

YOUTH MINISTRY: THE STRUGGLES AND BLESSINGS
OF A CURRICULUM

by

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Youth ministry is full of difficult challenges for a youth leader in today's day and age. This paper discusses some of those challenges and how they need to be addressed in a youth group setting. There is also a review of current youth Bible studies produced by the WELS and LCMS. A number of youth leaders were interviewed to gain perspectives into their ministry experiences. These experiences helped to guide the direction of this project. The purpose of this project is to develop an outline form of Bible study. This Bible study can be filled in and fleshed out by each individual youth leader. This process would not require a lot of reworking of material to suit their individual needs and purposes. The long-term goal is to develop a complete curriculum of this style of Bible study.

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YOUTH MINISTRY: THE STRUGGLES AND BLESSINGS OF A CURRICULUM

Teens are an important part of a church. Numerous books and papers have been written that say teens are important. These writings stress that the church needs to involve the youth. But what is it that makes the youth so vital to the church? These teens are future leaders in the congregation. They will be future pastors and teachers, church presidents and choir directors, church secretaries and custodians, organists and ushers, evangelists and good Christian neighbors. This is the group who will be the church and will be leaders in our churches.

Not only are they future leaders, but they are leaders right now.¹ Too often teens are viewed as “big kids”; they are old enough to have a little responsibility, but not quite mature enough to help in important church work. Too often they are lost in that gap between grade school and college-aged young adults. “They are a kind of lost element in contemporary American society.”² However, an active teen ministry is essential to the life of a congregation. The youth certainly can help in church work. They are some of the best evangelists, telling their friends about their faith and church life. They can certainly add a new perspective to the long-range planning committee at church.³ A youth group should never be neglected. It is vitally important that teens are kept in God's Word and grow in knowledge and appreciation of it.

Jesus himself gives us admonition in his Word to care for the spiritual needs of those not yet spiritually mature. “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Matthew 19:14). We are also told, “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it” (Proverbs 22:6). A congregation as a whole will want to impress God's Word firmly in the hearts and minds of all its members. “He who fears the Lord has a secure fortress, and for his children it will be a refuge” (Proverbs 14:26). God's Word is to be a firm foundation in the lives of all Christians. When that solid foundation is built on continued study in God's Word, faith will be strengthened. “Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road,

¹ James A. Behling, “Rebuilding a Youth Program.” 1983, 2.

² Reverend Terry K. Dittmer, “Young Adult Manual: A Congregational Resource for Ministry with Young Adults”. The Board for Youth Services: The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, 1985, 2.

³ Dr. Joel A. Nelson, Interview by author, , December 15, 2011, Appendix D:3, 7.

when you lie down and when you get up” (Deuteronomy 6:7). This wonderful gift of faith in God's Word is meant to be shared with the next generation, “Tell it to your children, and let your children tell it to their children, and their children to the next generation” (Joel 1:3). When God's Word is passed on to the next generation, parents and church leaders are fulfilling the command of Jesus to, “make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19).

The primary purpose for teaching a youth group is always for the salvation of souls and the strengthening of faith. There are also many other reasons for which to minister to the youth of a congregation. Teenagers are going through an incredibly trying time of life. “The one fact that runs through all studies of teen-age years, however, can be summed up in one word: change.”⁴ Teens have a lot of concerns in their life with which to deal. They can seem moody and cannot make up their mind. There can be highs and lows in their emotions in a matter of minutes. Their values are also changing. What their parents say is not accepted automatically anymore; they want to make their own decisions and determine their own values in life. They are caught between two worlds: childhood and adulthood. They want to be respected as an adult but they still do childish things. They want to be treated like an adult, but are not ready for the responsibilities associated with being an adult. The goal of a youth ministry is to help young people bridge that gap.⁵

It is not easy to care for the spiritual lives of teens alone. A youth leader must include others in this work. This means that youth group leaders will stay connected with the biggest influence on the teens' life thus far; their parents.

To guide this restless change in teenagers, parents need to change, too. Until the teen years, the parent is most likely to hover over children with the incessant question in mind, “What is he up to?” Now that you have a teenager to care for, the more understanding and helpful question to ask is, “What is he up against?”⁶

⁴ Anne Lewis and Others, “A Changing Time. Handbook for Parents of Teen-Agers.” National School Public Relations Association, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N. W.; Washington, D. C., 1963.

⁵ “A good youth group program is that important bridge between Confirmation and adult life wherein the youth can develop and grow in Christ and become stronger Christians individually and better prepared for adult church work and leadership.” ad hoc Youth Committee, “A Handbook for Youth Leaders.” Board for Parish Services, WELS, 1977, 15.

⁶ Lewis, “A Changing Time,” 6.

Having the parents in agreement with and helping the youth ministry of a church is pertinent to maintaining relationships with the teens and keeping them in your program. Without the support of parents, a teen will not have opportunities to come to worship, Bible study, or youth group meetings. Without the support of parents, teens may not realize the absolute importance of a faith-based life connected to God's Word. Working together with parents is always to be incorporated with a teen ministry.⁷

Thus youth workers operate closely with God's Word and with parents to help the youth of our churches wrestle with this turbulent time of their lives. Youth leaders can understand what teens are going through to a degree; they were young once too. On the other hand, the world around is changing rapidly and teens are faced with situations never experienced by their parents and pastors. It is essential that adults stay informed of what is going on in the lives of their children and in the world to help teenagers face these difficulties.

Change

Because of the numerous changes and difficulties that teenagers face, a youth leader must know what is happening in the life of a teen. There are numerous physical and emotional changes that affect the lives of teens. Teenagers' bodies are growing and developing at different rates. Girls begin to develop an average of two years sooner than boys. Not only is there that inconsistency, but within the same gender, individuals develop at very different rates. Girls mature earlier and their interest is usually in older boys because boys their own age are not yet at the same level of maturity. This can certainly lead to some interesting interactions in the youth group! This process of maturation is an awkward time of life. Teens are very self-conscious of their looks and interactions with their peers. These physical changes can cause great emotional stress and are of great importance in the life of teens.

At the same time teens' physical bodies are changing, the physical world of the 21st century is also undergoing rapid change. Technology is prevalent in all aspects of life. Youth are first introduced to technology by being placed in front of the television, which serves as their babysitter. It then progresses to video game systems that take up hours of their life in just one sitting. Kids are texting their friends at young ages, and even during school. This current

⁷ "As a congregation and as pastors, teachers, and staff ministers, we need to support and equip the parents and other mentors in the congregation so that they can consistently model and teach outreach to the youth." Kevin Walker, "Creating a Home-Run Hitting Team." In *Seaway Circuit Meeting*, 7. Liverpool, NT, 2006, 2.

generation is so interconnected via social media that physically talking with one another is happening less and less. Will this hurt their social and communication skills in the future? Right now, it is too soon to tell, but what is known is that communicating with teens requires a youth leader to be connected to this digital age. Some youth leaders are not as technologically advanced as teenagers, while some are even further advanced in their use of technology. Either way, having that extra connectivity will help a youth leader to better serve the youth group.

For example, while serving as the youth leader at Messiah Lutheran Church in Green Bay, I did not have texting. I thought that organizing events and staying in contact via Facebook would be enough. I was wrong. The teens made fun of Vicar Schauland because he was still “stuck in the stone ages.” It made my communication with them more difficult. They did not always check their Facebook account, but they always had their phones on their person. That extra connectivity would have been extremely helpful in my communication with the teens.

These physical changes also lead to emotional changes among teenagers.⁸ They are learning their new identity as they are phasing out of childhood and approaching adulthood. Youths may become impatient with adults because they just do not understand what teens are going through. They are learning independence for the first time and it can be a daunting task to juggle all of these newfound and growing responsibilities, in addition to pleasing their parents with their work. They may begin to question the values with which they grew up. No longer will they believe what their parents say simply because mom and dad said it. They are now making their own decisions and setting their own values on life.

When a teen enters high school, they enter new emotional territory. Social activities and life’s interactions are much more complex. The friends that they knew in grade school may not be in the same high school. They find new circles of friends, but they still want to remain close with their old acquaintances too. Perhaps they want to abandon everything they knew and start fresh. The desire to be accepted and to be part of a cool social group is a very strong influence in the life of an adolescent.⁹ These cliques and social circles may seem silly and irrelevant to parents and adults, but this is a huge part of a teen’s life. They want to feel wanted and liked by

⁸ Dr. Joel A. Nelson, “What Makes Teens Tick?” Middler Youth Seminar, April 16, 2008, 5-6.

⁹ Roy G. Irving, *Youth and the Church;: A Survey of the Church’s Ministry to Youth*,. Moody Press, 1968, 100.

their peers. They need social interaction and more importantly, acceptance. This may result in rebellion against their former way of life, their friends and family, or their values.¹⁰

In addition to these emotional stresses, teens also face an uncertain future. Plans for college and future jobs are being made earlier and earlier in life. What is a teen supposed to do when their best friend already has their life plan neatly laid out in front of them? This added stress makes the everyday tasks like homework that much harder. It can be daunting when a teen cannot get his homework done on time, but his friends think that they already know at what age they are going to retire. Teens are just beginning to grasp that the world does not revolve around them. Their world is not the be-all and end-all for everyone around them. This world has suddenly gotten a lot bigger around them, and it all looks very scary.

Teenagers are clearly going through a lot in their lives. What can the church do about it? How does the ministry of the church reach out to them? What will help them? Teens will be challenged in their faith. Their Christian morals will be tested. They will stand out in a crowd because the Christian life is distinctly different than American society. It is essentially important through the high school years that teenagers have a strong role model to look up to, someone whom they can emulate and from whom they can learn. That is why youth leaders' roles in the church are so vital to the spiritual life of teens. Teens *need* a role model.¹¹ There is no place better to find that person than in the church, where they can be rooted deeply in God's Word.

Youth Leaders

A youth leader has a substantial task among their responsibilities. They have to deal with these numerous issues that face today's teenagers.¹² There may be only ten years that separate a leader from the teen group, but teenagers face a very different world just this short time later. No matter the situation there is only one thing to do; take these youth to the cross. That is the purpose of the church. That is the purpose of leaders in the church. They lead people to Christ,

¹⁰ D. Campbell Wyckoff, ed., *Religious Education Ministry With Youth*. Religious Education Pr, 1982, 228-229.

¹¹ "We cannot forget the important impact modeling has on our young people's faith-life." Walker, "Creating a Home-Run Hitting Team.", 2.

¹² "The church needs trained teachers who put their minds into their preparation, their hearts into their presentation, and their lives into their example." Evangelical Teacher Training Association, *Teaching Techniques for Church Education*. Evangelical Teacher Training Association, 1978, 45

pointing out Christ in Word and Sacrament. “God’s Law and Gospel know no age limits.”¹³ Youth ministry will face many desperate and dismal situations in the lives of teens, but Christ is the only answer.

“What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:31-35, 37–39).

There is nothing more powerful than the Gospel of Jesus Christ that can strengthen and uplift a downtrodden soul. Struggles will always be present in the spiritual lives of teens, of that there is no doubt. However with strong spiritual guidance from a youth leader and Christian love and friendship from a youth group, teens will be able to face these troubles in life with confidence and trust in their Lord and Savior. This is an important time. With all of the outside, worldly influences attacking their faith and consciences every day, every moment spent in God's Word is beneficial to withstanding the onslaught of sin in this world.

A very important and regular way to connect with the youth group is weekly Bible studies. Not every church has them at the same time; they might be Sunday morning, Sunday night or even on a weeknight. Whatever the case may be, this weekly connection with the teens is vital for their spiritual life. What is the best way to teach them? This is a question that has been asked for a long time and this thesis will address that issue.

Proposal

The intention of this project originally was to create a well-planned curriculum of *discussion* based Bible studies for a church’s teen group.¹⁴ The purpose was to avoid handouts or worksheets for the teens. For many teens the implications of a worksheet makes the Bible

¹³ Charles J. Keeler, *Serving Our Lutheran Youth: a Handbook for Lutheran Pastors and Youth Leaders*, Youth Committee, Board of Education and Youth, Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 1991, 45.

¹⁴Appendix A: Initial Proposal.

study too much like a classroom and makes it feel like homework. These feelings of obligation and tediousness should not be connected with studying God's Word. Therefore a complete abandonment of sheets was the goal.

My original idea was based on my short experience with worksheets and teens. The youth group of Messiah Lutheran Church in Green Bay, WI, with whom I worked during my vicar year, despised worksheets. Once I got rid of them, the discussions were much more energetic and engaging. These teens seemed to thrive on these discussions. The group was usually evenly divided on its stance and would be able to stretch discussions out for weeks at a time. Looking back now, it appears that the group was unusual in its makeup. After talking with youth leaders who have been in the church for decades of work, I understand better now that most groups will not be able to learn well with strictly discussion-based Bible studies.

Therefore during the course of research, the initial proposal was found to be too focused. As more youth pastors and youth workers were interviewed, it was suggested that variety is vital for a vibrant youth group.¹⁵ In addition to their recommendation, they were sensitive to the word, *curriculum*.¹⁶ They saw it as a rigid, step by step lesson plan for the entire year that is forced upon the group. These youth workers envisioned a curriculum as something that must be gone through in its entirety by the end of the year. This was not the intended outcome of the thesis.¹⁷ Thus, the aim and focus of this project changed from its inception.

The goal of this thesis and project is to create a curriculum of Bible study outlines. Rather than full lessons with worksheets, outlines can be easily adapted by teen leaders in any number of different settings.¹⁸ The leader's guide will contain a basic body of information that will give the youth leader a solid basis from which to build. The skeletal structure of the lesson

¹⁵ Nelson, Interview, 3.

¹⁶ "Curriculum is experience under guidance toward fulfillment of the purposes of Christian education – not the entire social situation within which the person acts and with which he is interacting, but rather that part of it which is consciously planned." Wyckoff, *Theory and Design of Christian Education Curriculum*, 27.

¹⁷ "The task of Christian education is the nurture of the Christian life. In order that such nurture may be effective in accomplishing its purpose, the church as a rule rejects reliance upon haphazard means and adopts a reasoned and planned teaching-learning process for its educational work. A curriculum is a plan by which the teaching-learning process may be systematically undertaken." Wyckoff, *Theory and Design of Christian Education Curriculum*, 17.

¹⁸ Appendix E: Bible Study.

is given, but it is up to youth leaders to flesh out the lesson. The curriculum will consist of monthly units. Each unit will be four to five weeks long, with the last lesson of each unit being a planned review of the month's unit. It would not be academic in nature, but rather would have the purpose of being a fun time for the teens, e.g. Bible Trivia or Bible Jeopardy. The units would vary between topics and sections of Scripture. The idea would be to alternate these two types of lessons from month to month. However, if something comes up in the lives of these teens, in the church, or in the world, a different unit could easily be swapped in that better pertains to current events.

Depending on whether the project evolves into a two, three, or four year curriculum, 70 to 140 lessons would be created. When using this curriculum, leaders would not have to find new Bible study courses continuously. This format would enable leaders to review materials with teens two or three years later. The task of preparing two to four years of material in advance is daunting, but the benefits of being able to prepare lessons from the same format and curriculum every week would be incredibly beneficial.¹⁹

Each lesson contains one goal stated that will be learned by the youth group that day. The outline suggests pertinent Bible passages that will be helpful in facilitating class discussion. Also included would be questions and extra resources to consult. Resources would include a video clip or newspaper article concerning the day's topic. All of the lessons would be laid out in similar format. With this system, the leader would know what to expect out of the lesson and continuity would be present throughout the year.

These guides will delve deep into the topic so that teen leaders would not have to do a whole lot of outside research on their own. A leader would adapt a lesson to their own style of teaching; therefore no prescribed method of teaching would be demanded. At the same time, the guide will propose possible teaching suggestions. The leaders would have freedom to present the material in a manner that would best serve their own unique situation.

Not every youth leader is a called worker of our synod. Some have not received the theological training that called workers have. They may not know the Scriptural truths as well as other people. This curriculum would help guide them in their understanding of the topic matter.

¹⁹ "I think what you're striving to do is something that is definitely needed in our church body because I think that almost all youth ministers whether they are pastors or lay leaders are struggling to find a curriculum that they can use." Berger, Pastor Ben, Interview, December 12, 2011, Appendix D:4, 4.

In preparation prior to the discussion, they would be directed to certain other resources that would be helpful to broaden their understanding and knowledge of the subject matter. Enough information would be included that if time did not allow for in depth preparation, this guide itself would be enough for the lesson.

Worksheets would not be included in the lesson outlines. Worksheets often end up as doodle sheets and filler for the garbage can. This thesis proposes that if each teen had their own Bible in the class, they could highlight key passages and write notes in their Bible. This would be more beneficial for them in the future by reminding them of extra insights when they read their Bible. These important passages would be marked for them in their Bible, rather than on worksheets that were thrown away or that are sitting in a dusty binder in the closet. Starting this Bible marking process could even begin in Catechism class.²⁰ Passages studied in 7th and 8th grade would be seen again in these future teen Bible studies. The concepts and teachings would be reinforced in their minds.

Not every situation will be the same in every teen ministry. In fact, no two will be the same. The goal of this project is to be multi purposed: to give enough content for pastors and lay leaders to mold a Bible study but not be too specific that they have to change large parts of it. It is my hope that this resource will be helpful no matter what situation a youth leader is in. Every leader has their own personal style of teaching, and this curriculum would have merely information without imposing styles of teaching.

For the purpose of this project, I will only be preparing one lesson and proposing the lesson topics for the unit for the remainder of the month. I hope to evaluate this lesson in the future. I look forward to receiving honest feedback concerning this proposal from youth leaders in our synod. I also plan on implementing this in my own work with teens in the future. I pray that this project, even if it does not serve the purpose I intended, can get more youth leaders in our synod to prepare more Bible studies and share them with one another.

Curriculum Review

Most Bible studies that are in print have a few things in common; they have worksheets. Nearly all of the Bible studies which I reviewed contain worksheets which are intended to be

²⁰ Prof. Michael J. Quandt, "Middler Education", Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, WI, September 2009.

handed out to the teens. Worksheets can become quite tedious by asking very simple and basic questions. These type 1, 2, or 3 simple questions are basic read and repeat.²¹ They do not require any thinking. While these questions are pertinent to get to the point of a Bible study lesson, they are quite monotonous to go through step by step on a worksheet. To the teens this can seem more like homework than a beneficial and fun experience of studying God's Word. Teens have school five days of the week already; they do not need or want any academic exercises.

The Bible studies that I chose to review are more than just a single book of Bible studies. I purposefully chose ones that are larger series that can be used as part of a curriculum. The following Bible studies are published by Northwestern Publishing House (NPH) and Concordia Publishing House (CPH).

NPH produced the Christ Light series for the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. The product was not quite what they had anticipated and did not fit the original goal of the project.²² The result turned more into a Christian day school and area Lutheran high school curriculum than a Sunday School and teen group curriculum.²³ It was too in depth and too involved for a once a week Bible program. "Sunday School teachers are overwhelmed at trying to cram that much information into 45 minutes each week."²⁴ Many students in Sunday School and teen group do not have the Biblical background to be bombarded with so much information in forty-five minutes on a Sunday morning. Not only is there way too much information, but the lesson directions for the leader are difficult to follow. Here is a summary of a sample lesson given about Creation, "Hand out Copy Master 5 ... Hand out Copy Master 1 ... Hand out Copy Master 2 ... Return to Copy Master 1 ... Return to Copy Master 2 ... Hand out Copy Master 3 ... Return to Copy Master 1 ... Hand out Copy Master 6."²⁵ Those directions do not even include

²¹ David P. Kuske, "The Principles of the Teaching/Learning Process Applied." 32, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, WI, 1987, 12.

²² Mike Pfeifer. Interview by author, December 15, 2011, Appendix D:2, 2.

²³ Nelson, Interview, 7.

²⁴ Pfeifer, Interview, 2.

²⁵ David P. Kuske, *Christ Light: Creation, Fall, Flood*. Vol. 1. Old Testament 1. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2000, iv.

all the pages of this lesson, which stretches out for nine pages. Clearly, the writers tried to put too much information into this project than originally was intended. In addition to each individual lesson being extensive, the curriculum as a whole is lengthy. The concept of Creation and God as our Creator is covered by three units spanning ten lessons. That is a long time to spend on one topic. The members of a Sunday morning teen group would not continue to show up for a full ten weeks of Creation discussion. While the content is thorough and doctrinally sound, there is so much information that it would be difficult for a lay leader to look at this information and narrow it down into one appropriately sized lesson.

One aspect of Christ Light that I liked is the Unit Introduction. Each unit consists of three to four lessons. The theme, goals, Bible passages, teaching ideas and supplementary readings are listed on this one page of the unit introduction. This single page is quite similar to what I propose as a good lesson guide. It gives a very basic overview of the unit. I think for the sake of a Sunday teen Bible study, this one unit intro could serve as a guide for one lesson with the teens. In my opinion, the current Christ Light is not a viable option for a once a week teen Bible study.

CPH has numerous teen Bible studies. These Bible studies are offered in a variety of formats and different subject matters. It is commendable the amount of materials that they have available. Each Bible studies series offers similar topics and Scripture, but each also presents the material in different formats. Clearly the purposes of these Bible studies are varied, but the positive side is that options are available. Youth leaders can decide what works best in their situation. Most of these curriculums have over one hundred different lessons. Many of these series have introductions that are very similar to each other. They all offer the reason to study Scripture, i.e. to grow in knowledge and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. The Introductions also give tips for teaching teens and what preparation is needed from the leader prior to class.

Life Light from CPH is the oldest series of the ones that I looked at. It consists of fifty-one books with nine lessons in each. The books range in topic from Biblical books to Christian doctrine. This series is very academic in nature. The stated audience is adults who want to delve further into God's Word. It also states that this material would be profitable for teenagers.²⁶ However the material of this series is clearly more than a teen Bible study would have

²⁶ Jane L. Fryar, ed., *The Bible: An Overview (Leader's Guide)*. Concordia Publishing House, 1998, 5.

opportunity to cover. Using one lesson per week, it would take almost nine years to go through this series. The content of this series is very in depth and could be a useful resource for a leader to pull information from, but this would not be a good series from which to teach a teen Bible study.

Our Life in Christ is another series offered by CPH. It is quite similar to my project proposal. It has four books; each book contains thirty-nine lessons. The lessons of these books correlate to the lessons of the Sunday School program of the same name. This allows for a unified curriculum within a church. The lessons are both topical and Bible history based. Each lesson has only one page of notes for the leader. This guide clearly states the goal of the lesson and offers suggestions how to teach this goal to the teens. The lesson also contains a one page handout. However, the handout could easily be done away with in a Bible study because it mainly consists of basic fact questions and Scripture references; the closed questions could be asked by the leader and the Scripture references could easily be written on the board.

The Real Deal Bible study series is made up of seven books with twelve lessons in each book. CPH themed every book with similar topics, e.g., faith, school, personal issues.²⁷ Each lesson has three to four pages for the teacher and a handout for the teens, either one or two pages long. The leader's sheet is made up of long paragraphs which prompt the leader exactly what and when to read to the teens. Teens would find this boring and scripted. The teen worksheets look like busy work; some have matching or fill-in-the-blank answers. On other worksheets, all that is listed is a column of Bible passages. All in all, *The Real Deal* Bible study series has beneficial content but is rigid in laying out exactly how the Bible study should progress.

Fusion is a really neat concept from CPH. This series takes an object that is found both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament and it shows the connectivity between the two, i.e. trees, numbers, water.²⁸ It consists of six books with six lessons each, but it is adaptable as each lesson could be split. It provides that option because of the size of each lesson. Each teacher's guide reads like a biblical commentary. There are twelve to thirteen pages of preparatory reading for the leader and three to four pages of student worksheets. The stated purpose is to deepen knowledge of Scripture, so it is understandable how in depth each lesson

²⁷ Mark Sengele, Ed., *It's a Big Deal: Faith Issues*. Concordia Publishing House, 2005, 3.

²⁸ Chad Bird, *Fusion: Trees*. Concordia Publishing House, 2005, 5.

delves. A summary of what is written for the leader is to be shared with the teens, but I fear that with an untrained leader, it could develop into the leader just reading the paragraphs to the teens. If that were to become a habit, it would not draw teens in but instead cause them to want to stay away. While, I do like how they have similar topics in each book, I think the detailed leader's guide could become a crutch to the leader and could kill creative thoughts and discussion among the teens.

The last teen Bible study that was found through CPH is called *Pulse*. This Bible study is the closest one to the concept of this project. *Pulse* is a downloadable resource from cph.org. There are over one hundred different Bible studies to choose from. "Each Pulse links a complete Bible study with a current song, video, movie, or other media."²⁹ The leader's sheet is short and concise. It provides the place to find the media resource. It also contains pertinent Bible passages for the topic of discussion, with only a short comment on how specifically the passages relate. There is no worksheet for the teens. The downside is that each resource is only sold individually. Buying all of those lessons separately is costly and could be a hindrance in using this series as a curriculum for teen Bible study.

Methodology

In order to get a better understanding of current youth work, I contacted eight men who work extensively with youth or have served in positions in our synod related to youth ministry. I sent each man a survey but only received two responses.³⁰ More importantly though, I had the opportunity to interview five of these men: three over the phone and two in person.³¹ These men were very helpful to me as I narrowed down the scope of my vision for this project.

Participants

Ben Berger was assigned out of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary to be a tutor at Nebraska Lutheran High School. He has been serving at Mount Olive in Appleton, Wisconsin (WI) for nine years. He is the youth minister and spends most of his time with school-aged kids. In

²⁹ Mark Sengele, "Pulse:" Concordia Publishing House, 2009, <http://sites.cph.org/pulse/>.

³⁰ Appendix B: Survey

³¹ Appendix D: Interviews

addition to his call, he serves as the chair of the Northern WI Commission on Youth Discipleship (CYD). He also serves on the WELS CYD as one of the district representatives.³²

Tom Schneider currently serves at Michigan Lutheran High School as a teacher and a coach. Prior to that, he served Goodview Trinity in Winona, Minnesota. While at Trinity, he was the director of a Christian youth camp, Camp Whitewater, for 11 years. He helped organize three Youth Rallies while in Winona. Currently he also serves as chairman of the synod's Youth and Family Ministry.³³

James Buske was assigned to be a tutor at Luther Preparatory School (LPS) for two years after graduation. At LPS he taught sophomore religion. He then was reassigned to be an assistant to the District President in the Pacific Northwest District. He stayed for two years in Bremerton, Washington serving as the youth pastor. He then had the opportunity to start Lighthouse Youth Center in inner city Milwaukee. He has been there for six years as of 2012.³⁴

Doctor Joel Nelson graduated from Dr. Martin Luther College in 1978. His first call was to St. Andrew's in Chicago, Illinois. He then went to Our Redeemer in Santa Barbara, California, followed a call to serve St. Paul's in Muskego, WI. At all of his calls, he was involved in the youth group. He then was called to a synod position, specifically administrator for Youth Discipleship. In that role he gave guidance to many WELS congregations with their youth groups. He serves as principal of Garden Homes, Milwaukee, WI, where he has been for three years.³⁵

Mike Pfeifer graduated from DMLC as well. After working in congregational and school settings in Appleton, WI for a number of years, he received one of the very first Staff Ministry calls. He went to Bloomington Lutheran Church in Bloomington, MN. A major part of his work and responsibilities while there was working with all aspects of youth ministry. After being in Bloomington for eight years, he received a call to St. Mark Green Bay, WI to serve as their staff minister. He had a wider range of duties and responsibilities in Green Bay, but his

³² Berger, Interview, 3.

³³ Pastor Tom Schneider, Interview by author, December 14, 2011, Appendix D:1, 1.

³⁴ Pastor James Buske, Interview by author, December 15, 2011, Appendix D:5, 1.

³⁵ Nelson, Interview, 1.

responsibilities still included working with teens. During that time, he got involved in synod youth activities. He helped with district youth events and served on the CYD for a number of years. In 2000 Mike received a call to serve as administrator for CYD. He accepted and as a result he oversaw much of the preparation of the Christ Light program. Mike currently serves at Beautiful Savior in Green Bay as staff minister.³⁶

Procedure

Most of the men whom I contacted were recommended to me by Professor Joel Otto, my thesis advisor. Some of the men I had contact with in the past, and I sought them out myself. I contacted all of them via email and received five affirmative responses that they were willing to be interviewed as part of my thesis project. During the interviews I asked them about their own experiences working with youth and how they best connected with the teens. All of these men worked with youth in different capacities and therefore all had their own unique experiences. I inquired of them to expound on their own experience. Most of the interview questions focused on their experience, which was applicable to the project. I also spoke with these men regarding my thesis and my ever-changing direction that it was headed.

All of these men were encouraged by my enthusiasm and eagerness for advancing youth ministry. They felt my idea was workable and could have definite benefits if it were to be published. “I kind of like the idea of yours. Here’s the idea, here’s the skeleton, but you’re going to have to put muscle and tissue on it to make it worthwhile.”³⁷ Pastor Berger said, “I do think if you are going to have a discussion [about] different topics and then tie them all together, that would be beneficial for everyone. I think that’s worth pursuing.”³⁸ And, “I think what you’re striving to do is something that is definitely needed in our church body because I think that almost all youth ministers, whether they are pastors or lay leaders are struggling to find a curriculum they can use.”³⁹ Pastor James Buske said, “A well-put together, Bible-based, thought-provoking program would be pretty easy to incorporate and use. I think it would be great,” and,

³⁶ Pfeifer, Interview, 1.

³⁷ Schneider, Interview, 4.

³⁸ Berger, Interview, 4.

³⁹ Ibid., 4.

“With your program that I read about, you have this whole wide variety of stuff and you have all these resources, and it’s all topical already. It’d be pretty easy for a youth leader to find out what’s hot or what recently happened in the news, in the nation or church. I could see that really catch on.”⁴⁰

Results

After my first couple of interviews, I could see immediately that I needed to broaden the focus of my project. All of these men thought my idea of discussion-based youth Bible studies was a good plan, yet they all offered suggestions. There were a few themes that were common throughout the suggestions. First, the youth would tire of the repetition quickly. Pastor Tom Schneider related to me that he tries to vary his approach from unit to unit.⁴¹ Dr. Nelson flat out told me, “You need to have variety,”⁴² and also,

“I would see your desire to develop a curriculum that was discussion-based with nothing that the teens have to look at would be a really great *additional* arrow to have in your quiver to use. But that will go for so long and then you have to switch it up and go with something else.”⁴³ (emphasis mine)

My original intention was too narrow of a focus to be able to used long term. However, the concept would be a beneficial tool to use as part of a curriculum.

Another important aspect these men stressed was to apply God's Word to the lives of the teens. Teen Bible study is not just an academic exercise. It is important to their lives.⁴⁴ A teen leader will want to answer the question for these kids, “How does that help me when I leave these doors?”⁴⁵ “That actually works really well ... when the questions are open-ended and a little more application-oriented and [then] there are not right or wrong answers.”⁴⁶ Teenagers do

⁴⁰ Buske, Interview, 5.

⁴¹ Schneider, Interview, 1.

⁴² Nelson, Interview, 3.

⁴³ Ibid., 5.

⁴⁴ “as a teacher you can also help your children to think consciously about the Christian life as a life of full time service to the Lord, a useful, meaningful, purposeful, rewarding life of service. Or to put it in Paul’s words, you can help them to a fuller awareness of the fact that all of life is something a Christian continuously offers up to God as a living sacrifice in an ongoing liturgy, (Ro 12:1). Many of our people, in my judgment, do not think of the ordinary affairs of everyday life as opportunities God gives for serving him.” Joel C. Gerlach, “What Can Be Done to Make Our Children Active Church Members?” 6.

⁴⁵ Buske, Interview, 4.

⁴⁶ Berger, Interview, 2.

not want to be filled with facts that they can mechanically repeat; they want to know why it all matters. “In today’s complex society it is not always easy for students to translate God’s will for their lives into practical daily actions.”⁴⁷ The information needs to be pertinent to their lives.

“We need to spend far more time on applications as well, connecting the truths we teach with life situations so that the student realizes how these truths apply in his/her life (since we can’t assume that this will happen naturally at home or to some degree in society as well.)”⁴⁸

The interviewees stated that topics should be weighed carefully when planning a lesson. It is smart to choose something that is applicable to their lives. For example, if one of the teens just lost a loved one to death, death is real in their lives right now and could possibly be talked about if that teen is ready to discuss it.⁴⁹

Discussion

The whole thesis process has been very time-consuming and tiring, but the insights that have been gleaned from this work are invaluable. I based my original proposal on my very limited experience of vicar year. Having the opportunity to speak with men who have served the youth in many ways for numerous years has been extraordinarily insightful. My idea of having a curriculum of themed units was supported. The concept of using the teens’ own Bibles as the worksheets had a positive response among the men with whom I spoke.

Included with this paper is a sample Bible study, which is the culminating product of this paper.⁵⁰ It does not contain great detail. It allows leaders to come up with their own creative ideas. Unlike Christ Light, it does not list commentaries as further reading. Instead, it cites additional references outside of the typical sources. The extra references would fill in facets that would not necessarily be covered by a commentary, such as an editorial in the newspaper or a magazine article. Additional features of the outline guide are: Guided Questions - those questions which can be asked of the teens, Illustrations – helpful pictures to help describe the

⁴⁷ Evangelical Teacher Training Association, *Teaching Techniques for Church Education*. Evangelical Teacher Training Association, 1978, 15.

⁴⁸ David P. Kuske, “Expanding the Nurture of High School Age Youth”, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Library Essay File, 4.

⁴⁹ Berger, Interview, 1.

⁵⁰ Appendix F: Creation Bible Study.

lesson's theme, Applications – how this is pertinent in the lives of teens, Teens' Questions – what might be asked by the teens, and Teaching Techniques – possible ways to teach lesson. The lesson begins and ends with a prayer asking God to be with the group as they study his Word and as they go out into the world and let their faith shine.

The unit concept of this proposed month would go: Week 1 – Creation, Week 2 – Defense against Evolution, and Week 3 – The Fall and Promise. The end of this unit would conclude at the end of the month with a Bible trivia game based on facts and applications learned from the first three weeks of the month.

While working on this project, I discovered variables which left some holes. First, I spoke only to called workers from within WELS. I was only able to talk with a small handful of youth leaders out of the many possibilities within our synod. Another limiting aspect was that I viewed a small sampling of Bible studies from NPH and CPH; there are many more well-known institutions and Bible studies available than just what I viewed. To undertake such a large task of reviewing additional Bible studies would require more work and manpower than this thesis allowed.

A four year teen Bible study program would be difficult to impossible for one man to tackle on his own.⁵¹ Therefore, the outcome of this thesis did not produce much in the way of material. However, it is important for the members and leaders of our church body to keep planning and preparing materials for future use.⁵² I believe that with the help of other youth-minded individuals a large youth curriculum could be created and used to edify the youth of our synod for many years to come.

Conclusion

⁵¹ “When I saw your concept of a 4 year series of lessons, I just smiled. I thought, Oh to be young and idealistic again. Hang on to the ideals though; somebody has got to keep going with it.” Pfeifer, Interview, 2.

⁵² “It is unfortunate, but few ministries do any systematic planning with allocation of resources (both physical and human) based on clearly identified goals. Perhaps a major element in this failure is that few leaders take time to analyze carefully the needs of those to whom they have been called to minister. And this must include more than merely identifying present needs. Effective leaders must consider those needs that will be encountered in coming years, and then prepare themselves and their ministries to address those needs. If churches took time to make such analyses and then designed appropriate programs, we might see more innovative and effective ministries. But often churches seem more concerned with replicating the past than planning for the future.” Robert Clark, Lin Johnson, Allyn Sloat, Robert E. Clark, and Allyn K. Sloat, eds., *Christian Education: Foundations for the Future*. New ed. Moody Publishers, 1991, 73.

There are many variables when planning the guidelines for a youth ministry. First and foremost, a teen Bible study should be based always and only on the Word of God. The Bible is the only truth and the only thing that can strengthen the faith of the youth. Nothing else in this world is as important as what God's Word has to say.

Bible studies do not have to only be about books of the Bible or on specific doctrines. Obviously many different ways are available to present God's Word. No hard and fast rules exist stating that a Bible study must be a certain length or have a certain number of questions. The possibilities of Bible studies for teens are endless. To prescribe anything so rigid would be doing a disservice to God's Word and to the teens.

Youth leaders vary in God-given abilities and training. A youth leader may have little teaching experience. "In addition, your group will need a greater variety of learning activities. You will find that it is hard to meet their needs with your limited repertoire of teaching skills."⁵³ Leaders may have to go outside their comfort zone in order to prepare a high-quality lesson.

Quality lessons require hard work and dedication on the part of the youth leader. If leaders give less than their best, teens reciprocate that attitude. Pastor Buske said in his interview, "Whatever work you put into your youth and your youth leaders, that's what you get back."⁵⁴ When a youth leader does not care about the youth, the youth will not care to have any part of that youth group. When a youth leader shows respect for the Word and for the teens, it will be noticed by the teens.

A youth leader must be appropriately flexible in working with the teens. If a certain group of youth leans heavily towards technology, even if it is not a strength of the leader, that leader would do best to work with technology for the sake of the teens. A fresh approach and variety in teaching styles and tactics will help keep young people engaged.⁵⁵ A good leader will always keep in mind that different people learn differently and will have to make a concerted effort to reach all learning styles. "Applying principles of sociology to Bible classes cannot

⁵³ Jan Corbett, *Creative Youth Leadership: For Adults Who Work With Youth*. Judson Pr, 1977, 70.

⁵⁴ Buske, Interview, 5.

⁵⁵ "Students need to hear the Gospel. Will students grow tired of hearing it? Only if it is repeated in tiring ways. Our challenge in each lesson is to find the Gospel power and apply it to our students' lives in fresh and meaningful ways" Sengele, *It's a Big Deal*, 5.

substitute for interesting and biblical teaching, but when coupled together, these create a climate for expanding your Bible study ministry.”⁵⁶

When teaching, the youth leader must remember that there are three different types of learners. There are *visual learners* who need to see what is being taught in order to learn it well. Vivid pictures and someone acting it out for them is very beneficial for their learning. There are also *auditory learners* who need to hear themselves speak the truth out loud in order to grasp it best. The third type is *kinesthetic learners*. These learners need to get in on the action. They need to feel and touch and move in order to best grasp and retain what is being taught. In every group of learners, you will find all three types of learners. An instructor will need to remember this and teach the lesson in a variety of ways that all of learners can become engaged in the lesson.⁵⁷ The distribution of different types of learners will change year to year for a youth group leader. As the personalities and characters of one class graduates, a new set of personalities and characters will move in with the incoming freshmen. It is the task of the youth leader to determine what works best for the group’s situation and to adjust accordingly.⁵⁸

While resources and materials are available, a need still remains. In 1976, Pastor John Lawrenz saw the growing need for more and up-to-date printed materials for the purpose of parish education.⁵⁹ He said, “Our Synod has not been a “publishing” Synod. Person for person we have produced far less Christian literature than church bodies of comparable size or much smaller.”⁶⁰ This was said over 35 years ago, but I still see a lack of youth materials being printed and offered by our synod. While this may be a budget issue that cannot be currently addressed, it does not mean that the leaders of this synod cannot produce materials on their own. Ministry

⁵⁶ Sengele, *It's a Big Deal*, 5.

⁵⁷ Nelson, “What Makes Teens Tick?”, 4.

⁵⁸ “People (especially youth) and situations change; so youth ministry structures, to be effective, must constantly evolve. Don’t see the need to change the ministry as failure; it’s only a sign of growth!” Jeffrey D. Jones, and Kenneth C. Potts, *Organizing a Youth Ministry to Fit Your Needs*. Judson Pr, 1983, 25.

⁵⁹ “In my opinion we need the following items for our parish education program of the next two decades, ... a multi-year youth Bible study curriculum,” Pastor John C. Lawrenz, “The Need For Contemporary Published Materials For Parish Instruction In The Wisconsin Synod.” In *Second Biennial Convention of the South Atlantic District of the WELS*, 5. Tampa, Florida, 1976, 3.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

aids and resources do not have to be officially stamped by the synod and sold at a profit.⁶¹ Helping out fellow workers in the church will be beneficial in ways that we will not always be able to comprehend.

How will the work I have done for my research and project affect my own youth ministry? This academic exercise has taught me to strive for excellence and to continue to gain more knowledge about teen ministry. Papers and books about youth ministry abound and the numbers keep growing. I know that I will need to be in-tune with what is going on in pop-culture and in the lives of teens so that I can relate to them in an effective manner. I must not rely purely on my own work or character for leading the teen group. It is God working through his Word which he gives us the privilege of sharing. I also will continue to learn about and grow in new teaching techniques, as they are important to communicating clearly.⁶²

What is the best way to teach teens? What is needed from a youth ministry?⁶³ These questions have been asked for a long time and *will continue* to be asked. No magic Bible study exists that will solve all the challenges of reaching out to teens. There is no specific personality that will be able to automatically connect with all of the church's youth. There is not a hidden Bible passage that will automatically click in the minds of teenagers, making them come to Bible study every week. There is not a specific series that will intrigue all of the teens enough to come to Bible study and bring along two of their friends. There is no easy answer. No one way is the

⁶¹ "Realizing that with limited manpower there's not much we'll be able to do in the future regarding new Bible studies and things like that. Plus it seems like now the current climate in our synod is trying to *train the trainers*. That is kind of the way that we are going right now. I don't think that I buy into it 100%, because I still think we need to be developing materials as well, but right now, that just isn't possible." Schneider, Interview, 2-3.

⁶² "Too many youth and their families are "not there" because poor teaching and preaching have created a stumbling block too big for their Old Adam to crawl over. Current leaders who want to pass on a spiritual, leadership legacy, must recognize that youth today (and many adults) learn differently." Dr. Joel A. Nelson, "REACH!" Summer (2007), 2.

⁶³ What types of objectives do we need in Christian education? Shall the objective be functional? That is, shall it stress some aspect or aspects of the service that Christian education should perform, such as mission? Shall it be psychological? That is, shall it stress what it should accomplish with the people Christian education serves: conversion or commitment, perhaps? Shall it be operational? That is, shall it stress some aspect or aspects of the techniques involved in carrying out Christian education, such as study or worship? Shall it be theological? That is, shall it stress its doctrinal orientation and aim? Shall it be otherwise content-centered? That is, shall it point up the teaching of Bible, history, morality, or some other body of knowledge or information? Or shall the objective of Christian education be a combination of these? They all appear to be more or less legitimate and important." Wyckoff, *Theory and Design of Christian Education Curriculum*, 59.

best. Teen ministry takes time. Teen ministry takes effort. It is a labor of love that every leader will have to undertake and set as a priority. Teen ministry will vary greatly depending on individual circumstances, but with God's Word in hand, a determined attitude, a loving heart, and an understanding mind, God will bless the efforts of working with the youth of his kingdom.

Reference List

Appendix A: Initial Proposal

Teen Ministry is an important part of any ministry. The youth are the young men and women who will someday lead our churches. It is imperative that they are trained in knowledge and understanding of God's Word. "Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not turn from it." (Proverbs 22.6) Ideally, it would be great for all of our youth to attend a preparatory school or an area Lutheran high school. Practically though, this will not happen. While we may not be able to have them attend a high school where God's Word is taught in every classroom, this does not mean that we are free from our obligation to train them in the Lord. This can still be accomplished through a well-run church youth group program and/or a teen Bible study.

Working with the youth is no easy task however. The teenage years are unpredictable and impressionable for them. They will not always be open or ready for a class discussion; they have a lot going through their minds as they are entering this next phase of growing up. A good connection with the youth group is imperative to the effectiveness of that group through the year. While some of this relates to the youth minister/leader and his or her personality, the manner in which the teens are approached is also vitally important.

PowerPoint is overused. With the adding of technology to every classroom, teens are getting PowerPoint for hours a day at school. They are tied to their i-Phones and i-Pads and are always texting one another. They are on technology overload. What is it going to feel like when they sit down in the youth room on Sunday morning and see another PowerPoint? It is going to feel like another classroom and their defenses are going to immediately go up and they will refuse to learn.

Worksheets are also overused. They get these everyday from multiple classes in high school. When they feel like you are giving them "work" to do, they begin to put up that wall and sit and doodle on that worksheet throughout the class, not making eye contact. That makes for a difficult discussion in Bible study. The other detriment to worksheets is what the teens actually do with them. Many will follow along with them in class but just throw them out on their way out the door. Others may actually fill them out faithfully and stick them in their binder on the shelf, but what happens after your last Bible study before summer? They will take that binder home and toss it out or stick it in a box with all of their school binders to be stored in the garage for a couple of years. What is the benefit of those worksheets?

In viewing the 9-12 Christ Light materials put out by NPH, they are very thoroughly done and well thought out. They are certainly scripturally sound and cover pertinent topics in the lives of high school students. I find the worksheets to be overbearing. There are three units with a total of ten lessons on Creation! In regards to a once a week teen Bible study, that is too many. The

curriculum was intended for an area Lutheran high school curriculum, so I will not say that it is too much. It would serve that purpose just fine, but it cannot work for a teen Bible study in which the teens may not all have a strong biblical base. The Christ Light series is also intended for an individual grade level. I would have to figure that all teen groups consist of 9th-12th graders, and perhaps even 8th graders. The curriculum of Christ Light could be taught as a four year cycle, but every couple of years the seniors would be getting the basics of Christianity, while the freshmen would be taught lessons of Christian Dogmatics.

There are many wonderful Bible study series available as well as the Christ Light series. With these individual series you would begin another series every month or two. There is nothing wrong with that, but the cohesiveness that comes from a planned curriculum could definitely benefit the youth group as a whole and make the work of the teen minister easier.

In my humble opinion, I believe that a discussion based teen Bible study is more beneficial and effective. I think that by focusing on one, two, or perhaps three Scripture passages each week would allow the youth to remember them better in the long term. What are they going to pull out when confronted by life issues? A dusty binder with worksheets half-filled out and doodles on the side? Or will they be able to access those key passages from Scripture that they know from memory?

My goal with this project is to review some practices of current youth leadership teams. I will inquire as to what Bible studies they use and to what effect. I hope to contact current youth leaders in our synod and see what they feel is the best way to keep the youth in the Word of God. After gaining information from current sources, I will prepare a discussion based Bible study to be tested in a youth group. After hearing results from both the leader and the youth group, this will help to fine-tune future Bible studies.

The long-term goal of this would be to produce a four-year Bible study for teens that is discussion based. A pastor/youth minister could use this as needed and be flexible with its uses. Because there would only be a teacher's guide, he could make his own student guide if desired. He would study up on the subject before hand, but use this guide in developing his thoughts and where he wanted to go with the teens that week.

Appendix B: Survey

What curriculum do you use with your teen group?

Have you had experience using Christ Light materials with teens?

Do you write your own Bible studies or printed series?

How well do the teens respond?

What do they do with the handouts?

Have you found an effective way to use handouts?

What has been the best way to get the teens to remember what you talked about?

What is the best way to keep them engaged?

Do you ever have any review of materials studied with the teens?

Would a 4-year discussion based teen Bible study be a beneficial resource to have?

Details of what I hope to eventually develop:

- 4 years Bible study , themed by month
- Review at the end of each month in the form of game/Bible Trivia
- Topical and Scriptural lessons that alternate every month
- Each discussion guide would be for pastor alone
 - Contains pertinent Scripture and application
 - Shows resource guide – what to read before Bible study

Appendix C: Returned Surveys

C.1 Staff Minister Mike Pfeifer Survey: Beautiful Savior, Green Bay

What curriculum do you use with your teen group?

Currently don't use a teens-only curriculum. Several teens involved in helping with Sunday School; or attend "adults" Bible Study. In previous congregations I used some of the "old" NPH teen materials (ala' Jim Adermann, Paul Kelm, etc.); also borrowed ideas from Group's teen series, especially for discussion starters, illustrations, learning activities.

Have you had experience using Christ Light materials with teens?

Somewhat, especially when we were doing the field-testing during the writing and development of the materials.

Do you write your own Bible studies or printed series?

I have done quite a few over the years; again, sometimes got ideas / borrowed pieces from former NPH teen materials, Group, Youth Specialties, Concordia.

How well do the teens respond?

I found it varies based on the group and the individuals. Some years we've had great attendance, strong involvement and discussions; other years not as much....

What do they do with the handouts?

The majority left on the table, couch, floor. Even in Confirmation class I'm going much more heavily on visual media (PowerPoint, video clips, etc) rather than lots of paper, hand-outs.

Have you found an effective way to use handouts?

Over the past 10+ years I become a HUGE believer in "active learning." For me that means people are either up and moving around in some kind of learning activity; or having table-talks (small group discussions or working through section of Scripture together), etc. So when it comes to handouts, for me they all need to be interactive - - in other words, not just a page of notes from me, but rather something which they'll use to write down notes on.

What has been the best way to get the teens to remember what you talked about?

Oh, they're supposed to remember what we talked about? 😊 Without being flippant, praying together at beginning and/or end of discussion/class; doing a short wrap-up / overview near the end of the discussion; starting off the following session by briefly bringing up / reviewing what we discussed last time (where we left off).

What is the best way to keep them engaged?

As much as possible, avoiding the "Me-minister; I-talk. You-learners; you listen" lecture style. [I even avoid using terms like 'Bible study' or 'Bible class' as much as possible, and go with

'Bible discussion' most of the time.] And going back to the active learning concept, with the Holy Spirit's help, I try to develop the layout of the discussion to involve and engage them. Whether it's something as simple as having them read a verse or two (which I know some guys out there don't believe in) or doing "polls" ("Do you agree or disagree with....? Why / why not?") I think there are ways that we have to lovingly force our academic-prone brains to think: "How can I involve them more? What can we do to have active participation?" I think Group has developed some strong approaches in this vein.

Also, getting ideas from the teens from time to time about topics they'd like to discuss.

Incorporating current events, movies or TV shows, music - - not as the primary focus of the discussion or lesson, but as a tool or avenue to engage them.

Do you ever have any review of materials studied with the teens?

If by reviews you mean formal quizzes or anything - no. But as I mentioned above, I think it's pedagogically strong to have a wrap-up in order to "bring it all home."

Would a 4-year discussion based teen Bible study be a beneficial resource to have?

I think high-quality, Bible-based, interactive materials and resources would be great!

C.2 Pastor Ben Berger Survey: Mount Olive, Appleton

What curriculum do you use with your teen group?

I have used “adult” studies from NPH, youth from CPH, Group, Simply Youth Ministries and others. I have also written my own.

Have you had experience using Christ Light materials with teens?

They are not well received. Can be good resource material

Do you write your own Bible studies or printed series?

I have and those are most often the best.

How well do the teens respond?

They need to see and discuss truths that intersect with their lives.

What do they do with the handouts?

At best just follow along – rarely take notes

Have you found an effective way to use handouts?

I like handouts as a discussion guide. Need freedom to abandon though in order to follow discussion wherever they take it.

What has been the best way to get the teens to remember what you talked about?

Talk about them and their lives. Figure out how God’s truths intersect their lives.

What is the best way to keep them engaged?

Again, talk about them and their lives. They still need to learn truths that they will “need later.” I’ve found that once I build a relationship discussing what’s happening and what matters now, they give me freedom to discuss those truths they aren’t dealing with yet.

Do you ever have any review of materials studied with the teens?

Most materials geared toward youth are useable. I avoid the ones that are too old. Of course, most non-WELS or non-LCMS materials have doctrinal issues. I either discuss during the study or just rework the idea into my own lesson.

Would a 4-year discussion based teen Bible study be a beneficial resource to have?

Absolutely. I’ve thought of doing that myself – just not as easy as it sounds. I also have to work around Lutheran High School curriculum because most of my teens attend Fox Valley Lutheran. Nonetheless, they still study mostly doctrine there and have limited time for life-based discussion. WELS definitely needs to create some resources though and a four-year supply would do well.

I like the idea of alternating topic and sections of Bible. I would be happy with a blank discussion guide – that’s more important to me than the “answers.” Most of the discussion should be open anyway, without right or wrong answers. The pastor’s or leader’s job will be to insert the truth appropriately. If you want to supply a “leader’s guide,” it would still be good to have one without the answers so I don’t have to do too much editing myself. Also, some design or artwork would be great, but keep it simple and avoid clipart (it looks old).

I don’t know about the need for a review. That feels like school more than discussion. Perhaps the games or Trivia would give that a different feel. Might be nice to just build those into the weekly discussions rather than some kind of “review.” Just my initial reaction.

God bless your work!

Appendix D: Interviews
D:1 Pastor Tom Schneider

Tuesday December 13, 2011

How long have you worked with teen ministry? What experience have you had working with teens?

I've been at Michigan Lutheran High School for 15 years as a teacher and coach. Prior to that I was at Goodview Trinity in Winona where I did youth ministry. As you mentioned earlier, I was director of a youth camp, Camp Whitewater, for 11 years. I was also involved in the Western Wisconsin District Youth Ministry Program. I helped organize, I think it was 3 Youth Rallies, while I was there. I currently am the chairman of the synod's Youth and Family Ministry.

In regards to a Sunday morning teen Bible study, what experience do you have with that?

Actually, very limited. When I was in a congregation, we did not have a teen ministry class as such. I invited them to come to my adult Bible classes. I guess shortage of manpower was one of the reasons why we didn't do it that way. Obviously here at the high school, I'm doing teen ministry on a daily basis. It looks like you mention in your thesis are two different things.

I'm guessing that MLHS has their own curriculum. Have they looked at Christ Light or used Christ Light?

We have it here; we don't follow it precisely. But I looked it over when I first got here. I kind of took things from it. My approach is a little more Bible based, where Christ Light tends to pick and choose parts of stories that they want to use as far as going into the Old Testament. For instance in sophomore religion, which I teach, we start with the life of Solomon and we go through all the rest of the Old Testament in one semester with the kids. In the second semester, we look at the life of Jesus, but my preference is actually just to use one of the Gospels, so I focus on the Gospel of Luke. That as opposed to doing a comprehensive look at all of Jesus' preaching and teaching and miracles. We stay on the focus of Luke because that way the kids can look at it and see that each Bible writer has a reason for picking and choosing the stories in Jesus' life, as opposed to lumping it all together.

In your teaching in the classroom, obviously it is different than a Sunday morning, what is the best way to engage the students so that they remember the lessons and take them to heart. Do you use worksheets or do you have class notes?

I try to vary my approach from unit to unit. Sometimes we will do a class note thing where I have them do group work together. They answer the questions and they discuss it as a class later on. Sometimes I have them do take home assignments with notes. Sometimes we do it as a PowerPoint. I try to switch things up a little bit so it's not the same old, same old day after day and week after week. and I find that depending on what unit I'm teaching that can change how I approach it as well.

Do you have some examples as to how what concept you are studying changes your style of teaching?

A couple for instances. In Revelation, I use PowerPoint because it gives me the opportunity to in one column put down pictures that are being presented in Revelation and in the other side I'm able to bring in the meaning and what the different components of the picture are. And so by having the kids read it first

and giving them a feel for the picture, we can go through the picture quickly and spend more time focusing on the meaning of the picture. In another instance, when I teach the book of Ezra, I do a grouping scenario where we are looking for groups of threes. We look at three things. 3 reasons why it took 20 years to rebuild the temple. 3 prophets God used to encourage the people. All different types of 3s. those we fill out as a group. I find that the kids have more discussion then. They aren't always right with their answers, but they are participating a lot more. And its not just the simple question, here's the answer type of thing. Of course there are times, like when we are studying the history of the kings of Judah, there it is important for them to jot things down in question and answer format, then to cover the material. It really kind of depends on what the material is that is being taught. Is it a history lesson, or is there something more to it?

Professor Quandt told us during Middler Education how he ran his Catechism class in Salt Lake City. Rather than buying the confirmands the study Bibles after they were confirmed, the ladies group bought them these Bibles before 7th grade, as they started confirmation. Throughout confirmation class they could mark in these Bibles that they would prayerfully use for the rest of their lives and take notes in these Bibles. I'd like to incorporate something like that into my thesis proposal. So those key passages that they had in confirmation, they've got them marked, so as we go through those same passages in Bible study during the 4 years of high school, they would come back to these passages that are marked. With the highlighting and the notes in the margins, they would be able to take that home instead of worksheet. When they read it again in the future, they would be able to key in on those points again. Does that sound like a viable concept? Would that be beneficial?

Yeah I think that would be. In fact I do something here, I can't call it similar, in my sophomore religion class first semester. When we are studying the lesson for that week, I pick out 3 Bible passages that we memorize. But the passages are all speaking to the scenario or situation that we are studying that week. I think that part is important to have those Bible gems at your disposal. I think it's a good idea. When I used to teach confirmation, I used to use the Vallesky/Bivens course for confirmation. I actually had the kids look up all of the passages out of their Bible, not just use the catechism. I wanted these kids to have the understanding that these passages are actually coming from the Bible and not just copied out of the Bible and stuck in another book. Nothing against Kuske by the way. I felt it was more important for them to have a working relationship with their Bible, not just knowing the books of the Bible, but being able to find chapter and verse.

Can you tell me about your work as chairman of the board for Child and Family Services?

It's changed a lot in the past couple of years. The synod has run on more difficult times financially. Our administrator, the guy called to that position took a call away and has not been replaced. Because of that, our work has been fairly limited in what we're able to do. It simply because everyone that is serving on the commission, has fulltime jobs outside the commission. Right now what we're doing is really more of a maintenance type thing. We're trying to finish up projects we've been working on. Realizing that with limited manpower there's not much we'll be able to do in the future regarding new Bible studies and thing like that. Plus it seems like now the current climate in our synod is trying to *train the trainers*. I'll be coming over for the Mission and Ministry Day at the Seminary in February to talk about youth ministry, about the vision of youth ministry, and how to establish youth ministry programs within the congregation.

That is kind of the way that we are going right now. I don't think that I buy into it 100%, because I still think we need to be developing materials as well, but right now that just isn't possible.

I took a look at the Concordia version of Christ Light, called *One in Christ*. In my opinion (CPH) has it narrowed down more than Christ Light. Christ Light has an 8 page worksheet per lesson. They have Creation stretched out over 10 lessons. CPH's workbook for the teens is more streamlined. It has less clutter on the pages, just on one side or a front and back per lesson. Have you had an opportunity to look at Concordia's teen Bible studies?

I've seen some of the work that Concordia has put out. The only comparison I'd make is that the Concordia material is almost too quick and easy to get through things. As far as their approach, they tend to gloss over things much more quickly, sort of like a refresher course for kids who've had it already than something new. In my mind, it's a matter of what your goal is and also who your audience is. You may find that when you get out into your first parish, you may have a congregation where almost all of the kids went to a CDS and go to an ALHS. So there you are going to have to develop materials that fit in between the gaps of what they already have. You may also get into a congregation where they don't have a grade school or a high school, and there you may find that your kids still need things that are very basic. One of the things I noticed that you are talking about, trying to get the kids engaged in a lot of discussion. That is certainly great. But when you're standing in front of kids on a daily basis, I find quite often, our kids don't want to get into discussion. They are quick to ask questions, but as far as getting into discussions or even debating issues, they just pull back and shy away from it. You almost have to drag it out of them. That might be a little bit of our heritage, I don't know. The other thing that I could just add to this is that every class is different. I've had some classes that have been just wonderful with discussion. The next year I have notes saying "good discussion point here" and so I throw it out to the kids and it just falls flat. Every group that you get is unique in what you can do and what you try to do and whether it is successful or not.

What I'd like to end up with is a 4 year "curriculum" with discussion guides for a leader listing pertinent Bible passages for that topic or section of Scripture, and with extra resources that a leader might be able to read in preparation for teaching. Not necessarily a point by point guide that they would teach from, but as a preparation for them to get a handle on where they want to go, to give them options. If you have a 4 year curriculum, you have a lot to choose from. If they wanted to create a discussion sheet in addition, they would be welcome to do so. I went this route because I saw the need for it. There are a lot of Bible studies out there obviously. But to have a cohesive unit, a whole curriculum like this, do you see the benefit and need of this?

Let me share this thought with you. I think a 4-year curriculum might be far-reaching. My suggestion would be to shorten it up to a 2-year curriculum. The idea being if you spend 2 years with it and you repeat it again, the circumstances of the kids after you come back to it in 2 years will have changed enough and their way of thinking will have probably changed, that you can go back over the same material after 2 years and it would be new again. The reason I mention that is because I teach sophomore and senior religion at MLHS. I've often said to the seniors, "remember what you learned in sophomore religion?" and I get 29 blank stares looking at me. Evidently they studied it for the time yet they haven't retained it. that's why if you were to pursue a 2 year curriculum, that could be good enough. You could

expand it at some time, but I think it might be difficult to spread materials out over a 4 year period. It would be beneficial enough to do that, but it might be more beneficial for the kids to repeat something.

My project here does not have the intention of laying out those 4 years already. This is only the groundwork of working towards that goal and seeing if this is a feasible thing and seeing if this is needed or wanted.

I'm always getting requests of people to send them Bible studies. There is always a clamor for that because sadly I think people are looking for something canned that they can just open it up and run with it without having to put a whole lot of time and energy into it. I kind of like the idea of yours. Here's the idea, here's the skeleton but you're going to have to put muscle and tissue on it to make it worthwhile. Which I think is a good thing because whenever I tried to teach someone else's Bible study, I'm never comfortable doing that and I don't know what they were thinking at the time when they wrote it. *I think the more basic you can lay out the skeleton, the more beneficial it ultimately will become for those who are going to use it.*

Starting out, could you talk about your experience working with youth, where you've been and in what capacities you've served?

I was an old DMLC grad. After working at a congregational and school setting in Appleton for a number of years, I received one of the very first staff ministry calls. That was to Bloomington Lutheran Church in Bloomington MN. A major part of my work and responsibilities was working with teens, confirmation aged, public school and LES students, high school students and young adult, whether in college or in the work force. That's where I mostly got my feet wet in regards to working with teens. After being in Bloomington for 8 years, I received a call to St. Mark Green Bay, to serve as their staff minister. I had a wider range of duties and responsibilities, but part of them was still working with teens. That has kind of carried over. During that time, I got very involved in some of the bigger picture things. District youth events and also with synod. I served on the old CYD for a number of years. In 2000 received the call to serve as administrator for CYD. Now I'm here at Beautiful Savior in Green Bay. Not as large of a congregation, so we don't have as large a number of teens in youth, and it's hampered a little bit by the facility that we are in right now. It's a glorified WEF unit. It's a multi-purpose facility for many different groups in the church.

Did you get a chance to read through my proposal that I sent to you? Starting with the questions from my original survey, what did you use for resources with the teens? Did you create your own or do you used packaged Bible studies.

All of the above. We had the opportunity to mooch from some very talented people who had done some professional writing that was published in the old Northwestern series. We also used bits and pieces of Group Inc. studies. We especially used discussion starters and group activities approaches, as opposed to "me stand and lecture, you sit and listen" format. This unfortunately was the norm for many, many years. I can remember suffering through Bible studies as a teen in Helenville; I pretty do things 180° the other way. I work much towards a discussion based like you were talking, a participatory style. We had the opportunity to do some of the writing and field testing for the original Christ Light.

How involved were you with the Christ Light program?

I have to answer that question kind of 3 fold. One, with the CYD, we were in charge of the overall review of the entire project. We had to keep the big picture going. I had to do some writing for some parts of it. We had some situation where we had a guy committed to write a series or unit and it didn't quite turn out the way we hoped for. Their roles changed and they weren't able to finish it all. I did some of those fill in the gaps projects. And thirdly, I was serving as administrator for CYD, so I was the overall project director. That was just as we were getting deep into the high school materials.

I spoke with Dr. Joel Nelson earlier today, he wasn't really involved with it at all, but he said that initially the Christ Light series was intended to be for Sunday School curriculum and it morphed into the grade school/high school because the discussions were more in depth than they originally intended.

Right. I would agree with Joel's observation on that.

When it got to the teen’s section, did you try to redirect it back to its original intention, or move it back to an area Lutheran High School curriculum?

I don’t know if I had too much to say by the time I got into the driver’s seat on this program. The project was so far along at that point in time. What I’m about to say is no reflection on my dear friend and former colleague Jerry Kastens. I have nothing but great things to say about Jerry. But I think that Jerry if he were still with us would probably step back and say, “This baby didn’t turn out the way we had hoped.” I don’t know why that necessarily is. I think some of it might have been, and I say think because I’m not sure, due to some feedback from districts or people at large. I would agree with your summary of Joel’s comment. This whole concept of developing materials that were to be especially Sunday School friendly, and could be used in a CDS or ALHS, but somewhere along the process, I think those two areas of focus may have gotten flip-flopped. As a result, the current Christ Light materials, and I realize that they’re starting to gear up for a revision, but the current ones are definitely overwhelming in the amount of information. Sunday School teachers are overwhelmed at trying to cram that much information into 45 minutes each week. I too was disappointed. This is no rip on Jerry at all. I too when we got to the end said, “Wait a minute, this isn’t what I thought we were talking about 6, 7, 8 years ago, when Dave Kuske came up with the original concepts.” It may have come from the Publishing House a little bit, because they had to look at putting out a product that they could sell and get a return on. I know at one time it was well over \$3 million just to get the first round of materials out. Especially the artwork. Artwork is extremely expensive. There was so much original artwork that was done. When you step back and look at every teacher guide and student guide and everything else, the 3-4 year cycle, the A, B, C lessons, it was a monstrosity in a sense. When I saw your concept of a 4 year series of lessons, I just smiled. I thought, Oh to be young and idealistic again. Hang on to the ideals though; somebody has got to keep going with it.

I guess the more I’ve talked with you and other youth leaders, my idea has morphed a little bit from my original intention. Talking with Joel today especially, he was saying how variety is such a good thing. Having a discussion based Bible study week after week would get old. I understand that better now. Where I’m going with my project now is to have a resource that a teen leader could take and read. It would have questions that the leader could ask, questions that would be expected to be asked from the youth, and additional resources that they could go and read prior to leading discussion with the teens. That’s not to say that the leader couldn’t make up his own study sheet to add to it to give to the teens, or throw in a PowerPoint or throw in an appropriate video for the topic at hand. I think that more so is where I’m leaning now. You put the material together that should be discussed with teenagers, that’s pertinent to them and applicable, and then with that information, the leader can do what they want with it. I think that’s where the whole project is leaning now. Is that more beneficial? Is that less *idealistic* and more practical?

I think so, I think so. All things considered I think there has to be a balance of both of those. Not an either/or, but a both/and. Do you want to get up every week and preach the world’s greatest sermon? Of course you do. you’ll also get those weeks when your kids are sick and you have a funeral and 3 people in the hospital. The next thing you know it’s Saturday night and the clock is ticking. You have to have the ideal, but also realize that life is life. When you’re giving materials to somebody else, realize that in many cases this is for volunteer teen leaders, or its going to be a pastor or vicar that has 8 other things going on. I think that keeping it very practical as opposed to my 42 page guide for one lesson.

What was your experience with handouts for the teens?

I would sometimes use them but not always. If I felt that it was something that was going to help discussion, I would use it. If I looked at it and saw that it was a pencil and paper fill in the blank or match column A to column B. I felt that was too academic. That's what most high school students feel like 4-5 days a week already. It looked too much like school. That has been my personal criticisms of Christ Light and of Concordia. My experience with Concordia over the years was a bit of a turnoff for me. They published these 13 week, 13 lesson booklets, and I just could not see groups of teens trying to crawl through that 1 single topic for 3-4 months. So I'm glad that some of the things we have done in more recent years are a little more realistic. Joel was part of some of those discussions and ideas and plans.

Can you begin by giving a little background of your working with youth, focusing particularly on high school?

I graduated from MLC in 1978. My first call was at St. Andrew's in Chicago, then I went to Our Redeemer in Santa Barbara, CA, then to St. Paul's in Muskego, then to synod positions, every place I was, I worked, with teens in addition to my other work. I was always involved with the youth group. The second synod position I had was administrator for Youth Discipleship so it was my job to help all the other WELS congregations with their youth ministry.

How long have you been here at Garden Homes?

This is my third year. It's been two and a half years.

Can you talk a little about your work as administrator for Youth Discipleship?

It was a synod level position on the Board for Parish Services to work with WELS congregations and help them with youth and family ministry and one part of that was working with the teen dimension of things. So we would consult with congregations on how to do good youth groups, we conducted workshops and seminars, we would do an annual workshop for the Middlers at the Seminary just on youth ministry, teen ministry, we ran the WELS International Youth Rallies every two years.

Did you ever prepare any resources for youth work?

A big part of the job at Parish Services was to develop resources. We developed several Bible study resources that were used. *Walk in My World, Making Right Choices* was another one. We had developed several videos that were going to be having Bible study stuff included with them, called *Every Day*. Those are on the WELS streams website and they're also on Youtube. They took different real-life vignettes of teens in real life everyday situations covering a host of different topics. Primarily WELS teens were involved as the actors for those and the plan before I left was to develop those into some kind of Bible study where there would be a discussion sheet that could go along with the video. I'm not sure where that all went to after I left and Parish services all imploded.

Did you do any work with Christ Light?

Christ Light was up and going, I was involved very heavily in what would be the second edition of Christ Light, which is not coming out now because of the translation problem. But I worked a lot with the Publishing House in figuring out what to do with the next Christ Light better for everybody.

Do you have a list of things that you were planning on changing?

They were going to do things to make it more engaging for the different learning styles. The current Christ Light style is very sit-in-your-desk to learn the stuff. There isn't a whole lot of interaction. The lessons were designed more to connect more with visual, auditory and kinesthetic learners, a lot better activities, a lot better variety of activities, a lot more helps for teachers. They were going to make a separate Sunday School version of it, so that the repetition between Sunday School and Day School would pretty much be eliminated. Those were some of the things that they were working on.

Did you ever teach teen groups or youth groups yourself? What was your experience with that?

As I looked at your materials here, there were 5 things that I thought anybody that's going to work with teens should be looking at. Your stuff seems to really be focused on the curriculum, the materials that are being used. And your vision is to develop discussion kinds of things because you feel that PowerPoint or technology is overused.

Job one for me is to **#1. Know Teenagers**. You have to know what makes teens tick and the things that are going on in them psychologically, physiologically, and spiritually, that impacts anything that you're going to be doing with them. ... Handouts ... I think being a pastor guy you know and are taught you really got to know your audience for preaching; I think you've got to do that for teenagers too. You've got to know what's going on in them. The things that are being described here, some pretty basic stuff in regards to teenagers, no matter what era or generation, these things happen to me and you. There are definite psychological, physiological, and spiritual things going on. If you're better locked into those, I think you are better able to figure out what you need to be doing to connect with kids.

#2 You have to know what good teaching is. A slam dunk curriculum in the hands of someone who doesn't know how to teach is going to be a disaster. A crummy curriculum in the hands of a teacher who really gets it, is really going to be good, even though the curriculum might be kind of weak. So if teachers know how young people learn, how people in general learn, how they all have different learning styles, and those learning styles have to be accommodated, that there are visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. If you understand that there are three basic learning styles and know what the visual learner needs and what the auditory learner needs and what the kinesthetic learner needs, understand that in any class, it will usually break down into thirds. I've tested that with groups of 13 and 300. You've got to know what good teaching is. I think that you Seminary guys, your professors would tell you that too if they are being honest, that you don't get really good models of teaching there. when I did my Middler workshops there, we talked about this stuff. I was nice but didn't hold back in saying that the lecture approach that people get at the college level isn't really what needs to happen. It may connect with some kids but a lot of kids are going to be left.

You can always get someone to come to your Bible class, teen or adult, the first time. But do they come back? And if they don't come back, what's the reason that they don't come back? I'm a firm believer that a lot of times they don't come back because the class isn't connecting with them. They're not getting anything out of it and they're not because a lot of times the teachers don't design and make the class resonate with the different learning styles that there are. If you understand that every class has these 3 learning styles in it in thirds, you need to in your lesson have something that's visual, something auditory, and an opportunity for movement, otherwise you're going to miss a third or two thirds of the kids. That's been proven over and over and over. I've been doing this for over 30 years. This isn't rocket science, but when you do it, it really makes a difference. And for young people especially.

Older people, adults have learned how to sit through a not so good class. They understand the social responsibilities that you are still respectful. Depending on the teenager and how much they really understand about what's socially acceptable or not, they're not going to hang with you there for very long. If you're not delivering, there's going to be a discipline problem or other things happening. Eventually, they're not going to come back. You need to know what good teaching is and you need to know your teens.

#3: You need to have variety. Your point about PowerPoint is overused, yeah that's true. But I don't know if it is so much that PP is itself the problem as to how it is used. I still think today, because most kids are visual, to not take advantage of PP or use video would be a mistake. Can you use the PP, maybe a couple of slides to set up the discussion. Or you have a cool video clip used to set up discussion. Sometimes you don't use it at all. I was getting the impression that you were thinking of designing more of a discussion based curriculum. I think you said no student handouts, just leader's guide. I think it'd be very good, but even that if done over and over is going to become boring. There's a thing called habituation. I could be doing really awesome things, but if I'm doing it over and over it's not going to connect. If I'm PP all the time, kids are going to get turned off. If I'm using video all the time. I think if you're using just discussion all the time without bringing in some of these other things you're going to have problems.

#4 It's got to be engaging and fun. I think young people want to be engaged. You've got to keep them interested. And it's got to be fun. Research shows that when stuff is fun, you remember it better. That's just a reality. When stuff is more fun, there's more of an emotional connection to it and you remember it better.

#5: You've got to have Food. It sounds silly but you've got to have refreshments.

I think if you are doing these things, it doesn't matter what you use. I've taught a lot of different stuff. I've used WELS stuff, stuff I've created myself, Group Inc., Youth Specialties, Concordia. Some were more worksheet driven, some discussion driven, some had video. You need to have variety. With your model, which I think is very, very good, you are thinking that we are going to start with something and work through this whole curriculum, I don't think that today you can expect that the same teens are going to come all of the time. You may have some that come a lot, but I just think that with today's schedules and activities, if your curriculum is going to build one week to the next, you're always going to have some kids who won't make every week. I always tried to do things that kids could come in any time without feeling like they had missed something. Teens are so worried about how they are going to look in front of others, if the class is going 3 weeks on this particular topic and I couldn't be there because I had to work, they can feel like they are behind or missed out. It gives them an excuse to not come back again. If you could develop things in such a way that the teens could walk in any time and still feel like part of the group without feeling like they missed out on anything, I think that's important.

Your thought about the worksheets and just filling up binders; if we think that the teenagers are going to take the stuff home, and that's important to them, I would say disabuse yourself of that. Have whatever materials you're going to have for class available, but maybe let them leave it there. If they take it home, it's going to wind up in the parking lot or the wastebasket. You may have a really superstar group. There are going to be some that this will mean enough to them that they are going to take it home. But finally, I want to accomplish everything with them in the 45-50 minutes that they are with me. If I've done a good enough job, they're going to take something home with them whether they take the sheet or not. It'll be in the head or the heart. Probably the biggest thing you want them to take home is, "Wow, I really enjoyed this. I'm coming back."

You're taught at the Seminary that for every minute of a sermon, you should do an hour of prep. Are you spending an hour of prep for every minute of Bible class? The answer would be no. but we believe that Bible study is an important thing. So would not Bible class even warrant more time than a sermon

because it's an hour long? I think that sometimes you get the result that you do because that's what you work toward. People come to worship every Sunday because they know they are going to be fed. I wonder sometimes if they don't come to Bible class so much because they know they didn't get enough prep out of their pastor. I've been in Bible classes before and so have you I'm sure, it just seems that we're opening up our Bibles to go through this. Sad to say but sometimes it seems that the pastor is just making it up as he goes along. Or if you have a sheet that we just have to get through, someone asks a tangent question that is ignored because we have to get through this sheet. There's such pressure. If that's how you're going to deal with it with kids, kids are not going to play along with that. You have to be willing with young people to go on the teachable moment paths that they give you.

A lot of times people are afraid to ask questions in Bible class (reference study). As an educator, I'm not afraid of the questions that have been asked, because that's the only way you get feedback. You sit in a lot of classes where everyone sits passively and the pastor is doing most of the talking and nobody ever give much feedback unless it's the prescribed answer to the question. How do you ever know if you're getting through to anybody?

With teens especially, they have a lot of things on their minds, so your discussion model to try to get them to talk I think is really cool. Not making it so prescribed; here's a sheet that we're going to go through, now here's the topic and Bible passage that goes with it, now let's just talk about it and see where it goes. This could be a really neat approach to doing things, but then you've got to be willing to allow for that discussion to percolate and then be ready for some really interesting stuff. Teenagers if their personalities are more forceful will sling something out there just to see how you're going to bite on it. that first thing that they sling out there might not be what they want to talk about, but let's see what mood pastor is in today or let's see if it's safe, I'll float this question out there and depending on the reaction I get from pastor, I can/not ask the real question I wanted to ask. Knowing what's going on with teenagers is very important. You've probably heard this before, "I don't care how much you know, until I know how much you care." I think a lot of teens face teachers and pastors with whom they aren't comfortable enough because you don't care enough about them. So what you know isn't going to get through to them, because they really don't feel like you care enough about them. You make the point that the leader has to have a good relationship with them. That's huge. That will cut you a lot of slack. Kids will hang with you there an awful lot if they know that you care about them.

Here I am a principal, for the most part, of an all black school. I've never done that before. I was out of being a principal for almost 20 years. And then when Parish Services was going down, the Lord gave me this opportunity. I had the call to be principal at St. Paul's in New Ulm. And the incentive was that I could be the "principal of the flagship school of the WELS at the foot of the hill." I really didn't want to be a principal again, but when somebody comes to you and says, "you want to be a principal of an all black school in one of the poorest neighborhoods in the fourth poorest county in America and see what you can do with these kids?" I was 53 at the time. I thought to myself, this might be kind of fun. The point I was going to make is this: after the kids understood that I care about them, it's pretty amazing how well they respond to me. They've gone through several different principals over the years and things were not so super discipline-wise. We run a pretty tight ship here and the kids have been willing to roll with my approach because they know I'm a pretty decent, fun guy. They can respect me and I have a good relationship with them. That means a lot. They're willing to do more, put up with more, try harder if they know you care. And teenagers in a Bible class are going to do that too. If they know that the

person who is leading them is just a Bible study volunteer that agreed to do it but really doesn't know much about it, or hasn't gotten much training as to how to do it; they're just a warm body to oversee a class, you're going to have problems and don't be surprised if kids don't show up.

I surveyed 117 pastors and youth leaders and asked them a bunch of different questions about what to tell the vicar before he goes out to be the youth minister. (See packet) One of the things we did in Youth Discipleship offices was a research study on why young people leave WELS. There were 11 recommendations on that. On the basis of that, the Youth Discipleship Commission came up with this Conceptual Framework for developing more engaged young people in churches and Bible studies were written by Professor Sellnow of MLC to go with all of that. Here are more articles written about youth ministry. These all get at my belief that you've got to get to know teenagers and you've got to know how to teach and provide variety. If you do these 3 things, you could probably use just about anything.

I would see you desire to develop a curriculum that very discussion based with nothing that the teens have to look at would be a really great additional arrow to have in your quiver to use. But that will go for so long and then you have to switch it up and go with something else.

My direction has changed a little bit. I originally intended that this whole curriculum would be the base, but from what you're saying and from talking with others, I understand that you have to add that variety to it. I think that my goal with this is to have the resources available for a teen leader to take and look at, and prepare themselves for the questions that the teens might ask, prepare questions that they might ask the kids, additional resources that they can go and read, give them those 1-3 Bible passages that they will focus on that day. Give one sheet for the leader and they can do what they want with the information. If they want to add a video they can. That might be a resource that I add to the bottom of it. Even adding specific examples that they might use. That's what I now directing this towards. This would take care of the lack of variety in my initial proposal.

Even just asking young people what they want to study. Every teen Bible study doesn't have to be about sex, drugs and rock-n-roll. I was amazed at the times when there was a youth leader that worked with my two kids in youth group. They did a study on different religions. On Sundays he took them to these different church bodies or religious groups' service as part of their Bible study. They went to the Mormon temple and the Moslem mosque. They respectfully observed and then talked about it. I thought that was a very interesting thing. I think young people are concerned and interested in a lot of other different topics. Are they going through things with sex and drugs? Of course they are. They are going through things physiologically. There are a whole lot of other things that young people would talk about. You can use the Bible then to help them. Kids have so much information; they're on their ipods and cell phones. There is no end to the topics you can find.

With my curriculum, you wouldn't have to follow a set pattern but rather pick and choose what ones you want to use. Do you think thematic months can be a good thing or not? Have 3 weeks on Creation/Evolution/Original Sin and have a trivia wrap up at the end of the month?

I think that's a very good idea as long as you understand you're not going to have everybody there every week. Is that critical to what you're trying to accomplish if not everybody is there? If you do that, make

it short enough that the potential for someone to be there for the whole thing is better. If you stretched it out longer than those 3 weeks, you'd start to lose them.

Another thing an educator needs to do is set the road map for them. The brain needs to know where it's going with this thing. With your 3 week program, you would lay out what you're doing for the next month. This gets them excited and gets their brains ready for it. That's a good thing to do. No matter what you're teaching, what is the objective of what you're trying to teach, they need to know where you're going. That helps them to understand and stay focused.

There is a lack of teaching us to teach at the Seminary and I think that's something that they're trying to address. Perhaps eventually having SPaM guys at MLC taking teaching classes, which I think would be incredible. Professor Quandt told us in education how he ran his Catechism class in Salt Lake City. Rather than buying the confirmands the study Bibles after they were confirmed, the ladies group bought them these Bibles before 7th grade, as they started confirmation. Throughout confirmation class they could mark in these Bibles that they would prayerfully use for the rest of their lives and take notes in these Bibles. I'd like to incorporate something like that into my thesis proposal. So those key passages that they had in confirmation, they've got them marked, so as we go through those same passages in Bible study during the 4 years of high school, they would come back to these passages that are marked. With the highlighting and the notes in the margins, they would be able to take that home instead of worksheet. When they read it again in the future, they would be able to key in on those points again.

Being able to make the Bible come alive for kids is important. One of the things we also did in the office was develop a video based series to teach Sunday School, *The Word of Life Comes to Life*. It really emphasized how to do some of these things with your lessons so that the kids really felt that the Bible is relevant and interesting. Group Inc. developed a whole curriculum taking stories from the Bible giving you a visual object that would be helpful in making the Bible concept really stick in my head and visualize it. that is really important. I think the new Christ Light is going to try and do that too.

For example, when I was teaching in a one-room school in Santa Barbara, we taught this lesson of Stephan being stoned. What's this concept of stoning? We walked outside where I had put together a big pile of stones. I had each kid take one and then we threw the stone and it hit the ground. I had each one tell me how that felt and what it sounded like. After we had taught the lesson I told them to imagine being in the middle of that. What would that feel like? The fact that they could hold that heavy stone and throw it and hear it hitting, helps them to understand that lesson. Even under those circumstances, Stephen is asking God to forgive them. You can't assume that they know things, here especially at Garden Homes, the experiential base is not very high. I think you have to use a different way to get them to understand the concept using a different way, using their inner city experience. Sometimes it is quite easy to not think about your audience when you are doing stuff, then you have difficulty. I try to bring things in, to make the Bible come alive so that kids grasp what it's talking about. God made us to be sensory beings and we don't accomplish a whole lot by having you sit in the desk.

With the new Christ Light, are they going to cut back on worksheets?

The reality is that Christ Light was intended for Sunday School. But then they turned it into such an academic workbook, take your pages, sit down and fill them out, but then morphed into a CDS. It makes

Sunday another day of school and who wants another day of school? You figure out different ways of presenting it to make it more enjoyable and less tedious. And for Sunday School teachers, you have 45 minutes to an hour, you're not going to be able to cover 8 pages. I think they are going to try to address that in the new Christ Light.

A lot of our pastors and churches are going to Concordia. Any experience?

I always found the Concordia things had a lot of good stuff in it. I think it would've been neat if Christ Light was like that. I think it's going to move towards that, but Concordia was always a little bit further ahead on how to present the things in better ways.

Do you have any final thoughts?

I think education is always a moving target, especially with young people and it's crucial that you understand that they can help lead our churches now. In my ministry, we tried to get young people more involved in things. 2 teenage girls on the long range planning committee at St Paul's in Muskego came up with the church mission statement. We tried to have other things that the young things can offer. Teens helped plan the youth rallies. It was incredible their contribution and the things that they did. Congregations would probably have more teens in Bible studies if they included them in ministry. I'm in church work today because 3 guys in Burlington WI would find me in the church on Sunday and shake my hand and talk to me. They would make me feel like I was starting to become a man in this church. I looked forward to going to church so I could talk to these men .

If you could expound a little more upon what you've written. You've used a lot of various and different curriculums for your youth group, have you found one that you prefer, they all have their strengths and weaknesses of course. Can you speak on that please?

I don't think that there is any one place out there that you can say, Well here is a curriculum that you can use for teens. I think that what I've tried to figure out was what can I teach the teens, and I think about from 2 different ways. One, what might they be interested in. But that is always hit or miss. For example, if somebody's grandpa dies, that teen might be interested in talking about death when it happens, but if nobody in (their) family has ever died, then they know that it is relevant, because they're going to hit it at some point, but they're not super interested in it at that moment. So I try to balance that with what do they need to know. But in all the cases, I try to get past doctrine, to start with doctrine, but try to get into how this is going to show up in your lifetime. What I've found is that, if I can create conversation and get them to react, if I can find one person who has struggled through death and get them to tell their story, then the others will be interested enough to talk about it. And I go from there. Why use NPH studies, they and our synod overall don't really produce anything specifically for teens. You might find a person here or there who has written their own thing but there is nothing that is mass produced and marketed and sold through NPH. What I have found is that the teens are more than capable of using any of the NPH studies that are out there, and it is just a matter of me as a teacher, taking those and applying them to a high school kids life. And the main thing that is true of the other stuff, although some of the other places I listed like Concordia, Group, Simple Youth Ministries, they do have materials that are geared towards the high school kids. They tend to have the really good application stuff. CPH is doctrine heavy like our stuff. Group and Simple Youth Ministries and most of the other teen material out there is heavy application, but missing the doctrine or is wrong doctrine. So one way or the other, you have to supply something.

Have you used Christ Light in particular, have you molded it to fit your needs?

I haven't personally used a lot of the teens Christ Light materials, I've seen it. I've used Christ Light pretty extensively in catechism class and it works great there. I know that we use it in our grade school and I've used some of those materials myself as well, especially the topical studies for 7th and 8th graders. The topics are good for teens, but if they haven't already seen them, the teen materials themselves tend to seem a little childish for them. Since most of the teens in my area have gone through the system (CDS and Fox Valley) it just has a negative connotation because they have been doing it for so many years. I haven't gone into it a lot. FVL is here in Appleton and their curriculum is pretty much all self-written I guess by the teacher. I think that they have Christ Light around as a little bit of a resource, but I don't honestly know of anyone anywhere who is using it for teens just the way that it is written.

I was reading some essay in the essay file, that Christ Light had originally intended for a high school curriculum.

I'm not sure that any of them are using it like that. Part of it might simply be that if you have an area Lutheran high school, that probably means you have Lutheran grade schools and Christ Light is probably being used there, so maybe its getting old. Also it comes across as a little childish to the kids. Even

though it might be age appropriate, they way that they perceive it, they might think that they are more mature than they are. I don't know of anyone who is using it very extensively.

Do you regularly or do you on occasion use handouts?

I probably use handouts almost all the time. Probably for two reasons; one it just feels funny to sit there with nothing in front of you. Although the advantage of not using a handout is probably is creating that conversation instead of that class type feeling. It is an advantage. So when I create a handout, I don't actually plan for them to take notes on it. It's not like a worksheet. If they wanted to write on it they could, but more than anything it's something to hold on to, something to guide the discussion. The last couple of years our teen Bible study has been basically calling them *life guides*. It's essentially a sermon study, and I would just use the sermon text. If they heard the sermon that was always a benefit, but that wasn't always a guarantee either. Some of the kids were coming from other churches or maybe they missed church that weekend but they still made the study or whatever the situation was. And so very close-ended questions, a couple of questions that might get you into the text, but then after that open-ended questions so there wasn't a right answer. The whole point was to get them talking. We used that handout as a guide, if someone made a comment or asked a question that diverted, we followed that. We let the conversation go wherever they took it. But if they just answered the question, it was meant to be open-ended but it didn't create any conversation, well then we had another question to go to. We just worked our way down that sheet, usually a half-sheet of paper. Maybe 6,7, or 8, 8 at the most questions on it, it was more of a guide than a worksheet or notes.

You said that recently you've been basing Bible studies off your sermons?

The last couple of years, now we're doing that for adults too in small groups as one of the options. We still have our normal large group studies on Sunday morning, and a couple throughout the week, but now we've started small groups and they are sermon based. With the exact same guide that I was writing for my teen Bible study, now there are 3 pastors here that preach and each one just writes a guide, whoever has preached. The teens use that too. That actually works really well because it gives you a chance to have a specific text to study but because the questions are open ended and a little more application oriented and they are not right or wrong answers, what do you think, what do you feel, it tends to get the conversation to that. Basically they are getting the doctrine part by listening to the sermon and then the application is the discussion that follows. Our teens have been doing that for about two years now and it works pretty well. We preach mostly from the lectionary.

I really like the idea that you have. The teens have wanted to do topics, so I said come up with a list of topics you could study. The school year is roughly 30 weeks long if you come up with 30 topics, we could do that in a year. What are we going to do next year? Are we going to do the same topics over and over again? What are you going to do? So when you start alternating sections of Scripture, that extends it from topic to Scripture, topic to Scripture. I always thought it was really difficult to take topics to discuss, but I thought that was a difficult way to create and kind of extended curriculum. Doing the lectionary almost creates a cycle for you. It's a 3 year cycle but there are so many different readings and we're preaching on those different readings. That's one nice thing that it got us into Scripture. But at the same time, topics came out of it then instead of trying to come up with topics. That's a challenge if you are trying to create a 4 year curriculum. I always thought that would be ideal. Plan out 4 years, and then you're good to go, just keep repeating after that. But getting it on paper was tough. I went back and forth

a lot when I was writing and creating my own studies. I like balance that their desire for a topic but there's only a couple of hot topics. Not leaving the scripture behind either and just getting stuck on topics. This has been one way for us to do that, so it would be a good thing to consider.

How long have you been serving there an Appleton?

I've been in Appleton for nine years. I was at NLHS for 2 years out of Sem.

Professor Quandt told us during Middler Education how he ran his Catechism class in Salt Lake City. Rather than buying the confirmands the study Bibles after they were confirmed, the ladies group bought them these Bibles before 7th grade, as they started confirmation. Throughout confirmation class they could mark in these Bibles that they would prayerfully use for the rest of their lives and take notes in these Bibles. I'd like to incorporate something like that into my thesis proposal. So those key passages that they had in confirmation, they've got them marked, so as we go through those same passages in Bible study during the 4 years of high school, they would come back to these passages that are marked. With the highlighting and the notes in the margins, they would be able to take that home instead of worksheets. When they read it again in the future, they would be able to key in on those points again. Does that sound like a viable concept?

I think that'd be a great idea. In fact one of the things that I've started working on hard for the past couple of years is the role of parents in the whole spiritual education of their kids. We now have a Power Hour that has parents and kids together 6 Fridays in the fall and 6 in the spring. We just started this year of Sunday School with parents of 2-3 years olds, they come. All the other ages I have the parents in a separate adult class. I'm trying to figure out how to get the parents to get involved a little bit more in Catechism class as well.

Have you ever heard of *Faith Inkubators*? **No.** *Faith Inkubators* is from a Lutheran guy who basically created his own Sunday School, Catechism, junior youth, middle school and high school. He's got a curriculum for all of these different things. One of the things that he talks about that I haven't figured out how to do yet, he follows a five finger step approach. Every night you **Share** a high and low. You **Read** a section of Scripture. The parents read one passage, highlight it, **Talk** about it and **Pray** together. Give thanks to God for the best part of the day and ask for help in regards to the worst part of their day. **Bless** is the last step. It incorporates this idea of reading one passage a night and highlighting it in your Bible. That filters all the way through his curriculum. Those key passages filter through in his catechism and classes all the way through. I really like the idea of having those passages. The difficulty and challenge that I see of having a curriculum (is getting the parents on board).

I think that Christ Light is solid enough in our church body to use the key passages from there, because it'd be really nice to have that starting in Sunday School. I realize they may not have the self study Bible in Sunday School. For them to get used to the idea of them highlighting passages in their Bible from the time that they were so little that it became second nature by the time that they got to confirmation. They would be continuing that and if you had something to bring them back to that in high school, that would be awesome. What I would try if I had a curriculum that did that would be how to get the parents involved in that process along the way. And by the way, all those passages you've been working on in Sunday School, don't worry because we're going to go through them in Catechism and you're going to highlight them again. And now you're going to have more notes. That'd be great. That's a good idea.

I asked if you have any end of the month review. You said “not really”. I suppose with the way you do your teen Bible study based on sermons, it isn’t really set up for review. But if you were to do a thematic month, would that work with your teens? A 3 week unit and last Sunday of the month is a wrap up and review combined with a game day. Is that something that is beneficial to keep a lively spirit that the teens know that we can get together and still have fun even though we are studying God's Word?

There is definite value in that attitude and that spirit. I think that it has to be there every week. It can’t be, “ok it’s the last week of the month. *This* week is going to be fun. We just have to suffer through the other 3 weeks.” I do think that different setting will have different value on those reviews. Most of the teens that I have, have been in the system for most of their lives. That doesn’t mean that they know as much as they think they know. But they have had more contact with it. Whereas I think of a friend in South Carolina who has a growing teen ministry and those kids don’t have any Bible history, and those things are new to them. So for them to have an opportunity to talk about it and come back and review it again probably has a greater benefit. But I do think if you are going to have a discussion and different topics and then tie them all together, that would be beneficial for everyone. I think that’s worth pursuing.

Do you have any questions or suggestions about my thesis work?

Paul Jenkins in Appleton has started confirming after 7th grade. He wrote a new curriculum for 8th grade that incorporates Bible History along with Catechism or Doctrine. It was meant to flow into the teen ministry a little bit more as a transition point.

I think what you’re striving to do is something that is definitely needed in our church body because I think that almost all youth ministers whether they are pastors or lay leaders are struggling to find a curriculum that they can use. Whether someone uses the whole 4 years, or if someone says I just want to pick and choose what I want to use, that would be a benefit. The biggest thing to consider is your different audiences. You have one side that has no biblical background. For them a little bit more of a school setting would be beneficial. Then you have all of these kids who have been in Lutheran schools their whole life, and for them, they are getting most of the doctrine, but they don’t have the application and discussion. You’re going to have to find the balance between them learning the teachings and giving them a chance to talk through it, not just being told, “This is the right answer.” I think that would be a good guideline.

If I could have your background in working with youth.

I am a 2002 graduate of the Seminary. I was assigned as a tutor to LPS. I taught 10th grade religion and lived in the dorm to keep my 45 boys out of trouble, and served for 2 years. I was reassigned to be an assistant to the DP in the Pacific Northwest. I served 2 years in Bremerton, Washington. That was a permanent call. But along came this opportunity to create this Lighthouse Youth Center and it seemed like the perfect fit. While I was in the Pacific NW, I was half lead pastor/half evangelism and youth pastor, just because I was the young guy. It was neat because that's why I got in the ministry was to help young people live Christian lives. when I was at WA, my first youth group meeting, there was 5 people; at my farewell 25 were there. Now I've been at Lighthouse for 6 years in Feb.

When you were in WA, did you have Sunday morning teen Bible studies or weeknight?

We had Sunday morning studies and then twice a month we gathered together.

What did you use for Sunday morning Bible class?

It was a variety of different things. We would use anywhere from Christ Light to some other Bible studies from NPH. I vicared in Green Bay with John Parlow and he had subscribed to CPH. For \$25/year you could preview all of their materials. I did that program and they came out with all kinds of stuff. I simply adapted a bunch of those. I used that pretty extensively in WA. I did some topical stuff. My responsibility in WA was also to teach 7-8th grade Bible History. Most the of the school was non-church. For some reason the parents felt more comfortable with the teacher teaching Catechism and the pastors teaching Bible history. It was a different scenario but it was neat that I got to teach Bible History. So I could get a lot of application out of the Bible History. At that time, Christ Light was too expensive, I didn't like the artwork as much, and it was too repetitious. So I actually found at CPH, *A Bible History*. It has a workbook and teacher's guide and the stories and artwork are pretty concise. The rest of the application I just made up myself.

In your Sunday morning teen Bible study, did you use handouts with the kids?

Often. I used handouts. You learn the philosophy of what to do and what not to do when you vicar. Parlow, he was a big fan of the half-sheet. He would have artwork and questions and more artwork and applications on the back. That way all your proof passages would be right there and he and I would encourage the kids to bring their Bible all the time. We would just get a whole compilation of series in the back of the Bible. Some of the bigger hitter topics we would do that. Some of it we would even laminate. It's a matter of stealing the right stuff from the right people and filing it away.

Did you find that the teens did keep their worksheets or not?

The ones that were organized did, and the ones who weren't and were more like me just threw them away at the end of the time.

Were they more discussion guides? Was it more of a road map that they knew where you were going or were there questions to be answered?

It was probably more of a discussion guide. There were a few type 1, 2, 3 Kuske questions followed by 4, 5, 6 questions. A lot of fact-finding at the beginning and then a lot of application. Instead of me being a talking head up front, I really wanted the kids to be leaders. I was really blessed. There were a couple of faculty kids there, a couple of kids of longtime, energetic, and spiritual members that would often lead and dictate the conversation. It was kind of nice. The most productive time with teens is when you can sit there and be referee and you can sit there and say, "Yup, you're going in the right direction." Or, "No, that's not exactly right." I think it's more beneficial for them in the long run if they're doing the work themselves.

I found that my vicar year too, up in Green Bay. For me, once I got away from the worksheets, that's when they started talking.

That's the best teaching time. You use the discussion guide as structure. One, you have enough material. If you don't have enough material, you kill your Bible study pretty quickly. Having that provocative question there to get them thinking critically, and the next thing you know you're going in another direction. "No, where going to cover that next week," or, "Yeah, let's look at that right now." That's the joy of being the referee.

What are the ages here at Lighthouse?

The ages are 10-18. The majority are 11-15. We do have a lot of 10 year olds. Our target group is 11-15.

You have daily Bible studies?

As we've developed the program over the last 5 years, we're now open 5 days a week. We used to be open only 1 day a week. Basically the curriculum that I've developed, most of it I've handed off to Mark (Gunderson) right now so he runs the Bible studies, Monday we hear a story, Tuesday we review it. Wednesday we hear a story, Thursday we review it. Basically Monday we hear all the details and a little application. The second day we let the students relate the story and find applications in their own life. Friday we do more of a worship service and those are more theme based. Anywhere from video series, to what I want for Christmas, 3 reasons to be thankful, prayer life, 10 weeks on the 10 Commandments, so you're always building off of what you're doing. Trying to be topical throughout the year.

The Friday worship service is more of a curriculum? Bad Question.

We try not to make it a worship service, but it's more than a Bible study. Our audience is much different here. The kids that are coming here are unchurched, inner city, low academic intelligence, smarter than a whip for the city, but at the same time zero to biblical illiterate. I joke that sometimes our kids don't know Jesus as anything more than a cuss-word. And you're teaching them Bible truths. The range for on Friday evenings is a teaching moment. We'll talk about the 1st Commandment. We'll start the service just setting the parameters, we're here to worship and keep your hands to yourself. Give respect to the leader and respect to God. We'll start with an invocation and then a responsive reading and jump into a devotion. It's probably about 15 minutes to 20. It's much more talking head than Bible study, but it's much more interactive. Keeping kids attention. Keeping kids engaged. They can't sit still unless they are entertained. They want to be engaged and that's where their need is. When they are Biblically illiterate they need to be walked through and you have your fact questions for the younger kids and the application questions for the older kids. At the same time we try to develop a culture in there. If we've

got 40 kids in there, probably 2 or 3 of them are first time people where that's hopefully a place of respect that they can answer a question. Dozens of times I've heard, "What's this whole Jesus thing about?" Whoa! We've got to back the truck up and get everyone onboard here." No songs because I don't sing and it's hard to get this group singing. We've tried different things and it just hasn't worked. With that then is responsive prayer, Lord's Prayer and prayer requests.

Do the Monday/Wednesday lesson have a unit concept to them or are they just random biblical stories?

Mostly just biblical stories with application. For structure, we go through the stories, but I think that as they are set up, certain truths come through in these stories and we're trying to hit different things. We try to pick one main topic per story and I leave that up to the staff to figure out. I really want to be flexible for the sake of the kids. Our goal is to take kids through these Bible history stories, 70-80 stories a year, 2 a week, 35 weeks of school. One year we'll go through the Old Testament, the next the New Testament. That way they get refreshers on these stories, because our goal is that these kids will be part of our program anywhere from 5-9 years. Then you have the older kids who can answer those harder questions. There is some showing off and bragging involved, but it's good for the growth of our students. That's our program. Really about the basics.

One thing that we do each month, Mark Gunderson and I and the staff, I call it Bread for the Body, Bread for the Soul, we get together on a Saturday morning once a month and make breakfast, and then they do a Bible study. That's much more topical, like the First Article. They'll go through the different types of Psalms. It's only once a month, so they're not really consecutive, but they'll go through 2 themes for the entire year.

During summer, we have a different program altogether. We'll do one week, Fun with Math, Fun with Science; we'll do Art or Nature and Animals. Sometimes Mark will set up a program for the entire summer. Sometimes it's themed base. All of the things that we don't hit during the school year, we're going to do here. We try to do a bit more video based, grabbing stuff from Bluefish TV. We'll take snippets out of videos and create Bible classes out of that. As Professor Balge said, "Steal boys, steal. There's nothing new under the sun." I saw this Bible study as St. Marcus or find something elsewhere. I'll tweak this one. Or just create our own based on what the kids are struggling with at this time. This is a little bit different than a youth group where the kids have been through the system. It is unique here. But we are filing everything, so we have everything that we've used.

Have you found it difficult at times to tweak things; do you find it more burdensome and time-consuming to create your own out of somebody else's?

I would say that a majority of my stuff, I've borrowed from other people. But because of the network of people that I know, I know which stuff I like and not. I kind of know how much work I'll have to put into this or that. I can grab from some guys, we think alike, so that's easy. Sometimes you don't. It all depends on the materials. Mark likes to create his own. He doesn't like anyone's materials. He'll joke about that, but that's just the way his brain thinks. For me I would rather spend a lot of that time building a relationship with a kid that doesn't know Jesus, so they know me as a resource to share Jesus. Verses putting all of your time and effort into a Bible class and missing the relationship and the seed falls on hard ground and away it goes. I have a lot of stuff on video; I do a lot of reading. Even if I don't use the

video, there are a lot of thought-provoking questions included with them. When you only have 30 minutes, you only need 2 or 3 really good questions. Give them the 3-4 Bible passages as the foundation, and referee.

Did you use videos in WA at all?

I used some. I think at that time being young, I didn't use as much. I think within the last 6 years things have become more ready and accessible, and cost effective. I did use Walk in My World. It was something from synod. It came in 2 series. that was 7 weeks on different topics. But that came down to a cost thing. You spend \$70 on 7 weeks; great, but not always practical. At that time I reused stuff from adult classes too. You tweak it a little for the teens, you know what questions will come, you know the material. It doesn't take a whole lot of time to remanufacture that.

For your purposes here at Lighthouse, the review is really important.

Yes, the application is so important, especially for these kids. I think that some of the things that we find here are actually universal. I found it at Prep, I found it at WA, and kids are struggling with a lot of the same things. It's just the surroundings around them that are different. In inner city, it's poverty and they deal with it, generally speaking, with depression or violence or chemical dependency or food. Whatever is going to fill that void for them. They really struggle with the whole word "hope." Out in the 'burbs, we know what hope is. Generally speaking, we can cover it up with cash. We can buy our kids something new, or we put the kid in counseling. They're struggling with the same problems; they're just coping in different ways. What's really important is that the application is critical. I think both groups of kids understand the rules of how God's Word applies to their lives in this setting (in Bible study/youth group). But taking that word and taking it out into their world, into real life application is critical. I think that application process, it isn't just asking "What if" questions, it's asking the real questions. "How does Jesus feeding the 5000, how does that help my life right now? How does that help me when I leave those doors?" If we can teach one thing each day, that's the goal. You can spend a lot of time with those reviews and ask all kinds of different questions, but I really want to see one question get answered so it's beat into their heads.

Professor Quandt told us during Middler Education how he ran his Catechism class in Salt Lake City. Rather than buying the confirmands the study Bibles after they were confirmed, the ladies group bought them these Bibles before 7th grade, as they started confirmation. Throughout confirmation class they could mark in these Bibles that they would prayerfully use for the rest of their lives and take notes in these Bibles. I'd like to incorporate something like that into my thesis proposal. So those key passages that they had in confirmation, they've got them marked, so as we go through those same passages in Bible study during the 4 years of high school, they would come back to these passages that are marked. With the highlighting and the notes in the margins, they would be able to take that home instead of worksheets. When they read it again in the future, they would be able to key in on those points again. Do you see a 2 to 4 year program for leaders to use, having those key scriptural truths laid out with key Bible passages stated, key questions for the teens, additional resources listed as as beneficial? If they are running out of time, they can go to it and still have enough information that they can lead this Bible class. Does that sound like a viable concept?

I would say for sure. I would have to say that most youth leaders in most situations don't have the training that we have, so it's usually a dad or volunteer, and honestly they honestly can't put the time into it. A well put together, Bible based, thought-provoking, program would be pretty easy to incorporate and use. I think it would be great.

Mark and I were talking the other day about confirmation. There was a girl who graduated from the school but was not confirmed. Most of the students are not members. They give them the opportunity, if they're not ready to be confirmed after 8th grade, well then just forward whenever you are ready. Halfway through her 9th grade year, she decided to become a member and confessed her faith in front of church at the 7:45 service. We were just talking about St. Marcus. They don't confirm until after 9th grade. They give them that whole year, that waiting period. I heard of a congregation in the Pacific Northwest that has confirmation 6th-7th grade and confirms after 7th. Even after they are confirmed the kids are around for another year. You still have them to mentor and get around that confirmation syndrome. I toy with that. You can't have as deep of spiritual questions with 6th graders, that's where the one flaw is. But you have a confirmed member and you are able to keep feeding them vs. 8th grade and all of a sudden you lose this person. You could do a "What does it mean to be a member" talk and actually have it mean something.

I was talking with Ben Berger from Appleton and he gave me the name of Paul Jenkins in Appleton who developed a curriculum for 8th grade. They confirm after 7th grade and 8th grade they have a transition program from confirmation to youth group.

I didn't know that he did that. I know who that is. I would be very interested to see that. I think that the philosophy would be very intriguing. Historically, you look at the Barna institute, 80% of kids that are confirmed will leave the church at 18, never to return. And even if we're saying that we're doing a stellar job as the WELS, what are we keeping, 50%, 45%. If you front shift some of the Bible basics and really focus on confirmation, knowing what confirmation means and a lot of application 8th grade year, giving meaningful application what that means inside the church, I think you'd lose less kids. What that looks like, that's your job now, that's what your paper is going to answer for us. That's key.

I think the key is identifying student leaders to push the cause for you. Instead of an adult saying, "This is good for you." I was only in WA for 2 years, but it is best if it was one of the teens ideas, even if it's your own. I hated more than anything as a young pastor when the bulletin said, "Cleaners needed for next Sunday." That just burned me. It was in the bulletin and newsletter. If a visitor comes in and says, "Holy Cow, they can't even get anyone to come in here, this church cares so much about itself that they can't even get cleaners to come in." I would rather not have it in there at all or make sure it's filled. Whenever I saw it, I said, "put the youth group. service project. We'll take care of it." Then it was neat because some members would be up and didn't want to clean so they would give \$50 to the youth group to clean for their turn. We started this that the youth group was cleaning on Sunday mornings. 17 kids would show up for cleaning church. Our kids went to the youth rally. Our congregation invested in the youth. I developed a system when these kids did service projects, I kept tallies of each kid. The church then would give \$4 per kid per cleaning. The church would then be helping to pay for the youth rallies. When you had a function that was service based, you had a lot more kids there. it's a little bit law driven, but it worked! 17 kids would show up to clean the church, and one of the kids asked, "hey, can we make breakfast next time?" I really wanted to see this develop into a whole Saturday morning thing. "yeah, let's do breakfast next time." I'm sure I planted that seed someplace. It was so neat. Next thing you

know a junior in high school decided that we should have a Bible study. I told him to tell the group. It's not pastor driven. Now they were doing a service project, fellowshiping together with breakfast, now requesting Bible study. They would vote on the topics. After the third or fourth time they asked if we could go play kickball. So you add this recreational aspect to this day. I knew I wanted to develop it like this, but the kids all thought it was their own idea. Don't tell the kids. If it's student driven, it means more to them. It's still going. It's not the pastor bribing them with trips, it's the kids saying this is what we want.

We have the same thing here. we have a student contract. I had the whole thing written out beforehand. But the first 5-6 times I let the kids write the rules of Lighthouse in creative writing projects. Now it's really simple. If a kid breaks the rules, "your friends and peers made these rules, I didn't make them." Same thing with Bible study. This is what you guys wanted. If there's involvement, there is more buy-in.

With your program that I read about, you have this whole wide variety of stuff and you have all these resources, and it's all topical already, it'd be pretty easy for a youth leader to find out what's hot or what recently happened in the news, in the nation or church. I could see that really catch on.

Any other thoughts or comments?

I think that NPH sends out some wonderful stuff. The problem is with their series that by lesson four it seems that the lesson is always the same. It's a 6 week series and by week 4 you have the same answer as week 2. Which is good in that it is reinforcing, I understand that. They need some work as well too. Whatever work you put into your youth and your youth leaders, that's what you get back. And of course it is God the Holy Spirit working through it all, but challenging those leaders to be leaders.

Appendix E: Bible Study Template

Opening Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, ...

Goal: Aim or truth that we are seeking to teach the teens this week

Scripture: Passages used to support Goal of the week (one to two passages, maybe three)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Guided Questions: Questions that are to be asked by the leader to the group. Thought-provoking questions that will make teens take a stance on an issue and defend it.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Teens' Questions: Questions that the teens might very well ask.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Illustrations: Possible illustrations to use in describing today's topic/Scripture

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Applications: Reason why this topic/Scripture is applicable to teens' lives

1. Teen's life (thoughts, words, actions)
2. Teen's friends and family
3. The rest of the world with which teens interact

Further Resources: A list of books/papers/articles that is pertinent to discussion that will deepen the leader's understanding of the subject. These sources are to be more than just Biblical commentaries.

1. Book
2. Seminary Essay File
3. Newspaper Clipping

Teaching Techniques: Possible techniques that can keep Bible studies lively and engaging for the youth

1. PowerPoint
2. Play acting
3. Video
4. Thought Provoking Question
5. Yes, perhaps even a worksheet

Closing Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, ...

Appendix F: Creation Bible Study

Opening Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, we ask that you guide our thoughts today as we learn about how you created this world. Show us that we are the crown of your creation, Amen.

Goal: God created our world with his words in six 24 hour days. Humans were the crowning joy of creation.

Scripture:

1. Genesis 1 and 2
2. Exodus 20:11
3. Hebrews 11:3
4. Romans 1:20

Guided Questions:

1. Where do the dinosaurs fit in Creation? Were they created or their bones just stuck in the ground?
2. Did God create germs, parasites, thistles, nettles, etc., in the 6 days? How were they not an issue before sin?
3. What can we say in response to humanoid like fossils, like Lucy and other “cavemen”?
4. How would you defend Creation to your evolution teaching science professor?

Teens’ Questions:

1. When were angels created?
2. How old is the earth?
3. When did Satan and his angels fall?
4. How do I defend Christianity to my unbelieving friends?

Illustrations:

1. Take the teens on a nature hike
2. If timely, watch the sunrise and sunset
3. PowerPoint of pictures of unique animals that God has made
4. Show intricacy of the human body (all of the systems and how they work together)

Applications:

1. What does God’s creation of the world and subsequent gift to humankind mean for me as I live in this world?
2. How can we as a teen group make a positive impact in nature?
3. What groups are out there that lobby for taking care of “Mother Earth”? Why can these be dangerous?

Further Resources:

1. Seminary Essay File – Professor John Brug – *Why Confessional Lutherans Believe that Genesis 1-3 Describes Real History*
2. Seminary Essay File – Professor James Westendorf - *Teaching Creation According to the Creator's Revelation*
3. Creation Science Institute – <http://www.lutheranscience.org/>

Teaching Techniques:

1. Godtube.com – *Since the Creation* Music Video
2. Mimic college/high school science lab where they must defend their faith to an evolutionist
3. Panel discussion – share all the amazing parts of creation that you love the most

Closing Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for the amazing gift of your creation. We know that we are just dust, but you loved us and gave us this world to live in. Make us good stewards of this gift, that we may in turn, show our love to you, in Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

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