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Abstract

This qualitative phenomenological study examined a small rural Midwest Christian high school and its influence on the biblical worldview of its students. The author surveyed and interviewed current seniors and former students from this Christian high school to better understand the biblical worldview of the students from their perspective. The study also attempted to identify the influence of the school and the school's strengths and weaknesses on its students' biblical worldviews. This phenomenological study demonstrates how the practices, programs, procedures, curriculum, and relationships at a small Christian high school lead to a foundational biblical worldview in its students.

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Action Research Report Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Education

This is God's World: A Study of Student Worldview in a Small Rural Christian High School

By

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B.A. Dordt College, 1997

Action Research Report
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the
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Department of Education
Dordt College,
Sioux Center, Iowa
April 2014

This is God's World: A Study of Student Worldview in a Small Rural Christian High School

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Abstract

This qualitative phenomenological study examined a small rural Midwest Christian high school and its influence on the biblical worldview of its students. The author surveyed and interviewed current seniors and former students from this Christian high school to better understand the biblical worldview of the students from their perspective. The study also attempted to identify the influence of the school and the school's strengths and weaknesses on its students' biblical worldviews. This phenomenological study demonstrates how the practices, programs, procedures, curriculum, and relationships at a small Christian high school lead to a foundational biblical worldview in its students.

How do we look at life? How do we think about things? What makes a difference in how we think of things? Are our beliefs reflected in our behavior? Who and what have influenced that viewpoint? In order to explore these questions, worldview should be defined. Basically, worldview is how we understand and interpret life (Mueller, 2006). Worldviews guide behavior, give emotional safety, confirm cultural standards, aid in the assimilation of culture, and examine cultural change (Hiebert, 2008). Our outlook on the world is our worldview. Or to put it another way, worldview is the framework by which one views life.

However, Christian worldview looks different than cultural worldview. It is knowing and believing that everything in the world is under the supreme leadership of the Lord and thus, requires Christians to live accordingly. Kuyper (2000) stated “God is present in all life, with the influence of His omnipresent and almighty power, and no sphere of human life is conceivable in which religion does not maintain its demands that God shall be praised, that God’s ordinances shall be observed, and that every labor shall be permeated with its own fervent and ceaseless prayer” (p. 89-90). In other words, Kuyper believed that God is in all of life. Thus, a Christian worldview allows for all of life to be viewed through the lens of the Bible and God’s revelation through creation.

What then is the worldview of today’s Christian youth? What is their worldview based on? Unfortunately, Christian students are not only struggling to articulate their worldview, but are often lacking a solid, foundational Christian perspective in which to view the world and in turn, live in service to Christ. Research has shown that many of today’s adolescents are struggling to articulate their religious beliefs or explain the role it has in their lives (Smith & Denton, 2005). Smith and Denton’s (2005) research also reveals that few Christian adolescents

even have a biblical worldview (2005). Since their spiritual foundations are fragile, many Christian school students reject their faith before college graduation (Howse, 2002).

This generation of students, including Christian school students, is especially susceptible to having a worldview that is jaded by culture and is not based on Biblical concepts. They are living in a culture with a postmodern worldview, which guarantees many questions, seemingly few answers, and a feeling of disconnect from the world (Mueller, 2006). This postmodern culture encourages the idea that there are many truths. For example, Barna has found that only 9% of evangelical students believe in absolute truth (Colson & Morse, 2004). Today's culture is also teaching adolescents that the Bible is obsolete, denying its truths or accepting it as irrelevant to modern life (Dunn, 2001). A postmodern worldview is in direct contrast to Christianity. This is especially troubling for the Christian schools and its teachers whose purpose it is to create learning environments where students are immersed in seeing and understanding how God is sovereign over all aspects of life.

As formal education plays a pivotal role in forming and shaping a student's worldview, Christian schools constantly need to be aware of whether or not they are fulfilling their obligations to shape image-bearers of God (van der Walt, 2000). Christian school educators need to be concerned and to aid students in the development and growth of their Christian worldview. A small rural Christian high school has made it a priority to teach from a Christian perspective and to encourage the maturation of their students' biblical worldviews. Yet, it is difficult to know whether or not this has come to fruition. There is a desire among the board, administration, and staff to know how influential the school is in the growth of student worldviews. Although working in conjunction with a strong church and parent community, the school community wants to know if their school mission, "Challenging students to grow in knowing, loving, and serving

God and others” (see II Peter 3:18), is lived out in the lives of their students, both during their time in school and upon graduation. While a Christian worldview cannot be measured in the same manner as academic subjects, an attempt can be made to find indicators of where students are in their biblical worldview.

Statement of Purpose

This qualitative phenomenological study examined a small rural Midwest Christian high school and its influence on the biblical worldview of its students. The purpose of this study was to evaluate whether or not the school was influential in its development of student worldview and to better understand the biblical worldview of these students from their perspective. Specifically, was the school living out its mission in aiding in the growth of its students’ biblical worldview?

Research Questions

To address the overarching question of this study, the following research questions are addressed:

1. What is the influence of the school in the growth of student worldview?
2. What are the strengths of the school in teaching Christian worldview?
3. What are the weaknesses of the school in cultivating Christian worldview?

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions will be used. Unless otherwise noted, the definitions are those of the author.

Biblical worldview: a worldview in which all of life is looked at through the framework of what God is doing in the world (Mueller, 2006) and our response to that activity (Dykstra, 2005)

Religious practices: traditions or habits that are done in order to help cultivate one's faith life. Prayer, scripture reading, meditation, tithing, etc. (Smith & Denton, 2005)

Spiritual formation: the relational process that results from a partnership between us and God (Hall & Marrah, 2010/2011)

Worldview: a framework that directs our beliefs and guides our actions

Literature Review

Worldview is the foundation for living and is shown in words, actions, and deeds (Mueller, 2006). A biblical worldview, however, is "rooted in the story of what God is doing in the world" (Mueller, 2006, p. 55). The truth is revealed in the Bible and seen in creation, with Christ as the center of God's unfurling, redemptive story (Mueller, 2006). Hiebert (2008) explained that the central biblical worldview shows God is the creator and lord over all. He created man as the pinnacle of his creation. Then, sin entered the world through the Fall: man's act of rebellion and break in relationship with its creator. Yet God has loved and continues to unconditionally love his fallen creation. So great was God's love that he sent his son to earth to bear the burden of the cross, which carried the weight of all of man's sins. The cross was God's triumph over sin and the beginning of his redemptive process. Through Christ's death and resurrection from the dead, man has gained new life and is in restored relationship with God. The final chapter of the biblical narrative is the return of Christ, the restoration of creation, and the institution of God's kingdom here on earth. Thus, to be in relationship with Christ means having a worldview that is viewed in correlation with this biblical narrative. (Mueller, 2006)

Smith and Denton (2005) looked at how religion is affecting student worldviews. While religion seems to be a significant part of the lives of adolescents and many hold to some religious group, it does not seem very valuable or essential to them or their existence. Consequently, many

of today's adolescents are struggling to articulate their religious beliefs or explain the role it has in their lives. Students are also seemingly incapable of seeing their lives within the greater framework of the world. Subsequently, faith is not integral to their lives, but part of the backdrop of their experiences. As Barna stated, "There is evidence that spirituality has been mainstreamed into teen life without radically affecting the lifestyles and values of most teens" (Mueller, 2006, p. 44).

The lack of significant influence of religion on student worldview has also proven to be true in the testing done at the Nehemiah Institute, a ministry that specializes in Christian worldview testing and training. The Nehemiah Institute has tested many students from public and Christian schools using the PEERS Test. This test evaluates a student's worldview by looking at their thoughts on politics, economics, education, religion, and social concerns (Smithwick, n.d.). Significant drops in student religious worldviews have been recorded, revealing a weak and deficient Christian worldview in most students. (Howse, 2002)

In a postmodern culture, where everything is accepted, there is no absolute truth. Thus, the mantra is that adolescents should "create a god that works for you" (Dunn, 2001, p. 32). Therefore, this leads to young adults that have no "reference point, no guiding standard by which to assess life" (Mueller, 2006, p. 90). In addition, many young people, while growing up in a culture that is not longer affected by a biblical worldview, feel that they have been left behind (Dunn, 2001). This generation has been disenfranchised by the church and its leaders and enveloped by the youth culture (Dunn, 2001). There has been a failure of knowing and understanding their world and what is important to them (Mueller, 2006).

However, as inherently religious beings, adolescents continue to seek. There is a hunger and desire for God, but an inability to process the spiritual teachings and procedures (Dykstra,

2005). Consequently, teenagers who do not have a strong biblical perspective, as well as lack a supportive family, will have difficult times as they move into adulthood (Mueller, 2006).

This also has been carried over into the personal religious practices of students (Smith & Denton, 2005). Prayer, Bible reading, tithing, devotions, involvement in church education, etc., which help aid in the spiritual formation of believers, is participated in by a minority of teenagers, even though they have been found to generate positive results in adolescents' lives (Smith & Denton, 2005). Dykstra (2005) has also found this to be true, stating that Americans in general are not knowledgeable about the Bible, and the devastating result of this is that life questions are no longer important or are not even asked by this generation.

Adolescents are caught in uncertainty and seek to find their role in the world. However, there is a desire to be "meaningfully connected to life" (Mueller, 2006, p. 18-19). Though only with a firm biblical worldview will they be able to understand their role in God's creation (Mueller, 2006); the Christian faith, however, is knowing God through the Holy Spirit and believing in the gospel of Jesus Christ (Dykstra, 2005). Students should be taught to incorporate faith and God into all aspects of their lives, as well as be guided into living out God's will for their lives in today's world (Mueller, 2006). Living a Christian life should create a life of discipleship: "that involves growth in moral maturity, a deepening faith, and loving service" (Mueller, 2006, p. 14).

Consequently, those, who as part of the body of Christ, are leading and teaching today's youth are extremely important in aiding the growth of students' faith lives. This is especially true in a culture that glorifies individuality and that often looks predominately at the personal relationship with Jesus, not communal life (Dykstra, 2005). However, teachers and spiritual leaders are often incapable or reluctant to listen and look at their students' worldviews and

experiences before trying to answer their questions (Mueller, 2006). Listening to students before teaching is imperative or as Francis Schaeffer said, we “only beat the air” (Mueller, 2006, p. 19). Thus, we need to know their worldview (Mueller, 2006).

The Christian story should inform what is taught and how it is taught (Smith & Denton, 2009). Educating students must be purpose-filled: discovering what is unknown, teaching through experiences, listening and noticing their lives, and ultimately, helping them learn to interpret all through the lens of the Bible (Dykstra, 2005). Faith educators are to “sow the seeds” in the lives of students and watch the transforming power of God, while still encouraging these young adults to participate in their lives of faith (Hielema, as cited by Dykstra, 2005, p. 176). Christian education needs to help shape, form, and mold students to be disciples that are active kingdom workers, not just fill them with Christian ideas and ideals (Smith, 2009). Education should be formative, not just informative, directed at student’s hearts (Smith, 2009). Consequently then, Christian education needs to be “a pedagogy of desire” (Smith, 2009, p. 33). Living out lives of faith will then enable students to see that their actions are the way God moves inside and through them (Dykstra, 2005).

Methodology

The researcher conducted a phenomenological study of a small Midwest Christian high school. The purpose of this study was to look at the relationship between this specific Christian high school and its influence on the worldview of its students. While understanding that there were other variables that also affect this development, such as parental, church, and community influence and involvement, the researcher looked only at the school’s relationship with the maturation of these students’ worldviews.

The researcher had all of the students in the current senior class participate and,

additionally, requested the participation of all of the students who graduated four years earlier from this high school (in 2009), many of whom are college seniors. The combined sampling included between 25 and 30 students. Both groups filled out a cross-sectional survey that contains a concise set of questions based on the student's educational experience. (See Appendix F) These surveys included various questions about their worldview and the high school's involvement in fostering the growth of their worldview. The high school students took the survey during a school class period. After signing a consent form (See Appendix A), they took the survey via a survey site. Alumni students were contacted by email and asked to participate in this study. They were able to sign the consent form (See Appendix B) and take the surveys via email, also from a web-based survey site.

After completing the survey, the high school student sampling was randomly divided into a smaller group of 4-5 participants. This was also done to the alumni student sampling. These two groups of students were also involved in a follow-up interview. (See Appendix G) The initial interview questions were directed toward the students' general educational experiences. The interview also contained questions that delved into how their high school education influenced their worldview and prepared them for a life of service. The researcher interviewed the high school group during another class period. The alumni student sampling was contacted and an interview was conducted via phone. (See Appendix G)

The student samplings used survey and interview questions based on similar questions from Cardus. Cardus is "a think tank dedicated to the renewal of North American social architecture." (Cardus website, n.d., para.1) This distinguished research enterprise is based on years of Christian social thought. Their research is based on four key areas: cities, civic core, education and culture, and work and economics. In 2011, Cardus conducted a nationwide survey

of 23- to 40-year-olds that had graduated from high school. Cardus researchers were seeking to answer the question, “Do the motivations for private religious Catholic and Protestant schooling in North America align with graduate outcomes?” In other words, do Christian schools do what they say they will do? To answer this question, Cardus researchers looked at the academic, spiritual, and cultural outcomes of Christian education. (Pennings, 2011)

With permission from Dr. Patty LeBlanc, a member of the Cardus research team, this researcher obtained 2 different questionnaires and a set of interview questions from the Cardus Education Survey. These surveys were based on a random sample of Americans provided by a respected Internet survey firm, Knowledge Networks. Knowledge Networks conducts online research for consumer products and services, pharmaceuticals, retail, media, and public policy. Although Cardus used a variety of surveys in their very comprehensive study, only these surveys based on educational influences on student worldview, were used specifically in this researcher’s study. The two surveys were combined, organized, and compiled according to what was applicable for this study’s student samplings.

A pilot test of both the survey and interview questions was given to five former students. These students were not part of the worldview study, but were similar to the students in the sampling. This test allowed the researcher to make sure that the survey and interview questions are concise, fluent, and appropriate for the study. After conducting the pilot test, changes were made to the wording of the survey and some questions were consolidated in the interview. (See Appendix C, D, and E)

The survey used a Likert numerical scale. The mean score was determined for each survey response, aggregated for each sample group, then graphed to show comparison. The answers were categorized by groups of student: current and alumni. The results of the survey

questions was assimilated and compiled together in a narrative form.

The interviews open-ended responses were coded to introduce the interpretation of the data. A code was used to suggest how the associated data segments inform the research objectives. A report was prepared to summarize the prevalence of codes, discuss similarities and differences in related codes across the data sources, and to compare relationships between codes. The researcher compiled the information into a narrative form to give the “essence” of the students’ high school experiences and how it affected their worldviews.

Participants

The current high school senior class was asked to participate in the survey. Twenty-seven students completed the survey during their Social Science class period. At a later date, the researcher interviewed four randomly chosen students from the senior class. This group consisted of three female students and one male student.

The alumni students that had graduated four years previously were asked to participate in the survey via email. Sixteen students completed the survey. Four alumni students were also randomly chosen and participated in phone interviews with the researcher. This group consisted of 2 female alumni and 2 male alumni. They were all college students.

Results

Results of Senior Students’ Surveys

Question one on the senior survey asked about the spiritual preparation they had received in high school and how well their high school prepared them spiritually for work/vocational school/college. When asked on a Likert scale of 1 to 10, nearly 63 percent of senior students gave their high school an 8 in how well it had prepared them spiritually for work/vocational school/college.

Table 1

SMCS Senior Student Survey - Question 1

How well did your high school prepare you spiritually for work/vocational school/college on a scale 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest.		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
1 Poorly prepared	0.0%	0
2	0.0%	0
3	0.0%	0
4	0.0%	0
5	0.0%	0
6 Somewhat Prepared	14.8%	4
7	22.2%	6
8	63.0%	17
9	7.4%	2
10 Extremely well prepared	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		27
<i>skipped question</i>		1

Question two asked students to rate the following statements using the scale provided, as well as indicate the level of influence their high school education had on rating these statements. Approximately 25% of the senior students rated an 8 in that they could worship God in a variety of places using a variety of means with nearly 26% rating a 7 and 22% rating an 8 in their high school influence on this statement. Forty-eight percent of senior students rated a 9 when answering that they regularly thank God for what He is doing in their lives. The high school influence on this statement was rated 7 by nearly 30% of students, 8 by 26% of students, and 9 by 22% of students.

Table 2

SMCS Senior Student Survey – Question 2a

Please rate the following statements using a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest.

Rate Statement

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Count
I feel that I can worship God in a variety of places using a variety of means.	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	11.11% (3)	18.52% (5)	11.11% (3)	25.93% (7)	18.52% (5)	14.81% (4)	27
I regularly thank God for what He is doing in my life.	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	3.70% (1)	7.41% (2)	11.11% (3)	18.52% (5)	48.15% (13)	11.11% (3)	27

Influence from High School

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Count
I feel that I can worship God in a variety of places using a variety of means.	0% (0)	0% (0)	3.70% (1)	7.41% (2)	7.41% (2)	18.52% (5)	25.93% (7)	22.22% (6)	11.11% (3)	3.70% (1)	27
I regularly thank God for what He is doing in my life.	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	7.41% (2)	3.70% (1)	11.11% (3)	29.63% (8)	25.93% (7)	22.22% (6)	0% (0)	27

Senior students responded to “I spend regular quality time in God’s Word and in prayer” with over 29% rating a 7 and 22% rating an 8. The high school influence was rated a 7 and 8 at 22% each. Thirty-three percent of students rated 8 when answering “I am able to help people in need without being judgmental towards them.” Twenty-two percent of students rated a 5, while another twenty-two percent rated 7 in their influence from high school. Forty-eight percent of senior students rated a 10 in their desire to know God better with nearly 26% rating an 8 and another 26% rating a 10 in their high school influence. Nearly 23% rated a 6, while 18.5% rated 5, another 18.5% rated 7 and another 18.5% rated 8 when answering whether they consistently integrate their faith with their education/job. Thirty-three percent rated a 7 in their influence from

high school, while 18.5% rated an 8.

Table 3

SMCS Senior Student Survey – Question 2b

Please rate the following statements using a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest.

Rate Statement

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Response Count
I spend regular quality time in God's Word and in prayer.	0% (0)	0% (0)	7.41% (2)	7.41% (2)	7.41% (2)	18.52% (5)	29.63% (8)	22.22% (6)	3.70% (1)	3.70% (1)	27
I am usually able to help people in need without being judgmental towards them.	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	3.70% (1)	7.41% (2)	18.52% (5)	14.81% (4)	33.33% (9)	11.11% (3)	11.11% (3)	27
I have a strong desire to know God better.	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	3.70% (1)	18.52% (5)	7.41% (2)	22.22% (6)	48.15% (13)	27
I consistently integrate my faith with my education/job.	0% (0)	3.70% (1)	0% (0)	3.70% (1)	18.52% (5)	22.22% (6)	18.52% (5)	18.52% (5)	14.81% (4)	0% (0)	27

Influence from High School

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Response Count
I spend regular quality time in God's Word and in prayer.	3.70% (1)	3.70% (1)	0% (0)	11.11% (3)	0% (0)	18.52% (5)	22.22% (6)	22.22% (6)	14.81% (4)	3.70% (1)	27
I am usually able to help people in need without being judgmental towards them.	0% (0)	0% (0)	3.70% (1)	7.41% (2)	22.22% (6)	7.41% (2)	22.22% (6)	18.52% (5)	7.41% (2)	11.11% (3)	27
I have a strong desire to know God better.	0% (0)	3.70% (1)	3.70% (1)	7.41% (2)	0% (0)	3.70% (1)	11.11% (3)	25.93% (7)	18.52% (5)	25.93% (7)	27
I consistently integrate my faith with my education/job.	0% (0)	7.41% (2)	3.70% (1)	3.70% (1)	7.41% (2)	3.70% (1)	33.33% (9)	18.52% (5)	11.11% (3)	11.11% (3)	27

Over 51% of students rated a 10 when asked whether they felt loved by God, while over 40% of students rated it a 10 in their influence from high school. When answering whether they enjoy helping others, 33% of senior students rated a 9, while nearly 26% rated a 10. Nearly 40% rated an 8 on their influence from high school. Senior students responded to “I am able to think critically about important social issues” with 22% rating a 7 and nearly 26% rating an 8. Their

influence from high school showed 29% of students rating an 8, 14.8% a 9, and 14.8% a 10.

Nearly 30% of senior students rated a 7, while 22% rated a 9 when answering, “I am able to defend my beliefs in a respectful manner.” Twenty-two percent rated a 6, 14.8% rated a 7,

another 22% rated an 8 and 14.8% rated a 9 for the influence of high school on this answer.

Thirty-seven percent of students rated an 8 in answering, “I respect the beliefs of others.” The

ratings stating the influence from high school was as follows: 3.7% rated 1, 3.7% rated 3, 3.7% rated 4, 22.2% rated 5, 18.5% rated 6, 18.5% rated 7, 22.2% rated 8 and 7.4% rated 9.

Table 4

SMCS Senior Student Survey – Question 2c

Please rate the following statements using a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest.

Rate Statement

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Response Count
I feel loved by God.	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	3.70% (1)	7.41% (2)	18.52% (5)	18.52% (5)	51.85% (14)	27
I enjoy helping others.	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	7.41% (2)	14.81% (4)	18.52% (5)	33.33% (9)	25.93% (7)	27
I am able to think critically about important social issues.	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	7.41% (2)	3.70% (1)	11.11% (3)	22.22% (6)	25.93% (7)	14.81% (4)	14.81% (4)	27
I am able to defend my beliefs in a respectful manner.	0% (0)	0% (0)	3.70% (1)	3.70% (1)	7.41% (2)	0% (0)	29.63% (8)	18.52% (5)	22.22% (6)	14.81% (4)	27
I respect the beliefs of others.	0% (0)	3.70% (1)	3.70% (1)	3.70% (1)	0% (0)	7.41% (2)	18.52% (5)	37.04% (10)	7.41% (2)	18.52% (5)	27

Influence from High School

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Response Count
I feel loved by God.	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	3.70% (1)	11.11% (3)	7.41% (2)	14.81% (4)	14.81% (4)	7.41% (2)	40.74% (11)	27
I enjoy helping others.	0% (0)	0% (0)	3.70% (1)	0% (0)	3.70% (1)	0% (0)	18.52% (5)	40.74% (11)	11.11% (3)	22.22% (6)	27
I am able to think critically about important social issues.	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	7.41% (2)	14.81% (4)	11.11% (3)	7.41% (2)	29.63% (8)	14.81% (4)	14.81% (4)	27
I am able to defend my beliefs in a respectful manner.	3.70% (1)	0% (0)	7.41% (2)	3.70% (1)	11.11% (3)	22.22% (6)	14.81% (4)	22.22% (6)	14.81% (4)	0% (0)	27
I respect the beliefs of others.	3.70% (1)	0% (0)	3.70% (1)	3.70% (1)	22.22% (6)	18.52% (5)	18.52% (5)	22.22% (6)	7.41% (2)	0% (0)	27

Senior students responded to sharing their faith with others with 33% rating an 8 and 22% rating a 9. High school influence was shown at 40.7% rating 8. “I have learned to be honest with myself and a few significant others about my doubts, feelings, beliefs, and struggles.” Students rated this statement at 7 and 8 at 22% each and 9 at 18.5 each. The influence from high

school was rated at 5 and 6 at 22% each and 14.8% rated 7.

Table 5

SMCS Senior Student Survey – Question 2d

Please rate the following statements using a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest.

Rate Statement

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Response Count
I am able to share my faith with others.	0% (0)	0% (0)	3.70% (1)	3.70% (1)	3.70% (1)	11.11% (3)	3.70% (1)	33.33% (9)	22.22% (6)	18.52% (5)	27
I have learned to be honest with myself and a few significant others about my doubts, feelings, beliefs, and struggles.	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	7.41% (2)	11.11% (3)	22.22% (6)	22.22% (6)	18.52% (5)	18.52% (5)	27

Influence from High School

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Response Count
I am able to share my faith with others.	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	7.41% (2)	14.81% (4)	3.70% (1)	11.11% (3)	40.74% (11)	18.52% (5)	3.70% (1)	27
I have learned to be honest with myself and a few significant others about my doubts, feelings, beliefs, and struggles.	0% (0)	0% (0)	7.41% (2)	14.81% (4)	22.22% (6)	22.22% (6)	14.81% (4)	0% (0)	7.41% (2)	11.11% (3)	27

Question three asked students if they pray. One hundred percent of senior students respond with yes. Question four asked students why they prayed. For help in solving problems, 70% marked frequently, while 33% marked that they frequently pray to be in communion with God, and nearly 67% frequently pray to express gratitude. Seventy percent of students pray frequently for emotional strength, while nearly 89% pray frequently for forgiveness and 55.5% pray frequently and 44% pray occasionally to relieve the suffering of others. One senior student answered that they pray to give God glory, while another student felt that they ask God for too many things and “that I am too self-centered in my prayers.”

Table 6

SMCS Senior Student Survey – Question 4

Why do you pray? (Mark one for each item.)

Answer Options	Frequently	Occasionally	Not At All	Response Count
For help in solving problems.	70.37% (19)	29.63% (8)	0% (0)	27
To be in communion with God.	33.33% (9)	66.67% (18)	0% (0)	27
To express gratitude.	66.67% (18)	33.33% (9)	0% (0)	27
For emotional strength.	70.37% (19)	29.63% (8)	0% (0)	27
For forgiveness.	88.89% (24)	11.11% (3)	0% (0)	27
To relieve the suffering of others.	55.56% (15)	44.44% (12)	0% (0)	27

Question five asked students how often they engaged in the following activities: forty-four percent of senior students engage in self-reflection several times a week, while 66.67% pray daily. Fifty-nine percent of senior students participate in religious singing several times a week. Twenty-two percent of students read the Bible daily and 44.4% read the Bible several times a week. Nearly 26% of students partake in other reading on religion and spirituality several times a week. Thirty-seven percent of students partake in other reading on religion and spirituality once a week.

Table 7

SMCS Senior Student Survey – Question 5

How often do you engage in the following activities? Include individual and communal worship. (Mark one for each item.)

Answer Options	Daily	Several Times A Week	Once A Week	Monthly	Less Than Monthly	Not At All	Response Count
Self-reflection	11.11% (3)	44.44% (12)	18.52% (5)	11.11% (3)	11.11% (3)	3.70% (1)	27
Prayer	66.67% (18)	29.63% (8)	3.70% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	27
Religious Singing	22.22% (6)	59.26% (16)	14.81% (4)	0% (0)	3.70% (1)	0% (0)	27
Reading the Bible	22.22% (6)	44.44% (12)	25.93% (7)	3.70% (1)	3.70% (1)	0% (0)	27
Other reading on religion/spirituality	7.41% (2)	25.93% (7)	37.04% (10)	14.81% (4)	14.81% (4)	0% (0)	27

Question six asked students how often they engaged in the following activities: forty-eight percent of senior students marked “to a great extent” when answering whether they have an interest in spirituality, while 51.8% marked “to some extent.” Forty-four percent believe in the sacredness of life to a great extent, while 55.5% believe “to some extent.” Over 92% of students felt unsettled about spiritual and religious matters “to some extent.” “Believing only what I can see or can be explained” was rated at “to some extent” by 66.6% of students, while 33% rated it “not at all.” Thirty-seven percent of senior students felt good about the direction in which their life was headed “to a great extent.” Nearly 63% felt good about the direction in which their life was headed “to some extent.”

Table 8

SMCS Senior Student Survey – Question 6a

Please indicate the extent to which each of the following describes you. (Mark one for each item.)

Answer Options	To A Great Extent	To Some Extent	Not At All	Response Count
Having an interest in spirituality.	48.15% (13)	51.85% (14)	0% (0)	27
Believing in the sacredness of life.	44.44% (12)	55.56% (15)	0% (0)	27
Feeling unsettled about spiritual and religious matters.	7.41% (2)	92.59% (25)	0% (0)	27
Believing only what I can see or can be explained.	0% (0)	66.67% (18)	33.33% (9)	27
Feeling good about the direction in which my life is heading.	37.04% (10)	62.96% (17)	0% (0)	27

Forty-eight percent of students had felt a sense of connection with God that transcended their personal self “to a great extent”, while nearly 52% felt it “to some extent.” Feeling a strong connection to all humanity was felt “to a great extent” by nearly 26% of senior students and “to some extent” by 74 % of students. Nearly 26% of all students had felt disappointment with their religious upbringing “to some extent,” while 74% had felt no disappointment with their religious upbringing. Having an interest in different religious traditions “to some extent” was marked by 59% of senior students with nearly 41% marking “not at all.” Nearly 19% of seniors felt committed to introduce people to their faith “to a great extent,” while 74% felt it “to some extent.”

Table 9

SMCS Senior Student Survey – Question 6b

Please indicate the extent to which each of the following describes you. (Mark one for each item.)

Answer Options	To A Great Extent	To Some Extent	Not At All	Response Count
Feeling a sense of connection with God that transcends my personal self.	48.15% (13)	51.85% (14)	0% (0)	27
Feeling a strong connection to all humanity.	25.93% (7)	74.07% (20)	0% (0)	27
Feeling disappointment with my religious upbringing.	0% (0)	25.93% (7)	74.07% (20)	27
Having an interest in different religious traditions.	0% (0)	69.26% (16)	40.74% (11)	27
Being committed to introducing people to my faith.	18.52% (5)	74.07% (20)	7.41% (2)	27

Nearly 27% of seniors believe in the goodness of all people “to a great extent,” while 61.5% believe it “to some extent,” and 11.5% believe it “not at all.” Being thankful for all that has happened to me was felt by nearly 78% of senior students “to a great extent,” and “to some extent” by 22%. Nearly 41% of students see each day, good or bad, as a gift “to a great extent,” and 59% “to some extent.” Seeking to follow religious teachings in their everyday life was felt “to a great extent” by nearly 41% of senior students, while 59% marked “to some extent.”

Table 10

SMCS Senior Student Survey – Question 6c

Please indicate the extent to which each of the following describes you. (Mark one for each item.)

Answer Options	To A Great Extent	To Some Extent	Not At All	Response Count
Believing in the goodness of all people.	26.92% (7)	61.54% (16)	11.54% (3)	26
Being thankful for all that has happened to me.	77.78% (21)	22.22% (6)	0% (0)	27
Seeing each day, good or bad, as a gift.	40.74% (11)	59.26% (16)	0% (0)	27
Seeking to follow religious teachings in my everyday life.	40.74% (11)	59.26% (16)	0% (0)	27

Question seven asked senior students to indicate the importance to them personally of each of the following statements: nearly 41% of seniors felt that seeking out opportunities to grow spiritually was “essential,” while nearly 56% felt it was “very important.” While reducing pain and suffering the world was deemed “essential” to 37% of students and “very important” to 48% of senior students. Forty-eight percent of students found attaining wisdom “essential” and nearly 41% found it “very important.” Seeking beauty in my life was seen as “essential” to 33% and “very important” to 37% of seniors. “Finding the answers to the mysteries of life” was not responded to. Nearly 51.8% of senior survey takers saw it as “essential” that they become a more loving person, while 44.4% of survey takers saw it is “very important.” Following faithfully the laws and rules taught by my religion was chosen as “essential” by nearly 52% and 44% chose it as “very important.” Thirty-three percent find improving the human condition “essential,” while nearly 41% found it “very important,” 22% found it “somewhat important” and 3.7% found it “not important.”

Table 11

SMCS Senior Student Survey – Question 7

Please indicate the importance to you personally of each of the following: (Mark one for each item.)					
Answer Options	Essential	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Response Count
Seeking out opportunities to help me grow spiritually.	40.74% (11)	5.56% (15)	3.70% (1)	0% (0)	27
Reducing pain and suffering in the world.	37.04% (10)	48.15% (13)	14.81% (4)	0% (0)	27
Attaining wisdom.	48.15% (13)	40.74% (11)	11.11% (3)	0% (0)	27
Seeking beauty in my life.	33.33% (9)	37.04% (10)	25.93% (7)	3.70% (1)	27
Becoming a more loving person.	51.85% (14)	44.44% (12)	3.70% (1)	0% (0)	27
Following faithfully the laws and rules taught by my religion.	51.85% (14)	44.44% (12)	3.70% (1)	0% (0)	27
Improving the human condition.	33.33% (9)	40.74% (11)	22.22% (6)	3.70% (1)	27

Question eight asked students about their spiritual/religious beliefs. Nearly 67% of senior students “agreed strongly” that their spiritual/religious beliefs had helped them develop my identity. Thirty-three percent “agreed somewhat.” Their spiritual/religious beliefs are one of the most important things in my life was “agreed strongly” by nearly 82% of students, while 18.5% was “agreed somewhat.” Eighty-five percent of senior students “agree strongly” that their spiritual/religious beliefs give meaning/purpose to their life, while 14.8% “agree somewhat.” Their spiritual/religious beliefs help define the goals they set for themselves is “agreed strongly” by 70% of students, while nearly 26% “agree somewhat.” Nearly 82% of students “agree strongly” that their spiritual/religious beliefs provide them with strength, support, and guidance. Nearly 19% of students “agree somewhat.” Their spiritual/religious beliefs lie behind my whole approach to life is “agreed strongly” by 62.6% of seniors and “agreed somewhat” by 30%.

Table 12

SMCS Senior Student Survey – Question 8

My spiritual/religious beliefs: (Mark one for each item)					
Answer Options	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly	Response Count
Have helped me develop my identity.	66.67% (18)	33.33% (9)	0% (0)	0% (0)	27
Are one of the most important things in my life.	81.48% (22)	18.52% (5)	0% (0)	0% (0)	27
Give meaning/ purpose to my life.	85.19% (23)	14.81% (4)	0% (0)	0% (0)	27
Help define the goals I set for myself.	70.37% (19)	25.93% (7)	3.70% (1)	0% (0)	27
Provide me with strength, support, and guidance.	81.48% (22)	18.52% (5)	0% (0)	0% (0)	27
Lie behind my whole approach to life.	62.96% (17)	29.63% (8)	0% (0)	7.41% (2)	27

Results of Senior Students' Interviews

All senior students that participated in the interviews had also taken the online survey. When asked about how did/does your high school experience influence your spiritual growth all four senior students had similar thoughts and feelings. Chapels were significant in the spiritual influence of three students. “Elizabeth” remarked that chapels explained how to “grow with God.” “Marta” found hearing speakers stories significant and that music from singing and bands “affected and lifted her.” She also felt hearing chapel speakers’ stories put her own life in perspective. “Ingrid” found chapels more significant her senior year and enjoyed the variety of speakers. Spiritual Emphasis Week, events planned to empower and encourage spiritual growth, was meaningful to “Marta.”

All four students found their senior Social Science and Biblical Perspective classes to be influential in their spiritual growth. Both “Elizabeth” and “Ingrid” expressed that discussions on how to make decisions as a Christian and what you base your decisions on in a non-Christian environment were significant in their spiritual growth. “Ingrid” and “Ezra” found that learning about other religions and how to defend your faith and witnessing to others helped in forming a Christian worldview.

Relationships were also deemed as important in spiritual growth. Building a relationship with God and together with her classmates over four years was meaningful to “Elizabeth.” “Marta” also found morning devotions with a mixed grade group of students relevant in establishing spiritual relationships in a school setting.

Classroom content also played a critical role in development. Classroom projects from a Christian perspective, learning more about the Bible, and classroom prayers and devotions were far-reaching for “Marta” and “Ingrid.”

“Ezra” felt that in his high school experience as a freshman, he was told what to believe and learned it all day, everyday. He saw the Christian faith enacted in both teachers and coaches. This culminated into how he “perceived God and the world,” while challenging his thinking and forming “foundational thoughts.” It also helped him to establish a “Christian–conscience mind.” “Marta” felt that her high school education had influenced her to enter into the field of education. Her high school experiences had helped her decide to become a Christian schoolteacher where she could teach from a Christian perspective.

The students felt that the high school excelled in many of the same facets that also influenced their spiritual growth. “Elizabeth,” “Ingrid,” and “Ezra” mentioned that school chapels were done well. The interviewed senior students all found their classroom experiences to

be favorable. Senior Social Science and Biblical Perspective classes were positively mentioned as being influential in their spiritual growth. Classroom curriculums were valued for their “focus on living your life towards God,” showing God’s involvement in all of life, “touching on Christian aspects” in subject areas, looking at other parts of the world, and an over-all Christian perspective. “Elizabeth” thought there was a “good tie between academics and spirituality.” “Ezra” mentioned that the teachers, sports, and extra-curricular activities were also a positive influence.

Students found that their high school education could have better supported their spiritual development with improved relationships. “Elizabeth” felt that students needed to talk more personally and individually with both other students and teachers about their relationships with God. She also saw that more transparency between both students and teachers could aid in these relationships. “Marta” sensed that there was a certain level of disrespect between students to teachers and students to other students. She felt that this disrespect was not stopped right away and hindered relationships.

“Elizabeth” and “Ingrid” felt that improved chapels could be more effective. “Elizabeth” thought that chapels could be more personal and wished for more speakers and missionaries. “Ingrid” said chapels could have better speakers, be more relatable to the students, and delve into deeper topics.

“Elizabeth” and “Ezra” felt that more preparations for life outside of the Christian school would help better prepare students for choices not only today, but also in the future. “Ezra” also thought that learning about and understanding non-Christian worldviews might help prepare students better for interacting with non-Christians.

However, in response to the question of how did their high school experience prepare

them to live out their Christian faith, the senior students did state that they were able to talk to others openly and honestly. “Ezra” felt that this preparation would equip him as he attends a public university where professors and students may not believe as he does. “Elizabeth,” who also was planning on attending a state university, also had similar reflections as she felt that she would be able to distinguish between “what is right and what is wrong” and where Science and the Bible don’t meet.

“Elizabeth” thought that her high school education would provide her the ability to make decisions as a Christian and how to handle the influences of college, culture and current issues. While “Ingrid” sensed that her education had “established a foundation in God” as she learned more about Him through the Bible. She felt that she had been trained on how to “live that out in everyday life from now on and for the rest of her life.”

Results of Alumni Students’ Surveys

Question one on the alumni student survey asked about the spiritual preparation they had received in high school and how well their high school prepared them spiritually for work/vocational school/college. When asked on a Likert scale of 1 to 10, nearly 38% of alumni students gave their high school a 7 and 25% rated their high school an 8 on how it had prepared them spiritually for work/vocational school/ college.

Table 13

SMCS Alumni Survey - Question 1

How well did your high school prepare you spiritually for work/vocational school/college on a scale 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest.		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
1 Poorly prepared	0.0%	0
2	0.0%	0
3	6.3%	1
4	6.3%	1
5	0.0%	0
6 Somewhat Prepared	18.8%	3
7	37.5%	6
8	25.0%	4
9	6.3%	1
10 Extremely well prepared	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		16
<i>skipped question</i>		0

Question two asked students to rate the following statements using the scale provided, as well as indicate the level of influence their high school education had on rating these statements. Around 19% of the alumni students rated an 7, nearly 38% rated 8, almost 19% rated a 9 in that they could worship God in a variety of places using a variety of means with nearly 25% rating a 7 and 38% rating a 6 in their high school influence on this statement. Nearly 38 percent of alumni students rated an 8 and 25% rated a 7 when answering that they regularly thank God for what He is doing in their lives. The high school influence on this statement was rated 4 by 33.3% and 7 by nearly 27% of alumni.

Table 14

SMCS Alumni Survey – Question 2a

Please rate the following statements using a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest.

Rate Statement

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Count
I feel that I can worship God in a variety of places using a variety of means.	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	6.25% (1)	18.75 % (3)	37.50% (6)	18.75% (3)	18.75% (3)	16
I regularly thank God for what He is doing in my life.	0% (0)	0% (0)	6.25% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	25.00 % (4)	37.50% (6)	12.50% (2)	18.75% (3)	16

Influence from High School

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Count
I feel that I can worship God in a variety of places using a variety of means.	0% (0)	6.25% (1)	6.25% (1)	6.25% (1)	6.25% (1)	37.50% (6)	25.00 % (4)	6.25% (1)	6.25% (1)	0% (0)	16
I regularly thank God for what He is doing in my life.	0% (0)	0% (0)	6.67% (1)	33.33 % (5)	6.67% (1)	0% (0)	13.33 % (2)	26.67% (4)	6.67% (1)	6.67% (1)	15

Alumni students responded to “I spend regular quality time in God’s Word and in prayer” with over 31% rating a 7. The high school influence was rated a 4 at 25% and 6 at 31% each. Twenty-five percent of alumni rated 8 and nearly 38% rated 9 when answering “I am able to help people in need without being judgmental towards them.” Twenty-five percent of alumni students rated a 5, while another 31% rated 7 in their influence from high school. Nearly 38% of alumni students rated a 10 in their desire to know God better with 25% rating an 8 and another 25% rating a 7 in their high school influence. Thirty-one percent rated 8, while 25% rated 9 when answering whether they consistently integrate their faith with their education/job. Thirty-one percent rated an 8 in their influence from high school, while 25% rated a 7.

Table 15

SMCS Alumni Survey – Question 2b

Please rate the following statements using a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest.

Rate Statement

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Response Count
I spend regular quality time in God's Word and in prayer.	0% (0)	0% (0)	6.25% (1)	18.75% (3)	12.50% (2)	12.50% (2)	31.25% (5)	12.50% (2)	6.25% (1)	0% (0)	16
I am usually able to help people in need without being judgmental towards them.	0% (0)	0% (0)	6.25% (1)	0% (0)	12.50% (2)	0% (0)	12.50% (2)	25.00% (4)	37.50% (6)	6.25% (1)	16
I have a strong desire to know God better.	0% (0)	0% (0)	6.25% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	6.25% (1)	12.50% (2)	12.50% (2)	25.00% (4)	37.50% (6)	16
I consistently integrate my faith with my education/job.	0% (0)	0% (0)	6.25% (1)	0% (0)	6.25% (1)	0% (0)	12.50% (2)	31.25% (5)	25.00% (4)	18.75% (3)	16

Influence from High School

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Response Count
I spend regular quality time in God's Word and in prayer.	6.25% (1)	6.25% (1)	6.25% (1)	25.00% (4)	12.50% (2)	31.25% (5)	12.50% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	16
I am usually able to help people in need without being judgmental towards them.	0% (0)	0% (0)	12.50% (2)	18.75% (3)	25.00% (4)	5.25% (1)	31.25% (5)	6.25% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	16
I have a strong desire to know God better.	6.25% (1)	0% (0)	12.50% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)	18.75% (3)	25.00% (4)	25.00% (4)	6.25% (1)	6.25% (1)	16
I consistently integrate my faith with my education/job.	0% (0)	6.25% (1)	0% (0)	6.25% (1)	12.50% (2)	18.75% (3)	25.00% (4)	31.25% (5)	0% (0)	0% (0)	16

Fifty percent of alumni students rated a 10 when asked whether they felt loved by God.

Thirty-one percent of alumni students rated it a 7, while 18.75% rated it an 8 and 18.75% rated it a 10 in their influence from high school. When answering whether they enjoy helping others, 50% of alumni students rated a 9. Nearly 19 percent rated a 7, 8, and 9 each, while 25% rated a 5 on their influence from high school. Alumni students responded to "I am able to think critically about important social issues" with 13% rating a 6, nearly 27% rating a 7 and 20% rating an 8

and 9 each. Their influence from high school was nearly 27% of alumni rating a 4, and 20% rating a 7 and 8 each. Nearly 38% of alumni students rated an 8, while 25% rated a 6 when answering, "I am able to defend my beliefs in a respectful manner." Twenty-five percent rated a 5, 18.75% rated a 4 for the influence of high school on this answer. Nearly 38% percent of alumni students rated an 8 and a 9 each in answering, "I respect the beliefs of others." The ratings show the influence from high school was as follows: 18.75% rated a 6 and 8 each, while 12.5% rated a 3,4,5 and 9 each.

Table 16

SMCS Alumni Survey – Question 2c

Please rate the following statements using a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest.

Rate Statement

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Response Count
I feel loved by God.	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	12.50% (2)	18.75% (3)	18.75% (3)	50.00% (8)	16
I enjoy helping others.	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	6.25% (1)	18.75% (3)	50.00% (8)	25.00% (4)	16
I am able to think critically about important social issues.	0% (0)	0% (0)	6.67% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	13.33% (2)	26.67% (4)	20.00% (3)	20.00% (3)	13.33% (2)	15
I am able to defend my beliefs in a respectful manner.	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	6.25% (1)	6.25% (1)	25.00% (4)	6.25% (1)	37.50% (6)	12.50% (2)	6.25% (1)	16
I respect the beliefs of others.	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	6.25% (1)	6.25% (1)	0% (0)	6.25% (1)	37.50% (6)	37.50% (6)	6.25% (1)	16

Influence from High School

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Response Count
I feel loved by God.	6.25% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	6.25% (1)	12.50% (2)	0% (0)	31.25% (5)	18.75% (3)	6.25% (1)	18.75% (3)	16
I enjoy helping others.	0% (0)	6.25% (1)	0% (0)	6.25% (1)	25.00% (4)	0% (0)	18.75% (3)	18.75% (3)	18.75% (3)	6.25% (1)	16
I am able to think critically about important social issues.	6.67% (1)	6.67% (1)	0% (0)	26.67% (4)	13.33% (2)	6.67% (1)	20.00% (3)	20.00% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)	15
I am able to defend my beliefs in a respectful manner.	6.25% (1)	6.25% (1)	12.50% (2)	18.75% (3)	25.00% (4)	6.25% (1)	12.50% (2)	6.25% (1)	6.25% (1)	0% (0)	16
I respect the beliefs of others.	0% (0)	6.25% (1)	12.50% (2)	12.50% (2)	12.50% (2)	18.75% (3)	6.25% (1)	18.75% (3)	12.50% (2)	0% (0)	16

Alumni students responded to sharing their faith with others with 31% rating an 8, 18.75% a 6, and 12.5% a 7, 9, and 10 each. High school influence was shown at 25% rating a 5 and 7 each. “I have learned to be honest with myself and a few significant others about my doubts, feelings, beliefs, and struggles.” Alumni students rated this statement at 8, 9, and 10 at

25% each. The influence from high school was rated at 6 at 25% each and 31% rated 7.

Table 17

SMCS Alumni Survey – Question 2d

Please rate the following statements using a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest.

Rate Statement

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Count
I am able to share my faith with others.	0% (0)	0% (0)	6.25% (1)	0% (0)	6.25% (1)	18.75% (3)	12.50% (2)	31.25% (5)	12.50% (2)	12.50% (2)	16
I have learned to be honest with myself and a few significant others about my doubts, feelings, beliefs, and struggles.	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	6.25% (1)	0% (0)	6.25% (1)	12.50% (2)	25.00% (4)	25.00% (4)	25.00% (4)	16

Influence from High School

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Count
I am able to share my faith with others.	6.25% (1)	6.25% (1)	18.75% (3)	6.25% (1)	25.00% (4)	6.25% (1)	25.00% (4)	6.25% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	16
I have learned to be honest with myself and a few significant others about my doubts, feelings, beliefs, and struggles.	0% (0)	6.25% (1)	6.25% (1)	6.25% (1)	18.75% (3)	25.00% (4)	31.25% (5)	0% (0)	0% (0)	6.25% (1)	16

Question three asked students if they pray. One hundred percent of alumni students responded with yes. Question four asked students why they prayed. For help in solving problems, 56% marked frequently, while nearly 44% marked occasionally. Nearly 63% of alumni frequently pray to be in communion with God, with 37.5% rated occasionally. Nearly 88% frequently pray to express gratitude. Fifty-six percent of alumni students pray frequently for emotional strength, with nearly 44% pray occasionally. Fifty-six percent pray frequently for forgiveness with 43.75 pray occasionally. Nearly thirty-eight percent pray frequently and 56%

pray occasionally to relieve the suffering of others. One alumni student comment that they try to pray in all of these areas and know that “I am in constant need of Jesus every day in every way.” Another student wrote that they pray for God’s will to be done and “to grow more dependent on him.”

Table 18

SMCS Alumni Survey – Question 4

Why do you pray? (Mark one for each item.)

Answer Options	Frequently	Occasionally	Not At All	Response Count
For help in solving problems.	56.25% (9)	43.75% (7)	0% (0)	16
To be in communion with God.	62.50% (10)	37.50% (6)	0% (0)	16
To express gratitude.	87.50% (14)	12.50% (2)	0% (0)	16
For emotional strength.	56.25% (9)	43.75% (7)	0% (0)	16
For forgiveness.	56.25% (9)	43.75% (7)	0% (0)	16
To relieve the suffering of others.	37.50% (6)	56.25% (9)	6.25% (1)	16
Other (please specify)				2

Question five asked students how often they engaged in the following activities: fifty percent of alumni students engage in self-reflection several times a week, while nearly 44% reflect once a week. Fifty percent pray daily, while nearly 44 % pray several times a week. Thirty-one percent of alumni students participate in religious singing once a week, with 6% monthly, and 12.5% less than monthly. Twenty-five percent of alumni read the Bible daily, 18.75% read the Bible several times a week, and nearly 44 read once a week. Six percent of alumni partake in other reading on religion and spirituality daily, 31% several times a week, 12.5% once a week, 18.75% monthly, 12.5% less than monthly, and 18.75% not at all.

Table 19

SMCS Alumni Survey – Question 5

How often do you engage in the following activities? Include individual and communal worship. (Mark one for each item.)

Answer Options	Daily	Several Times A Week	Once A Week	Monthly	Less Than Monthly	Not At All	Response Count
Self-reflection	0% (0)	50.00% (8)	43.75% (7)	6.25% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	16
Prayer	50.00% (8)	43.75% (7)	6.25% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	16
Religious Singing	0% (0)	50.00% (8)	31.25% (5)	6.25% (1)	12.50% (2)	0% (0)	16
Reading the Bible	25.00% (4)	18.75% (3)	43.75% (7)	6.25% (1)	6.25% (1)	0% (0)	16
Other reading on religion/spirituality	6.25% (1)	31.25% (5)	12.50% (2)	18.75% (3)	12.50% (2)	18.75% (3)	16

Question six asked students how often they engaged in the following activities: fifty-six percent of alumni students marked “to a great extent” when answering whether they have an interest in spirituality, while 43.7% marked “to some extent.” Nearly 63% believe in the sacredness of life to a great extent, while 37.5% believe “to some extent.” Sixty percent of alumni students felt unsettled about spiritual and religious matters “to some extent,” while nearly 23% “to a great extent.” “Believing only what I can see or can be explained” was rated at “to some extent” by 25% of students, while 75% rated it “not at all.” Twenty-five percent of alumni students felt good about the direction in which their life was headed “to a great extent.” Seventy-five percent felt good about the direction in which their life was headed “to some extent.”

Table 20

SMCS Alumni Survey – Question 6a

Please indicate the extent to which each of the following describes you. (Mark one for each item.)

Answer Options	To A Great Extent	To Some Extent	Not At All	Response Count
Having an interest in spirituality.	56.25% (9)	43.75% (7)	0% (0)	16
Believing in the sacredness of life.	62.50% (10)	37.50% (6)	0% (0)	16
Feeling unsettled about spiritual and religious matters.	26.67% (4)	60.00% (9)	13.33% (2)	15
Believing only what I can see or can be explained.	0% (0)	25.00% (4)	75.00% (12)	16
Feeling good about the direction in which my life is heading.	25.00% (4)	75.00% (12)	0% (0)	16

Nearly 44% of alumni students had felt a sense of connection with God that transcended their personal self “to a great extent”, while 50% felt it “to some extent.” Feeling a strong connection to all humanity was felt “to a great extent” by 25% of alumni students and “to some extent” by nearly 63% of students. Nearly 38% of all alumni students had felt disappointment with their religious upbringing “to some extent,” while 62.5% had felt no disappointment with their religious upbringing. Having an interest in different religious traditions “to some extent” was marked by 53% of alumni students with 40% marking “not at all.” Nearly 13% of alumni students felt committed to introduce people to their faith “to a great extent,” while 75% felt it “to some extent,” while 12.5% answered “not at all.”

Table 21

SMCS Alumni Survey – Question 6b

Please indicate the extent to which each of the following describes you. (Mark one for each item.)

Answer Options	To A Great Extent	To Some Extent	Not At All	Response Count
Feeling a sense of connection with God that transcends my personal self.	43.75% (7)	50.00% (8)	6.25% (1)	16
Feeling a strong connection to all humanity.	25.00% (4)	62.50% (10)	12.50% (2)	16
Feeling disappointment with my religious upbringing.	0% (0)	37.50% (6)	62.50% (10)	16
Having an interest in different religious traditions.	6.25% (1)	50.00% (8)	37.5% (6)	15
Being committed to introducing people to my faith.	12.50% (2)	75.00% (12)	12.50% (2)	16

Twenty-five percent of alumni believe in the goodness of all people “to a great extent,” while 50% believe it “to some extent,” and 25% believe it “not at all.” Being thankful for all that has happened to me was felt by nearly 81% of alumni students “to a great extent,” and “to some extent” by 18.75%. Nearly 63% of alumni students see each day, good or bad, as a gift “to a great extent,” 31% “to some extent,” and 6% “not at all.” Seeking to follow religious teachings in their everyday life was felt “to a great extent” by 50% of alumni students, nearly 44% marked “to some extent,” while 6% marked “not at all.” One student commented that they “daily surrender to the Lord,” “try to preach the Gospel to themselves daily” and practice “spiritual breathing-constantly confessing sin, while constantly taking in grace and forgiveness.”

Table 22

SMCS Alumni Survey – Question 6c

Please indicate the extent to which each of the following describes you. (Mark one for each item.)

Answer Options	To A Great Extent	To Some Extent	Not At All	Response Count
Believing in the goodness of all people.	25.00% (4)	50.00% (8)	25.00% (4)	16
Being thankful for all that has happened to me.	81.25% (13)	18.75% (3)	0% (0)	16
Seeing each day, good or bad, as a gift.	62.50% (10)	31.25% (5)	6.25% (1)	16
Seeking to follow religious teachings in my everyday life.	50.00% (8)	43.75% (7)	6.25% (1)	16
Other (please specify)				1

Question seven asked senior students to indicate the importance to them personally of each of the following statements: nearly 38% of alumni felt that seeking out opportunities to grow spiritually was “essential,” while nearly 56% felt it was “very important,” while reducing pain and suffering the world was deemed “very important” by 63% and “somewhat important” by nearly 38% of alumni students. Nearly thirty-eight percent of alumni found attaining wisdom “essential” and 56% found it “very important.” Seeking beauty in my life was seen as “essential” to nearly 19% and “very important” to 25% of alumni. “Finding the answers to the mysteries of life” was not responded to. Fifty-three percent of senior survey takers saw it as “essential” that they become a more loving person, 33% of survey takers saw it is “very important,” and 13% saw it as “somewhat important.” Following faithfully the laws and rules taught by my religion was chosen as “essential” by 31 %. Forty-four percent chose it as “very important,” nearly 19% found it “somewhat important,” and 6% found it “not important.” Nearly 13% find improving the human condition “essential,” while nearly 62% found it “very important” and 25% found it

“somewhat important.”

Table 23

SMCS Alumni Survey – Question 7

Please indicate the importance to you personally of each of the following: (Mark one for each item.)					
Answer Options	Essential	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Response Count
Seeking out opportunities to help me grow spiritually.	37.50% (6)	56.25% (9)	0% (0)	6.25% (1)	16
Reducing pain and suffering in the world.	0% (0)	62.50% (10)	37.50% (6)	0% (0)	16
Attaining wisdom.	37.50% (6)	56.25% (9)	6.25% (1)	0% (0)	16
Seeking beauty in my life.	18.75% (3)	25.00% (4)	50.00% (8)	6.25% (1)	16
Becoming a more loving person.	53.33% (8)	33.33% (5)	13.33% (2)	0% (0)	15
Following faithfully the laws and rules taught by my religion.	31.25% (5)	43.75% (7)	18.75% (3)	6.25% (1)	16
Improving the human condition.	12.50% (2)	62.50% (10)	25.00% (4)	0% (0)	16

Question eight asked students about their spiritual/religious beliefs. Nearly 88% of alumni students “agreed strongly” that their spiritual/religious beliefs had helped them develop my identity. Six percent “agreed somewhat” and 6% “disagreed somewhat.” Their spiritual/religious beliefs are one of the most important things in my life was “agreed strongly” by 81% of students, while 18.5% was “agreed somewhat.” Nearly eighty-eight percent of alumni students “agree strongly” that their spiritual/religious beliefs give meaning/purpose to their life, while 12.5% “agree somewhat.” Their spiritual/religious beliefs help define the goals they set for themselves is “agreed strongly” by nearly 63% of students, while 31% “agree somewhat” and 6% “disagree somewhat.” Nearly 69% of students “agree strongly” that their spiritual/religious

beliefs provide them with strength, support, and guidance. Thirty-one percent of alumni students “agree somewhat.” That their spiritual/religious beliefs lie behind their whole approach to life is “agreed strongly” by 87.5% of alumni, “agreed somewhat” by 6% and “disagree strongly” by 6%. A comment by an alumni survey participant was that “simply, Jesus is enough for me.”**

Table 24

SMCS Alumni Survey – Question 8

My spiritual/religious beliefs: (Mark one for each item)					
Answer Options	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly	Response Count
Have helped me develop my identity.	87.50% (14)	6.25% (1)	6.25% (1)	0% (0)	16
Are one of the most important things in my life.	81.25% (13)	18.75% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)	16
Give meaning/purpose to my life.	87.50% (14)	12.50% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)	16
Help define the goals I set for myself.	62.50% (10)	31.25% (5)	6.25% (1)	0% (0)	16
Provide me with strength, support, and guidance.	68.75% (11)	31.25% (5)	0% (0)	0% (0)	16
Lie behind my whole approach to life.	87.50% (14)	6.25% (1)	0% (0)	6.25% (1)	16
Other (please specify)					1

Results of Alumni Students’ Interviews

All alumni students that participated in the phone interviews had also taken the online survey. They were also all enrolled college students. The alumni students expressed that a variety of high school experiences had influenced their spiritual growth. The experiences ranged from the more personal to the communal. Although in reflection, the interviewed students saw that

they had “not taken my faith in high school seriously,” “didn’t know who I was,” had many spiritual “ups and downs,” and had “head knowledge that hadn’t translated to heart knowledge,” they appreciated their Christian high school education, as it was “very molding” and gave them confidence and assurance.

“Peter” and “Amelia” commented that their high school teachers having incorporated their faith in their classrooms, as well as being taught from a Christian perspective were instrumental in their spiritual growth. Amelia felt that her Social Science, Biblical Perspective and Literature classes were significant in their influence, while “Peter” mentioned that his History class was important to him as it focused both on religion and contemporary viewpoints.

“Luke” found chapels, Spiritual Emphasis Week, morning devotions, and Junior/Senior men devotions influential. Through these different avenues of spiritual awareness, deeper and more meaningful conversations were facilitated, appreciation for different students and their different perspectives was encouraged, as well as the strengthening of relationships among peers. “Laura” felt that morning devotions were “good” and “spiritually specific for each day,” while “Peter” was appreciative of the ritual of morning prayer.

“Peter” commented about the affect of some of the more severe mistakes he made in high school and how well the situation was handled by the high school’s administration team and teachers. It was a difficult time and he learned how “serious life is and how I can work at that,” while also feeling very impressed by how he was treated and helped through the experience and how he gained respect for everyone involved.

The alumni students also felt that the high school excelled in many of the same facets that also influenced their spiritual growth. “Peter” felt that the high school had overall done well in facilitating spiritual growth. “Amelia” reiterated this by speaking of the “instructional, and

foundational truth” provided at the high school.

“Laura”, “Amelia”, and “Luke” felt that chapels were done well. They appreciated the variety of speakers, as it was sometimes students, teachers or other community members, as well as the different perspectives of each speaker.

Spiritual Emphasis Week was a spiritual peak, as well as a time to grow in spiritual understanding for many alumni students. Over the year, “Laura” had gotten to know her living group well. However, Spiritual Emphasis Week gave her an opportunity to get to know other students as well. “Luke” felt that during Spiritual Emphasis Week it had been hard to talk about his own spirituality, as it sometimes felt forced. Though in retrospect he was glad that he had opened up. Along the same lines, “Amelia” expressed that Spiritual Emphasis Week had facilitated “deep, open conversations.” However, it also made the students feel “vulnerable” and it was difficult to talk that openly in front of the entire school.

“Amelia” and “Luke” mentioned that Senior Social Science and Biblical Perspective classes were a positive influence in their spiritual growth. “Luke” specifically spoke of Apologetics and the discussions and questions about issues in Christianity that were fielded in Biblical Perspectives. “Laura” felt that the Christian perspective was incorporated as much as possible in the core courses. “Peter” was spiritual moved by a close relationship with a teacher. He felt that the teacher was “very straight up with kids,” had a concrete view on life, and talked to “Peter” personally.

Alumni students found that their high school education could have better supported their spiritual development with more in depth relationships with both friends and teachers, as at this age and stage in life there is much need for guidance. “Peter” mentioned that it is “hard to think for yourself and you could go down some tough paths”. While he said that it is a “case to case”

situation for each student, he felt that in high school he was too concerned with what his friends thought and didn't decide things and think for himself. He also thought that in high school it was difficult to break away from a bad or negative reputation. He expressed that a one on one student/teacher relationship, similar to a college advisor or mentor, could facilitate a close relationship with the student and teacher and thus, be a guide to them through these formative years. "Luke" also felt, especially during his first two years of high school, that it was difficult to have foundational relationships with friends. He found that he bounced around with different friend groups and did not always live the right way. He, too, felt that a one on one teacher/student relationships would be beneficial.

"Amelia" desired more discussion and questions with teachers and students concerning their faith and how they were in their own personal walk. She felt that there was more need for accountability and deep, open conversations about both the teachers' and students' faith. Expounding on this, she felt that there should be more room in school to talk about the real aspects of teenage life and the vulnerabilities and difficulties students face, even though many students act like they have everything together. Teachers could then, by example and word, show what a Christian walk looked like. They could also explain that there is never a perfect relationship with God here on earth, but instead it is a continual process and striving.

"Luke" felt that the high school could have done even more to address current societal issues in the light of Christianity, as well as having students work on developing their worldview in relationship to culture. "Amelia" reiterated this by stating that while teachers tried to help students develop a vision past high school, more could be done to help them understand what it means to "follow the Lord and abide with him," especially after high school where your faith is tested and challenged more openly.

“Amelia” felt chapels could incorporate more personal testimonies. Her belief was that each personal testimony is someone else’s amazing story, and show how “all things point to God.” She suggested that the high school instruct students on how to give personal testimonies and then create opportunities to give testimonies, as an affective way to share the Lord with others. She also proposed that students be taught how to share and defend their faith and be guided to an evangelistic mind-set of knowing, loving, serving and glorifying God. This way they will be prepared to make “disciples of all nations” as well as preach and teach the gospel to others.

In response to the question of how their high school experience prepared them to live out their Christian faith, the alumni students felt that they were spiritually equipped. The former students spoke specifically about how this preparation had helped them. “Laura” felt “spiritually prepared” and is grateful that she is morally and ethically more conservative than her college friends.

“Peter” was spiritually challenged in his summer job by coworkers that grew up differently than he had and were not Christians. He felt his elementary and high school experience had given him a solid foundation with enough freedom, but also enough structure to provide him with the skills to be able to defend and adhere to his faith, even though at times it was difficult. He saw himself transitioning from a “follower” position to a “leader” position.

“Luke” traveled to Zambia, Africa after graduating from high school. He felt that high school had helped prepare and guide him to be able to teach Bible school in Africa. His biblical knowledge and spiritual worldview “helped to get him there and helped him while there.”

“Amelia” felt that it had been helpful to be challenged after high school. She was tested in college. Biblical beliefs and truths had always been there and second nature, but to be openly

challenged made her proclaim her faith. She felt that she had a strong foundation that was developed in high school, but has grown a lot in college and has developed a faith that is “her own.” She felt her Christian education had been “huge, gaining all that knowledge” and also where she had received “a lot of kindling” for a fire for Jesus in her heart.

“Peter” felt well prepared to attend college. His primary goal in college was to “glorify God” and to be influenced by a community of believers. Through difficult situations in high school he learned many life lessons and realized that he had a “follower” personality. Thus, he wanted to find solid friends and develop his leadership skills by being a “leading and guiding light.

Discussion

Summary

In order to better understand the biblical worldview of the students from a small, rural high school, an extensive action research project was initiated and completed. Current research shows a decline in the worldview of students, yet after extensive interviews and a survey that looked at their biblical worldview, students and alumni from a small rural high school show that they are bucking the trend. The students’ responses show that their biblical worldviews are strong and are continuing to be strengthened by daily interaction with spiritual enforcers. They are living out the “story of what God is doing in the world” in their words, actions, and deeds (Mueller, 2006, p. 55).

Senior students and alumni ranked and stated, from their perspective, the influence of and from their high school on their biblical worldview. Senior and former students also expressed the strengths and weaknesses of the high school in relationship to developing a biblical worldview in its students. The students articulated their beliefs, the role it has in their lives, and how they

implement their faith in daily living. There were generally elevated ratings on students' spirituality and biblical worldview. Also, both alumni and senior high school students have overall marked the high school relatively high in how it spiritually prepared them.

With the overall picture of the senior students and alumni's biblical worldview, their comments, thoughts and suggestions, this small rural high school can continue to be an integral part of their students' spiritual formation. This new information can contribute to a renewed sense of purpose, a concentrated effort of betterment, and a fine-tuning of already implemented programs, processes and procedures. The administration team and the teaching staff can move towards better helping students create lives of discipleship "that includes growth in moral maturity, a deepening faith, and loving service" (Mueller, 2006, p. 14).

Implications

The research from this study indicates that this small, rural Christian high school is aiding and guiding students to a more foundational biblical worldview. The study's students felt that their high school experience prepared them to live out their Christian faith, helped them formulate decisions as a Christian, facilitated their spiritual growth and equipped them spiritually. The administrative team and teaching staff are strengthening and allowing for growth in the spiritual formation of their students. The implication of this research is that the school should continue on the path it has declared in its mission statement: "Challenging students to grow in knowing, loving, and serving God and others." (See II Peter 3:18) While the scope of this research project has found that the Christian high school, its administrative team and teaching staff should continue the practices that they have implemented to develop a biblical worldview in their students, the study has also found that there is need to improve on these practices. The administrative team and teaching staff need to do what they are doing, just do it

better.

This school has many areas of strength that were instrumental in the building and reinforcing of students' biblical worldview. Both senior and alumni students found many of the same aspects of school to have helped influence their spiritual growth were also the school's strengths. Senior and former students felt that chapels and Spiritual Emphasis week were significant in their spiritual influence. In conjunction with chapels and Spiritual Emphasis Week, both senior and alumni students felt that devotions, group devotions, and prayer were important parts of the school's active work toward student spiritual growth. Classroom content, experiences, and curriculum from a Christian perspective were also considered the school's strengths. Senior social science classes and the Biblical Perspectives class were especially recognized for their molding influences.

Senior and alumni students relayed authentic and relatable relationships with teachers and coaches as strengths. They found that their teachers incorporated and enacted their faith in the classroom, as well as helping students foster more in depth relationships with God and other students and classmates. One alumni student in particular also recognized the strengths of the administrative team and teachers when dealing with hard and complicated student situations.

Interestingly, many of the strengths of the school are also where senior and alumni students' pinpointed weaknesses. Both senior and alumni students expressed that the school could improve chapels. Senior and alumni students also felt that there could be improved, enhanced, and more in depth relationships between students and teachers, as well as students with other students.

Senior students broadly stated that more preparations for life outside of the Christian school, community, and family could have better supported their spiritual development. Alumni

students were more specific. They expressed that more discussion and questions concerning faith with teachers and students would be beneficial. The alumni students felt that there should be even more done to address current societal issues in light of Christianity and to develop worldviews in relationship to culture. An alumni student advocated that the Christian high school do more to help students develop a “vision” past high school and to help students truly understand and embrace the meaning of “following the Lord and abiding with him” in their daily walk.

The strengths and weaknesses of this small, rural Christian school then beg the question: “How do the weaknesses become ‘less weak’ or the strengths ‘stronger’?” The students themselves developed and suggested some ideas that could be implemented into this Christian school and Christian schools similar to it.

To help chapels even become more instrumental in in developing biblical worldviews, senior students stated that they could become more personal, relatable, and relevant to students. Chapels could also feature more speakers and more missionaries, as well as delve into more in depth topics. An alumni student felt chapels could incorporate more personal testimonies. Her belief was that each personal testimony is someone else’s amazing story, and show how “all things point to God.” She advised that the Christian high school instruct students on how to give personal testimonies and then create opportunities to give testimonies, as an affective way to share the Lord with others. She also proposed that students be taught how to share and defend their faith and be guided to live out the school mission of knowing, loving, serving and glorifying God. This way they would be prepared to make “disciples of all nations” as well as preach and teach the gospel to others. This would also aid in helping students open up about their spirituality and develop a secure “vulnerability” when sharing about their faith.

Both senior students and alumni students felt that talking more personally, openly, deeply and individually with teachers and other students about their faith and relationship with God would aid in the spiritual formation of students. Senior students also suggested more transparency between students and teachers, while alumni students suggested increased accountability between students and teachers.

An alumni student recommended that there should be more room in school to talk about the real aspects of teenage life and the vulnerabilities and difficulties students' face. Teachers could then, by example and word, show what a Christian walk looked like. They could also explain that there is never a perfect relationship with God here on earth, but instead it is a continual process and striving. Another alumni student proposed that a one-on-one student/teacher relationship, similar to a college advisor or mentor, could facilitate a close relationship with the student and teacher and thus, be a guide to them through these formative high school years.

Senior students advocated for more learning and understanding of non-Christian worldviews, suggesting that it might help better prepare students for interacting with non-Christians.

Studies such as this one are valuable in evaluating whether a Christian school is meeting its desired outcome. Although difficult to determine and timely to examine, looking at students' worldviews periodically are essential in determining the spiritual health and vitality of this Christian high school and any Christian high school. The teaching staff and administrative team need to be reminded and encouraged of what they are doing well and also, what they need to improve in order to maintain a spiritually alive and thriving school, while equipping their students for living a life of discipleship.

Limitations:

Although the Cardus surveys have proven themselves to be a trusted format for gleanings information about student beliefs concerning their worldview, this specific study may have limitations for several reasons. First, the researcher has internal ties to the school as she is married to the school's administrator. Thus, the researcher may have biases toward certain findings, such as wanting students to report an overall positive view on how the Christian school in the study has affected their worldview. As the students know that they are participating in a study, it may cause them to experience the Hawthorne Effect. Their answers are affected by the fact that they are part of ongoing research. Students may also be affected by a phenomenon called Social Desirability, wherein they will answer questions based on what they think they should answer or what they think the researcher will want them to answer.

There also may be uncontrolled variables that may skew the findings, such as student bias, mood, and situation. As the high school setting is more controlled than the alumni student pool, there were more high school senior students participating in the study than alumni students. Last, by doing a random sampling of alumni students, the students that participate may be those that have either a more positive outlook concerning their education or in turn, a more negative outlook. In other words, students that have more to "say" about their education may be more likely to contribute to the study, than those that have a more moderate view of their high school education; thus, creating unbalanced observations about the influence of the school on their worldview.

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Appendix A

Senior Class Sampling

Information and Consent Form

My name is Rachel Bootsma and I am currently working on my Master's Thesis at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa. My action research project is to gather information about how Southwest Minnesota Christian High School can better equip students' spiritual maturation and growth. As a student at SWC, your personal beliefs and experiences concerning your education will help this study. This research will be used at SWC to improve its ability to teach its current and future students.

The process will include taking a survey and possibly being part of an interview. Both the survey and interview will contain general questions about your educational experience, as well as questions about your worldview and the high school's involvement in fostering the growth of your worldview. This will be done in conjunction with the your Senior Humanities class. All information used in this study will be held in strictest professional confidence and is done with permission of Mr. Bootsma and Mr. Vanderaa.

Thank you so much for choosing to participate in this study!

My signature below indicates that I have read and understood the information given about the SWC Worldview Study and I have decided to participate.

_____	_____/_____/_____
Signature	Month Day Year

Appendix B
Alumni Student Sampling
Information and Consent Form

My name is Rachel Bootsma and I am currently working on my Master's Thesis at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa. My action research project is to gather information about how Southwest Minnesota Christian High School can better equip students' spiritual maturation and growth. As a former student at SWC, your personal beliefs and experiences concerning your high school education will help this study. This research will be used at SWC to improve its ability to teach its students and future students.

The process will include taking an online survey and possibly being part of an interview. Both the survey and interview will contain general questions about your educational experience, as well as questions about your worldview and how your high school education contributed to the growth of your worldview. The entire process will take about an hour.

All information used in this study will be held in strictest professional confidence and is done with permission of SWC's administrator, Mr. Bootsma.

Thank you so much for choosing to participate in this study! It is greatly appreciated!

My signature below indicates that I have read and understood the information given about the SWC Worldview Study and I have decided to participate.

_____	/	_____	/	_____
Signature		Month	Day	Year

Appendix C

Pilot Test Information Sheet

My name is Rachel Bootsma and I am currently working on my Master's Thesis at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa. My action research project is to gather information about how Southwest Minnesota Christian High School can better equip students' spiritual maturation and growth. As a former student at SWC, your personal beliefs and experiences concerning your high school education will help this study. This research will be used at SWC to improve its ability to teach its students and future students.

The process will include taking an online survey and being part of an interview that will contain general questions about your educational experience, as well as questions about your worldview and how your high school education contributed to the growth of your worldview. I will conduct that interview at your convenience. The entire process will take about an hour. This test will allow to me to make sure that the survey and interview are concise, fluent, and are appropriate for the study. Although you will not be part of the actual worldview study, you are similar in age and stage of life to the student sampling in this study.

Please tag any question/statement that seems unclear, causes confusion, or that you have questions about. At a later date, I will have you explain your thoughts on both the survey and interview.

All information used in this study will be held in strictest professional confidence and is done with permission of SWC's administrator, Mr. Bootsma.

Thank you so much for choosing to participate in this study! It is greatly appreciated!

Appendix D**Pilot Test: Alumni Student Interview****Outcomes of Education Interview Questions**

Name: _____ Date: _____ Phone: _____

1. Describe what your high school did well.
2. In what areas could your high school improve?
3. What could your school have done to improve in these areas?
4. Describe your favorite high school teacher. How was he/she influential in your life/high school career?
5. How has your high school education prepared you to live out your Christian faith in the world?
6. Did your high school education prepare you to intellectually defend your faith and share it with others? If yes, how?
7. Do you feel that your high school education prepared you to function in a diverse world? If yes, how?
8. Did your high school education help you to discover your spiritual gifts? If yes, how?
9. Did your high school education help you discover your calling? If yes, how?
10. Discuss how influential your high school was in your decision to attend college/vocational school/work. In the selection of a major, if in college/vocational school? Volunteer activities?
11. Describe any spiritual leadership roles you had in high school or currently have at

- college/place of work? How did your high school education prepare you for these roles?
12. How did your high school experience influence your spiritual growth? Your involvement in missions? Evangelism? Community service?
 13. Describe a “typical” day in your spiritual walk.
 14. Could your Christian high school education have better supported your spiritual development? How?

Appendix E**Pilot Test: High School Senior Student Interview****Outcomes of Education Interview Questions**

Name: _____ Date: _____ Phone: _____

1. Describe what your high school does well.
2. Describe what your high school does poorly.
3. What could your school do to improve in these areas?
4. Describe your favorite high school teacher.
5. Describe some of the service learning or missions projects you and your friends and fellow classmates have completed during high school.
6. How has your high school education prepared you to live out your Christian faith in the world?
7. Do you feel your high school education has prepared you to intellectually defend your faith and share it with others? How?
8. Do you feel that your high school education has prepared you to function in a diverse world? How?
9. Has your high school education help you to discover your spiritual gifts? If yes, how?
10. Has your high school education help you discover your calling? If yes, how?
11. Discuss how influential your high school was in your decision to attend college/vocational school/work. In the selection of a major? In your involvement and selection of a church? Volunteer activities?

12. Describe any spiritual leadership roles you have had in high school or currently have at college/place of work? How did your high school education prepare you for these roles?
13. How has your high school experience influence your spiritual growth? Your involvement in missions? Evangelism? Community service?
14. Describe a “typical” day in your life
15. Has your high school experience influence your spiritual growth? Your involvement in missions? Evangelism? Community service?
16. Could your Christian high school education have better supported your spiritual development? How?

Appendix F

Southwest Minnesota Christian School Survey

Southwest Minnesota Christian School Survey 														
<p>1. Please tell me about yourself. Your answers are confidential and responses will not be individually identifiable.</p> <p> Name: <input type="text"/> Address: <input type="text"/> City/Town: <input type="text"/> State: <input type="text"/> ZIP: <input type="text"/> Country: <input type="text"/> Email Address: <input type="text"/> Phone Number: <input type="text"/> </p>														
<p>2. Please mark which applies to you.</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Adult <input type="checkbox"/> High School Student </p>														
<p>3. Think about the spiritual preparation you received in high school. How well did your high school prepare you spiritually for work/vocational school/college on a scale 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest. (Mark only one number.)</p> <table border="0"> <tbody> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> 1</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> 5</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> 9</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> 2</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> 6</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> 10</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> 3</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> 7</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> 4</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> 8</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 9	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 10	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 7		<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 8	
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Southwest Minnesota Christian School Survey

4. Please rate the following statements using the scale provided.

In the second column, indicate the level of influence your high school education had on your rating of these statements. Please use a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest. (Mark only one number.)

	Rating	Influence from High School
I feel that I can worship God in a variety of places, not just in church.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
I regularly thank God for what He is doing in my life.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
I agree regularly pray and in God's Word and in prayer.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
I am ready and able to help people in need without being judgmental towards them.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
I have a strong desire to know God better.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
I consistently treasure my faith with my education/ies.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
I am loved by God.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
I enjoy helping others.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
I am able to discuss my faith and important social issues.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
I am able to defend my beliefs in a respectful manner.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
I respect the beliefs of others.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
I am able to share my faith with others.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
I have learned to be tolerant with myself and a few people for others, through my beliefs, feelings, beliefs and struggles.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

5. Do you pray?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Southwest Minnesota Christian School Survey

6. If yes, why do you pray? (Mark one for each item.)

	Frequently	Occasionally	Not At All
To help in solving problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To be in communion with God	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To express gratitude	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To feel emotional strength	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
For forgiveness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To know the meaning of life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify):

7. How often do you engage in the following activities? Include individual and communal worship. (Mark one for each item.)

	Daily	Several Times A Week	Once A Week	Monthly	Less Than Monthly	Not At All
Self-reflection	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Prayer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Engaging in Service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reading the Bible	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other meeting or religious activity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Southwest Minnesota Christian School Survey

8. Please indicate the extent to which each of the following describes you. (Mark one for each item.)

	To A Great Extent	To Some Extent	Not At All
Having an interest in spirituality.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Believing in the sacredness of life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feeling unsettled about spiritual and religious matters.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Believing only what I can see or can be explained.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feeling good about the direction in which my life is headed.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feeling a sense of connection with God that transcends my personal self.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feeling a strong connection to all humanity.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feeling disappointment with my religious upbringing.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having an interest in different religious traditions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being committed to introducing people to my faith.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Believing in the goodness of all people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being thankful for all that has happened to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Seeing each day, good or bad, as a gift.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Seeking to follow religious teachings in my everyday life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

Southwest Minnesota Christian School Survey

9. Please indicate the importance to you personally of each of the following: (Mark one for each item.)

	Essential	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Seeking out opportunities to help me grow spiritually.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reducing pain and suffering in the world.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attaining wisdom.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Seeking beauty in my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Becoming a more loving person.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Following faithfully the laws and rules taught by my religion.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improving the human condition.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. My spiritual/religious beliefs: (Mark one for each item)

	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
Have helped me develop my identity.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Are one of the most important things in my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Give meaning/purpose to my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Help define the goals I set for myself.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provide me with strength, support, and guidance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lie behind my whole approach to life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

Appendix G

Senior Interview Questions

1. How does/did your high school experience influence your spiritual growth?
2. How does/did your high school do this well?
3. How could your Christian high school education have better supported your spiritual development?
4. How has your high school education prepared you to live out your Christian faith in the world?

Appendix H

Alumni Interview Questions

1. How did your high school experience influence your spiritual growth?
2. How did your high school do this well?
3. How could your Christian high school education have better supported your spiritual development?
4. How has your high school education prepared you to live out your Christian faith in the world?

Vita

Rachel Bootsma
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Edgerton, MN 56128
(507) 227-3164

Education

M.A. Curriculum and Instruction, Dordt College (2014)

B.A. Elementary Education, Dordt College (1997)

Academic Employment

Teacher (combination seventh and eighth grade), Leota Christian School, Leota, MN
(September 2002-December 2003)

- Planned and implemented lessons across the curriculum for both seventh and eighth grade in a combined grade school room, including art
- Planned and implemented lessons for one semester of sixth grade social studies
- Communicated with parents, students and colleagues on a regular basis
- Successful working in small school with limited resources

Teacher (third grade), Terra Ceia Christian School, Pantego, NC (August 1998-May 2001)
(sixth grade), Terra Ceia Christian School, Pantego, NC (August 1997-May 1998)

- Planned and implemented lessons across the curriculum for both sixth grade and third grade, including PE and art
- Helped implement, with colleagues, Accelerated Reading Program in K-6
- Communicated with parents, students and colleagues on regular basis
- Helped develop science and reading curriculum with colleagues for K-6 grades
- Served on a committee that helped start and develop mentorship for new teachers
- Directed high school play for 1 year
- Successful working in small school with limited resources

Teacher Substitute taught at Edgerton Christian Elementary School and Southwest Minnesota Christian School, Edgerton, MN

Volunteer at Edgerton Christian Elementary School, Edgerton, MN (2001-present)

- Promotions Committee member for six years: helped develop and revitalize promotions program
- Directed 8th grade play in 2002

Volunteer at Southwest Minnesota Christian School, Edgerton, MN (2001-present)

- Helped organize and decorate for annual community pumpkin festival for past 6 years
- Helped organize and decorate for annual Carry the Light Donation Sale for past 6 years
- Helped organize at Southwest Christian Rummage Sale for past 3 years
- Conducted in-service on teaching from a Christian perspective for teaching staff

- Rewrote aspects of student handbook
- Wrote and developed a teacher evaluation system

Volunteer at Bethel Christian Reformed Church, Edgerton, MN (2001-present)

- Served on Education Committee for 3 years
- Teach Children's Church for ages 3 to Kindergarten and Children's Worship for grades 2-4
- Taught and volunteered at Vacation Bible School
- Cooked, decorated and served in Apples of Gold Bible Study for over six years
- Helped with Women Brunches
- Helped with GEMS program