

The Role of Spirituality in Christian School Leadership: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

This qualitative study examined the spiritual experiences of Christian school leaders. A purposeful, nominated sample of 12 Christian school leaders was selected. In-depth, open-ended interviews were conducted, audio taped, and then transcribed verbatim. Data analysis was based on Rudestam and Newton (2001) and Creswell's (1998) method of researcher description. Findings indicated participants believe that spiritual leadership is an active, personal process for each individual; that spiritual leaders see the importance of relationships with others, exhibit personal growth, provide for needs and opportunities, and make personal and spiritual growth conducive in the school community; and that Christian school leaders make every effort to establish and maintain a school that is both spiritually and academically excellent.

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Introduction

This phenomenological study examined Christian school leaders' experiences and spiritual preparation programs that may have enhanced their spiritual development. This study may lead other Christian school leaders to gain a better understanding about preparation and information that may assist them in leading schools toward greater spirituality.

It is an arduous task for the Christian school leader to direct the school community towards deeper spirituality. A greater understanding of the relationship between spirituality and Christian school leadership is necessary for the mission and vision of schools. Findings of this study describe, identify, and examine Christian school leaders' previous experiences, meanings, and spiritual preparation programs. Perhaps these findings will also assist future Christian school leaders to spiritually lead their schools.

Review of the Literature

Christian Education Defined

Christian education can be defined as instructing students about faith, teaching Christian doctrines, and conducting religious practices (Tye, 2000). What separates Christian education from educational philosophies such as Greek or Judaism is Jesus Christ who is the focal point of Christianity (Gaebelein, 1995). Though Christian doctrines often differ, faith in Jesus Christ, in addition to following His teachings, is the center of Christianity

Christian schools may attempt to display Christian intent from a crafted mission statement or from Biblical integration in the classroom. However, a school which has prayer, Scripture reading, devotions, and sharing faith in the classroom may be the only differences between Christian institutions and other educational institutions. All Christian school educators

should then live as well as practice not only the Christian faith, but the philosophy and mission of the school as well as strive to educate to achieve the desired academic and spiritual outcomes of every student. The academic success of students is important in Christian education, but most important is the relationship a child develops with Jesus (Kienel, 1986).

Therefore, Christian education and spiritual development are more than just learning about the Bible. Included is the processing of Biblical knowledge and applying it to one's personal life throughout life (Estep, 2002). The challenge then to Christian educators is to educate students to be capable of understanding academics, philosophy, and aesthetics from a spiritual perspective and to integrate Biblical teachings and spirituality into every area of the lives of students, so this becomes a natural lifestyle. The desired outcome would be students who continue to develop a Christian lifestyle and begin to reflect the Christian faith not only in words but also in actions long after leaving school.

Spiritual Leadership

Many authors discuss spiritual leadership. Secretan (1997) defines a spiritual leader as one who leads by giving life meaning. Wheatley (2002) characterizes a spiritual leader as one who reflects a sense of calling. Spiritual leaders are not produced nor do they become spiritual through an election or appointment (Sanders, 1994). Another characteristic of spiritual leadership as described by Stokley (2002) is inner peace and security. Solomon and Hunter (2002) and Fullan (2002) believe that spiritual leadership provides an example for those who lead through simple daily activities. Blackaby and Blackaby (2001) describe spiritual leaders as those who lead the organization from a heart of service, reflecting not only spirituality but servanthood as well.

Blackaby and Blackaby (2001) and Vaill (1991) further define spiritual leadership as the desire to develop and improve spirituality, and this would be exhibited in external actions. A spiritual leader characterizes genuineness and encourages those in the organization to take risks, so others may see an openness and trust. The spiritual leader reflects an attitude of respect for others, encouraging a freedom of openness and expression. Kessler (2002), Stokley (2002), and Wheatley (2002) reiterate that spiritual leaders value those with whom they work and build trust and confidence among colleagues. The spiritual leader views the organization not from a top down perspective, but rather a horizontal view, seeing others as valuable colleagues serving the community with purpose (Stokley).

School Administration and Spirituality

Keyes, Hanley-Maxwell, and Capper (1999) explored principals' behaviors and concluded that spirituality is an important characteristic of the identities of principals and their roles in school administration. The study showed the relevance of spirituality with school administrators and recommended further investigation about the role of spirituality and its importance in school administration. The study also recommended further investigation into school administrators' definitions of spirituality and how these similarities and differences of spirituality impact their roles as administrators. Current research and interest in spirituality and spiritual leadership reflect a need for further study of spiritual experiences, qualities, traits, philosophy, and leadership of the Christian school leader as well (Miller, 2002)

Public and secular school leaders are also realizing the need to include spirituality in their leadership practices. The separation of church and state in public school education does not allow any religious influence, but soul and servant leadership in the workplace can take place at any school (Kessler, 2002). Additionally, Starratt and Guare (1995) reported that:

educational leaders should be most attuned to their own spirituality...and that educators of all people in our society, ought to be in touch with the best that humans have thought and written about, the nobility and sacredness of human life. (pp. 194, 196)

Stokley (2002) adds to genuinely lead and serve for a higher purpose with the right spirit can transform a school into a sacred spiritual place.

There is a need to investigate the relationship between spirituality and Christian school leadership, and there is also a need to describe, identify and examine Christian school leaders' previous experiences, meanings, and spiritual preparation programs, to potentially assist future Christian school leaders to spiritually lead their schools. Therefore, the purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the spiritual preparation programs and experiences Christian school leaders have undertaken to become the spiritual leaders of their schools.

Methods

Rationale for Research Methodology

Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, and McCormick-Steinmetz (1991) describe qualitative analysis as, "a direct concern with experience as it is 'lived' or 'felt' or undergone . . .Qualitative research has the aim of understanding experience as nearly as possible, as its participants feel it or live it" (pp. 4-5). It is a discovery oriented approach in the natural environment" (p. 37). Gay (1996) describes a qualitative researcher as one not just concerned with describing the way things are, but gaining insights into how things got to be the way they are, how people feel about the way things are, what they believe, what meanings they attach to various activities (p. 13).

A phenomenological investigation was the most appropriate method to address the purpose of this study. Phenomenology is a description of the various experiences of a specific concept by those who

have knowledge of the concept (Creswell, 1998) and involves gaining an understanding through experiences of participants who have experienced the theme under study (Rudestam & Newton, 2001). Leedy and Ormrod (2001) explain that “a phenomenological study is a study that attempts to understand people’s perceptions, perspectives, and understandings of a particular situation” (p. 51).

Data Generation

Participants. A purposeful, nominated sample of 12 Christian school leaders was selected. Nominees were recommended by consultants from the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI). The criteria for inclusion were: Christian school leaders with five years or more administrative experience who were able to identify those significant experiences that have assisted in spiritual leadership.

Instrument. The interview protocol was developed to encourage and gather information about specific spiritual experiences and programs that have assisted Christian school leaders to be the spiritual leaders of schools. The researchers developed the open-ended protocol based on the review of the literature (See Appendix).

Data Collection, Processing, and Analysis

In-depth, open-ended interviews were conducted as this is the most frequently used method in phenomenological research. This type of interview reflects more of a conversation than an interview, with the participants controlling much of the discussion. Interviews were audio taped and then transcribed verbatim.

Data analysis for this study was based on Rudestam and Newton’s (2001) method of researcher description, as well as Creswell’s (1998) strategies of developing ideas, getting feedback on codes, and comparing, and contrasting of each participant’s interview. The information gathered in data collection, the experiences, the feelings, the images and memories provided a window into the explored phenomena. N6 software was used to code the data.

Trustworthiness

Many traditional researchers accept trustworthiness in place of internal and external validity (Rudestam & Newton, 2001). Guba's (1981) model of trustworthiness as discussed by Krefting (1999) defines truth value as credibility. The goal of truth value is to accurately describe the rich essence of the experience as given by the participants. Credibility is confirmed when the experiences are understood so that anyone who ever had a similar experience would identify with it (Sandelowski, 1986). The credibility strategies included member checking and the interview process.

Krefting (1999) referred to Guba's (1981) model when discussing applicability in qualitative research, often called transferability. This takes place when the results of the study fit into various situations outside the study. Thus, transferability in a qualitative approach is determined by the readers of the study. Findings of this study may be transferable to certain other settings.

Guba's (1981) model of consistency, known as trackable validity or dependability, takes place when the results would be the similar if the study were replicated. Krefting (1999) reiterated "the key to qualitative work is to learn from the informants rather than control them...Qualitative research emphasizes the uniqueness of the human situation so that variation in experience rather than identical repetition is sought" (p. 175). Dependability strategies included low inference descriptors, participant feedback, reflexivity, and pattern matching.

Findings

Spiritual Leadership as Defined and Recounted by Participants

Participants defined spiritual leadership as an ongoing process of a personal relationship with God. The spiritual leader is responsible to have a personal relationship with God, exemplifying that personal relationship, and following God's will. All of the participants noted

that a time of meditation, reading the Bible, and prayer were all necessary tools toward ongoing spiritual development.

Participants also discussed what it means to be the spiritual leader at a Christian school. They discussed how a leader leads by influencing others in God's direction. The leader strives to help others grow closer in their relationships to God by equipping, encouraging, and inspiring others to see who God is. Participants indicated that demonstrating spiritual leadership takes place through establishing a personality of the school and the spiritual mission and vision of the school in a focused manner. Therefore, spiritual leadership, for a Christian school leader, is modeling spirituality through one's actions. The characteristics of spiritual leadership least mentioned were continuing the pursuit of academic and spiritual excellence in the school.

Three participants noted the concept that they are not the intellectual leaders but the spiritual leaders of their schools. "Craig" voiced his idea on spiritual leadership:

God uses each person and is not particularly a respecter of title to determine who is going to be effective, and so sometimes the person that doesn't have a formal title, but by his or her example, exhibits God's power at work. Leadership then depends on my willingness to acknowledge that without God I can't do anything special, and I feel like that willingness to acknowledge a dependence on God is not a false humility but genuine humility. It is genuinely acknowledging that what success we have is by God's grace and not by our own brilliance. So spiritual leadership is being able to say I know God can change your life because He is changing mine, and that doesn't depend on me being ahead of you in the race. It depends on my exhibiting growth in front of you.

Participants discussed whether they believe their staff perceives them as the spiritual leaders of their schools. Eight participants indicated their staff sees them this way. Four

participants mentioned that their staff believes they are servant leaders rather than spiritual leaders, and two participants were not sure. One participant elaborated that the pastor of the church is the spiritual leader rather than the Christian school leader.

Spiritual Leadership Characteristics

Characteristics of spiritual leadership most frequently described by the participants were having a personal, ongoing relationship with God, developing relationships with constituents, being humble, being accessible, being a mentor, being an encourager, and being a supporter of all members of the school community. Participants discussed those characteristics needed for the Christian school leader to spiritually lead the school. The characteristic of one's consistent personal relationship with God was critical for spiritual leadership. As "Mercy" reiterated, "Be God's person before you do God's work." A Christian school leader who is a spiritual leader is one who sees the importance of relationships with others, who exhibits personal growth, who provides for needs and opportunities, and who makes personal and spiritual growth conducive in the school community.

Spiritual Leadership Stories

All participants gave examples of how they reflect spiritual leadership in their schools. Five shared spiritual leadership stories that related to parents of students at the school. Four mentioned spiritual leadership stories that took place through their faculty and staff, and three shared stories about students and spiritual leadership.

Eight participants thought about their roles as spiritual leaders at their Christian schools on a daily basis. However, two were unsure if they think about their spiritual leadership on a daily basis, mentioning that they do not think about spiritual leadership on a daily basis because it is just a part of who they are.

All participants focused on four areas that had provided meaning toward their spiritual leadership. These four areas were a personal time with God, the Bible, prayer, and people. Participants saw that the meaning of spiritual leadership take place through the examples of prayer, application of the Bible, and an emphasis on relationships with people. Participants shared that in their efforts to develop spiritually, time alone with God is necessary, and they shared that in one's efforts to develop spiritually, time alone with God is to be included in one's daily activities.

All participants mentioned the importance of Jesus in their lives. There is a sincere desire by all participants to be a model and exemplify Jesus as a true spiritual and servant leader through their spiritual leadership. Several reported that their role model and example for doing their best as a leader is Jesus Christ.

Spiritual Development Experiences

All participants shared various experiences that impacted and assisted them toward spiritual development. Some of the experiences were both positive and negative, but all participants agreed that these experiences affected their spiritual development and impacted their spiritual leadership roles as Christian school leaders. Participants discussed spiritual leadership in the context of beliefs, family influence, college experiences, spiritual meanings, and programs. Spiritual leadership on a daily basis and stories of how they demonstrated their spiritual leadership as Christian school leaders were also discussed.

Family influences. Ten participants expressed that their families, especially their parents, had an impact on their spiritual development. Eight specifically mentioned their parents' Christian faith and influence on their spirituality as a result of their parents' spiritual walk and

involvement in church. Five noted that their parents had significant spiritual impacts but did not include any specific references to the Christian faith as a part of the overall influence.

In contrast, some of the participants mentioned that their parents played no role whatsoever towards their spiritual development. Some participants shared that their parents had influenced them toward their spiritual development but not through any specific spiritual training, meanings, and programs, but through instruction of values.

Four participants discussed experiences that were specifically related to mothers. Cindy expressed admiration and respect for her mother, who modeled for her a dependence on God, as a result of the death of her father who was killed in Vietnam. Three specifically pointed out the role that their fathers played in their spiritual development, explaining their father's role as one of influence, by displaying servant and spiritual leadership, and by involvement in church.

Several participants mentioned grandparents had a spiritual influence and discussed their influence regarding evangelism and compassion for people. Only one mentioned a spouse in reference to spiritual development. None mentioned their siblings or children as having impacted their spiritual development. Additionally, one participant reported that her husband's parents were role models towards her spiritual development.

Furthermore, seven participants reported that people other than family members held a special meaning and assisted their spiritual development. Teachers, dorm parents, college roommates, acquaintances, friends, former bosses, and deacons were specifically mentioned.

College experiences. A number of participants mentioned college programs that have prepared them towards spiritual leadership. Six shared that college professors not college programs, impacted their spiritual development. Two participants shared that their college programs did not impact their spiritual development.

Church experiences. Eight participants pointed out that not only the church, but their pastors and an involvement in ministry, had impacted their spiritual development. Programs such as attending Sunday School, youth group activities, and Bible studies had special meaning for six participants. Several also mentioned that teaching Bible studies, as well as attending Bible studies, influenced their spiritual development.

Other programs. Additional programs mentioned included the Girl Scouts, and International Crusade for Christ. Various courses, such as Bible courses and philosophy of Christian education courses provided by the Association of Christian Schools International [ACSI], were mentioned. Furthermore, ACSI conventions and professional development seminars also influenced some participants' spiritual development.

Prayer. All participants mentioned the importance of prayer in their lives in developing their spiritual leadership whereas only six participants shared that church played an important role towards spiritual development. Regarding prayer, Sarah described prayer as "my opportunity to let God hear me say I am not in charge. It is you know a chance to see Him in all the ways that are necessary on behalf of everybody around me." Craig also reported;

There's no substitute for that personal walk with Christ. I can't lead people into a relationship if I'm not in a close relationship with Christ, and I don't think its something you can fake, so I do think a willingness to pray regularly with your faculty and team, to pause in the middle of an administrative team meeting, and just ask God for wisdom. To recognize publicly that we are insufficient to the task, that in ourselves we don't have a good answer or a right answer, that pride or self-interest will interfere, or that our own short-sided view of people will keep us from recognizing the solution that God would

have us see. I think that that conscious yielding, bending the knee sort of figuratively and literally, is really important.

The Bible. All participants agreed that the Bible has brought about meaning in their lives. Sarah added: “God’s word has got to be central, central in every way in a devotional way, in a personal hold-me-accountable kind of way, in an encouragement kind of way; it is something that I can pass on.”

Spiritual Leadership in Action

The participants also discussed what a Christian school would look like with a true spiritual leader. The school would be a caring place of oneness where the needs of others would be more important than those of individuals, and all would agree with what is best for the school. Several participants mentioned that every member of the school community would have a desire to seek and pursue a vibrant walk with God while encouraging others to do the same. The mission would be first and foremost a spiritual one.

Attracting a quality staff and developing a team that would exhibit honesty, humility, and the heart of Christ as a community would be evident in the Christian school. The leadership model of Jesus was used to describe the importance of developing a team that carries on the mission even when the leader is no longer around.

Several participants believed that as important as it is to care for the needs of others, taking care of themselves is also important and assists towards spirituality. In addition, people should take care of not only the spiritual and emotional parts of their lives but the physical part as well through diet, exercise, and rest. The participants agreed that any attempt to deal with spiritual development apart from the physical, mental, and emotional will not be completely

successful, nor will any attempt to deal with human emotions apart from one's relationship to God.

Spiritual Leadership Now and in the Future

Nine participants believed that their life experiences have impacted their spiritual and servant leadership. In regards to experience and what is in store for these Christian school leaders in the future, five shared that they see themselves in the future serving God in some educational capacity such as college, church, or continuing in a Christian school. Six participants discussed the importance of continual improvement in their personal lives presently; they mentioned growth, obedience, a dependence on God, and developing relationships with a confidante and mentor. Craig pointed out, "God keeps demonstrating that He doesn't see the world through my eyes, but he wants me to see the world through his eyes." Finally, two participants mentioned that in the future they have a desire to assist others as educators or leaders. Mercy discussed that the future for her as a Christian school leader is, "to build up the leaders around me and in the future, that is where I see myself headed. to equip others for servant leadership and mission."

Words of Wisdom from Christian School Leaders

All participants shared various recommendations and words of wisdom for future and present Christian school leaders, relative to spiritual leadership. One recommendation was leaders need to listen -- listen more and talk less. Another recommendation was that one needs to continue to have a close walk with God. Developing a team that will aid in consensus building was another recommendation. One of the participants recommended Biblical training for all Christian school leaders. Mercy elaborated that "you bring your people around, bring the right

people in.” Brian discussed the previous recommendations, but also shared numerous other concepts to assist Christian school leaders:

Don’t burn yourself out, and part of that is you have got to bring a team with you, you’ve got to develop a team that you can rely on. It can’t be a one man show, and that is not what God demonstrated for us. It’s not what Jesus demonstrated for us. You need to find the right people and surround yourself with them and then rely on them once they are in place. You need to be involved in a church. You need to carve time out for yourself. You have to get some time of rest and spiritually renew yourself. Carve time out with your personal devotions and have a mentor, someone outside of the school, you can share your burdens with. Stay in touch with all of your friends and network ideas with fellow Christian school leaders.

Lastly, Sandy pointed out:

Don’t react, you respond. You don’t question, you clarify. Do not make emotional decisions no matter what. In everything you do, seek the Lord and meet each person where they are at and get the whole story stepping back. Decisions don’t have to be immediate. Ask God to direct you every step of the way, and as you are obedient, He does.

Discussion

This study focused on 12 Christian school leaders and their personal experiences of spiritual leadership. Although the best study would have included all Christian schools and Christian school leaders, the nature of the study, the school setting, and the number of participants limited the study. Leaders were not chosen from any specific organization, religious preference, location, or specific school size but from various Christian school settings.

Participants sometimes made no distinction between spirituality and spiritual leadership and stated that it was difficult to report one specific explanation. Several participants defined spiritual leadership as an active process of developing a close relationship with God and following His direction while encouraging and inspiring people to do the same. The review of the literature revealed that this definition is aligned with the beliefs of Blackaby and Blackaby (2001) and Covey (1991) in that spiritual leadership takes people toward God's plan, moving them where they are to where God wants them to be. Covey (1991) further elaborated that

The wisdom literature of thousands of years of history repeatedly validate the reality that the greatest fulfillment in improving ourselves comes in our empowerment to move effectively to reach out and help others. Quality of life is inside-out. Meaning is in contribution in living for something higher than self. (p. 58)

This is similar to one participant's statement that "the Christian school leader looks for every opportunity to make things of God vibrant and vital." It is through experiences, meanings, programs, and one's personal relationship with God that spiritual development and servant leadership are enhanced.

The Christian school leaders all agreed that experiences in their lives impacted their spiritual and servant leadership. Wood (1970) supported this premise that "all knowledge begins with self-experience, and that knowledge of the world, others, and God is built on self-knowledge because all reality is sufficiently self-like to be known" (p. 163). Greenleaf (1991) further supported this belief:

One does not awaken each morning with the compulsion to reinvent the wheel. But if one is *servant*, either leader or follower, one is always searching, listening, expecting that a better wheel for these times is in the making. It may emerge any day. Any one of us may find it out from personal experience. (p. 7)

Experiences that impacted the participants ranged from family to personal experiences. Other experiences took place as a Christian school leader. The participants identified parents as the most influential people who assisted them toward their spiritual development. Many of the participants specifically mentioned either their mother or father as influencing their spirituality. Schultz (1998) also noted that parents played the primary role in education and influence. In contrast, some of the participants mentioned that their parents played no role whatsoever towards their spiritual development. Some participants shared that their parents had influenced them toward their spiritual development but not through any specific spiritual training, meanings, and programs, but through instruction of values.

The lessons learned from the participants' experiences that influenced their spiritual development and servant leadership were a trust and dependence on God rather than people, a willingness to be of service in the church, a genuine concern for others, and responding to God and others when they fail. Though religion reflects extrinsic activity, spirituality also is visible through activities such as prayer and church attendance (Chafer, 1981; Stokley, 2002).

Several participants mentioned that grandparents had a spiritual influence and discussed their influence regarding evangelism and compassion for people. No participants mentioned spouses, siblings, or children as aiding their spiritual development. All of the participants mentioned people other than relatives who held special meaning and influence. These included teachers, dorm parents, college professors, deacons, friends, former bosses, and employees.

Participants discussed spiritual leadership as an individual's responsibility that takes place through a personal relationship with God. This belief is consistent with the thinking of Blanchard and Hodges (2003) who reported that "The journey of servant leadership starts in the heart with motivation and intent must travel through another internal domain, that of the head which is the leader's belief system and perspective on the role of the leader" (p. 43). Participants also believed that those who are

spiritual will strive to develop body, soul, and spirit, and continually work toward furthering their relationships with God, themselves and the world. These beliefs are similar to those of Brown (1996), Foster (2002), Purves (1989), and Secretan (1997).

All participants focused on four areas that had provided meaning toward their spiritual leadership. These four areas were a personal time with God, the Bible, prayer, and people. Participants saw that the meaning of spiritual leadership takes place through the examples of prayer, application of the Bible, and an emphasis on relationships with people. The participants shared that in their efforts to develop spiritually, time alone with God is necessary. The participants shared that in one's efforts to develop spiritually, time alone with God is to be included in one's daily activities. Thus, spiritual development involves communion, a time of reflection, and an acceptance of God's leading and direction that cannot increase without external actions and personal reflection (Muto, 1988; Willard, 1998). These experiences of reflection change who the person is and will eventually lead to a greater understanding of spirituality. As Vaill (1991) stated: "it makes no sense to talk about a leader inspiring an organization if the leader's own spiritual condition and spiritual development are not also considered" (p. 283).

All participants mentioned the importance of Jesus in their lives. There is a sincere desire by all of the Christian school leaders to be a model and exemplify Jesus as a true spiritual and servant leader through their spiritual leadership. Several reported that their role model and example for doing their best as a leader is Jesus Christ. This coincides with the remarks of Blanchard and Hodges (2003) who stated, "Christians have more in Jesus than just a great spiritual leader, we have a practical and effective leadership model for all people for all situations" (p. 10). These characteristics also aligned with the model of Jesus Christ as discussed in Greenleaf's (1991) theory on servant leadership. Greenleaf believed that Jesus Christ best exemplified servant leadership by the life He led. Examples of Jesus

modeling servant leadership included His intention to show true care and concern with individuals such as the woman at the well, Jesus' reflection of humility by washing the disciples' feet, and Jesus' consistent communication of the importance of loving one another. During the time of Jesus' ministry, his spiritual and servant leadership also focused on training His disciples to continue to carry on God's mission after He returned to Heaven. Blanchard and Hodges (2003) pointed out that "Jesus modeled the true servant leader by investing most of his time training and equipping the disciples for leadership when His earthly ministry was over" (p. 21).

All participants aligned themselves with spirituality, but they did not discuss religion and its connection to spirituality. This finding is in agreement with the Marler and Hadaway (2002) study on religion and spirituality where they noted "being religious and being spiritual are most often seen as distinct concepts" (p. 297). Stokley (2002) reaffirmed the concept of spirituality as "distinct from religion and [forming] the context or basis for religious belief to arise" (p.1).

All participants mentioned the importance of prayer in their lives towards their spiritual and servant leadership whereas only six participants shared that church played an important role towards spiritual development. Extrinsic activities such as prayer and church attendance are reflected in both spirituality and religion (Chafer, 1981; Stokley, 2002). One participant specifically mentioned that going to church actually detracted from spirituality. This participant's belief is in contrast with Foster (2002) who stated

Spiritual formation requires discipline and regular participation in the traditional practices of the church—even when they seem to have no meaning. Spiritual formation is a process that demands discipline and that is not easy for many who claim to want to be formed spiritually. (p. 6)

A number of the participants mentioned college programs that have prepared them towards spiritual leadership. Six participants shared that college professors, not college programs, impacted their

spiritual development. This aligns with Batten (1998) who reported “Leadership in every phase of your life can happen only if others like what they see in you, respect you, and want to achieve what you are asking them to be and do” (p. 47). On the other hand, six participants voiced that their college programs had no impact on their spiritual leadership. This concept is similar to the beliefs of Peterson (1971), who found

A seminary is a place of learning, learning about God to be sure, but still learning. Ever since the Enlightenment split between the heart and the head in the seventeenth century, schools have not been easy allies in a life of worship, prayer, and love of God. Talking about God is almost the antithesis of talking to God. (p. 53)

Several participants noted that they thought about their roles as spiritual leader on a daily basis. Two of the Christian school leaders did not think about their spirituality separately, but rather as a part of who they are. Willard’s (1988) view of spirituality is in alignment with these two Christian school leaders in that “spiritual is not just something we ought to be. It is something we are and cannot escape regardless of how we think or feel about it. It is our nature and our destiny” (p. 79). However, this belief is not in agreement with the views of most of the study participants.

The participants discussed what a Christian school would look like with a true spiritual leader. The school would be a caring place of oneness where the needs of others would be more important than those of individuals, and all would agree with what is best for the school. Several participants mentioned that every member of the school community would have a desire to seek and pursue a vibrant walk with God while encouraging others to do the same. The mission would be first and foremost a spiritual one. This would be in agreement with the concept that a spiritual person would show a reflection of Christ, how one treats people, how people see themselves in relation to Christ, and how people desire holiness (Purves, 1989).

Attracting a quality staff and developing a team that would exhibit honesty, humility, and the heart of Christ as a community would be evident in the Christian school. The leadership model of Jesus was used to describe the importance of developing a team that carries on the mission even when the leader is no longer around. This manifestation discussed by the participants was consistent with the beliefs of Covey (1991). During the time of Jesus' ministry, His spiritual leadership focused on training His twelve disciples to continue to carry on God's mission after Jesus returned to Heaven.

Several of the participants believed that as important as it is to care for the needs of others, taking care of themselves is also important and assists towards spirituality. In addition, people should take care of not only the spiritual and emotional part of one's life but the physical part as well through diet, exercise, and rest. Erickson and Hustad (1992) also acknowledged the importance of taking care of the whole body. Participants agreed with the work of Erickson and Hustad (1992) who indicate that any attempt to deal with spiritual development apart from the physical, mental, and emotional will not be completely successful, nor will any attempt to deal with human emotions apart from one's relationship to God.

The phenomenological tradition of qualitative research strives to capture the essence of the experience under study. This study indicates that the experiences discussed by participants are similar in some ways and different in other ways, but each experience has a special meaning that impacted the spiritual development of the participants.

This study suggests that all of the participants' experiences have affected their roles as spiritual leaders of their respective schools. Learning from various experiences assisted these Christian school leaders in learning how to be better spiritual leaders. Participants did reiterate that reflecting on the experiences discussed in the study resulted in an assessment of their present spirituality leadership. Therefore, findings from the current study indicate that there is an

important need for continual, ongoing discussions regarding personal experiences as they relate to spiritual development and leadership for leaders from all walks of life.

The objective of Christian education is to instruct the constituents of the school community to gain a thorough understanding of the doctrines of the Christian faith, reflect on each person's individual experiences that have taken place regarding spiritual development, and apply this knowledge throughout one's life. Estep (2002) discussed Vygotsky's developmental theory and reiterated that an individual's spiritual development takes place in stages. Therefore, Christian school leaders need to realize and be aware that varied levels of spiritual diversity as well as spiritual maturity exist and develop in various stages at a Christian school.

Findings of the current study indicate that Christian school leaders need to assess the true spiritual atmosphere of their schools. Christian school leaders cannot assume that spirituality is a reality just because the term Christian is in the school's title or because the leader desires spirituality for the school. The Christian school leader ought to remember that it is not the title that makes a Christian school Christian but the spirituality of the people that function daily on the campus. It is important to note that this is an arduous task for Christian school leaders as they determine what assessment should be used to determine the spiritual climate of their schools.

Christian school leaders must fully understand the dual responsibility and desire of spiritual development and academic excellence in a Christian school. This awareness ought to be clearly defined in the school's mission as well as communicated to the Christian school community. Christian school leaders need to personally grasp, define, implement, and assess how the school can accomplish both objectives. Within this framework, the Christian school leader needs to know the philosophical framework of Christian education and its role as it relates to the church. The Christian school leader must be able to answer the following questions: Is the

school an extension of the church, is the school a para-church organization that seeks to educate students through a spiritual lens, or is the school a Christian organization that focuses solely on educating the whole child?

Spiritual opportunities outside and inside the academic arena ought to be encouraged and promoted by Christian school leaders. Activities outside the academic arena might include church retreats, Christian organizations' spiritual development programs, campus ministries, team building, communication, and servant leadership seminars. Within the school community, Christian school leaders must meet with faculty and staff on a regular basis emphasizing the mission, vision, and "Christianness" of the organization. The Christian school leader needs to make every effort to recruit and retain spiritually mature faculty and staff so the mission and vision of the organization are affected. Christian school leaders cannot assume that only administrators and faculty can lead the school community towards spirituality. This concept must include the realization by Christian school leaders that any member of the school community can be a spiritual leader.

This study suggests that clearly-defined descriptions regarding the role of a Christian school leader's spiritual influence are essential to the spiritual effectiveness of a Christian school. A true, meaningful understanding of spiritual leadership may be the foundation of effective Christian school leadership and may be vital for the success of Christian schools. This study indicates that further dialogue must take place to develop a greater understanding among constituents including church administrators, college department chairs, board members, parents, and school administrators. This study further indicates a critical need for discussions surrounding the impact that spiritual leadership plays as related to Christian school leaders.

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Appendix

Interview

1. How did you come to be a Christian school leader?
2. What experiences in your life such as family, friends, school/college, teaching, and church, assisted you towards spiritual development and servant leadership?
3. What experiences, meanings and spiritual programs have assisted you towards spiritual development and servant leadership as a Christian school leader
4. How have these experiences placed spiritual leadership in the context of your life?
5. What does it mean to be the spiritual leader at a Christian school?
6. What does it mean to be a servant leader at a Christian school?
7. How do spiritual leadership and servant leadership manifest themselves at a Christian school?
8. What stories can you share that reflect you are the spiritual leader of your school?
9. What stories can you share that reflect how you demonstrate servant leadership?
10. Describe a day in your life as the spiritual leader and servant leader in your school.
11. Given the experiences that took place before you became a Christian school leader, and given what you have said about your work now, how do you perceive spiritual leadership and servant leadership in your life?
12. Given what you have reconstructed in this interview, where do you see yourself in regards to spiritual leadership and servant leadership in the future?