects of their beliefs and often enjoys challenging others (Jamieson 2002:117). The Critic is characterised as standing in solitude outside any community. The Critic purposively removes him/herself from the boundary lines of a group and loathes conforming to the ideals of a group. Even if the Critic is part of a group he/she has a deep need to be recognised as an individual. During this period the individual acts independently and sees him/herself as self-sufficient, thus not needing advice or assistance from others.

According to Jamieson (2002:115) in order to begin the transition from Stage three to Stage four an individual will often need a significant distress to occur in his/ her life. In the researcher's opinion this distress could involve "being hurt by the church"; this hurt can therefore cause the transition into stage four. In the researchers' opinion, individuals hurt by the church are often "forced" into this stage as that sense of family and community is not just affected but completely destroyed. In the researchers opinion many individuals who leave the Church after high school fall into stage four.

2.3.1.5 Stage 5: Conjunctive Faith

According to Fowler (1981:198) it is uncommon for an individual to get to this stage before mid adulthood. At this stage the individual changes from a closed critic to an individual who is open to different testimonies. A person at this stage is comfortable⁵ in their faith thus finds it easy to intermingle with other cultures and religions. Fowler describes the people of this stage as "adoring ambiguity and delighting in the mysterious" (Jamieson 2002:119).

2.3.1.6 Stage 6: Universalizing Faith

The distinguishing factor of this stage is that an individual decides to remove him/herself from the "throne" or centre of his/her life and chooses to place God in the centre of his/her life instead. A person chooses to give all authority and control of their life over to God (Jamieson 2002:120). In Matthew 16:24 (NIV) Jesus say "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." The life of Jesus on earth gives humankind the perfect example of this. In Luke 22:42 (NIV) Jesus states "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."

Jamieson (2002:129) maintains that individuals in stage six have an exceptional faith quality. Essentially it is imperative to realise that even if a

⁵ The individual does not feel intimidated by the beliefs of other individuals.

person “fits” into this stage he/she is not free from sin and only has the hope of eternal life through the grace of Jesus Christ.

These stages of faith can be compared to the analogy of a climbing expedition on Mount Everest. Each climber sets goals to climb mount Everest and each climber is at a specific level in their expertise with each climber setting his/her own personal goals as to how far up the mountain they want to climb. The commonality however is that they are all climbers; in other words each one is moving on an expedition and they are all on the Mountain. The reality is that some are satisfied with climbing to the middle of the mountain and others are satisfied with staying at base camp and only a few experience the privilege of reaching the peak where they can put up their country’s flag. But at the end of the day they are still all climbers just like we are all “faithers”. No matter what stage the climber is on he/ she is still on “Mount Everest”.

Mount Everest represents- Faith in general Different Base camps on Mount Everest represent- the different stages of faith Climber represent- a “faither”, a person walking in the Christian faith

Fowler’s stages of faith are useful and informative especially to this research study as they aid in understanding the faith of those who leave the Church once completing high school. One must realise however that as Christians we are able to rely on the Holy Spirit for direction and growth and not just on our own personal experience or environmental and social facets. Due to this there may be young individuals who could already be within stage six due to the divine direction of God.

2.4 Research approach

2.4.1 Quantitative versus Qualitative

Leedy and Ormrod (2005:94) highlight the following distinctions in quantitative and qualitative research:

“In general, quantitative research is used to answer questions about relationships among measured variables with the purpose of explaining, predicting and controlling phenomena.”

Qualitative research however, “is typically used to answer questions about the complex nature of the phenomena, often with the purpose of describing and understanding the phenomena from the participant’s point of view.”

2.4.2 Quantitative methodology

According to De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2002:79) the main aims of quantitative research are “to measure the social world objectively, to test hypotheses and to predict and control human behaviour.” Quantitative methodology can be defined as:

an inquiry into social or human problems, based on testing a theory composed of variables, measured with numbers and analysed with statistical procedures in order to determine whether the predictive generalisations of the theory hold true (De Vos et al 2002:80).

The researcher has chosen this method because a quantitative approach is more controllable and the study can focus upon specific questions. Statistical methods are used to determine similarities and differences between variables in quantitative methodology. The researcher can therefore collect data in a methodical manner which can then be measured more accurately (De Vos et al 2002:80).

2.5 Research Design

Mouton (2003:55) stipulates that a research design is “a plan or blue print of how you plan on conducting the research.” The researcher therefore decided to embark on an empirical study using the survey method in order to gather and assess data efficiently. According to Czaja and Blair (2005:3), “surveys are based on the desire to collect information (usually by questionnaire) from a sample of respondents.” The survey method for this study was conducted by means of a single structured questionnaire.

In order to determine the Survey Design, the researcher had to plot out the main aims of the research. This involved establishing what the researcher wanted to acquire from the results of the survey. The researcher wanted to design a survey in order to determine why individuals abandon the Church after High School and to possibly design interventions or at least suggestions to assist in altering this behaviour in the future. Aspects such as time constraints, financial implications and designing the types of questionnaires were taken into consideration.

2.6 Questionnaire augmentation/development

According to the Oxford Dictionary the definition of a questionnaire is “a written list of questions that are answered by a number of people so that information can be collected from the answers” (Hornby 2003:1080).

2.6.1 Questionnaire compilation

The researcher made use of a structured questionnaire⁶ which is generally used in survey research, thus the word choice as well as the specific order in which the questions were plotted played a significant role in the final effectiveness of the questionnaire (Bradburn et al 2004:363). According to Andrews (2003:2), “questions then are context related and usually the power

⁶ Refer to Appendix 1.

rests in the questionnaire.” It is subsequently essential that a research question must be answerable.

2.6.2 Drafting the questionnaire

During this phase the researcher read up on designing questionnaires and made use of previous questions or parts of previous questions as they were applicable to the study. This ensured that optimal questions were asked and this left opportunity to compare results to previous research. Specific questions within the questionnaire were formulated based on the following presumptions made in the researcher’s research proposal: School leavers abandon the Church post adolescence because they do not have a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ or, they are hurt by the Church or because they find church or church activities boring. The researcher formulated new questions for the purpose of the study in order to be more specific and to ensure that fresh insight would be brought into why young adults leave the Church.

2.6.3 The covering letter

According to De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2005:176) “a covering letter should precede all questions within a questionnaire.” A covering letter is a written outline that accompanies a questionnaire. It is essential as it underlines the key aspects of the research as well as the process that needs to be undertaken by the research respondent. The researcher made use of a brief covering letter underlying the purposes of the questionnaire as well as the importance of the completion of the questionnaire⁷. The researcher made it clear that the respondent’s participation would play a key role in the study and that they would remain anonymous on all accounts.

⁷ Refer to Appendix 1.

2.6.4 Type of Questions

According to Bradburn et al (2004:325), “a good question is one that yields a truthful, accurate answer.” The researcher primarily made use of closed ended questions in order to ensure that the responses by the respondents could readily be assessed and measured. According to Czaja and Blair (2005:73) “a closed question has two parts: the statement of the question and the response category.”

Due to the nature of the study, it was decided that using closed ended questions solely was too limited for the matters of the Spirit, thus the researcher made use of a few open ended questions in addition to the closed ended ones. According to De Vos et al (2002:179), open ended questions allow the research respondent to write “any answer in the open space.” In this way the researcher can ensure that the research respondent can give an opinion without any influence from the questionnaire and that the responses given by the different respondents are diverse (Welman, Kruger and Mitchell 2005:175).

The researcher divided the research survey into sections; Section A was made up of demographic information. Section B consisted of general questions on religion and Christianity. Section C focused on specific questions on Christianity and Section D encompassed the respondent’s attitudinal perceptions on the Church.

The researcher made use of the following types of closed ended questions:

2.6.4.1 Dichotomous questions

Dichotomous questions “only have two response possibilities” (De Vos et al 2002:180).

Example used in questionnaire:

Did your mother/parental guardian ever discuss her faith with you?

Yes	No
-----	----

2.6.4.2 Multiple choice questions

In multiple choice questions there is always an option of three or more response alternatives (De Vos et al 2002:180).

Examples used in questionnaire:

How often did you attend Sunday school?

Never	01
Less than once a year	02
Several times a year	03
About once a month	04
2-3 times a month	05
Nearly every week	06
Every week	07
Numerous times a week	08

Which of the following did you do at Sunday school?

Play games	01
Sing praise songs	02
Learn Bible stories	03
None of the above	04

2.6.4.3. Scaled questions

Four-point scaled questions were utilised in this research study. A scaled question is a type of multiple choice question where respondents have to mark a certain point on the scale (De Vos et al 2002:182). The researcher made use of different statements allowing the respondent to give their attitudinal opinion on the scale. According to Bradburn et al (2004:330), “even-numbered scales can more effectively discriminate between satisfied and dissatisfied customers because there is not a neutral option.

Example used in questionnaire:

Please mark the box to indicate your point of view with an x.

4= Always

3= Most of the time/regularly

2= Sometimes

1= Seldom/Never

In your opinion:

Statement	Evaluate the statement on given scale				This is why I left the Church	
	1	2	3	4	Yes	No
Many people leave church because they are hurt by the Church						

2.6.4.4 Follow up questions

Follow up questions are implemented in order to gain more insight into previously asked questions. They are useful because they enable the respondent to respond more specifically to a particular matter (De Vos et al 2002:183).

Example used in questionnaire:

If you answered “yes” to the above question then please indicate which area/s they helped prepare you for:

Leadership	01
Relationships	02
Career choice	03
Sexuality	04
Dealing with temptation	05
Other	06
None of the above	07

2.6.4.5 Open ended questions

Example used in questionnaire:

Do you think the Church could have prepared you better for life after high school?

2.6.5 Pre-testing

It is important to note that a pre-test is not a pilot study. A pre-test usually takes place before the actual pilot study commences, and allows a few participants to scrutinise the questionnaire. Czaja and Blair (2005:122) point out that “every flaw that is found during the testing is one less problem to confront during analysis and interpretation.” It is because of this that the researcher made use of the pre-testing process.

Once the questionnaire was drafted and before it was coded by the statistician the researcher sent out the questionnaire to individuals both in the academic field and who work within the public sector, as well as to members who attend youth in order to get feedback as to whether or not the questionnaire made sense, in order to determine any flaws and to limit ambiguity within the survey questionnaire (Czaja and Blair 2005:72). By going through the pre-test phase the researcher was able to detect flaws within the questionnaire. After the pre-test it was clear that the initial questionnaire needed to be shortened and that certain questions needed to be rewritten. Some of the participants advised that more open ended questions should be included, especially relating to salvation. The researcher took all of the feedback into consideration, when compiling the final questionnaire.

2.6.6 Pilot study

A pilot study was conducted in this research endeavour in order to certify the feasibility of the questionnaire and the relevance of the structured questions. Czaja and Blair (2005:122) stipulate that “a pilot study is when a relatively large number of interviews are conducted using the exact planned procedure for the study.” It was important to determine if the questionnaire needed to be further improved.

The pilot study differed to the pre-test in that the respondents consisted of individuals who fitted the sample criteria. In other words they were young adults between the ages of eighteen to twenty-three years, attending a tertiary institute and who had left the church post high school. The researcher conducted the pilot study on fifteen research respondents. These respondents were requested to give constructive criticism on the format of the questionnaire, the phraseology, the length of the questionnaire and to mention if any of the questions were confusing. The pilot study was deemed successful and the researcher was able to proceed with the research process.

2.7 Sampling

2.7.1 Type of Sampling

The researcher made use of non-probability purposive sampling in order to ensure that respondents involved in the research were applicable to the study (De Vos et al 2002:205; Kumar 2005:179). Respondents had to meet the following requirements: they had to be young adults between the ages of eighteen to twenty-three years, attending a tertiary institute (The University of Pretoria) who were faithful church/youth goers until they left High School.

2.7.2 Sample size

Due to the nature of the study the sample size was greatly influenced by the co-operation of the tertiary institute and the members attending it. The researcher aimed to draw reference from a minimum of one-hundred respondents from various denominational, cultural, racial and social backgrounds attending the University of Pretoria. In order to achieve this, one hundred and eighty questionnaires were given out.

2.8 Data collection

For the purpose of this research study, questionnaires were hand-delivered to the selected research respondents. The researcher was assisted by a volunteer field worker who studies within the University of Pretoria. As advised by De Vos et al (2002:174), the researcher and volunteer fieldworker retrieved the questionnaires within forty eight hours in order to ensure better control of the study and to prevent any questionnaires from being misplaced. The respondents were therefore able to ask the researcher/ volunteer fieldworker for assistance on his/her return if there were any uncertainties with the questionnaire.

2.9 Data Analysis and interpretation

According to De Vos et al (2002:223) “data analysis (in the quantitative paradigm) entails that the analyst breaks data down into constituent parts to obtain answers to research questions and to test research hypotheses.” Data are therefore portions of information or facts in a specified circumstance presented to the researcher (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005:88). As previously mentioned the researcher divided the questionnaire into different sections in order to assist the analysis process.

The data of this research study was analysed methodically via a computer programme specifically designed for quantitative research. At this point it is imperative to add that the analysis does not provide the final answers to the research questions; interpretation of that data is necessary. Interpretation involves taking the results of analysis and making suppositions applicable to the research links studied and then drawing conclusions about these links (De Vos et al, 2002:223). Leedy and Ormrod (2005:286) maintain that “the interpretation of data is the essence of research.”

CHAPTER THREE

3. COLLABORATION

3.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to display the research results of this study. The researcher plans to interpret and analyse data and intends to highlight certain correlations between the results. The quantitative research findings are outlined both in table form and text form. Each result will be discussed succinctly by the researcher. Certain results will however be followed by a more in-depth discussion.

The total number of respondents who participated in this study consisted of one hundred individuals. The questionnaire⁸ comprised of sixty-six questions as the researcher aimed to do a thorough research investigation. There are however questions where certain respondents did not indicate their score, although they completed the rest of the questionnaire. Thus the group total for a question may fluctuate. As mentioned in chapter two⁹ the questions were divided into certain sections, some sections may have been left out by a respondent on purpose because that specific section was not applicable.

⁸ Refer to Appendix 1.

⁹ See section 2.6.4.

3.2 Glossary

Cumulative Frequency:	Is the total number of scores in the class interval and all the intervals below it (The cumulative frequency for a value x is the total count of all the data values that are less than or equal in value to x).
Cumulative Percentage:	Is the Cumulative frequency divided by the total frequency, all times 100.
Distribution:	An arrangement of values of a variable showing their observed or theoretical frequency of occurrence.
Frequency:	The number of occurrences within a given time period.
Label:	Brief description, phrase or term.
Maximum:	The greatest amount, size, speed that is possible, recorded or allowed, the maximum recorded value for a specific variable.
Mean:	Average value of the specific variable (example: the average age).
Minimum:	The smallest or lowest amount that is possible, required or recorded, the minimum recorded value for a specific variable.
N:	Stands for the total number of scores in a sample or the total number of scores in an experiment (number of respondents who answered the question).
Percentage:	Proportion or rate per hundred.
Std Dev:	(Standard Deviation) is the average distance between any specific value and the average value.
Variable:	Is any environmental condition or event, stimulus, personal characteristic or attribute or behaviour that can take on different values at different times or with different people.

(Kiess 1996: 538-544; Abrami, Cholmsky and Gordon 2001: 63,106).

3.3 Outline of Research Results

3.3.1 Section A: Demographic Information

(1) Age

Age distribution v1				
v1	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
18	21	22.11	21	22.11
19	20	21.05	41	43.16
20	23	24.21	64	67.37
21	19	20.00	83	87.37
22	5	5.26	88	92.63
23	7	7.37	95	100.00

Variable	Label	N	Mean	Std Dev	Minimum	Maximum
v1	v1	95	19.87	1.47	18.00	23.00

Respondents who filled out the questionnaire were between the ages of 18 and 23 years. The average age (mean) of the respondents who completed the questionnaire was 19.87 years. These ages correspond with the original intended ages for the sample criteria.

(2) Gender

Gender distribution v2				
v2	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Male	35	35.00	35	35.00
Female	65	65.00	100	100.00

The researcher and volunteer fieldworker handed out questionnaires to willing individuals who no longer attended church regularly¹⁰ and who fitted the age criteria. Female respondents made up the bulk of the sample, comprising of 65%. 35% of the respondents were male. According to the 2006 Annual Review of the University of Pretoria (2006:109), the contact students enrolled at the University of Pretoria consisted of 47% male and 53% female students.

(3) Marital Status

Marital Status distribution v3				
v3	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Single	100	100.00	100	100.00

All research respondents were single. This did not come as a surprise due to the average age as well as to the fact that the respondents were all completing their tertiary education.

¹⁰ More than twice a month.

(4) Race

Race distribution v4				
v4	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Caucasian	50	50.00	50	50.00
Black	46	46.00	96	96.00
Indian	1	1.00	97	97.00
Coloured	2	2.00	99	99.00
Eastern	1	1.00	100	100.00

The respondents' race distribution comprised of 50% Caucasian, 46% Black, 1% Indian, 2% Coloured and 1% Eastern. The researcher and volunteer fieldworker handed out questionnaires to willing individuals; who no longer attended church regularly and who fitted the age criteria. According to the 2006 Annual Review of the University of Pretoria (2006:109) the overall race distribution for the contact students enrolled at the University of Pretoria was 60% Caucasian, 34% Black, 4% Indian and 2% Coloured.

(5) Involvement in tertiary education

Tertiary education distribution v5				
v5	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Yes	100	100.00	100	100.00

All of the respondents were involved in a tertiary institution. This links in with the sample criteria requirement.

(6) Part-time versus full-time enrolment

Enrolment distribution v6				
V6	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Fulltime	100	100.00	100	100.00

All respondents indicated that they were enrolled in full-time education.

(7) Year of Study

Study year distribution v7				
v7	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1st	44	44.00	44	44.00
2nd	26	26.00	70	70.00
3rd	21	21.00	91	91.00
4th	6	6.00	97	97.00
5th	2	2.00	99	99.00
Doctorate	1	1.00	100	100.00

The majority of the respondents consisted of First and Second year students. This made up a collective percentage of 70%.

3.3.2. Section B: General questions on religion and Christianity

(8) Religious preference

Religious preference distribution v8				
v8	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Christian	93	93.00	93	93.00
Other	4	4.00	97	97.00
None	3	3.00	100	100.00

Even though the majority (93%) of these respondents rarely¹¹ attend church (see responses to question 11) they still classified themselves as Christians. 4% of these respondents preferred other religions and 3% indicated that they do not follow a religion.

(9) Denomination preference if Christian

Denomination preference distribution v9				
v9	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Anglican	16	17.20	16	17.20
Baptist	7	7.53	23	24.73
Catholic	17	18.28	40	43.01
Episcopalian	1	1.08	41	44.09

¹¹ Less than once a month.

Denomination preference distribution v9				
v9	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Evangelical	1	1.08	42	45.16
Lutheran	4	4.30	46	49.46
Methodist	14	15.05	60	64.52
Pentecostal	2	2.15	62	66.67
Presbyterian	6	6.45	68	73.12
Non-denominational	4	4.30	72	77.42
Other	21	22.58	93	100.00

The majority of the respondents belong to the following denominations: Catholic 18.28%, Anglican 17.20% and Methodist 15.05%. It must be noted that 22.58% of the respondents chose “Other” as an option. This may be inaccurate due to the fact that many of the respondents were from various cultural backgrounds, with English as their second language and may just have chosen “Other” as they may not have known where their church denomination fits in.

(10) Religion that respondent was raised in

Religion raised in distribution v10				
v10	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Christian	100	100.00	100	100.00

All respondents indicated that they were raised in Christianity. It was necessary for the purpose of this study that every respondent was raised in the Christian faith.

(11) Denomination the respondent was raised in

Denomination raised in distribution v11				
v11	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Anglican	17	17.00	17	17.00
Baptist	6	6.00	23	23.00
Catholic	18	18.00	41	41.00
Evangelical	2	2.00	43	43.00
Lutheran	8	8.00	51	51.00
Methodist	15	15.00	66	66.00
Pentecostal	2	2.00	68	68.00
Presbyterian	8	8.00	76	76.00
Nondenominational	1	1.00	77	77.00
Other	23	23.00	100	100.00

The majority of the respondents were raised Catholic (18%), Anglican (17%), and Methodist (15%). It must be noted that 23% of the respondents indicated “Other”. Once again this result may not be entirely accurate. Generally the percentages were quite similar (with a 1% to 2% distinction) in what

denomination the respondents were raised in compared to the denomination that they chose to be in¹².

3.3.3 Section C: Specific questions on Christianity

(12) Church attendance

Church attendance distribution v12				
v12	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Never	15	15.00	15	15.00
< Once a Year	16	16.00	31	31.00
Several times a year	42	42.00	73	73.00
Once a month	22	22.00	95	95.00
2-3 a month	4	4.00	99	99.00
Every week	1	1.00	100	100.00

The majority of the respondents (42%) attend church several times a year. Special occasions such as Easter, Christmas, Funerals and Weddings could be included in this percentage. 22% of the respondents attend church once a month. Upon speaking to these individuals and through their written responses on their questionnaire's it was determined that this was usually when they returned to their family home. 15% of the individuals specified that they no longer attend church.

¹² See comparison to question 9.

(13) Childhood church attendance

Childhood church attendance distribution v13				
v13	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
< Once a Year	2	2.00	2	2.00
Several times a year	9	9.00	11	11.00
Once a month	2	2.00	13	13.00
2-3 a month	11	11.00	24	24.00
Nearly every week	33	33.00	57	57.00
Every week	39	39.00	96	96.00
> once a week	4	4.00	100	100.00

While growing up most of the respondents attended church every week (39%) or nearly every week (33%). 4% of the respondents attended church more than once a week. This means that 76% of the individuals who completed the questionnaires used to attend church frequently as children. These are alarming figures when compared to their current attendance (see responses to question 11). 75% of the respondents therefore no longer attend church frequently¹³.

¹³ Nearly every week or more.

(14) Church attendance of Mother

Church attendance of Mother distribution v14				
v14	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Never	5	5.05	5	5.05
< Once a Year	4	4.04	9	9.09
Several times a year	8	8.08	17	17.17
Once a month	4	4.04	21	21.21
2-3 a month	10	10.10	31	31.31
Nearly every week	33	33.33	64	64.65
Every week	28	28.28	92	92.93
> once a week	7	7.07	99	100.00

The figures show that 68.68% of the respondents' mothers attend church nearly every week or more. Only a small percentage (5%) do not attend at all.

(15) Faith discussed by mother

Faith discussed by mother distribution v15				
v15	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Yes	77	77.78	77	77.78
No	22	22.22	99	100.00

77.78% of the respondents indicated that their mothers discuss their faith with them.

(16) Church attendance of father

Church attendance of father distribution v16				
v16	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Never	16	16.33	16	16.33
< Once a Year	8	8.16	24	24.49
Several times a year	18	18.37	42	42.86
Once a month	12	12.24	54	55.10
2-3 a month	9	9.18	63	64.29
Nearly every week	13	13.27	76	77.55
Every week	14	14.29	90	91.84
> once a week	8	8.16	98	100.00

The figures show that 35.72% of the respondents' fathers attend church nearly every week or more. 16.33% of the respondents' fathers never attend church. In comparison to the church attendance of the respondent's mothers there is a large gap of approximately 33%. This is not surprising as research in the United States of America shows that "mothers are generally thought to be more influential than fathers in the development of religiousness in adolescent children" (Black 2006:21).

(17) Faith discussed by father

Faith discussed by father distribution v17				
v17	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Yes	55	56.12	55	56.12
No	43	43.88	98	100.00

56.12% of the respondents indicated that their fathers discuss their faith with them. This leaves approximately 22% difference to that of their mothers.

(18) If Parents belonged to the same denomination

If Parents belonged to the same denomination v18				
v18	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Yes	79	79.00	79	79.00
No	21	21.00	100	100.00

79% of the respondents identified that their parents belonged to the same denomination as them. According Bader and Desmond (2006:316), "Previous research suggests that when mothers and fathers belong to the same religious denomination and/or they are equally religious, they are better able to transmit their religious behaviours and attitudes to their children."

(19) Family meal time

Family meal time distribution v19				
v19	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Never	1	1.00	1	1.00
< Once a Year	2	2.00	3	3.00
Several times a year	7	7.00	10	10.00
Once a month	3	3.00	13	13.00
2-3 a month	4	4.00	17	17.00
Nearly every week	10	10.00	27	27.00
Every week	16	16.00	43	43.00
> once a week	57	57.00	100	100.00

57% of the respondents ate a meal with their family more than once a week. Only 1% indicated that they never participated in a family meal time at all.

(20) Family discussion on faith or matters pertaining to God

Family discussion on faith or matters pertaining to God distribution v20				
v20	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Never	10	10.00	10	10.00
< Once a Year	11	11.00	21	21.00
Several times a year	32	32.00	53	53.00
Once a month	10	10.00	63	63.00
2-3 a month	8	8.00	71	71.00
Nearly every week	11	11.00	82	82.00
Every week	7	7.00	89	89.00
> once a week	11	11.00	100	100.00

The majority of the respondents (32%) stipulated that they discussed faith or matters pertaining to God with their family several times a year. The cumulative percentage for respondents who discussed faith or matters pertaining to God with their family once a month or more comprised of 47%.

(21) Sunday school offered by church

Sunday school offered by church distribution v21				
v21	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Yes	92	92.00	92	92.00
No	8	8.00	100	100.00

92% of the respondents confirmed that their church offered Sunday school.

(22) Sunday school attendance

Sunday school attendance distribution v22				
v22	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Never	11	11.83	11	11.83
< Once a Year	2	2.15	13	13.98
Several times a year	9	9.68	22	23.66
Once a month	5	5.38	27	29.03
2-3 a month	8	8.60	35	37.63
Nearly every week	27	29.03	62	66.67
Every week	31	33.33	93	100.00

62.36% of the respondents stipulated that they attended Sunday school nearly every week or more whilst growing up.

(23) Age of first Sunday school attendance

Age of first Sunday school attendance distribution v23				
v23	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
3	8	10.00	8	10.00
4	8	10.00	16	20.00
5	10	12.50	26	32.50
6	23	28.75	49	61.25
7	14	17.50	63	78.75
8	4	5.00	67	83.75
9	1	1.25	68	85.00
10	7	8.75	75	93.75
11	1	1.25	76	95.00
12	3	3.75	79	98.75
14	1	1.25	80	100.00

Variable	Label	N	Mean	Std Dev	Minimum	Maximum
V23	v23	80	6.43	2.38	3.00	14.00

28.75% of the respondents marked that they started to attend Sunday school from the age of 6. The average age (mean) of the respondents when they first attended Sunday school was 6.43 years.

(24) Reason for Sunday school attendance

Reason for Sunday school attendance distribution v24				
v24	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Parents	22	25.58	22	25.58
Friend	9	10.47	31	36.05
Family habit	38	44.19	69	80.23
None of above	17	19.77	86	100.00

The respondents predominantly (44.19%) indicated that their reason for attending Sunday school was due to a family habit. 25.58% indicated that they were forced to attend Sunday school by their parents (See response to questions 63 and 64).

(25) Activities undertaken during Sunday school

(25a) Playing games

Playing games distribution v25a		
v25a	Frequency	Cumulative Frequency
Games	38	38

38 of the respondents allocated that they played games during Sunday school.

(25b) Sing praise songs

Sing praise songs distribution v25b		
v25b	Frequency	Cumulative Frequency
Praise songs	49	49

49 of the respondents indicated that they sang praise songs during Sunday school.

(25c) Learn Bible stories

v25c	Frequency	Cumulative Frequency
Bible stories	79	79

79 of the respondents marked that they learnt Bible stories during Sunday school.

(25d) None of the above

None of the above distribution v25d		
v25d	Frequency	Cumulative Frequency
None of above	3	3

3 of the respondents allocated none of the above. This indication may have been because these individuals did not have a Sunday school at their church.

(26) Taught on other religions at Sunday school

Taught on other religions at Sunday school distribution v26				
v26	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Yes	29	34.52	29	34.52
No	55	65.48	84	100.00

Only 34.52% of the respondents were taught about other religions at Sunday school¹⁴.

(27) Taught to defend faith against non-Christians at Sunday school

Taught to defend faith against non-Christians at Sunday School distribution v27				
v27	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Yes	33	39.29	33	39.29
No	51	60.71	84	100.00

39.29% of the respondents marked that they were taught how to defend their faith against non-Christians during Sunday school¹⁵.

¹⁴ See discussion in chapter four (4.7.3.1).

¹⁵ See discussion in chapter four (4.7.3.2).

(28) Youth/teenage group offered by church

Youth/teenage group offered by church distribution v28				
v28	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Yes	80	80.00	80	80.00
No	20	20.00	100	100.00

80% of the respondents indicated that their church offered a youth/teenage group.

(29) Youth attendance

Youth attendance distribution v29				
v29	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Never	17	20.99	17	20.99
< Once a Year	8	9.88	25	30.86
Several times a year	10	12.35	35	43.21
Once a month	7	8.64	42	51.85
2-3 a month	5	6.17	47	58.02
Nearly every week	16	19.75	63	77.78
Every week	16	19.75	79	97.53
> once a week	2	2.47	81	100.00

41.97% of the respondents who attended youth stated that they attended youth nearly every week or more.

(30) Full-time Youth Pastor

Full-time Youth Pastor distribution v30				
v30	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Yes	46	67.65	46	67.65
No	22	32.35	68	100.00

The majority (67.65%) of the respondents marked that they had a full-time Youth Pastor. This percentage should increase in the future as more churches in South Africa have started to employ full-time Youth Pastors.

(31) Volunteer youth leader

Volunteer youth leader v31		
v31	Frequency	Cumulative Frequency
Yes	24	24
No	5	29

24 respondents out of the 81 respondents in this section indicated that their youth group had volunteer youth leaders.

(32) Number of youth leaders/ volunteers

Number of youth leaders/ volunteers distribution v32				
v32	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1	10	17.54	10	17.54
2	20	35.09	30	52.63
3	14	24.56	44	77.19
4	3	5.26	47	82.46
5	1	1.75	48	84.21
6	2	3.51	50	87.72
8	3	5.26	53	92.98
10	4	7.02	57	100.00

The majority of the respondents indicated that they had two or three youth leaders.

(33) Total number of volunteers

Total number of volunteers distribution v33				
v33	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
0	1	2.70	1	2.70
1	5	13.51	6	16.22
2	15	40.54	21	56.76
3	8	21.62	29	78.38
4	3	8.11	32	86.49
6	1	2.70	33	89.19
8	1	2.70	34	91.89
9	1	2.70	35	94.59
10	2	5.41	37	100.00

The majority of the respondents who answered this question (62.16%) indicated that they had two or three youth volunteers.

(34) Volunteers who received training

Volunteers who received training distribution v34				
v34	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Yes	18	33.96	18	33.96
No	5	9.43	23	43.40
Not sure	30	56.60	53	100.00

The majority of the respondents (56.60%) stipulated that they were not sure whether the volunteer leaders at their church received training. 33.96% indicated that the volunteer leaders at their youth group had.

(35) Type of training received

The respondents made the following comments on the type of training that the respective volunteers received.

- *The youth leaders at my church went on church and church leadership courses.*
- *Our Sunday school and youth leaders worked hand in hand with Scripture Union.*
- *They attended a number of workshops on leadership in Christianity.*
- *My youth leaders did courses with other youth leaders from other churches.*
- *Went away on youth leadership camps.*
- *They were theology students so they had university training.*
- *Our priest trained them.*

(36) Activities of youth gathering

Activities of youth gathering distribution v36				
v36	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Games	1	1.54	1	1.54
Teaching only	2	3.08	3	4.62
Worship only	2	3.08	5	7.69
Games and teaching	6	9.23	11	16.92
Games and worship	3	4.62	14	21.54
Teaching and worship	12	18.46	26	40.00
Games, teaching, worship	39	60.00	65	100.00

60% of the respondents indicated that their youth gathering time consisted of games, teaching and worship.

(37) Cell group/s offered within youth ministry

Cell group/s offered within youth ministry distribution v37				
v37	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Yes	37	56.92	37	56.92
No	28	43.08	65	100.00

Cell groups were offered by 56.92% of the youth groups.

(38) Attendance of cell group if offered

Attendance of cell group if offered distribution v38				
v38	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Yes	19	39.58	19	39.58
No	29	60.42	48	100.00

The majority of respondents (60.42%) who completed this question did not attend a cell group even though their youth group offered it. This may be due to clashes with their extra curricula school timetable as many youth cell groups are offered during a week night.

(39) Reason for initial youth attendance

Reason for initial youth attendance distribution v39				
v39	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Parents	6	9.38	6	9.38
Friend	22	34.38	28	43.75
Chose	28	43.75	56	87.50
None of above	8	12.50	64	100.00

The majority (43.75%) of the respondents attended youth because they chose on their own to attend or because their friend/s attended (34.38%).

(40) Taught on other religions at youth

Taught on other religions at youth distribution v40				
v40	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Yes	38	58.46	38	58.46
No	27	41.54	65	100.00

58.46% of the respondents indicated that they were taught about other religions at youth. The number of individuals who were taught on other religions during youth increased compared to when they were in Sunday school. 41.54% indicated that they were not taught on other religions at youth¹⁶.

(41) Taught to defend faith against non-Christians at youth

Taught to defend faith against non-Christians at youth distribution v41				
v41	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Yes	36	56.25	36	56.25
No	28	43.75	64	100.00

56.25% of the respondents marked that they were taught to defend their faith against non-Christians, whereas 43.75% marked that they were not¹⁷. Although it appears that there is a dramatic change in percentages between being taught how to defend faith in Sunday school and youth, there is a

¹⁶ See discussion in chapter four (4.7.3.1).

¹⁷ See discussion in chapter four (4.7.3.2).

distinct difference in the cumulative frequency of the two questions. Hence only three more individuals actually indicated that they were taught to defend their faith during youth when comparing the data to when they were in Sunday school.

(42) Involvement in church leadership

Involvement in church leadership distribution v42				
v42	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Yes	19	29.23	19	29.23
No	46	70.77	65	100.00

70.77% of the respondents stipulated that they were not involved in any church leadership whilst growing up. Previous research done in the United States of America shows that “those who led church programmes are more likely to attend church as young adults” (Black 2006:25).

(43) Involvement in ministries during adolescence

Involvement in ministries during adolescence distribution v43				
v43	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Yes	27	41.54	27	41.54
No	38	58.46	65	100.00

The bulk of the respondents (58.46%) were not involved in any ministries during adolescence.

(44) Participation in Christian events/societies at school

Participation in Christian events/societies at school distribution v44				
v44	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Yes	35	53.85	35	53.85
No	30	46.15	65	100.00

53.85% specified that they were involved in Christian events or societies during their secondary education. 46.15% specified that they were not involved in these events.

(45) Youth group assistance for preparation after Grade 12

Youth group assistance for preparation after Grade 12 distribution v45				
v45	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Yes	40	61.54	40	61.54
No	25	38.46	65	100.00

A large percentage (61.54%) of the respondents indicated that they felt that their youth group had helped prepare them for life after high school.

(46) Areas of preparation for post Grade 12

Areas of preparation for post Grade 12 distribution v36	Frequency
Leadership	18
Relationships	27
Career choice	7
Sexuality	15
Dealing with temptation	24
Other	8
None of the above	4

27 of the respondents indicated that their youth group assisted in preparing them for dealing with relationships after high school. 24 respondents allocated that their youth group aided in preparing them for dealing with temptation. Only 7 individuals indicated that their youth group assisted them in preparing for their career choice.

(47) Church attendance of friends

Church attendance of friends distribution v47				
v47	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Never	7	7.00	7	7.00
< Once a Year	11	11.00	18	18.00
Several times a year	31	31.00	49	49.00
Once a month	16	16.00	65	65.00
2-3 a month	10	10.00	75	75.00
Nearly every week	15	15.00	90	90.00
Every week	7	7.00	97	97.00
> once a week	3	3.00	100	100.00

31% of the research respondents marked that their friends attend church several times a year. 16% indicated that their friends attend church once a month and 15% indicated that their friends attend church nearly every week. Unlike previous research done in the United States of America where the respondents' friends' attendance "correlated very closely to their own attendance and participation" (Black 2006:26). Individuals in this study differed from their friends. In fact 35% of the respondents' friends attend church two or more times a month whereas approximately only 5%¹⁸ of the respondents do, that leaves a distinguishing gap of 30%. Thus the respondents' friends' attend church more frequently than the respondents do.

¹⁸ Refer back to question 12 for comparison.

(48) General description of mentors' faith

General description of mentors' faith distribution v48				
v48	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Backslidden	12	12.00	12	12.12
Committed	44	44.00	56	56.00
Indifferent	34	34.00	90	90.00
None of above	10	10.00	100	100.00

The majority of the respondents described the faith of their mentors as committed (44%). 34% of the respondents described the faith of their mentors as indifferent.

(49) Church attendance of mentors

Church attendance of mentors distribution v49				
v49	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Yes	77	77.00	77	77.00
No	23	23.00	100	100.00

77% of the research participants marked that their mentors do attend church.

3.3.4 Section D: Attitudinal perceptions on the Church

(50a) People leave the Church due to being hurt by the Church

People leave the Church due to being hurt by the Church distribution v50a				
v50a	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Always	29	29.00	29	29.00
Regularly	43	43.00	72	71.00
Sometimes	23	23.00	95	95.00
Seldom/Never	5	5.00	100	100.00

The majority (43%) of the research respondents felt that people regularly leave the Church because they were hurt by the Church. 29% of the respondents indicated that this is always the case. This makes up a sum total of 72%.

(50b) Individual's personal reason for leaving the church

Individual's personal reason for leaving the church distribution v50b				
v50b	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Yes	15	15.00	15	15.00
No	85	85.00	100	100.00

15% of the respondents indicated that being hurt by the Church was one of the factors that played a role in them leaving the church.

(51a) Young adults stop attending church/church activities because they find them boring

Young adults stop attending church/church activities because they find them boring distribution v51a				
v51a	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Always	3	3.00	3	3.00
Regularly	27	27.00	30	30.00
Sometimes	51	51.00	81	81.00
Seldom/Never	19	19.00	100	100.00

51% of the respondents felt that young people sometimes stop attending church because they find church/church activities boring. 27% of the respondents felt that this was regularly the case.

(51b) Individual's personal reason for leaving the Church distribution

Individual's personal reason for leaving the Church distribution v51b				
v51b	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Yes	41	41.00	41	41.00
No	59	59.00	100	100.00

41% of the respondents indicated that finding church or church activities boring was one of the factors that played a role in them personally leaving the Church.

(52) Reasons why individuals feel that church/church activities are boring

The answers to this question have been put into different categories according to the feedback of the respondents.

(a) The Preaching

Many of the respondents indicated that they were not satisfied with the preaching and that they found the respective messages to be unrelated. They had the following to say:

- *Sermons are not applicable to me.*
- *Preaching is not applicable to daily life.*
- *Pastors don't relate every day life to what is being preached.*
- *Preaching was boring.*
- *Sermons are not applicable to modern society; the preachers do not apply it to every day life.*
- *Sermons were repetitive and boring.*
- *Same message all the time – same idea- same tone.*
- *Sermons are geared to an older (50+) generation.*

(b) Worship during Sunday morning

Less than five respondents stipulated that they felt that the worship was unappealing. The general comment made was that:

- *Worship is outdated.*

(c) Sunday service structure

Respondents stipulated the following in respect to the service structure:

- *I would like the Sunday service to be structured in more of a discussion.*
- *There is not enough interaction during the service.*

(d) Not “youth friendly”

The respondents made the following comments in this section:

- *I attended church when I left my youth group and found it so boring in comparison.*
- *It is too boring for the youth; I tend to think about other things during the service.*
- *There are not enough activities involving the youth.*
- *Not appealing to the youth.*
- *Old ways of teaching, very conservative, nothing that appeals to the youth.*

(e) Other comments made

The following comments were made:

- *I am agnostic so church was extremely boring to me, there is too much emphasis placed on God and not on the self.*
- *The preacher and elders only tend to focus on one area: money which make church so boring.*
- *Going to church for me feels like a chore especially after confirmation.*

(53a) People stop attending church because they start to disobey God’s commands; feeling unworthy or guilty thus finding it difficult to attend

People stop attending church because they start to disobey God’s commands; feeling unworthy or guilty thus finding it difficult to attend distribution v53a				
v53a	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Always	21	21.00	21	21.00
Regularly	47	47.00	68	68.00
Sometimes	25	25.00	93	93.00
Seldom/Never	7	7.00	100	100.00

The majority of the respondents (68%) indicated that they believe that individuals always or regularly stop attending church because they start to disobey God’s commands. Only 7% indicated that they believe that this was seldom the case.

(53b) Individual’s personal reason for leaving the Church

Individual’s personal reason for leaving the Church distribution v53b				
v53b	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Yes	14	14.00	14	14.00
No	86	86.00	100	100.00

14% of the respondents indicated that their personal disobedience to God's commands is one of the factors that played a role in them leaving the church.

(54a) Many young adults stop attending church in South Africa due to immigrating to another country

Many young adults stop attending church in South Africa due to immigrating to another country distribution v54a				
v54a	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Always	24	24.00	24	24.00
Regularly	49	49.00	73	73.00
Sometimes	24	24.00	97	97.00
Seldom/Never	3	3.00	100	100.00

73% of the respondents indicated that they believed that young adults regularly or always stop attending church due to immigrating to another country. Only 3% felt that this was seldom/never the case.

(54b) Individual's personal reason for leaving the Church

Individual's personal reason for leaving the Church distribution v54b				
v54b	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Yes	7	7.00	7	7.00
No	93	93.00	100	100.00

7% of the respondents stipulated that immigration to another country was why they personally left the Church. It must be noted however that this percentage was not entirely accurate as the majority of these respondents moved cities or to a city from a town within South Africa. These respondents therefore stopped attending church¹⁹. Thus many individuals fit into this category not necessarily because they immigrated to another country. In reference to the above findings, it is advised that for future research the question be rephrased, taking into account the matter of relocation to another city, town or country.

(55a) Many young adults stop attending church because they were put off by Christians who they felt were hypocritical

Many young adults stop attending church because they were put off by Christians who they felt were hypocritical distribution v55a				
v55a	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Always	7	7.00	7	7.00
Regularly	32	32.00	39	39.00
Sometimes	42	42.00	81	81.00
Seldom/Never	19	19.00	100	100.00

42% of the respondents believe that many young adults sometimes stop attending church because they were put off by Christians who they felt were hypocritical. 32% felt that this was regularly the case. According to the research feedback done by Wesley Black one of the top four reasons why young adults do not attend church in the United States is “because they are

¹⁹ See response to question 64.

turned off by Christians who are fakes” (Black 2006:32). This seems to be a global predicament and not just a localised one.

(55b) Individual’s personal reason for leaving the Church

Individual’s personal reason for leaving the Church distribution v55b				
v55b	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Yes	43	43.00	43	43.00
No	57	57.00	100	100.00

43% of the respondents indicated that being put off by hypocritical Christians was one of the factors that played a role in them leaving the Church. Being put off by hypocritical Christians and finding church or church activities boring were two of the strongest factors as to why the respondents in this study personally left the Church.

(56) Introduction to the Holy Spirit

Introduction to the Holy Spirit distribution v56				
v56	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Yes	83	83.00	83	83.00
No	17	17.00	100	100.00

The majority (83%) of the respondents allocated that they had been introduced to the Holy Spirit at church.

(57) The way the Holy Spirit was introduced

The way the Holy Spirit was introduced distribution v57				
V57	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Fundamental	45	45.00	45	45.00
Minor	44	44.00	89	89.00
Not at all	11	11.00	100	100.00

Nine of the respondents who answered “No” to the previous question did not answer this question. 45% of the respondents allocated that they were introduced to the Holy Spirit in a fundamental²⁰ way. 44% indicated that they were introduced to the Holy Spirit in a minor²¹ way.

(58) Description of experience of the Holy Spirit

Description of experience of the Holy Spirit distribution v58				
v58	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Close	31	31.00	31	31.00
Not at all	20	20.00	51	51.00
On and off	49	49.00	100	100.00

²⁰ Receiving deeper teachings and understanding.

²¹ Receiving basic teachings and understanding.

49% of the respondents described their experience of the Holy Spirit as “on and off”. 31% of the respondents described a “close” experience of the Holy Spirit.

(59a) Individuals leave the Church post adolescence because they do not have a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ

Individuals leave the Church post adolescence because they do not have a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ distribution v59				
v59a	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Always	11	11.00	11	11.00
Regularly	31	31.00	42	42.00
Sometimes	43	43.00	85	85.00
Seldom/Never	15	15.00	100	100.00

43% of the respondents indicated that they believed that young adults sometimes stop attending church because they do not have a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. 31% of the respondents believe that this is regularly the case.

(59b) Individual's personal reason for leaving the church

Individual's personal reason for leaving the church distribution v59b				
v59b	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Yes	30	30.00	30	30.00
No	70	70.00	100	100.00

30% of the respondents expressed that one of the factors that played a role in them leaving the church was that they themselves did not have a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

(60) How the respondent perceives him/herself in terms of Christianity

How the respondent perceives him/herself in terms of Christianity distribution v60				
v60	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Backslidden	21	21.00	21	21.00
Reject	8	8.00	29	29.00
Indifferent	48	48.00	77	77.00
Committed	23	23.00	100	100.00

The majority (48%) of the respondents perceived themselves to be indifferent in terms of Christianity. 23% indicated that they perceived themselves to be committed. 21% admitted that they were backslidden.

(61) If the respondent's church lead him/her into a heart relationship with Christ

If the respondent's church lead him/her into a heart relationship with Christ v61				
v61	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Yes	72	72.00	72	72.00
No	28	28.00	100	100.00

72% of the respondents specified that their church had led them into a heart relationship with Christ. Although a "heart relationship"²² was explained in the questionnaire these results may not be entirely accurate due to the types of responses given in question 62.

(62) How the respondent's church led him/her into a heart relationship with Christ

The answers to this question have been put into different categories according to the feedback of the respondents.

(a) During a church service

- *I did the repentance prayer and asked Jesus to come into my heart; he forgave me and blessed me by letting me be one of his children.*
- *They taught me how to pray. I was taught through other people's testimonies and they showed me God's love.*

²² Respondent's church guided him/her in the steps to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour.

- *My church asked if anyone was interested in becoming a Christian to stay behind after the church service, I was able to pray and ask Christ to come into my life.*
- *They gave me pamphlets to read and advice on what it means to be a Christian.*
- *Asked who needed to be saved and who wanted to be closer to God, if you agreed they prayed for you.*
- *They gave me readings and a pastor talked with me.*

(b) Sunday school

- *Through the teachings of Sunday school and my cell group.*
- *By teaching me that Jesus died for my sins.*
- *They taught me that Christ is always there and that he will love me no matter what.*

(c) Youth

- *It was actually through my youth group.*

(d) Through church courses

- *Confirmation and church courses (discipleship).*
- *Alpha course.*
- *I attended an Alpha course and was confirmed.*

(e) Through cell group

- *By attending cell groups, I was able to discuss the Bible and church services.*

(63) Other reasons why the respondents think that individuals leave the Church post high school in South Africa

The answers to this question have been put into different categories according to the feedback of the respondents.

(a) Change in geographical location

- *They move away from their family home and go to another city to study.*
- *They leave home.*

(b) Study, work and sport commitments

- *Studies take up too much time.*
- *Sports commitments.*
- *Not enough time.*
- *Become too preoccupied with their lives and forget about God.*
- *Work and social commitments.*

(c) Conflict of interests

- *They first want to “enjoy” their lives and want to live in a sinful way.*
- *Young adults want to party and do not want to feel restricted by the Church.*
- *They are busy with drugs and alcohol.*
- *Many of my friends found that their church was too focused on money and they found the members to be hypocritical.*

(d) Influence of world views

- *People are trying to discover who they are.*
- *There are other religions available.*
- *At varsity people are exposed to more religions and they start doubting their religion.*

(e) Freedom of choice

- *They were originally forced to attend church.*
- *They are no longer “forced” to attend church by their parents.*
- *Parents go or even force them to go and when they leave school they realise that going to church becomes their own choice.*

(f) Peer pressure

- *They are pressured by their friends.*
- *Peer pressure and they no longer think that being a Christian is cool.*

(g) Other

Some young adults /youth fall pregnant out of marriage and leave the church because of that.

(64) Reasons why respondents personally left the Church

(a) Change in geographical location

- *I moved from my home town to the city and have not found a church I like and find it difficult to go on my own.*
- *I left my home city and find it difficult to join a church in the new area I am in.*
- *I moved from another area to the city and haven't found a new church.*
- *I haven't found one that I like since I have come to the city.*

(b) Against Rules and Regulations

- *I like having sex and drinking alcohol and feel that I am constantly judged when I go to church.*
- *Too many rules and regulations.*
- *Youth lifestyle conflicts with that of the church lifestyle.*

(c) Dealing with trauma or a loss

- *I had a personal trauma.*
- *I didn't have a pleasant childhood and did not really bond with the Lord.*
- *After my mom died I drifted from the church and felt some anger towards God.*

(d) Hurt by or conflict of interest with the Church

- *The Church rejected my family after my parents got divorced.*
- *Due to rejection by the church elders.*
- *I left because I did not feel that I was gaining anything and I mostly day dreamt through the service. Going to church became an obligation based on guilt.*
- *Parents and friends stopped attending due to conflict with church leaders.*
- *The general defensive nature of the Church, the rejection of other people with different faiths and its sense of superiority over others.*
- *The Church really hurt my family and I after my parents chose to divorce.*
- *I found that the members who attended my church were hypocrites.*
- *Church only spoke about their need for the congregation's money.*
- *Didn't feel like I belonged.*

(e) Freedom of choice

- *I was no longer "forced" to attend church by my parents.*
- *I was forced to attend church as a child so I rebelled.*
- *I was forced to wear a dress each time I went to church – I just think you should be able to wear what is comfortable to you. That's why when I had the choice I never went back.*
- *I was forced to attend chapel at my school everyday- this really put me off.*

According to research done by Black: "some young adults drop out of church simply because they were only going because of parental pressure in the first place" (Black 2006:37).

(f) Relationship with God

- *I never had a proper relationship with God.*

Following the above statement more than ten respondents wrote that they did not have a proper relationship with God.

- *I do not feel that going to church is a way of judging how close you are to God.*
- *I feel that I do not need to go to church to have a relationship with God, I can do that anywhere.*
- *When you grow up you realise you don't need a group of hypocrites to be connected to God.*
- *I guess I backslid and after that my relationship with God changed I didn't like the hypocritical way my church approached the youth. I found a deeper and better relationship with Christ through self study of the Bible.*
- *I don't believe I need to confess my sins to a priest, I believe I can go directly to God on my own.*

(g) Found church services boring or inapplicable

- *Church bored me and I backslid.*
- *I left because I did not feel that I was gaining anything and I mostly day dreamt through the service. Going to church became an obligation based on guilt.*
- *I found church to be too boring.*
- *The church services never made sense and they never applied the sermon to everyday life.*
- *Apart from me finding church hypocritical and boring it was forced on me what I had to believe.*
- *Talks were too serious, I could not relate and sermons needed to be more interactive.*

(h) Work, transport and studies

- *I left due to the workload of varsity and my part-time job.*
- *I work on the weekends.*
- *Lack of transport.*
- *I have too much university work.*

(i) Other

- *Seeing is believing.*
- *There are church services on the radio and TV.*
- *I used to attend for the wrong reasons.*
- *I believe that in the church structure between high school and adulthood there is about a four to five year gap where you feel like you do not fit in by going to church and my church never offered anything for that gap- you are no longer a youth member yet you do not feel part of the adult congregation.*
- *I am confused about my faith.*
- *I haven't found myself Spiritually.*
- *I haven't found one that I like.*
- *Church only spoke about their need for the congregation's money.*
- *The Bible is a fairytale and Jesus was a prophet. The god I believe in is too overwhelming to capture in something as money infested and 'preachy' as Christianity.*

(65) Whether the Church could have prepared the respondent better for life after high school

Whether the Church could have prepared the respondent better for life after high school distribution v65				
V65	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Yes	53	53.00	53	53.00
No	47	47.00	100	100.00

53% of the respondents agreed that the church could have helped them in preparing for life after high school. 47% of the respondents felt that the Church did an adequate job of assisting them in preparing for their future.

(66) What the respondents wish the Church had prepared them for

(a) More about Christianity

- *I wish the Church taught me more about my religion and not just about Bible stories.*
- *More information on confirmation.*
- *More practical applicable teachings to modern day.*
- *More teachings about God's work and his miracles.*
- *By applying current issues that young adults face to the Christian faith.*
- *More about the Holy Spirit.*
- *How to ask God for help.*

(b) Apologetics

- *How to deal with people from other beliefs and to learn about other religions sects and cults.*
- *How to deal with the onslaught of people from other beliefs.*
- *How to handle other religions.*

- *How to defend it (my beliefs).*
- *I wish my church would have taught me how to be spiritually stronger and how to handle comments from non-believers.*
- *Doubts about my religion.*
- *How to deal with worldly issues.*
- *Taught me more on other religions.*
- *How to deal with all the freedom after you leave school.*
- *Could have helped me to have a stronger faith and to defend it. Instead now I doubt it and look at other religions.*
- *I wish the church would have prepared me for a loss of faith because when I left school my world got bigger and I found it difficult to just believe in things that people told me at church; I hardly knew them. At university I encountered many different beliefs; not just religions and I wish someone could have told me how to deal with that.*

(c) Relationship with Jesus Christ

- *Not prepared me for but I wish my church would have led me to a personal relationship with God.*
- *How to have a personal relationship with God.*
- *Helped me obtain a better relationship with God before I left school.*

(d) Temptation

- *Being in tough situations involving sex and alcohol.*
- *Dealing with temptation.*
- *Peer Pressure.*

(e) Dealing with the concept of eternity

- *Not being afraid to die.*
- *Could have prepared me for what happens after I die because I am scared.*
- *More on life after death, not to be scared or unsure of what will happen.*

(f) Other

- *Time management.*
- *Dealing with anger.*
- *How to be a youth and a Christian at the same time.*
- *How to deal with relationships.*
- *How to deal with the death of a loved one.*
- *University.*

As a result the majority (53%)²³ of the respondents felt that the Church could have prepared them better for life after high school .The respondents pointed out that they really wanted to learn more about other beliefs, specifically how to defend their faith against other beliefs. Many of the respondents wanted to know how to actually have a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus and what the concept of eternity entails.

²³ Refer back to question 65 (Section 3.3.4).

CHAPTER FOUR

4. BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES

4.1 Introduction: A Scriptural foundation

In this chapter, Scriptural texts relevant to the various reasons as to why young people leave the Church after high school will be applied. Each cause will be addressed individually.

Unless we stand firmly in The Word, we will be in danger of drifting into error. Unless we stand clearly on The Word, we will be buffeted by circumstances. This thesis seeks to stand as clearly on The Word, as the researcher seeks to rest in it.

4.2 Why we can rely on the Word for guidance

God had His divine administration over the writing of His word. Although the writers of the Bible were merely human, they were led by the Holy Spirit; by God himself. 2 Timothy 3:16 states **“All scripture is God-breathed (*theopneustos*) and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work”**(NIV).

According to Boice (1986:38), “the Greek word *theopneustos* is the combination of the word for ‘God’ (*theos*) and the word for ‘breath’ or spirit (*pneustos*).” In Genesis 2:7(NIV) it is written “the Lord God formed the man from dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.” In John 20:21-22 (NIV), Jesus appears to his disciples after rising from the dead; it states, “and with that he breathed on them and said, ‘receive the Holy Spirit’.” The book of Luke tells us that after receiving the Holy Spirit the disciples would better understand the Scriptures,

“[t]hen he opened their minds so that they could understand the Scriptures” (Luke 24:45,NIV). This tells us that just as God breathed life into Adam and just as Jesus breathed on His disciples, God breathed into the Scriptures. From this we know that Scripture truly is powerful and “alive”. Hebrews 4:12 (NIV) specifies “For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”

According to Little (2005:85) “as one reads, the confirmation of the Holy Spirit is what finally turns doubt into belief, that the Bible is the word of God.” There is power in the guidance of God’s word and as Christians we can be encouraged to search the Lord’s word for direction. In Luke 11:28 (NIV) Jesus says “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.”

4.3 Guiding principles

The guiding principles which have been applied are from the following Scriptural verses:

- **Deuteronomy 6:1** (NIV) “These are the commands, decrees and laws the Lord your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess.”

Moses was giving the Israelites clear directives on what they needed to do to fully possess the “Promised land”. The parallel for us is that in order to fully possess the abundant life of our salvation, we need to do the same: to look to the Word of God for guidelines in how to live.

- **Joshua 1:8** (NIV) “ Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.”

God was giving Joshua a practical tool to be successful even though this verse was written thousands of years ago we can still apply it directly in the 21st century. As Christians today if we read the Word of God and meditate on it and obey it then we too can be successful and prosperous.

- **Jeremiah 15:16** (NIV) “When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart’s delight, for I bear your name, O Lord God Almighty.”

“Eating” in this sense means to understand, meditate and to put into practice. It is not just hearing the Word of God it is doing something practically. We therefore need to practically live out the Word of God within our ministries in order to set an example for the youth.

- **Jeremiah 1:12** (NIV) “The Lord said to me, ‘You have seen correctly, for I am watching to see that my word is fulfilled’.”

As we work with the youth and young adults in our churches today we can confidently call on all the promises that God has given to us in His Word.

- **Proverbs 30:5-6** (NIV) “Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar.”

God is very specific on how we should treat His Word. He is a holy and perfect God, thus so is His Word. No one has the right to add to His Word or take away any Scripture that does not suit their lifestyle. The Lord is clear that if we do this; there will be repercussions.

- **Psalms 12:6** (NIV) “And the words of the Lord are flawless like silver refined in a furnace of clay, purified seven times.”

As Christians we can rely on the Word of God to be pure, true and faultless and when we need clear direction we can turn to His Word.

- **Psalm 119:9** (NIV) “How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word.”

This verse is very applicable to the youth and the young adults of the 21st century; everywhere they turn they are faced with temptation and the worldview where “everything goes”. The only way they can stand against this current moral decay of society is by standing firmly on the Word of God in order to receive wisdom and strength.

- **Psalm 119:105** (NIV) “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.”

As long as we guide our children and youth on the path that is in line with Scripture then we will be guiding them in the right way.

- **Psalm 119:89** (NIV) “Your word, O Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens.”

Despite the continual change in social standards the Word of God will always be applicable. God’s Word is everlasting and we can therefore always find it applicable and relevant to the varying ministries within the Church Body.

- **Psalm 119:130** (NIV) “The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.”

It is the unfolding of the Word of God that gives depth and joy to every believer and leads to commitment.

- **Luke 11:28** (NIV) “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.”

Although in this context the Lord Jesus was replying to a woman who said that His mother was blessed for giving birth to Him, it is applicable to every Christian across time. The patient work of consistent obedience according to the Word of God is far more important than any position in society.

- **1 Timothy 4:13** (NIV) “Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.”

Although Paul was giving this instruction to Timothy to encourage him, this instruction is applicable to every Christian despite the generational gap. No matter how daunting the Christian walk or working within the ministry may seem; we are never to be discouraged and must continue to read and teach the Word of God.

- **2 Timothy 2:15** (NIV) “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”

It is every believer’s responsibility to accurately engage in the Word of God and not to take Scripture out of context in order to suite their own personal agenda. We need to carefully study and apply the Word of God with boldness in order to understand what it means and to keep it within God’s perspective.

Without the continual guidance and teaching of the Holy Spirit none of these verses would be pertinent. It is only with the help of the Holy Spirit that we can have the opportunity to better understand and apply the Word of the Lord in our lives and ministries. John 14:26 (NIV) states: “But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

4.4 We have been warned that people will drift away from the Church

According to Kreeft and Tacelli (1994:23) today's society "has been marked by genocide, sexual chaos and money worship." Scripture clearly warns us that humankind will fail to lean on God's word as truth and authority and that individuals will drift away from the Church. In 2 Timothy 3:1-5 (NIV) Paul describes the following:

But mark this there will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God- having a form of godliness but denying its power.

We see this reflected in how the world lives today, specifically as depicted in the media.

2 Timothy 4:3-5 (NIV) describes the following:

For a time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their eyes away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

This Scripture is applicable where the Church is teaching truth and Biblical morals and where this is found by a generation exposed to a worldview where there are no absolutes and "anything goes". The Word of God therefore becomes unpalatable for them hence we see them leaving the Church in search of easier alternatives.

4.5 God Himself is concerned that the youth are leaving His Church

Our heavenly Father clearly has a heart for the “lost” as this is continuously emphasised throughout the Old and New Testament. In Ezekiel 34:11-12 (NIV) it is written “For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so I will look after my sheep” (NIV). This passage goes on to state “I will search for the lost and bring back the strays....” (Ezekiel 34:16, NIV). God loves each of us so much that when we turn our back on Him, ignore Him or when we fail to seek Him, He personally goes out to search for us. Jeremiah 4:22 (NIV) states “Return, faithless people; I will cure you of backsliding.”

Jesus used various parables in the Synoptic Gospels to illustrate His concern for the “lost”. The book of Matthew clearly emphasises the importance of seeking out the lost in the parable of the lost sheep²⁴:

What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he is happier about that one sheep than the ninety-nine that did not wander off. In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost (Matthew 18:12-14, NIV).

Luke 15:8-10 (NIV) describes the parable of the lost coin:

Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbours together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.

²⁴ Refer back to Chapter One (1.1).

Luke 15:11-32 (NIV) describes the parable of the lost son which ends with his father saying: “My son... you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we have to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.”

4.6 The Body of Christ is called to encourage and to gather in again those who stray

“May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 15:5-6,NIV).

Our call as Christians is to be integrated into the Body in order to make a difference for the Kingdom and glory of the Lord. As mentioned in Chapter one²⁵, this is emphasised in Romans 12:5 (NIV) where it states “so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.” According to Frambach (2005:36) this Scriptural text “casts a vision for life and ministry in Christian communities that is naturally intergenerational and intentionally inclusive of all people.” Hebrews 10:25 (NIV) stipulates “Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” This verse highlights the significance of fellowship as well as the importance of bringing in those who stray²⁶.

According to Jamieson (2002:141), “All too often those in church leadership find it more convenient to let existing members slip away while they focus their attention on those coming in the front door.” The members of the Body of Christ are quick to blame an adolescent for his/her leaving the Church instead of wondering what part the Church played in it happening. We even make feeble excuses for their leaving, with statements such as: “they are still young

²⁵See section 1.1.2. (Chapter one).

²⁶ Refer back to section 1.1 and 4.5 (Matthew18:12-14, NIV) on gathering in those who stray.

and want to enjoy life” or “it is normal for that age to leave, they will return”. But do all of our school graduates who leave the Church return?

There are areas within the Church where we have slipped up and where we can improve. When we don't follow up on individuals who abandon the Church it gives them reason to feel that their actions are justified. Jamieson (2002:143) stipulates that many adult leavers felt that “by their silence the church leadership reinforced their decision to leave.” The book of Titus clearly specifies that the Body of Christ should interact with the youth, “Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. In everything set an example by doing what is good” (Titus 2:6, NIV).

The truth is that we are involved in constant Spiritual battle. Satan does not want anyone to be gathered into the Kingdom of heaven. Scripture tells us that as believers we need to be equipped with the full armour of the Lord in order to go into battle against Satan's attacks. Ephesians 6:13 (NIV) reads “Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground.” This section of Scripture goes on to state, “Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:17, NIV).

It is therefore our duty as members of the body of Christ to take up the sword of the Spirit in order to combat this serious dilemma of high school leavers abandoning church. It is our duty to search God's word for what He expects and for how we can go about solving this very serious trend. The body of Christ needs to become ‘leaver sensitive” (Jamieson 2002:145).

4.7 Tackling the problem

This research study has highlighted what is obviously a problem with very grave and far reaching consequences for those concerned and that there is much the Church needs to address. It is not possible to do it full justice within the context of a Master's thesis and the researcher recommends that the problem be the subject of further in-depth study and reporting. For the purposes of this Master's thesis, the issues revealed in the questionnaire responses as most frequent reasons for leaving the Church were chosen for in-depth discussion.

4.7.1. Many respondents went to Sunday school as children, but no longer attend church as adults

In reference to questions 12²⁷ and 13²⁸ in Chapter three the following findings were noted:

Past situation: 76% of the respondents who completed the questionnaires used to attend church frequently²⁹ as children.

Current situation: Only 1% of the respondents currently attend church frequently.

There has therefore been a 75% decline in frequent church attendance amongst the respondents in this study this figure is alarmingly high and needs to be addressed.

²⁷ "Church attendance." (Chapter three, section 3.3.3).

²⁸ "Childhood church attendance." (Chapter three, section 3.3.3).

²⁹ Nearly every week or more.

In the book of Matthew, Jesus initially tells the parable of the four soils.

...‘A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came out they were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seeds fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop- a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown’ (Matthew 13:3-8,NIV).

Jesus later elucidates this parable by saying:

‘Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path. **The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since he has no root he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away.** The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of it choke it, making it unfruitful. But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it’ (Matthew 13:18-23, NIV).

It is therefore imperative that children are provided with a firm foundation in their Christian faith; so that they will not easily stray at a later stage.

4.7.2 Training a child when young

Proverbs 22:6 (NIV) which states “train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it” gives us clear instruction on when we should start training our children if we do not want them to turn away as adults. If they are straying we need then to ask ourselves if we are in fact training

them up at all? We clearly have a specific responsibility, along with the parents, as to the way we raise and teach so that the child does not turn away from the Church in his/her future. According to Black (2006:28) “the Bible speaks clearly about the responsibility of the home in nurturing faith in children.” This is addressed in Deuteronomy 6:5-7 (NIV) where it states:

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

Ephesians 6:4 (NIV) states “Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.” The respondents predominantly (44.19%) indicated that their reason for attending Sunday school was due to a family habit. 25.58% indicated that they were forced to attend Sunday school by their parents³⁰. Thus it is clear that many of the respondents’ parents played a significant role in providing a Christian upbringing. This may no longer be the case with parents today, and it may be argued that parents need clearer guidance from the Church on how to do this. Certainly we need to step up and into the gap left by the secularisation of the older generation.

In the 21st century the Church is faced with another challenge in that many children’s parents no longer attend church or take their children to church. According to the Barna Research institute in the United States (2001:¶4) “overall just less than two out of three adults who were churching as children take their own children to church.” It seems that we are facing a second generation of “church leavers” as a result of inadequate church guidance to and training of its leaders on how to train up children.

It is the responsibility of the Church to promote parental teachings on faith and Christianity. According to research by Gibson in the United States (2004:10)

³⁰“Reason for Sunday school attendance.” Refer back to Chapter three (section 3.3.3), question 24.

only a small³¹ percentage of parents report that their church teaches them how to nurture the faith of their children. Children need proper teaching from infancy and the Church has a responsibility to purposefully involve the parents in this endeavour.

Often the teachings at Sunday school level fail to emphasise the importance of having a “heart relationship” with the Lord Jesus. 30%³² of the respondents in this study expressed that one of the factors that played a role in them leaving the Church was that they did not have a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. The Barna Group in Robinson (2002:¶5) did a study in the United States of America on Salvation and found that “the vast majority of the population who are saved experience the conversion during childhood, before the age of 14.” They postulate that “a person who is unsaved at the age of 14 only has a 10% chance of being ‘saved’ later in life.”

If this is true, it is imperative that the Church should focus on the “Great Commission” at Sunday school level. Matthew 28:19³³ (NIV) states: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” Throughout the centuries the Church has been content to emphasise the sacraments and not to fulfil of the “Great Commission”. We introduce our children to Christianity but fail to teach them how to live out their faith through relevant, practical and ongoing teachings.

It is clear that there is a lack of shepherding³⁴ within our churches, not only of the adult members, but also of the children. The role of shepherding; leading and searching for “lost sheep” must start from infancy. In other words the absence of a child in toddlers’ church must be as important to us as the absence of an affluent business person in our churches. We are failing to reaffirm the value and love that God has for each one of us by ignoring the

³¹ Actual percentage not stated in Gibson.

³² Refer back to Chapter three (section 3.3.4), question 59.

³³ Refer back to Chapter One, 1.1.

³⁴ Refer back to section 1.1 and 4.5 (Matthew18:12-14, NIV) on gathering in those who stray.

lack of shepherding within the Body of Christ and the fact that the Church has a responsibility for nurturing the faith of every single member.

4.7.3 The importance of Apologetics

According to Sproul (2003:13) “apologetics comes from the Greek word *apologia*, which literally means ‘a reasoned statement or verbal defense’.” The foundations of apologetics are built up from the following scriptural text: “But in your hearts set Christ apart as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15, NIV). Kreeft and Tacelli (1994:21) state that one of the primary reasons for doing apologetics “is out of obedience to God’s will, announced in his Word. Refusal to give a reason for faith is disobedience to God.”

When engaging with individuals from other religions or when trying to defend our faith, we have to bear in mind that we are not just engaging with human beings but that we are dealing directly with the enemy. We therefore need to be prepared.

God warns us that Satan:

- Tries to blind unbelievers from seeing the truth. 2 Corinthians 4:4 (NIV) reads “The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”
- Is like a roaring lion but he disguises himself as an angel of light. 1 Peter 5:8 (NIV) states “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” 2 Corinthians 11:14 (NIV) states “And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.”

- Is a liar and deceiver, this is highlighted in John 8:44 (NIV) "...for he is a liar and the father of lies" (Adams 1987:13).

4.7.3.1 Christianity and other religions

In reference to questions 26³⁵ and 40³⁶ the following findings were noted:

Only 29 of the respondents were taught about other religions at Sunday school. 38 of the respondents indicated that they were taught about other religions at youth. The figures for the number of respondents who were taught on other religions at youth increased compared to when the respondents were in Sunday school. Despite this increase there is still a large gap in the number of respondents who did not learn about other religions either at Sunday school or during youth. In the feedback to question 66³⁷ many respondents expressed that one of their greatest wishes was that they could have been better equipped in learning about other religions.

4.7.3.2 Teach children to defend their faith

"[F]or it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose" (Philippians 2:13, NIV).

In reference to the feedback in questions 27³⁸ and 41³⁹ the following findings were noted:

33 of the respondents marked that they were taught to defend their faith against non-Christians during Sunday school, whereas 51 respondents marked that they were not. 36 of the respondents indicated that they were taught to defend their faith against non-Christians during youth. Thus only three more individuals actually indicated that they were taught to defend their

³⁵ "Taught on other religions at Sunday school", Chapter three (section 3.3.3).

³⁶ "Taught on other religions at youth." Chapter three, section 3.3.3.

³⁷ Refer back to Chapter three (section 3.3.4).

³⁸ "Taught to defend faith against non-Christians at Sunday school." Refer back to Chapter three (section 3.3.3).

³⁹ "Taught to defend faith against non-Christians at youth." Refer back to Chapter three (section 3.3.3).

faith during youth when comparing the data to when they were in Sunday school. In the feedback to question 66⁴⁰ the respondents stipulated that they wished that they could have been taught how to deal with other people from different beliefs and their arguments against Christianity.

The Sunday school lesson structure is an essential tool. We need to begin with Bible stories like David and Goliath; but too often the Bible is equated with a child's nursery rhyme or to a bedtime fairytale story. There is often a lack of substance and depth when relating the Bible stories to a child's daily life. We underestimate a child's ability to understand Scripture. According to research "identity⁴¹ development "starts during childhood and continues until an individual dies (Louw AE, Louw DA, Van Ede 1999:425). It is not ideal to teach a child how to defend their faith during a youth group; the foundation for faith must be laid during infancy, specifically before the age of twelve years. The biblical examples of the power of early teaching are emphasised in the life of Samuel, who as a young boy ministered before the Lord (1 Samuel 2:18, NIV) and in the life of king Josiah, who as a young boy made a pledge to the Lord to follow Him with all of his heart, soul and strength (2 Kings 22:3 and 25, NIV).

After he was weaned, she took the boy with her, young as he was, along with a three- year-old bull, an ephah of flour and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the Lord at Shiloh. When they had slaughtered the bull, they brought the bull to Eli, and she said to him, 'as surely as you live my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the Lord. I prayed for this child and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him. So now I give him to the Lord (1 Samuel 1:24-28, NIV).

⁴⁰ "What the respondents wish the Church had prepared them for." Refer back to Chapter three (section 3.3.4).

⁴¹ "Identity" refers to the individual's awareness of himself or herself as an independent, unique person with a specific place in society.

Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem thirty-one years...He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and walked in all the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left (2 Kings 22:1-2,NIV).

Given the current worldview of “Syncretic⁴² religion”, the Sunday school and youth ministry should include teachings on the verse in Acts 4:12 (NIV) which states that: “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”

4.7.3.3 Address predominant Biblical and “life” questions of the time

Youth Pastors and children’s Ministers must ensure that the answers to the most regularly asked biblical and “life” questions are covered during their lesson structure. The questions must stay relevant to the time period and; this can be achieved by interacting with the children in their ministry and by doing research on what is commonly being asked globally. Here below are some of the most commonly asked biblical questions of the 21st century.

- Evolution versus Creation.
- “Do animals go to heaven?”
- How do the dinosaurs fit into Creation?
- “What does the Bible teach about the Trinity?”
- What does Scripture have to “say about tattoos and body piercings?”
- What does Scripture say about masturbation?
- What happens when we die?
- “Can a Christian lose Salvation?”
- Why do Christians get baptised?
- Who was Cain married to?
- What does the Bible say about living together?

⁴² Syncretism “is the reshaping of Christian beliefs and practices through cultural accommodation so that they consciously or unconsciously blend with those of the dominant culture. It is the blending of Christian beliefs and practices with those of the dominant culture so that Christianity loses its distinctive nature” (van Rheezen 2006:5).

- What does God say about sexual intercourse before marriage?
- What does Scripture say about divorce?
- When unbelievers pray, does God hear their prayers too?
- “Where did Jesus go for the three days between his death and resurrection?”
- “What is the gift of speaking in tongues?”
- What happens to people who never hear about Jesus?
- Does the Bible have any mistakes in it?
- Does God let people suffer?
- Why should Christians attend church?
- What does tithing involve?
- “What is the mark of the beast?”
- “Can Satan read our minds?”
- “What is God’s view on homosexuality?”
- “Do Christians and Muslims worship the same God?”
- “What does God think about cloning?”
- What does Scripture say about abortion?
- According to God are all sins equal?
- “Can people see us from heaven?”
- “What does the Bible say about interracial marriage?”
- What does Scripture have to say about suicide?
- What does God think about global warming?
- What is God’s view on crime?

(Kretzschmar and Hulley 1998:52-110, Top 20 Bible Questions, 2007:§1; Common questions, 2007:§1).

As regards to all these questions, we should equip our youth with Scriptural backing for instance when teaching them on sexuality then we should refer them to a Scriptural verse like 1 Corinthians 6:15-18 (NIV):

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her body? For it is said, 'the two will become one flesh.' But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit. Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.

4.7.4 Hurt by the Church

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yolk upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light (Matthew 11:28-29, NIV).

Unlike the Lord Jesus who carries our burdens, the Church Body often adds to the burdens of its members. The Body disillusion its members by the way individuals deal with conflict within the Body or by being judgemental. According to Dave Burchett (2004:§2, ¶18) being hurt along the Christian walk is inevitable but "feeling like a victim and deciding to stay there is optional". Although only 15% of the respondents indicated that the reason why they personally left the Church was because they were hurt by the Church a sum total of 72% of the respondents believed that people in general always or regularly leave the Church because they have been hurt by the Church⁴³.

⁴³ See responses to Chapter three (section 3.3.4), questions 50a and 50b.

⁴³ 'Reasons why respondents personally left the Church' (section 3.3.4), question 63.

4.7.4.1 *What should the Church be doing?*

As specified in Chapter three⁴⁴ many individuals left the church due to conflict with the church leaders or due to being hurt by church members. The Lord is very specific in illustrating how Christians should deal with conflict or hurt. This is emphasised in the following Scriptural passages:

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with one another and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you (Colossians 3:12-13, NIV).

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no records of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices in the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres (1 Corinthians 13:4-7, NIV).

"If possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everybody" (Romans 12:18, NIV).

As indicated by the above Scripture and highlighted by the feedback to the research questionnaire, the Church should therefore:

- Be aware, notice and respond when people leave for whatever reason.
- Reach out and restore those who stray, acting in love and compassion.
- Aim to work together in peace and love regardless of any differences.

⁴⁴ Refer back to section 3.3.4, question 50a and question 64(d).

4.7.5 Hypocrisy within the Church: A wake up call

The results of this study indicated that over one third of the respondents believed that young adults stop attending church regularly or always because they were put off by Christians who they felt were hypocritical. Over 40% of the respondents indicated that this is one of their personal reasons for leaving the Church⁴⁵.

In John 8:31(NIV) Jesus says, “If you hold to my teachings, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.”

According to Mark Atteburry (2006:§7) “People need to know that Jesus, not the Church He is the truth”. Over two thousand years ago in his teaching Jesus was scathing of the Pharisees⁴⁶ and teachers of the law who are a parallel to the Church in the 21st century. It is a fact that Christians constantly give Christianity a bad name. If we prepare our children to understand the difference between truth and hypocrisy before they are wounded by it, they will be better prepared to withstand the damage.

Jesus said, “You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you ‘These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men” (Matthew 15:7, NIV).

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are” (Matthew 23:15,NIV).

Later in the book of Matthew Jesus goes on to state: “The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach” (Matthew 23:2-3, NIV).The Lord clearly did not approve of their conduct.

⁴⁵ See responses to Chapter three (section 3.3.4), questions 55a and 55b.

⁴⁶ “A member of an ancient Jewish group who followed religious laws and teachings very strictly” (Hornby 2003:985).

Many of us within the Church have been guilty of being a “Pharisee” and society often equates God to the Church. They forget that the Church is made up of fallible human beings who will have to stand before the Lord one day and give an account of their lives. Romans 14:12 (NIV) states “So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God”. Church leadership needs to emphasise that they are fallible and that although they try to represent the love and holiness of God they simply can never live up to that and will often fail hopelessly. They need to emphasise that Jesus is not the Church.

Paul sets a good example of how to relay the gospel in 1 Corinthians 2:1-5, NIV:

When I came to you brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and in fear, and with much trembling .My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words; but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.

4.7.6 Finding church and church activities boring

Over 40% of the respondents indicated that finding church or church activities boring was one of the factors that played a role in their leaving the Church. In response to question 52⁴⁷ many of the respondents indicated that the sermons were boring and unrelated to everyday life and that they were not “youth friendly”. It is high time that the Church “wakes up” and reconsiders the way the gospel is presented to a post modern generation. Presenting the gospel in a monotone voice is not helpful. To make matters worse many churches neglect to seek the Holy Spirit as a source of power, inspiration and guidance.

⁴⁷ “Reasons why individuals feel that church/church activities are boring.” Refer back to Chapter three (section 3.3.4).

The Lord Jesus walked the earth over two thousand years ago; He presented the gospel to the people of the day in ways that were relevant to them. He spoke in parables, relating the gospel to their everyday lives; he did it outdoors to crowds and in small groups and at the temple. Every church needs to start asking the question “what would be the best way to present the gospel to the youth and young adults in our congregation” and then they need to implement a plan. We cannot expect what worked in the beginning of the 20th century to work now. It is palpable that the youth grow up in a world of audio and visual communication. According to Steyn (2004:91) “reformed churches are losing particularly the youth because they have not adapted fast enough to digital technology and to the cultural change that is evident in the post-modern teenager.” He asks “how can we attempt to be relevant if we still preach as we did one hundred years ago.”

The Church therefore needs to be flexible and needs to continually adapt to the developing nature of society. This adaptation must clearly apply only to how we present the Gospel and not in any way to what the Gospel says. There is a danger of going too far in the other direction and falling into error and relativism⁴⁸. Again, it is in seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit and staying grounded in the Word that we will find the right path.

4.7.7 The importance of Church involvement

Just over 70% of the respondents who completed question 42⁴⁹ stipulated that they were not involved in any church leadership whilst growing up. As mentioned in Chapter three previous research done in the United States of America shows that “those who led church programmes are more likely to attend church as young adults” (Black 2006:25). Over 50% of the respondents who completed question 43⁵⁰ were not involved in any ministries during adolescence. If we involve our youth more they will want to participate and not

⁴⁸ Relativism “is a philosophical theory asserting that there is no absolute truth, only truth relative to the individual, or to a particular time or culture or both...relativism may be defined as the radical denial of objectivity” (Progressive Living, 2007,§1A).

⁴⁹“Involvement in church leadership.” Refer back to Chapter three (section 3.3.3).

⁵⁰ “Involvement in ministries during adolescence distribution.” Refer back to Chapter three (section 3.3.3).

just be spectators and God willing will experience the reality and bonds of their faith as they become involved. The Church needs to make a conscious effort to involve the youth not only in leadership roles but in all activities.

1 Corinthians 12:27, NIV states “Now you are the body of Christ and each one of you is part of it.” It is therefore the duty of the Church to assist members in finding their role within the body. In other words it is the duty of the Church to aid all its congregants in finding their Spiritual gifts and their purpose within the body of Christ. This includes the younger members of the body too, which is something the Body often negates to realise. Perhaps we suffer from a carry over of the Victorian age with its “children should be seen and not heard”. Jesus on the other hand came to overturn our prejudices and told His disciples “...Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Matthew 19:14, NIV).

CHAPTER FIVE

5. PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

Chapter one⁵¹, stated that the purpose of this study was to investigate the reasons why high school graduates extricate themselves from the Church, not only as a global phenomenon but particularly within South Africa. The goal was to develop practical guidelines arising from the findings, in order to help the Church address this critical loss. The researcher therefore undertook an empirical study using an attitudinal survey method in order to efficiently gather and assess data. The questionnaire comprised of sixty-six questions. The total number of respondents who participated in this study consisted of one hundred individuals, between the ages of eighteen to twenty-three years. Each respondent attended a tertiary institute and had left the Church post high school.

This chapter will present a conclusion outlining the main findings as well as possible recommendations for further research. It will focus on proposing practical steps that the Church can take in order to curb the dilemma of individuals abandoning the Church after high school. Each recommendation will be outlined in detail.

5.2 The trend can be reversed

The reality which the Church faces; of many young adults leaving the Church after High School in the twenty first century has been confirmed throughout this research endeavour. However if, as the Body of Christ, we work together to do something about this situation, then we can be assured that God will

⁵¹ See section 1.6.

give us strength and herein lies our hope. The Body of Christ has this assurance based on the following Scriptural passages:

- **Philippians 4:13** (NIV) “I can do everything through him who gives me strength.”
- **Luke 31:7** (NIV) “For nothing is impossible with God.”
- **Genesis 18:14** (NIV) “Is anything too hard for the Lord.”
- **Psalms 62:5** (NIV) “Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him.”

5.3 Main findings

- There has been a 75%⁵² decline in frequent church attendance amongst the respondents from childhood to adulthood.
- Being put off by hypocritical⁵³ Christians and finding church or church activities boring⁵⁴ were two of the strongest factors as to why several of the respondents in this study personally left the Church.
- In the responses to the open ended questions the respondents pointed out that they really wanted to learn more about other beliefs, specifically how to defend their faith against other beliefs⁵⁵.
- The Majority (53%) of the respondents felt that the Church could have prepared them better for life after High school⁵⁶.

⁵² Refer back to Chapter four (4.7.1) and Chapter three (3.3.3) question 12 and 13.

⁵³ 43% of the respondents indicated that being put off by hypocritical Christians was one of the factors that played a role in them leaving the Church (see chapter three question 55b).

⁵⁴ 41% of the respondents indicated that finding church or church activities boring was one of the factors that played a role in them personally leaving the Church (see chapter three question 51b).

⁵⁵ Refer back to Chapter three (3.3.4), question 66.

⁵⁶ Refer back to Chapter three (3.3.4), question 65.

- In the responses to the open ended questions many of the respondents wanted to know how to have a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus and what the concept of eternity entails⁵⁷.
- The majority (70.77%) of the respondents were not involved in any form of church leadership⁵⁸ during adolescence.

5.4 Practical recommendations

But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I do not need you!' And the head cannot say to the feet, 'I don't need you!' On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable...so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it" (1 Corinthians 12:18-22 and 25-26, NIV).

As the above Scriptural passage highlights; the Body cannot healthily function and grow in strength if one part of it is disconnected from the other parts. High school leavers who leave the Church are a part of the Body of Christ. It is therefore the considered opinion of the researcher that the only way the Body of Christ is going to be able to combat this predicament, is to address it holistically, tackling the situation from all angles. Recommendations have therefore been grouped so as to encompass "the Church in general", "Sunday schools", "youth groups", "parents and parental guardians" and "further research".

⁵⁷Refer back to Chapter three (section 3.3.4), question 66.

⁵⁸ "Involvement in Church leadership." Refer back to Chapter three (section 3.3.3), question 42.

5.4.1 To the Church in general

5.4.1.1 Avoid denominational pride within the Body

Some church congregations do not have a youth group because of lack of numbers. Others regardless of the lack of numbers keep a very small youth group going which often dwindles over time. Churches, despite their denominational differences should in these cases co-operate and form one viable and dynamic youth group. Or encourage their youth to join the youth groups that are thriving. We need to hear the wake up call: it is more important that the adolescent be saved and grow into full membership of the wider Body, than that we try and keep them within a specific denomination and possibly have them drift away completely.

5.4.1.2 Encourage inter-ministry cohesion

According to Kenda Creasy Dean in Taylor (2006:74) "[w]e have treated kids as a separate species, which has had the effect of marginalizing them in church life." This can often result in adolescents or young adults finding it difficult to feel connected to the rest of the Church Body. Frambach (2005:42) states that: "A congregation is a rich, intergenerational matrix; and as such a natural crucible for such relationships between children and adults." It is therefore imperative that church leadership implement strategies in order to strengthen the bonds between the various groups within a church structure. Practical implementations could include a mentoring programme, group gatherings (picnic's, sport events, games) which, where appropriate could be attended by the whole spectrum of age groups. Church leadership could designate specific church members to be involved in a "connector's ministry" whereupon they purposefully seek out newcomers at church in order to integrate them into the Body.

The Interrelated Flow Model⁵⁹ illustrated below, is one way in which this could be done. The Interrelated Flow model is based on the General Systems

⁵⁹ Researcher's own development.

theory⁶⁰ where “an organised whole is more than the sum of its parts” (Avis, Pauw and van der Spuy, 2000:115). The Interrelated flow model’s main goal is to ensure that each part purposefully engages with every other part inside the whole. The number of parts can fluctuate according to the structure of each Church congregation.

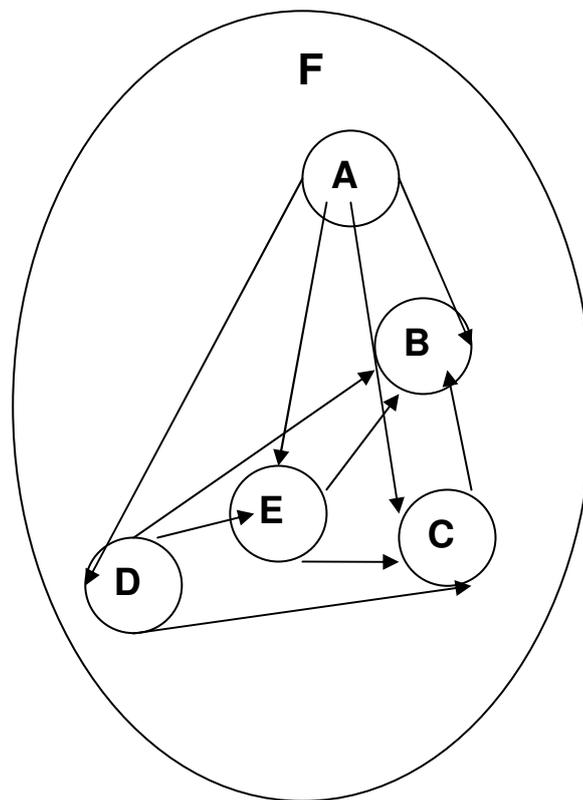


Figure 1. INTERRELATED FLOW MODEL

- A. Adult congregation**
- B. Children’s Ministry**
- C. Youth ministry**
- D. Student and young adult’s ministry**
- E. Pensioner’s ministry**
- F. The Church as a whole**

⁶⁰ Each individual is part of a system of interacting and interconnecting parts or individuals (Avis, Pauw and van der Spuy, 2000:115).

Example on how this can be applied:

The adult congregation [A] can be encouraged to be involved in a pensioners outreach [E]. They in turn can be involved in building a play apparatus for the children's ministry [B] and spending some time as surrogate grandparents with the children. The children's ministry can do a role play performance for the student and young adults Church service [D]. They in turn can provide input into the lives of the youth [C] as youth leaders. The youth ministry can host a garden picnic for the adult congregation. All of these separate ministries form part and function inside the Church as a whole [F].

5.4.1.3 Promote the importance of fellowship

The book of Acts gives a clear insight into the functioning of the "early Church". A sincere, profound sense of fellowship is portrayed following the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The Holy Spirit brought an extraordinary sense of union and oneness as He worked through the early Christians. Acts 2:44-47(NIV) states:

All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Everyday they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all people."

Boice (1986:534) states that "one's relationship to God is actually to be developed and expanded by relationships with other believers... [a]ccording to the arrangement of God, the Christian is more of a Christian in society than alone." 1 John 1:3 (NIV) states: "We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ." By leaving the Church individuals isolate themselves and in overlooking the essence of fellowship, expose themselves to all the dangers of such isolation, not the least of which is a growing and imperceptible indifference. The Church therefore plays a

fundamental role in emphasising the importance of fellowship to its local community. Churches can apply this practically in various ways. By sending out news letters to the community with articles on how individuals were helped in their lives by being a part of the Body (it is important that these articles are applicable to the varying age groups). By community outreach, whereby a church premises becomes a known and friendly place; offering the use of the premises for non-church youth activities such as scouts, ballet and other sport and cultural activities.

As mentioned in Chapter four⁶¹ the Church needs to:

- Be aware, notice and respond when people leave for whatever reason.
- Reach out and restore those who stray, acting in love and compassion.
- Aim to work together in peace and love regardless of any differences.

5.4.2 Sunday schools

In the book of Mathew; Jesus gives the parable where the wise man builds his house upon the rock and the foolish man builds his house upon the sand (Matthew 7:21-28, NIV). This parable reminds us that even if the Church helps a child to build a strong structure if that structure is built on the “sand” it is an effort done in vain as the house will fall because the foundation is not solid. That is why it is so essential to assist leaders and teachers within the Body of Christ to equip its children with the correct foundation.

The only foundation which will withstand the floods of peer pressure and pseudo intellectualism which await our young adults on leaving school, is a thorough grounding in the Word, not just something that is memorised, but as something that is understood, debated, worked through and absorbed. All this needs to be done at Sunday school level.

⁶¹ See section 4.6.4.1.

As mentioned in Chapter four⁶² children need to be taught how to have a “heart relationship” with the Lord Jesus Christ. Children need to be taught on the concepts of the fall and on redemption as they grow up. They need to be taught how to engage with others in different religions and how to defend their faith. The Church needs to evangelise children and we need to teach our children how to share their faith with others. This can be implemented practically by training up the Sunday school leaders efficiently; providing creative and innovative tools with which to teach the children. Other tools which may be used could include role play sessions in the relaxed and safe environment of the Sunday school.

5.4.3 Youth groups

It is essential to get youth group members involved in church ministry. This can be applied practically by initially finding out a youth members Spiritual gifts (there are many courses available on Spiritual gifts). Once this is established the Youth Pastor/ coordinator can assist the youth member in getting involved within the Body. For instance if a youth member has the Spiritual gift of shepherding⁶³, that person could be encourage to assist in facilitating a younger group.

The Youth Pastor/Coordinator should aim to give small responsibilities to youth members thus helping them to be involved and making them feel needed. As they grow and respond, these can be incrementally increased and as they are encouraged, it will lead to a boosting of self-worth and cement their need for a secure and valued identity. Members within the Youth Ministry constantly need to assess there teaching styles and the way they approach the youth in their congregation. The sermons, teaching and activities need to be relevant and contextualised for their generation. Study groups on relevant topics like the “Five language of love” (Chapman 2004), “The purpose driven

⁶² See section 4.6 and 4.7.

⁶³ Also known as the gift of “Pastor”, it is “the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to assume a long-term personal responsibility for the spiritual welfare of a group of believers (Wagner 2005:141).

life” (Warren 2002) and “Preparing for adolescence” (Dobson 1989) could be fruitfully implemented.

Church leadership needs to not only consider offering a transition programme⁶⁴ into student life or young adulthood but they need to implement one. Once again this emphasises the importance of connecting the different parts within the Church Body.

5.4.4 Parents or parental guardians

In the researcher’s opinion the Body of Christ is made up of families of people and if these families are “healthy” then the Body too will be healthy. The following practical steps can be taken by parents/parental guardians in order to better prepare their children so that they do not abandon the Church in their post adolescent years.

- Parents need to lead and teach by example. It is how we live out our faith in the home that our children are most influenced. Parents should ideally be seen to be involved in the Body; to worship and to fellowship, and to be seen praying and studying the Word at home.
- Teach your children about Salvation and how to have a heart relationship with Jesus Christ.
- Discuss your faith at home with your children; give a personal account of why you believe and what God is doing in your life.
- Teach your children to pray meaningfully and to engage in the Word of God from a young age.

⁶⁴ Refer back to Chapter 3 (section 3.3.4), question 64: “Reasons why respondents personally left the Church” section: (i) other.

- Discuss other beliefs at home and teach your children applicable verses to remember and use so that your children will be able to base their faith and defend it from “solid ground”. A verse like Isaiah 43:10-11(NIV) is a good example it states: “Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me. I, even I, am the Lord, and apart from me there is no savior”.
- Encourage your children to go to Sunday school and to go to Church. This applies to ALL parents not just the married but to the divorced and to the single parent.
- Value your children showing them unconditional love. According to Josh McDowell (2007:¶2) “in order for a child to trust the truth, there has to be unfailing love.”
- Teach your children how to ask for forgiveness and about God’s grace.
- Engage in real life issues with your children; be involved in you children’s life. Teach your children how to use the Bible in helping them to solve issues or conflict.
- Incorporate routine family activities such as saying grace during family meal times; giving members of your family the opportunity to give thanks for the day and the meal.

5.4.5 Recommendations for further research

- There is definitely a need for further in-depth study and reporting. Further research needs to be done on this subject both within South Africa and worldwide as this is a global problem.
- This study has significantly highlighted the importance of spiritual input into the pre-adolescent's life. Further research is vital in this area and it demands a much deeper research approach.
- Future research can be done on what qualifications would best equip a Sunday school leader or a youth leader and how the Church can make sure that only well equipped teachers and leaders are used.
- Further studies within the South African cultural context need to be done. It may be difficult for instance, for individuals coming from a town/ township/ rural area to the city to find a new church because the new church may be culturally so different from their previous experience or expectation that they find it difficult to integrate. This dilemma became apparent out of, and tangentially to, the research questionnaire.

5.5 Conclusion

No matter how arduous or complicated the issues, we need to address them wholeheartedly, and as a matter of urgency. 1 Corinthians 15:58 (NIV), clearly highlights this "Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain."

5.6 Final remarks

According to Colson and Pearcey (1999: xii):

The church's singular failure in recent decades has been the failure to see Christianity as a life system or worldview that governs every area of existence. This failure has been crippling in many ways. For one thing we cannot answer the questions our children bring home from school, so we are incapable to prepare them to answer the challenges they face. For ourselves we cannot explain to our friends and neighbours why we believe, and we often cannot defend our faith. We must show that Christianity is more than a private belief, more than personal salvation. We must show that it is a comprehensive life system that answers all of humanity's age-old questions.

I believe that we need to address this core issue of high school leavers abandoning the Church as a matter of urgency. We need to start rethinking how we train up our children. This research project has confirmed what Christians in every denomination have seen and experienced. It is my prayer that this research endeavour will be not only an academic work, but prove to be a launching pad for life giving and meaningful change.

Appendix 1

Theological survey for the Tshwane region QUESTIONNAIRE WHY SCHOOL LEAVERS ABANDON CHURCH

Dear respondent, thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire; your co-operation is appreciated. Please ensure that you read the following before answering the questionnaire:

Your answers will help develop a better understanding as to why people have chosen to leave the church once they have finished high school. Please realise that as your answers will form part of statistical data it is essential that you take this questionnaire seriously and answer each question **accurately** or to the best of your knowledge. By no means will your identity be linked to the questionnaire; **you will remain anonymous** on all accounts.

The final results of this survey will be used for a Masters thesis. The data will be analysed and used to make suggestions to assist the Church. The results will be made available to anyone who is interested in youth and student ministry or the future of the Church.

INSTRUCTIONS

- Please do not leave out any questions. If you have difficulty understanding a question please ask the researcher or volunteer for assistance.
- Please answer questions honestly. Even if your answers are negative in nature, this survey will only be able to assist the Church if you are upfront and forthright with your answers.
- Questionnaires should be administrated by the researcher and volunteers and returned accordingly by the respondent on the agreed date.

SECTION A:

Demographic Information

Please state the following (mark with a cross on the number):

1	State your age:		2	Gender	Male	01	Female	02
3	Marital status:		4	What is your race?				
	Married	01		Caucasian (white)				01
	Single	02		Black				02
	Divorced	03		Indian				03
	Widower/Widow	04		Coloured				04
				Eastern				05
5	Education: Are you currently enrolled in a tertiary institution?						Yes	No
6	If yes, is this part time or full time?					Yes, part time	Yes, full time	
7	If yes, what year are you currently involved in:							
	1 st year	01		6 th Year				06
	2 nd Year	02		Honours				07
	3 rd year	03		Masters				08
	4 th Year	04		Doctorate				09
	5 th Year	05						

SECTION B:

General questions on religion and Christianity

8. What is your religious preference?

Christian	01
Jewish	02
Muslim	03
Other	04
None	05

9. If Christian which denomination, if any?

Anglican	01	Methodist	08
Baptist	02	Orthodox	09
Catholic	03	Pentecostal	10
Charismatic	04	Presbyterian	11
Episcopalian	05	Nondenominational	12
Evangelical	06	Other	13
Lutheran	07		

10. What religion, if any, were you raised in?

Christian	01
Jewish	02
Muslim	03
Other	04
None	05

11. If Christian, what denomination were you raised in, if any?

Yes Christian	No not Christian
---------------	------------------

Anglican	01	Methodist	08
Baptist	02	Orthodox	09
Catholic	03	Pentecostal	10
Charismatic	04	Presbyterian	11
Episcopalian	05	Nondenominational	12
Evangelical	06	Other	13
Lutheran	07		

If you answered “no not Christian” to the above question, please return your questionnaire to the researcher or volunteer .If you answered “yes”, please continue.

SECTION C

Specific questions on Christianity

12. How often do you attend church services?

Never	01
Less than once a year	02
Several times a year	03
About once a month	04
2-3 times a month	05
Nearly every week	06
Every week	07
Numerous times a week	08

13. Growing up as a child, how often did you attend church services?

Never	01
Less than once a year	02
Several times a year	03
About once a month	04
2-3 times a month	05
Nearly every week	06
Every week	07
Numerous times a week	08

14. How often did your mother attend church?

Never	01
Less than once a year	02
Several times a year	03
About once a month	04
2-3 times a month	05
Nearly every week	06
Every week	07
Numerous times a week	08

15. Did your mother/parental guardian ever discuss her faith with you?

Yes	No
-----	----

16. How often did your father attend church?

Never	01
Less than once a year	02
Several times a year	03
About once a month	04
2-3 times a month	05
Nearly every week	06
Every week	07
Numerous times a week	08

17. Did your father/parental guardian(s) ever discuss his faith with you?

Yes	No
-----	----

18. Did your mother and father/parental guardian belong to the same denomination?

Yes	No
-----	----

19. Growing up how often did you have a meal together with your family members?

Never	01
Less than once a year	02
Several times a year	03
About once a month	04
2-3 times a month	05
Nearly every week	06
Every week	07
Numerous times a week	08

20. How often did your family discuss faith or matters pertaining to God?

Never	01
Less than once a year	02
Several times a year	03
About once a month	04
2-3 times a month	05
Nearly every week	06
Every week	07
Numerous times a week	08

Please note: The following section represents the stage in your life from Infancy to age thirteen.

21. Did your church offer Sunday school?

Yes	No
-----	----

If you answered “yes” to the above question then please continue with this section, if you answered “No” then please move onto the next section of the questionnaire (page 6).

22. How often did you attend Sunday school?

Never	01
Less than once a year	02
Several times a year	03
About once a month	04
2-3 times a month	05
Nearly every week	06
Every week	07
Numerous times a week	08

23. If you attended Sunday school, what age did you start attending?

24. You first started attending Sunday school because:

Your parents forced you	01
A friend attended	02
It was a family habit	03
None of the above	04

25. Which of the following did you do at Sunday school?

Play games	01
Sing praise songs	02
Learn Bible stories	03
None of the above	04

26. Did you ever learn about other religions at Sunday school?

Yes	No
-----	----

27. Were you ever taught how to defend your faith against Non-Christians during Sunday school?

Yes	No
-----	----

Please note: The following section represents the stage in your life from age thirteen to eighteen.

28. Did your church offer a youth group/teenage group while you were growing up?

Yes	No
-----	----

If you answered "yes" to the above question then please continue with this section, if you answered "No" then please move onto the next section of the questionnaire (page 10).

29. How often did you attend youth?

Never	01
Less than once a year	02
Several times a year	03
About once a month	04
2-3 times a month	05
Nearly every week	06
Every week	07
Numerous times a week	08

30. If yes did you have a full time youth pastor?

Yes	No
-----	----

31. If you answered no to the above question, was it a volunteer youth leader?

Yes	No
-----	----

32. How many youth leaders/ youth pastors did you have?

33. How many of these were volunteers?

34. If there were volunteers, to your knowledge did these volunteers receive any form of training?

Yes	01
No	02
Not sure	03

35. If you answered “yes” to the above question, if possible please indicate what type of training these volunteers received and possibly by whom.

36. What did your youth gathering comprise of?

Games only,	01
Sound Biblical teachings only	02
Worship only	03
Games and Biblical teachings	04
Games and Worship	05
Biblical teachings and worship	06
Games, Biblical teaching and worship	07

37. Did your youth group offer a cell group/s?

Yes	No
-----	----

38. If yes, did you belong to a youth cell group?

Yes	No
-----	----

39. You first came to attend youth because:

Your parents forced you,	01
A friend attended,	02
You chose on your own to attend	03
None of the above	04

Question			
40.	Did you ever learn about other religions at youth?	Yes	No
41.	Were you ever taught how to defend your faith against Non-Christians during youth?	Yes	No
42.	Were you ever involved in any form of church leadership whilst growing up?	Yes	No
43.	Were you ever involved in any ministries at church during your teenage years?	Yes	No
44.	Did you participate in any Christian events or societies at your school?	Yes	No
45.	In your opinion did the time spent/ lessons at your youth group ever prepare you for life after Grade 12?	Yes	No

46. If you answered “yes” to the above question then please indicate which area/s they helped prepare you for:

Leadership	01
Relationships	02
Career choice	03
Sexuality	04
Dealing with temptation	05
Other	06
None of the above	07

47. On average how often do your friends attend church?

Never	01
Less than once a year	02
Several times a year	03
About once a month	04
2-3 times a month	05
Nearly every week	06
Every week	07
Numerous times a week	08

48. In general how would you describe the faith of older individuals that you look up to?

Backslidden(walked away from your relationship with Christ)	01
Committed	02
Indifferent	03
None of the above	04

49. Do any older individuals whom you would consider as a mentor or person that you look up to attend church?

Yes	No
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SECTION D:

Attitudinal perceptions on the Church

Please mark the box to indicate your point of view with an x.

4= Always
 3= Most of the time/regularly
 2= Sometimes
 1= Seldom/Never

In your opinion:

	Statement	Evaluate the statement on given scale				This is why I left the Church	
		1	2	3	4	Yes	No
50	Many people leave church because they are hurt by the Church						
51	Many young adults stop attending church because they find church and church activities boring.						

52. If you answered yes to the above question please indicate the reasons why you feel this way.

53.	People stop attending church because they started to disobey God's commands and they feel unworthy or guilty, so find it difficult to attend church.	1	2	3	4	Yes	No
54.	Many young adults leave the Church in South Africa due to immigration to another country but join another congregation overseas	1	2	3	4	Yes	No
55.	Many young adults stop attending church because they were put off by Christians who they felt were hypocritical?	1	2	3	4	Yes	No

56. During the time you attended church were you ever introduced to the Holy Spirit?

Yes	No
-----	----

57. If yes, in your opinion was the Holy Spirit introduced to you:

In a fundamental way (giving you deeper teachings and understanding)	01
In a minor way (giving you basic teachings and understanding)	02
Not at all	03

58. How would you describe the way you experience/d the Holy Spirit?

Close	01
Not at all	02
On and off	03

59. Individuals leave the Church post adolescence because they do not have a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.	1	2	3	4	Yes	No

60. Would you consider yourself?

Backslidden (walked away from your relationship with Christ)	01
Rejecting Christianity	02
Indifferent	03
Committed	04

61. Did your church ever lead you into a heart relationship with Christ? (By this did your church guide you in the steps to accept Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Saviour)

Yes	No
-----	----

62. If yes, how did they do it?

63. In your opinion, what are other reasons why individuals leave the Church post high school in South Africa?

64. In your opinion, are there any other reasons why you personally left the Church?

65. Do you think the Church could have prepared you better for life after high school?

66. What do you wish your church had prepared you for?

Thank you for taking the time and effort to complete this questionnaire!

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