

Influence of Personal Faith on Teacher Self-Efficacy and Retention in Christian Schools

Alicia Kozimor

Grand Canyon University

## **Abstract**

Teacher retention remains a critical issue for Christian schools, where educators often balance professional responsibilities with deeply held personal beliefs. This qualitative descriptive study explores how personal faith influences teacher self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and retention within Christian school contexts. Guided by Bandura's (1999) Social Cognitive Theory and Fowler's (1981) Stages of Faith Development, the study examines the extent to which faith contributes to teachers' confidence in their instructional abilities, their resilience in addressing classroom challenges, and their long-term commitment to the profession. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 15 Christian school teachers across varying levels of experience. Through thematic analysis, the study identifies patterns in how teachers describe the role of faith in their professional lives. Findings contribute to an understanding of the intersection between spirituality and teacher efficacy, offering practical implications for leadership in Christian schools seeking to enhance teacher support and reduce turnover, while also expanding the scholarly conversation on motivation and retention in faith-based educational settings.

*Keywords:* teacher self-efficacy, teacher retention, Christian schools



## **Influence of Personal Faith on Teacher Self-Efficacy and Retention in Christian Schools**

Teacher retention has emerged as a significant challenge facing schools, as high rates of turnover disrupt instructional continuity, negatively impact student outcomes, and place strain on institutional resources. While issues related to teacher retention are well documented in public school settings, Christian schools operate within distinct contexts that may influence educators' decisions to remain in the profession (Regualos, 2025). Christian educators often describe their work as not simply a career, but as a calling rooted in faith. This integration of professional identity and personal faith may serve as a source of resilience while also presenting unique challenges as teachers balance instructional demands, organizational expectations, and personal commitments.

Examining the role of faith in teacher self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and retention offers an opportunity to better understand how Christian schools can support educators in sustaining long-term and meaningful careers. This study addresses the need to explore how personal faith functions within the professional lives of PK–12 Christian school teachers and how faith-related beliefs and practices may influence their decision to persist in the field.

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

This study is grounded in two complementary theoretical frameworks that together inform an examination of teacher self-efficacy, faith, and retention within Christian school contexts. Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1999) conceptualizes self-efficacy as a central mechanism influencing human agency, motivation, and behavior. Within educational settings, teacher self-efficacy refers to educators' beliefs in their

ability to plan, implement, and adapt instruction to support student learning (Bandura, 1999). These beliefs shape instructional decision-making, persistence when facing challenges, and emotional responses to classroom demands. From this perspective, teachers with stronger self-efficacy are more likely to demonstrate resilience, maintain motivation, and remain committed to their professional roles despite obstacles.

Fowler's Stages of Faith Development (Fowler & Dell, 2006) frames faith as a developmental and evolving construct that influences how individuals make meaning, form commitments, and interpret life experiences. Fowler's framework provides a lens for understanding how personal faith matures over time and how that maturation may shape individuals' values, sense of purpose, and responses to vocational challenges (Fowler & Dell, 2006). Within the context of Christian education, faith development may play a role in how educators interpret their work, experience fulfillment, and navigate periods of stress or uncertainty.

Together, these frameworks support an exploration of how Christian educators integrate personal faith with professional practice. Social Cognitive Theory offers a foundation for examining teachers' instructional confidence and persistence, while faith development theory provides insight into the role of spiritual beliefs and meaning-making in shaping resilience and long-term commitment.

## **Literature**

Teacher shortages continue to be a widespread concern across the United States, affecting schools across grade levels, geographic regions, and educational contexts. While many reports frame the issue as a national crisis, recent scholarship suggests the need for a more nuanced understanding of where shortages occur and the factors

contributing to teacher attrition. Nguyen, Lam, and Bruno (2022) argue that shortages are not evenly distributed, but rather concentrated in high-need subject areas, underserved communities, and regions already experiencing systemic inequities.

### **Attrition, Burnout, and Organizational Conditions**

National data continue to demonstrate that teacher mobility and attrition remain ongoing challenges within the U.S. education system. Recent findings from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), drawn from the 2021–2022 Teacher Follow-up Survey, reaffirm that a substantial number of educators continue to leave or change positions, highlighting the continued need for retention-focused research and intervention (Taie & Lewis, 2021). Importantly, research suggests that teacher turnover is rarely driven by a single factor; rather, it reflects the interaction of individual experiences and organizational conditions, including workload, leadership support, and school culture.

In addition to national attrition trends, research continues to demonstrate that teacher mobility is closely connected to stress, burnout, and perceptions of the school environment. Longitudinal work by Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2020) illustrates that burnout is not a singular experience but consists of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment, all of which are associated with declining job satisfaction and motivation over time. Their findings emphasize that organizational conditions such as leadership support, workload expectations, and perceived autonomy play a significant role in shaping teachers' decisions to remain or exit the profession.

Similarly, national reporting from the National Center for Education Statistics affirms that teacher attrition is influenced not only by career stage or personal factors, but also by workplace conditions and institutional support (Taie & Lewis, 2021). These data

reinforce the importance of examining retention through both psychological and organizational lenses, particularly in educational contexts where resources may be constrained.

Regardless of variation, the consequences of teacher turnover are substantial. High turnover disrupts instructional continuity, negatively impacts student learning, and contributes to decreased morale among remaining staff (Nguyen et Al., 2022). As a result, addressing teacher retention has become an essential component of sustaining school effectiveness and long-term stability. For Christian schools, which often face additional constraints related to funding and staffing, understanding why teachers choose to remain, or leave, has become increasingly important.

### **Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory**

This study is grounded in Bandura's (1999) Social Cognitive Theory, which explains how personal beliefs, environmental factors, and behaviors interact to influence human functioning. Central to this theory is self-efficacy, defined as an individual's belief in their ability to successfully perform specific tasks (Bandura, 1999). Bandura identifies four primary sources of self-efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological or emotional states. Within educational contexts, teacher self-efficacy has been linked to instructional decision-making, persistence when facing challenges, and emotional resilience. Teachers with stronger self-efficacy are more likely to adapt instruction, remain motivated, and sustain commitment despite obstacles.

Social Cognitive Theory aligns with the experiences of Christian educators, whose perceptions of effectiveness are often shaped by both professional preparation and

personal belief systems. In Christian school settings, confidence in one's instructional ability may be reinforced by a belief in vocational calling (Roberts, 2022). As a result, perceptions of self-efficacy may reflect not only pedagogical competence but also a deeper sense of purpose that influences how teachers interpret challenges and respond to stress.

### **Self-Efficacy, Stress, and Job Satisfaction**

Research further clarifies that teacher self-efficacy is deeply intertwined with stress and job satisfaction. Klassen and Chiu (2010) found that teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy reported lower job stress and greater job satisfaction, while teachers experiencing elevated stress demonstrated declining efficacy beliefs over time. Their findings suggest a reciprocal relationship in which self-efficacy both influences and is influenced by teachers' emotional and professional experiences. This dynamic relationship highlights why self-efficacy is a particularly relevant construct for examining retention, as sustained stress without adequate support may erode teachers' confidence and commitment.

Within faith-based educational settings, these dynamics may be further shaped by belief systems that influence how stress and challenge are interpreted. When teachers perceive their work as meaningful and aligned with a sense of calling, self-efficacy may be sustained even under demanding conditions, reinforcing persistence despite ongoing pressures.

### **Theological Extensions of Self-Efficacy**

Building on Bandura's work, Roberts (2022) proposes a theological extension of self-efficacy for educators who integrate faith into their professional identity. This framework

suggests that Christian teachers may draw upon an additional source of confidence grounded in spiritual calling, reliance on God, or a belief in divine empowerment. For these educators, self-efficacy is not limited to skills developed through training or experience, but is also shaped by faith-based beliefs about purpose and responsibility (Roberts, 2022).

This theological dimension provides an important lens for understanding teacher persistence in Christian schools. In contexts where compensation may be lower and resources more limited, faith-related beliefs may strengthen teachers' resilience and commitment. By framing their work as part of a broader spiritual mission, Christian educators may sustain motivation and confidence even when facing ongoing challenges.

### **Calling and Meaningful Work**

The concept of calling has also been widely examined beyond theological literature, particularly in relation to well-being and persistence. Duffy et al. (2013) argue that life satisfaction is not just associated with possessing a sense of calling, but with actively living out that calling in one's work. Their research suggests that individuals who experience alignment between vocation, values, and daily practice report greater fulfillment and resilience. For Christian educators, teaching often represents a primary avenue through which faith, identity, and purpose converge, making the lived experience of calling especially salient.

Hirata et al. (2024) explored the multifaceted nature of school climate by examining the relationship between teachers' and students' perceptions of climate and key teacher outcomes. The authors found that positive school climate was associated with higher teacher satisfaction and stronger professional commitment. Importantly, teachers'

perceptions of climate were closely linked to emotional well-being and motivation, highlighting the role of relational and organizational environments in retention. These findings align with prior research emphasizing the importance of supportive, relational school cultures and extend this work by demonstrating how shared perceptions across stakeholders reinforce teacher persistence.

### **Teacher Self-Efficacy and Retention**

Teacher self-efficacy has consistently emerged as a strong predictor of retention across educational settings. Educators with higher self-efficacy are more likely to remain in the profession, navigate challenges effectively, and experience greater job satisfaction. Floyd (2023) found that elementary teachers in Christian schools report distinct sources of self-efficacy when compared to their public school counterparts. Specifically, Christian educators described confidence emerging not only from instructional experience and professional development, but also from faith, community support, and alignment with school mission.

These findings highlight the multidimensional nature of self-efficacy in faith-based settings, where professional identity and spiritual purpose are closely connected. Teachers who feel both competent and called are often better positioned to handle the challenges of teaching. Floyd (2023) further notes that Christian educators frequently evaluate their effectiveness through both pedagogical and spiritual lenses, reinforcing persistence in the classroom. This integration of faith demonstrates the importance of examining retention within Christian schools using frameworks that account for both professional and faith-based influences.

Recent empirical work also continues to link self-efficacy with burnout-related outcomes and perceived work ability, reinforcing that efficacy functions not only as a motivational belief but also as a resource connected to teachers' mental health and sustainability in the role (Hlado et Al., 2025). Li et al. (2023) examined the relationships among teacher self-efficacy, resilience, emotion regulation, and burnout, identifying a mediation model in which self-efficacy indirectly reduced burnout through resilience and emotion regulation. Teachers with higher self-efficacy were better able to manage emotional demands and adapt to stress, resulting in lower levels of emotional exhaustion.

### **Burnout, Mental Health, and Sustainability**

Recent scholarship continues to link teacher self-efficacy to broader indicators of professional sustainability. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2020) demonstrate that diminished perceptions of competence and support contribute to burnout trajectories that increase the likelihood of attrition. These findings reinforce that self-efficacy functions not only as a motivational belief, but also as a protective resource connected to teachers' mental health and long-term sustainability in the profession.

Together with research highlighting the importance of school climate and relational trust (Collie et al., 2012), these studies underscore that retention is most effectively supported when teachers experience both internal confidence and external support. In faith-based schools, where relational culture and mission alignment are often emphasized, these dynamics may play an especially influential role in shaping teachers' professional experiences.

### **Faith and Identity in the Work of Christian Educators**

Faith plays a central role in shaping teacher identity for many Christian educators. Birmingham (2025) found that Christian teachers working in public school settings often experience tension as they balance personal faith with institutional expectations. Despite these challenges, many participants described a strong sense of calling and a commitment to serving students holistically. Faith functioned as a source of motivation, resilience, and moral grounding, influencing how teachers understood their professional role.

Within Christian school contexts, the influence of faith on teacher identity is even more apparent. Roberts (2022) describes how theological concepts such as calling, gifting, and reliance on God inform educators' sense of competence and purpose. These beliefs allow teachers to frame their work as an extension of their spiritual identity. Yoder et al. (2024) further demonstrate that teachers with strong faith-integration self-efficacy report greater confidence not only in instructional responsibilities but also in the spiritual formation aspects of their role. This integrated identity has been linked to higher levels of job satisfaction and a stronger commitment to the school community. When educators perceive their work as spiritually meaningful, they may be more inclined to remain in challenging positions, particularly in mission-driven environments.

Arviv Elyashiv and Hanuka (2024) examined differences in teacher job satisfaction between religious and secular schools, finding that teachers in religious school contexts reported significantly higher levels of job satisfaction. Their findings suggest that shared values, mission alignment, and a sense of meaning embedded within faith-based environments contribute positively to educators' professional well-being. For Christian schools, these findings underscore how shared belief systems and spiritual culture may strengthen teachers' commitment to remain despite external challenges.

## **Retention in Christian Schools**

Research focused specifically on Christian and Catholic school contexts further illustrates how faith, relationships, and organizational structures interact to influence retention. Meyer (2021) found that teachers in Christian schools frequently cited calling, spiritual community, and mission alignment as central reasons for remaining in their positions. However, participants also noted that sustained commitment was influenced by leadership practices, workload expectations, and perceived institutional care.

Similarly, Schwartz (2021) found that mentoring relationships and job embeddedness were significant predictors of teachers' intentions to remain in Catholic schools. These findings suggest that faith-based motivation alone is insufficient to sustain long-term retention without intentional relational and organizational support. Together, these studies reinforce the importance of examining retention in Christian schools through a holistic lens that includes faith, community, and structural conditions.

Christian schools represent a distinct educational space that is shaped by shared beliefs, a mission-centered culture, and relationally focused communities. These characteristics can serve as powerful retention factors; however, they may also introduce unique pressures. Regualos (2025), in a multiple case study of Christian school teachers, identified calling, spiritual community, and supportive leadership as primary reasons educators chose to remain in their positions. Participants expressed appreciation for environments that emphasized relationships, shared values, and meaningful engagement with students and families. Many teachers reported that their sense of ministry outweighed concerns related to compensation or limited resources.

At the same time, Regualos (2025) identified factors contributing to teacher attrition, including heavy workloads, burnout, inconsistent administrative support, and financial strain. While mission alignment and faith-based motivation can sustain teachers in the short term, long-term retention often requires structural and organizational support. These findings suggest that Christian schools must attend to teachers' professional, emotional, and spiritual needs in order to reduce turnover and maintain stability.

Although teacher retention is widely studied in public education, research focused on Protestant Christian schools remains comparatively limited, and available evidence suggests these schools operate within distinctive cultural and mission-driven contexts that shape staffing decisions and teacher experiences (Johnson et Al., 2024). Recent work within Christian school settings also highlights the role of mission alignment, community, and calling as prominent considerations in why teachers stay, while also underscoring that structural factors still matter for long-term stability (Regualos, 2025).

### **Summary**

Across the literature, several consistent patterns emerge. Teacher shortages remain a national concern; however, retention continues to be a primary driver of instability within schools. Teacher self-efficacy plays a critical role in supporting persistence, yet for Christian educators, self-efficacy is often strengthened by faith, community, and a sense of calling (Floyd, 2023; Roberts, 2022). Research indicates that teachers in Christian schools draw upon both professional and spiritual resources to remain committed to their work (Floyd, 2023; Yoder et al., 2024). At the same time, faith alone cannot offset challenges related to workload, compensation, and leadership support (Regualos, 2025). Together, these findings reinforce the need to examine teacher

retention in Christian schools through frameworks that honor both professional supports and faith-based influences.

### **Purpose of the Study and Research Questions**

Despite research highlighting the importance of self-efficacy and job satisfaction in teacher retention, there is a lack of understanding about how faith functions as a sustaining factor for teachers in Christian schools (Birmingham, 2025). Without a nuanced understanding of how personal beliefs intersect with professional practice, Christian schools risk overlooking critical strategies that could enhance teacher persistence. The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study is to explore how PK–12 Christian educators describe the role of faith in their professional experiences, particularly as it relates to self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and retention. Through in-depth, semi-structured interviews, this study seeks to describe the perceptions of Christian educators across different career stages, thereby uncovering patterns and themes that illuminate the influence of faith on teacher motivation and persistence.

### **Research Questions**

This study is guided by the following research questions:

RQ 1: How do Christian school teachers describe the role of faith in their self-efficacy as teachers?

RQ 2: How do Christian school teachers conceptualize the role of faith in their job satisfaction as teachers?

RQ 3: How do Christian school teachers appraise the role of faith in their decision to stay?

### **Advancing Scientific Knowledge and Significance**

This study addresses a gap in the literature by examining the underexplored relationship between faith and teacher retention in Christian schools. While teacher self-efficacy and job satisfaction are well-established predictors of retention, the role of faith as a contributing factor remains largely unexamined. By integrating Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory and Fowler's Stages of Faith Development, this research contributes to a deeper theoretical understanding of how spirituality influences teacher persistence.

Practically, findings from this study may help Christian school leaders design support systems that strengthen both professional capacity and spiritual well-being. Results may inform teacher preparation programs, professional development, and mentoring models that recognize the holistic needs of Christian educators. The study also contributes to the broader scholarly conversation on faith-based education, motivation, resilience, and retention within unique institutional contexts.

### **Methodology**

This study employed a qualitative descriptive methodology to explore Christian educators' lived experiences and to examine how personal faith influences teacher self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and retention. A qualitative approach was intentionally selected because it allows researchers to explore meaning-making, identity, and contextual nuance, which are dimensions that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative methods alone (Sarfo et al., 2021). Qualitative descriptive designs are particularly appropriate when the goal is to understand how participants interpret and describe their

experiences in their own words, without imposing highly abstracted theoretical interpretations (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Understanding how faith shapes both personal and professional identities requires methods capable of capturing complex, deeply personal experiences, especially within faith-based educational contexts. Following institutional review board approval and site authorization from participating schools, participants were recruited from PK–12 Christian schools in the southwestern United States using purposive sampling to ensure variation in teaching experience, grade levels, and school contexts. The target population included approximately 200 teachers, with a smaller, focused sample selected to allow for rich, in-depth data and thematic saturation (Sarfo et al., 2021). Data were collected through a demographic questionnaire and semi-structured individual interviews, which were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and reviewed for accuracy prior to analysis. This qualitative descriptive approach provided the depth necessary to examine how Christian educators interpret faith, calling, and persistence within their professional roles.

### **Semi-structured Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews lasting approximately 60 minutes were conducted with 15 Christian school teachers representing diverse career stages and years of experience in teaching. The interview protocol (Appendix C) guided each of the interviews and included questions related to each of the research questions as well as theoretical frameworks of self-efficacy and Fowler's Stages of Faith Development. The interview questions were also field tested with three Christian educators to ensure the interviews were conversational in nature and aligned to the research questions. The interviews took place over Zoom with most teachers located in their classrooms before or after school,

with the interviews lasting between 14 and 32 minutes. Each interview was recorded via Zoom as the primary device and the researcher's phone as a secondary device. The interviews were transcribed with identifying information removed and then sent to the participant to check for accuracy.

### **Demographic Questionnaire**

The researcher designed a demographic questionnaire to gather information related to the experience and education of each of the participants. This information was used to ensure that a wide range of participants were interviewed for this study.

Demographic information collected included: age, highest degree held, years of teaching experience, and subject areas and grade levels taught.

### **Data Collection**

For the study, site authorization was received for five Christian schools, with about 100 teachers in total. Upon receiving IRB approval (Appendix A), the researcher contact each of the schools with site authorization to receive a list of names and emails of teachers at their sites. The teachers were emailed the recruitment email sharing information about the study, qualifications to participate, and a link to the informed consent and demographic questionnaire (Appendix B). Of the 100 teachers emailed, 15 responded and agreed to be interviewed (Appendix D).

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis was focused on identifying patterns in how Christian teachers describe the role of faith in their professional lives. Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim. The researcher read the transcripts multiple times to gain familiarity with the data, followed by systematic coding and theme development.

Demographic data gathered from the questionnaire will be summarized using descriptive statistics (e.g., frequencies, percentages, and ranges) to provide an overview of participant characteristics. These descriptive findings will help contextualize the qualitative themes.

### **Thematic Analysis**

Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring patterns and shared meanings across participant narratives. This analytic approach supported a systematic examination of how Christian educators described the role of faith in relation to teacher self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and decisions to remain in the profession. Thematic analysis is well suited for qualitative descriptive research, as it allows for the identification and interpretation of patterned meaning within participants' experiences while remaining flexible, inductive, and closely grounded in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In alignment with contemporary guidance, this study adopted a reflexive thematic analysis approach, recognizing that meaning is actively constructed through the researcher's engagement with the data rather than discovered as an objective truth (Braun & Clarke, 2023).

Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach: familiarization with the data, initial coding, generating categories, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. The data set consisted of interview transcripts from 15 PK–12 Christian school educators, representing approximately 300 double spaced pages of transcribed data. All interviews were transcribed verbatim and reviewed by the researcher to ensure accuracy prior to analysis.

This initial review also supported early immersion in the data and provided an opportunity to note preliminary impressions and recurring ideas.

The first analytic phase involved familiarization, during which transcripts were read multiple times in full. This process supported deep engagement with participants' language, tone, and meaning-making related to faith, teaching, and persistence. Notes and analytic memos were recorded during this phase to document initial reflections, emerging questions, and potential areas of significance. Consistent with reflexive thematic analysis, familiarization was not treated as a single step but continued throughout the analytic process as themes evolved (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Byrne, 2022).

Following familiarization, initial coding was conducted inductively by generating open codes that represented meaningful units of text across the entire data set. Coding was data-driven and remained closely aligned with participants' words in order to preserve meaning and avoid premature abstraction. Codes captured ideas related to personal and communal faith practices, instructional confidence, emotional regulation, relational experiences, burnout and resilience, and motivations for remaining in the profession. This phase resulted in approximately 48 initial codes. Coding was iterative, with earlier transcripts revisited as new insights emerged, allowing codes to be refined and expanded over time (Braun & Clarke, 2023).

In the next phase, codes were reviewed and organized into broader analytic categories aligned with the research questions. Codes were clustered based on conceptual similarity and relationships among ideas, resulting in categories such as faith as a source of resilience, faith and instructional confidence, faith-informed classroom practices, and faith-based relational support. Throughout this phase, analytic decisions were

documented through memo writing, supporting transparency and reflexivity. Care was taken to ensure that categories remained grounded in the data and that potentially meaningful codes were not prematurely collapsed or excluded (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Byrne, 2022).

Categories were then refined into overarching themes that captured the essence of participants' shared experiences. Themes were reviewed iteratively to assess internal coherence, distinctiveness, and sufficient evidentiary support across multiple participants. This involved returning to the full data set to confirm that themes reflected patterned meaning rather than isolated instances. Themes were refined, collapsed, or expanded as needed, resulting in six final themes that represented the central ways faith influenced participants' professional experiences. In keeping with Braun and Clarke's (2023) guidance, themes were developed as analytic interpretations that moved beyond surface-level description while remaining firmly anchored in participant data.

To support rigor, consistency, and transparency, a formal codebook were developed (Appendix H). The codebook included code names, definitions, inclusion and exclusion criteria, decision rules, and representative excerpts drawn directly from participant transcripts. Maintaining a structured code system, alongside analytic memos, provided a clear audit trail of analytic decisions and strengthened the trustworthiness of the findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Byrne, 2022).

### **Descriptive Statistics**

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize participant characteristics collected through the demographic questionnaire. These data provided an overview of the sample and established context for interpreting the qualitative findings. Participant characteristics

summarized through descriptive statistics included years of teaching experience, grade levels taught, and school level (elementary, middle, or high school).

The demographic data were analyzed using basic descriptive measures, such as frequencies and ranges, to illustrate variation across participants. These findings were presented in both narrative and tabular formats (e.g., participant characteristics by site, distribution of teaching experience) to support transparency and to allow readers to better understand the composition of the sample.

**Table 1**

*All Demographic Data*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Age Range</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Level of Education</b>	<b>Years Teaching</b>	<b>Teaching Level</b>
1	25-34	Female	Bachelor's Degree	4	Elementary School
2	55-64	Male	Master's Degree	40	High School
3	25-34	Male	Bachelor's Degree	4	Middle School
4	45-54	Female	Bachelor's Degree	27	High School
5	35-44	Female	Bachelor's Degree	20	Elementary School
6	18-24	Female	Bachelor's Degree	2	Elementary School
7	25-34	Female	Master's Degree	3	Elementary School
8	35-44	Female	Master's Degree	11	High School
9	25-34	Female	Bachelor's Degree	4	Elementary School
10	25-34	Female	Master's Degree	7	High School
11	35-44	Female	Master's Degree	5	Preschool
12	35-44	Female	Master's Degree	6	Preschool
13	35-44	Female	Master's Degree	8	Middle School

<b>14</b>	25-34	Female	Master's Degree	8	High School
<b>15</b>	25-34	Female	Bachelor's Degree	5	Elementary School

**Table 2**

*Age Range*

<b>Age Range</b>	
18-24	1
25-34	7
35-44	5
45-54	1
55-64	1

Table 2 demonstrates the age range of participants. Participants represented a range of age groups, with the majority falling between 25–34 years (n = 7) and 35–44 years (n = 5). Smaller numbers of participants were represented in the 18–24, 45–54, and 55–64 age ranges (n = 1 each). This distribution reflects a sample composed primarily of early- to mid-career educators.

**Table 3**

*Participant Gender*

<b>Gender</b>	
Female	13
Male	2

Table 3 demonstrates the gender of participants. The majority of participants identified as female (n = 13), with two participants identifying as male (n = 2). This gender distribution is consistent with national trends in the teaching profession and reflects the demographic composition of many PK–12 educational settings.

**Table 4**

*Level of Education*

<b>Level of Education</b>	
Bachelor' Degree	7
Master's Degree	8

Table 4 represents the level of education held by each participant. Participants held either a bachelor's degree (n = 7) or a master's degree (n = 8). The nearly even distribution indicates representation from educators at varying levels of formal preparation, providing insight into experiences across different stages of professional development.

**Table 5**

*Years of Teaching Experience*

<b>Years of Teaching</b>	
Minimum	2
Maximum	40
Median	6
Mean	10.26667

Table 5 illustrates the years of teaching for participants. Participants' years of teaching experience ranged from 2 to 40 years, with a median of 6 years. While the mean teaching experience was 10.27 years, the wide range reflects variation across career stages, including both early-career and veteran educators.

**Table 6**

*Participant Teaching Level*

<b>Teaching Level</b>	
Preschool	2
Elementary School	6

Middle School	2
High School	5

Table 6 represents the teaching levels of participants. Participants taught across a range of grade levels, including preschool (n = 2), elementary school (n = 6), middle school (n = 2), and high school (n = 5). This distribution illustrates representation across PK–12 settings and supports the examination of teacher experiences across multiple instructional contexts.

While the purpose of these descriptive statistics was not to generalize findings, they served to situate the qualitative themes within the broader context of participants' professional backgrounds and teaching environments. This contextual information strengthened the interpretation of findings by illustrating how participant experiences varied across settings and career stages.

## **Results**

Analysis of the interview data revealed six interrelated themes that illuminate how personal faith influences teacher self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and retention within Christian school contexts. These themes emerged through an iterative process of coding and thematic refinement and reflect consistent patterns across participants' lived experiences. Collectively, the findings indicate that faith functioned not as an outside influence, but as a central force shaping professional identity, instructional practice, relational engagement, and decisions to remain in the profession.

### **Theme 1: Faith as Identity and Calling**

Participants consistently described faith as foundational to both their personal identity and their professional role as educators. Teaching was not framed just as a job,

but as a spiritual vocation deeply intertwined with participants' sense of self. One participant shared, "Faith is honestly the foundation for everything for me," emphasizing that faith was not compartmentalized from teaching but inseparable from it (Participant 002). Similarly, another explained, "It's very much, like, the driving force for me," identifying faith as the motivating center of their professional life (Participant 003).

Several participants explicitly connected their daily work to a sense of divine calling. Participant 007 stated, "I start my days knowing that I'm where I need to be because God has called me to be here," reflecting a sense of assurance that sustained commitment even during difficult seasons. This perception of calling appeared to strengthen self-efficacy by reframing challenges as purposeful rather than discouraging. As Participant 013 explained, "God equips those He calls... my faith reminds me that God equips those He calls," illustrating how confidence was grounded not solely in skill or experience, but in spiritual assurance.

Many participants also described teaching as ministry. "I see my teaching as my ministry," shared Participant 010, reinforcing the understanding that professional responsibilities were interpreted through a theological lens. This integration of faith and professional identity provided a durable foundation for meaning, confidence, and persistence.

## **Theme 2: Spiritual Practices as Pedagogy and Coping Mechanisms**

Personal and communal spiritual practices emerged as essential supports for instructional confidence and emotional regulation. Participants described prayer, Scripture reading, journaling, and Sabbath rest as daily supports that shaped how they approached teaching and managed stress. One teacher shared, "Prayer is honestly huge

for me. I pray on my way to school every morning... I also keep Scripture verses on sticky notes on my desk” (Participant 002). These practices were reminders of purpose and presence throughout the school day.

Others described prayer as woven seamlessly into daily routines. Participant 005 explained, “Prayer is woven into almost every part of my routine... in the mornings I pray over the room... during the day I whisper little prayers.” This consistent reliance on prayer supported emotional regulation and sustained patience during challenging moments.

Communal spiritual practices further reinforced participants’ sense of belonging and support. Staff devotions and shared prayer were frequently cited as meaningful. “We start every staff meeting with prayer, and teachers regularly pray for one another,” noted Participant 010. Sabbath rest also emerged as a critical boundary-setting practice, with Participant 010 reflecting, “I practice Sabbath every weekend... I’m a much better teacher when I’m spiritually rested.” Together, these spiritual practices supported resilience, reduced burnout, and strengthened participants’ capacity to remain present and effective in their roles.

### **Theme 3: Compassionate Classroom Management, Repair, and Law/Gospel**

#### **Discipline**

Participants described faith as shaping how they interpreted and responded to student behavior. Rather than viewing misbehavior as defiance, teachers framed it as communication. “My faith helps me see behavior as communication, not defiance,” shared Participant 002. This perspective encouraged patience and compassion, particularly during moments of disruption or frustration.

Several participants described intentionally slowing their responses and leading with grace. Participant 004 reflected, “My faith helps me slow down and lead with compassion... ‘They’re not giving me a hard time. They’re having a hard time.’” This mindset supported emotional regulation and reduced reactive disciplinary responses.

Discipline was frequently described through a law-and-gospel framework that balanced accountability with forgiveness. Participant 009 explained, “Forgiveness is something God has done for us... we still need to be accountable... we study the commandments.” Participants emphasized relational repair following discipline. “I reconnect right after behavior is addressed so the child knows we’re okay... a tough moment doesn’t define them,” shared Participant 005.

Faith also guided communication and relationship repair. Participant 010 referenced Scripture directly, stating, “To be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry... faith helps me repair relationships.” These faith-informed approaches contributed to classroom stability and reinforced teachers’ confidence in managing complex emotional and behavioral situations.

#### **Theme 4: Community Relationships as Drivers of Job Satisfaction and Retention**

Strong relationships with colleagues, students, and families emerged as a significant source of job satisfaction and a key factor influencing retention. Participants described intentionally cultivated spiritual communities among staff. “We do prayer groups on Friday mornings... devotions every morning. It’s a very cool staff,” shared Participant 003. Participant 006 similarly described “starting the day in staff devotions... coworkers who will pray with me after a difficult day.”

Structured relational practices reinforced connection and belonging. Participant 014 noted, “We have devotions every morning... and on Fridays we have prayer groups which rotate every quarter.” Relationships extended beyond staff to students and families through faith-centered rituals. Participant 009 described writing prayer postcards to students, stating, “Every first Monday we have prayer cards... we write a postcard to students and mail it to them.”

Participants emphasized that unity among staff directly influenced retention. “Build as many teams and bonds within the staff as you can... when teachers are united, they’re more likely to stay,” explained Participant 008. These relational networks functioned as emotional and spiritual support systems that sustained commitment to the school community.

### **Theme 5: Purpose, Hope, and Resilience Sustain Retention**

Faith emerged as a primary source of resilience during periods of exhaustion, discouragement, and burnout. Several participants explicitly stated that faith was the primary reason they remained in the profession. “My faith is honestly the number one reason I’m still here... it gives me resilience,” shared Participant 002.

Participants described moments of discernment in which faith guided decisions to stay. Participant 004 reflected, “I felt God gently reminded me not to make big decisions out of exhaustion... little confirmations—notes from students—‘You’re needed here.’” These moments reinforced purpose and countered thoughts of leaving.

Others framed retention as stewardship of a calling. Participant 001 shared, “I would not leave this school... because if I did, I was taking away a gift that God had given them.” Participant 010 similarly noted, “My faith is the main reason I’ve stayed...

without a deeper calling, I don't think I'd still be in the profession." Faith reframed hardship as meaningful persistence rather than a signal to exit.

### **Theme 6: Mission Alignment and Whole-Child Formation**

Mission alignment and the freedom to integrate faith openly were central to participants' job satisfaction and commitment. Teachers described schools where spiritual formation was prioritized alongside academic instruction. "Our number one goal is to see as many people in heaven as possible," stated Participant 003. Participant 009 echoed this mission-driven focus, saying, "Make Heaven Crowded... our mission is to equip these kids... faith is what matters."

Participants emphasized whole-child development, particularly in early grades. "Pre-K lays the foundation... I feel called to help make that foundation strong," shared Participant 005. Others highlighted the freedom to teach authentically. "Teaching in a Christian school allows me to teach with my whole heart... pray with students... spiritual growth is valued," explained Participant 010.

Faith integration extended into content areas as well. Participant 013 described teaching science as an act of worship, stating, "I see science as a way to explore God's creation... I pray over my lessons to inspire curiosity and model humility." This integration reinforced instructional confidence, professional fulfillment, and alignment with school mission.

### **Discussion**

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore how personal faith influences teacher self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and retention among PK–12 Christian school educators. Analysis of participant interviews revealed that faith

functioned as a central organizing force in teachers' professional lives, shaping identity, instructional confidence, relational practices, resilience, and long-term commitment to the profession. The findings extend existing research on teacher self-efficacy and retention by demonstrating that, within Christian school contexts, efficacy beliefs are often inseparable from spiritual identity, vocational calling, and communal faith practices.

### **Faith as a Foundational Source of Teacher Self-Efficacy**

Participants' descriptions of faith as identity and calling closely align with Bandura's (1999) conceptualization of self-efficacy as a belief system influencing motivation, persistence, and emotional regulation. However, the findings suggest that for Christian educators, self-efficacy is not grounded solely in mastery experiences or professional competence. Instead, confidence is frequently rooted in theological beliefs related to calling, divine equipping, and purpose. Teachers consistently described a sense of assurance that they were called to their work and therefore capable of meeting its demands, even when external conditions were challenging.

This faith-based confidence reflects Roberts' (2022) concept of theological self-efficacy, which extends Bandura's framework to include spiritual sources of agency. Participants' statements emphasizing divine equipping illustrate how efficacy beliefs are reframed through faith, allowing teachers to persist despite uncertainty, self-doubt, or limited resources. These findings support prior research indicating that Christian educators often interpret competence through both professional and spiritual lenses (Floyd, 2023; Yoder et al., 2024).

Fowler's Stages of Faith Development further illuminate how participants' mature faith supported the integration of belief and professional identity. Many educators

demonstrated a reflective, internalized faith that guided decision-making and sustained commitment, consistent with later-stage faith development characterized by coherence, purpose, and vocation. This integration appeared to strengthen teachers' sense of agency and resilience across career stages.

### **Spiritual Practices as Mechanisms for Coping and Emotional Regulation**

Findings related to personal and communal spiritual practices illustrate how faith was enacted daily as a coping mechanism and pedagogical support. Prayer, Scripture reading, Sabbath rest, and communal devotions functioned as stabilizing routines that supported stress management, emotional regulation, and sustained presence with students. These practices align with Bandura's identification of physiological and emotional states as key contributors to self-efficacy. Teachers who described intentional spiritual rhythms also reported greater calm, patience, and confidence when navigating classroom challenges.

The emphasis on communal practices, such as staff devotions, prayer groups, and collective worship, highlights the role of environmental influences in shaping efficacy beliefs. Social persuasion, another of Bandura's sources of self-efficacy, was evident in participants' experiences of encouragement, prayer, and affirmation from colleagues and administrators.

From a faith development perspective, these practices reflect the integration of belief into daily life and professional functioning. Teachers' reliance on spiritual disciplines suggests that faith operated not merely as a belief system, but as an active and sustaining resource.

### **Compassionate Classroom Management and Relational Repair**

Participants consistently described faith as shaping how they interpreted student behavior and approached discipline. Rather than viewing misbehavior as defiance, teachers framed behavior as communication, leading to patient, grace-filled responses and intentional relational repair. This perspective aligns with Bandura's assertion that efficacy beliefs influence how individuals interpret challenges—as either threats or manageable situations.

Faith-informed discipline practices also reflected Fowler's framework, particularly in how participants described forgiveness, accountability, and restoration as interconnected rather than opposing concepts. Teachers emphasized repairing relationships following discipline, modeling grace while maintaining expectations. These findings are consistent with prior research linking faith to relational orientation and classroom climate (Sarfo et al., 2021).

The findings extend existing literature by demonstrating how faith directly informs classroom management strategies, contributing to both teacher confidence and emotional sustainability. Teachers who felt equipped to respond compassionately also reported greater job satisfaction and reduced emotional exhaustion.

### **Community Relationships as a Lever for Job Satisfaction and Retention**

One of the most salient findings of this study was the central role of relationships in sustaining job satisfaction and retention. Participants described deep relational ties with colleagues, students, parents, and administrators, often facilitated through shared faith practices. These relationships functioned as both emotional support systems and spiritual partnerships, reinforcing teachers' sense of belonging and purpose.

These findings align with existing research indicating that positive school climate and relational trust are critical predictors of retention (Collie et al., 2012). This study extends that literature by illustrating how faith-based relationships, particularly prayer partnerships and spiritual mentorship, function as distinctive retention mechanisms in Christian school contexts. Teachers who felt spiritually supported by leadership and peers were more likely to remain, even amid heavy workloads or limited compensation.

Bandura's concept of social persuasion is particularly relevant, as encouragement, prayer, and affirmation reinforced teachers' beliefs in their capacity to continue. These relational dynamics suggest that retention in Christian schools is not solely an individual decision, but a communal outcome shaped by shared mission and mutual care.

### **Purpose, Hope, and Faith-Driven Retention Decisions**

Participants consistently identified faith as a primary reason for remaining in the profession. Faith reframed challenges, moderated impulsive exit decisions, and sustained hope during periods of burnout. Teachers described moments of discernment in which faith guided them to stay, often through perceived confirmations such as student notes, prayer, or spiritual conviction.

These findings support prior research emphasizing calling and purpose as central to persistence among Christian educators (Regualos, 2025). They also align with Fowler's theory, as participants demonstrated the ability to hold tension between difficulty and commitment without disengagement. Rather than idealizing teaching, educators acknowledged exhaustion while remaining anchored in meaning and hope. Importantly, the findings suggest that faith does not eliminate burnout but provides a framework for enduring it. This distinction reinforces existing literature cautioning

against reliance on spiritual motivation alone without attention to structural supports (Regualos, 2025). Faith sustained teachers emotionally, but participants also emphasized the importance of supportive leadership and healthy boundaries.

### **Mission Alignment and Whole-Child Formation**

Mission alignment emerged as a critical factor influencing job satisfaction and retention. Participants valued the freedom to integrate faith openly and to teach the whole child, including spiritual and character formation. Teachers described environments in which academic instruction and spiritual development were viewed as complementary rather than competing priorities.

This alignment strengthened both self-efficacy and job satisfaction by allowing teachers to teach authentically. The findings support research indicating that organizational mission alignment enhances retention (Schwartz, 2021) and extend it by demonstrating how mission clarity supports teachers' sense of integrity and coherence. Participants' descriptions of faith integration across subject areas further illustrate how belief shaped pedagogy and professional fulfillment. This holistic approach reinforces Fowler's emphasis on integrated faith and Bandura's focus on agency, suggesting that when educators are able to teach in alignment with their values, commitment deepens.

Taken together, the findings suggest that faith influences teacher self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and retention through interconnected pathways of identity, practice, relationships, and purpose. Faith served as a lens through which teachers interpreted challenges, regulated emotions, cultivated relationships, and made long-term career decisions. By integrating Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory and Fowler's Stages of Faith Development, this study offers a more holistic understanding of teacher persistence

in Christian schools, highlighting both the professional and spiritual dimensions of the teaching experience.

### **Limitations**

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of this study. First, the study relied on self-reported data from a relatively small, purposive sample of PK–12 Christian school educators. While this approach allowed for in-depth exploration of participants' lived experiences, the findings may not be generalizable to all Christian school contexts, particularly given variation in denominational affiliation, school size, geographic region, and organizational culture. The sample represents specific school communities and faith traditions, which may shape how faith, self-efficacy, and retention are experienced and articulated.

Second, data were collected through semi-structured interviews and a focus group conducted via Zoom. Although virtual interviews increased accessibility and allowed participants to engage from their own contexts, the online format may have influenced the depth or nature of responses for some participants. Nonverbal cues and informal relational dynamics may be less fully captured in virtual settings. Additionally, participants' reflections were retrospective and may have been influenced by personal interpretation or social desirability.

Finally, while the study intentionally focused on faith as a central construct, other contextual factors, such as compensation, workload, and organizational policies, were not examined in isolation. As a result, the findings should be understood as capturing how faith interacts with, rather than replaces, structural and organizational influences on teacher retention.

## **Implications**

### **Theoretical Implications**

The findings of this study contribute to theoretical understandings of teacher self-efficacy, faith development, and retention by illustrating how efficacy beliefs among Christian educators are often grounded in both professional competence and spiritual identity. While Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory provides a foundational framework for understanding agency, motivation, and persistence, the findings suggest that for Christian educators, self-efficacy is frequently informed by theological beliefs related to calling, purpose, and divine equipping. This supports and extends Roberts' (2022) conceptualization of theological self-efficacy by offering empirical insight into how faith functions as a source of confidence and resilience in educational practice.

Additionally, the integration of Fowler's Stages of Faith Development provides a lens for understanding how mature, internalized faith supports coherence between belief and professional identity. Participants demonstrated faith development characterized by reflection, meaning-making, and vocational commitment, suggesting that later-stage faith may strengthen persistence and emotional regulation. Together, these frameworks offer a more holistic understanding of teacher motivation and retention in faith-based contexts.

### **Practical Implications**

For Christian school leaders and administrators, the findings highlight the importance of attending to both professional and spiritual dimensions of teacher support. Participants consistently described faith, community, and mission alignment as central to their job satisfaction and decisions to remain in the profession. School leaders may

consider designing professional development, mentoring, and wellness initiatives that intentionally recognize and support the role of faith in educators' professional lives.

The findings also highlight the value of cultivating relationally rich school cultures. Practices such as staff devotions, prayer partnerships, and faith-integrated mentoring emerged as meaningful supports that reinforced teachers' sense of belonging and efficacy. Leaders may benefit from reflecting on how school structures, communication practices, and leadership behaviors affirm teachers' sense of calling while also promoting healthy boundaries, sustainability, and emotional well-being.

### **Future Research**

Future research could extend this study by including larger and more diverse samples of Christian school educators across a wider range of denominational traditions, geographic regions, and school types. Comparative studies examining differences and similarities between Christian and public school teachers may further illuminate the unique and shared factors influencing self-efficacy and retention. Mixed-methods designs incorporating quantitative measures of teacher self-efficacy, faith integration, and job satisfaction could strengthen the empirical base and allow for broader generalization.

Longitudinal research would be particularly valuable in examining how the role of faith in teacher self-efficacy and retention evolves over time. Exploring how faith functions at different career stages or during periods of transition, burnout, or leadership change may provide deeper insight into the sustainability of faith-based motivation in teaching.

### **Implications for Practice**

Practitioners may consider implementing intentional structures that address the holistic needs of Christian educators. Faith-integrated mentoring programs, peer support groups, and opportunities for spiritual formation may help reinforce teachers' sense of purpose, resilience, and professional confidence. Schools might also examine how mission alignment is communicated and enacted across policies, curriculum, and daily practices to ensure consistency between stated values and lived experience.

Finally, while faith emerged as a powerful sustaining force, the findings reinforce the importance of pairing spiritual support with organizational care. Addressing workload, providing consistent leadership support, and fostering relational trust remain essential components of long-term retention. Attending to the whole teacher, spiritually, emotionally, and professionally, may help Christian schools create environments where educators are both called and supported to remain.

### **Conclusion**

This study explored how personal faith influences teacher self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and retention among PK–12 Christian school educators. The findings indicate that faith functions as a central organizing force shaping professional identity, instructional confidence, relational practices, and long-term commitment to the profession. By integrating Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory and Fowler's Stages of Faith Development, this study offers a more holistic understanding of teacher persistence in faith-based contexts, demonstrating that efficacy beliefs among Christian educators are often intertwined with vocational calling, spiritual practices, and communal support. While faith alone does not eliminate the structural challenges inherent in teaching, it provides a framework through which educators interpret challenges, regulate emotions,

and sustain purpose over time. These findings contribute to the growing body of literature on teacher retention by highlighting the unique ways faith, community, and mission alignment support the professional sustainability of Christian educators.

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## Appendix A.

### IRB Approval Letter



GRAND CANYON  
UNIVERSITY™

3300 West Camelback Road, Phoenix Arizona 85017 602.639.7500 Toll Free  
800.800.9776 www.gcu.edu

DATE: October 01, 2025  
TO: Alicia Kozimor  
FROM: Grand Canyon University Institutional Review Board  
STUDY TITLE: Influence of Personal Faith on Teacher Self-Efficacy and Retention in  
Christian Schools  
IRB REFERENCE #: IRB-2025-8029  
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project  
ACTION: APPROVED  
APPROVAL DATE: October 01, 2025  
REVIEW CATEGORY: Exempt  
Category 2  
CLASSIFICATION:

Thank you for submitting your study materials.

Grand Canyon University Institutional Review Board has determined this project is EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations. You now have GCU IRB approval to collect data.

If you make any changes to your approved IRB application, you need to return to the IRB with a modification for that change PRIOR to implementation

Researchers must use the IRB stamped approved recruitment script(s) and informed consent(s) that are included in your published IRB documents.

We will put a copy of this correspondence on file in our office.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at [irb@gsu.edu](mailto:irb@gsu.edu) or 602-639-7804.  
Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Melissa A. Singer Pressman".

**Dr. Melissa A. Singer Pressman**  
**Director, Institutional Review Board**  
**College of Doctoral Studies**

**Appendix B.**  
**Informed Consent**

Link: Link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/XWTVQBF>

## Appendix C.

### Individual Interview Protocol and Guide

The following interview protocol and guide provides the guidelines for conducting the semi-structured, open-ended, conversational interview with the participants in this study. The questions in this protocol are aligned to the research questions. The standard interview questions will be asked of all participants, while the follow-up questions will be used to elicit a deeper response from participants as needed. The structure of the questions have been planned to create a comfortable environment and support a conversational element to the interview.

**Step one.** Verify that the participant has signed the consent form.

**Step two.** Read the interview introduction aloud to the participant.

**Step three.** Answer any participant questions for clarity.

**Step three.** Ask all of the participants the standard interview questions. The follow-up questions may be asked of participants when more depth and clarity of participant responses is needed.

#### Introduction

Thank you very much for taking the time to talk to me today. I have set this Zoom meeting to record for data collection purposes. I will be talking to you today about your experiences with self-efficacy and faith as an educator. I will not be sharing your responses with your school site, peers, or administrators. This interview aims to explore your experiences as a teacher in a Christian school, focusing on how your faith influences your confidence in teaching, your job satisfaction, and your decision to remain in the profession.

Now, I will tell you what to expect from today's interview. This interview will last approximately 60 minutes. I will be taking notes and recording this interview using Zoom as a primary device and my phone as a secondary device. The audio recordings will only be used for data collection and analysis. I will be the only person with access to these audio recordings. They will be password protected and stored on my personal computer. Your informed consent form will also be filed in a locked cabinet that only I have access to. As a reminder, your participation in this study is voluntary and you may stop the interview at any time. You may also skip any questions at any time. I have received permission from the university to conduct this interview and have also completed CITI training modules on the ethical consideration for interviews. Do you have any questions before we begin the interview?

#### Opening Question:

1. How would you describe the role of faith in your life and teaching profession?

**Self-Efficacy:**

2. How does your faith influence your confidence in teaching?
  - Can you provide an example of a time when your faith helped you overcome a challenge in the classroom?
  - Are there specific aspects of teaching where your faith plays a significant role?
3. What role do you believe prayer, scripture, or spiritual practices have in shaping your teaching abilities?
4. How has your faith impacted your ability to handle challenging situations or student behavior in the classroom?

**Job Satisfaction:**

5. In what ways does your faith contribute to your sense of purpose and fulfillment as a teacher?
  - Can you describe a moment where your faith made your teaching experience particularly rewarding?
6. How do you think your faith influences your relationships with students, colleagues, or parents?
  - How do these relationships affect your overall job satisfaction?
7. Are there times when your faith has been challenged in the context of your teaching role?
  - If so, how did you navigate these challenges?

**Retention:**

8. How does your faith impact your decision to stay in the teaching profession?
  - Have there been moments when your faith played a key role in your choice to continue teaching?
9. What role does the mission or faith-based environment of your school play in your decision to remain there?

10. What support systems, if any, provided by your school help reinforce your faith and commitment to teaching?

**Closing Questions:**

11. Are there other ways your faith has influenced your professional experience that we haven't discussed?
12. What advice would you give to a teacher entering a faith-based school about integrating faith into their professional life?

**Conclusion:**

Thank you! This concludes your interview. I will transcribe this interview and send it to you. Please look it over and respond to my email with your comments on the accuracy of the transcript. If I do not receive it back in 48 hours, then I will assume the transcript is accurate as it was written and send to you. Do you have any questions?

## **Appendix D.**

### **Recruiting Email**

Hello,

My name is Alicia Kozimor and I am conducting research on Christian educator self-efficacy, faith, and retention at Christian schools. I am email to see if you might be interested in participating in my study.

I am recruiting individuals that meet these criteria:

- 18 years or older
- Working full time as a teacher in a PK-12 Christian school setting
- Willing to share demographic information such as years of teaching experience and education level
- Willing to participate in an individual interview about your self-efficacy and faith in a 60-minute recorded Zoom interview

You cannot be in this study if you are:

- Not 18 years or older
- Not working full time as a teacher in a PK-12 Christian school setting
- Not willing to share demographic information such as years of teaching experience and education level
- Not willing to participate in an individual interview about your self-efficacy and faith in a 60-minute recorded Zoom interview

The activities for this research project will include:

- Demographic Questionnaire: about 10 minutes answering demographic questions such as years of teaching experience.

- 1:1 Interview: about 60 minutes via Zoom that will be audio recorded.
- Member Checking Transcripts: About 30 minutes of personal time to check accuracy of your responses.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you can opt-out at any time.

All data in this study will be protected by removing your name or any identifying information from the interview transcript and data. No names of identifiable information will be shared with anyone.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact me through email ([alicia.kozimor2@gcu.edu](mailto:alicia.kozimor2@gcu.edu)) or by phone (602-762-8500).

Thank you!

Alicia Kozimor



## Appendix E.

### Codebook

<b>RQ 1: How do Christian school teachers describe the role of faith in their self-efficacy as teachers?</b>				
<b>Initial Codes</b>	<b>Broad Themes</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Examples</b>
faith as foundation, calling, identity, vocation, purpose, authenticity, modeling Christ	Faith Identity, Calling, Authenticity	Faith as Identity and Calling	Participants described faith as inseparable from their identity as educators. Teaching was framed as a calling rather than employment, with confidence grounded in spiritual purpose and divine equipping. Faith was modeled through daily actions and relationships.	“Faith is honestly the foundation for everything for me.” (P002) “It’s very much the driving force for me.” (P003) “I start my days knowing that I’m where I need to be because God has called me to be here.” (P007) “I see my teaching as my ministry.” (P010)
prayer, Scripture, journaling, Sabbath, reflection, devotions, prayer groups, staff prayer, chapel	Personal Practices, Communal Practices	Spiritual Practices as Pedagogy and Coping Mechanisms	Participants described personal and communal spiritual practices as essential routines that supported emotional regulation, instructional confidence, and coping with stress.	“Prayer is honestly huge for me. I pray on my way to school every morning.” (P002) “We start every staff meeting with prayer, and teachers regularly pray for one another.” (P010) “I

			These practices functioned as daily anchors within their teaching roles.	practice Sabbath every weekend... I'm a much better teacher when I'm spiritually rested." (P010)
behavior as communication, compassion, patience, grace, forgiveness, accountability, repair, law and gospel	Compassionate Management, Relational Repair	Compassionate Classroom Management, Repair, and Law/Gospel Discipline	Participants framed classroom management and discipline through a faith-informed lens emphasizing compassion, patience, accountability, forgiveness, and relational restoration rather than punitive responses.	"My faith helps me see behavior as communication, not defiance." (P002) "They're not giving me a hard time. They're having a hard time." (P004) "I reconnect right after behavior is addressed so the child knows we're okay." (P005)

**RQ 2: How do Christian school teachers conceptualize the role of faith in their job satisfaction as teachers?**

<b>Initial Codes</b>	<b>Broad Themes</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Examples</b>
colleagues, prayer partners, teamwork, mentoring, parents, trust, partnership, prayer rituals	Collegial Relationships, Family Relationships	Community Relationships as Drivers of Job Satisfaction and Retention	Participants identified faith-based relationships with colleagues, students, and families as central to job satisfaction and decisions to remain. Prayerful collaboration and relational trust created	"We do prayer groups on Friday mornings... it's a very cool staff." (P003) "Coworkers who will pray with me after a difficult day." (P006) "Every first Monday we have prayer cards... we write a postcard to students and

			strong support systems.	mail it to them.” (P009)
<b>RQ 3: How do Christian school teachers appraise the role of faith in their decision to stay?</b>				
<b>Initial Codes</b>	<b>Broad Themes</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Examples</b>
burnout, exhaustion, overwhelmed, hope, perseverance, stay, remain, confirmation	Resilience, Retention Decisions	Purpose, Hope, and Resilience Sustain Retention	Participants acknowledged burnout and fatigue but described faith as a source of hope and perseverance that sustained their commitment. Retention decisions were often framed as faith-driven discernment.	“My faith is honestly the number one reason I’m still here.” (P002) “My faith is the main reason I’ve stayed.” (P010) “I would not leave this school... because I felt God had placed me here.” (P001)
mission, faith integration, Christian school culture, whole child, character, confidence, perseverance	Mission Alignment, Whole-Child Formation	Mission Alignment and Whole-Child Formation	Participants emphasized the importance of mission alignment and freedom to integrate faith. Teaching was described as addressing the whole child, including spiritual and character formation, reinforcing satisfaction and commitment.	“Teaching in a Christian school allows me to teach with my whole heart.” (P010) “Pre-K lays the foundation... I feel called to help make that foundation strong.” (P005)