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Are Teens Able to Articulate a Biblical Understanding of Christianity?

Abstract

The following study uses previous research about the religious and spiritual lives of American adolescents and their beliefs about the Christian faith to survey teenagers at a mid-western, Christian high school. The survey is given to find out what our young people know to be true about Christianity and if they can accurately articulate their beliefs based on Scripture and reinforced in the Heidelberg Catechism.

According to the research, the students surveyed are receiving the information they need to articulate a biblical definition of Christianity. They do, however, have their strengths and weaknesses. The weakest areas would be in the belief that "we are born with a sinful nature" and it is "our responsibility to share Christ with others".

The students' strongest areas were that "the Bible is the inspired Word of God", "God is the Creator of the universe and of all things good" and "Jesus Christ was fully man and fully God while He lived on earth. He was crucified and arose from the dead three days later".

Using this research as a baseline for where our adolescents are will help us as parents and teachers to re-examine what we are teaching and modeling. Where do we need to make improvements?

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Are Teens Able to Articulate a Biblical Understanding of Christianity?

By

Sheila L. Bruns

B.A. Dordt College, 1987

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

Department of Education
Dordt College
Sioux Center, Iowa
April 2007

Are Teens Able to Articulate a Biblical Understanding of Christianity?

By

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Abstract

The following study uses previous research about the religious and spiritual lives of American adolescents and their beliefs about the Christian faith to survey teenagers at a mid-western, Christian high school. The survey is given to find out what our young people know to be true about Christianity and if they can accurately articulate their beliefs based on Scripture and reinforced in the Heidelberg Catechism.

According to the research, the students surveyed are receiving the information they need to articulate a biblical definition of Christianity. They do, however, have their strengths and weaknesses. The weakest areas would be in the belief that "we are born with a sinful nature" and it is "our responsibility to share Christ with others".

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Using this research as a baseline for where our adolescents are will help us as parents and teachers to re-examine what we are teaching and modeling. Where do we need to make improvements?

Introduction

In the summer of 2005 I had asked Professor Syd Hielema if he had any ideas for a topic for a thesis that would pertain to research in theology or Bible study. He thought for a minute and then told me of a book he had read called *Soul searching: The religious and spiritual lives of American teenagers.* The book is a summary of interviews and surveys of American teenagers conducted by Christian Smith. Smith wanted to know what was going on in the religious and spiritual lives of teenagers including the following: What do teens actually believe about God, His creation, or salvation? What religious practices do they engage in? Do they hope to remain in the same faith as their parents? Smith wanted know if they are abandoning traditional institutions in search of a new, more contemporary expression of spirituality. The book also reports the findings of the National Study of Youth and Religion—"the largest and most detailed study of teenagers and religion ever undertaken" (Smith, 2005, inside cover). I was intrigued with the idea of doing a survey of our young people in this local area. I, however, narrowed the research down to "Do the young people in this area understand and embrace the core beliefs of Christian faith as summarized in the Apostles' Creed? Do they understand the radical nature of the fall? Can they put into words who God is"?

I was excited about the idea of surveying students—especially some of my former students. I wanted to know if our Christian school teenagers are able to accurately articulate the meaning of biblical Christianity. Do they know what it means to *believe* in Jesus Christ? Is it clear to them that their good works do not assure them of salvation? Are they aware that Satan and his demons really do exist? Do our students realize that living out the Great Commission is a big part of being a Christian?

Christianity cannot be defined in a few words. Yes, I know that all you need to do to be saved is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; however, *believe* includes action, not just lip service. Living a Christian life means studying and embracing Scripture as God's infallible Word as the history of and the road map for our lives. It means to live according to the Ten Commandments—not in order to be saved by works, but as an expression of love and gratitude for God's grace and mercy and sacrifice. Taking Christianity seriously includes living a life that expresses the Fruit of the Spirit. Also, as Christians we are responsible for sharing the Gospel with others, not to keep the truth hidden! Christians must live as a community with other believers as brothers and sisters in Christ. Simply put, we must live a life of love, obedience and service.

Our purpose in life, as Christ put it, is to "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37-39, New International Version). These commandments summarize the law and the prophets. These commandments summarize the life of a Christian. I find that my students who have been raised in Christian homes and attended Christ-centered churches and Christian schools know these things to be true. I wondered if they could articulate the core beliefs of the Christian faith. I realize that just because they may be able to do so does not make them a Christian. I am convinced, however, that our young people need to be able to communicate what they believe to create a foundation for their walk and relationship with the Lord. This does not mean they need to be able to put it into "big" words or speak eloquently, but to be able to communicate what they believe as a Christian and why they believe in Christ so that they can begin to see the big picture of

their true purpose here on earth. Not all young people have connected the "head" knowledge with the "heart" knowledge, but when it does click for them—when they do invite the Lord into their hearts—what an incredible moment that will be when they are enlightened by the truth! Wow! Their footings will be in place and their foundation will be rock solid!

General Definitions

Christian faith—The Christian faith is based on the Scriptures as explained in the Apostles' Creed.

Christian life—The Christian life requires living in a biblically-directed way which includes love, obedience and service.

Religion—Religion is a particular institutionalized or personal system of beliefs and practices relating to the divine.

Teenagers/adolescents—The terms teenager or adolescent refer to people 13-years-old to 18-years-old.

Ten Commandments—The Ten Commandments are the ten laws that God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai.

Fruit of the Spirit—The Fruit of the Spirit includes love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23, New International Version).

Core Belief Definitions

Faith—Faith is not mere intellectual dissent. For example, one may know many facts about Jesus and may even believe He lived on earth at one time, but this is not faith. Faith is complete trust and total reliance on someone or something. One's faith is only as

strong as in whom, or what, they put their faith. The apostle Paul defines faith as "being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see" (Hebrew 11:1, New International Version). We cannot measure the amount of faith in God that a person has, but this will be reflected in how he/she lives his/her life and the choices he/she makes.

Creator—God created the heavens and the earth and everything in them. He created all things good. He created humans in His own image. God continues to uphold and rule over all His creation. God will provide whatever we need for body and soul.

Bible—The Bible is God's Holy Word. Authors who were inspired by the Holy Spirit wrote it. The Bible tells our story, the story of our origins beginning with the creation of Adam and Eve. The line of faith is passed down through Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Judah to David and on to Mary and Joseph. The Bible also includes books and letters written by disciples and apostles of Jesus Christ, which were written to encourage believers and to convert unbelievers. The Bible confronts us with the story of salvation. The Bible is infallible!

Jesus Christ—We must believe in Jesus as our Lord and Savior who came to earth through the virgin Mary. Jesus was fully God and fully man. He lived His life as an example for how we are to live. He gave His life up for us as a sacrifice when He died on the cross to be the ultimate sacrifice for our sins. He sets us totally free and makes us right with God.

Great Commission—"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20, New International Version). Christ spoke these words before He ascended into heaven. He expects us to live out our

faith. Jesus made it very clear to His followers that we are to share the news of God's love and grace. Each of us will answer to God for our sin of omission if we do not tell others about His glory and love!

Satan—Also known as the devil, Satan is a fallen angel. He is the lord of evil and demons and the enemy of God. He first tempted humans to sin in the Garden of Eden when he was able to trick Adam and Eve into eating the fruit of the tree of good and evil. Even today Satan is alive and busy! He knows our weaknesses and tries to tempt us into disobeying God and to ultimately deny God. Satan has demons that help to do his work, but he is not omnipresent like our God.

Gratitude v. Good Works—Our good works and obedience to God's law are done out of gratitude for His sacrifice of His Son—not to earn heaven! After Adam and Eve's fall into sin it "so poisoned our sinful nature that we are born sinners—corrupt from conception on" (Q & A 7, Heidelberg Catechism). We can only be saved by being born again. Christ sets us totally free and right with God! The kindest, most giving and loving people will not enter heaven unless they accept Christ into their hearts as their Lord and Savior. Our good works and kind deeds are not the cause of our salvation but a result of our faithfulness and enrich our relationship with God. Our actions must be done out of a "true faith, must conform to God's law and be done for His glory" (Q & A 91, Heidelberg Catechism).

Salvation—Salvation is a deliverance from evil and sin. Our salvation comes only through Jesus Christ. Even though we are inclined to do evil we are assured of heaven if we ask for forgiveness of our sins and accept Christ's gift of salvation by believing that Jesus lived on earth, was crucified on the cross, rose again three days later and now sits

on the right hand of God. God's grace was poured on us through the sacrifice of Jesus' death on the cross. "Only Christ's satisfaction, righteousness and holiness make [us] right with God" (Q & A 61, Heidelberg Catechism). The opposite of salvation is hell, which is everlasting punishment.

Trinity—Although we speak of God and Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, we believe in one triune God—the Trinity. The Athanasian Creed states it this way:

> For the person of the Father is a distinct person, the person of the Son is another, and that of the Holy Spirit still another. But the divinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is one, their glory equal, their majesty coeternal (Heidelberg Catechism).

We can pray to all three. God is our Father and Protector. Jesus is our Savior and Mediator. The Holy Spirit is our Counselor and Guide. Yet, all three can have the same characteristics. Amazing!

Eternity—Because of the gift of salvation given to us as a result of God's love and grace, those who believe in Jesus' death and resurrection will experience life without end—everlasting life! Our earthly bodies may die, but we will live forever on a new earth with resurrected bodies. We will experience righteousness, peace and joy in heaven! I Corinthians 2:9 describes a life in eternity as, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him" (New International Version). To believe in Jesus is to live for eternity!

God—Our God reigns over us. He is a God of justice and mercy. He will not let any sin go unpunished. It is by His mercy and grace that He laid on Christ, His Son, the iniquity of us all. It is because of His mercy and grace that God provided us with a Counselor to live within us and to be our Guide. Therefore, God is many things to us. He is our

Creator, our Lord, our Father, our Strength, our Provider and Redeemer and Friend. God is our reason for getting up in the morning. He is our purpose for living!

Review of Literature

I was pleasantly surprised to find quite a bit of literature that referred in one form or another to the spiritual lives of teenagers. In my introduction I mentioned Christian Smith (2005). Through his research he came to many conclusions about the spirituality of adolescents. He believes that "American adolescents as a whole experience and represent in their lives an immense variety of religious and spiritual beliefs, practices, experiences, identities, and attitudes" (Smith, 2005, p. 26). His research supports the belief that religious practices influence their faith lives significantly and that few are the "spiritual seekers" that some writers would like us to assume. Teenagers are more likely to gravitate to the more traditional religions (Smith, 2005). He also notes that the religious practices and communities that the teenagers are involved in compete for time with the many social and school activities, media, sports, homework, dating, part-time jobs, etc. Quite often church activities end up at the bottom of the list (Smith, 2005). He found that teenagers most often referred to God as the one who created everything, watches from above what He created, and controls all that He created! Smith (2005) summed up his analysis of what teenagers believe as *Moralistic Therapeutic Deism.* This is "about belief in a particular kind of God: one who exists, created the world and defines our general moral order, but not one who is particularly personally involved in one's affairs—especially affairs in which one would prefer not to have God involved. Most of the time, the God of this faith keeps a safe distance" (Smith, 2005, p. 165). Teenagers in Smith's research believe God is the creator of moral law and order, but they do not

believe in the Trinity. Their beliefs do not include God using the prophets or His law to speak to people; nor do they believe Christ rose from the dead. In regard to the Spirit, He does not work in people's hearts (2005). Many young people are searching for truth in the wrong places and are coming up empty so they take the different pieces of life (media, experiences, bits of Sunday school lessons, what morals they do find in movies—good guy/bad guy/feel-good type, teachers' values and parental examples, etc.) and try to piece them together to come up with some sort of eclectic worldview.

George Barna has done extensive research on the spiritual transformation of 13-year-olds. His research states that nine out of ten young people claim to be Christians by the age of 13 (Barna, 2003). Of these, 34 percent were determined to be born again Christians and 59 percent were nominal Christians, or people who are not necessarily followers of Jesus Christ but say they are Christians (Barna, 2003). Most of the 13 year olds surveyed are not in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ (Barna, 2003). And Barna's research revealed that only three percent have a biblical worldview (Barna, 2003, p. 37). Most of the teenagers believe they know all they need to about Christianity and the most popular Bible stories. Many of them are convinced that they will not change their beliefs as they grow older (Barna, 2003). According to Barna's data, most children decide at an early age "what they will do about Jesus—either wholeheartedly follow Him, merely acknowledge or ignore or reject Him—while they are young" (Barna, 2003, p. 45). This information supports our need for Christian education. Our children need to learn and understand the Scriptures well, to learn how to pray and to see God around them in what He has created and to see God's grace and salvation as gifts. I realize sending children to a Christian school or attending a Christ-centered church weekly does

not make them Christians. As Bass and Richter explain, we don't claim to be perfect, but we can claim the promise that even in our failures God loves us (Bass and Richter, 2002). The gift of biblical knowledge gives us an opportunity to live a new life. Learning more about God and living biblical practices simply helps us to draw closer to the Lord to learn the truth while getting better at serving and obeying God (Bass and Richter, 2002).

Scripture is clear on the issue of children being raised in the Lord, especially starting at a young age. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up" (Deuteronomy 6: 5-7, New International Version). There are many passages that support training our children in the Lord. I can't imagine not raising a child in the light of God's Word. Another passage that stands out to support the value of researching if our young people can accurately explain the core beliefs of the Christian faith is found in I Timothy, "Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come" (I Timothy 4: 7-8, New International Version). God makes it very clear that our children are to know the truth—God's Word—starting at an early age.

In Robert Coles' (1990) psychoanalytic research of children who were stricken with disease or injured, he let the children talk about whatever came to their minds (1990). He found that children want to understand *why* things happen to them, not just *what* is happening to them (Coles, 1990). This is another example of how our children

want to know and understand the truth. The truth can only be found in reading the Scriptures, biblically-based instruction, and godly modeling of others. This is the only way for teenagers, or any of us, to develop an accurate understanding of the Christian faith that embraces the truth.

Les Parrott III warns that there are four general mistakes adults tend to make when encouraging young people to grow in their faith and knowledge of God's Word (n.d.).

> *Motivating by guilt*—it only works short term and is only done to please others
>
> *Equating spirituality with youth group activity*—a teenager's spirituality cannot be measured by how many church activities and programs he/she attends
>
> *Setting our expectations for teenagers too high*—this can lead to failure and more guilt
>
> *Setting too-low expectations for teenagers*—adolescents may develop a proud sense of accomplishment or believe they are not able to aspire to higher goals (Parrott, n.d., p.2)

Parrott states that we need to "think teen" in order to help adolescents grow in their understanding of Christianity and mature in their faith (Parrott, n.d.). He also pointed out that there is a natural process in which teenagers can experience an emotional high that may later settle into a time of doubt and questions. We must look at this as a good thing in helping our young people to work through their reservations or fears, or lack of knowledge (Parrott, n.d.). This is the sort of "learning" that helps our young people to grow deep roots. According to Parrott, Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget labeled two different ways that people comprehend. One is assimilation in which the person has to fit new information in with what he/she already knows. The second is accommodation where new information or experiences broaden his/her comfort zone and have to move

beyond what he/she already knows to search out answers (Parrott, n.d.). This is where instruction in the home, church and school works together and helps to accomplish both processes. Along with this instruction, the modeling of strong, spiritually alive adults and peers helps reinforce a teen's Christian beliefs (Parrott, n.d.). As I surveyed teenagers I hoped to discover that all of these facets of learning and understanding the Christian faith have assisted the students in being able to articulate what they believe. I recognize that my research is a snapshot of what a sample of teenagers' understanding of what Christianity is, but this will give local educators and parents a glimpse as to what our teenagers believe, and what their strengths/weaknesses in this area may be.

The findings based on Gallup Youth Surveys conducted over a period of twenty years showed that most adolescents highly value the presence of religion in their lives (Gallup, 1999). The survey also revealed that teenagers attend church because they want to. Eight in ten teens say they admire adults who instill values in young people, and 86 percent of teens believe they watch too much T.V. and should spend more time praying! The poll stated that many young people are determined to be "more religious" and giving when they get older. One-third of the teenagers polled showed interest in discussing religion with their parents more often than they presently do, and many teenagers are crying out for help in areas that pressure them, such as alcohol, drugs and sex (Gallup, 1999). This study reinforces the fact young people need to know the truth about the Christian life—especially the gift of grace! Teens need to know about forgiveness and unconditional love. Parrott also wrote about how our teenagers struggle with their own temptations and in their idealism discover that the church is not perfect nor does it bring fulfillment to everyone who is a part of it. He suggests that our teenagers have a need to

fit in or be a part of a community. They need to be in an accountability group of compassionate and supportive peers. Along with the idea of a caring group of peers to hold one accountable, Parrott pointed out a teenager's search for faith must be supported by education and modeling that cultivates his/her faith. Adolescents are aware of the spiritual disciplines. They are ready for Bible study, sincere prayer and caring service, and are able to attend weekly worship services.

I have seen firsthand that our teenagers are capable of carrying out these disciplines, in order to grow in their walk with the Lord. Some have become strong spiritual leaders in their churches and schools. Therefore, it is the responsibility of parents, clergy, teachers and community to make sure our children are getting the right message—the truth! In the Old Testament children were included in the Passover celebration and the covenant and were taken along on religious pilgrimages, and the adults were reminded to "...be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them" (Deuteronomy 4:9,10, New International Version). These instructions still apply to us today. It is still our responsibility to unswervingly train our children and our teenagers so that the truth is lived out through them and then shared with the next generation.

Craig Dykstra (1999) compares spiritual disciplines to human activity, or practices, such as baseball. Baseball requires intelligent and purposeful action, which makes use of its own vocabulary, concepts and symbolism just as in the Christian life. This intelligent and purposeful action comes in the exercise of prayer, scripture reading, forgiving others, confessing our sins and hospitality. People are able to work together

because the practice of the Christian life has established rules and roles. Like baseball, Christianity has character and consistency. We are able to teach it to and to learn from each other. Finally, Dykstra adds that both the game of baseball and the Christian life are coherent and complex. It takes work and effort to learn the rules, skills, moves and terms in how to play baseball and live out the core beliefs of the Christian life (Dykstra, 1999, p. 68-69). I understand this analogy to confirm the requirement of training and instructing our children in the Lord and His Word. There are rules and skills to remember. It means being part of a team or community. Living the Christian life will take discipline. Mistakes will be made and there will be consequences, but that is also a part of the training.

In other related studies Christian Smith (2005) with the help of the National Survey of Youth and Religion conducted many surveys for his book. One survey asked adolescents between the ages of 13 and 17 questions pertaining to the characteristics of their religious faith. They were asked to rate the importance of religious faith shaping their daily life and the importance of faith shaping major life decisions. The results of these two questions were especially close. If the group found religious faith important in their daily life, it was also important in shaping their major life decisions (See Appendix G). The Latter-Day Saints youth gave the highest ratings for both with 43 percent in daily life and 52 percent in making major life decisions. The Black Protestants were next to rank these as important with the conservative Protestants ranking them only two or three percent lower. Those not religious ranked them as not very important. According to these results faith is important to at least half of the U.S. teens and exerted a big influence on the other half.

Another question was in reference to how close these young people feel to God. Twenty-two percent of the Black Protestants surveyed claimed they were "extremely close". The Latter-Day Saints showed 20 percent, and the conservative Protestants were at 15 percent. According to this survey about one-third of our teens have a close intimate relationship with God. The last question was in reference to the believers' doubts about religious beliefs in the prior year. The Black Protestants, Latter-Day Saints and conservative Protestants came out on top with the most responses to no doubts.

Although the differences are not major, the Jewish teens seemed to find the influence of their faith less important than all but the non-religious group. Also, very few Jewish teens felt extremely close to God, but they had few or no doubts about their religious beliefs. In general, about half of our religious teens have no doubts about their religious faith.

Another study in *Soul searching: The religious and spiritual lives of American teenagers* reports on beliefs of United States adolescents about God (See Appendix F). When asked whether or not they believed in God, the Black Protestants scored the highest with 97 percent saying yes. Eighty-four percent was the lowest of those with any religious affiliation. Even of the non-religious, almost half believe in God. Overall, there were only three percent who do not believe in God; however, their views of God vary considerably. Conservative Protestants ranked the highest with the view that God is a personal being who is involved in the lives of people today; however, less than half of the Jewish teens surveyed agreed with this view. Thirty-three percent of the Jewish teens believe God is something like a cosmic life force. A high majority of the denominations polled, with the exception of the Jewish, believe there will be a judgment day when God

will reward some and punish others. Sixty-seven percent of the Jews do not believe there will be a judgment day. What we can't know about these statistics is if the young people surveyed believe God to be the Creator of the universe, the God of Abraham and Isaac, the God of all Scripture, or if they believe in a god of the New Age or a Deistic god.

According to a Gallup poll recorded in the book, *The spiritual life of young Americans,* some of the top subjects of interest are the following: Is there really a God? What is the meaning of life? Is there a heaven or hell? And, How do I decide what is right and wrong in life? The majority of our adolescents seem to have the desire to learn and discuss more about their faith and religious beliefs than some adults realize (See Appendix H).

Another Gallup poll based on telephone interviews of 500 teenagers shows that young people believe having personal peace and happiness (92%) is much more important than being famous (16%). This sounds impressive, but having a deep religious faith ranked lower than having a lot of money!

George Barna's research in *Transforming children into spiritual champions* asks 13-year-olds and adults whether they strongly agree or disagree with ten belief statements. I believe this survey is two-fold. He wanted to see if those polled understand and have an accurate picture of the Christian faith. Secondly, he wanted to see if there is a big difference in what a 13-year-old believes versus an adult. Barna claims that two out every three 13-year-olds maintain that they will not amend any of their core beliefs in the future. Also, in his research he found a high level of consistency between the religious beliefs of adults and children. Accordingly, whatever belief a young person holds at 13 is not likely to change as he or she grows older. Perhaps "the average young person will

encounter fewer adults or peers whose worldview is sufficiently different enough as to pose a serious challenge to his or her own existing belief system" (Barna, 2003, p. 37). This analysis tells me that it is even more important than once thought that our young people are educated in their faith, have a biblical understanding of what (and why) they believe and are challenged in their beliefs. Teenagers also need to be taught how to live out what they believe.

I was eager to conduct my research to investigate what a sampling of our local teenagers believe to be the core beliefs of the Christian faith! Do they find structure and meaning living Christianly? Do they know the "rules and roles"? Are they able to teach and learn from each other about the Christian life? Have they learned from Christian instruction (home, school and church), modeling, reading Scripture and praying? Do our teenagers know the "skills, moves and nuances" to know what the true lifestyle and beliefs of a Christian are? Have our teenagers "grown and developed in moral character and substance" (Dykstra, 1999, p. 69)? Christian Smith (2005) found in his comprehensive interviews and surveys that a large majority of our teenagers are unable to explain their religious beliefs and practices. His interviews were the first time most teenagers ever had an adult ask them what they believe. They were able to tell him about what they knew to be true about drugs, alcohol, sex and STDs—topics they have heard about over and over in junior high and high school (Smith, 2005). The adolescents could not express what they believe about God, His role in their lives, or why they participate in certain religious practices. How meaningful can one's religious faith, practice and commitment be if one cannot verbally explain it (Smith, 2005)? "Articulacy fosters reality" (Smith, 2005, p. 268). We as parents, educators, or adult brothers and sisters

need to promote and encourage teenagers to articulate and practice their faith (Smith, 2005).

Are our local Christian school teenagers able to accurately articulate the core beliefs of the Christian faith?

Methods

For my research I surveyed students from a medium-sized, midwestern Christian high school. I gave the survey to the freshmen and seniors in September (See Appendix B). I first had the parents sign a participant permission form (See Appendix A). A freshman homeroom teacher and senior homeroom teacher handed out the permission forms, collected them after they were signed and gave them to the principal. This kept the cost of postage down. My survey has two parts. The first part contains 10 questions and uses a Likkert scale for recording responses. Part two is an open-ended questionnaire with one question. From part one I tallied and reported my findings, or percentages, for each answer of each question. I read the essay answers to find common themes of what our students believe and to see if the students were able to put into words the core beliefs of Christianity. This survey is an adaptation of questions George Barna (2003) has asked to compare the beliefs of 13-year-olds and adults (See Appendix D). The second part of the test is an overall summary of what the student believes to be the essential beliefs of the Christian life.

I had given the survey to my three children the summer before I administered it at the high school. My oldest daughter is currently a freshman at a private college, my son is a sophomore at the high school I surveyed and my youngest daughter is a 7th grader at a Christian elementary school. Thanks to them I reworded several questions on the first

part of the test. After visiting with Dr. Kobes and Dr. Adams, I had decided to use only one open-ended question and omitted and reworded more of the survey questions.

I believe most of the students in this study answered honestly and sincerely; however, when I surveyed the seniors they all came to the choir room where they were given a folder as a hard surface to use to answer their survey while sitting in chairs next to each other. This was not quite the structured atmosphere the freshmen had where I was allowed the first 20 minutes of each of a teacher's English classes in which the students sat in assigned desks and there were fewer students in the room. The freshmen seemed to put more thought and time into the survey.

After I had supervised and collected the surveys I tallied the Likkert scale questions into a chart according to percentages under six main categories—freshmen females, freshmen males, senior females, senior males, the difference between freshmen and seniors and the difference between female and male (See Appendix C). In order to condense the results of the written question I took half of the freshmen responses and half of the senior responses and wrote down "meaning" statements that appeared most often (in one variation or another) and then organized them into themes.

Implications and Limitations

This research is limited to testing whether or not our young people can articulate in writing a definition of core beliefs of biblical Christian life. It is not to assess our Bible curriculum, nor will it tell us if their head knowledge has connected with their heart. It will not show us if the students live what they believe. Only the Lord will know that for sure. I, as a Bible teacher and a parent, simply wanted to know if our teenagers are able to verbalize what they believe.

Results of the Survey

Part one

Your religious faith is very important in your life. Ninety-four percent of our freshman females strongly agreed with this statement in comparison to only 44 percent of our senior males who strongly agreed (See Appendix C)! This seems to be a big difference. In Barna's survey, however, 69 percent of the adults strongly agreed along with 68 percent of the 13-year-olds.

God is the Creator of the universe and of all things good. One hundred percent of the freshman and an average of 93 percent of the seniors strongly agreed with this statement! This question was not one of Barna's.

The Bible is the inspired Word of God. This statement was not a part of the Barna survey either. In my study 100 percent of the freshmen strongly agreed and so did 97 percent of the senior females and 88 percent of the senior males. This is a big step in one's relationship with God.

Jesus Christ was fully man and fully God while He lived on earth. He was crucified and arose from the dead three days later. Here, 97 percent of the freshmen believed this to be true. Only one or two of the students mildly agreed. The senior females record 95 percent strongly agreed and 91 percent of the senior males. The pattern I am finding is that most of the doubts come from the senior males. This statement took the place of Barna's "When Jesus Christ lived on earth, he committed sins". Twenty-five percent of the adults agreed with this comment and 22 percent of the 13-year-olds.

You, personally, have a responsibility to tell other people about Jesus. The numbers are not as strong in this category. The freshman females scored the highest with 87 percent who strongly agree, while only 25 percent of the senior males strongly agree it is their responsibility to tell others about Christ. Fifty-nine percent of the senior boys mildly agreed. I wonder if this may be due to preoccupation with so many other interests and activities and plans that need to be made in the senior year. It would be interesting to ask the students why they circled the answers they did. In Barna's study 34 percent of the adults strongly agreed with a variation of this statement and 40 percent of the kids agreed. Barna's statement was "You personally have a responsibility to tell other people your religious beliefs".

The devil, or Satan, does not really exist but is a symbol of evil. The freshmen scored lower than the seniors in this category. Seventy-four percent of the freshman females and 61 percent of the freshman males strongly disagreed. An average of 87 percent of the seniors strongly disagreed with this statement. This information correlates with their themes in the written answers. The seniors stressed that the devil does exist and that there is a hell and a heaven. The freshmen did not tend to bring this up but focused more on how to live as a Christian. Barna's statement went like this, "A human being can be under the control or the influence of spiritual forces such as demons". Thirty-one percent of the adults strongly agreed and 34 percent of the 13-year-olds strongly agreed. It would be hard to compare these results because they are actually very different statements.

If people are generally good, or do enough things for others during their life, they will earn a place in heaven. Our hope is that all understand that our good works do not

get us into heaven but it is by grace and through our faith in Jesus Christ we are saved. The senior females were the most convicted in this area with 90 percent strongly disagreeing. Only 53 percent of our senior males were sure of this. Seventy-two percent of our freshmen strongly agreed. The majority of the students already believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God, however, they need to understand that good works and service are done out of gratitude. In Barna's survey only 26 percent of the adults and 24 percent of the kids strongly disagreed!

Children are born without sin; they are neither good nor evil. They make a choice between good and evil as they grow older. Seventy-three percent of the senior females and only 50 percent of the senior males disagreed with this statement. The freshmen came in lower with 57 percent of the freshman females and 45 percent of the freshman males strongly disagreeing. The fact that we are born in sin does not seem clear to many of the students. Barna's study is even more alarming. His statement is "When people are born, they are neither good nor evil; they make a choice between the two as they mature". Fifty-eight percent of the adults and 63 percent of the kids strongly agreed!

God is one Being in three separate Persons—God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son and the Holy Spirit. One hundred percent of the senior females agreed with this statement and so did 88 percent of the freshman females, 91 percent of the freshman males and 84 percent of the senior males. This can be a hard concept to understand and most often has to be accepted in faith. Barna's statement included the words "three separate and equal persons". Seventy percent of the adults and 61 percent of the 13-year-olds strongly agreed with this.

Every person has a soul that will live forever, either in God's presence or absence. The students were not overly confident about this statement. I speculate that it could be in the way it was worded. It may have been easier for the students to comprehend if I would have written "heaven or hell" rather than "God's presence or absence". The freshman and senior females had 74 percent that strongly agreed and the freshman males 79 percent and senior males 59 percent. Sixty-four percent of the adults and 62 percent of the 13-year-olds strongly agreed with this statement in Barna's study.

Part two

The freshmen and senior responses to the essay question, "What are the essentials of the Christian faith that you would want a non-believer to understand?" fell under six themes.

Characteristics of God

The students stressed the love of God for his people. "He will always love you no matter what" (freshman), and "God is a loving Father and wants you to be His child" (senior) are comments that our young people wrote and were reiterated in various ways. Both grades also stated that God is our Creator and Supreme Ruler. According to one senior, "God is omnipresent and all-powerful". "God is the maker of heaven and earth and created everyone in it" adds a freshman. "God is the Father, Son and Holy Spirit" (freshman) reveals the belief that God is triune. "God is three in one" (senior). Other students' comments that were most often shared include the following:

"God loves you no matter how naughty/sinful you have been". Freshman

"Jesus is kind and loving". Freshman

"God created the whole universe". Senior

"He will give you what you need". Senior

"He [Jesus] was born of a virgin Mary". Senior

"He gave us the Holy Spirit to help us whenever we need His help". Freshman

Christ's Mission

Jesus Christ's life is clearly significant to both the freshmen and the seniors. There were many responses that reflect the significance of His presence on earth, His death and resurrection. One senior sums it up this way, "Jesus is God's Son, He came to earth, grew up and died on the cross. Three days later He arose". Another way to put it, "Jesus conquered death and offers us eternal life and the forgiveness of sin" (freshman). Of Christ's physical presence one senior said, "He was fully God and fully man while he lived on earth. Another, senior wrote, "He lived His life like a human being, teaching and healing". Many similar statements were made, such as these two and others like them:

"This God so loved his people that He sent His one and only Son to pay the debt for our sins". Senior

"I would want them to understand that Jesus died for him/her and that Jesus loves him/her". Freshman

Faith

Along with Christ's mission comes our faith. Most of the comments the students wrote were about living by faith not works. According to several students from both grades, in order to go to heaven we must repent and believe to be saved; only through faith can we really be saved, not by works. A freshman wrote, "If we recognize our sinful nature and need for salvation, we can invite Jesus into our lives and be saved".

The students really seem to grasp that all the good works we do do not earn us a place in heaven but are a reflection of our love and gratitude for God. "We must respond in faith and live a life of gratitude. Nothing we do can ever be good enough to save ourselves from going to hell. Only through Jesus' sacrifice can we go to heaven and by having faith in Him" (seniors). The following statements also support these thoughts:

"If you believe in Him and show your faith, you will live eternally with Him in heaven and on earth". Freshman

"With faith in Jesus we can also have eternal life". Senior

"They should be an active member of social groups and show their beliefs through their actions". Freshman

"We cannot earn this salvation, or even count it as our own without the Holy Spirit working in our lives". Senior

"That Christians make mistakes but we know that we are forgiven, that we don't think that we are better than others". Senior

"You must believe that Jesus died for you or you will go to hell". Freshman

Predestination

Predestination is defined by one freshman this way: "If we worry about it, we are probably saved. We wouldn't care if it weren't for the Holy Spirit". A senior stated that "we are chosen to be God's people". Another freshman gave this advice: "You need to understand that we are all born into sin and there will always be sin until the second coming". Predestination is hard for students to explain in a survey, but they seemed to get the point that we are born with sin; and that through the Holy Spirit's work in our hearts we realize God is calling us and we must respond to this call.

"It is our job to obey Christ and to tell others about Him". Freshman

"It is our responsibility to spread God's Word". Senior

The Bible

Several of the students surveyed wrote about the Bible being "God's true, perfect and infallible Word". "The Bible is God-breathed and from Him alone", stated one freshman. Both freshmen and seniors agree that, "The Bible is God's truthful Word, inspired by Him".

Heaven and Hell

"There is a place called heaven and hell" claims one senior. "You will spend eternity in heaven or hell; there is no in-between" (senior). The senior students brought up the reality of heaven and hell. The freshmen did not but had much to say about how we are to live as Christians. The seniors were black and white on the subject.

"The devil and hell do exist". Senior

"Adam and Eve's sin did not just affect them but the whole world". Senior

"...even though He is a loving God He will still judge and punish us". Senior

Living for Christ

The freshmen offered a lot of knowledge on how Christians are to live their lives. "They need to trust and obey God's Word for their faith to be active". "They should be active members of social groups and show their beliefs through their actions". They added that "to be Christ-like, you must read God's Word", "You must pray", and "Be kind to your neighbor". These are only a few suggestions. They seem to be very insightful.

"You should live by God's commandments". Senior

"Show your gratefulness to God by the things you do". Senior

"You cannot be a fake Christian. You either believe or you don't believe". Senior

"Acts will get you nowhere; you have to live a Christian life and accept Jesus into your heart". Senior

"We are stewards of His creation". Senior

"The Lord is good to those who love Him and stand up for Him". Senior

Discussion

As I read over the results of the survey I am affirmed that our young people are receiving the information they need to accurately articulate a biblical definition of Christianity; however, the results also show areas in which we are weak in statements such as "We are born with a sinful nature," that it is "our responsibility to share Christ with others". The research actually gives us a "baseline" of where we need to reinforce what they know and build on it. We cannot be content with, "Wow, they seem to be getting it," and leaving it at that. I see this as a mandate to rally and to find joy in being able to, and having the freedom to, proceed to work with our students and teach them the truth about our privileges as Christians and the responsibilities that come with being Christians. One of the responsibilities is to be on the offensive. Students must be taught to share the good news of Salvation; not to keep the message only in their homes and communities. We must continue to instill in our young people that their quest for biblical wisdom and a relationship with Christ is not an accomplished feat. It is an ongoing, daily activity that is nourished with the reading of God's Word, prayer, meditation and learning about our world! God is all and in all. Therefore, we also need to teach our young

people discernment and to look at things through the eyes of Scripture. The Lord gives educators and parents a huge responsibility to impress upon our children the commandments and His Word. Yet, He does not leave us unequipped. To us His children He provides parents, a church home, Christian instruction, the Holy Spirit and His Word. We are not alone in raising our children nor could we do it alone. We must actively do our part to educate and love them. This also means disciplining them and teaching them to stay away from activities and beliefs that could harm or destroy their relationship with the Lord. As adults in the community, whether we are parents, educators, neighbors, business owners, etc. we also need to continually be in the Word and in prayer and growing in our relationship with the Lord and living what we believe in order to be prepared to give an answer or instruction or discipline to our young people. Our work is far from finished, but I feel this research has given us a thermometer reading of where a sampling of our local adolescents are in their ability to articulate the meaning of Christianity according to Scripture. As I have stated before, this does not tell us if they are living what they believe or what is in their hearts—that is between them and the Lord!

This research is narrow in audience and was not extensive but has given a ray of light to show us what a sampling of our area high school students have learned and can articulate about Christianity. This same research could be done in other high schools and perhaps in colleges or youth groups. There are many possibilities. I would recommend administering it at this high school again in three years to gauge progress and so that parents and teachers can be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum and instruction given to their young people. I believe God's Kingdom is alive and growing.

The Holy Spirit must be excited about the prospect of educators and parents taking more responsibility to make sure that our young people may increase in their knowledge of God's Word and learn to live in gratitude and love for our Lord!

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Dear Parents,

My name is Mrs. Sheila Bruns. I currently teach at Sioux Center Christian School. I have been working on my master's degree in education at Dordt College. My last assignment includes a written thesis based on research pertaining to education. I would like your permission to have your son/daughter fill out a survey and a short answer question to complete my research. Their names will NOT be used. I simply want a sampling of high school freshmen and seniors from northwest Iowa to fill out the survey. If you agree to this please sign below.

I give_____(son/daughter) my permission to participate in the research conducted by Mrs. Sheila Bruns. I understand my child's name or any identifying information will not be used in my final report or shared with anyone.

Parent's signature_____

Thank you so much for your cooperation!

Mrs. Sheila Bruns

Female_____ Male_____ Grade level_____

Directions: Rate each statement on a scale from **strongly agree** to **strongly disagree.**

1. Your religious faith is very important in your life.

Strongly agree	Mildly agree	Neutral	Mildly disagree	Strongly disagree

2. God is the creator of the universe and of all things good.

Strongly agree	Mildly agree	Neutral	Mildly disagree	Strongly disagree

3. The Bible is the inspired word of God.

Strongly agree	Mildly agree	Neutral	Mildly disagree	Strongly disagree

4. Jesus Christ was fully man and fully God while he lived on earth. He was crucified and rose from the dead three days later.

Strongly agree	Mildly agree	Neutral	Mildly disagree	Strongly disagree

5. You, personally, have a responsibility to tell other people about Jesus.

Strongly agree	Mildly agree	Neutral	Mildly disagree	Strongly disagree

6. The devil, or Satan, does not really exist but is a symbol of evil.

Strongly agree	Mildly agree	Neutral	Mildly disagree	Strongly disagree

7. If people are generally good, or do enough good things for others during their life, they will earn a place in heaven.

Strongly agree	Mildly agree	Neutral	Mildly disagree	Strongly disagree

8. Children are born without sin, they are neither good nor evil. They make a choice between good and evil as they grow older.

Strongly agree	Mildly agree	Neutral	Mildly disagree	Strongly disagree

9. God is one Being in three separate persons—God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Strongly agree	Mildly agree	Neutral	Mildly disagree	Strongly disagree

10. Every person has a soul that will live forever, either in God's presence or absence.

Strongly agree	Mildly agree	Neutral	Mildly disagree	Strongly disagree

Questions adapted from:
Barna, G. (2003). *Transforming children into spiritual champions*, Ventura, CA: Regal Books.

Answer the following question either in full sentences or bulleted points:

What are the essentials of the Christian faith that you would want a non-believer to understand?

Survey of Unity Christian High School Freshmen and Seniors

Key

FF - Freshman female
FM - Freshman male
SF - Senior female
SM - Senior male
dF/S - difference between Freshmen & Seniors
dF/M - difference between Male & Female

Grade level/Gender (percentages)

	FF	FM	SF	SM	dF/S	dM/F
1. Your religious faith is very important in your life.						
Strongly agree	94	78	79	44	24	26
Mildly Agree	6	22	18	50	20	24
Neutral			3	3	6	
Mildly disagree				3	3	3
Strongly disagree						
2. God is the Creator of the universe and of all things good.						
Strongly agree	100	100	97	88	7	5
Mildly Agree				6	6	6
Neutral			3	3	6	6
Mildly disagree				3	3	3
Strongly disagree						
3. The Bible is the inspired Word of God.						
Strongly agree	100	100	95	91	7	2
Mildly Agree			5	3	8	2
Neutral				3	3	3
Mildly disagree				3	3	3
Strongly disagree						
4. Jesus Christ was fully man and fully God while He lived on earth. He was crucified and arose from the dead three days later.						
Strongly agree	97	97	95	91	4	3
Mildly Agree	3	3	5	3	14	1
Neutral				3	3	3
Mildly disagree				3	3	3
Strongly disagree						

Survey of Unity Christian High School Freshmen and Seniors

	FF	FM	SF	SM	dF/S	dM/F
5. You, personally, have a responsibility to tell other people about Jesus.						
Strongly agree	87	68	71	25	30	32
Mildly Agree	13	23	23	59	23	23
Neutral		9	3	13	7	19
Mildly disagree			3		3	3
Strongly disagree				3	3	3
6. The devil, or Satan, does not really exist but is a symbol of evil.						
Strongly agree	10	5	3		12	2
Mildly Agree	6	9			15	3
Neutral		5	5	6	6	6
Mildly disagree	10	20	3	9	9	8
Strongly disagree	74	61	89	84	19	9
7. If people are generally good, or do enough good things for others during their life, they will earn a place in heaven.						
Strongly agree						
Mildly Agree	6	5		3	8	2
Neutral		2	5	6	9	3
Mildly disagree	20	23	5	38	10	18
Strongly disagree	74	70	90	53	0.5	20
8. Children are born without sin; they are neither good nor evil. They make a choice between good and evil as they grow older.						
Strongly agree	17	10	3		24	10
Mildly Agree	13	20	8	12	8	4
Neutral	13	14	8	13	3	3
Mildly disagree		11	8	25	11	18
Strongly disagree	57	45	73	50	11	17
9. God is one Being in three separate persons--God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son and the Holy Spirit.						
Strongly agree	88	91	100	84	2	6
Mildly Agree	6	5		10	1	9
Neutral	3	2		3	2	2
Mildly disagree	3			3		
Strongly disagree		2			2	2

Survey of Unity Christian High School
Freshmen and Seniors

	FF	FM	SF	SM	dF/S	dM/F
10. Every person has a soul that wil live forever, either in God's presence or absence.						
Strongly agree	74	79	74	59	10	5
Mildly Agree	10	16	13	16	2	4
Neutral	6		5	19	18	8
Mildly disagree	10		5	3	2	12
Strongly disagree		5	3	3	1	5

Barna study from "Transforming children into spiritual champions"

A Comparison of Religious Beliefs of 13-Year-Olds and Adults

Description of the belief statement	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree	Group
Your religious faith is very important in your life.	69%	5%	adults
	68	7	kids
The Bible is totally accurate in all of its teaching.	45	13	adults
	45	8	kids
You, personally, have a responsibility to tell other people your religious beliefs.	34	27	adults
	40	13	kids
The devil, or Satan, is not a living being but is a symbol of evil.	45	21	adults
	41	17	kids
If people are generally good, or do enough good things for others during their life, they will earn a place in heaven.	37	26	adults
	35	24	kids
When Jesus Christ lived on Earth, He committed sins.	25	37	adults
	22	42	kids
When people are born, they are neither good nor evil; they make a choice between the two as they mature.	58	15	adults
	63	6	kids
God is one Being in three separate and equal persons—God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son and the Holy Spirit.	70	9	adults
	61	11	kids
Every person has a soul that will live forever, either in God's presence or absence.	64	8	adults
	62	5	kids
A human being can be under the control or the influence of spiritual forces such as demons.	31	25	adults
	34	24	kids

Source: National surveys conducted by Barna Research Group in 2001-2003. Sample sizes range from 630 to 1,010 adults and 126 to 318 13-year-olds.

Gallup study from "The spiritual life of young Americans: Approaching the year 2000"

Priority of religious faith: ratings of importance

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not very important
Having personal peace and happiness	92%	7%	1%
Being well educated	91	7	2
Helping people in the community	66	31	3
Working for peace	60	34	6
Getting married	52	33	14
Having children	45	34	20
Having lots of money	44	37	19
Having a deep religious faith	43	33	23
Being famous	16	28	56

The findings are based on telephone interviews by the Gallup Youth Survey with a representative national cross section of 500 teenagers, 13 through 17, conducted between March and April 4, 1990.

Smith study from "Soul searching: The religious and spiritual lives of American teenagers"

Beliefs of U.S. adolescents about God, ages 13-17 (percentages)

	U.S.	Religious Tradition						
		CP	MP	BP	RC	J	LDS	NR
Belief in God								
Believes in God	84	94	86	97	85	72	84	49
Is unsure in belief about God	12	5	13	2	14	23	13	34
Does not believe in God	3	1	2	~	1	5	~	17
Views of God								
A personal being involved in the lives of people today	65	77	69	74	64	44	76	30
Created the world, but is not involved in world today	13	10	13	13	17	12	7	15
Not personal, something like a cosmic life force	14	8	13	7	14	33	9	31
Don't know/refused/none of these views	5	4	3	5	4	5	8	7
Does not believe in God	3	1	2	~	1	5	~	17
Believes in a judgment day when God will reward some and punish others								
Yes	71	88	63	91	67	25	85	33
No	22	10	31	7	28	67	5	43
Don't know/refused	4	2	5	2	5	4	9	7
Does not believe in God	3	1	2	~	1	5	~	17

Source: National Survey of Youth and Religion, 2002–3.

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding and unreported don't know and refused answers; cells of <1 are reported as ~.

Smith study from "Soul searching: The religious and spiritual lives of American teenagers"

Characteristics of religious faith of U.S. adolescents, ages 13-17 (percentages)

	U.S.	Religious Tradition						
		CP	MP	BP	RC	J	LDS	NR
Importance of religious faith shaping daily life								
Extremely important	20	29	20	31	10	8	43	4
Very important	31	38	30	42	31	5	25	10
Somewhat important	31	25	34	22	41	51	16	29
Not very important	11	6	10	3	13	24	10	24
Not important at all	7	1	6	2	5	13	5	33
Importance of faith shaping major life decisions								
Extremely important	20	28	19	31	11	7	52	7
Very important	29	37	34	35	30	9	14	12
Somewhat important	31	28	30	27	41	29	21	22
Not very important	11	6	11	3	12	31	9	23
Not important at all	8	2	6	3	6	24	4	35
How close teen feels to God								
Extremely close	11	15	7	22	9	3	20	2
Very close	25	33	33	27	22	7	24	7
Somewhat close	35	33	34	35	43	25	39	26
Somewhat distant	17	15	18	11	20	38	11	22
Very distant	5	3	4	3	3	12	4	13
Extremely distant	3	1	2	2	2	9	2	11
Does not believe in God	3	1	2	~	1	5	~	17
Believers' doubts about religious beliefs in prior year								
Many doubts	5	4	6	6	5	3	4	—
Some doubts	14	14	10	15	16	19	4	—
A few doubts	32	30	36	26	35	30	40	—
No doubts	48	51	48	52	44	45	51	—
Refused	~	~	~	~	~	4	~	—

Source: National Survey of Youth and Religion, 2002–3.

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding and unreported don't know and refused answers; cells of <1 are reported as ~; doubts about religion findings for nonreligious teens are reported in table 26.

Gallup study from "The spiritual life of young Americans: Approaching the year 2000"

Topics teens would like to study and discuss

	Great deal of interest	Some interest	Little or no interest
Is there really a God?	64%	21%	15%
What is the meaning of my life?	56	28	16
Is there really a heaven or hell?	55	27	18
How to decide what is right and wrong in life	55	31	14
Why is there so much evil and hatred in the world?	50	33	17
Why bad things sometimes happen to good people	43	35	22
Why do some people of different religions hate and fight each other?	41	36	23
How to become more religious	26	38	36
What it would be like to try another religion or church	11	22	67

Have great deal of interest in discussing...	**Protestant**	**Catholic**	**Attended church last week**	**Did not attend**
Is there really a God?	71%	60%	75%	54%
What is the meaning of my life?	58	55	58	54
Is there really a heaven or hell?	60	51	63	46
How to decide what is right and wrong in life	58	54	60	49
Why is there so much evil and hatred in the world?	54	44	52	49
Why bad things sometimes happen to good people	47	43	50	37
Why do some people of different religions hate and fight each other?	44	36	47	34
How to become more religious	29	22	40	12
What it would be like to try another religion or church	13	13	13	9

Department of Education

Dordt College

Sioux Center, Iowa

VITA

Name: _____Date of Birth: _____

Home Address: _____

Dordt College
1983 – 1987
Bachelor of Arts
Education