

Wheaton College
Billy Graham Center Rm. 255
Summer, 2006
Tues. 5/30 – Sat. 6/3
CFM 520

Instructors: Scottie May, PhD
Chris Boyatzis, PhD
Don Ratcliff, PhD
Office-Rm. 238 / Ext. # 5976
scottie.may@wheaton.edu

Research on the Spirituality of Children and Ministry Practices

Advance work required. This intensive course will consider various approaches to the research of children's spirituality and ministry practices. Children's spirituality, as identified by Rebecca Nye, is defined as "relational consciousness." Ministry practices refer to programs, materials, and approaches for children. Several approaches to researching these themes will be considered, most of them involving qualitative research methods. Effective outcomes cannot be assumed merely based on popularity or attractiveness of an approach, but ministry practice may be improved through careful study and subsequent refinement. Children's spirituality and ministry practice must be grounded in Scripture and also in characteristics and outcomes that result from careful study.

Course Objectives

This course will enable you to:

1. survey recent literature and theories related to children's spirituality.
2. describe distinctive aspects of researching children, emphasizing qualitative methodologies.
3. select perspectives and methodologies appropriate to a specific research plan to study some aspect of children's spirituality.
4. journal key insights that may be useful in future data collection and analysis, using required and optional readings, as well as in-class activities.
6. discuss and/or present questions, reflections, and critiques of the textbooks within the class setting.
7. summarize key insights resulting from readings, class discussions, and attempted applications using the data set in the form of a final paper.

Required Textbooks

Coles, R. (1990). *The spiritual life of children*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
Greene, S., and D. Hogan, (Eds.) (2005). *Researching children's experience: Approaches and methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Chapters 1, 4, 7, 8, 13, 14, and possibly others.
Reader for the course: a compilation of articles available from the campus bookstore. This will be mailed to registered students in early May.

Assignments

1. **Before the course begins**, read *The Spiritual Life of Children* and selected chapters in *Researching Children's Experience*.

•Keep a journal of your personal reactions as you read. Generate questions, reflections, potential applications, and/or reservations about each chapter. These may relate to methodologies, concepts, or theological implications.

- Record sections where ideas are unclear to you, as well as areas of study related to children's spirituality that appear to be in need of research. Share these ideas and questions during the Tuesday class session.
- Select a chapter of interest, and prepare to lead a discussion during the course about that material.

2. Examine the qualitative research outline and resources located at the following web address: don.ratcliffs.net/qual. Print out the five sections. These pages consist of a basic outline of qualitative research concepts, a common research framework that will inform much of this class.

4. If you have access to a video (a DVD is preferable) of children in a ministry setting, please bring that with you. (Obtain advance permission from the parents of the children featured in the video.)

5. **Final paper:** Distill from your personal journal created prior to and during class sessions those areas in need of study—topics and methods you are most likely to consider in your current or future research. Identify relevant issues. Describe in detail how you would implement what you consider to be the best method for studying one or more of these topics.

- Include a description of how your views of children's spirituality and ideas for researching children have changed as a result of your reading, class sessions, and reflections.
- Summarize other key issues and methods from your journal that you may find useful in your future plans for children's ministry. In what ways has the class influenced your views?
- Submit this paper (approx. 15 pp.) to the instructor by Microsoft Word email attachment or regular mail. **Due: June 30.**

Schedule

Tuesday (5/30)

1:00-4:30: Introduction to the Research of Children's Spirituality and Ministry Practice

Wednesday (5/31) Note: All sessions will flow between Children's Spirituality and Ministry Practice

8:30-11:30: Preparing to Research

1:00-4:30: Methods of Researching I

Thursday (6/1)

8:30-11:30: Methods of Researching II

1:00-4:30: Data Analysis

Friday (6/2)

8:30-11:30: Applying Methods I

1:00-4:30: Applying Methods II

Saturday (6/3)

9:00-11:00: Evaluating and Improving Children's Ministry