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**Discipling adolescents who live in trauma-informed households: A
practical theological approach**

By

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Declaration

I declare that “Discipling adolescents who live in trauma-informed households: A practical theological approach” is my own work, and that all sources cited herein have been acknowledged by means of complete references.

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Abbreviations

ESV- English Standard Version

NLT-New Living Translation

NBC-Northpine Baptist Church

Key Concepts

- Discipleship
- Disciple
- Adolescents/Youth
- Trauma
- Trauma-informed households
- Practical Theology

CHAPTER 1

RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Research (Rationale)

The researcher has been involved in various aspects of youth ministry over the last 7 years and has run various projects, discipleship and youth programs, programming in a juvenile centre and one-on-one ministry on the Cape Flats. Throughout this time, there has been a recurring theme within the adolescent experience or a noted observation taking place within their homes. Over the last four years, the researcher has dealt with approximately fifty adolescents. In ministering to these adolescents, the researcher has observed that approximately forty of those adolescents have experienced traumas of varying natures. This has impacted them both directly and indirectly in their environment. These various traumas they faced would include, and not be limited to, domestic violence, drug-addicted parents or mothers, gangsterism and drug dealing within the home, parental death, alcoholism, absent fathers, molestation, and rape. Often, these would be interlinked, occurring over many years and to more than one sibling, and thus, the impact was devastating and made the task of ministry to this impressionable age group even more difficult.

The researcher is currently placed in a ministry setting within Kraaifontein, which serves youth from various backgrounds and in which there is a substantial and sometimes overwhelming number of adolescents who are living in trauma-informed homes and environments. The researcher is involved in midweek evening life groups and spearheads a discipleship and life skills program at Bonnytoun Youth Centre. The researcher also leads Friday night youth programs. What has become alarmingly apparent is the desperate need to engage youth in spaces outside of 'regular' programming to facilitate their discipleship journey better. For these young people, the call to follow Christ despite their circumstances proves to be difficult and tiring as they fight to overcome the obstacles they face.

According to Stier (2015:4), in 21st-century youth ministry, we have forsaken the focus of Jesus and discipleship and exchanged it instead for a program-oriented ministry. In

the Gospels, it is noted that Jesus has a deep regard and love for the lost and broken. His interaction with them in these stories/pericopes shows his compassion and concern for those who have been ostracized and considered unworthy. The researcher has encountered adolescents who, due to their home circumstances, are broken, lost and 'ostracized' from the church and its ministries. The researcher believes that these very adolescents will benefit from a discipleship approach based on Christ and his way from within the church. Arzola (2015:115) concurs, stating that the real presence of Christ is found in the church or the assembled people of God and that this is where discipleship and teaching fundamentally take place. It is in this space that adolescents will learn that what they are facing, such as suffering and hardship, is nothing in comparison to the joy experienced through Christ. The Christian's calling is clear:

For to this, you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.

(1 Peter 2:21, ESV)

This is a clear indication that Christ himself suffered, but even in his suffering, he remained faithful to what God had called him to do. Platt (2010:10) highlights the very idea that believers are called to give up everything when following him, which includes being able to still follow him despite our circumstances because of the work of the Holy Spirit. Going through the deepest trauma and life-changing circumstances doesn't change who God is. The Holy Spirit indwells every believer, giving believers peace amid crises and trauma and the comfort of knowing Christ is with them always (Platt, 2010:57).

According to Lewis (1997:171-172), the entire 'Christian Walk' can be summarised in that we are called to become exact replicas of Christ, who are most greatly known by the fruit we bear. That fruit should be seen irrespective of what we face in our daily lives, but how does one teach/model that to adolescents who are experiencing abuse (directly and indirectly), drug-addicted parenting, divorce, single-parent/grandparent homes, and abject poverty?

The rationale of this work is thus deeply embedded in seeking to understand these adolescents and their situations and build a sound theology on discipleship, which can

be utilised in various contexts and by other youth ministers, but which also specifically addresses trauma.

1.2 Purpose of Study

During my tenure in youth ministry in various areas of the Cape Flats, I have recognised the desperate need to understand discipleship toward adolescents who live trauma-informed lives. There is a great need for youth pastors to understand the context in which they find themselves, more so to understand that often their context will most likely hold areas of deep trauma and thus inform their praxis and methodology.

The primary focus of this dissertation is an investigation into discipling adolescents within the Kraaifontein, Northpine area who experience trauma daily within their domestic household. By engaging the New Testament scriptures and examples of discipleship of the oppressed and marginalised, this dissertation will enable other ministers within youth ministry to intentionally and lovingly disciple those who have been traumatised and whose circumstances often do not change despite a decision for Christ.

The purpose of this research is to critically investigate the pitfalls that exist within youth ministry in relation to discipling adolescents who live trauma-informed lives and develop a theology on discipleship to this specific group of youth within the Kraaifontein, Northpine area. Although discipleship to adolescents is an extremely saturated field of study, the tenets of the discipleship approach to be suggested in this dissertation will be specifically geared toward the oppressed and trauma-informed adolescents.

1.3 Clarification of Terms

1.3.1 The Adolescent

Curtis (2015:1) describes adolescence as a dynamic construct that is ever-evolving due to the various lenses used to view this theoretical life stage. Adolescence is the life stage sandwiched between puberty and adulthood, and Curtis concurs, stating that adolescence is a critical life stage and can be viewed as a stage for social

independence. According to Bell (2016:3), discussions on adolescence can be traced back to ancient Greece to the work of Plato and Aristotle; however, it wasn't until the 20th century that there was a workable definition or description of this life stage. Bell writes that after a workable definition was developed, the terms 'teenager' and 'adolescent' were subsequently used interchangeably as the age group ranges between 13-19 years. Adolescence is, however, not solely an age group but rather a life stage, as highlighted by Curtis (2015:1). Bell (2016:3) concurs, asserting that the adolescent life stage begins and ends at different stages for each individual and that the cognitive, biological, psychological, and social changes that occur at this time all characterise and influence the transition from child to adult.

According to Schickedanz et al. (1993:563), the adolescent life stage begins with a burst of growth physically, which indicates the end of the childhood stage and the birth of a new life filled with torrents of hormones. The adolescent life stage could possibly be understood as the most difficult life stage. This life stage begins at the onset of puberty and can last until the early twenties. Bell (2016:3) agrees and argues that although this life stage is generally understood to be one marked by storms and stresses, the malleability and opportunity presented during adolescence and developmental processes have led recent studies to believe that there's greater potential in this life stage than was previously understood.

Kousiakis (2015:4) argues that due to the complexity of adolescent definitions universally, and in light of the United Nations definition of youth as the age group between 15-24 years, adolescence/youth cannot be 'strictly' defined by an age group. Kousiakis (2015:4) writes that in South Africa, the term youth/adolescence is understood to be between 15-35 years but believes that this presents many issues due to the vast disparity in age groups.

Based on the explanations and definitions provided by scholars in the preceding section, the researcher will thus delimit the study to concentrate on the adolescent group falling in the age bracket of 18-21 years, as adolescence is understood to be a life stage which falls between childhood and adulthood, and the difference between dependence and independence in various aspects of life. Bell (2016:3) agrees, stating

that there are cultural/social markers by which adulthood is attained, and it is with this in mind that the researcher has delimited the study to the age group selected.

1.3.2 Disciple

According to Fritz (2018:17), the term 'disciple' is derived from the Latin *discere*, which means to learn. A disciple is thus understood to be disciplined. Fritz (2018:17) asserts that the discipline of the disciples leads them to deeper conversion and even deeper personal relationships with Jesus Christ. Nel (2009:2) agrees and believes that one who is an enthusiastic or avid follower of a teacher can be described as a disciple. Nel (2009:2) further states that within the New Testament scope of understanding the term disciple, it is one who is in a deep relationship with Jesus Christ. Mark highlights the very call to deny one's own inhibitions for the cause of Christ.

And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

(Mark 8:34, ESV).

Kernaghan (2007:162) points out that within this portion of scripture, Christ makes this call to a mixed population of Caesarea Philippi, and he does so by calling people to forsake all else for the seemingly 'unrewarding' task of following him, the suffering Son of Man. Kernaghan (2007:162) focuses our attention on the significance of the cross, which is found in the idea that in Roman times, crucifixion on a cross became a 'necessity' if the Roman government believed that a person posed a serious threat to the Roman government. Therefore, Jesus made this call to follow, him, the very one who threatened the government of the day. Kernaghan (2007:12) furthermore points out that those who would choose to follow Jesus were to repent and believe in the Gospel, thus denouncing the Roman belief system. This notion is upheld today still in the sense that as Christ's disciples, we are to follow him amidst the hardship of life. Kernaghan (2007:13) believes that a disciple is to follow Jesus and to see life from God's viewpoint in every circumstance, especially when it meant that Christ was to be crucified.

Nel (2009:2) states that the term disciple is not exclusive to the New Testament and is also shown to be present in the Old Testament through men and women who

dedicated their lives to learning about God's word and obeying God fully, as the author of Deuteronomy writes:

Listen, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength. And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands that I am giving you today. Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road when you are going to bed and when you are getting up. Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

(Deuteronomy 6:4-9, ESV).

This is one of the most pertinent scriptures from an Old Testament perspective, which can be related to what it means to be a disciple of Christ. As already stated, a disciple is one who is in a deep relationship with Jesus Christ, with their entire lives being built on and rooted in God's word (Nel 2009:2). According to Fritz (2018:16), a disciple is one who is inspired to live like the teacher, and they are thus impacted by the teacher's lifestyle. Faith in this regard is not something which can be taught but is instead caught.

Putman (2008:13) concurs that those who are Christ's disciples follow him intimately but also know him intimately. A disciple is one who understands the importance of being in communion with their saviour, not only patterning their lives after him.

1.3.3 Discipleship/Spiritual Formation

Discipleship is critical to helping others understand who they are in Christ and how to live a life fully surrendered to Christ. According to Averbeck (2008:28), discipleship is the process of helping or assisting others to be disciples of Jesus Christ and embracing the process of sanctification, which is done through the work of the Holy Spirit. Andrew Root (2013:17) describes this act as having the ability to encounter people and helping them to encounter the presence of Jesus. Averbeck (2008:28) affirms this idea in earlier writings, stating that the best understanding of discipleship is through understanding that the Holy Spirit, who indwells us after salvation, is the catalyst to

patterning our lives after Christ, as the Holy Spirit works at the core of the believer's being.

While being a disciple is important, we are also called as God's church to make disciples. This act is understood to be the discipleship process. Adams (2017:60) agrees, stating that discipleship is a step-by-step, stage-by-stage process which meets the person at their spiritual level, taking them from 'come follow me' to 'come and die with me.' This is seen in the progression in Scripture from the call of the first disciples to follow and he will make them fishers of men (Matthew 4:19) to them dying with him (Matthew 16:24). Adams (2017:61) writes that if Christ had begun with the call to die for Christ/die to self, that perhaps the disciples would not have followed him because they were not matured, but because they walked with him and shared deep relationship, they understood the later call to 'deny themselves and pick up their cross.' Root (2013:17) asserts that relationship is the key element to any church or church ministry because it is through relationships with people that our influence to follow Christ in all that he does becomes evident. Another term that adequately describes or can be used interchangeably with discipleship is spiritual formation. Averbek (2008:27) sees spiritual formation/discipleship as the basis for Christianity and believes that it serves to promote true Christ-like spirituality in the lives of Christians.

Averbek (2008:28) clarifies that, although spiritual formation is not 'clearly expressed' or stated outright in the Bible, like, for example, the Trinity, it is inferred through Scripture and that it forms a vital part of the Christian faith and life of a believer. According to Putman (2008:73), discipleship is the key to building the universal church. Discipleship is an important aspect of the church ministry, and as individual believers, we are called to make disciples as Christ commands us in Scripture. Root (2013:119) concurs that God sought union with people through personal relationships and achieved that through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which thus highlights that the key to discipleship is through a personal relationship between God and human and man to human. Discipleship is thus an act of growth and a constant drawing nearer to God to live our lives as Christ lived his.

1.3.4 Kraaifontein

Kraaifontein is an area within the Western Cape situated in the Northern Suburbs. According to Reesberg (2016:1), Kraaifontein was first founded in the late 1600s by a farmer named Joostenwas, who took a liking to the area due to the vast number of crows. He later bought a farm in the area, named it Kraaifontein which stretched between Durban Road and Old Paarl Road. According to Statistics South Africa (SSA 2011: n.p), Kraaifontein was named after a farm called 'Crow Spring' (English) and was translated into Afrikaans, hence Kraaifontein. It was only in the 1960s that real growth occurred in Kraaifontein due to the town joining the Wemmersdam pipe-laying project (Reesberg 2016:1). In a contrasting version written by Carstens (2015:26), it is noted that the first landowner of Kraaifontein was Henrik N.H. Theunissen from Durbanville. Carstens (2015:26) furthermore points out that there were only 3 farmers in Kraaifontein at that time and that the land was underdeveloped and bushy. The contrasts in the stories do offer one similarity, and that is that the land was originally farmland and relatively underdeveloped at the time of its discovery. It is Carstens (2015:26) who argues that Kraaifontein became an official municipality in 1957, with the first mayor being J.P. Rossouw. In more recent years, Kraaifontein has become more developed and more synonymous with increased crime. An article written in the Northern News by Soyiso Maliti (2016: n.p.) highlights the increase in crime, stating that there has been a plea for more police to be deployed to the area. Maliti claims that across Kraaifontein, there was a surge in murders, robberies and gang violence over the festive period particularly.

According to the 2011 Census compiled by the City of Cape Town (CoCT) from data presented by Statistics South Africa (2011:n.p.), the population consisted of 4 034 people and 1 356 households and of those figures, 76% of the population consisted of black Africans and 79% had a monthly income of R3 200 and less (SSA, 2011:n.p.). SSA also presented in its data the total percentage of people who had matriculated, which was a meagre 19% and that adolescents accounted for 19,7% of the population (SSA, 2011:n.p.).

According to Dawes (2006:35), in studies done in the CoCT, 68% of adolescents were exposed to some degree of violence within their home and community, of which 75%

knew the perpetrator. Dawes (2006:50) indicates that a large percentage of adolescents have been exposed to domestic violence, and 8% of those adolescents have been exposed to drug-induced domestic violence.

In a national report released by the South African Police Force for 2021 (2019/2020), Kraaifontein was ranked number 15 for serious crimes, 16 for contact crimes (which include: rape, sexual assault, murder, and common assault), and number 3 in the country for murder. For common assault, Kraaifontein was ranked number 10 in South Africa and 9 and 16, respectively, for sexual offences and rape. These statistics were gathered by the South African Police Force over the period of April 2021 to June 2021.

More recent statistics were gathered from the Western Cape Government Crime Analysis (March 2022). It should be noted that the crime statistics have highlighted the true gravity of what is happening. This report is primarily based on the annual statistics highlighted in the 2020/2021 report, which was released in September 2021. Western Cape Government Crime Analysis (March 2022) asserts that the data contained in the report was gathered and formulated until December 2021. According to Western Cape Government Crime Analysis (2022:17), Kraaifontein police station had the 4th highest number of murders reported in the province, with 196 murders reported between 2020/2021 alone. This indicates that since the 2021 report, the murder rate in other precincts has increased significantly. The report further highlights that in relation to sex crimes, Kraaifontein ranked in the top 4 within the Western Province. Kraaifontein is ranked number 9 for grievous bodily harm, number 5 for common assault and number 3 for robbery with aggravating circumstances. These statistics display the seriousness of what is transpiring within Kraaifontein. The Western Cape Government Crime Analysis (2022:18) states that in relation to the murder rate, the associations or contributing factors are gang violence and drug and alcohol abuse. Domestic violence contributed to 5.2% of all murders reported.

The statistics given offer a very brief introduction to the environment and social norms which exist in Kraaifontein.



Fig. 1.1 Map of Area: $-33,853276, 18,674908$

1.3.5 Trauma

Eagle and Kaminer (2010:122) state that one should not look at the effects of trauma in South Africa without discussing the traumatising of children and adolescents, as trauma is not limited to adults. Adolescents are vulnerable to trauma and can experience a very broad spectrum of events both directly and indirectly (Eagle, et al. 2010:123). Herbst and Reitsma (2016:3) concur that trauma is something which can affect adolescents deeply and that trauma is unique to each person, alluding to the idea that each person's trauma response is thus unique and justified.

According to Herbst Reitsma (2016:2), trauma or traumatic stress is derived from the Greek language and is understood to mean 'wound, physical injury or damage' sustained by a person. Trauma or traumatic stress has various outworkings in adolescents, and Herbst and Reitsma (2016:3) assert that only certain trauma is recognised as causing serious traumatic stress. However, Eagle and Kaminer (2010:123) state that traumatising in adolescents in South Africa is a real issue, which has serious repercussions as the impact is long-lasting. Eagle and Kaminer (2020:23) further state that trauma exposure in South Africa is very high for children and adolescents and that this is linked to the strife in South African history, leading one to understand that the more violent and conflicted a society is, the higher the trauma exposure.

Wright (2003:15) writes that trauma is not limited to violence within the home and community but is made up of a large spectrum of events that take place, which include

death, loss, divorce, incapacitating illness such as cancer, drug abuse, absent parents, abject poverty and the likes. For the sake of clarity within this dissertation, when referring to trauma, the inference includes all the above and, at times, will be specified.

1.4 Description of the Research Problem

The researcher works with the youth of Kraaifontein through the Northpine Baptist Church Youth Ministry and has discovered, through interaction, that there is a huge surge of children who attend youth and who are exposed to trauma within their homes. These adolescents are professing believers in Jesus Christ and have become invested in the ministry of the church, more specifically, Northpine Baptist Church. They are exposed to drug and alcohol abuse and extreme bullying at school; they have experienced great loss due to illnesses and are being raised in homes with single parents and emotionally unavailable parents. When these adolescents attend the youth ministry programmes at church, Bible study and various other church ministries, they struggle to grow in Christ due to their home environments. They come from volatility to experience peace. However, they should be able to experience peace despite the volatility as they grow in love with Christ. Relationship building with these adolescents is not a straightforward approach as their trauma informs their response, and their understanding of God's Word in relation to a life sold out for Christ is skewed. With all these factors considered, the discipleship/spiritual formation of these adolescents is not one which has a normal approach but requires an understanding of their trauma and an even deeper understanding of the methodology presented to us through Jesus Christ in Scripture. This dissertation is an attempt to create a discipleship approach undergirded by Scripture, which addresses trauma and helps adolescents grow spiritually and move them to a place where their trauma no longer has the biggest influence on their response.

1.5 Initial Literature Review

According to William (2019:1), an adolescent or youth is described as one who is between childhood and adulthood, and youth today are subjected to many radical changes within context as they are exposed to far greater technological gadgets, more explicit sexual content, complex understanding of family and gender choices. Swart et al. (2022:16) point out that there are complexities within understanding the term 'youth'

as the term varies from country to country and from one organization to the next, and furthermore, the definition for the terms 'youth' or 'adolescent' is dependent on various factors. Swart et al. (2022:16) list cultural and socioeconomic factors, among other factors, as the markers which contribute toward having a workable concept for the term youth/adolescent. They (2022:16) have also added that due to age also being a marker, the age group to be considered for adolescence is 15-24 years. This understanding aligns with the insights offered by Kousiakos (2015:4), who states that the United Nation's age group for adolescents is 15-24 years and that this is also dependent on their transition to independence.

Wyn and White (1997:1) write that it is important to understand what is happening in the lives of young people as they grow up in varied circumstances. Their circumstances can, in many instances, be detrimental to them. Years later, Bastien and Holmarsdottir (2015:4) concur, stating that adolescents face various circumstances and difficulties and that the disparity between one individual and the next is vast. Some of these difficulties include but are not limited to trauma.

Offerdahl et al. (2014:5) assert that adolescents across the world are raising their voices about the hardship and inequalities faced in their lives, and they highlight the vulnerability of youth in instances of economic shocks, social instability, and conflict. Studies done by SAMHSA (2014:7) indicate that social instability and conflict can be understood to be trauma because trauma is a series or a set of events or a single event that is experienced by an individual, which is emotionally harmful and has long-lasting adverse effects. According to Wright (2003:15), trauma and crises are everywhere around us, and we cannot limit the number of traumatic experiences that people face since trauma is part of the natural course of life. Floyd (2008:42), however, argues that although trauma is considered a natural part of life, it breaks past the boundaries of what is usually expected to be normal and thus infringes on normal coping mechanisms and causes deep emotional pain.

Floyd (2008:42) describes trauma in its simplest form as meaning 'wound.' Although trauma is often understood in its physical connotation, trauma involves everything from physical to emotional and is often unexpected. Trauma has a deep and often negative

impact on those who experience it constantly. Herbst and Reitsma (2016:3) state that there are various trauma symptoms and traumatic events which take place in the lives of adolescents in South Africa that need to be considered as unique. These traumatic events need to be considered when discipling young people within the church. Hunsinger (2011:21) asserts that the Gospel offers hope and that hope is fundamental for healing those who have been traumatised. It is thus the church's responsibility to have a caring approach for those who have suffered trauma, which culminates in a discipleship approach. Hunsinger (2011:21) agrees, stating that Scripture attests to calling on God for help but that we are to make disciples who understand this and can thus practice daily.

According to Longenecker (1996:50), the use of the term disciple is underscored by the teaching expressed by Luke, in which he highlights that those who follow Jesus are to pick up their cross *daily*, emphasising the need for Christ's followers to be completely surrendered unto him. Platt (2010:11) concurs that those who are called to be Jesus' disciples are to pick up what is viewed as an 'instrument of torture' and follow him in a world that sets its expectations on following society. Putman (2008:9) states that Jesus begins his ministry with these pertinent words, "Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is near" (Matthew 4:17b), which is still the mandate today. We are called to wholeheartedly follow Christ if we are to be called his disciples. Putman (2008:10) asserts that to be a disciple of Christ is to be one who not only has a relationship with Christ but one who bears fruit for his namesake.

Discipleship is the action word for being a disciple. Putman (2008:73) describes discipleship as an authentic relationship that exists between people and spurs people into a deeper relationship with Christ. Root (2013:120) affirms the idea that discipleship is found in relationships and highlights the idea that God himself sought a personal relationship with people and has achieved this through Jesus Christ. Relational ministry is important to discipleship. Root (2013:17) concurs that relational ministry is important and is not based on strategy but rather influence. An important aspect of this dissertation will be to demonstrate how discipleship could be contextualised in such a way that it influences youth in crisis to persevere in their walk with Christ despite coming from trauma-saturated homes.

1.6 Motivation

Hunsinger (2011:23) asserts that, recently, pastoral theology has been integrating more and more with the social, political, and public domain to offer pastoral care. The need for pastoral care in the life of those who are having, or have, in the past, experienced trauma is of utmost importance. In this regard, Hunsinger (2011:24) states that by doing so, we give those who are hurting a space to tell their stories and allow us to remind those hurting of who God is through it all. Breen and Kallestad (2005:27) note that the next generation is desperately seeking discipleship because their family institution is no longer safe, and their environments are not conducive to growth. This is where the church needs to step in and step up.

At every stage of the journey with Christ, there is a teacher-learner relationship which must occur as it offers accountability and stability in Christ. Dever (2016:16) reminds us that believers are called to make disciples. This is clearly in various passages such as Mark 8:34 and John 14:15 and alludes to the idea that believers are, by inference, disciple-makers as part of their service to God. Breen and Kallestad (2005:27) argue that the very core of discipleship is that the disciple must spend time with the teacher, and when practising discipleship, the teacher needs to know and understand the methodology given by Christ in Scripture.

The motivation of the researcher for this study is two-fold in nature in that the writer seeks to bring understanding to the trauma which our youth and adolescents face, and second to that, the great need for a discipleship theology/methodology which specifically addresses adolescents who are living in trauma-informed homes.

1.7 Research Question

Within the context of the local church, there needs to be a greater understanding of adolescents and their struggles. In Kraaifontein specifically, it has been noted that the environment of adolescents is filled with violence, domestic abuse and drug abuse, gangsterism and high levels of crime. These factors all have an adverse effect on the Gospel, which promotes peace and a new life through Christ despite one's circumstances. The gaping hole in the church, however, is the pure lack of discipleship

geared toward these young people. The research question thus is, how do we disciple adolescents who live in trauma-informed homes in Kraaifontein?

1.8 Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this study is “A sound theological discipleship approach geared toward adolescents who live in trauma-informed homes in Kraaifontein.”

1.9 Research Design

Schuringer (2019:1) states that the universal church of Christ needs to have a sound understanding of practical theology to gain the necessary knowledge needed to avoid being pragmatic and traditionalistic in an ever-changing world. A church that understands that practical theology is necessary understands that in every ministry and facet of the church ministry, we are to strive to be effective and functional in reaching the nations. According to Schuringer (2019:1), a church that understands practical theology can provide essential guidance for the church ministry, allowing ministry leaders to tailor ministry which aligns with their specific context. For the purpose of this study, a twofold/mixed research methodology will be conducted, which will include qualitative research by way of empirical research as well as quantitative research.

Smith (2010:99) concurs that the primary purpose of Richard Osmer’s methodology in his book *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (2008) is to assist in educating leaders in churches to participate in practical theological approaches/interpretations of their context and situations which are presented to them. Furthermore, it aids students in developing skills related to practical theological reflection. The value of qualitative/empirical research is that it offers the reader and researcher depth into the context in which these adolescents find themselves. Furthermore, Osmer’s methodology will be utilized to further supplement this research endeavour since it is a practical theological approach.

The research design is based on four basic elements. Osmer (2008:53) points out that the research plan has four foundational elements, which will be discussed in this dissertation in the following manner: the first component will focus on the adolescents,

their families, and the community from which they come. This will be done through an investigation by way of using questionnaires and interviews. Osmer (2008:53) reiterates that this component studies not only the people but is designed in a manner that underlines the purpose of the study. This data needs to be a true indication of the context, and in order to collect data that is indicative of the situation, the sample/respondents will be those who are within the local youth ministries, schools, and communities. This will offer the researcher a guideline for the way forward in conducting the research. The second component described by Osmer (2008:54) is the methods of research, which allude to the strategy that one utilises, which is the most efficient for gathering the necessary information. The third component is the research team or the individual who will be conducting the research. Osmer (2008:55) asserts that meticulous attention to detail is required when making sure that those who are interviewing the sample group are available and able to do so in a manner which does due diligence to the study. Due to time and personal constraints, the student will be the only researcher for this dissertation.

The final component of the research design is the sequence of steps in which the researcher will focus on data collection, data transcription, data analysis, and interpretation and performing research findings (Osmer, 2008:55-56).

Smith (2010:99) views Osmer's model in terms of practical theological tasks, which comprise four tasks, each with its own question, which helps congregational leaders and students understand the interpretive journey necessary to do ministry functionally. By employing Osmer's methodology, a greater understanding is expected of the current crisis faced by the adolescents in Kraaifontein and the context in which discipleship needs to take place. The four interpretive tasks offer guidelines on how to contextualise the discipleship methodologies employed by youth workers in the area. The following tasks are part of Osmer's methodology.

1.9.1 The Descriptive-Empirical Task

The Descriptive-Empirical Task asks the question, "What is going on with the adolescents in trauma situations from Kraaifontein?" Osmer (2008:33-34) bases the descriptive task on the ministry of presence and seeks to understand what is taking

place within the lives of the people, their immediate and extended family and congregation, and this is achieved through what is termed ‘priestly listening.’ Smith (2010:103) asserts that through qualitative research people are more than just subjects, which is important in understanding the concept of priestly listening, as you are fully engaged in the process and the person.

The goal of this section of the research is to investigate what is happening in the lives of traumatised adolescents and their families. The researcher hopes to gain an understanding of the adolescents who are in crisis and experiencing trauma and, in the process, try to ascertain whether they are being disciplined in a way that helps them understand God’s presence in their lives despite their struggles. This task will look to glean their understanding of what it means to be a disciple of God even though the youth are facing hardships. The research sample will consist of twenty adolescents in the Kraaifontein area who will be answering questionnaires. In addition to this, five adolescents will be interviewed from an in-depth perspective. Five additional adolescents who will be interviewed have been selected due to the multifaceted extent of their trauma experienced. The questions will be focused on key areas of trauma, seeking to understand the household, its occupants, and the effect of various situations within the home. The researcher, for the purpose of this research, hopes to garner greater understanding and plans to employ a mixed methodology of quantitative and qualitative data collection. For the purpose of this research, an attempt will be made to ascertain the adolescents’ understanding of trauma, God, the impact of youth ministry and the church in relation to their circumstances and how discipleship influences their walk with Christ.

1.9.2 The Interpretive Task

For the Interpretive Task, the question is asked, “Why are there adolescents in crisis, and why are they subjected to the trauma?” As a result, this section is twofold in its approach. The data collected from the questionnaires and interviews will be collated, and the resultant information will be presented in a scientific manner. Through the collation of the data, it is hoped that a greater understanding will be gleaned as the information provided will answer Osmer’s “why”/ Interpretative task.

Smith (2010:104) states that Osmer uses this task to find the reasons behind what is happening in the previous task, which leads to the pivotal question of “why.” It is foreseen that the understanding gained from this research will present the reasons why adolescents are experiencing trauma within their homes, why this trauma impacts these adolescents to the degree that it does, why trauma hinders discipleship, and why the ‘one size fits all’ discipleship methodology will not be effective. Osmer (2008:83) describes that a part of this task is a theoretical interpretation, which symbolises the understanding of the data collected in the previous task and bridging the gap between the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of each situation and the current context. The researcher will also make use of what Osmer (2008:84) describes as wise judgment, which alludes to the idea of being able to make an effective decision regarding circumstances, which can only be achieved through fully understanding the context in its entirety.

1.9.3 The Normative Task

The question to be asked with respect to the Normative Task, is, “What ought to be taking place within the discipleship relationship, youth group and church community to effectively disciple adolescents in crisis?” Within the scope of the normative task, the researcher proposes an engagement in the discussion of what God’s will is for the current context and situation. Smith (2010:107) writes that Osmer refers to this as the so-called prophetic task, alluding to the idea of past traditions and present revelations through theological interpretation. In this task, the writer will seek to provide a theological basis for discipleship within the church, youth ministry and through relationship-building, and will attempt to bridge these theological perspectives to the situations discovered in previous tasks. The researcher will also discuss different approaches to discipleship and propose to argue why a specific discipleship approach is necessary. Osmer (2008:161) asserts that during this process one must employ “ethical principles and guidelines to be able to attain a ‘moral end’ which is relevant to the current context and situation. This task will lay bare the theological understanding of Scripture in the following ways:

1. Being God’s disciple, what it means, what to expect, suffering servants, counting the cost of following Jesus, what it means to pick up one’s cross.

2. Discipleship: what are the Old Testament and New Testament teachings, and how does teaching in this context find its place within the church today?
3. Specific discipleship teachings within Scripture that deal with wounds, both physical and spiritual.

This task is one which will look at the past, present and future in that Osmer's idea of prophetic discernment will be applied.

1.9.4 The Pragmatic Task

The relevant question to ask under the Pragmatic Task, is, "How should we respond to what is happening?" Developing a discipleship approach/theology which addresses adolescents from Kraaifontein in crisis.

This task will focus on the responsibility of youth pastors and youth workers toward adolescents in crisis who live in trauma-saturated environments. Smith (2010:109) states that the objective of this chapter is to offer guidance and to look at the process of change to be implemented with the end goal being servant leadership. This task applies to everyone and seeks to assert transformational leadership at its core.

1.10 Methodology

1.10.1 Qualitative Research

The purpose of qualitative/empirical research is to characterise that which is being studied in a manner that provides a better understanding of the subject matter. Bradley (1993:434) points out that qualitative research seeks to comprehend others' experiences, offering understanding by seeking to identify the core issues in specific situations. Jaison (2018:20) concurs, stating that qualitative research addresses a specific problem in an area of study, and is extremely detailed.

According to Kabir (2016:202), qualitative research is usually nominal or descriptive in nature and usually consists of sentences and words, which often capture emotions and subjective perceptions of a particular subject. Smith (2016:171) agrees, stating that qualitative research asks more personal questions in a more in-depth setting. The proposed interviews for this project will be held with 5 adolescents identified through

youth programs and life groups held at Northpine Baptist Church, who have experienced extensive levels of trauma over a longer period in different settings. Kabir (2016:202) writes that qualitative research adds to the quality of a quantitative-based evaluation and, therefore, will emphasise and clarify the depth of the problem.

1.10.2 Quantitative Research

According to Jaison (2018:21), the quantitative approach is primarily concerned with collecting and analysing numerical data to measure the extent of a phenomenon within a research area. Kabir (2016:203) asserts that with the numerical nature of the data, the quantitative method seeks to address the 'what' aspect of the research. Surveys and questionnaires are typically used within this data collection methodology. Quantitative data makes use of the questionnaires, adding that often, people are more truthful because there is anonymity, which protects them (Kabir, 2016:203).

For the purpose of this project these two methodologies will be used within the scope of Osmer's methodology.

1.11 Data Collection

Kabir (2016:202) states that data collection is a systemic fashion of gathering information which aids us in being able to answer a research question. Within every ambit of study, one must collect data in order for the field of study to make strides in its field, he affirms this idea and highlights that the goal to capture accurate and correct data aids in rich data analysis.

For the purpose of this study, three different data collection processes will be utilized. Interviews will be done with the additional five adolescents, while twenty adolescents will complete questionnaires. The total number of adolescents is 25.

1.11.1 Sampling

Taherdoost (2016:22) writes that non-probability sampling is often geared, but not limited, toward case study research design and qualitative research, and is intended to examine real-life situations.

It is with this in mind that the researcher utilised a sample of convenience. This selection of sampling is due to its simplicity and since the researcher is already engaged within an adolescent space in which the problem has been observed and noted. According to Taherdoost (2016:22), convenience sampling helps to avoid all the limitations that are typically associated with research.

The sample size consisted of a total of twenty-five adolescents. Twenty adolescents did a questionnaire, and an additional 5 adolescents formed part of the interviews. These adolescents were selected from the youth programs, life groups, discipleship program and school program run by Northpine Baptist Church. The total sample size for this dissertation will thus be 25 adolescents.

1.11.2 Data Analysis

Smith (2016:176) calls attention to the fact that because data doesn't convey its own meaning, researchers employ various analytical tools to present their findings. Bradley (1993:443) clarifies, though, that in every ambit of research tradition, the data must be developed in aggregates and abstractions must be drawn. Although there are no formal rules or processes for qualitative analysis, Bradley (1993:443) highlights that the researcher must find commonality/themes and that those themes will then be broken down into categories to discover the patterns within the data. These categories will be discussed in the remaining chapters of this project.

1.11.3 Data Interpretation

The data will be analysed and organised in a scientifically rigorous manner. Theron (2015:3-4) alludes to the idea that data interpretation is unpacking the data presented in each category and focusing on the content presented. Smith (2016:177) writes that the natural progression of research leads to results/conclusions and that these findings need to be presented in 3 steps. According to Smith (2016:177-178), these steps are to state the findings in a very concise manner, as well as validate the data and its credibility and implications.

These aspects will be covered in this dissertation in chapters 3-6.

1.12 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations, according to the University of Pretoria's ethical guidelines, were adhered to in the study. The researcher applied for ethical clearance from the Research and Ethics Committee at the University of Pretoria, Faculty of Theology and Religion. Applications for permission were also made to the authoritative structures of the schools and congregations to which the adolescents belong. The empirical research for this study was only conducted after permission from authoritative structures and ethical clearance from the University were granted. Participants were informed of the purposes of this study and were asked for their consent to participate in the study. They were furthermore informed that they had a choice when they felt the need to stop participating. Participants were also not rewarded (neither financially nor by any gift) to prevent any bias or potential influence on the outcome of the interviews.

1.13 Thesis Outline and Chapter Structure

1.13.1 Chapter 1: Research Introduction and Background

In this chapter of the dissertation, the researcher introduced the problem faced by adolescents from Kraaifontein who find themselves in crisis and how the church can disciple them effectively. This chapter describes how data were gathered, and how that data is utilised to better understand the responsibilities of the church, youth pastors, and youth workers. This chapter also clarifies key terms and offers a guide to the rest of the dissertation.

1.13.2 Chapter 2: Literature Review

The literature relevant to this study is engaged with by the researcher, who will be attempting to create a discussion around issues pertinent to this study, which will help the reader to develop an understanding of key terms. These key terms include adolescent development and life stage, trauma and crisis, what it means to be a disciple and discipleship, as well as a brief look at the area of Kraaifontein. This is a discussion which engages various scholars.

1.13.3 Chapter 3: Adolescents in Crisis

In this chapter, the researcher made use of the data collected from the questionnaires, and interviews to emphasise the intensity of what these youths are experiencing within

their homes. The researcher engages in discussions around areas such as adolescent development in crisis, and develops an in-depth understanding of these crises, trauma and the situations which cause them. Within this chapter, Osmer as a guide and scholarly writings will be employed to build the foundation of understanding what is going on.

1.13.4 Chapter 4: Adolescents & Trauma

In this chapter the various development stages of an adolescent will be discussed and looks at the theoretical responses documented regarding trauma and crisis. The researcher engages in arguments and discussions surrounding trauma and its effects on society, more specifically on adolescents.

1.13.5 Chapter 5: Disciple & Discipleship

In this chapter a theological basis is built for the words 'disciple' and 'discipleship.' In this regard, reference will be made to scriptural references, prominent scholars in this field and commentaries to illustrate biblical truths adequately. This chapter portrays the interpretative task, also known as sagely wisdom, as set out by Osmer in his practical methodology, and engages various arguments and discussions on this important aspect of a believer's life.

1.13.6 Chapter 6: Youth Pastor & Youth Worker Responsibility: Contextualising Discipleship to Adolescents in Crisis

The last task within Osmer's practical methodology is the most important. In this chapter, the researcher sets forth guiding principles for those who work with youth in crisis and who are part of running discipleship programs. This chapter discusses the practical outworking of the theoretical groundwork discussed in the previous chapters.

1.13.7 Chapter 7: Summary of Findings

This chapter concludes the thesis by addressing the findings of the data collected throughout this process, including the theoretical aspects. A proposed explanation is presented in what the study has set forth and recommends are suggested in terms of what congregational leaders can do, in consideration what has been found after all the information had been collated and interpreted.

CHAPTER 2

ADOLESCENTS, TRAUMA AND DISCIPLESHIP: AN ALL-TOO-COMMON TRIFECTA

2.1 Introduction

The adolescent life stage is interesting in light of so many changes that are happening within their minds and bodies simultaneously. There is an overflow of hormones and emotions, and adolescents might not fully grasp these changes. Robards and Bennett (2013:3) affirm that adolescents experience rapid body changes and extremely stressful challenges in this regard during which time they need empathy, understanding and guidance. These changes and trauma could present various difficulties within the youth space/ministry within the church. If these adolescents and their circumstances are not properly understood, it will negatively impact discipleship. In this chapter various terms will be discussed, which are utilised throughout the rest of the dissertation.

2.2 The Adolescent: The life stage of great change

It was already found in 1989 that adolescents had become increasingly more challenging to navigate due to the increase in their life challenges, which entail both age-related issues and various changes in family dynamics (Huggins, 1989:47). Thirty-six years later, however, it would be difficult to imagine that this has improved. Hasan (2016:1) agrees that adolescence is generally associated with many behavioural problems, which are often preceded by external issues. Cline and Fay (2006:15) add that adolescents are experiencing one of the most intense life stages; they are on the cusp of adulthood, which adds a great deal of pressure to an already explosive situation. It is with this in mind that the researcher would like to engage in a discussion about adolescent development.

Robards et al. (2013:3) point out that adolescents are important and that adults seek to understand and guide them through this life stage, which brings about the most change. An adolescent is not a child and not an adult, but someone caught in the in-

between. They argue that the adolescent does not possess the naivety of a child, even more so the awareness of an adult. This is what makes adolescence stressful. Tsagem (2022:1) agrees, writing that as children exit childhood, they are thrust into adolescence, which is considered the most important life stage as it is directly linked to one being accepted into the fold's membership within society. This idea is affirmed by Curtis (2015:1), who asserts that adolescence is a life stage which can be understood to be the start of social independence. It is with this in mind that Tsagem (2022:1) highlights that the way this is done will have a direct impact on the future members of society. If this is mismanaged, it could have a negative effect.

According to Bell (2016:3), adolescence is understood to be the age group between 13-19 years. A working definition of adolescents is yet to be solidified, but authors such as Robards et al. (2013:4) assert that adolescence is typically profiled between the age of 12-24 years. Kousiakis (2015:4), however, argues that although the United Nations (UN) provided this age group as a definition for youth, the South African definition of adolescence differs drastically, being in the range of 15-35 years, which contradicts the UN's definition. It is thus the researcher's deduction that adolescence is defined as a different age in various countries. What has become expressly apparent is that adolescence is a life stage marked by the end of childhood and the cusp of adulthood. Bell (2016:3) affirms this, writing that specific markers are to be considered in order to determine adolescence. These markers will be discussed in this chapter.

2.3 Developmental Stages

In this research section, research of a number of scholars will be engaged regarding the various developmental stages of adolescence. This will assist the reader in grasping the various aspects or stages of adolescent development, which informs the way they reason, act and have decision-making abilities.

2.3.1 Physical Development

According to Swartz (2012:204), the onset of puberty is the general marker for when adolescence begins. This period is usually described as a challenging and exciting time. Robards et al. (2013:8) agree, arguing that outside of the womb, puberty is the

most dramatic and rapid life change in one's entire lifespan. There is a wide array of biological changes associated with puberty, which are universal (Swartz, 2012:206).

Tyler (2020:733) attests to the fact that girls experience puberty 2 years before boys and that these pubertal changes happen over a period of 4 years. These changes can be observed from the extremities to the torso (Tyler, 2020:733). According to Swartz (2012:206), the most obvious change is the growth spurt, often resulting in adolescents looking awkward and out of proportion. Not only does this physical growth spurt make adolescents appear awkward, but it can also result in depression and behavioural issues. Swartz (2012:207) concurs, stating that when adolescent maturity is reached earlier or later than peers, adolescents are affected socially and psychologically. Tyler (2020:739) highlights that early puberty/maturation presents many issues, not only from a mental health point of view but also behavioural issues, eating disorders, substance abuse and strained relationships with family and friends. Tyler (2020:738-739) notes that when early adolescence occurs, there is often riskier behaviour associated with the adolescent, as they tend to gravitate to older peers to 'appear' less different/awkward.

2.3.2 Brain Development

With the physical development of the adolescent being so radical, it must surely be an indicator of how the brain develops, too. Swartz et al. (2013:209) write that in the past, neuroscientists had believed that brain development was completed within the first few years of childhood. However, research has determined that the brain develops well into the person's twenties. Tyler (2020:741) argues that the brain undergoes highly dramatic changes during adolescence as it matures, interconnects, and becomes more specialised. This enhances how adolescents process new information and improves their thinking markers (Tyler, 2020:741). Lang et al. (2022:343) point out that brain development in adolescence produces more complex creases, and the increases in the fold of the brain at this time are at areas which impact cognitive and emotional information.

Roaten and Roaten (2012:5) state that the brain is the most complex organ of the body and that, although thousands of studies have been conducted, it is not fully

understood. Roaten et al. (2012:6) assert that the most sporadic growth of the brain happens during the second wave of growth which occurs from adolescence to the age of 24. This affirms the argument put forth by Swartz (2012:209-210) that brain development hits its absolute peak within the twenties.

With the sporadic changes within the brain, Roaten et al. (2012:5) assert that the interplay between the structural and behavioural changes becomes evident and is understood in consideration of these changes. Swartz (2012:209) agrees that, within adolescence, the brain is at its most optimal learning stage although it is important to note that different parts of the brain mature at different rates. There are brain scans that can attest to this phenomenon, as stated by Swartz (2012:5), and the pre-frontal cortex is one of those areas in the mind that develops slower. When This information is important when seeking to understand adolescents and their decision-making process. The pre-frontal cortex is the part of the brain that is responsible for decisions and planning. Therefore, Swartz (2012:5) asserts, that adolescents are more prone to risky behaviour and psychological distress due to it not being fully developed. Robards et al. (2013:11) affirm Swartz's argument, adding that the immature development of the pre-frontal cortex during adolescence opens them up to erratic behaviour and a heightened openness to experimentation. These are important aspects of adolescent development if we are to understand how they reason and to which degree their development informs the way they understand God's Word, God's Word and their position within the church community.

Cognitive development is another aspect of brain development which needs to be considered carefully. Robards et al. (2013:11) highlight that Piaget set forth a theory of 'formal operational thinking', which he developed by postulating four sequential stages in adolescent brain development. These stages are present in every adolescent, having a profound impact on the ability to think abstractly. Byrnes (2008:227) writes that cognitive development has broad applicability, asserting that cognition refers to the acquirement of knowledge. Not only is cognitive development related to the acquisition of knowledge, but according to Byrnes (2008:227), it also relates to the modification and manipulation of knowledge. In a more straightforward

form, cognitive development refers to how adolescents learn, remember, reason and use language.

2.3.3 Cognitive Development

Dahl (2004:5) argues that neuroscientists, developmental psychologists, clinical investigators, and social scientists should collaborate in seeking to understand adolescents by constructing a framework, which will guide the leading academics in understanding the developmental pathways of adolescents. According to Swartz (2012:210), it is during cognitive development that adolescents are navigating their way through understanding their experiences and trying to organise their worlds. In relation to the rest of the dissertation, this acts as a segway in understanding how their trauma will inform their understanding of their worlds and God's Word. Swartz (2012:210-211) asserts that adolescents assimilate by allowing existing ideas and new ideas to co-exist and find the balance within that space.

Swartz (2012:211) states that poverty has various effects and levels of impact on adolescent cognitive development within the South African context. The impact Swartz (2012:11) describes is linked to the idea that external stimulation of cognitive development produces optimal maturation. According to Swartz (2012:211), poverty, lack of parental supervision, and constant stress hinder this maturation, and produce high degrees of violent behaviour among adolescents in this specific context. Kapur (2015:241) supports the idea of environmental impact on cognitive development, stating that environmental stimulation, religious institutions, schooling, and culture all play vital roles in this maturation process. According to Kapur (2015:241), Piaget sets out the various stages of this development, which can be described in the following manner: the ability to concrete abstract thinking processes, the flexibility of thought processes, explain phenomena, interpretation of literary material, the concept of time and adolescent egocentrism (Kapur, 2015:241-242).

Kapur (2015:241) argues that the idea of adolescent abstract thinking is related to Piaget's finding is that adolescents are able to construct hypothetical perspectives. This idea is supported by Swartz (2012:211), who states that adolescents develop the ability to replace concrete experiences with conclusions derived from logical thinking.

Swartz (2012:212) highlights that it is this development in their cognitive development that drives them to have strong opinions or voices about certain causes, such as war, democracy, and more Kapur (2015:241) asserts that during the period of cognitive development in adolescents, language development occurs, and this has a direct correlation to abstract thinking.

Byrnes (2008:236) explains that in a perfect world, adolescents who have more significant metacognitive insights make good decisions. Kapur (2015:242) understands metacognition as self-awareness in adolescents in terms of intellectualisation and thinking about their own thoughts. This, however, is significantly challenged or lowered when faced with real-world issues and situations. Byrnes (2008:236) concurs, highlighting that factors such as intoxication, emotional distress and trauma reduce the adolescent ability to generate, evaluate and implement success-producing options.

2.3.4 Psychological, Social and Emotional Development

With the various factors at play within the body and mind of the adolescent, it would be a great injustice if the research didn't include these key aspects stated within the heading. Within cognitive development, it is understood that adolescents develop the ability to think abstractly, formulating the ability to make decisions that impact their lives. Kapur (2015:243) argues that adolescents subject themselves to constant self-evaluation and self-appraisal, which raises their self-consciousness. This is necessary to determine who they are and understand and form their identity.

Robards et al. (2013:8) assert that adolescents, like adults, are universally required to attain certain competencies/developmental tasks. The central developmental task is to achieve a good understanding of identity and self-worth. Kapur (2015:243) corroborates this statement, highlighting that this is most greatly achieved when they can successfully detach from their parents and identify more with their peer group. Kapur (2015:243) states that this detachment from parents often leads to conflict within families. Robards et al. (2013:9) write that as adolescents begin to discover their identity, they begin to understand their weaknesses and strengths, their contribution to society and how they respond in different situations. This often leads to

experimentation. Kapur (2015:243) states that experimentation could lead to an identity crisis and that great conflict with parents during this time could result in a greater identification with peers, which could have negative results. Robards et al. (2013:9) concur, adding that difficulties are encountered due to ignorance, impulsivity, cognitive immaturity, an inability to comprehend consequences and poor self-worth. Kapur (2015:243) writes that adolescents are typically psychologically integrated in late adolescence and have discovered their roles within society by developing a consistent view of the outside world. Grobbelaar and Breed (2016:56) make an interesting statement that adolescence should thus be understood to be a developmental stage that begins with biology but finds its culmination in culture. According to Aziz (2020:3), the adolescent transition is characterised by turmoil, life-altering decisions and confusion, and this period of their life is best described as individuation. This is what prepares them for civic duty.

Another aspect of adolescence is emotional development. Kapur (2015:243) points out that emotions are very often what rules adolescents, and that these emotions can become quite intense. Yet, these social-emotional changes are a natural part of the voyage from childhood to adulthood. It is precisely these emotions which are used to form relationships and function effectively within the world. Dahl (2004:18) rightly argues that the emotional change within adolescence is a relatively understudied area of adolescent development, yet it guides adults in understanding their vulnerability and passions.

The areas covered within this section related to adolescent development are imperative to formulate an adequate understanding of adolescents and this stage of their lives. A good understanding will assist in developing a concise theological discipleship model which uses these factors as a part of the framework. In the next section, the researcher will engage the discussion around trauma and its effects on adolescents.

2.4. Trauma & Adolescents

In this section, an adequate understanding of trauma will be attempted, as well as the devastating effects it has on adolescents and their development and, essentially, their

whole lives. If one were to define trauma or psychological trauma, it would be one or more events which cause severe stress, threatening a person's psychophysical balance (Perrotta, 2019:1). According to Perrotta, the word 'trauma' finds its origins in the Greek language, has a double-edged meaning. It means to harm or damage and can be used to describe a wound with a laceration. Malizia (2017:11), on the other hand, defines trauma as a direct personal experience of an event which could possibly lead to serious injury or death or other physical threats. Trauma is a form of helplessness and could be described as the loss of control over one's body. These ideas highlight the devastating effects of trauma and provide insight into the depth of its grip on the lives of those who have suffered from it.

Trauma affects different age groups, and Malizia (2017:11) asserts that trauma is considered an emotionally unsustainable event for those who suffer as a result of it. It has detrimental effects on both childhood and adolescent development. Perrotta (2019:1) concurs, highlighting that trauma changes the victim's perception of well-being and results in them being vulnerable and unstable, distorting their identity. Trauma is thus an experience which changes the victim's life forever if not dealt with.

According to Malizia (2017:13), severe trauma impacts the transition from childhood to adolescence. In childhood, for example, attachment relationships are necessary for the development of a sense of security. Perrotta (2019:13) agrees that children internalise initial interactions with their parents/parental figures and situations contrary to this 'safe zone' will be compared to their current experience. This contributes to the way in which older children/adolescents deal with trauma. Malizia (2017:13) affirms this idea, stating that the relationships formed in childhood influence the reliance of adolescents on their parents during traumatic experiences, and how they respond to these traumatic experiences. Perrotta (2019:14) argues that a traumatised brain responds differently and could lead to irrational thinking, apathy, a general lack of self-awareness and the inability to make good, sound decisions. This idea is affirmed by Scaer (2005:58), who argues that the synapses, neurochemicals, and neurons of the brain are indefinitely and that the traumatised brain is thus unable to distinguish between past and present. This demonstrates that trauma has a severe impact on adolescent behaviour and decision-making processes, highlighting the idea of

cognitive development, which is impeded by adverse environments. Perrotta (2019:14) concurs, stating that trauma in adolescence produces negative behaviours and aggression and results in loneliness. Not only does it affect behaviour and cognitive development, but Perrotta (2019:14) asserts that trauma negatively affects emotional development in adolescents. Trauma in adolescence must thus be understood to be destructive and a severe hindrance to adolescent development with potentially detrimental outcomes.

2.4.1 Different Traumas

Following the preceding section, this section will deal specifically with the various traumatic experiences and their impact on the lives of adolescents. The discussion will focus on both childhood and adolescence because often, trauma occurs in childhood, but its effects are seen in adolescence. Hendricks and Newman (1995:170) write that in the 1990s it became apparent that children and adolescents who experienced public and private trauma were experiencing extensive post-traumatic stress disorder. Malizia (2017:13) agrees, asserting that the effects of childhood trauma on adolescents are significant and severe and that it impacts every sphere/aspect of their lives.

2.4.1.1 Grief in Adolescence

According to Sanghvi (2019:6), grief is described as the experience of loss due to the death of a loved one. Revet et al. (2020:2) add to this by providing a breakdown of the loss experience, describing it in the following way: bereavement is the actual loss of a loved one, and grief is the aspect which impacts cognitive, affective, and behavioural responses to the loss and mourning, which is the manner in which people adapt to the loss.

According to Revet et al. (2017:63), one of the most common occurrences in childhood and adolescence is death, highlighting that it can be extremely stressful. Guzzo and Gobbi (2023:1208) concur, stating that within the US alone, more than 4.8 million adolescents experience the death of a parent or sibling. This provides an indication of the seriousness of understanding adolescent grief and the stress it causes. Not only is it stressful but leads to

secondary issues. Revet et al. (2018:63) argue that some of these secondary issues are mental health disorders, depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder. This idea is supported by Guzzo et al. (2023:1208), who claim that the trauma of death in the life of an adolescent is significant due to their developmental stage.

Adolescence cannot be likened to the childhood or adulthood life stages. Guzzo et al. (2023:1207) assert that due to adolescence being such a pivotal growth stage with complex neuro-psychological phases, there must be a distinct separation in understanding their grief process. The distinction described by Guzzo et al. (2023:1224) is necessary as grief in adolescence often leads to delinquency, suicide, behavioural disengagement, and substance abuse issues. This is because there is a general shift within the family dynamic. Guzzo et al. (2023:1225) present the idea that a change in family structure and parenting style contributes further to the complexity of adolescent grief.

The breakdown offered by Revet et al. (2020:2) provides the reader with a greater understanding of what adolescents are experiencing and the impact of grief on their development. Revet et al. (2018:64) describe grief as a normative process, further stating that grief is not stagnant, but rather that it is progressive, which possibly leads to complicated grief leading to mental health disorders. It is thus observed that grief has many layers, and these various layers impact adolescents differently. Guzzo et al. (2023:1209) agree with Revet and coworkers, writing that grief is a lifelong process in which grief is relived in different life events. Grief in adolescence should thus be considered complex and serious in nature, with layers of consequences of that grief.

Sanghvi (2019:6) postulates that grief is multifaceted, and the effects of grief extend far beyond just the emotional response. The factors listed by Sanghvi (2019:6) are the circumstances surrounding the loss, attachment to the deceased, coping style, personality, and the individual themselves. All these factors introduce the many layers to adolescent grief, the trauma thereof and the results of that specific trauma. Revet et al. (2020:74) state that because

adolescent grief isn't linear, there are pockets of regression which might be witnessed, and developing an understanding of their grief will aid in navigating that process.

2.4.1.2 Orphanhood in Adolescence due to HIV

According to Pallies- et al. (2020:1), there has been a steady increase in early adult mortality in South Africa, which was noted over the late 90s and early 2000s due to the HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) pandemic. Since treatment became available in 2004, Pallies et al. (2020:1) noted that these mortality rates decreased. However, the result of the previous mortalities was orphanhood in adolescence. The rate of orphanhood by 2010 was estimated to have risen to 36%, with Pallies et al. (2020:1) observing that 53% of adolescents had lost both parents between the ages of 10-19 years old by 2014. This highlights the alarming rate of orphanhood in South Africa among adolescents especially.

Babedi and Pillay (2019:1039) provide an even scarier scenario pertaining to the issue of orphanhood, highlighting that globally, there are an estimated 153 million orphans, 3.7 million of those orphans in South Africa. The reality is thus bleaker than one could imagine. According to Babedi et al. (2019:1039), South Africa constitutes 17% of orphans globally, and most of these adolescents have been orphaned due to their parents dying from HIV.

In a study based on the prevalence of HIV in Kwazulu-Natal, Pallies et al. (2020:2) argue that the high rates of HIV in this province have been a major contributing factor to orphanhood. This was particularly greater during the 2010-2014 period (Pallies, et al., 2020:2). In a separate study, Babedi et al. (2019:1039) highlight the plight of the orphans in the Free State, stating that the high prevalence of HIV in the province is a large contributing factor. Babedi et al. (2019:1039) claim that estimates show that nearly 7.52 million people in South Africa have HIV and that the Free State ranked one of the highest among the provinces. Pallies et al. (2020:2) argue that the death of a parent is extremely traumatising to adolescents, especially the death of a mother and

that the consequences are profound. Losing both parents can thus be understood to have an even more profound effect on an adolescent's well-being and behaviour. Babedi et al. (2019:1039) agree, asserting that the death of a parent in adolescence is challenging due to a lack of parental support and financial resources, and not having basic needs met.

When unpacking the data, it is interesting to note that in the 2018 UNAIDS (Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS) report, it is stated that half of orphans across the globe are adolescents, indicating again that orphanhood is a direct result of parents dying or parental neglect. According to Mwoma and Pillay (2016:83), an orphan is defined by the fact they have lost both parents. This underscores the premise that orphans do not have parental support, which in turn results in these same adolescents having their basic social needs unfulfilled. Babedi et al. (2019:1040) postulate that unmet needs in adolescent orphans often result in anxiety or anxiety-like behaviour due to the transitional phase of adolescence. Ntuli et al. (2020:1) agree with this assessment, further stating that orphaned adolescents suffer from emotional distress, often resulting in silence, which becomes their coping mechanism. It is then appropriate to characterise orphanhood as deeply traumatic, leading to severe depressive symptoms, as can be observed in the arguments presented.

According to Ntuli et al. (2020:2), the prevalence of HIV has significantly contributed to orphanhood in adolescence, adding that this is due to the natural maturation of children who have lost their parents. With families failing to understand the enormity of the task attached to next of kin responsibility, these children go uncared for and are thus neglected. They point out that the family network has collapsed and that a proper support system for these adolescents is non-existent, which has given rise to teenage-headed households. The mortality rate of adults with HIV or HIV-related illness has not waned despite the increased treatment methods and remains prevalent, especially in rural South Africa (Pallies et al., 2020:9). Babedi et al. (2019:1041) claim that orphanhood in adolescence often gives rise to discrimination, bullying and isolation, becoming yet another branch of trauma in their lives. The lived

experience of the adolescent is thus not only loss and abandonment but exclusion due to circumstance. Babedi et al. (2019:1041) assert that support from adults during adolescent orphanhood is critical due to their transitional developmental stage, but also that due to their loss, they need to be cared for financially too. The lack suffered from parental loss is more than emotional, and this often leads to these adolescents not having schooling resources, which often leads to anxiety (Babedi, et al. 2019:1041).

According to Babedi (2019:1042), the destabilisation of the family often occurs due to the death of a parent and, ultimately, orphanhood due to the often-impending consequence of being self-reliant, which ultimately adds to the trauma. This trauma must be addressed.

2.4.1.3 Physical and Sexual Adolescent Abuse

Farnia et al. (2020:1098) state that child abuse is rampant in all human societies across the globe. The definition of child abuse, as provided by the World Health Organization (WHO), is a complex issue which involves various aspects of abuse (Farnia, et al., 2020:1098). These factors are listed as physical and psychological abuse, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect, and other forms of exploitation (Farnia, et al. 2020:1098). This highlights the seriousness of the complexities of abuse, demonstrating that abuse occurs in many forms, and its effects can be seen in the present and future of the affected child. Meink et al. (2016:1) argue that a major problem in South Africa is sexual, emotional, and physical abuse of children and that the outcome of this abuse is severely negative. They reported that at the time of publishing their article, there was no in-depth data available from community-based samples. The data provided by them was the first study of its kind which focused on self-reported child abuse within South African communities.

Meink et al. (2016:1) assert that in Sub-Saharan Africa, children who have been victims of abuse have displayed consistently weaker mental health outcomes. Farnia et al. (2020:1098) agree, stating that memory weakness, immature communication, weak emotional regulation, severe depression, anxiety, and

substance abuse issues are all effects of abuse. The outcome is never seen immediately but is seen in later years such as adolescence. What is evident from the onset is the damage and trauma caused by abuse, and how this creates a series of problematic behaviours within adolescence. When discussing statistics and the data around abuse toward adolescents, it is important to note that there is not a vast pool of data available for South Africa. The available data presents a bleak picture. Meinck et al. (2016:1) affirm the previous statement by Farnia and co-workers, arguing that the paper they presented is one of the first to address the prevalence of sexual abuse against adolescents. Meink and co-workers furthermore state that their paper is the first to address a community-based understanding of this trauma.

Gwala (2021:1) argues that approximately a third of girls in South Africa will experience sexual assault and that 1 in 5 children will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime. These are quite alarming statistics and solutions to this sort of issue should be of huge concern to our government and churches. Gwala (2021:1) notes that rape remains a great challenge in South African society, documenting that the 1/3 of girls who are raped, know their perpetrator. This demonstrates that perpetrators are often within the victim's family or immediate environment. Crime statistics provided in the Annual Crime Statistics for the period 2019/2020 noted that 24,000 children were sexually assaulted and that this translated to 19.8% compared to the global statistic of 18%. This statistic alone brings to light the extent of the problem in South Africa. Meink et al. (2016:2) assert that due to the inconsistency in studies of adolescent abuse and the measure of severity of abuse, the statistics that will now be provided vary. The data shows that 1.6%-60% of children suffered sexual abuse, with 14,8% reporting life-long sexual harassment (Meink, et al., 2016:1-3). Other statistics presented by them demonstrate the dire need for intervention and protection as up to 3.3% of children reported lifetime rape.

Another traumatic experience for adolescents and children is physical abuse. Titi et al. (2022:122) write that in South Africa, it appears that violence has become a way of solving problems. According to Titi et al. (2022:122), 42% of

children experienced physical abuse, and for that number to shift there needs to be a shift in societal norms which allow for this behaviour toward children and adolescents to be considered normal. These statistics closely correlate with the data provided by Meink et al. (2016:3), which state that 37,9% of children reported physical abuse in 2015 and 54,9% reported lifetime physical abuse. Titi et al. (2022:122) argue that physical abuse doesn't only leave physical scars, but psychosocial effects, PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) and further debilitating consequences. Artz et al. (2018:791) report that in much of the data collected in their study, it was noted that boys were as much at risk as girls for sexual abuse. Girls, however, were exposed to more penetrative and contact abuse. This does not detract from the seriousness of the abuse, as the effects of this kind of abuse are devastating on every level. Sexual abuse should also not be thought of as a once-off occurrence. Artz et al. (2018:791) assert that sexual abuse often occurs throughout the adolescents' lifetime, and often at the hands of known perpetrators.

Gwala (2021:1) argues that many sexual assault cases in South Africa aren't reported and that due to cultural and traditional reasons, the victims are unable to speak about the abuse as it must be concealed. The effects of sexual abuse in the childhood of adolescents, as the research has presented, do lead to risky behaviour, substance abuse, anxiety, and PTSD. These are responses to the trauma they have experienced, and without guidance and discipleship will be their natural response.

2.5. A Disciple

Brady (2019:44) writes that the very first step in becoming a disciple of God is to accept the pardon of our sins through faith in Christ. This pardon is given to us through Jesus Christ and can be understood in light of John 3:16-17 (ESV):

For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.

The gift of God is given to us through his son Jesus Christ. Whitacre (1999:90) describes that the statement made by John highlights the purpose of his coming, salvation for those who believe.

Another text in John which points to faith in God is found in John 3:3 (ESV):

Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God.

Brady (2019:44) argues that within this text, Nicodemus, a good man and highly religious, asked Jesus how he could enter the kingdom of heaven, and Jesus' response was that he must be born again. Etheredge (2015:5) concurs, stating that when we are considered to be disciples of Christ - we have decided to surrender our lives and to follow him. Brady (2019:45) asserts that the new birth, through surrender and faith in Jesus Christ, gives the individual the ability to recognise that we are sinful and that God alone is righteous. Disciples, in its most simple understanding, are thus followers of Jesus who live lives surrendered to Christ. Not only are disciples to live surrendered lives, but there also needs to be a willingness to learn from following.

Fritz (2018:18) describes that the terms 'disciple' and 'discipline' come from the Latin word *discere*, which means to learn and, by extension, would mean that those who are disciples need to have discipline. He highlights the fact that those who believe they are disciples of Christ must practise daily disciplines, which leads them into a deeper relationship with Christ. It becomes apparent that a disciple is not merely someone who believes in Christ. It is someone who has faith, wants to follow Jesus, learns from him, and practises daily disciplines to deepen their relationship.

According to Kgatle (2017:189), to be a disciple of Christ is to willingly accept the suffering and discomfort that comes with following Christ, which is considered an asset. To understand even greater the meaning of the term disciple, one needs to engage the discussion around the theological aspect of the term. Faranao (2015:67) states that the term disciple is the Greek term '*mathetes*', and this term is used 294 times in the New Testament. One such example is found in the Gospel of Mark (Mark 1:16-17 NLT).

One day as Jesus was walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew throwing a net into the water, for they fished for a living. Jesus called out to them, “Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!”

In this pericope, Jesus calls the first disciples. Faranao (2015:70) asserts that the call to the disciples in this pericope is one which undergirds the very call to us today. The call from inertia to motion, a call which demands of us to leave that which we know behind and simply follow Jesus. Kernaghan (2007:45) agrees, writing that the Gospel of Jesus Christ requires us to repent and believe wholeheartedly embracing the way of Christ. This is the true call to being a disciple. To follow Christ, not the world, to forsake what we know for the opportunity to be fully known. Faranao (2015:70) argues that this call is personal and calls us to react, often without knowing what is to come, but trusting Christ to lead the way. A disciple of Jesus is essentially pupils who endeavour to be transformed through the process of ardently learning the way of Christ (APCWO 2020:1). While the term ‘disciple’ is a noun, the researcher will discuss discipleship in the next section, which is the verb form.

2.5.1 Discipleship

Nel (2017:1) asserts that discipleship has almost altogether disappeared from what is considered normal church conversations. This is alarming, especially in light of Christ's mandate in Matthew 28:20 and could be indicative of a misunderstanding of Scripture. Eaton (2010:315) underscores Jesus' emphasis on the fact that we are to go into the world, make disciples, and teach them everything he has taught. Our responsibility as believers is thus to teach others about Christ and his ways. Discipleship is how we teach people to follow Jesus. Fritz (2018:16) writes that discipleship, in its most simple explanation, is the process of the disciple imitating the teacher through teaching and mentorship. Eaton (2010:315), agreeing, states that the mission given to believers is to teach new converts to obey God and trust God in everything they do. The culture and society today are very different from the one in which Jesus gave this mandate, but the mandate remains the same.

According to Nel (2017:2), discipleship has become more challenging over the years, especially in a post-modern society. An influx of technology, confusing ideologies, and

a world that has cultivated a self-satisfying culture are contrary to the marks of discipleship. Ogden (2018:xii) agrees, stating that in the world today, we are ruled by relativism, where the ideology of 'live and let live' seems to be the metric by which we gauge right and wrong. This is an indication of the challenges the church faces especially with adolescents, but it should not deter us.

Fritz (2018:17) argues that within the biblical context when a young Jew grew up, he would graduate from classroom education and stay with a rabbi to learn from his life and to live with him. The same was true for the disciples when Christ had called them. Fritz (2018:17) alludes to the idea that when Christ called Peter, James, and Andrew, they were exposed to Jesus' prayer life, and his demeanour in difficult situations and got to know him intimately. This allowed them to imitate him when he ascended into heaven. We might not have discipleship homes for people to learn from rabbis or have Jesus physically walking and calling us, but we do have the Bible and the call to follow remains.

Nel (2009:3) refers to the idea of a pneumatological understanding of believers and explains that Christ's body aids us in understanding that discipleship happens in incarnational communities. Christ, the Word, who became flesh and dwelt among us, now lives inside of us when we profess faith in him (Nel, 2009:3). This is the basis for discipleship today, that we become what Jesus is, a relational being. Ogden (2018:xii) concurs, writing that at the heart of each person is the desire to be in a deep relationship and through these relationships we are able to be effective in discipleship. Platt (2010:99) argues that as Christ's disciples, it is imperative that we seek to partner with Christ on his mission to build the church but also to be a living example of what it means to be a Christ follower. Our mission as disciples must align with Christ's mandate as given in Matthew 28:20. Our obedience in this regard emphasises our obedience to the call to follow Christ as his disciples. Kgatle (2017:188) writes that Mark 10:35-42 is a demonstration, or even a teaching of discipleship as a self-denying, self-risking, lowly service act for the redemption of the world.

Discipleship builds on the foundation of being a disciple, embracing surrender and the willingness to follow. The two are not mutually exclusive as they intertwine in every

aspect of the journey. Kgatle (2017:189) agrees, arguing that discipleship is taking up one's cross and following Jesus, acting like him and being, by extension, a manifestation of his Kingdom here on earth.

2.6. Conclusion

What has become apparent in this chapter is that adolescence is not a simple life stage, but rather encompasses many transitions, hormonal changes, and fluctuations. It is a life stage in which key decisions need to be made, and very often can determine the course of one's life. Not only are their body and mind going through many changes, but their development is also largely influenced by their environment. The various developmental stages of adolescence are so intricately interlinked that youth are most often grappling with many changes simultaneously. Not only are there all these changes, but they are also trying to find their identity. This, coupled with non-conducive living circumstances, can cause havoc in their lives. Whether it's poverty, abuse or stress, their cognitive development is negatively impacted. Those factors, coupled with trauma in the various ways it could be experienced, adversely impact their walk with God.

Trauma is a stressful occurrence in the life of the affected person. In adolescence, trauma negatively impedes the already tumultuous life stage. With trauma having the ability to affect the mind and one's well-being, it was necessary for the researcher to shed light on the topic. When looking at trauma in relation to adolescence it is imperative to understand that it is detrimental to the transitional life stage and that it has a very devastating effect on relationships in the victim's life. It often renders adolescents helpless and often leads to irrational thinking and decision making, and behaviour such as promiscuity and aggression. Trauma should also be understood to be either a culmination of events or a single occurrence, which have left emotional scars. These scars are often invisible to the naked eye, but very visible in the behaviour of adolescents. It would take a great deal of empathy and compassion to walk with these adolescents when they decide to live a life surrendered to Christ.

To be a disciple of Christ means to ardently follow Christ, deny yourself and pick up your cross. It often means that despite raging emotions, the choice is always to

emulate Christ and what he embodies. This could be very difficult to as an adolescent because the world offers many solutions to dealing with our problems. The hyperfocus on self-care, self-gain, self-harm, and self-satisfying is the world's way, but Jesus calls those who profess him to a different way; a way which acknowledges that even though we are suffering, yet we will serve in a way which acknowledges that even though my situation is bad, God remains good. This could be difficult for the adolescent mind to comprehend, but with the right discipleship method and program, it could become easier. Discipleship is the process of mentoring and guiding disciples to walk with Jesus in every sphere of their lives with zeal and excitement. Discipleship is important and necessary, especially to adolescents as their trauma response might hinder their view of God. Discipleship also allows for relationships to be built, relationships which edify and enrich the life of the disciple.

In this chapter, I have engaged the discussion around all of these topics and have engaged various scholars to build a foundation for this dissertation. It has demonstrated that adolescence is complex and that trauma affects that complexity. The influence that trauma has on the life of the adolescent, has been adequately described. The terms 'disciple' and 'discipleship' have been discussed. This will provide the reader with a basis for the rest of the dissertation as chapter 3 will deal with the data collected and collated. This data will demonstrate adolescents in crisis and the researcher will engage the discussion around trauma and adolescence.

CHAPTER 3

THE DATA: WHAT IS GOING ON?

3.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, the researcher concentrated on the academic arguments related to adolescents and their development. Not only did I focus on their development, but also sought to understand the impact of trauma in adolescent life. Trauma does not always occur in adolescent life - it can occur in childhood, and its effects are seen in adolescence. Malizia (2017:11) argues that trauma occurs at different stages of childhood and adolescence and that the effects are often PTSD, which impedes cognitive development. These are not the only effects of trauma.

In this chapter, the focus will be on presenting the data collected from 25 adolescent respondents. Twenty (20) respondents from the Kraaifontein area participated in an anonymous questionnaire. The remaining 5 respondents participated in an interview process. The interview process focussed on their childhood, their experiences and how it has shaped them and their faith. The survey focussed largely on their immediate home environment, their experiences regarding trauma and how this translates to their walk with Christ.

3.2 Methodology

For this study, the researcher applied a mixed method of collecting and collecting data utilising the quantitative and qualitative methods. This was necessary to underscore the importance of a contextualised approach to discipleship for adolescents experiencing trauma.

3.2.1 Context

This study was located and conducted in Kraaifontein, a suburb in the Northern Suburbs. Kraaifontein is quite extensive and has a wide range of smaller neighbourhoods within it. These neighbourhoods are closely situated together and

comprise middle to low-income families. The respondents in the study were identified and drawn from these surrounding areas and are all part of a local youth group.

3.2.2 Participants

For the best insight into this study of understanding adolescents who experience trauma and how to discipline them, the sample was drawn from the local youth group. The respondents for both the quantitative and qualitative data were all samples of convenience participants, as described in Chapter One. The element of a sample of convenience was selected because the researcher is engrossed in the community in various youth settings.

For the questionnaire, the participants were not selected; the questionnaire was, however, distributed with a link in a chat group. The link allowed the participants to complete a Google form, completely anonymously. The members of that group were informed that this was a voluntary exercise. The purpose of this exercise was also explained to them. Those who responded were willing participants. The questionnaire was developed with the sole purpose of seeking to determine the trauma these adolescents face and their understanding of terms such as discipline and discipleship and determine if they experience discipleship through mentorship. This questionnaire is attached as an annexure.

In order to collect the best possible data for the study from a qualitative perspective, the sample for the interviewing method was restricted to adolescents who had experienced trauma in their childhood and/or current home environment. The adolescents also had to be involved in the youth programs within the Northpine Baptist Church. In the sample were 2 males and 3 female participants with ages ranging between 18-21. The researcher selected this age group due to the developmental stages of the adolescent journey. Guzzo et al. (2023:1207) refer to adolescence as the life stage with various developmental stages, with intense changes to the biological, psychological and social aspects of their lives. This period of transition is unique to the adolescent and is the life stage in which the final growth of the frontal lobe occurs (Guzzo, et al., 2023:1207). According to Guzzo et al. (2023:1207), this part of the brain is used for problem-solving, spontaneity, impulse control and social

behaviours. This is imperative in our understanding of how best to disciple adolescents who are from trauma-informed homes.

3.2.3 Ethical Considerations

All permissions and ethical clearances were obtained from the University of Pretoria and letters of consent from all participants. All respondents were willing participants and fully comprehended the intention of the research. All participants were offered counselling if they were affected by recalling their traumatic experiences. Those who filled out the anonymous questionnaire were able to request counselling or debriefing from the local youth pastor and youth leaders, remaining anonymous to the researcher.

3.3 The Importance of the Data

The data of this study is vital in that it displays the harsh reality of our current context. The data that emerges demonstrates the great need for a contextualised approach to discipleship. This will require a reform in the praxis of the church, but this cannot be attained without fully grasping and appreciating the effect trauma has on young people. The researcher would like to highlight the idea of contextualised discipleship in the Kraaifontein community. The researcher would also like the research to stimulate further study and engagement for the greater good of adolescents within the church.

3.4 The Findings from the Questionnaire

Jaison (2018:21) highlights that the primary concern of quantitative data is to ascertain the extent of the phenomena in a particular study. The question of 'what' is occurring is typically answered through numerical data (Kabir, 2016:203). Kabir (2016:203) further postulates that quantitative data collection allows researchers to easily summarise and compare what is taking place.

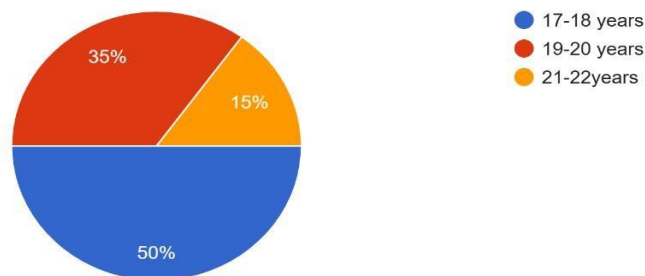
The quantitative data (questionnaire method) in this study comprises 20 adolescent respondents from the Kraaifontein area who all willingly participated. This survey was completely anonymous and was distributed in a broadcast group. In this questionnaire, open-ended and closed-ended questions were posed. In this section, the researcher will discuss the findings of the questionnaire. The primary focus of the questionnaire

was to ascertain the home environment of the adolescents, the traumatic experiences they have faced and their understanding of disciple and discipleship. The questionnaire also sought to determine the role of the church and how it addresses these situations. I will now present the questionnaire questions and the responses from the adolescents below.

3.4.1 Which age group are you in?

Fig. 3.1 Age Group

Which age group are you in??
20 responses



This question was to determine the age group of the adolescent. The researcher opted for this age group for two main reasons. One reason was to ensure that the adolescents who participated could do so freely with no adult influence. The second reason was to ensure that the adolescent could properly comprehend the questions and the benefit of the research.

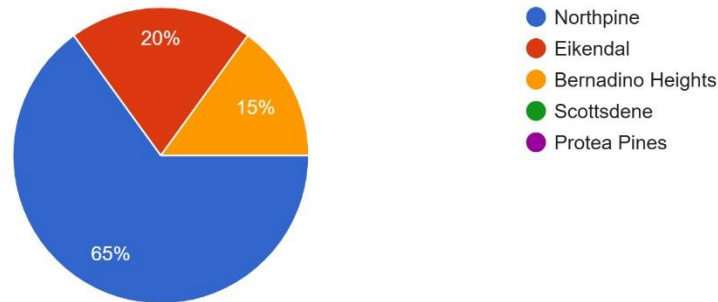
According to Spano (2004:3), the age group 17-21 years old constitutes late adolescence because, in this life stage, there is a greater ability to express their thoughts and feelings clearly. This aligns with the argument presented by Kapur (2015:234) that the adolescent developmental stage concludes between the ages of 18-21. This depends on life experiences, culture and a host of other factors. Kapur (2015:234) further highlights that although one often limits adolescence to a specific age, it largely depends on key developmental milestones. This underscores the researcher's delimitation of the study to this specific age group and allows these adolescents' input to be of great value. Spano (2004:3) agrees that adolescents at this age can contribute useful insights.

3.4.2 Which part of Kraaifontein are you from?

Fig. 3.2 Area of Residence

Which part of Kraaifontein are you from?

20 responses



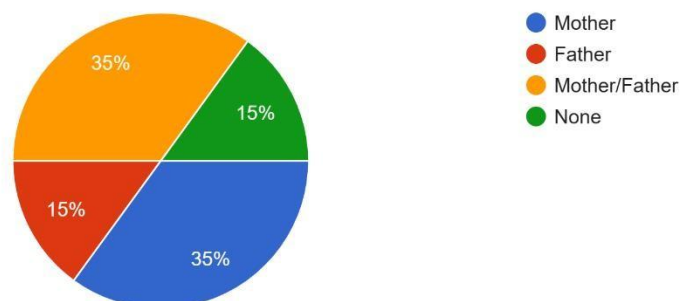
This question was to determine the area in which they reside within Kraaifontein. Kraaifontein is a suburb within the Northern suburb area. Kraaifontein comprises various residential areas, which include Belmont Park, Bernadino Heights, Northpine, Eikendal, Scottsdene and Protea Pines (Lucas Real Estate website, n.d.:n.p). The adolescents of this study reside in these areas within the scope of the convenience sample and are part of the youth group activities in the surrounding areas.

3.4.3 Is your mother/father present in your life?

Fig 3.3 Parental figure present

Is your mother/father present in your life?

20 responses



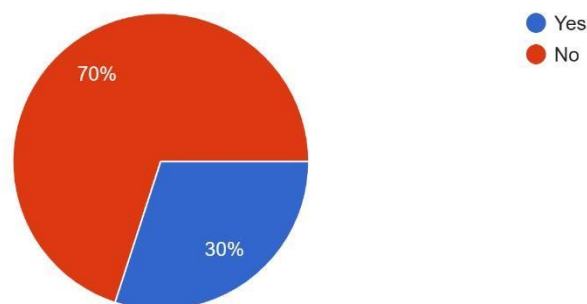
This question was to determine which parental figure is present in the life of the adolescent. Adegboyega (2019:116) postulates that single parenting is an occurrence in which only one parent is present, and that this can be either mother or father. The question here aimed to determine who the main parent figure was whilst simultaneously highlighting the plight of single-parent-run households. Adegboyega (2019:116) argues that in single-parent homes, the available parent's responsibility is to nurture the child. This has devastating consequences for the affected parent and child. Adegboyega (2019:116) states that psychologists and teachers are very concerned about the child's overall development. The arguments presented by Adegboyega are further substantiated by Ali and Soomar (2019:002), who write that children raised in single-parent homes have a more stressful life, face economic crises and increased anger and violent behaviour.

This question illuminates the dire situation within the community and the lives of the adolescents. Ali et al. (2019:002) assert that single parents are just simply unable to meet all the social and developmental requirements of a child whilst working long hours. This results in what Ali et al. (2019:002) describe as unconstructive behaviour, such as alcohol and substance abuse, depression, anger, isolation, smoking and lack of social interaction.

3.4.4 Are you being raised by your grandparents?

Fig. 3.4 Grandparents Raising Adolescent

Are you being raised by your grandparents?
20 responses



This question was to determine if there were adolescents being raised by their grandparents. The researcher's purpose with this question was to demonstrate that 'traditional' family models are no longer 'traditional.' Mia (n.d.:5) states that in South Africa, 1-3% of orphaned children are raised by their grandparents. Mia (ND:5) further postulates that their grandparents raise 60% of orphans as parent mortality increases and as parents neglect their responsibilities. MacNab-Dolbin and Keiley (2009:162) agree, claiming that there has been a significant increase in adolescents being raised by grandparents. This demonstrates a trend within our current culture.

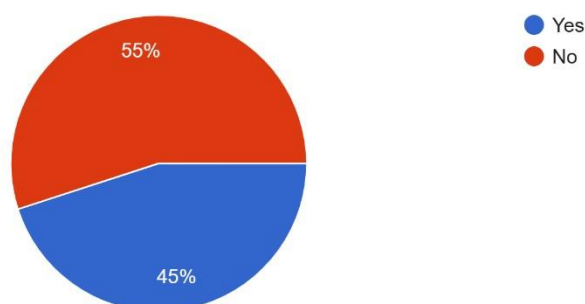
MacNab-Dolbin and Keiley (2009:163) argue that adolescents raised by their grandparents solely have varied relationships with their parents where possible; in most instances, however, it is non-existent. MacNab and Keiley (2009:163) assert that there are various reasons why adolescents are raised by their grandparents, highlighting issues such as incarceration and loss of custody. There are also cases where the children have been abandoned, or parents are substance abusers (MacNab-Dolbin & Keiley, 2019:163).

This data is imperative to the study because the data surrounding these family dynamics offer insight into the stark reality of absent parents.

3.4.5 Have you been exposed to drug addiction in your house?

Fig. 3.5 Drug addiction in the home

Have you been exposed to drug addiction in your house?
20 responses



This question was to determine whether the adolescent was/is being exposed to drug addiction in their home. Drug addiction in the home has become more prevalent (Ramson, et al., 2016:67). Ramson and co-workers stipulate that approximately 246 million people worldwide have used illicit drugs. South Africa is not immune to this epidemic. They postulate that developing countries are more at risk of illicit drug use, highlighting the seriousness of this issue, especially in the Western Cape. The Western Cape Government (2015:11) argues that the situation appears to be worsening in the Western Cape, asserting that the Department of Social Development has flagged it as a major social problem.

This should indicate the depth of the issue at hand. Frasier (2019:1) agrees, stating that everyone is affected by substance abuse, more specifically, that children suffer lifelong consequences due to parental drug use. According to Frasier (2019:1), children that are exposed to addiction face increased exposure to sexual assault and various forms of abuse. With substance abuse in the home, there is always the possibility of children at risk. Ramson et al. (2016:78) affirm this idea, describing that child neglect, barriers to learning, financial neglect and family conflict are the pillars of drug addiction in the home.

3.4.6 Effect of Drug Addiction

This question was to determine whether the drug addiction in their home affected them negatively.

Of the 20 respondents, 6 answered with a resounding no. One (1) opted to write N/A, and one left that answer blank. The rest (12) of the respondents offered a great degree of insight into the detrimental impact of drug addiction on their lives. Due to the anonymity of the study, the researcher may not identify the person who has offered insights.

Responses were, for example:

“...I don’t experience family the way others do, and my family is broken, and I am hurt.” and

“...it never gave the normal experiences of having a parent.”

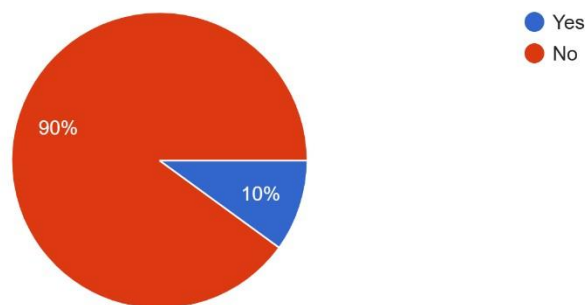
The responses indicate the atrocious implications of drug addiction on family structures and on the affected adolescents. Frasier (2019:1) claims that children who are exposed to addiction in the home often bear the brunt of the addict's choices. Dandona (2016:32) concurs, writing that children exposed to addiction are more likely to become addicts, and are more likely to be removed from parental care and face unstable family systems. This can be observed in some of the responses.

Dandona (2016:32) asserts that when faced with addiction in the home, adolescents are likely to turn to alcohol or drugs due to the anxiety caused by traumatic home environments. Frasier (2019:4) identified a higher rate of anxiety disorders, eating disorders, conflict about their sexuality and depression in those adolescents who are negatively impacted by addiction in the home environment. This highlights only some of the negative impacts of substance abuse that need to be considered.

3.4.7 Have you been sexually assaulted by someone in your home or who frequents your home?

Fig. 3.6 Sexual assault of the adolescent in their home

Have you been sexually assaulted by someone in your home or who frequents your home?
20 responses



This question was to determine whether the adolescent was sexually assaulted by someone in their home/ frequents their home. Sexual assault has become a commonality in our current context, especially at the hands of those known to the victim. According to Weber and Bowers-Du Toit (2018:1), there is a great degree of violent crimes, which take place in South Africa, highlighting that 1 in 3 young South

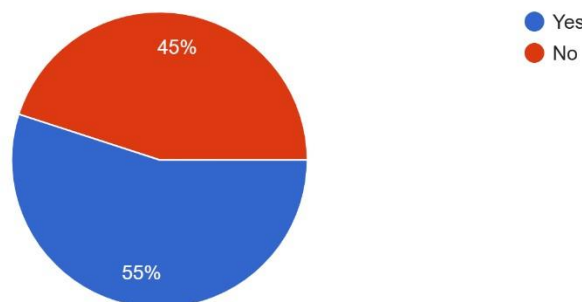
Africans is a victim of sexual violence. This should indicate the severity of the situation within our country. Weber et al. (2018:1) assert that the gravity of this epidemic can be seen in the data collated in 2017, which documents 66 young people within the Western Cape being violently murdered and sexually assaulted in 2017.

In the latest crime statistics released by SAPS Crime Statistics, there were 12 211 rape cases and 2114 sexual offences from October 2023-December 2023 nationwide. Provincially, SAPS Crime Statistics (2023:28) states that Kraaifontein is currently ranked 5th in the Western Cape in relation to sexual offences. There were 44 reported incidents between January and March 2023 (SAPS Crime Statistics, 2023:28). Have we considered those not reported due to fear by the victim? The statistics illuminate the dire situation within the Western Cape and the Kraaifontein area.

3.4.8 Have you been abused emotionally by someone in your home environment?

Fig. 3.7 Emotional abuse in the home

Have you been abused your, emotionally by someone in you home environment?
20 responses



This question was to determine whether the adolescent had experienced abuse in their home environment. Titi et al. (2022:122) argue that in South Africa, violence is a daily occurrence and has become a way of life, a means of solving problems; this includes harsh parenting. Farnia et al. (2019:1098) concur, adding that violence against children has increased significantly, but even more in homes where there are cases of addiction and alcoholism. The risk factors significantly increase when substance abuse is prevalent.

Substance abuse and harsh parenting are, however, not the only factors. Titi et al. (2022:122) postulate that by the age of 22, close to 99% of adolescents would have experienced some degree of abuse and/or violence within their home. In Khayelitsha, 80% of their adolescents were exposed to abuse in their homes (Titi, et al. 2022:122). This presents with clarity that domestic abuse in any fashion is a cause of great concern.

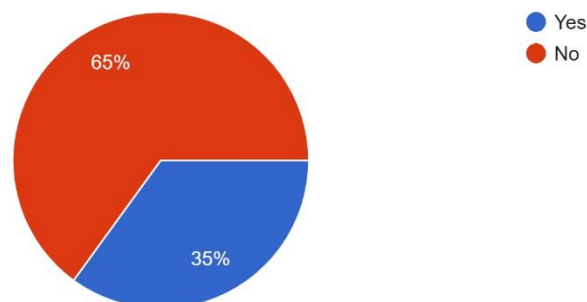
According to Meinck et al. (2016:1), there is not nearly enough data in South Africa to accurately depict the issue of abuse of children and adolescents. The data provided in the paper by Meinck et al. (2016:1) was the first paper at the time to provide an in-depth analysis of the abuse of adolescents. It must be noted that abuse is detrimental to the well-being of its victim. Titi et al. (2022:122) substantiate that statement, claiming that the long-term effects of abuse in adolescents are displayed in their PTSD, which manifests in various ways. Titi et al. (2022:122) say this is observed in the data of a community-based survey where it was noted that 20%-38% of adolescents present with PTSD symptoms due to abuse.

3.4.9 Have you been exposed to high levels of violence in your home?

Fig. 3.8 Exposure to high levels of violence

Have you been exposed to high levels of violence in your home?

20 responses



This question was to determine whether the adolescent was exposed to high levels of violence in their home. High levels of violence are determined by its frequency and severity. Sui, Massar, Kessels, Reddy, Ruiter and Phillips (2021:4085) argue that the rate of violence in South Africa is terrifyingly high. This statement is made by Sui et al.

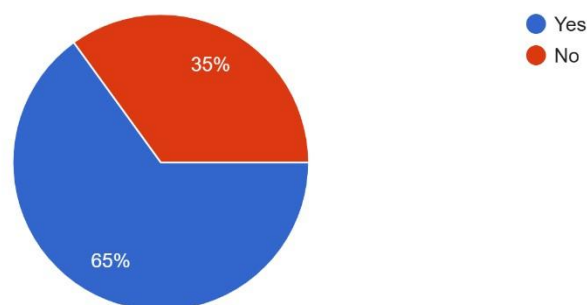
(2021:4085) on the basis of the data which shows that adolescents in South Africa encounter violence 8 times higher than the global average for boys and 5 times the global average for girls. The last three questions were greatly intertwined and served to provide the reader with a clear understanding of the severity of what takes place in the lives of adolescents. Titi et al. (2022:1) describe that the first study done in 2016 on the prevalence of violence against adolescents showed that 35% of adolescents experienced physical violence. This data was associated with the 2016 Optimus Study (Titi, et al. 2016:1). The issue of violence was greatly understudied in previous years, with the result being that the prevalence thereof is not fully understood. What can be ascertained is that it is a common occurrence, as noted in that research. Munge (2020:15) asserts that children are often directly and indirectly affected by violence in the home, describing that 69.7% of violence happens in the home setting.

Munge (2020:16) further states children who witness violence in the home environment display behavioural and emotional problems and often become aggressors in adolescence. The consequences of being exposed to violence in the home thus have dire consequences for all involved. Bvindi (2018:7), however, argues that not all adolescents exposed to violence become violent, but instead, with the proper support, they can overcome the experience. Bvindi (2018:7) finds that community forums, social reforms and extended support could offer adolescents an alternative to repeating observed behaviours.

3.4.10 Are your parents divorced?

Fig. 3.9 Divorced parents

Are your parents divorced?
 20 responses



This question was to determine whether the parents of the adolescent are divorced, highlighting the idea of a single-parent-run home. According to Dykes and Ward (2022:366), the effects of divorce on adolescents is a largely unexplored area of study, as the focus is generally on how younger children are affected. This is alarming, considering the current divorce rate. Dykes et al. (2022:366) claim that in a study conducted in 2018, the Western Cape had the highest divorce rate totalling 6224. This accounted for 24,6 % of divorces nationally (Dykes, et al., 2022:366).

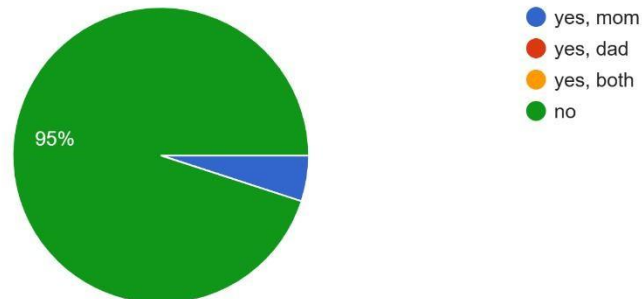
In this quantitative study, the percentage of participants who responded with a 'yes' to this question already demonstrates a grave concern regarding marriage. Chauke and Obadire (2019:97) suggest that divorce negatively impacts the involvement of parents in the lives of adolescents, leading to overwhelming feelings of anxiety and stress. This is compounded by the thought of living arrangements and breaking down in the 'traditional' family structure. Chauke et al. (2019:98) further describe that adolescents from divorced homes often struggle with self-worth and rejection, with that being expressed in bouts of anger and depression.

Dykes et al. (2022:368) postulate that there are unintended consequences of divorce for adolescents, which are dependent on the level of acrimony within the divorce proceedings. Adolescence, being a transitional life stage, can make this an even more difficult process as they struggle with self-identification. Dykes et al. (2022:369), agreeing, states the break in family structure hampers the self-identification process, as the needs of the adolescent are often left unmet. These are only a few of the effects of divorce on an adolescent's life.

3.4.11 Are your parents deceased?

Fig. 3. 9 Deceased parents

Are you parents deceased?
 20 responses



This question was to determine whether the adolescent has experienced the death of a parent. Of the 20 respondents, only 1 respondent noted that the mother had passed away. Guzzo and Gobbi (2023:1207) present the argument that there are broad areas of research with regard to the effects of parental loss in childhood. However, the same cannot be said about adolescence. According to Guzzo et al. (2023:1207), the adolescent life stage has such unique neurodevelopment that adult and child data must be kept separate. Wieruszowski (2008:70) agrees that adolescents' cognitive and reasoning abilities are at a critical stage and that they are in the process of becoming 'independent.' One can thus deduce from the academic understanding of adolescence that any disruption, especially grief at this pivotal stage, would negatively influence their development. Guzzo et al. (2023:1207) state that when faced with mourning the death of a parent, an adolescent would face immense difficulty.

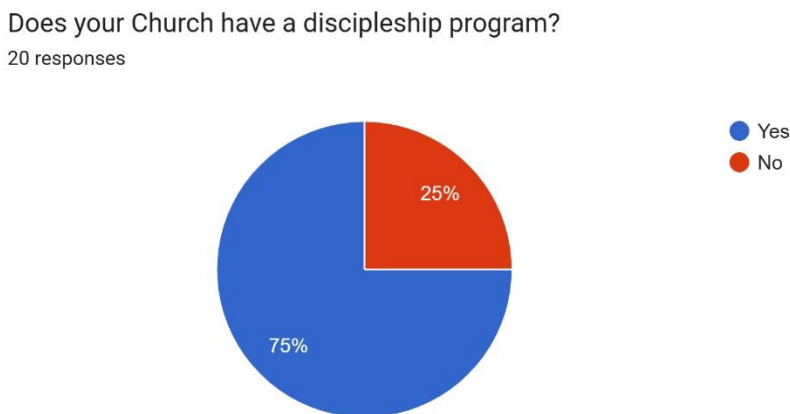
Guzzo et al. (2023:1210-1212) suggest that after having reviewed what little literature there is, it became apparent that adolescents experience behavioural issues, depression, difficulties building relationships and sleep disturbance after the loss of a parent. This highlights the gravity of grief in the life of an adolescent who is transitioning from one stage to another but is also attempting to reach self-identification. Wieruszowski (2008:73) argues that self-identification is an imperative developmental stage; grief at this stage would negatively impact how they perceive their role in society and, more specifically, within a now broken family unit. Guzzo et al. (2023:1214)

concur, asserting that the adolescent might adopt the role of a 'carer' to the surviving parent, pushing them to adopt responsibility that is not theirs. This would impede future relationships as they are assuming an identity which is far above their maturity level (Guzzo, et al., 2023:1215). Wieruszowski (2008:107) affirms the idea that adolescents develop a sense of responsibility toward the surviving parent, highlighting that they adopt the 'social' expectation.

The data clearly shows that mourning a parent has significant and lasting consequences for the adolescent and, if unchecked, could be detrimental to the adolescent's future relationships.

3.4.12 Does your church have a discipleship program?

Fig. 3.10 Discipleship Program



This question was to determine if the adolescents are exposed to a discipleship program in their church. Discipleship should be an integral part of the church and its desire to help the congregation in their faith. Nel (2009:1) through observations from the literature, concludes that the church began to neglect the work of discipleship very early in history due to a loss of radicalism to spread the Gospel.

When seeking to understand discipleship, Nel (2009:2) argues that one should understand that the term relates to the relationship between God and God's people in the Old Testament. Within the context of the New Testament, Nel (2009:2) asserts it

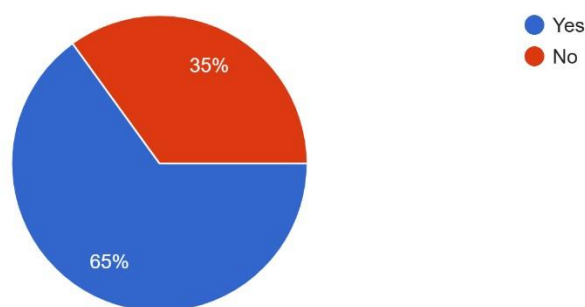
is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ with a strong yearning to follow him. This is the basis of discipleship. We are called to teach people how to follow Jesus once they enter a relationship with him. Kgatle (2017:188), amongst others, describes discipleship as the teaching of followers of Christ to be servants of Christ. Our misconception of what discipleship entails is often the pitfall in what Nel (2009:1) describes as discipleship neglect.

Kgatle (2017:189) describes discipleship as the art of learning to act upon what Christ has taught us. Our mission as a church should thus be to teach adolescents how to follow Jesus at a time of great transition within a world with conflicting values. Kgatle (2017:190) furthermore writes that discipleship demands a self-sacrificial cross-bearing attitude that must be taught and cultivated through leadership and guidance. Nel (2009:2) agrees, stating that when one dissects the word discipleship, one arrives at the determination that in its verb format, it holds the meaning of 'causing others to follow Christ.' The basis is teaching and following Christ.

3.4.13 Does the discipleship program benefit you and your current circumstances and experience?

Fig. 3.11 Discipleship program and its benefits

Does that discipleship program benefit you and your current circumstances and experience?
20 responses



This question was to determine if the discipleship program benefits them or their current circumstances/ experiences. Earlier, the researcher referred to Nel (2009), who suggested that discipleship was how we teach others to follow Christ. Discipleship should thus be contextualised in its approach and nature. Nel (2009:6) argues that in

our current world, it is difficult to seek the kingdom of God due to societal pressures when we are called to be self-sacrificial.

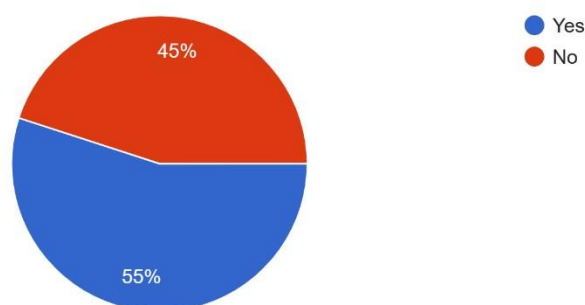
Aziz (2022:1) postulates that the past practice of believers was the 'reach one teach one' approach, in which their main objective was the personal salvation of the unsaved adolescent. This seemingly describes many evangelical practices. Aziz (2022:1), however, states that the focus of this ministry lacked the foresight of a contextualised approach, in which we aim to create a space in which the Gospel addresses the current world. Nel (2018:196) concurs, highlighting that youth ministry is a space in which the local missional church is developed for the now and then. This emphasises the idea that youth ministry is a community in which adolescents are being developed into who they are to be in Christ.

Aziz (2022:2) asserts that youth ministry in our current context demands a contextualised discipleship approach, with the foundation of Scripture addressing the social ills within their homes and communities.

3.4.14 Do you have a mentor/mature believer who walks with you, shares God's word with you and encourages you?

Fig. 3.12 Mentorship within the church

Do you have a mentor/ mature believer who walks with you, shares Gods word with you and encourage you??
20 responses



This was to determine if the adolescent has a mentor/ mature believer who is actively disciplining them or encouraging them. According to Aziz (2014:3), the fundamental

focus of any youth ministry is to assist or aid youth in their understanding of what it means to follow Christ. Jesus spent time with his disciples, teaching them all he needed them to know. This idea is reflected by Kgatle (2017:187), who states that Jesus had walked with his disciples closely, allowing them to witness what he experienced and teaching them personally. This should be that which undergirds older believers in mentoring youth.

Fritz (2018:28) articulates that a foundational principle in youth ministry with a specific focus on ministry to adolescents is that they should be understood and that they have a sense of belonging. These factors are achieved through building relationships. Jesus was in a close relationship with His disciples, as Kgatle (2017:189) reminds us. The impetus is on us to have close relationships with adolescents if we seek to have a meaningful impact. Fritz (2018:29) affirms this idea by stating that we can never seek to mentor or encourage others if we do not try to get to know them. Mentorship is thus a crucial component of discipleship.

3.4.15 This question was to determine the adolescents' understanding of the term 'disciple'

When analysing the data, the researcher was able to observe that the respondents' understanding of the term 'disciple' is rooted in Christ. Of the 20 respondents, 14 had a positive correlation between being a disciple and following Jesus. This demonstrates that they do understand the term and, thus, what it requires.

Fritz (2018:15) claims that a 'disciple imitates the rabbi's ideology as the foundational basis for what it means to be a disciple. If any person seeks to be a disciple, they must thus be a student to a teacher and practise the discipline observed by them. Fritz (2018:16) agrees, stating that disciples are those who are first and foremost intrigued by the idea of following Christ. This must then be a result of personal salvation.

Nel (2015:2) asserts that being a disciple of Christ means entering into a personal relationship with Christ, learning to die to self, and following Christ daily. Other scholars, such as Ogden (2003:46-47), have highlighted the fact that to be a disciple is to wilfully become a student of Jesus in every aspect of life, striving to become what

Christ embodies. Disciples are thus not the unsaved but the saved, those who have forsaken their own will for that of Christ.

3.4.16 This question was to determine if / what the adolescent understands about the term discipleship

The terms disciple and discipleship are intertwined in their meaning, in which one gives rise to the other. As discussed in the previous question, a disciple is someone who has a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and who has decided to follow him. Discipleship by deduction should be an extension of that.

Of the 20 respondents, 9 respondents demonstrated their understanding of discipleship by alluding to the idea of being mentored/encouraged on how to follow Christ.

Nel (2015:3) articulates that discipleship has a link to evangelism, as one cannot evangelise and seek to build Kingdom communities without a desire to teach others how to follow Christ. This is an extension of the student–rabbi relationship where people decide to follow Jesus and his teachings. Ogden (2018:xi) argues that if there were no space to nurture new converts/disciples, one would need to consider what would happen to the church. Discipleship is an intentional relationship of transparency and accountability where disciples are equipped to follow Christ and make more disciples (Ogden, 2018:xi).

Ogden (2018:xii) asserts that discipleship is most effective when modelled as it has become an imperative learning dynamic, as people often strive to resemble those they admire. One (1) of the respondents wrote that discipleship is “*to teach someone and to eventually let them teach someone else*”. This describes what Ogden (2018:xii) alludes to and demonstrates the idea of the teacher-student relationship in which the disciple teaches a disciple to follow Christ.

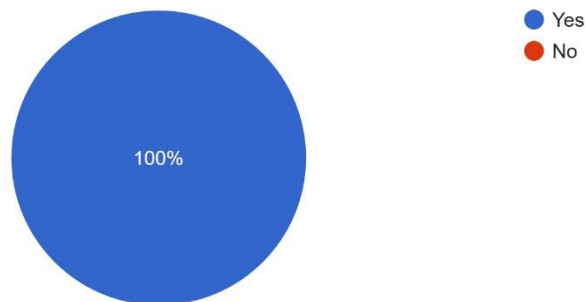
Another respondent wrote, “When people that follow God helps another person to follow Him”. This affirms the inferences made by Nel (2015:4), who describes that the relationship between teaching and learning is at the heart of discipleship.

3.4.17 Do you believe God is still good, despite everything you experience?

Fig. 3.13 God's goodness in their experience

Do you believe that God is still good, despite everything you experience?

20 responses



This question was to determine whether adolescents believed God was still good despite their circumstances. A positive reflection of the respondents' understanding of God and God's character. According to DeYoung (2020:3), God's goodness is greatly experienced in God's display of mercy in our misery and grace when we are undeserving of God's patience with us. God's goodness is not an attribute that one can describe glibly but must be understood in the light of God's character.

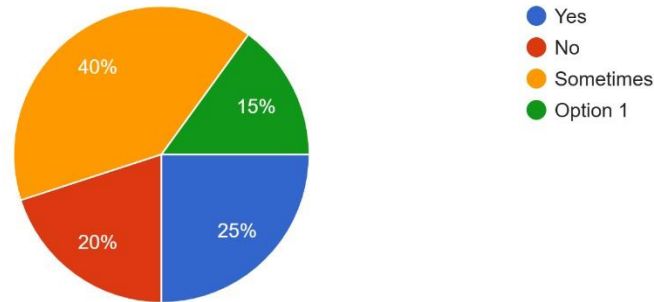
DeYoung (2020:8) argues that the goodness of God amid suffering can be best understood in light of God's sacrifice of God's Son to redeem people from their sins through the crucifixion of Christ. For adolescents to communicate that God is good despite their suffering is to communicate that they comprehend and acknowledge God's will. Talbot (2006:41) refers to the idea that God holds all things together in God's hands, including evil, carrying it to where he has purposed it for God's glory.

"It was not because of his sins or his parents' sins," Jesus answered. "This happened so the power of God could be seen in him" (John 9:3). Talbot (2006:42) argues that when one views suffering considering this passage, we come to understand that God turns our suffering around for God's glory.

3.4.18 Does your home environment negatively impact your walk with God?

Fig. 3.14 Home environment and their walk with God

Does your home environment negatively impact your walk with God??
20 responses



This question was to determine whether their home environment negatively impacts their walk with God. This question had the most diverse number of answers from the respondents. A breakdown of the responses from the respondents is as follows.

- 8 respondents: Sometimes
- 4 respondents: No
- 5 respondents: Yes
- 3 respondents opted not to respond.

Only 4 respondents demonstrated their understanding of what walking with Christ despite suffering looks like. Kgatle (2017:187) reminds us that being a disciple is understanding that Christ's suffering and sacrifice are indicative of a disciple's life. Being a disciple entails carrying one's cross and understanding that dying to self to the glory of God.

What becomes clear in Kgatle's (2017:187-188) research is that the disciples who walked with Christ themselves didn't understand that suffering was part of their relationship with Christ. A contributing factor could be the transitional state of adolescents, which impacts decision-making. Dykes et al. (2022:4) determined that adolescence is a life stage in which adolescents question themselves and others and are often faced with absolute confusion. This undergirds what the data shows in these

2 questions, that even though the adolescent respondents believe God is good in the circumstance, they are confused about their response to their relationship with Christ.

3.4.19 This question was to determine how the church can better structure its discipleship program (more contextualised)

It is notable that 1 of the respondents seemingly chose not to respond to this question.

As the researcher reflects on the data provided, it is observed that most of the respondents were seeking a discipleship program that would help them connect with God on a deeper level. One (1) respondent writes, “to ask me more about my situation and to teach me from the Bible how to respond and how to cope”. Baron (2017:4) is in agreement with this observation, asserting that our aim with adolescents should never be one-dimensional in learning about God, but in fact how to live for God’s glory daily. This displays an attitude of consideration and inclusion toward adolescents. Baron (2017:4) further states that discipleship toward adolescents should entail teaching them to praise God in the most challenging times and teaching them how to live for God, which should be inclusive in its approach.

The data presents that there is a need for a greater understanding of adolescents and their home environments, which will aid the local church in having a contextualised discipleship approach.

3.5 The Interviews and Results

According to Williamson et al. (2018:453), qualitative data analysis has more than one approach, and these approaches are often aligned with how the researcher seeks to communicate their findings. Bradley (1993:432) postulated a similar idea by stating that qualitative research has no rigid formulae, but instead that qualitative research is driven by seeking to understand a specific research problem.

Kabir (2016:202) argues that qualitative data consists mainly of words and sentences, capturing the emotions of the participants and seeking to address the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of any subject area. Qualitative data is described by Kabir (2016:202) as being useful

as a tool to improve the data collected from quantitative data by clarifying data and adding depth to its findings.

Kabir (2016:204) asserts that the mixed method approach of employing qualitative and quantitative data aids in increasing the data's trustworthiness and the research's dependability.

The qualitative data in this research consisted of semi-structured and unstructured interviews. These interviews were scheduled and held in a private space, which allowed participants to feel safe and at ease. The interviews were generally between 30-45 minutes per session, and in 2 cases, follow-up interviews were conducted for clarification purposes.

This section of the paper will engage the data and findings of the interviews. The response rate of those selected for the interviews and the key themes will be discussed. The decision was made that only 5 adolescents would participate in the interview process. The invitation to this interview was shared on various platforms, and the response rate was incredible. There were more than 10 respondents, and through purposive sampling, 3 girls and 2 boys were selected to participate in the interview. The selection of girls was based on the premise that only 5 had responded, and 2 were siblings. The boys were selected randomly based on their responses. This selection method was helpful because the respondents are from different backgrounds and stages in their walk with Christ. The respondents are also accessible to the researcher as they are part of the youth programs at Northpine Baptist Church in Northpine, Kraaifontein.

3.5.1 Data Analysis

Williamson et al. (2018:453) write that data analysis is the tool researchers use to make sense of the data collected. Although there are no 'rules' to analysing data, the researcher is responsible for finding themes/commonalities within the data (Bradley, 1993:443). Cohen et al. (2007:461) agree, suggesting that the data collected can be arranged in various ways, with the premise that it fulfils the purpose of the research. One way to collate the data, for example, was to have the data analysed according to

the questions, as these were the steerers of the research. This could be done by cross-referencing various sources (Cohen, et al., 2007:467-468).

The interviews were conducted in a mixture of semi-structured and unstructured ways due to the fact that the researcher is fully immersed in the various youth programs and their settings. According to Kabir (2016:212-213), this way of interviewing respondents is viable and credible because both processes have observation and enhance the researcher's pre-understanding of the particular subject matter. Williamson et al. (2018:455-459) articulate that the data can be tabulated as themes emerge from the data. Once these themes are identified, they can be arranged into categories and discussed.

Several themes arose from the data collected. For this study and the scope of the research problem, emphasis will be placed on the following themes. Absent fathers, drug-addicted parenting and divorce. For the protection of the respondent, pseudonyms are used.

3.5.2 Absent Fathers

According to Freeks (2022:1), absent fathers in South Africa have become a deeply concerning social issue for various reasons. These reasons include refusal to be a father, divorce, unmarried parents, and untold fatherhood, all of which contribute to a dysfunctional society (Freeks 2022:1).

Question: When did your father leave and how has this impacted you?

Brian X, one of the participants, recalls how his father decided to leave when he was a very young child, "...my childhood was quite rough because my father left me when I was 4 years old, and that is when a young boy needs his father..." Brian displayed great sadness when broaching this subject. His first statement was that his father left him. Freeks (2022:1) describes that fathers are treating women and children poorly and that South Africa is swiftly becoming a fatherless society. This statement was made at a Fatherhood Forum in Mathatha (Freeks, 2022:1). Brian's experience of rejection and abandonment by his father describes a societal norm in which fathers

opt to walk away from families without warning. According to Khan (2018:18), the rate of fatherlessness in South Africa has reached an all-time high, which can be observed in the statistics.

Stats SA 2021 asserts that 42% of children live with only their mothers, underscoring the devastation observed in the lives of participants of this study. Brian X's story is evident in this dire statistic as it has serious ramifications in the life of the adolescent. Freeks (2022:2) argues that absent fathers in South Africa have been labelled as a 'courageous monsters', which has significantly contributed to the various social ills we now experience.

Tania X's* story is no different in terms of the fact that her father also chose to leave her and her siblings. "...I was born to my mother and my father, who were both 18 at the time... I lived with my mommy and my grandma, and my daddy was living with his mother....," she relates. From a young age, Tania X experienced a life devoid of her father, mainly due to his age; the fact that her parents were at school and unmarried is typical for many adolescents in South Africa. Freeks (2012:3) describes those factors, such as fathering out of wedlock and domestic inability, as factors contributing to experiences such as Tania's.

The above is a common scenario in society in which children conceived out of wedlock experience absent fathers. Linn et al. (2015:14) refer to the fact that the nature of fatherhood has transformed over time, creating a vacuum in society. This vacuum can be witnessed in varying degrees and has a ripple effect on the life and the development of the adolescent. Affirming this idea, Freeks (2022:2) postulates that the effects of absent fathers on adolescents are observed in substance abuse issues, mental health issues, poor performance in school and low self-esteem. This is just the cusp of what the absence of fathers does within society.

Freeks (2017:90) claims that a father's love is necessary for children because a father is to offer guidance and security to his family. Not only is his love and guidance necessary, but boys and girls benefit in different ways from a father's presence and love. The impact of not having her father around is telling in Tania X's voice and body

language, as she becomes less confident. Tania said, "...my dad is in and out of my life; he is married now and has his own family, and he isn't addicted to anything like my mother...". This has so many undertones. A father who doesn't offer a sense of consistency despite Tania X's mother being an addict. Freeks (2017:93) argues that girls benefit from a father-daughter relationship in that they are far more balanced and less likely to participate in deviant behaviour.

Brian X, too, expresses his need for the love of his father. "My father, I don't know much about him, honestly...2 years ago, I spoke to him...he said he didn't like my profile photo and said I am demonic...my father said I can learn a lot from him, but I don't need to learn a lot from him, because my mother taught me all the things I need to know." A disparaged Brian X was recounting his last interaction with his father, a man who was absent for more than half his life and who still audaciously sought a place of authority. Freeks (2017:93) highlights that a father is necessary in the life of a boy to teach him how to lead and one day be a father when he matures. Brian X does not have that example, similar to millions of adolescents worldwide. Lamb (2015:91) postulates that children have never felt as deserted by their fathers as they do in our current context. They lacked the knowledge of having a father, because of the father's absence.

The discourse of absent fathers is a never-ending trajectory of devastation and negative implications which need real consideration. Freeks (2022:4) writes that the study of fatherhood should be broached from a biblical perspective, actively engaging the discussion around how this would benefit adolescents.

3.5.3 Substance Use Disorders Parents

In the interview process, 3 of the 5 respondents are adolescents who have been exposed to parents with substance abuse disorder. They are still exposed to this reality, and it is noteworthy to mention that they are 3 girls aged 18-20.

As covered in the literature and the quantitative findings, drug addiction is yet another epidemic which has befallen South Africa, specifically the Western Cape. Chetty (2016:67) points out that in the Western Cape, the unlawful drug trade continues to

wreak havoc on the Cape Flats, affecting every ambit of society, and devastating communities and families. This is one epidemic which leaves nothing but ruin in its wake, one of which is separating children from their parents and having deleterious effects on said children.

Question: Are your parents addicted to substances, and how has this impacted your childhood or your adolescent journey?

Madison X greets me with a coy smile, nervously awaiting the questions that I am about to ask her as we engage in this very difficult topic. Madison X, like most 20-year-olds, has completed school and looks forward to a future in which she can possibly do better than her mother. Her mother is an addict and has been for most of her life. Chetty (2016:69) writes that drug-addicted parents are not good examples to adolescents and pose the risk of influencing their children to become substance abusers, too.

When asked about her upbringing Madison X responded, “My mommy is not really someone I talk about, but my daddy has become my rock.... growing up, I was a mommy’s girl; I used to cry for my mommy.....I would always go to my mommy even though I could see what she was doing was wrong.” Noting the change in Madison X’s voice was indicative of tremendous hurt and pain. Kropenske and Howard (1994:1) argue that drug abuse often results in inconsistent behaviours, altered mental state, the presence of drug paraphernalia and the restructuring of one’s life around the use of substances. This is an adequate description of Madison X’s life growing up.

Her memory of her mommy is as follows, “One night, my baby sister was crying, and I got up and I was looking for my mommy. My nana was like, your mommy isn’t here. I asked her where my mommy was, but it was like I knew from what I was seeing in the house. She would be sneaking out, smoking this, smoking that.... As I grew older, I started caring for my baby sister because I timed it and watched it.” This is the stark reality of many children and adolescents on the Cape Flats. Dandona (2016:31) highlights the reality of drug-addicted parenting, corroborating Madison X’s experiences and asserting that addicted parents neglect their children. This is not a

new phenomenon. Another aspect that Dandona (2016:32) correctly describes is that children of addicts have to assume adult roles, caring for siblings, cooking, and cleaning. This is the reality for Madison X and Tania X.

Tania X is the eldest of her mother's children and has 5 other siblings ranging from the ages 1 -15 years. Tania X and her siblings have been living with her grandmother since birth, and initially, her mother stayed there too. When asked about her mother and the start of her high school career, this was what she had to say... "My mommy was in and out my life... uhh, she was there, and she wasn't there, and she had Mallory X and she went and lived with Mallory X's father. Then they separated... then she had Malcolm X* and she then went to live with his father for a while, and she came and dropped Mallory with me so that I could look after her..."

When posed with the question, "Is your mommy a drug addict?" Tania responded, "Yes". It was such an ashamed and disconnected response and seeing her face change was deeply moving. Tania X continues, "... It was when she started dating Caryn X's father. In 2010, I would say, is when she started. I just started primary school, but she was a part of my life, but when I got to high school she was gone." Dandona (2016:32) postulates that severe substance abuse issues result in children being separated from their parents, which is deeply traumatising. I suspect that as Tania X answered that question, she was hit with the reality that her mother has wilfully neglected her for the last 14 years. Dykes and Casker (2021:226) claim that substance abuse affects the entire family, albeit, in different ways; there are unmet developmental needs, impaired attachment, and emotional distress. I believe through observation that Tania X has unmet developmental needs and that the impaired attachment is a result of a non-existent mother-daughter relationship.

Shirlene X has experienced much of what Madison X* and Tania X have experienced. When confronted with the question about her childhood, this was some of what she had to say, "I remember growing up with my mother, we slept in one room. I used to see my daddy sometimes when he would fetch us to clean us and wash our hair before we went back to my mommy's house; that's how it was....my mommy was under the influence of drugs, so she didn't take note of such stuff." Dandona (2016:8) refers to

the issue of attachment, which develops from childhood to adulthood, highlighting that the attachment between mother and daughter forms a significant part of their social life. Zeanah and Boris (2000:364) argue that maltreated and/or neglected children will display attachment disorders, and this can be observed through their affection for adult relatives and in their social behaviour. When listening to Shirlene X the researcher was able to observe her detachment from her mother and situation early in the interview, but later on, this turns to deep emotions.

Shirlene X stayed with her mother until she was in grade 1 and has never witnessed her mother being sober. When asked what she would do as a child, Shirlene X stated the following, "I would just go to my aunty and sit there; I would fall asleep there, and when I wake up, then my mommy is there, and it is dark... I don't remember eating food growing up, mostly sweets because my mommy never was home to make us food." Dandona (2016:5) postulates that substance abuse in parents often results in parents being unable to provide adequate housing and food for their dependents. This is apparent in the case of Shirlene X and it's much more complex than just food and housing. There are various aspects of child and adolescent development which need to be considered.

Drug addiction has the Western Cape and the world in a stronghold. The data and participant responses have emphasised the epidemic, which plagues our communities and society. It is not an isolated occurrence, and it is with this in mind that one should seek understanding before seeking solutions.

3.5.4 Divorce

Of the 5 respondents, 4 were from divorced homes, and there was an equal split between 2 boys and 2 girls. This allowed the researcher to listen to and observe the differences in behaviour, body language and response to the questions.

Question: When did your parents get divorced, and describe how this has affected you.

The first participant has not been introduced yet. Lance X is a 19-year-old from Northpine who matriculated last year. When the researcher initially met Lance a few years ago, he always wore a hoody and a cap and would sit on his own. Every single day. This was quite alarming, but last year, that yoke was broken. When asked about his upbringing, he said, “Uhm, my childhood has been a good childhood. Uhm, I was mainly raised by my mother, because my father and mother are divorced. I have not met my biological father as of yet, and I don’t know when I’m going to meet him.”

A young man who was born in wedlock who has never met his father due to divorce and the breakdown of the family unit. Hickman (2007:6) writes that there are great ramifications in the life of the adolescent due to parental divorce, and some of these include psychological and emotional problems. When reflecting on Lance X’s past behaviour, the researcher cannot help but wonder if the hoody, cap, and isolating were him ‘masking’ pain. Hickman (2007:6) postulates that adolescents from divorced homes suffer from antisocial behaviour and display great difficulty in interacting with peers. Lance X’s mother remarried and later divorced again, but he expresses that he has better relations with his stepdad, whom he considers to be his father. He relates as follows, “The father I have now is the man I see as my actual father, and when they divorce, I will still visit him during holidays. The way it was handled was good; it didn’t cause any bad habits or things... my father did everything he could to keep me happy.” Although Chauke and Obadire (2019:98) argue that divorce tends to negatively affect parental involvement, it is difficult to make that assertion in this case as Lance X has communicated that his stepfather never neglected him after the divorce.

However, this is not the case for everyone. Brian X highlights that his father neglected him and his needs for a long time. He explained, “Liam’s father is like a father to me also because he makes me feel wanted at certain times. Because, like one time when we were by his house and then his father called me ‘his son’, and that meant a lot to me. My actual father didn’t say ‘my son’ or anything...I told my father I didn’t want to talk to him anymore...it was difficult not having a father to guide me through everything because ever since I was in high school, they put me in detention for not shaving. I had a problem with not shaving because I didn’t know how to, so I had to learn by myself how to do that.” When observing and listening to the change in Brian X’s voice,

it is difficult not to acknowledge the pain of divorce and its ripple effects. Dykes et al. (2022:368) describe divorce as being a painful experience in which dependents feel that the family unit is forever broken, parents don't love one another, and they lose a relationship. When asked if he felt rejected by his dad, Brian X responded with an emphatic yes, "To be honest, yes, I do, because my mother told me everything about my father. My mother told me he left us for friends." Dykes et al. (2022:374) argue that self-identity in adolescence is a crucial aspect of development and that parents play a critical role in this. With Brian X's father being 'absent,' this is an aspect of his adolescent development that he might not fully achieve.

Madison X's situation is opposite to that of Brian and Lance. She lives with her grandmother and father and expresses feeling rejected by her mother. With her mom being an addict and the divorce, Madison X says that her greatest attachment at this stage is to her father. In her words, "My daddy used to do everything. He tells me he knows about the street life and whatever, he went to prison and whatever. Coming out of prison, he changed, got baptised in prison, and he knows what the world has to offer and what God has to offer... He protects us and growing up, I'll always say I'll choose him over anyone. My mommy has shown me that she couldn't be a mother to me, my daddy has shown me that he is raising us." Dykes et al. (2022:375) suggest that attachment is the relationship and bonding between a child and parent, and those emotional connections are imperative in understanding how to deal with life experiences. Failure to form an attachment with a parent can result in relational difficulty in the future. Madison X's inability to form a relationship with her mother could pose a problem in future relationships with women. Dykes et al. (2022:375) affirm this by postulating that parental inattentiveness throughout the divorce process yields precarious relational behaviour in adolescents.

The researcher notes the damage that divorce causes in the adolescent's life in every sphere and developmental level. Stable home environments and healthy marriages with each parent fulfilling their role assist adolescents in fostering their own healthy relationships in future.

3.6. Conclusion

The extent of adolescent trauma is far beyond what could possibly be covered in this chapter alone. The data has shown that adolescents are facing situations daily where they are placed in spaces where they are 'alone'. Absent fathers, drug-addicted parents, divorce. These are a few of the traumatic circumstances that adolescents face and have been facing since early childhood.

The effects of this trauma can be heard in their voices as the researcher reflects on the interviews. The inability to hide the hurt, rejection, and disappointment of how their parents have failed them is inexplicable. The data from both the quantitative and the qualitative data have reinforced the idea that the church holds great responsibility to contextualise the discipleship approach. The voice of the adolescent echoes that they need a safe space to share their life experiences and learn to walk with God.

The researcher has provided the data, analysed it and provided a thematic analysis of the qualitative data process. The literature has greatly supported the data findings and has underscored the pitfalls within society, especially toward adolescents.

CHAPTER 4

WHY ARE ADOLESCENTS SUFFERING FROM TRAUMA?

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the researcher presented the data collated from the quantitative and qualitative studies and provided brief insight into each of these aspects. This presented a deeper understanding of the various traumas experienced by adolescents in the church. Their experiences varied, but what was apparent is that there are clear themes, which have emerged from the empirical data, which the researcher will address. This chapter will focus on the various themes presented from the empirical research, and the writer will engage various scholars on these topics. Each aspect of trauma will be discussed individually, considering its impact on the adolescent and their overall development and subsequent behaviour.

4.2 Substance-abusing parents

One of the themes of trauma in adolescents that became clear from the data analysis was drug-addicted parents and the effect it had on the adolescent overall. In this section, the researcher will engage the discussion around drug-addicted parents, some of the statistics attached to that, and the overall effect that substance-abusing parents have on adolescents. The researcher will discuss areas such as child neglect and depression and how these lead to risky behaviour or possible generational addiction.

The CDA annual report for 2021-2022 (2022:16), asserts that 1 in 18 people worldwide between the ages of 18-64 years had used drugs in 2020, and that demonstrated a sharp rise in substance abuse. This statement is undergirded by the CDA's claim that this was a 26 % increase from 2010, as it is documented that 275 million used drugs between 2021-2022 (2022:16). This paints a picture of the depth of the drug crisis worldwide.

Groenewald and Bhana (2016:1) agree, stating that substance abuse across the world is complex and quite prevalent, and highlighting that South Africa has high rates of untreated substance abuse disorders. This gives a glimpse into the severity of drug addiction/substance abuse within South Africa. Groenewald et al. (2016:1) assert that what further exacerbates the drug addiction problem in South Africa is the lack of availability for treatment (in-patient and outpatient) and early intervention. An internet site called Recovery Direct highlights that in 2017, 10 936 people were recorded to have received treatment, yet goes on to state that there is an ineffectiveness of capturing data related to drug abuse in South Africa.

The CDA report (2022:19) reiterates that there is not a national survey which documents drug abuse within South Africa. However, there is data available from the South African Community Epidemiology Network (SACENDU). The data collected by SACENDU depicts that within the first 6 months of 2021, 10 938 people were admitted for treatment which is a sharp rise from 9394, CDA report (2022:19). The Western Cape contributed 2433 of which it also had the highest number of female patients admitted (CDA, 2022:20). Dykes and Casker (2021:224) make the compelling argument that within South Africa, the Western Cape has the highest prevalence of substance and alcohol abuse, and the highest number of methamphetamine users. This is attributed to the opening of the South African borders post-apartheid, an increase in environmental stressors such as poverty, high crime and a democratic dispensation (Dykes, et al., 2021:24). This highlights the plight of the drug crisis in South Africa and the Western Cape.

Groenewald et al. (2016:2) argue that there are at least 2 people in every household that are affected by drug addiction; these families face disempowerment and psychological and physical experiences such as depression, suicide, and emotional distress. Ramson and Chetty (2016:67) agree, asserting that drug abuse in the Western Cape has contributed to physical, emotional, and psychological effects, but also contributed to other social ills. The social ills listed by Ramson et al. (2016:67) are a high crime rate, profound acts of violence domestically and in the community, sexual abuse and an ever-increasing contribution toward family dysfunction. The effects of drug/substance abuse grow increasingly more destructive, and that is evident in the

research. According to Ramson et al. (2016:68), the drug/substance abuse problem in the Western Cape is getting worse and is now considered to be a significant social and health problem.

4.2.1 Risky behaviour & Poor Self Identification

The Western Cape has the highest level of methamphetamine (tik) abuse in the world, which produces horrific side effects (Ramson et al. 2016:68). The effects of methamphetamine are psychosis, aggression, depression, increased risky sexual behaviour and brain damage, which leads to other social problems such as unemployment and dysfunction in families (Ramson, et al., 2016:68-69). Sithole (2015:55) agrees, stating that parental addiction has adverse effects on adolescents, which impedes their emotional and psychological development. Adolescent emotional development focuses on how these adolescents are able to establish social relationships and reach maturation and self-identification (Kapur, 2015:243). Self-identification is hindered where trauma is present as Kapur (2015:243) argues that self-identification is influenced by factors like family, home environment and socioeconomic status. With drug-addicted parents being less protective, and able to influence their adolescent's behaviour positively, adolescents are more likely to look to other people and spaces for identification (Isaacs, 2019:7).

4.2.2 Abuse

Sithole (2016:55) argues that parents who suffer from substance abuse disorder cause deep trauma in the lives of adolescents, and that these adolescents struggle due to a lack of parental guidance and support. Drug addiction within the family setting is extremely traumatising, whether it be both parents or one parent who is an addict. According to Dandona (2016:30), substance abuse within a family setting is a very difficult situation, which is further exacerbated when there are children involved. There is an overwhelming number of issues which arise for adolescents or children who are exposed to addiction. Dandola (2016:30) argues that the adolescent or child exposed to addiction faces possible anxiety problems, psychosomatic illnesses, depression, underachievement at school, neglect, and child abuse. Lowered inhibitions due to intoxication in parents lead to dire consequences for the adolescent on the receiving end. Farnia et al. (2020:1098) describe that adolescent and child abuse at the hands

of drug-addicted parents occurs largely due to the parent's inability to control their impulses and behaviour. This abuse is not limited to physical abuse. Instead, it includes psychological abuse and neglect (Farnia, et al., 2020:1099). In data provided by Meinck et al. (2016:3), the idea of primary caregivers commonly being the source of abuse was affirmed. The data documented by Meinck et al. (2016:3) highlights that the primary location of abuse was within the home.

4.2.3 Depression

According to Utaminingtyas et al. (2022:125), adolescent depression can be attributed to family dysfunction as family is considered a part of the environmental factors. Utaminingtyas et al. (2022:126) postulate that adolescent depression is greatly attributed to a lack of parental affection, lack of parental emotional attachment and family dysfunction. Substance abuse contributes to all these factors. Dandona (2016:32) affirms this argument, asserting that the effects of drug-addicted parenting on adolescents are unstable family systems and emotional neglect. These are all traumatic consequences of parental substance abuse.

4.2.4 Poor role models

Ramson et al. (2016:70) highlight the idea that drug abuse by mothers has a negative impact, too, stating that children exposed to drugs *in utero* and child neglect due to substance are more likely to be maltreated. Ramson et al. (2016:70) further argue that *in utero* effects are poor physical development, intellectual, emotional, and social, and that child abuse is symptomatic of the drug problem within the Western Cape. Dada et al. (2018:2) assert that drug abuse among women, specifically in the Western Cape, has increased significantly.

Ramson et al. (2016:69) write that parents who are addicted to drugs are poor examples and that this increases the possibility of generational drug abuse. Poor authority/leadership from fathers and pathological behaviour in families increases risky behaviour in adolescents, as asserted by Jedrzejczak (2005:688). Addiction in parents impedes the development of adolescents and how they experience life. Not only are adolescents more prone to risky behaviour, but Dandona (2016:32) states that they are more prone to becoming addicts too. Isaacs (2019:7) concurs, arguing that studies

have shown that adolescents are more likely to use illicit drugs due to parental substance abuse. According to Isaacs (2019:7), drug-addicted parents are negligent and do not supervise their children, which hinders the adolescent social variable and leads to critical decision-making. abuse modelling in parents, thus increasing the risk of adolescent substance abuse. The research demonstrates the severity of the situation, and how this potentially results in generational drug addiction.

4.2.5 Poor adolescent parental relationship

Dandona (2016:31) argues that adolescents who have parents who abuse substances are often forgotten victims who distance themselves from friends for fear of humiliation and judgment. Groenewald et al. (2016:2) agree, arguing that adolescents who have drug-addicted parents experience feelings of guilt, humiliation, shame and blame.

These are all related to the 'big picture'. According to Groenewald et al. (2016:2), adolescents who have witnessed substance abuse in the family are often disempowered and face tremendous amounts of family conflict. Tsagem (2022:5) postulates that when looking at adolescent development it is imperative to note that at age 14-16, adolescents are acutely aware of the way that friends perceive them and are able to abstractly consider the 'big picture'. This would have a great bearing on how they, too, perceive parents who are addicted to substances. In later adolescent development, the adolescent has a greater understanding of who they are, and what they desire in a futuristic sense. They develop a greater bond with their parents (Tsagem, 2022:5). Tsagem (2022:5) argues that the strengthened bond with the parent is due to a view of the parent being an 'authoritative' figure. This would differ in adolescent-parent relationships in which the parent is an addict. The parent adolescent relationship would greatly influence the affected adolescent, possibly directing them to the use of drugs, too (Isaacs, 2019:7).

Drug-addicted parenting has a clear negative effect on the life of the adolescent. The effects are on holistic development and impede their developmental milestones in various ways. Kapur (2015:241) concurs, stating that development for adolescents is fundamentally affected by environmental stimulation, of which parents are a large part, adding that religious institutions play a large role.

4.3 Absent Fathers

Labuschagne, Koen and Smit (2023:1) provides a definition for absent fathers, stating it simply as the absence of a father figure in the life of an individual in various facets of their life. Labuschagne et al. (2023:1) further highlights that fatherlessness should be understood to refer to emotional, spiritual, and physical absence in the formative years of a child. For the rest of this section, the term fatherlessness will refer to the absence of a father to varying degrees in the life of a child/adolescent.

According to Freeks (2022:1), the Children Act specifies that care and protection are necessities in the life of a child, and being protected from fatherlessness is one of those needs. The idea that society can function optimally with absent fathers is a fallacy. Freeks (2022:2) affirms this, asserting that the role of the father is paramount within families and society at large. In this section, the researcher will investigate the importance of fathers in the life of the child/adolescent and discuss the devastating effects of fatherlessness.

Fatherlessness is not a new concept and is a universal problem within society writes Freeks (2013:3). There is a clear shift in traditional families, and what Freeks (2016:13-10) describes as God's design for the family. Ahiaku and Ajani (2022:174) present the argument that family structure is of utmost importance as it has a strong link/influence on child discipline. Ahiaku et al. (2022:174) assert that absent fathers create a vacuum within the life of the family, and that the role of a father cannot be substituted by grandfathers or any other male figure.

4.3.1 The Statistics

According to Carstens (2014:9-11), research has been done in 21 countries in the world, and it was proven that absent fathers were identified as the biggest problem in those countries. Freeks (2017:90) listed the following countries as being a part of that study: South Africa, Russia, Seychelles, Brazil and Grenada, among others. Bartlett (2013:1) argues that fatherlessness in South Africa had escalated from 42%-48% in 2011, and that South Africa, at that stage, had one of the highest figures of fatherlessness. That was 12 years ago.

According to Freeks (2017:91), this phenomenon is growing more dire by the day, with an estimated 2.13 million children who are fatherless, and 9 million who grow up without fathers. One would note that to be completely fatherless would be due to the father having never been present, and to grow up without a father because he is not in the home. Data presented by Labuschagne et al. (2023:8) suggests that 31.7% of black children grow up with fathers, followed by 51,3% of coloured children and 80% of white children. This data highlights the disparity that exists even with racial class and communities. Khan (2018:18) agrees, stating that the fatherlessness in South Africa is exceptionally high, asserting that 30% of children are born into single-mother households. Five (5) years later, Labuschagne (2023:9) presents data which states that only 21% of adolescents from the poorest communities grow up with both parents. This further demonstrates the natural development of disadvantage within lower income communities, underscoring the role of the church in justice for the fatherless and oppressed. Fatherlessness is, however, caused by many factors, and these must be considered for greater understanding.

The factors for absent fathers are children born out of wedlock, divorce, domestic violence, death and physically present but emotionally absent (Mabusela, 2014:13). Meyer (2018:2) argues that fathers who are physically present but are abusive, and emotionally absent or the like, can be very toxic to children and to the family dynamic. The idea that fatherlessness occurs in absentia is thus misconstrued as fatherlessness or absent fathers often occur while fathers are physically present. Freeks (2022:3) writes that growing up without a father or with a present absent father should be understood to be excruciatingly painful and difficult, which is traumatising. The arguments postulated here align with the thoughts presented by Ahiaku et al. (2022:180), who state that single mothers are unable to provide key aspects of spiritual and social support. According to Ahiaku et al. (2022:180), where there are fathers and mothers in a healthy relationship present in families, there are adolescents who thrive socially, spiritually, and psychologically.

An absent father is not the only one who is not present. Padi et al. (2014:44) describe fatherlessness as being absent but known, absent and undisclosed, unknown and

deceased. These categories also impact the consequences in each individual circumstance. What is apparent is that category doesn't matter; what matters is that it has a profound effect on the affected society/community. Padi et al. (2014:44) argue that fatherlessness in any shape or form impacts socio-economic and political contexts, and that our approach to fatherlessness must be made with care and intricate detail.

4.3.2 Societal Ills

Freeks (2017:91) argues that fatherlessness is a huge challenge within South Africa, and that it is growing exponentially, which contributes to other challenges within society. Note that being fatherless and growing up without a father happens at different times and to varying degrees, as some fathers are there in the beginning and others are altogether absent. Some of the problems society faces due to fatherlessness are listed by Freeks (2017:91) as broken families, aggressive behaviour in children, poverty, and the development of children.

According to John (2012:24), analysts have stated that the decay of fatherhood is the main cause of societal ills in South Africa and destroys households. Ahiaku et al. (2022:174) concur, stating that a father's absence in the life of an adolescent is disastrous and leads to truancy, delinquency, and failure to accept responsibility. What becomes abundantly apparent is that fatherless is on the rise, and the ramifications extend past the confines of just the household. Linn et al. (2015:12-13) agree, writing that the dynamic of fatherhood in South Africa has shifted, and that the communities are struggling with serious issues due to this shift.

Sylvester (2010:1) postulates that adolescents, especially boys who face fatherlessness are more prone to anti-social behaviour. Not only do they display antisocial behaviour, but they display a greater propensity to get involved with gangs writes Sylvester (2010:2). Thirteen (13) years later, the negative impact of fatherlessness in the life of the adolescent has become progressively worse.

In a study done by Labuschagne et al. (2023:14), it is argued that fatherlessness in various life stages yielded various consequences. Absent fathers from birth resulted

largely in criminal behaviour, in early childhood delinquency in adolescence, which in adolescence results in arrest (Labuschagne, et al., 2023:14). This affects both the family and the community. According to Sylvester (2010:15), the effect of fatherlessness, especially in the Western Cape, where drug addiction and gangsterism are defining features of the social context.

Beckman et al. (2019:6) postulate that fatherlessness in adolescence not only results in adolescent delinquency but also is a contributing factor to poverty. With a single mother who needs to provide for housing, food, schooling, and clothing, it might become overwhelming. Beckman et al. (2019:6) assert that research has shown that households that had absent fathers or single mothers' homes were experiencing poverty to varying degrees. The ramifications of fatherlessness are far-reaching, extending beyond the boundaries of family structures.

4.3.3 Risky behaviour

According to Ahiaku et al. (2022:174), the father-child relationship extends far beyond the idea of 'quality time'; it is a relationship that has a profound influence on impact regarding socialisation. This refers to the risky behaviour that develops in the case of an absent father. Freeks (2022:2) asserts that fatherlessness results in children abusing substances, dabbling in suicide, criminality and low self-perception, and that this has a domino effect on dysfunctional families. This idea was affirmed by Carstens (2014:129), who highlights that being fatherless is indeed destructive to family life.

Freeks (2022:3) argues that adolescents who suffer fatherlessness accounted for 63% of suicidal incidents and that the number of incarcerated offenders within adolescent age accounted for 1/3. This highlights the degree to which fatherlessness creates segways to risky behaviour. According to Freeks (2022:3), research provided by the South African Council for Educators (SACE) indicated that adolescents from fatherless homes were prone to violent behaviour at school and a complete disregard for rules and regulations. Freeks (2022:5) further postulates that children and adolescents who are fatherless are more prone to risky sexual behaviour, drug and alcohol abuse, and early pregnancy. Carstens (2014:10-11) presented data on adolescent risky behaviour

in the USA and noted that 70% of adolescents incarcerated, 85% of children with bad behaviour, and 63% of adolescent suicides were adolescents who were fatherless.

4.3.4 Emotional/Psychological Effects

Beckman et al. (2019:8) argue that fathers are responsible for fostering autonomy and independence, which is an important milestone in childhood development. This argument is supported by Freeks (2022:5) who states that absent fathers hurt the overall development of children. According to Freeks (2022:5), fatherlessness impacts emotional/psychological development, resulting in lower self-esteem, poor interpersonal relationships with the opposite sex and lower self-perception.

When fathers are not involved, the effects are detrimental to the child, family and society. Labuschagne et al. (2023:14) concurs, adding that adolescents who grew up fatherless endured deep feelings of grief, resentment and hatred toward their fathers and their circumstances in general. Sylvester (2010:17) argues that a study done within the Western Cape showed that the impact of fatherlessness left many adolescent girls confused, insecure and pregnant as a result. Labuschagne et al. (2023:13) concur, stating that fatherless girls were more promiscuous, and noted that 71% of teenage pregnancy was from girls who had no father. For girls and boys, the outcome varies, but the overall disadvantage remains. Labuschagne et al. (2023:13) add that fatherlessness for both girls and boys results in the affected adolescents being more prone to suicidal tendencies, mental health issues and depression in adulthood. Labuschagne et al. further states that adolescents from fatherless homes are far more impulsive and that the psychological impact can be seen long into adulthood.

The data underscores the gravity of the impact of fatherlessness within the life of the child/adolescent and highlights the overall impact that fatherlessness has on the adolescent.

4.4 Divorce

According to Nur et al. (2022:50), divorce affects the harmony and stability of the family and is considered to be the most traumatic experience in the life of the adolescent.

South Africa has among the highest divorce rates in the world, and couples between the ages of 25–29-year-olds displayed higher divorce rates than older couples, states Nur et al. (2022:50). Obeid et al. (2021:1) write that parental separation is an experience felt by both the parent and child and adolescents especially find it very difficult to cope. Reports from the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) document that by 2017, divorce rates in the U.S.A. had reached 787,251 and that within European countries, the prevalence of divorce has risen too. Divorce is described by Obeid et al. (2021:2) as being the result of a ‘decoupling’ process, which begins long before the parent decides to leave the house, and the effects are detrimental.

Nur et al. (2022:51) argue that marriage is founded on many premises, such as financial security, emotional support, physical needs, and sexual fulfilment, but despite these premises, divorce rates are still on the rise. Prakash et al. (2015:3) postulate that divorce represents a breakdown in the premises previously described and that this breakdown affects children and adolescents. With divorce, the family system becomes dysfunctional due to the sense of loss felt by both spouses and the subsequent adjustment that is required from children/ adolescents within the family (Prakash et al., 2015:3).

4.4.1 Absent Fathers

A possible adverse effect of divorce within the life of the adolescent or child is the fact that a natural result would be fatherlessness. Nur et al. (2022:51) concur, stating that adolescents who experience divorce often face the grim reality of having an absent father due to a breakdown in family structure. Prakash et al. (2015:3) agree, stating that very often, fathers leave the marital home, and this results in trauma due to the natural disruption of routine.

According to Prakash et al. (2015:3), men typically disengage from the children/adolescents when the marriage dissolves, leaving the adolescent/child confused and at a huge disadvantage. Ahiaku et al. (2022:174) agree, stating that with the disintegration of the family structure and the absence of a father, adolescent discipline declines as fathers are often viewed as disciplinarians in the family setting.

Ahiaku et al. (2022:174) refer to the fact that fathers foster social control, and greatly contribute to adolescent development.

Freeks (2022:5) argues that adolescents who are from homes where fathers are absent are bullied and shamed for their family situation, but also face various instances of abuse or neglect. This, Freeks (2022:5) writes, is due to single-mother homes and a lack of adult guardianship. Padi et al. (2014:46) postulate that another consequence of absent fathers is economic suffering or poverty as mothers struggle to cope. Nur et al. (2022:50) concur, adding that adolescents also struggle academically, and have high levels of anxiety and an inability to concentrate at school.

4.4.2 Mental Health

Utaminingtyas et al. (2021:126) claim that adolescent depression is linked to family in various ways, such as parental presence, lack of emotional attachment and breakdown in family structure. Depression is described by Utaminingtyas et al. (2021:126) as being a variety of moods that range from a simple lack of enthusiasm to severe debilitation in daily life. Adolescent depression is greatly enhanced in parental divorce.

According to Nur et al. (2022:50), the custody battle between parents is often messy and complicated, and adolescents are often torn between which parent they are to live with. Lefson (1997:24) articulates that people seldom understand the intense reaction that adolescents display to parental separation/divorce. With adolescent development, they are more aware of what is happening around them that people give them credence for. According to Lefson (1997:25) when adolescents learn about parental divorce, they grow acutely anxious, and the feeling of resentment and rejection greatly impacts how they view their future.

Tullius et al. (2022:969) write that adolescents who have experienced divorce are more likely to develop emotional and psychological problems, especially in older adolescents. Obeid et al. (2021:2) postulate that in divorce, adolescents are often caught in the middle, and the psychological stress from that often results in depression. This is exacerbated by the fact that adolescents feel responsible for solving parental

conflict, and they take on the emotional stress of the parent to alleviate parental depression (Obeid, et al., 2021:2). Tullius et al. (2022:975) concur stating that the changes during adolescence compounded with the added emotional, and psychological stress places adolescents at great risk of mental health issues.

Prakash et al. (2015:6) add to the discussion, stating that anxiety in adolescents is often masked with anger and despair, and is most often observed post-divorce as they learn to navigate their new normal. This is due to their own developmental milestones, and hormonal changes in the life of the adolescent. Majzub and Mansor (2012:3530) identify that adolescence is a stage of great transition, and divorce further impacts this transitional stage. Prakash et al. (2015:6) agree, arguing that the adolescent developmental stage is a complex stage, and a breakdown in familial security does cause depressive moods. Obeid et al. (2021:7) state that adolescent depression due to parental divorce is built on factors such as ineffective parent-child communication and insecure attachments. The impact of divorce should thus be understood to contribute significantly to adolescent mental health and emotional regression.

4.4.3 Impact on Academics

Nilsen et al. (2020:1) claim that parental divorce has a devastating impact on adolescent academics. This is set forth in the following manner. Nilsen et al. (2020:2) argue that adolescents who have experienced divorce are at a greater risk to have a decline in their academics due to financial constraints, emotional trauma, and ill-equipped parents.

Majzub et al. (2012:3533) present a similar argument, writing that adolescents who suffer from divorce have proven learning barriers, and an inability to cope with emotional pressure. Nur et al. (2022:51) concur, articulating that observation has shown that adolescents have trouble concentrating in class, and act out to ease the pressure at home. Nilsen et al. (2020:2) further postulate that when parents are uneducated and of a poorer nature, the academic performance of the affected adolescent has an even steeper decline.

4.5 Conclusion

Data from the empirical study has shown that these thematic occurrences have a stark impact on the life of the adolescent. Within the context of drug addiction, fatherlessness, and divorce, there are various aspects that branch off. In this chapter, the researcher has sought to bring clarity to the traumas that were most common among the study subjects. These traumas were drug-addicted parenting and divorce-related. There appears to be tremendous overlap between the various traumas, and with careful inspection, it could be deduced that they interlink at various points. An example of this would be that within the divorce context, a branch of that would be fatherlessness. However, fatherlessness is a stand-alone trauma because, as can be seen from the data, there are adolescents who have absent fathers who were never married to their mothers.

Depression and mental health issues are also recurring themes where trauma is concerned and can be observed in each theme. When looking closely, it appears that the adolescent transitional stage has a large bearing on their responses to trauma. This specific period in a young person's life, which is extremely complex, becomes even more complex when experiencing trauma. When seeking to truly understand adolescence it is important to not only understand their developmental stage, but how trauma impacts it. This trauma informs their responses and will inform their decisions in later stages of their life. In chapter five the researcher will engage the discussion around being a disciple of Christ and discipleship.

CHAPTER 5

DISCIPLING AND DISCIPLESHIP

5.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapters, the researcher engaged in discussions about teenage development and the trauma that they are experiencing. In this chapter, the researcher will focus on the topic of discipline and discipleship. Geiger (2015:5) describes disciples as being aliens within their own cultures, shunning the 'normality' of worldly practises and seeking to live and walk like Christ. The researcher will seek to answer the question, 'What is a disciple?' by engaging various scholars. It would be remiss of the writer to address the question of what a disciple is, without navigating the scriptural foundation for this discussion. Through exegesis, the writer will endeavour to build a sound biblical foundation for the term 'disciple,' and its praxis. In this section, the term discipleship and its role in the life of the local church will be discussed. Through the array of discussions presented, the researcher hopes to bring greater understanding to these terms, highlighting their importance and the need for both within the local church especially to adolescents.

5.2 What is a Disciple?

According to Nel (2015:2), God's core desire for humans is to have abundant life in God, yet we miss what 'abundance' constitutes in our limited human perspective. Nel (2015:2) asserts that God's call to abundance is the inherent call of believers to make disciples and the role they play in the discipleship process. Discipleship is thus a necessary ambit within the life of a believer. Gracin and Budiselic (2019:205) state that the terms disciple and discipleship are common terms used among evangelical Christians, with the premise that the terms are self-explanatory. This might not be the case as we seek to fully comprehend what these terms mean. According to Gracin et al. (2019:206), the terms disciple and discipleship, although common terms within the evangelical Christian world, found their roots within Jewish culture.

Therefore, to gain an in-depth understanding of the term disciple, one needs to understand it within the Jewish context, as it sets the foundation for how one interprets and understands the term today (Gracin, et al., 2019:206).

According to Mahuti (2021:62), the term disciple in Hebrew and in the Old Testament is the word *talmid*, which is equivalent to the term *mathetes* in the New Testament. Mahuti (2021:62) argues that the Old Testament understanding of the term disciple alludes to 'one who was taught' or who is a student. Wilkin (1988:12) argues that within the Old Testament, the term *Talmid* was used interchangeably to describe musicians (1 Chronicles 25:8; Isaiah 8:16) and the relationship between Moses and Joshua and Elijah and Elisha. This, Wilkin (1988:12) describes as being the student-teacher/master-follower relationship, highlighting the idea that a disciple in Old Testament times was devoted to learning about Scripture and religious traditions.

From a New Testament perspective, the emphasis is much the same. Mahuti (2021:62) postulates that the term *mathetes* refers to significant figures such as those who were called by Jesus. *Mathetes* is derived from the term *manthanos*, which is the verb 'to learn.' It is understood that a disciple (*mathetes*) is a learner/student (Mahuti, 2021:61). Fritz (2018:17) concurs that a disciple is dedicated to a life of discipline in following Christ, ultimately leading them in a deeper personal relationship with Christ.

Stoppels (2013:73) makes the assertion that to be a disciple is the unwavering decision to become a lifelong student of Jesus through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit and within the community. This assertion holds four key aspects of being a disciple. They are the decision, being a lifelong student, being a student of Jesus, being empowered by the Holy Spirit, and being in the community. Stoppels (2013:73) further postulates that this decision requires the student to follow God in totality, focussed on the desire to please God, embodying the very characteristics of Jesus Christ. Nel (2015:4) agrees, arguing that at the heart of discipleship is the desire to learn to imitate Jesus. This highlights the relationship between student and teacher.

5.2.1 The Disciple in the Old Testament

In this next section, the researcher will attempt to highlight the idea of 'disciple' in the Old Testament. Nel (2009:2) postulates that this term is not present in the Old Testament but that there are inferences through the many men and women who dedicated their lives to fully obeying God. An example of one such a person is Samuel.

According to Brueggemann (2012:22), Samuel was a gift from God to his mother, Hannah, who had prayed for him while being barren, and when he was born, Hannah dedicated him back to God. Hannah's words in 1 Samuel 1:28 (ESV) attest to the fact that she dedicated Samuel back to the Lord, "Therefore, I have lent him to the Lord. As long as he lives, he is lent to the Lord. And he worshipped the Lord there." It isn't until 1 Samuel 3 that we witness God's call to Samuel. Brueggeman (2012:25) argues that Samuel lived with Eli and was subservient to him, and fully obedient to God, ministering under Eli's leadership. Evans (2004:37) asserts that Samuel, being under Eli's leadership amid the rejection of Eli's lineage, is a display of God's continued work and highlights Eli's willingness to train Samuel in the ways of the Lord. These facts are highlighted in 1 Samuel 3:1-10.

According to Davis (2005:42), the word of the Lord was rare in those days, and this was most likely due to the disobedience in the priestly line as well as a sign of God. This argument states that God's displeasure with Israel is the reason for withholding God's word and that which is to follow would be the commencement of a new lineage. Evans (2004:38) highlights that when reading this text, it is important to note that Samuel, although ministering before the Lord and growing up in the presence of the Lord, had no personal relationship with God. Bergen (1996:86) claims that Samuel was youthful and serving under the tutelage of Eli. These arguments are supported by Evans (2004:38), who states that Samuel was willing to do whatever Eli had requested of him. Through this, Samuel grew in stature with God because serving Eli meant that he inadvertently was serving God. It can thus be observed that the teacher-student relationship, which is an aspect of being a disciple, is present.

Murphy (2010:29) asserts that when the Lord called Samuel, God was calling Samuel from a 'collective' space of family worship under Eli to be in a personal relationship with God. This idea aligns with the claim made by Mahuti (2021:62) that a disciple is committed to learning Scripture and being a believer in God. Murphy (2010:29) states that the call of Samuel began when he was dedicated to the Lord, culminating in this personal and auditory call from God. Bergen (1996:86) highlights that God calls this youth personally, to which Samuel's response, 'your servant hears,' is indicative of his

belief in God and his understanding that God is his master. Arnold (2003:82) argues that Samuel went from being a young boy in a place of inexperience to being open to experiencing Yahweh (God) in a new way, in other words, to being in a deeply intimate personal relationship with *Yahweh*. His willingness to serve, Eli's godly parenting and a childlike acceptance of religious instruction are what aided in his ability to submissively accept the call to servanthood (Arnold, 2003:82).

Samuel had gone on to be a prophet in Israel and served the Lord faithfully throughout his life. Brueggemann (2012:48) writes that Samuel will eventually become the one single mediator between God and Israel, highlighting Samuel's faithfulness and obedience. Davis (2005:71) agrees, stating that Samuel's appearance in 1 Samuel 3 was a depiction of grace for Israel, and his reappearance in 1 Samuel 7 was God extending grace to Israel again. This grace is offered through Samuel and has been, what Davis (2005:71) noted, the constant theme within Samuel's ministry. Brueggeman (2012:50) argues that the opportunity for a new start for Israel is constantly found in Samuel's life. We witness in Samuel 7:5-11 that Samuel's call is for Israel to repent.

Murphy (2010:52) asserts that Samuel exercises leadership through being an intercessor and mediator due to his obedience to God. Murphy (2010:54) argues that in the culmination of his public ministry, Samuel sets a stone between Mizpah and Shen, calling it Ebenezer, which means, 'Until now the Lord has helped us.' According to Bergen (1996:108), the laying of the stone was a reaffirmation of trust and faith in God, something that Samuel has faithfully and obediently developed since God called him. Bergen (1996:109) reiterates Samuel's faithfulness, writing that Samuel's life was one of service to the Lord as a prophet, judge and intercessor for Israel, because of his dedication to God.

Another example of a disciple in the Old Testament can be witnessed in the life of Ruth. Moore (2000:313) states that the book of Ruth starts with the story of Naomi, who becomes a widow in a foreign land that is facing famine with the responsibility of finding her wives for her sons. Sproul (2005:369) argues that whilst navigating widowhood as a foreigner in the land of Moab, Naomi's sons married Moabite women

but later died without any heirs. This was the start of Ruth's journey with Naomi, which ultimately led to her being a disciple. Another interesting observation made by Gailey (2023:1) is that the book of Ruth starts with Naomi and ends with Naomi, but the focus is the result of a decision made by Ruth. Ruth 1:6-18 (ESV) provides the background to this history.

Moore (2000:315) notes that although Naomi heard of God coming to aid her people, she still chose to leave with her daughters-in-law and travel to the land of Judah, and while travelling, she gave them a choice. Naomi cared so much for her daughters-in-law that she gave them a choice to return to their parental houses, but she did so with added blessings (Moore, 2000:316). According to Block (1999:633), Naomi's words in verses 8-9 signify an authority of *Yahweh* (God) within her life, but also a deep faith that God is deeply invested in the life of the family. Block (1999:632) describes this as a key theological theme within the book of Ruth that God would deal favourably with the Moabites, extending kindness (*hesed*), which relates to the attributes of God.

Matheny (2020:15) elucidates the fact that the centrality of Naomi, Orpah and Ruth in the remainder of the story is of significance because they are not referred to as *almana* (*widow*) but instead refer to Ruth and Orpah as 'daughter-in-law.' This holds significance, as Matheny (2020:16) states, in that they are closely linked to their relationship with their husbands and even more so to Naomi. This undergirds the idea of a strong relationship with the mother-in-law and daughters-in-law. According to Block (1999:635), Orpah and Ruth are not easily dissuaded from their initial decision to follow Naomi; they demonstrate outright determination to follow Naomi. James (2008:46) postulates that Naomi appears to have underestimated the bond that grief had borne.

Naomi grew acutely aware of her situation. James (2008:47) argues that the reality of Naomi's situation had taken hold of her, and she could no longer suppress her emotions regarding her suffering and her idea that God was to blame. It is observed by Moore (2000:317) that in verses 11-14 Naomi possibly highlights the greater impending hardships due to her being an older widow with no possibility of bearing more sons. Orpah decides to leave and kisses her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth

decides to stay. James (2008:47) articulates the idea that Orpah's devotion to Naomi has not waivered but instead took a different path in which she now willingly submitted to Naomi's counsel with careful consideration. According to James (2008:47), Orpah plays a vital role in this story as the decision made by Orpah demonstrates the contrasts between Orpah's sensible decision and Ruth's radical commitment to following Naomi. This decision by Ruth is a sterling example of the call to being a disciple and the action thereof known as discipleship.

Gailey (2023:1) elucidates that Ruth's decision is far greater than is initially comprehended, for the basis of her decision is a relationship, but the heart of her decision is a deeply spiritual one. Block (1999:641) concurs, stating that Ruth asserts that she will follow Naomi for the rest of her life and that her radical decision to serve Naomi's God is about radical self-sacrifice. This is a fundamental aspect of discipleship and the call to follow Christ. This decision of self-sacrifice is one which is made with conviction and determination after carefully observing Naomi for more than ten years (Block 1999:641). This is what Mahuti (2021:62) describes as being a disciple, in other words, one who is taught and who willingly accepts the practices and views of the teacher.

James (2008:48) recognises the depth of Ruth's decision, highlighting the idea that her decision was not half-hearted, but a decision that was a lifetime commitment. Gaily (2023:1) claims that Ruth's commitment is to *Yahweh* and to Naomi, a commitment which is to embrace every aspect of Naomi's lifestyle and belief in *Yahweh*. James (2008:50) asserts that it is at this point that scholars believe Ruth had become an Israelite, a true and earnest follower of *Yahweh*. Gailey (2023:1) writes that as the story of Ruth develops, one is shown how Ruth's choice to follow Naomi in every way draws attention to the surrendering of Ruth's life to God and her faith in God. Block (1999:643) argues that Ruth's commitment is among the loftiest in Scripture and can be interpreted to be her moment of conversion. Gailey (2023:2) observes that Ruth consciously gives up every sort of comfort by following Naomi and still finds it absolutely worth it, and that proximity trumps stability.

Both Samuel and Ruth were disciples and although the language is different between the two books, the inferences are there with a clear demonstration of the choice to be a disciple. Gailey (2023:2) argues that Ruth's statement to Naomi aligns with Christ's words in Luke 14:33, 'So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.' Not only were they disciples, but in each of their lives there were aspects of traumatic events which had occurred. This, Gailey (2023:2) argues, is the term and call of discipleship.

5.2.2 The New Testament disciple

In this section, a New Testament understanding is sought for the term disciple. Mark relates the following in Mark 1:16-20 (ESV),

Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, 'Follow me', and I will make you become fishers of men.' And immediately they left their nets and followed him. And going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. And immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him.

Guelich (1989:47) argues that this call to discipleship takes place at the onset of Jesus' public ministry. The passage from Mark highlights the significance of the relationship between Christology and discipleship. Sproul (2005:1416) presents the argument that the calling of the disciples this early in Christ's ministry undergirds the idea of Christ coming to seek the lost. Guelich (1989:50) does, however, state that the interaction between Christology and discipleship within Mark's gospel offers a central theme within this Gospel.

According to Stein (2008:78), this invitation by Jesus to follow him in verses 16-17 is not an invitation of partnership, but instead an invitation to a space of servanthood and imitation. This was not the usual way it would happen between a rabbi and students. Stein (2008:78) highlights that culturally, it was disciples who initiated a student-teacher relationship, but here we witness that it is Christ who extends the invitation to follow him and not the 'law,' which was the practice at the time. Guelich (1989:50) concurs, observing that Christ's call was similar to that of rabbinical schools. However, it underscores the radical difference between following Jesus and following the law.

The distinction is thus clear that disciples are called to follow Jesus. According to Guelich (1989:51), Jesus' call and the use of his words to describe the future of the disciples is to introduce the radical change their life would go through as they leave their old life behind. More recently, this idea is supported by Stein (2008:79), who states that the immediacy of Christ's call to follow him underlines our urgency to respond to Christ's call to forsake all else for the sake of the Gospel.

Kernaghan (2007:45) takes a closer look at the urgency of the word 'immediately' in verse 20, stating that Christ had spoken with power and authority, leaving them without question as to where they were going. Their fundamental understanding of Christ's authority was pertinent to their understanding of what it would look like to follow. Stein (2008:80) concurs that the 'immediately' in verse 18 holds specific theological significance. This theological significance, according to Stein (2008:80), is the Christological claim of the power of Jesus and his call to salvation and discipleship.

Another example of the New Testament understanding of disciples can be seen in the Gospel of Matthew in Matthew 9:9,

As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and He said to him, 'follow me.' And he rose and followed him.'

According to Eaton (2010:88), there is a reason why this story is immediately after the miraculous healing, which Jesus performs in Matthew 9:1-8 where Christ heals the paralytic. This, Eaton (2010:88) states, was to emphasise the idea of Christ's grace when initiating the call to discipleship, underscoring the idea that to become a disciple, one must simply follow Christ radically. A careful reflection on the placement of this story offers the reader an understanding of what it costs to follow Christ, which is faith, faith and a willingness to forsake the world. Blomberg agrees (1992:185), stating the 'immediacy' of Matthews's response to Christ's call to follow him was in the same way as for Andrew, James, Peter and John, with a simple command to follow him (Christ).

A disciple is one who radically follows Christ, putting their faith in Christ and denouncing the world. Ionascu (2024:169) argues that a disciple does not merely follow the teacher's teaching but becomes that which the teacher exemplifies. In light

of the discussion of scripture and scholars in this section, it is thus determined that a disciple is one who is committed and dedicated to following Christ. In the next section, discipleship will be discussed in terms of what it encompasses in light of adolescents.

5.3 Discipleship

In the previous section, a theological basis for the term disciple was defined and provided in discussion, along with the call to discipleship and what it entails. In this section, discipleship will be discussed in terms of its scriptural premise, its importance in the church and how it relates to adolescents.

Kgatle (2017:187) argues that discipleship is the verb of disciples, stating that discipleship is the teaching within the teacher-student relationship between Jesus and those who follow him. Ogden (2018:xiii) concurs, describing that modelling is considered the most significant learning style, adding that God works through disciple-makers to model life in Christ. Averbek (2008:28) argues that discipleship is the process of aiding another disciple in their walk with Christ and teaching them to submit to Christ through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Discipleship should thus be understood to be the action taken by those who are teachers after people decide to follow Christ after his call to discipleship. Root (2013:17) concurs with this argument, highlighting that as believers we are to encounter people leading them to a place where they can encounter Christ. This is the mark of discipleship, to teach people what it truly means to follow Christ. Adams (2017:61) describes discipleship as leading people from a selfish faith to a selfless faith, from living for self to dying to self, as Christ states in Mark 8:34-36.

Another consideration for discipleship is Bonhoeffer's argument. According to Bonhoeffer (1979:115-220), the Sermon on the Mount is addressed to disciples, those who are committed to following Christ, and holds the key to Christian living. Ionascu (2024:168) writes that disciples are called out of the world to a life of submissively following Jesus Christ. Bonhoeffer (1979:137) describes the lenses through which we should read the Sermon on the Mount must be informed by an overwhelming desire to obey Christ.. He points out that as Christ teaches on the Mount, one must observe the unseen characteristics of a disciple and what true obedience resembles. Ionascu

(2024:170) claims that the Sermon on the Mount focuses largely on the position of the heart and the attitude in the life of the believer as opposed to just what they do. This displays the transformation of Christ in the disciple's life. Ionascu (2024:171) describes this as part of the decision to radically follow Christ after being reborn with a new heart. Discipleship is initiated by the call of Christ, empowered through the Holy Spirit and teaching led by another believer (Marshal, 2008:1322).

According to Mahuti (2021:60), Christ lays the foundation for discipleship within the church through the Great Commission in Matthew 29:19-20 (ESV).

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

Sproul (2005:1411) asserts that Christ taught practical holiness and practical steps toward obeying him and doing so self-sacrificially, as well as the framework for how one is to teach new disciples. Mahuti (2021:63) writes that in Christ's public ministry of calling people to repentance, he also calls the disciples to follow him. Following him would lead to a natural transformation, which is first inward before it becomes an outward manifestation. Kernaghan (2007:45) states that the transformative call of following Christ very naturally leads to becoming 'fishers of men' or disciple-makers. This is the culmination of following Jesus, to go and make disciples of all nations.

Eaton (2010:315) elucidates that Christ has called the local church and believers to go out and proclaim the Gospel, and not just make converts but disciples, an extension of what Christ did in his earthly ministry. The call for discipleship thus extends beyond the confines of the 'church walls.' Mahuti (2021:60) attests to the idea that Jesus' discipleship model has its beginning at conversion with its roots being found in faith development. This, Mahuti (2021:60) explains, guarantees spiritual growth and automatically creates church growth. When one seeks to understand discipleship in the church, one must look at the example set by Christ. Dwight (1996:8) argues that not all who are saved are disciples and that it is thus key to discern and understand that one must be born again. Not only must one be born again, but one must be in an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ (Dwight, 1996:8). Mahuti (2021:65) claims that

a true disciple of Christ seeks to obey him as discipleship entails commitment and a deep identification with Christ.

According to Egbert (2002:1), within an American context, the greatest harvest of people within our culture who become disciples of Christ do so before they turn 18, highlighting that youth ministry is ripe for 'harvest.' In more recent years, Weber (2021:133) postulates that postmodern youth possess a deep hunger for God. Weber (2021:133) notes that this group does not 'class' themselves as deeply religious but seeks to have a faith that grows. Adolescence is a time of growth, transition and chaotic change with what Egbert (2002:1) describes as antithetic impulses. Adolescents must thus be understood where they are and shaped in Christ to where they need to be. Egbert (2002:1) sees Jesus' model of discipleship as rooted in meeting people where they are and journeying with them to where he desired them to be. It is suggested that this should be our approach today.

One of the issues which plague adolescents is the tension between culture and religion. Weber (2021:13) asserts that the faith formation of adolescents is greatly impacted by their cultural environment and that this is especially true within an African context. Religious identity and cultural practice are the weights of the scales, that often cancel each other out as they are so deeply intertwined (Weber, 2021:133). This is supported by Ndegwah (2014:39), who states that the pull between culture and religion is very real and a tension which cannot be ignored. Culture in Africa is described by Jurgens (2018:10) as being an all-encompassing myriad of food, fashion, music and sport. According to Nel (2010:15), there exists a great need to have an adequate contextualised understanding of youth in South Africa to have a great discipleship impact. Weber (2021:135) elucidates that because they don't identify with one faith group or orthodox Christianity, the approach to engage these youths contextually is a growing necessity. Egbert (2002:8) postulates that the approach should be relational, intentionally displaying love and reiterating the need to follow Jesus in all that he does. This, for Egbert, is discipleship.

Adolescent faith formation is largely dictated by family and the family setting writes Weber (2021:137). When there are trauma bonds within a family or a household, faith

formation cannot occur. Egbert (2002:9) argues that within the discipleship of adolescents, the involvement of the family unit is central to their growth and development. Within the context of the family is a deeply relational space, Maiko (2007:58) explains that relation-building is the greatest key to discipling youth. Where parents are substance abusers, absent or guilty of abuse, discipleship cannot be practised as those parents have no relationship with God. Weber (2021:137) postulates that discipleship toward adolescents has been handed over to their parents as their primary custodians. This presents its own tension, as Weber (2021:137) describes because parents are themselves unable to articulate their faith and their growth.

Nel (2017:1) argues that a truthful observation is that discipleship has all but vanished within the local church context, and this is a cause of concern as the church replaces discipleship with evangelism. Bosch (1991:10-11) describes evangelism as the proclamation of salvation to the lost, trusting for repentance and conversion. The difference between evangelism and discipleship moves from words to deeds. Nel (2017:2) asserts that discipleship is learning how to live the life we have been called to in Jesus Christ. This is faith in action. According to Nel (2015:1), the call to discipling youth is a missing link within many local churches, especially in churches with great generational disparity. God's church is called to obey God's mandate. Nel (2015:1) describes that the fullness of the Christian life should exist within making disciples of children and youth being an essential part of that mandate.

Nel (2015:7) argues that discipleship in youth ministry is a lot more than programming and a different way of relaying the Gospel. It is a literal relational approach in which we value people over programs (Dean, et al., 1995:25-39). Nel (2015:7) postulates that a rediscovery of our disciple identity creates a reform within our praxis. This praxis will result in a greater understanding of discipleship.

5.4 Adolescents and Discipleship

A recent study done by Montes (2020:3) highlights the term resilient discipleship, elucidating that there are very few countries that can attest to a percentage greater than 10% regarding resilient adolescent disciples. According to Montes (2020:7),

South Africa holds a 20% marker for what Montes describes as resilient disciples. It would be remiss of the writer not to add that Montes (2020:7) does note that this percentage does not account for the entirety of believers within the millennial age group. The observations made by Montes are endorsed by arguments presented by Gane (2014:42), who asserts that there is an issue regarding the discipleship of adolescents and building their faith, a faith that lasts. The idea that adolescent discipleship is an overwhelming and often daunting task is a fair observation when considering the data available. Montes (2020:15) builds on the work of James Loder, *Transforming Moment* (1989:1-260), which expounds on the subject of spiritual formation. Montes (2020:23) argues that the work of Loder is developed around the theological premise that a believer's life is radically changed by the power of the Holy Spirit through faith in Jesus Christ. It is with this foundation that I seek to present discipleship in adolescents and the pitfalls and challenges within the church.

Cornwall (1998:208) postulates that to facilitate discipleship in the life of adolescents, one has to consider the importance of parental and peer influence, further stating that these factors influence adolescent spirituality. These aspects are vital to ensuring that discipleship happens within the church and the home. Counted (2018:366) contends that discipleship is transformational at its core, arguing that believers are to follow Christ both personally and within the community. This undergirds the assertion that discipleship is not to be done in isolation. It is established through a faith relationship with Jesus Christ and strengthened in relationships with other believers.

Gane (2014:44) asserts that the home is shown to be the most effective space to cultivate faith in children as children emulate what they see, adopting the faith displayed by their parents. If this practice of faith is not present in the life of the parent, it is nearly impossible to be present or solidified in the life of the adolescent. According to Ward et al. (2023:10), parents who do not practice spiritual disciplines will drive adolescents to seek guidance and counsel from youth pastors. Ward et al. (2023:10) describe results in the adolescent learning from those outside the home, which might result in a skewed understanding of discipleship as their interactions are limited and within a particular context. Parents have a key responsibility to disciple their children by cultivating strong biblical truths within the home.

Within the church, adolescents face another hardship which has existed for an extended period of time. Cloete (2015:3) elucidates that there appears to be a natural segregation which exists between adolescents and adults within the church, known as age specific ministry. This idea is supported by the argument presented by Beukes and Van der Westhuizen (2016:11) who argue that the church finds engaging children and youth ministry complex, resulting in ineffective ministry. This ineffective ministry could possibly result in inadequate discipleship of adolescents. According to Beukes et al. (2022:151), the segregation of youth and adults within the church has resulted in what is known as youth culture, which yields detrimental consequences for youth leaders and the spirituality of adolescents. When considering that discipleship requires relationship, mentorship and guidance, it is imperative that adults of the church are involved in the lives of adolescents. Cloete (2015:1) postulates that age-specific ministry has no theological basis and, with adolescence being a vulnerable stage, further impacts their discipleship (Beukes, et al., 2022:151). According to Beukes and Van der Westhuizen (2016:114), it is an integral consideration that the church learns to incorporate a theology concerning adolescents. Without this theology, it would become redundant to have a youth ministry, especially for adolescents in crisis. This is necessary in order for the church to teach adolescents how to overcome their hardships and also become active members both within society and the church (Beukes & Van der Westhuizen, 2016:114).

Beukes and Van der Westhuizen (2016:114) highlight concerns regarding adolescents within South Africa, stating that within the Dutch Reformed Church, there was a noticeable deterioration in the junior and senior catechism candidates between 2000-2004. The problem of adolescent attrition within the church is not unique to South Africa. King (2012:2) contends that Australian youth are exiting the church, while Voas and Watt (2014:2) argue that United Kingdom churches are ageing without a younger generation to carry the baton. With the notion of being excluded from the church, these statistics should not be alarming when considering the trajectory of the church has become plain. Cloete (2015:3) argues that when engaging the discussion around what she terms 'true' community, our understanding must be founded on the premise that it comprises three generations. This is achieved through a simple theological

understanding. Beukes et al. (2022:152) state that 'God' refers to the Godhead as the God of Abraham, Isaacs and Jacob, a clear allusion to God who seeks to build intergenerational relationships. This should be the mission of the church regarding families and having faith in God being passed on between adults, children and adolescents.

Darmawan et al. (2024:1) state categorically that the onus of discipleship rests with the church and is the key to the regeneration of church leadership. Without the discipleship of adolescents in the church by the adults, the regeneration of leadership ceases to exist. Endres and Dreyer (2009:2) affirm this idea, highlighting that role models for adolescents are a necessity, and the church is commissioned to disciple and share the gospel with traumatised youth. According to Mueller (2006:24), adolescents are being failed by the church due to the degradation of collapsing relationships, and if the church does not need to heed the call to seek understanding adolescents, adolescents will leave the church. Adolescents desire to be understood and heard, and if we forget to do that during discipleship, especially within the church, they will find places where they are heard and understood. Lawrence (2007:64), agrees, writing that adolescents seek intimate relationships, the same kind of intimate relationship offered by Christ. The more the church embodies this characteristic, the greater its discipleship footprint will be in the lives of adolescents (Lawrence, 2007:70).

5.5 Conclusion

The understanding of the terms disciple and discipleship is imperative, and it is important that one is to understand their importance within the life of the local church. These terms are often used within evangelical circles, often with an inadequate understanding of what they really mean. The call to follow Christ and the transformation that comes from that are not mutually exclusive. The call to follow is always followed by the call to obedience and a deep dedication to Christ alone. In this chapter the researcher has attempted to build a sound theological premise for the terms disciple and discipleship and its all-encompassing meanings. The term disciple alludes to the willingness to follow Christ, and discipleship is a willingness to learn to live like Christ. The idea of disciples is seen within both the Old and New Testaments. The researcher also focussed on a few issues pertaining to discipleship and the

challenges of adolescent faith formation. The next chapter will engage the discussion around the youth leader and pastors, and the church's role in the discipleship of adolescents from trauma-informed homes.

CHAPTER 6

THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH AND YOUTH WORKERS IN DISCIPLING ADOLESCENTS WITH TRAUMA

6.1 Introduction

Adolescent development, trauma and discipleship are three aspects that need much consideration when seeking to cultivate a space within the church that incorporates these aspects within the community. The data presented throughout this paper has shown that adolescent development comprises many factors, such as cognitive, psychological and physical development. Trauma is not only related to what adolescents currently experience but includes what they experienced as children. Discipleship is more than just simply surrendering to God. It requires a relationship which teaches adolescents to live for God in spite of their age amidst their trauma, to the glory of God. The church has a God-given mandate to practice an inclusive kingdom mandate, which calls for believers to make disciples of all nations. There should be no disqualification for age. Instead, there should be a desire to see a greater intergenerational ministry being pursued.

Chapter five dealt with a theological understanding of the terms disciple and discipleship, unpacking the pivotal role of each of these in the church. The researcher discussed in the previous chapters how adolescents are segregated from the church, and how the lack of discipleship within the home resulted in seeking guidance elsewhere. In this chapter, the researcher will attempt to provide a theology of trauma and how this could enhance discipleship to adolescents from trauma-informed homes. An understanding of the Gospel's impact on adolescents facing trauma will render a church community with greater grace and a sense of community. The writer will also engage the discussion around relational discipleship and its benefits and discuss the mandate given by Christ. It will be considered how this should inform an inclusive discipleship approach, which seeks to cultivate a contextualised discipleship approach.

6.2 A Theology for Trauma

In the preceding chapters, the researcher has discussed trauma and its effects on adolescents in great depth, engaging various traumas, which affects adolescents, specifically in Kraaifontein. Understanding trauma by the church does not do any justice if there is no theology for trauma. According to Bond and Craps (2020:41), trauma has begun to characterise many spheres of cultural identity, further impacted by those who experience it. In this section, the discussion around a theology of trauma will be engaged in. The theology of trauma is to help guide the local church in its engagement of adolescents from trauma-informed homes.

Cronshaw (2010:4) articulates that trauma is related to the experience of observation, perception, memory and what was shown through deeds and words. This highlights that trauma is seen, felt, lived and heard by individuals and has no one result. O'Donnell (2023:4) argues that trauma destroys the identity of those who experience it and has the ability to destroy the cognitive and rationality of one's life and decisions. With adolescents' struggle with identity formation, the various aspects of developmental changes and being at the cusp of learning to solve problems with rationality, the impact is even greater. What is imperative to consider is that trauma and its effects cannot be discounted based on our inability to perceive what is traumatic to each person (O'Donnell, 2023:4).

When seeking to understand a theology of trauma, it is important to consider that most of the development has happened within the 21st century, as trauma theology is a fairly new discipline (O'Donnell 2023:5). That does not mean that it is not present within Scripture. O'Donnell (2023:6) does write that suffering and trauma should not be considered to be the same; suffering integrates into our identity, whereas trauma has resisted this integration.

One theological premise for trauma is the death of Christ. Hill (2022:6) states that Holy Saturday presents a significant example of understanding a theology of trauma. The death of Christ was violent, in full view of his mother and followers and displayed a great deal of violence and anguish. This speaks to the assertion made earlier, in which

the researcher noted that trauma is seen, felt and perceived. The crucifixion encompasses all of the above. Rambo (2010:45-46) refers to the crucifixion of Christ as depicting a great deal of violence, which resulted in a tremendous amount of unresolved trauma. Any dramatic portrayal of Christ's crucifixion through drama would reinforce this idea if one carefully observes the audience. Hill (2022:6) agrees, stating that within the context of Christ's crucifixion, there is a great deal of forsaking and abandonment above the extreme violence depicted.

Within all of Christianity, the cross of Christ embodies redemption and salvation. Hill (2022:7) argues that Rambo calls for the crucifixion of Christ and Holy Saturday to be the ultimate consideration for trauma in theology, as it has the one who suffered and those who suffered trauma through witnessing his brutal death. Agard (2023:142) paints a more sombre account, highlighting Jesus' body hanging on the cross, bloody and hammered, the stench of urine, and those who crucified him, mocking him as the one who is the Messiah, the Rabbi, the leader, the one who taught with authority the hope of his followers, his mother being decimated repeatedly. This is the image, Agard (2023:142) states, which is a picture of trauma being experienced by onlookers as they are filled with inner turmoil. O'Donnell (2023:12) supports this argument, postulating that the women, Jesus' mother and the beloved disciple are trauma survivors, as they fully witnessed the murder and humiliation of Christ. This would certainly have left them with feelings of resentment, fear, sorrow, and pain. O'Donnell (2023:12) asserts that in the narratives subsequent to his crucifixion if one observes the characteristics of those who were with Jesus, trauma responses are present.

Jones (2015:93) presents the argument that the original manuscripts conclude with Mark 16:1-8, which depicts a raw encounter between a young man and Mary, mother of Jesus, who, instead of having her son there, is told he is not, an ending which offers no solace, no healing, no victory over their traumatic experience. Carr (2014:170) writes that the sudden end in the original manuscript highlighted that those who remained behind did not emphasise Christ's vindication after immense suffering. This Carr (2014:170) attributes to the idea that perhaps the vindication was to be experienced through the church. It's a concept which needs much consideration, because the manuscript was edited, and therein, the resurrection of Christ is shared.

O'Donnell (2023:13) states that the church now leans toward the resurrection as a solution to trauma, preaching the victory of the cross. This, however, denounces the effects of trauma and negates the very real consequences thereof, especially in the lives of adolescents. Rambo (2010:7) writes that the resurrection of Christ points to victory over death and sin but cannot engage with and speak to the overwhelming reality of the suffering produced by trauma. Trauma must be acknowledged in order for there to be an adequate response to it, especially within the church.

Robinson (2024:55) postulates that trauma can be seen throughout Scripture, highlighting that David's lamenting and sorrow depicted in Psalm 55:1-6 testify to this truth. David is seen to be crying out to God in deep anguish. Another example of continuous lived trauma can be observed through Joseph. Harwood (2014:1) contends that between being hated by his brothers, sold off into slavery and becoming a prisoner, Joseph had experienced much in his young life. Joseph's life is another depiction of trauma and how one experiences it, whether once or ongoing. Harwood (2014:1) argues that despite the traumatic experiences Joseph remained faithful to God, without knowing why God allowed this to happen to him. Robinson (2024:58) observes that a sound understanding of theology for trauma offers the church a pastoral response. This is necessary when considering discipleship, specifically adolescents within a trauma-informed home. Roberts and Stringer (2023:20) concur, writing that having a theological understanding of trauma allows the church to build a nurturing faith community that encompasses healing, relationship building and accountability (Roberts et al., 2023:20).

A church's understanding of trauma and a sound understanding of a theology of trauma allows for a discipleship model which offers grace and compassion in Christ as its foundation. Robinson (2024:62) agrees, postulating that a trauma-informed theology allows for those who preach from the pulpit to authentically resonate with those who are trauma sufferers in the pew. This should be an important consideration for the church when considering the current culture and context. A contextualised ministry displays an understanding of those with the local church and community and speaks to an understanding of Jesus, who can identify with believers in every circumstance.

6.3 Discipleship to Adolescents in Trauma-Informed Homes

6.3.1 A Relational Discipleship Approach

Borgman (2013:3) postulates that at the heart of youth ministry there has always been the desire of youth pastors and youth workers to build relationships with adolescents that meet their deepest needs. The main component of discipleship, especially in the adolescent space, is relationships. Lawrence (2007:64) agrees, claiming that Jesus had an intimate relationship with God the Father, and modelled that same intimate relationship with people. Adolescents today, especially those from trauma-informed homes, desire that kind of intimacy within their relationship within the church community. According to Lawrence (2007:64), adolescents thrive when they are able to cultivate intimate relationships with the elders in their church. If the elders within the church fail to build these intimate relationships with the adolescents, the repercussions will be seen for generations to come.

Christ should be our example for ministry. Borgman (2013:270) asserts that youth ministry is based on the idea of Christ living in us, which points to the call of the church to imitate Christ. The mission of the church leadership should thus be to exude that love through displaying the love of Christ to adolescents in the church and include them in the life of the church. Stier (2015:3) concurs, highlighting Matthew 17:24-27, which narrates the story of Jesus and the disciples in the temple, asserting that the disciples must have been adolescents. Stier (2015:4) makes this assertion on the basis that only Peter and Jesus paid the tax, which was to be paid by everyone older than 20 years old according to customary law. This is Christ's example, that like the disciples, we must lead adolescents to have a relationship with Christ, but also leaders should be led to have a relationship with adolescents. These relationships should have depth and substance and create a stronger church geared toward the Great Commission (Nel, 2015:1). These deep relationships will offer adolescents who have faced trauma a safe and authentic space to share and learn to forgive those who have hurt them. According to Nel (2015:2), the church must digress from the need to overemphasise programming over relationships as scripture alludes to discipleship through relationships. These relationships offer trauma-informed adolescents a safe space with adults, where they are both seen and heard.

Adolescents from trauma-informed homes need more intentional relationship-building than adolescents from 'good' homes. Ogden (2003:42-43) claims that those being disciplined need to have attention granted to them intentionally and that this is what yields results in the discipleship relationship. This is why relationships are key to discipleship, especially with adolescents who have face trauma/have faced trauma. Baham (2020:4) postulates that effective discipleship to adolescents is not merely about creating followers, but also leaders for the present and future. This was Paul's impact on the life of young Timothy, which Baham (2020:4) notes was through discipleship and guidance, as can be seen in 2 Timothy 2:2. This idea is supported by Hunter (2015:149), who writes that when considering adolescent discipleship, a model which he endorses is what is termed the D6 model. This model affirms the idea of intergenerational discipleship, which offers youth pastors and leaders the necessary support for adolescent spiritual growth (Hunter, 2015:148-149). The D6 model finds its biblical foundation in Deuteronomy 6, in which the focus is on generational discipleship. According to Hunter (2015:149), if parents and the church do not support the youth pastor/leader, they are creating adolescents who are no longer interested in the Church of Christ.

With adolescence being a time of great change and transition coupled with hormonal changes, consistent relationships will ground and root the adolescent. Burns (2001:20) claims that our model for effective relational discipleship should be built on God incarnate, Jesus Christ. God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to dwell amongst us as is described in the Gospels and walked closely with the disciples whom he called unto himself. Not only that, but Christ also interacted with people intimately. Burns (2001:20) highlights that Christ walked the earth and is able to fully identify with believers, and we experience him within intimate relationships. This is the blueprint for relational discipleship. Agard (2023:145) concurs, arguing that being able to see Christ is to experience God, and when we disciple adolescents in trauma, we must help them to see Christ. Karei (2019:42) cements the idea of Christ being the perfect example of discipleship, by arguing that Jesus had spent the majority of his time teaching his disciples. Not only did Christ spend the majority of his time with his disciples. Karei (2019:42) suggests that Christ ministered to them and alongside them, teaching them

how to serve through relationship by calling them to 'come and follow him'. Nel (2009:7) agrees with an incarnation relational discipleship model, highlighting that a pneumatological view of the church would drive believers to walk in an incarnational community.

Nel (2009:6) argues that for adults to lead adolescents in the invitation to discipleship, those adults must understand that it is God's mandate to God's church for disciples to make disciples. This means that the adults and elders within the church have a missional understanding of disciple-making and discipleship. Bailey (2008:9) concurs, stating that all believers in Christ are disciples, and all disciples must engage in discipleship, emulating Christ in every way. Nel (2009:7) argues that parents have the greatest discipleship advantage, writing that when parents are believers, they have the key setting to invite adolescents into discipleship. Referring back to Hunter (2015:147-149), one must note that a relational discipleship model must begin within the home and be supported within the church. This might prove to be a challenge, considering that adolescents from trauma-informed homes often don't have Christlike guidance within the home. Nel (2009:7) asserts that adult believers within the church must envelop adolescents on this discipleship journey, 'wrapping their arms' around these adolescents and walking with them on this journey. This is an incarnational and relational discipleship approach. Providing that which is lacking in the home within the church, which is ultimately understood to be God's home.

Burns (2001:48) elucidates that adolescents seek to follow those on who they can model their lives. It is the responsibility of the parents/youth pastors and church elders to provide that example. When we understand that discipleship is not a program but a relationship, our inclination to foster those relationships with adolescents in the church will grow. Nel (2009:8) articulates that the Holy Spirit is the one who enables discipleship, through his guidance and leading, the church should be practising lifelong relational discipleship with adolescents. Where not possible in the homes of adolescents, the church must become what Jesus was to his disciples, what Naomi was to Ruth and Eli was to Samuel. Karei (2019:55) posits that the relationship between Eli and Samuel was intimate, yet they practised a collective discipleship method, which was effective and more positive. This should be the mission of the

church toward adolescents, especially adolescents in trauma-informed homes. An incarnational relational discipleship approach is intentional in its approach. Maarman and Lamont-Mbawuli (2021:89) echo the sentiments shared, adding that the church has a fundamental responsibility to teach adolescents of trauma how to overcome the obstacles and crises in their lives. This is achieved through modelling, which is greatly observed within a relational discipleship approach.

6.3.2 An Inclusive Discipleship Approach

According to Hobart (2013:145), the church has a responsibility to reach out to the youth within their community and involve them in the ministry of the church. This cultivates a sense of love and grace within a community of faith. Hobart (2013:145) believes that whilst involved in ministry, many of these adolescents would surrender to Christ as they encounter at work. Samuel served with Eli in the temple but did not yet know God. It was only when God called him, that he met God. Burns (2001:48) claims that adolescents look for role models, and the best way to influence them is to have adolescents at your side in the throes of ministry. Nel (2018:36) argues that when we consider that we call adolescents to be disciples, we must embrace the idea that disciples participate with God in God's mission. This is what it means to be a disciple and to practise discipleship.

If we seek to teach servant leadership, we must be willing to cultivate both a theoretical and practical understanding through inclusivity. According to Nel (2018:59), God holds a special space for children and youth, desiring for them to be participants in God's world; a failure to do so is to misrepresent Jesus. If we are inviting adolescents into discipleship, to walk as Christ walked, how can we dictate where they may or may not serve? Yaconelli (2001:156-157) asserts that discipleship teaches Christian practises and serving within the church, an intergenerational space is one of those practises. According to Yaconelli (2001:157), allowing adolescents to serve within the church community grounds their faith and teaches them the whole ambit of Christian living. Aziz (2022:5) states that the mission of the local church is to assist adolescents in their faith formation; this is achieved through authentic relationships and conversations about their lived realities. These conversations must include the truth of their traumatic experience with elders who share compassion and grace.

Nel (2018:64) argues that adolescents are considered an integral part of God's people/community and that the inherent need to separate adolescents from the rest of the faith community must cease. If we seek to disciple adolescents from trauma-informed homes, we must understand that they must be made to feel a part of that which points them to God, and that which is consistent. Beukes et al. (2022:151) contend that adolescents who are in church spaces where the ministry is segregated, have to 'discover' their faith on their own. This contrasts with the example left for the church by Christ. If the church values youth, they will include them in ministry in the church on the premise that their value is in who they are, not who they will be (Cloete, 2015:2).

6.4 Conclusion

To offer a contextualised discipleship approach to adolescents in trauma, one must have a sound understanding of the theology of trauma. Throughout scripture, one observes that there are, in fact, instances which, when studied, demonstrate traumatic experiences. When reading Joseph's story or how David was chased by Saul, it is imperative to note the consequences of trauma within their response. It is also important to understand that their experiences have caused feelings understood to accompany trauma. The Crucifixion is another such instance. Those who witnessed it observed how the one whom they love, and follow is brutally assaulted, murdered, and humiliated. No hope in sight, engraved in their memory with deep sorrow and turmoil. There is trauma. Yes, the Cross of Calvary symbolises victory and salvation, and Joseph's life story is one in which God turns it around for his good, but we must acknowledge the good and the bad.

A theology for trauma aids the church in offering a contextualised ministry for all who enter the door. Adolescents especially need to be understood as they navigate a very complex time in their lives. The researcher has presented a brief theology of trauma and how that would aid the church. The researcher has also engaged the discussion around two discipleship models which are geared to relationship and inclusivity. Relational discipleship focuses on the intentional building of relationships, which exemplifies the example left by Christ. The writer also offered the benefits of having

these relationships within discipleship. An inclusive discipleship model was also discussed, in which the researcher engaged in the discussion of adolescents being a part of the church. This would break from the current understanding that youth ministry is to be separate. Offering an adolescent from a trauma-informed home an opportunity to be included, shows them they belong and that God desires for them to be on a mission with Him. These discipleship approaches are merely that, approaches which would benefit adolescents who experience trauma. It seeks to understand, offer grace and show compassion to those who are often considered the least of those.

CHAPTER 7

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

This thesis has set out to engage the discussion around adolescent discipleship with a specific focus on those who are from trauma-informed homes. This has caused the researcher to discuss adolescence, trauma, discipline and discipleship in their respective chapters to offer the reading greater insight. Insight into various aspects of trauma, adolescent changes and developmental milestones and what it truly means to be a disciple of Christ. In this chapter the researcher will simply bring together all that has been discussed, offering the local church recommendations for future ministry.

7.2 An Overview

The researcher's background in youth ministry and development prompted the idea to address the issue of discipleship of trauma-informed adolescents. This area of study is imperative, especially within the context of the Western Cape, as communities battle gender-based violence, gangsterism, increased levels of crime and a scourge of drug addiction. When considering these factors, the researcher sought to understand how adolescents exposed to these very circumstances could walk with God despite their hurt and pain. This brought about the question of whether a contextualised approach would be best suited to help these adolescents grow in Christ. By identifying these trauma-informed youth, it became obvious that a contextualised discipleship approach is needed. Therefore, in doing this, the researcher was enabled to employ the methodology set forth by Osmer, utilising an integrated approach of both qualitative and quantitative data collection. This allowed the researcher the opportunity to grapple with the circumstances of these adolescents, set forth their understanding of discipleship, and create a safe space where they could share their experiences. This aided in giving the reader greater insight into the life of these trauma-informed adolescents.

A biblical foundation for being a disciple of Christ was laid out. By doing this, an understanding of discipleship from both the Old and New Testament and how disciples of Christ face suffering whilst serving Christ was gained. This research focussed on the adolescent, and how this could be practically applied by the local youth worker and pastor, extending to the congregation.

Chapter 2 engaged the discussion around the trifecta of adolescence, trauma and discipleship which is present within the church today. Various literature sources revealed that adolescence comprises many developmental changes, which creates a difficult transitional period. Hasan (2016:1) confirms this and writes that the adolescent stage is marred with behavioural issues, which are typically led by external changes related to their development. The researcher noted that adolescence is the life stage which holds many transitional moments and in which many life-changing decisions are often made. Tsagem (2022:1) highlights that adolescence is the exit of childhood and that the quest for social independence will greatly influence their role within civilisation in the future. The study determined that across the world the definition for the adolescent age group varied between the age of 12-35. Researchers, however, agree that the typical age group is between 12-24 years (Bell, 2016:3; Robards, et al., 2013:4; Kousiakis, 2015:4). This was also largely dependent on their ability to navigate and embrace developmental milestones.

Trauma was another aspect covered in Chapter 2. Trauma is the second leg of the trifecta. Trauma was determined by the researcher to be an event which occurs in the life of the affected person, causing great harm and suffering. Malizia (2017:11) noted that trauma has detrimental effects on both children and adolescents and creates emotional instability. When trauma occurs in childhood or adolescence, it was determined that it greatly impacted the future of the affected individual as well. This idea was affirmed by Perrotta (2019:1), who argues that trauma distorts the identity of the victim, causing them to be unstable and at risk of being hurt or influenced negatively easily. The researcher observed the overwhelming severe effect that trauma has on the victim and how this, if trauma is inflicted by parents, impedes adolescent-parent interactions. Not only was the parent-adolescent relationship

negatively affected, but Malizia (2017:13) observed how trauma-informed adolescents suffered from PTSD, negative behaviour and irrationality.

Specific areas of trauma, such as grief, orphanhood due to HIV, and physical and sexual adolescent abuse, were covered by this research effort. This highlights the varying degrees of trauma and their effects on adolescents. Revet et al. (2017:63) postulate that grief in the life of an adolescent is serious and that it can lead to PTSD and mental health disorders, too. The effect of grief on adolescents is understood to be greater due to the complexity of their life stage.

Orphanhood in adolescents due to HIV is yet another aspect of adolescent trauma which results in mental health disorders and negative behaviours. According to Pallies et al. (2020:2), the profound effect of losing both parents in the life of an adolescent can be seen in the overall well-being of adolescents and their lack of basic needs. The overall well-being of adolescents and basic needs not being met, present their own issues in the life of the adolescent. Babedi et al. (2019:1040) observed that it could result in anxiety. The traumatising effect of orphanhood is significant and is a trauma which must be addressed to prevent further degradation of the adolescent experience. Physical and sexual adolescent abuse is another prevalent trauma experience observed by the researcher, which is supported by Farnia et al. (2020:1098), who writes that abuse is rampant around the world. This research highlighted the seriousness of this kind of abuse toward adolescents. Scholars found that adolescents who experienced physical and sexual abuse were more likely to suffer from drug addiction, debilitating depression and poor emotional regulation (Meink, 2016:1; Farnia, et al., 2020:1098). The prevalence of sexual assault specifically should be addressed from both a community and church perspective, and Gwala (2021:1) explains that within South African society, rape culture is huge. It presents itself as a great challenge. The statistics presented here underscored the severity of the issue and the alarming rate at which it occurs.

The researcher furthermore briefly engaged with various scholars around the call to be a disciple and discipleship, It became evident that they all agree that the call to profess Christ as Lord is the first step to being a disciple. Brady (2019:44), for example,

noted that the call to profess Christ as Lord negates the understanding of 'religious' piety as the key to faith in Christ. In its most simple understanding, the literature consulted presented the concept that a disciple is an avid follower of Christ. This is supported by Etheredge (2015:5), who suggests that a disciple is a follower of Christ who lives a life fully surrendered to Christ in faith.

Discipleship is thus understood to be the verb attached to disciple. This research confirmed that discipleship was the mandate given by Christ in Matthew 28:19-20. This mandate is one which is given to the church. Nel (2017:1), however, observed that the idea of discipleship and the discussion around it has slowly dissipated from church discussion/praxis. This is, however, to be a fundamental focus of the church as it aids in developing people spiritually and guides them in how they are to follow Christ. The researcher also engaged the idea that discipleship has become more difficult in modern society. The overwhelming effects of the internet, social media applications and the current self-gratifying culture sharply contrast with the call of self-denial in discipleship (Nel, 2017:2). It was found that the call to discipleship in Christ's body is to be understood as a foundational mark of the church, to build God's kingdom and teaching others to walk as Christ walked.

Chapter 3 presented the data related to the participants and their responses in both the questionnaire and interview processes. This process allowed the researcher to document what was happening in the life of the adolescent. and engage the discussion around the dire reality of their home circumstances. The data demonstrated and underscored the severity of the adolescent experience of adolescents who are in discipleship 'programs' and who are involved in church. Specifically, data in Chapter Three (refer 3.4.14) displays that only 55% of adolescents who participated in the study have a mature believer teaching them about their walk with Christ. Kgatle (2017:187) reminds us that Christ walked closely with his disciples, and that should be the example to be followed within the church today. The adolescents also showed a very poor understanding of the term discipleship, as can be seen in the question posed in this chapter (refer to 3.4.16). This highlights the need for greater teaching on the importance of discipleship to the church, but also modelling the same to adolescents. Reading through the interviews, it became glaringly clear that the degree of trauma

experienced by adolescents is at the hands of their own parents. A great deal of self-identification and self-actualisation stems from a safe space created within parent-adolescent relational bonds. This, however, presented the opposite of what ought to be happening, the reality being that adolescents would struggle with irrationality and vulnerability, highlighting the importance of a contextualised understanding of discipleship to adolescents from trauma-informed homes. This research emphasises the reality that many adolescents are facing in today's context, which should prompt the church to equip themselves greater for the task at hand.

Chapter 4 dealt with the specifics of the trauma that these young people are facing, focussing on the discussion around the impact that this trauma has on the adolescents. Substance-abusing parents were one of the issues, which arose in the interviews, highlighting the prevalence of this occurrence, especially on the Cape Flats. This argument was supported by Dykes et al. (2021:224), who asserted that the Western Cape has the highest prevalence of substance abuse. The effects of parents who are substance abusers are risky behaviour, poor self-identification, abuse, depression, poor role models and a poor parent-child relationship. These effects are all aspects which aid adolescents in reaching their developmental milestones, and regression in any of these areas is detrimental to the life of the adolescent. This is supported by Kapur (2015:241), who claimed that environmental stimulation greatly impacts adolescent development, and parents form a large part of that development.

Another trauma that came to the fore was fatherlessness. This has a host of repercussions besides the initial trauma of a defunct family unit. Freeks (2013:3), amongst others, confirms that fatherlessness is not a new concept, but is, in fact, a universal issue. The absent father in the life of an adolescent, either currently or in their formative years, is observed to leave behind a litany of disadvantages in the life of the adolescent (Ahiaku, et al., 2022:174). Fatherlessness should also not necessarily equate to fathers who are absent but instead can refer to fathers who are emotionally absent and unavailable. The effects of fatherlessness can be observed in the community through societal ills (Freeks, 2017:1; Sylvester, 2010:1; Labuschagne, 2023:14), risky behaviour (Freeks, 2022:3; Carstens, 2014:129) and emotional and psychological effects (Beckman, et al., 2019:8; Labuschagne, 2023:13).

Divorce was another trauma which surfaced in the interviews which is described by Nur et al. (2022:50) as being one of the most traumatic experiences for an adolescent. The researcher observed that the divorce rates in South Africa are amongst the highest in the world. From divorce, one of the most logical occurrences noted is fatherlessness (Prakash, et al., 2015:3; Nur, et al., 2022:51; Ahiaku, 2022:174). Another repercussion is mental health, and how depression becomes engraved in the life of the adolescent coming from the affected family. Tullius et al. (2022:969) argue that adolescents from divorced homes are more prone to experience psychological problems. Not only is their mental health impacted, but also the academics of the adolescent. Nilsen et al. (2020:1) note that the devastating impact of parental divorce on the adolescent's academics is not only related to schoolwork but includes financial constraints regarding fees and humiliation.

The researcher delved deep into the heart of the trauma that adolescents experience and sought to understand how the individual traumas led to further traumatising. The effects noted are detrimental to adolescent development overall and complicate an already complex life stage.

Chapter five delved into the theological premises for the term's disciples and discipleship and sought to highlight the importance of both these practices within the church. The theological premise for the term 'disciple' was developed from both an Old Testament and a New Testament perspective. These biblical examples were all based on the premise of young men and women in the Bible who decided to follow God/Christ (Stoppels, 2013:73). The examples of Samuel and Ruth were used for an Old Testament theology, and from the New Testament it was the calling of the first disciples in Mark and the call to Matthew to follow Christ. This created a sound understanding of the radical call to follow Christ (Ionascu, 2024:169). This created the segway to understanding that discipleship is the teaching component of being a disciple. Adams (2017:61) states that teaching people to follow Christ in a fully surrendered fashion is the all-encompassing work of discipleship. The mandate given in Matthew 28:19-20 is the call for the local church to teach those who come to faith in Christ, and what it

means to live for him. Mahuti (2021:63) asserts that this is the foundational call of the church as they spread the Gospel and call people to repentance.

The tension noted in adolescent discipleship is the dichotomy between culture and religion (Weber, 2021:3). This research also focussed on the discussion around African culture and how this weighs in on discipleship within the life of the adolescent. The various issues regarding discipleship of adolescents can be addressed through a contextualised approach. Nel (2010:15) notes that a contextualised understanding of both adolescents and discipleship will better equip the local church to deeply impact adolescent discipleship approaches. One noteworthy area of concern in adolescent discipleship is how to build a resilient faith in adolescent life. The influence of both peers and parents in adolescent discipleship is an aspect imperative to their spiritual formation. Without this happening in the home, adolescents will struggle in discipleship (Counted, 2018:366). The segregated ministry approach is addressed by Cloete (2015:3), and causes a great deal of tension in adolescent discipleship. The separation of youth from the rest of the church has resulted in what has been termed by Beukes et al. (2022:151) as youth culture, which neglects the theological premise for guidance and mentorship. There are many challenges related to adolescent discipleship, the greatest being the lack of discipleship in the home and the segregation of youth from the church.

Chapter 6 discussed the role of the church and really focussed on a theology for trauma the inclusive and relational approaches to discipleship. When considering the pitfalls of adolescent discipleship within the church, it was necessary to build a theology for trauma. This theological premise creates a platform to cultivate a contextualised approach to the discipleship of those who have experienced hurt or who are currently experiencing trauma. Bond et al. (2020:41) point out that trauma has become a significant aspect of communities and cultural identities. This highlights the importance of having a sound theological understanding of trauma. The researcher developed a theology, engaging the discussion related to those who witnessed the crucifixion of Christ (Hill, 2022:6). This brings to the fore the presence of trauma within Scripture. Robinson (2024:55) provides scriptural references for other trauma observations within scripture, highlighting David and Joseph's experiences.

The researcher provided two approaches for discipleship of adolescents, which include a relational and inclusive approach. Both these approaches address the key pitfalls of adolescent discipleship, embracing what is discarded by the church as the very keys to impactful discipleship. The relational approach embraces the idea that the church community has a responsibility to help younger believers in their walk with Christ. Relationships were fundamental to Christ's ministry on earth, and even within the church as believers seek to have a personal relationship with Jesus. Nel (2015:2) asserts that the church must refrain from prioritising programming over relationships. Relationships, however, are what adolescents from trauma-informed homes need. They need positive relationships with adults, especially when they have substance-abusing parents.

The inclusive approach discards the local church's natural propensity to separate youth from the rest of the church. When engaging the discussion around Samuel, one notes that Eli included Samuel in temple practises despite his age and him not knowing God. Burns (2001:48) supports this idea, stating that adolescents are greatly influenced when exposed to role models in a hands-on approach. Nel (2018:236) argues that God wants disciples to participate with him in his mandate, and if adolescents are disciples, why should they be excluded from that mandate? The church must aid adolescents in their spiritual formation and a great way to do this is to involve them in the ministry and activity of the church.

7.3 Recommendations

For adolescent discipleship to be impactful, it is suggested that the local church must embrace the idea of having a relational and inclusive ministry approach, especially with trauma-informed youth. This would create safe spaces for these adolescents, who feel vulnerable to feel loved and affirmed by adults who can walk with them and with whom they can be authentic. Jesus leaves behind the example of a relational ministry from the call of the disciples until his resurrection, underscoring the importance of presence and inclusivity.

The local church's understanding of adolescents, trauma and discipleship is imperative if they seek to cultivate a contextualised approach for impactful ministry. Misunderstood age groups and situations cause poor ministry engagement and cause more division than unity. Beukes et al. (2022:151) postulate that adolescents who are separate from the church will end up developing their 'own faith,' which is concerning. The guidance and leadership from those who are considered older and more mature are envisioned to create a more resilient faith in adolescents who follow Christ. This leading and guidance should not be steeped in old 'traditional' thinking but should consider the current circumstances of the youth and address these circumstances with grace and empathy.

Adolescents matter to God, and their faith is no less important than the faith of a middle-aged person. They are to be included in the life of the church and should be considered to be the leaders of today's church as opposed to tomorrow's generation. The time to actively disciple them is now, and the best way to do so is to take an interest in them through relationships and allow them to participate within ministry spheres.

7.4 Conclusion

Adolescent discipleship is an important aspect of church ministry and should be considered to be a fundamental focal point of the church. With adolescents being such a complex life stage, it is imperative that one has a sound understanding of both the life stage and the impact that trauma has on their development. Trauma itself has so many detrimental effects on the life of adolescents as it impedes their development. An understanding of trauma and a theology thereof aids both the leader and the church in becoming aware of the context in which they minister. These premises will allow church leaders to fully understand how to disciple those who have trauma in their homes. This will create a church ministry which is both relevant and inclusive of those who do not come from Godfearing homes.

My research project has sought to engage as thoroughly as possible the idea of discipling adolescents from trauma-informed homes. This chapter concludes the overview of this project, having briefly engaged each chapter and its findings.

Recommendations for the local church have been included, with the greatest focus being the relational and inclusive approach, which the researcher concludes are the two most important aspects of trauma youth ministries of local churches should attend to.

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APPENDIX

A. Ethical Clearance Letter



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Theology and Religion

Research Office
Mrs Daleen Kotzé

10 August 2023

NAME: Mrs MV September
STUDENT NUMBER: 21844403
COURSE: Masters
DATE: 10 August 2023
APPLICATION NUMBER: T020/23

This letter serves as confirmation that the research proposal of this student was evaluated by:

- 1) **The Research committee:** This applies to all research proposals
- 2) **The Research Ethics committee:** This applies only to research that includes people as sources of information

You are hereby notified that your research proposal (including ethical clearance where it is applicable) is approved.



Prof D J Human
Chairperson: Research committee: Faculty of Theology and Religion



Dr JW Beukes
Chairperson: Research Ethics committee: Faculty of Theology and Religion

B. Research Questionnaire

Trauma and Discipleship

A questionnaire to determine the impact of trauma in the lives of adolescents and how discipleship (if any) helps strengthen the adolescent relationship with God.

Which age group are you in??

*

17-18 year
19-20 year
21-22years

Which part of Kraaifontein are you from?

*

Eikendal
Bernadino
Scottsdene
Protea Pink

Is your mother/father present in your life?

*

Mother
Father
Mother/Fat
None

Are you being raised by your grandparents?

*

Yes
No

Have you been exposed to drug addiction in your house?

*

Yes
No

Has this drug addiction impacted negatively? if yes, please explain?

*

Long-answer text

--

Have you been sexually assaulted by someone in your home or who frequents your home?

*

Yes
No

Have you been abused your, emotionally by someone in you home environment?

*

Yes
No

Have you been exposed to high levels of violence in your home?

*

Yes
No

Are your parents divorced?

*

Yes
No

Are you parents deceased?

Option 1
Option 2
Option 3
Option 4

Does your Church have a discipleship program?

*

Yes
No

Does that discipleship program benefit you and your current circumstances and experience?

*

Yes
No

Do you have a mentor/ mature believer who walks with you, shares Gods word with you and encourage you??

*

Yes
No

What do you understand by the term disciple?

*

Long-answer text

What do you understand by the term discipleship?

*

Long-answer text

Do you believe that God is still good, despite everything you experience?

*

Does your home environment negatively impact your walk with God??

*

Option 1

How can the church develop a better discipleship program for you?

*

Long-answer text