

**Classical Christian Education & Continued Faith Adherence:  
A Study of Alumni Experiences**

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## About the Study

The study was conducted as part of the dissertation through Drexel University, a secular university in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The research sought to explore the faith adherence experiences of high school alumni and their perceptions about aspects of attending a secondary, classical Christian school that helped equip them to remain committed to their faith after graduation. The study was mixed methods in design, using two stages:

- Stage 1: A survey of alumni to identify those who remained committed to their faith after graduation and willing to participate in a follow-up interview
- Stage 2: Interviews of participants identified in stage 1

### Stage 1 – The Survey

- The survey was a combination of two validated surveys to assess faith adherence through beliefs as well as practices/actions
- 7 different schools (in North Carolina, Virginia, Texas, and California) shared an initial survey with their alumni; interview participants were from 3 schools
- The survey allowed for scaled scores so that the top 50% were considered for interviews
- 19 alumni indicated willingness to participate in an interview and were in the top 50% of all respondents; 10 of these alumni were interviewed

### Stage 2 – Interviews

- 7 participants were interviewed one-on-one (with 5 in-person and 2 virtual); 3 alumni participated in a focus group together (details about participants below)
- Interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher
- Coding of participant responses happened in stages resulting in 5 findings with various subthemes

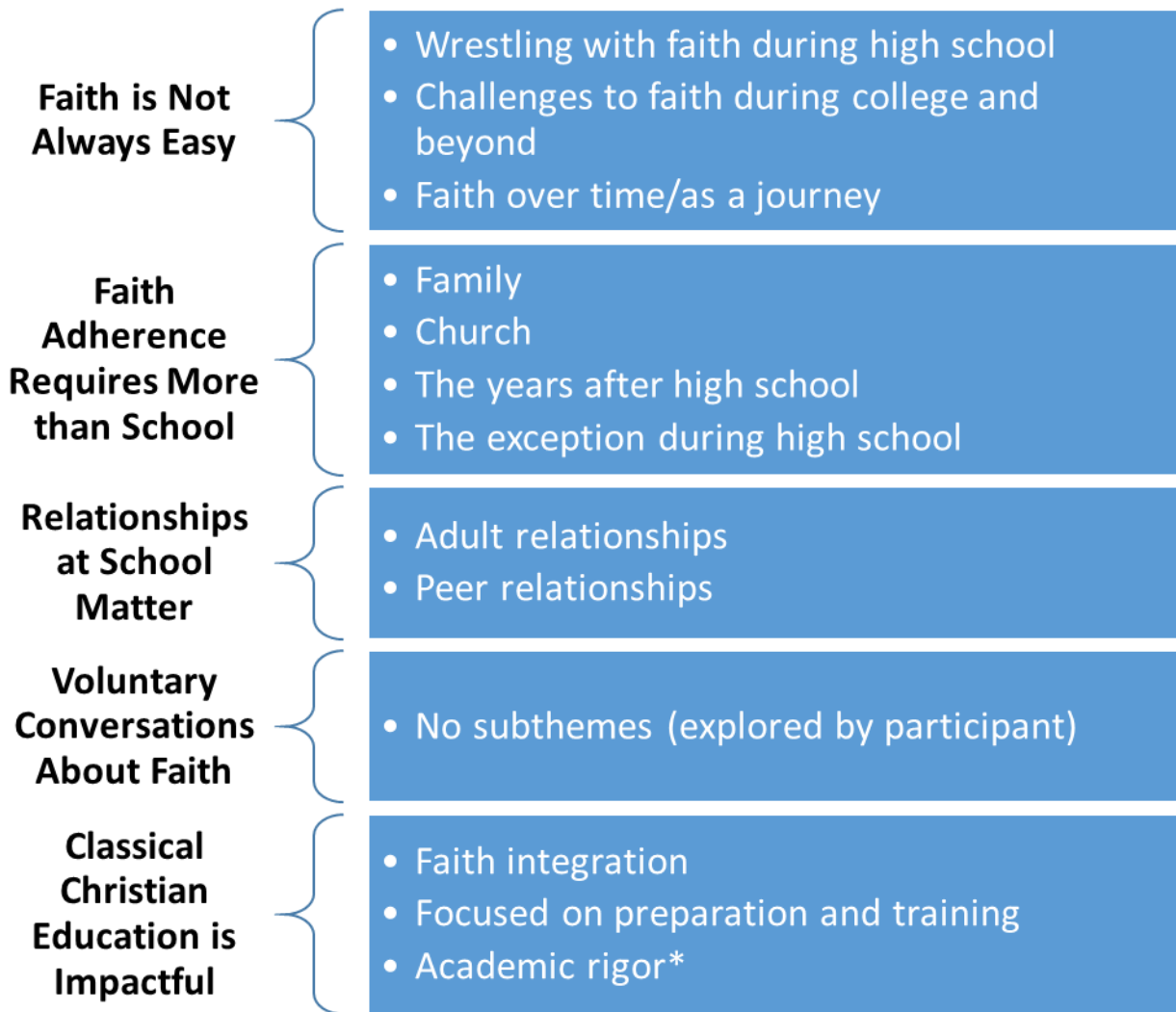
<b>Pseudonym (M/F)</b>	<b>Year graduated</b>	<b>State of school</b>	<b>Grades attended</b>	<b>Years at the school</b>	<b>Survey Score</b>
Abigail (F)	2011	VA	9 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup>	4	90
Bekah (F)	2001	VA	10 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup>	3	82
Caleb (M)	2004	VA	8 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup>	5	89
Daniel (M)	2002	NC	6 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup>	7	84
Elias* (M)	2008	NC	K-2 <sup>nd</sup> ; 6 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup>	10	92
Elizabeth* (F)	2013	NC	2 <sup>nd</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup>	11	92
Esther* (F)	2005	NC	9 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup>	4	92
Hannah (F)	2007	NC	6 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup>	7	93
Isabel (F)	2014	TX	K-7 <sup>th</sup> ; 9 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup>	12	80
Judith (F)	2005	NC	9 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup>	4	86

*\*identifies participants who participated in a focus group together*

# Key Findings

## Overview of Key Findings

Five major themes emerged from the study with various subthemes. These are highlighted below and then examined more in-depth in the proceeding pages.



\*Academic rigor is broken into additional components of classical philosophy, specific classes, & emphasis on thinking

## Theme 1: Faith is Not Always Easy.

This theme consisted of three subthemes: wrestling with faith during high school, challenges to faith after graduation, and faith seen as a progression/journey over time.

**Wrestling with faith during high school:** There were two ways participants wrestled with faith during high school: deciding whether or not to make the Christian faith their own and then how to apply that faith to specific situations.

**Challenges to faith during college and beyond:** Participants shared times that they encountered, and withstood, challenges to their faith (belief and/or practice) once they left high school.

**Faith over time:** A consistent element of their faith was that it was not static but that it grew and changed over time. Faith transitioned and was a journey, often going from something that was studied/learned to something that was applied. As one participant described it, their faith may have stayed the same, but it was more tested and therefore in many ways a new and growing faith.

**Summary:** While representing three different schools and states, with over a decade of age differences, each participant had their faith go through some sort of testing or trial period, either internally or externally. Additionally, each participant described their faith in high school differently than faith in college or later, showing that faith is a process or journey with changes along the way.

“I think that it’s very difficult, especially in our modern era, if you’re just a teenager you’re going to get influences from all aspects, whether that’s school, social media, friends, family, and if you don’t have a firm belief system when you go off to college, then you’re definitely not going to have a firm one when you’re there.”

## Theme 2: It Requires More than School

This theme was comprised of four subthemes: family, church, the years after high school, and the high school exception.

**Family & Church:** The high school experience was just one of many factors helping contribute to faith. Many participants in the study shared about their family as well as church, and how each

“I really made that priority to stay committed to that [faith] in college and was involved in both the local church and then also led a student ministry on campus. It was a way of serving and then also being matured to a point of leadership in college as well.”

played a role in helping develop a lasting faith for them. These two factors were seen as complements to their high school experience, helping provide network closure for many.

**The years after high school:** Interview participants shared engagement in faith communities after high school, as they sought out either churches or parachurch organizations to join during their post-high school years. This was even when it was not easy for participants and,

if a participant went without this continued faith engagement, they tended to describe it in hindsight as a mistake.

**The high school exception:** While external factors were important complements to school for faith formation of many participants during high school, several noted that the school played an outsized role. As noted by one participant: “I was involved in church but honestly, the high school I went to was pretty demanding. I played three sports, so I had sports all year long, took a lot of tough classes, was prefect and did all sorts of volunteer work and things like that so I didn’t get as plugged in honestly with the church as far as youth groups and things like that.”

“Honestly, I feel like from 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade everything I did seemed to be related to school, so it is hard for me to [identify other things that played a role in my faith]. We went to church...but by the time you factor in the social life with friends from school and sports at school and theatre and whatever, I feel like most of what I did was not necessarily academically school related but definitely school related even extracurricular.”

**Summary:** Participants varied in what they felt was impactful for their faith, with family and church being key elements as high school students. This importance was reaffirmed as when they went to college, most of them sought out similar supports even when outside the immediate influence of their parents and their high school. Even those who expressed that their high school was so dominant that it reduced the external supports during high school continued to seek out external supports in college.

### Theme 3: Relationships at School Matter

This theme entailed two subthemes: adult relationships and peer relationships.

**Adult relationships:** Relationships were formed in the classroom as well as outside of the

“So having that relationship with somebody that could be a spiritual mentor, an academic mentor, and have that be an open and safe place to have a hard conversation...I could go to my teacher and that was a place where I knew I would get Biblical counsel.”

classroom through roles such as coach or Bible study leader, especially when the same person fulfilled multiple roles. Participants found the adult relationships influential to their faith formation because of the content taught, the examples set, and the true care and concern demonstrated by teachers. There were two participants who did not have positive adult relationships with teachers and administration; one participant did not view that as the school’s responsibility while the other allowed the lack of

relationships to cast a negative shadow over their entire secondary classical Christian experience.

**Peer relationships:** Friendships were important from a social standpoint as well as academic, as friends were able to serve as “iron sharpening iron” and help push each other while in a safe environment.

**Summary:** Relationships were instrumental in the faith development of participants, especially faculty but also coaches and peers. The way that the adults lived their faith, and engaged relationally with students, impacted students. Likewise, the interaction between students served as a further actor upon faith formation.

## Theme 4: Voluntary Conversations About Faith

There were no subthemes for this theme.

“High school prepared me to have a conversation, how to deal with somebody confronting me about something.”

Not asked directly during interviews, this theme still emerged during the conversation with all participants. The commonality was that the concept of being comfortable with faith conversations, outside of the classroom and religious settings, was mentioned to some degree by all participants. In addition to specific conversations about Christian beliefs with non-believers, stories shared included using Pascal’s wager with an international student, conversations about faith and pre-marital sex, using classics as a starting point for faith conversations, and Romans 13 to explain why they chose to not drink alcohol while underage.

**Summary:** Participant’s shared diverse experiences engaging in conversations about faith, as the time, topic, and relationships all varied; however, the common element was a comfort of engaging in faith conversations. Whether it was in the classroom, with friends, with family, part of work, or just with people they were interacting within a social setting, each participant was prepared to engage in a faith conversation in whatever form that took in their life.

## Theme 5: Classical Christian Education is Impactful

Given the nature of the study, this is the most in-depth theme; it contains three subthemes of faith integration, a focus on preparation and training, and academic rigor. The subtheme of academic rigor was divided further into classical philosophy, specific classes, and an emphasis on thinking.

**Faith integration:** Participants described schools where faith was integrated not only into academic classes but even into athletics, with “in all things Christ preeminent” being described by one participant as a grounding principle for their high school.

**Focus on preparation and training:** The concept of “we don’t teach you what to think but how to think” was echoed by participants from multiple schools. This approach made participants feel ready and prepared to “take the preparation and the training” and to “go out into the ‘quote real world’ and put that into application.” Preparation and training included specific classes taught along with the manner in which they were taught.

**Academic rigor:** This subtheme was further subdivided into classical philosophy, specific classes, and an emphasis on thinking.

**Classical philosophy:** Participants noted the unique philosophy of a classical school, both in what is studied as well as teaching methodologies. The emphasis on classics was a repeated topic.

“Every class was taught from a Biblical worldview but not from a point of just rote memorization or to produce sort of a cookie-cutter Christian kid, but was to pursue excellence in all things, because that’s honoring to God.”

Specific classes: A multitude of specific courses were brought up by participants ranging from religious courses, to typical secular courses with faith integration such as history and literature, but also other courses less typically associated with faith integration such as math and languages. One participant still stated that she carries notes in her Bible from a course she had 18 years prior in high school.

Emphasis on thinking: While content was important, participants highlighted the manner in which courses were taught and how they emphasized thinking. One participant, sharing a sentiment similar to others, stated “We were taught to be developed as a reader, as a thinker, as a writer, as a believer.”

**Summary:** The words of a participant summarize this theme well. Describing her experience, she recalled it as “an intense period of equipping with aspects of the Christian faith so we’re prepared to go out into college and the rest of the world.”

### Theme Interconnectedness

While each theme is distinct, they overlap with each other in ways that make them important to understand within context of each other.

Theme	Subthemes	Interconnected
(1) Faith is not always easy	(1-A) Wrestling with faith during high school (1-B) Challenges to faith in college and beyond (1-C) Faith over time	2 – C 3 – A & B 5 – B & C
(2) It requires more than school	(2-A) Family (2-B) Church (2-C) The years after high school (2-D) The exception during high school	1 – A & C 3 – A & B 5 – B
(3) Relationships at school matter	(3-A) Adult relationships (3-B) Peer relationships	1 – A, B & C 5 – B
(4) Voluntary conversations with unbelievers	None	3 – A & B 5 – B & C
(5) Classical Christian education is impactful	(5-A) Faith integration (5-B) Focused on preparation and training (5-C) Academic rigor	1 – C 2 – D 3 – A & B 4

For example, the concept of faith not always being easy was connected with:

- the years after high school (Theme 2-C),
- the relationships developed at school, adult and peer (Theme 3-A & B),
- and with the focus on preparation and training (Theme 5-B) and academic rigor (Theme 5-C) of their school experience.



## **Results & Recommendations**

### **Result One:**

**Classical Christian education prepares and equips many alumni to remain committed to their faith after graduation.**

While the quantitative (survey) portion of the study was primarily for selection purposes, it does provide some basic information that is suggestive. Of the 50 alumni that completed the survey, scale score ranges from a low of -90 to a high of 93, a range of 183 points. While the study was not normed (compared to a pre-established group of scores) and is not large enough to draw definitive conclusions, the fact that 50% of all respondents scored between an 80-93 is suggestive of the impact of classical Christian education. Not only was there an extremely tight clustering of scores, the cluster was at the top end of the possibilities. This suggests that classical Christian education is effective for a large portion of students, although further study would be needed to confirm. This aligns to the Good Soil study published by ACCS/Goodwin in 2020 which is explored later in the section on relevant literature and connections to the study.

### **Result Two:**

**A multitude of interconnected factors contribute to faith formation and continued adherence, and many, but not all, of these factors are found in classical Christian schools.**

Reviewing related research around faith in adolescents and early adulthood, various factors emerged that were patterns for those who were highly religious as adults, something that only 21% of the American population was found to be in studies by Christian Smith. Students at classical Christian high schools engage in many of the factors found to be connected to faith. These are explored more fully in the section on relevant literature and connections to the study.

### **Result Three:**

**Knowledge of faith is important but is itself not enough.**

While participants shared the importance of knowing about their faith, and at a deep level through courses such as apologetics, the knowledge itself was not what provided for their lasting faith. The relationships formed that touched the personal/emotional aspects of their lives as students was essential for helping translate the faith knowledge into faith adherence and continued practice. These relationships sharpened their faith as students, and provided support for challenges they faced in high school and beyond.

## **Recommendations**

Classical Christian schools should continue to prioritize opportunities for students to grapple with their faith; this is encouraged for all faith-based areas working with adolescents.

- This should include students deciding whether to accept the Christian faith as their own belief in addition to opportunities to think through current topics applied to their faith, being pushed to really consider the implications of their beliefs. These opportunities of wrestling, or challenges, should be conducted in a manner that feels safe for students. If any of this experience leads to serious questions and doubting of their faith and potential faith adherence, the closed social network and the overall supportive environment of the school

setting can help guide a student through this time, particularly if the feeling of care has been demonstrated by teachers/staff.

Maintaining faith integration throughout all content areas must be authentic and seen as essential for classical Christian schools and is encouraged for all faith-based education.

- Faith should be connected to all areas and not reserved to specific religious studies courses or religious experiences. This will also help equip believers to integrate their faith into their lives, as the participants of this study demonstrated, including their college experience and career even if they pursue secular colleges or jobs.

Creating opportunities for healthy and meaningful adult to student relationships is important for adolescents and should be a focus/goal for classical Christian education as well as any faith-based institution.

- This can be through coaching, teacher-led Bible studies, or other activities but should be something encouraged by institutional leadership. Within classical Christian education the structure of the classroom, both in content and pedagogical delivery, can help form relationships between students and teachers.

Content knowledge must remain a priority for classical Christian schools but must not be so consuming that it is seen as prioritized above adolescents feeling known and cared for by the adults; this is also encouraged for any faith-based educational institution.

- Academic rigor is important, and content knowledge of faith is included in that rigor; however, it must not be the ultimate goal at the expense of students feeling known, cared for, and loved.

Those concerned about faith for adolescents and young adults should consider ways to support classical Christian education.

- This support could be sending their own students to this type of school or supporting the school through giving of time, talent, or treasure. When considering the body of research, there is no one magical solution to reverse the trend of faith disengagement during early adulthood; however, classical Christian education pulls together many of the components that have been identified as impactful, allowing for a focused opportunity to reverse the current prevailing faith trends. Classical Christian education is not the only way but it appears to be a successful option.

## Relevant Literature and Connections to the Study

### ACCS/Goodwin (2020) Study: Good Soil

Using previous survey data from the Cardus Education Survey on a variety of school types and outcomes on alumni, ACCS sponsored with the University of Notre Dame for a parallel survey exploring the outcomes of alumni from ACCS schools. Their findings are highlighted below in connection to this current study.

The ACCS Good Soil report provided significant quantitative data, but did not explore the why/how of those results. The current research study provides potential context to pair with the Good Soil report data. The report identified 7 life outcome profiles, outlined below:

- College and career ready (prepared for post high school, have goals)
- Life outlook (see God at work in world; have goals)
- Christian commitment (read Bible; volunteer at church)
- Christian lifestyle (attend church; put Biblical principles into action)
- Traditional and conservative (adhere to Christian sexual ethics; believe inerrancy of Bible)
- Independence of mind (able to accept challenges to beliefs appropriately while in community)
- Influence (believe they can impact the community; engaged in community)

While the current study explored features that helped contribute to continued faith adherence, those features may help explain the findings in the Good Soil study. Pairing the two studies together you have the demonstrated (quantitative) outcomes from the Good Soil study and you have a starting point for explaining how those outcomes came to be from this current study.

### Christian Smith's National Study of Youth and Religion: Nine Factors (Smith & Denton, 2005)

As part of a longitudinal study on youth and religion throughout the United States, Christian Smith has paired with various partners throughout the study to publish and release findings from the National Study of Youth and Religion. Two items merit close examination in light of these current findings: the nine factors and the six pathways.

Smith, with co-author Denton, published in 2005 nine factors that appear to help religion exert the influence necessary to result in positive sociological influences in teenagers. These nine factors have significant overlap with the findings of this research study:

Smith & Denton's Nine Factors	Connected themes from current research study
Moral directives <i>(historical traditions and narratives)</i>	Faith is not always easy; Relationships matter; Voluntary conversations about faith; CCE is impactful
Spiritual experiences <i>(context and substance for moral commitments)</i>	Faith is not always easy; Requires more than school; CCE is impactful
Role models <i>(adult and peer)</i>	Faith is not always easy; Requires more than school; Relationships matter; CCE is impactful
Community and leadership skills <i>(observe, learn, and practice skills)</i>	Requires more than school; Relationships matter; CCE is impactful
Coping skills <i>(for stress and emotions; conflict)</i>	Faith is not always easy; Relationships matter; Voluntary conversations about faith; CCE is impactful
Cultural capital <i>(education/skills that transfer outside religion)</i>	Faith is not always easy; Voluntary conversations about faith; CCE is impactful
Social capital <i>(cross-generational ties)</i>	Faith is not always easy; Relationships matter; Voluntary conversations about faith; CCE is impactful
Network closure <i>(deep ties that influence choices)</i>	Faith is not always easy; Requires more than school; Relationships matter; CCE is impactful
Extracommunity links <i>(beyond local community)</i>	Requires more than school

### Christian Smith’s National Study of Youth and Religion: Six Pathways (Smith & Snell, 2009)

Additionally, Smith with coauthor Snell, introduced in 2009 what they called six pathways to highly religious adulthood. Identifying 21% of adults as highly religious, Smith and Snell reviewed elements that these adults had in common and, while there were numerous pathways, six pathways emerged where 68% of adults who were on one of those pathways ultimately ended up as a highly religious adult.

A pathway is defined as a combination of four of the identified elements. For simplicity, these elements have been assigned letters, and the pathways (combinations of four of the elements) are on the table below:

- Element A: High parental religious service attendance and importance of faith
- Element B: High teen importance of religious faith
- Element C: Teen has many personal religious experiences
- Element D: Teen frequently prays and reads scripture
- Element E: Teen has no doubts about religious beliefs
- Element F: Teen has many adults in religious congregation to turn to for help and support
- Element G: Low parental religious service attendance and importance of faith

Pathway	Factors (see bulleted list above)	Percentage becoming highly religious
1	A + B + C + D	68%
2	A + B + E + D	70%
3	A + B + E + C	68%
4	A + F + E + C	67%
5	G + F + E + D	64%
6	B + C + E + D	77%

These elements (A-G) overlap with experiences of participants, especially when what Smith and Snell call substitutions are considered. A substitution would be replacing one of the elements with a similar, but slightly different, element. An example would be Element A – if the parent did not have high religious service and importance of faith but very involved grandparents did, then Element A could be achieved by substituting parents with the grandparents.

Elements B-F all are tightly woven into the experience of a classical Christian student:

- Element B: A classical Christian student will experience and engage with principles of faith in a deep and meaningful way, demonstrating importance of faith and giving them the opportunity to agree with that importance
- Element C: A classical Christian student will engage in many religious experiences as a student including classes taken, chapel services attended, conversations with peers and adults, athletics and other extracurriculars through the school, and more
- Element D: A classical Christian student will encounter prayer and scripture as part of their typical experience in classrooms and other school-related activities

- Element E: A classical Christian student may have doubts as a student, but the willingness of classical Christian schools to tackle hard faith topics makes it more likely that they will graduate confident and committed in their faith, being able to withstand future challenges without doubts
- Element F: Substitute congregation with the school, and a classical Christian student will have many adults to turn to for help and support

Element G is outside the control of the school and is only present in one of the six pathways; Element A is also outside the control of the school and is present in 4 of the pathways. Element A often is present in classical Christian students as many, but not all, parents selected the school for faith purposes. In these cases, 25% of the necessary elements are met already, leaving only 3 elements required; 2 pathways still exist without this element.

The overlapping of the elements indicates an increased likelihood of continued faith commitment into adulthood. While it cannot be guaranteed, the overlapping of the elements makes it highly likely that all classical Christian education students will fall onto one of the six pathways.

Pairing the pathways with the nine factors, it is clear that while classical Christian education is not the only trail to likely continued faith adherence, it does seem to be a method for surrounding a teenager with the multitude of experiences that contribute to faith formation and continued adherence.

## Additional Relevant Literature

- **Time on campus:** Students spend almost 1,200 hours at school, on average, not counting engagement in before or after school activities. During four years of high school, a student will be immersed in the culture of their school for likely 5,000 hours or more.<sup>1</sup>
- **Embedded experiences:** “Religious faith and spiritual practice are not simply matters of individual experience and institutional involvements. They are also embedded in and sometimes draw much of their life from personal relationships in families, with friends, at school, and with other adults.”<sup>2</sup>
- **Spiritual modeling:** Social learning theory suggests that students seeing others, such as teachers, live their faith is one way that people grow in their faith.<sup>3</sup> Religious language is like any other language: to learn how to speak it, one needs first to listen to native speakers using it a lot, and then one needs plenty of practice speaking it themselves; this is how they learn the religious language of their faith tradition. The influence of teachers can also increase when they serve multiple roles, such as a sports coach.<sup>4</sup>
- **Age of student:** “Adolescence is now recognized as a crucial time for religious development” as “change in religiosity is likely to occur during adolescence...and as adolescents make the transition to young adulthood.”<sup>5</sup> With this, ages 13-16 have been identified as “the peak age of conversion.”<sup>6</sup>
- **Post secondary choices:** While faith can always be developed through the spirit, as life decisions are made in adulthood, it can become harder to accept faith if your life choices (cohabitation, pursuit of rich lifestyle, etc) are counter to the teachings of faith.<sup>7</sup>
- **Summary:** “The greater the supply of religiously grounded relationships, activities, programs, opportunities, and challenges available to teenagers, other things being equal, the more likely teenagers will be religiously engaged and invested.”<sup>8</sup>
- **Faith trend data:** The number of Americans identified as post-Christian rose from 37% in 2013 to 44% in 2015.<sup>9</sup> Some data suggests that up to 70%<sup>10</sup> of evangelical teenagers experience some disengagement and decline in their faith; while the numbers vary between studies, the Protestant faith has seen a decline in participation that parallels with youth getting older<sup>11</sup>. Additional data showed that the shift became more significant after 2000.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> National Center for Education Statistics, 2016

<sup>2</sup> Smith and Denton, 2005, p. 54 (*Soul searching: The religious and spiritual lives of American teenagers*)

<sup>3</sup> Shields, 2008 (An assessment of dropout rates of former youth ministry participants in conservative Southern Baptist megachurches)

<sup>4</sup> Wood, 2008

<sup>5</sup> Desmond, Morgan, and Kikuchi, 2010, p. 247-248 (Religious development: How (and why) does religiosity change from adolescence to young adulthood?)

<sup>6</sup> Regnerus and Uecker, 2006 (Finding faith, losing faith: The prevalence and context of religious transformations during adolescence)

<sup>7</sup> Good and Willoughby, 2008 (Adolescence as a sensitive period for spiritual development)

<sup>8</sup> Smith and Denton, 2005, p. 261 (*Soul searching: The religious and spiritual lives of American teenagers*)

<sup>9</sup> Barna, 2015 (*2015 sees sharp rise in post-Christian population.*)

<sup>10</sup> Lifeway, 2007 (Church dropouts: How many leave the church between ages 18-22 and why)

<sup>11</sup> Walker, 2002 (Family Life Council says it's time to bring family back to life.)

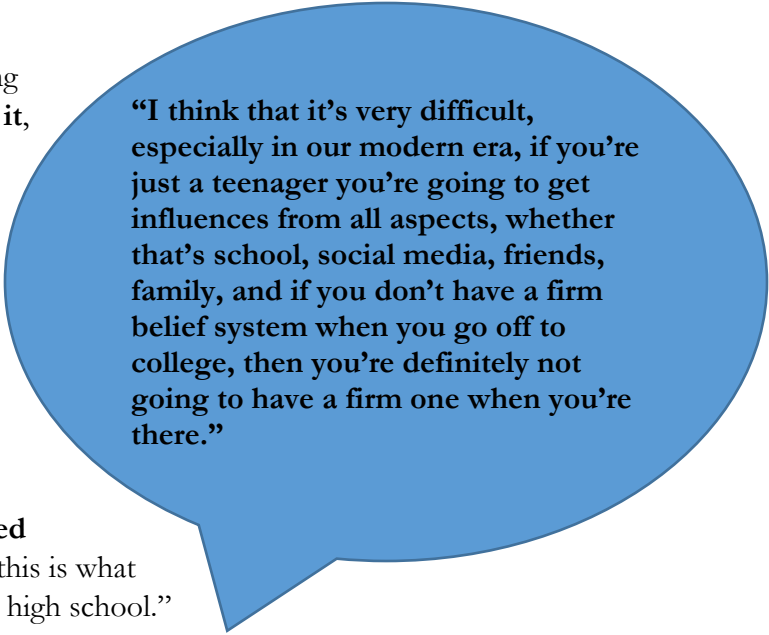
<sup>12</sup> Twenge, Exline, Grubbs, Sastry, & Campbell, 2015 (Generational and time period differences in American adolescents' religious orientation, 1966-2014)

## Selected Quotes from the Interviews

The interviews provided many rich quotes about classical Christian education. A sampling of the quotes are provided below.

“Classical Christian education uniquely positions students to **ask great questions of their faith** because through the **Socratic learning method**, and when you read **epic poetry**, when you read **philosophy**, when you have sort of **distinct approaches to science** so you’re not just taking a science textbook and laying a Christian faith over top of it...because you’re on one hand incorporating the faith from the ground up in the teaching method, and also equipping students with how to not only ask good questions, but when they encounter something in their faith, or in the Bible, that they don’t understand or they ask a question of God, they **have the tools** then to investigate that, to say, ‘I know how to do this, I have done this in other aspects of my education so I can do this with my faith as well.’”

“I really believe the foundation, knowing **what we believe and why we believe it**, was really engrained in us and to be able to make our faith our own...Yes it was our job to do our part but our teachers were ready to make that happen as well, and were there for the highs and lows, for all of it.”



“I think that it’s very difficult, especially in our modern era, if you’re just a teenager you’re going to get **influences from all aspects, whether that’s school, social media, friends, family, and if you don’t have a firm belief system when you go off to college, then you’re definitely not going to have a firm one when you’re there.**”

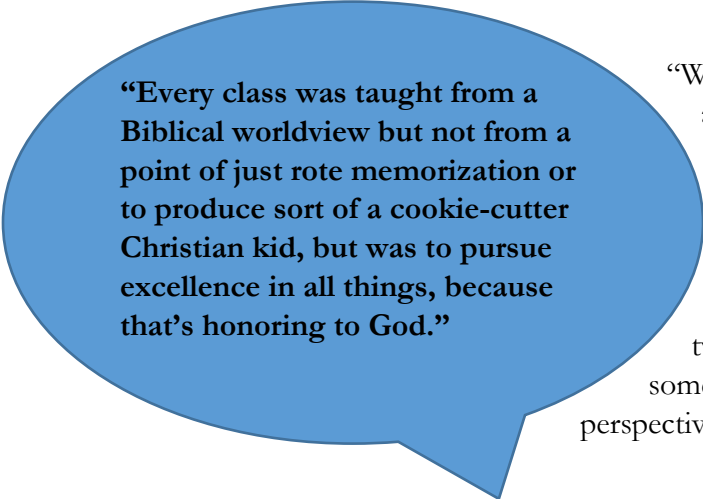
“It helped me a lot that we had **wrestled through issues** and nobody ever said ‘this is what you should believe as a Christian’ at my high school.”

“In terms of a classical school, the classical education model, you have the **trivium and Quadrivium**, and the **study of ancient texts**, and refocusing the teaching and learning methods. You’ve got the **Socratic method** in the classroom, you’ve got an education philosophy centered around **developing tools for learning**, not just going towards test scores or college preparatory as the focus. Then in terms of how you divide up learning, the **grammar** stage, the **logic** stage, the **rhetoric** stage, so having as the brain and the kid develops through their different age groups, having education fit that and starting first with **memorization**, then using the tools to piece those things together into **logic**, and then ultimately learning to put those logical things together into an **argument**, and being **persuasive** with it.”



“But when you add the Christian element, the way that my high school approached it was we are going to do everything from the perspective and belief that Christianity is true, that the Bible is true, and that all things can be taught and studied from a Biblical worldview. So when you ask questions, you’re studying calculus and the formula works, **why does it work?** It is **because God is a God of order** that created the universe in an orderly way and we cannot just learn things about the world through math but we can learn things about God through math.”

“...the **relationship with my teachers**, so while they were definitely clear authority figures, my classmates as well would say this to this day, but we nine out of 10 times always felt that our **teachers cared more about our hearts** and our spiritual well-being than anything else. We’d be in math class and our teachers were just so in tuned and cared so much about getting to know us on the personal and individual level and treating us more like their children, honestly, than just remote students they were trying to teach a concept to. So having that relationship with somebody that could be a spiritual mentor, an academic mentor, and have that be an open and safe place to have a hard conversation...I could go to my teacher and that was a place where I knew I would get Biblical counsel.”



“Every class was taught from a **Biblical worldview** but not from a point of just rote memorization or to produce sort of a **cookie-cutter Christian kid**, but was to pursue **excellence in all things, because that’s honoring to God.**”

“We were taught to be **developed** as a **reader**, as a **thinker**, as a **writer**, and as a **believer**. Just in all of those – who are you as a writer, let’s work on that, let’s take you from here and hopefully by your senior year you’re going to be here. As a thinker, where are some things that need tweaking, where are some philosophies, some logic that can help broaden your perspective.”

Describing the philosophy of a classical Christian school: “I think to **teach the truth** and to **teach what God loves** and to **teach why God loves what He loves**...I appreciate that **focus on academics** because just in my own faith I think that Christianity is inherently logical and I think it is important that no matter what subject you are in, math or literature or history, people’s worldviews, and the **teacher’s worldviews**, are always going to be interwoven into whatever subject you are in, whether you are in a public school or not, it is just natural for it to happen. And if you are going to get someone’s world view, as a Christian and also as a parent now at this point in my life, I would rather have it be at least a **Christian worldview** that they are getting.”

## Request More Information

To request more information about the study,  
or to engage in further conversation with the study's author,  
contact Matthew Breazeale at [breazeale@gmail.com](mailto:breazeale@gmail.com).

The full study is available electronically upon request.

Presentations about the study, or specific portions of the study,  
are also possible either in-person or virtually.

Potential presentation topics include:

- +Reviewing the full study in more depth and detail
- +Focusing on one of the findings or results as it pertains to your school
- +Connecting the study to overall faith formation & adherence

For schools interested, the researcher will duplicate the study unique for your school,  
using your alumni, and provide you with a comparison of findings.

Findings, results, and quotes may be used in school materials  
but should be attributed to the study.