

Liberty University School of Divinity

**Church Revitalization Through Effective Women's Ministry**

A Thesis Project Submitted to  
the Faculty of Liberty University School of Divinity  
in Candidacy for the Degree of  
Doctor of Ministry

by

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**Thesis Project Approval Sheet**

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## PROJECT ABSTRACT

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America's churches are in crisis. Historically, women are the majority and have been the backbone of the American Church. They go faithfully to churches where their needs are often overlooked, not identified, and they are unfulfilled. They faithfully serve the ministry while they are suffering in silence and waiting for the church to respond. The following thesis explores church revitalization efforts through effective women's ministry. A qualitative approach will be utilized to collect and analyze the data. The data will be collected through recorded personal interviews and observations. Some interview statements will be measured on a Likert scale to judge the current success of the church in meeting the needs of the women. Also, the data will be coded to identify emerging themes. This author believes that through the implementation of an effective women's ministry, the women's needs will be identified, met, and will improve the church's growth and health.

Abstract length: 150 words.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Churches are closing their doors at alarming rates while other churches are experiencing phenomenal and transformational growth. Churches are dying on the vine, holding on by a thread and having no impact on the families and communities that they are called to serve. Regardless of what the reasons may be for both experiences, it can all be explained with one word, and that word is leadership. Leadership separates organizations that are good, great, or mediocre, and this is especially true at the Salvation Church of North Dallas. Biblically, the dominant image and metaphor for leadership are that of a shepherd who is also known as a pastor.

Shepherds have been used literally and metaphorically throughout Old and New Testament Literature as a picturesque interpretation of the relationship between God and His creation. God told Jeremiah that “I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will lead you with knowledge and understanding.”<sup>1</sup> There are over ninety Old Testament references and images of shepherds culminating with Jesus being referred to as the “Chief” Shepherd in the New Testament.

To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ’s sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah 3:15, New International Version (NIV). Unless otherwise noted, all scripture references in this thesis project will be from the New International Version of the Bible.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Peter 5:1-4.



The pastor shepherds the flock in terms of feeding, leading, and protecting the sheep against all forms of danger, and this includes protecting them from themselves. Jesus told his disciples that He is a gatekeeper for the sheep and will protect them at all costs.

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep.<sup>3</sup>

The scripture above tells the reader that the shepherd must lead, protect, defend, discipline, comfort, encourage, carry, heal, find the sheep always if lost or taken. Shepherds are on duty 24 hours, 7 days a week. The sheep are entirely dependent on the leadership, direction, and protection of the shepherd. In the 21st-century church, the statement rings loud and deep. Shepherds/pastor must understand the needs of the sheep/congregants better than they do. Old and New Testament literature reflects that church and leaders have struggled to meet the needs of the people, especially the needs of the women. Women have been a fundamental part of the health and growth of the church, but meeting their need for leadership and protection has been an issue for centuries. In the early church, there is evidence of neglect and reluctance from the leadership who were divided in meeting the physical needs of the widows amongst them. “So, the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, it would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables.”<sup>4</sup> For sure, the spiritual needs are the highest priority, but meeting physical needs seem to have racial and sexist barriers associated with them as well.

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<sup>3</sup> John 10:11-15.

<sup>4</sup> Acts 6:2.

It is this writer's view that the neglect of women and their needs is still ubiquitous in the 21st-century church. The church has delivered all-encompassing messages of hope and healing but has not created programs that specifically deal with women's issues. Women are confronting issues such as being widowed, divorced, separated, and abuse (physical, emotional, mental, and sexual). Women are also struggling with sexual identity and being former members of the lesbian, bi-sexual, transgender, and queer (LBGTQ) community.

Man's attitude toward women has changed very drastically since the fall of Adam. Before Adam disobeyed the direction of God in which "the Lord God commanded the man, You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die."<sup>5</sup> Eve was created to be a helper and partner to Adam. God's plan for the man and the woman was to be in partnership with each other. According to John MacArthur, "Wives are seen as venerated partners and cherished companions to their husbands, not merely slaves or pieces of household furniture."<sup>6</sup> Since the fall, women were seen in two different perspectives. In the Old Testament, they were perceived as manipulators, deceivers, and seducers. This is seen in the portrayal of some key women, such as Rebekah, Jezebel, Eve, Bathsheba, Potiphar's wife, and Lot's daughters. Rebekah blatantly deceived Isaac. Queen Jezebel, exercising wicked control and influence over King Ahab and meeting a horrific death. "As she falls from window to gate she falls from queen to less than a person, and, if her presence at the window mirrors a goddess, then the goddess ideas and imagery fall with her, to be crushed under the hooves of Jehu's horses at the behest of Yahweh himself, in

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<sup>5</sup> Genesis 2:16-17.

<sup>6</sup> John MacArthur, *Twelve Extraordinary Women*. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005), xi.

the place of his judgment.”<sup>7</sup> There is Potiphar's wife, who tried to seduce Joseph, and when he resisted, falsely reports the incident to her husband, causing Joseph’s imprisonment. Also, Lot’s daughters committing incest with their drunken father. Bathsheba and Eve’s accounts are subjective since some scholars believe that David was never deceived by Bathsheba, and Eve was actually the one who was deceived. “Eve was not ignorant of the commandment not to eat the fruit, but she was perhaps, ignorant of the motive of the serpent.”<sup>8</sup> From the other perspective, some Old Testament women were mighty warriors, prophetesses, saviors/rescuers, and gracious hostesses. This is seen through the lives of Deborah, who was a Judge, Hanna, who devoted Samuel to the temple, the woman who took care of the prophet Elisha, Moses’ wife who was a prophetess as well as his sister Miriam, and Rahab the Harlot who hid the spies.

New Testament literature reflected women in similar perspectives as the Old Testament even though it was evident that women played significant roles in the lives of Jesus, Paul, and the early church, in a misogynistic society where they were viewed as lower-classed citizens. Jesus and Paul did not denigrate women, and the Holy Spirit fell upon men and women at Pentecost. They both were relational in their ministry, and women traveled with them extensively. However, it is Paul’s writing that has raised significant debates even to this day. On one occasion, he wrote to Timothy stating, “A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve.”<sup>9</sup> He also told the Corinthian Church that “Women

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<sup>7</sup> Cat Quine, “On Dying in a City Gate: Implications in the Deaths of Eli, Abner and Jezebel.” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 40, no. 4 (2016): 412, accessed December 10, 2019, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1177/0309089215611532>.

<sup>8</sup> Abiola I Mbamalu. “The woman was deceived and became a sinner’--a literary-theological investigation of 1 Timothy 2:11-15.” *HTS Teologiese Studies* 7, no. 3 (2014), 6, accessed December 10, 2019, [https://link-gale-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/apps/doc/A408782933/AONE?u=vic\\_liberty&sid=AONE&xid=bcff5aa7](https://link-gale-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/apps/doc/A408782933/AONE?u=vic_liberty&sid=AONE&xid=bcff5aa7).

<sup>9</sup> 1 Timothy 2:11-12.

should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak but must be in submission, as the law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.” Male-dominated church leaders have taken this scripture and created doctrine without properly exegeting the customs and cultures of the text. There were false doctrines and false leaders that Timothy had to address in the church. It was not meant to demean or lower women’s status amongst the men.<sup>10</sup> Can women be in ministry, or are women allowed to minister? That question has caused a demarcation line within the church. “Let me put it this way: there may be a debate about “women in ministry,” but there is not — or should not be — a debate about “women ministering” in the Bible.”<sup>11</sup> These are two separate issues since “women in ministry” debate involves licensing, ordination, and pastoring.

Paul may have told women to be silent (although the text in 1 Corinthians 14 may not have been in his original manuscript), and he did say something about a restriction of female teachers in Ephesus, but if we read each of these statements in the context of the entire Bible, then we may come to an altogether different conclusion. Instead of focusing on these “women in ministry” texts, I suggest that we should look again at texts that show “women ministering.” Instead of asking, “What *should* women do in ministry?” we might ask also, “What did women *do* when ministering?”<sup>12</sup>

This author believes that it is through the misuse of Scripture and pastoral vision beyond the current needs of the church that has relegated ministry to women as something to do rather than a priority and necessity for church growth and development. It is this author’s prayer that this proposed doctoral thesis project will help this church meet the pastoral care needs of women and grow the church.

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<sup>10</sup> 1 Corinthian 14:34-35.

<sup>11</sup> Scot McKnight, “Women Ministering.” *E-Quality*, August 2008, 5 accessed August 24, 2019, <http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/>.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

## Ministry Context

Salvation Church of North Dallas is a non-denominational, multicultural church that began meeting in the pastor's study with himself, his wife, and two family members. Before beginning his ministry, the lead pastor was a youth pastor at a megachurch, with multiple locations, until God placed on his heart to launch out into the deep. Before launching, he assisted another pastor in growing his ministry until he felt the tugging of the Lord to begin his ministry. The church has been in operation for six years now and will be celebrating its seventh year in a few months.

The church does not have a Board of Directors, and the pastor is responsible for the day to day operations of the ministry. Before this author and his wife's arrival, the church's leadership consisted of a co-pastor which is the pastor's wife, a youth minister, children's minister, and an evangelist. The pastor's brother operates as a deacon but does not want the title of a deacon. There are also no musicians, and the children's minister and the co-pastor also operate as the praise and worship leaders. One of the founding members and minister of the Gospel left the church to begin preparing for her upcoming nuptials and is attending church with her current fiancé. This author and his wife met the pastor while on vacation as they were preparing to launch their ministry. The lead pastor asked them to operate as pastors in the house and assist with helping him the day to day operational duties, fill in as needed, train the other leaders, and to help grow the church.

1 Peter 2:9 inspires the church's purpose statement, "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." The purpose statement is, "To release God's people into their God-given purpose and destiny within the kingdom." The church believes that

God's people are to be trained and released into whatever God has designed and intended for them to do. The church's mission statement is inspired by the entire chapter of 1 Corinthians 13 in which the church is commanded to love all people. The mission statement is, "We will love God's people from brokenness to restoration and victory." The church's vision statement is "Empowering people for purpose." The church believes that when God's people find out their purpose for this Christian life, all things become clear, and they can embrace their destiny and change the world by building up God's Kingdom. By embracing their purpose, the church will operate with values expressed as the fruit of the Spirit: love, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.<sup>13</sup> Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."<sup>14</sup>

The church believes that if they properly train people in the character of Christ that the body should reap the fullness of His calling in their lives. The following beliefs represent the church and its current members:

1. We believe that love must be the foundation of your gift for God's anointing to be entrusted in you for the benefit of His peoples.
2. We believe in the unadulterated word of God.
3. We believe in the Trinity: The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
4. We believe that Jesus is God's only begotten Son
5. We believe in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
6. We believe in the five-fold ministry: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers (Ephesians 4:11).
7. We believe in the restoration and building of God's people.
8. We believe that faith is the key to unlocking your destiny.

The church is currently located in Denton, Texas, close to a major interstate. Before moving to its current location, the church was located close to Texas Woman's University for

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<sup>13</sup> Galatians 5:22-23.

<sup>14</sup> Nehemiah 8:10.

four years and was experiencing intermittent growth due to the college students' rotations each semester. A rental dispute forced the church to relocate to its current location, and members that lived closer to the college campus decided to worship elsewhere. The church is renting space in a business center, which is suitable for its current size. At this location, the church was also sharing its space with a Spanish Church that operated in the afternoon. However, the Spanish church stopped operating due to poor membership attendance and their pastor's work schedule. The church has a membership of 15-25 people on Sunday mornings and around 5-10 for mid-week service. The numbers are somewhat disconcerting; however, Clifton states that "Numbers alone are an inadequate barometer of a replanted church's transformation. I never call a church small. A church of fewer than two hundred in gathered worship is not small. It's normative. It's only "small" when compared to the very small number of very large churches."<sup>15</sup> Rick Warren states, "Don't worry about the growth of your church. Focus on fulfilling the purposes of your church. Keep watering and fertilizing and cultivating and weeding and pruning. God will grow his church to the size he wants it, at the rate that's best for your situation."<sup>16</sup> The church is comprised of Black or African American and Hispanic or Latino members. The estimated population for the city of Denton, with a zip code of 76208, is 138,541 and for the county is 859,064 as of July 1, 2018.<sup>17</sup>

Out of the total population of 138, 541, two or more races account for 3.2%. The White population: 79.3%. Black or African American: 9.6%. American Indian and Alaskan Native:

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<sup>15</sup> Mark Clifton, *Reclaiming Glory: Revitalizing Dying Churches*. (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2016), 108.

<sup>16</sup> Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1995), 394.

<sup>17</sup> "QuickFacts: Denton city, Texas; Denton County, TexasDenton, tx 76208, Population Estimates, 1 July 2018," US Census Bureau, accessed August 25,2019, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/dentoncacitytexas,dentoncountytexas/PST045218>

0.5%. Asian: 4.2% Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander: 0.1%. Hispanic or Latino: 24.1%. White alone, not Hispanic or Latino: 59.6%.<sup>18</sup> Following is a further breakdown of the population according to the county census. The median age is 35.5 years. Ages 18 years and over: 626,144; 21 years and over: 590,447; 60 years and over: 122,892; 62 years and over: 107,824; 65 years and over: 82,259; and 75 years and over: 28,368.<sup>19</sup>

Sunday services at Salvation Church of North Dallas start with pre-service prayer at 9:45, which is led by one of the leaders at the church. This position rotates as needed, with not one person designated to lead every Sunday morning. It is a time for corporate prayer when the leaders pray for the service, its members, and the community. Pre-service prayer lasts for ten minutes, and the main worship service starts promptly at 10:00 AM, after a five-minute break to make final adjustments. The main worship starts with a Scripture reading and exhortation, which lasts for ten minutes and then flows into praise and worship. Since the church does not have any musicians, the church utilizes tracks and YouTube to assist in the worship of God. Following praise and worship, which lasts for twenty-five minutes, another pastor or leader would ascend to the pulpit, exhort the people, provide them with important announcements, and then take up the offering.

After the offering is taken, the leader would then introduce the speaker for the morning. The speaker would begin their sermon no later than 10:45 AM. If the lead pastor is the speaker, then he would dismiss the children and youth or decide to allow them to stay in the service depending on the type of message he would bring forth.

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<sup>18</sup> “QuickFacts: Denton city,” US Census Bureau.

<sup>19</sup> “Denton, Tx, 77208, Age and Sex, Product: 2018: ACS 1-Year Estimates Subject Tables,” US Census Bureau, accessed 25 August, 2019, <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=Denton,%20tx%2076208>.



Tuesdays at 7:00 PM is the corporate prayer, which is led by the co-pastor. The prayer service has an open microphone policy, and anyone who is led to pray can grab the microphone and share a prayer. The church members can pray for themselves, family members, the community, and intercede for whomever they wish. At 7:45, all those who are present come together and pray before being dismissed. Corporate prayer usually lasting for one hour.

Midweek Bible study is the least attended and is held on Wednesdays at 7:00 PM and lasts for one hour with the offering being taken up at the end of service. This author is designated to speak at mid-week Bible study every first Wednesday of the month and as needed.

The church does not take communion regularly and is planning to start doing it every quarter on the first Sunday of that month. Also, the church traditionally offers the normal special services for Mother's Day and Father's Day, Thanksgiving, Easter, Christmas, New Year's, and pastoral and first lady appreciations.

The church has changed its culture to reflect a more relaxed and free-flowing form of worship and expression. Members are encouraged to come as they are and to have fun worshipping God. However, the church still requires its members to wear black and white on the first Sunday of the month. The purpose of wearing black and white is to show uniformity and the solidarity of the church coming together and being on one accord. The attire does not have to be formal wear.

The church's congregation comprises primarily of women who have been with the church for at least five years, with some since its inception. Some of the members are reluctant to become more active in the ministry and have excuses ranging from past hurts to them being tired with children's after school activities. Mind-bogglingly, the church has been able to keep its doors open with such low numbers.

The lead pastor wants to increase membership and eventually become a multi-site church with campuses across the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex. Notwithstanding the low membership populace, the health of the church should not be measured by numbers alone and should account for the other factors that weigh in on poor church attendance. Ford in *Transforming Church* addresses the issues facing church health through research-based on personal experience, a congregational survey, and a database collected in the book's index. This research revealed five critical indicators of church health in which the author has broken out each category into two parts. The five indicators are consumerism vs. community (individualism on steroids and creating community consumerism/community speed bump), incongruence vs. code (out of sync and cracking the code incongruence/code speed bump), autocracy vs. shared leadership (leadership the noun and leadership the verb-autocracy/shared leadership speed bump), cloister vs. missional (the cloister and the exponential power of one cloister/missional speed bump), and inertia vs. reinvention (dead ends and transforming church inertia/reinvention speed bump). Also, Ford determined that other factors can be used to measure the success and failures of the church. He states that "church health, rather than church growth, was the primary indicator of a church's ability to transform its members, fulfill its members, fulfill its mission, and reinvent itself."<sup>20</sup> Clifton states, "Churches having fewer than two hundred people in attendance are normative, not small. The vast, vast majority of churches throughout church history have been of fewer than two hundred people. It's time our expectations matched reality."<sup>21</sup> Sometimes, the reality of a situation does not tell the whole story or the history that has led to the present reality. The pastor of Salvation Church of North Dallas understands that he must correct some of the

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<sup>20</sup> Kevin G. Ford, *Transforming Church: Bringing Out the Good to Great*. Colorado Springs, CO: (David C. Cook, 2006), 32.

<sup>21</sup> Clifton, *Reclaiming Glory*, 108.

mistakes from the past. As a pastor, preacher, teacher, and husband, this author understands the power that vision has and that the process must be followed. Early lessons learned in ministry is that there is no substitute for the process. After several strategy sessions and attempted vision casting, this author has concluded that the pastor has been operating in survival mode for several years and lost track of his vision and mission. He had been operating as a ministry of default, with no structure instead of as ministry with design. He has since relaunched his new vision and is making strides to rebrand the church. The pastor must have a combination of vision and visionary leadership, and his vision must be shared with the people. “Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it. For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; will certainly come and will not delay.”<sup>22</sup> Davis believes that there is also a difference between vision and visionary leadership.<sup>23</sup> Christians must have a spiritual vision, and the church requires visionary leadership to grow and maximize everything that God has for them. According to Davis,

So by vision, I mean seeing what is true, godly, real, and ultimately, biblical. A godly visionary leader relies on Scripture and by faith sees the timeless truths of God and of his plans and purposes for all Christians generally. Along with this, the revitalizing leader is able to apply the timeless scriptural vision of God and his purposes in the world to a specific local church and its calling in that community. He is able—by the power of the Spirit of Christ in him—to say (as in Rev. 2–3), “I know your strengths and your weaknesses. I know your opportunities, what ‘open door’ God has set before you. I know what kind of satanic opposition assaults you. I know what kinds of secret sins are defiling you. I know you.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Habakkuk 2:2-3.

<sup>23</sup> Andrew M. Davis. *Revitalize: Biblical Keys to Helping Your Church Come Alive Again* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017), 105.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

## Problem Presented

America's churches are in crisis. Studies show that churches are filled with a majority of women and children, and the men are nowhere to be found. Besides, these churches have programs and ministries focusing on growing "mega," ignoring the cries of the people, and not intentionally focusing on the women within the church. Unfortunately, women are suffering in silence, and the church is not hearing their sound. This discrepancy is no different within this author's church, which comprises of 90% women, 8% children, and 2% men and have been operating this way for several years.

The problem is that the Salvation Church of North Dallas is not meeting the holistic needs of the women that attend. The church is adept at preaching and teaching about healing and restoration; however, there are no programs in place to transform lives beyond having ordinary transactional relationships. The critical issue, based on conversation and observation, is that these women have experienced horrible traumas consisting of abuse, rape, molestation, divorce, separation, and other forms of violence.

Churches are filled with hurting people, mostly women, and they are waiting on the church's response to their issues. All issues are not created equal, and everyone's experience is not the same. Some issues are cultural issues that are rampant in their community, and the church must be keen on what the cultural issues are. For instance, churches that are located near military bases must prepare to deal with issues related to post-traumatic stress disorders. Regardless of what is going on in society and church, women are no longer content to suffer in silence. C.S. Lewis stated, "We can ignore even pleasure. But pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his

megaphone to rouse a deaf world.”<sup>25</sup> Conversing about pain, it is a universal language that crosses boundaries in which many people can identify with. However, pain can also paralyze an individual and stagnate their progression. According to Garzon and Ford, “People get stuck in their pain. Whether it’s ruminating about an abusive past or worrying about an imagined future, the challenge for many people is to slow down long enough to enjoy life in the present moment.”<sup>26</sup> During a staff meeting, Hamman stated, “resistance to women in ministry seems to be increasing.”<sup>27</sup> That leads to a psychodynamic relationship between resistance to women in ministry and sadness.

Awareness of the psychodynamics of sadness changes the nature of the conversation exploring resistance to women in pastoral leadership. Understanding this emotional process also indicates a possible path by which women can be celebrated as leaders by a church in need of restoration and revitalization.<sup>28</sup>

His research showed that dominance, depression, and sadness are correlated when women are resisted to be leadership positions based on their gender. He concludes, “the psychodynamics of sadness and resistance to women in ministry will remain intimate enemies of the church and women clergy.”<sup>29</sup> Suffering, particularly in silence, for the “sake of the ministry” is not a badge of honor for a woman. According to Miller-McLemore, “To prize the substitution of one person’s suffering for another’s, radically misunderstands the heart of Jesus’ life and death—his redemptive witness to abundant life on earth.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*. (HarperCollins, 1996), 91.

<sup>26</sup> Fernando Garzon and Kristy Ford. “Adapting Mindfulness for Conservative Christians,” *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, no. 3 (2016), 263.

<sup>27</sup> Jaco J. Hamman, “Resistance to Women in Ministry and the Psychodynamics of Sadness.” *Pastoral Psychology* 59, no. 6 (12, 2010), 769.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 771-772.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 780.

<sup>30</sup> Miller-McLemore, Bonnie J., “Practicing What We Preach: The Case of Women in Ministry.” *Practical Theology* 2, no. 1 (2009), 52.

Churches face hindrances and barriers when trying to progress their ministries and push their prospective churches forward, such as changing technologies, cultures, sub-cultures, and customs. Research has shown that if churches, organizations, and businesses do not adapt to the changing times, they will be left behind. For instance, look at what resulted from Blockbuster's inability to change and innovate to compete with Netflix. The seeming underdog took down the "Goliath" of movie rentals by changing its infrastructure and address the growing demand of in-home movie viewers. When Henard was discussing some of the physical barriers to church growth, he addresses an issue that most women have when it comes to the cleanliness of the bathroom. Although that issue will not be addressed here, Henard is relevant in stating,

Think of this problem in this manner: women probably make up the majority of most congregations. Take into consideration the number of women who attend without their husbands, the reality that women outlive men in most situations (meaning that widows well outnumber widowers), and the fact that single moms make up one of the largest unreached people groups in America.<sup>31</sup>

The problem for this church is that current members will not stay if their needs are not being met and look elsewhere to have them fulfilled. This daunting task falls upon the pastor, and he must focus his attention in this area, or the church will wither and die. Henard adds,

Remember also that these days are evil. Doing the Lord's work is often tedious and draining. The preaching event demands that one wrestle for the souls of men and women, thus becoming the most exhausting task of the pastor. Therefore, if the pastor does not commit to a systematic and current process of personal, spiritual growth, eventually emptiness and despair result.<sup>32</sup>

The church must change its culture and view of how to minister and develop women as leaders in the church. This author believes that the church must move beyond having a "complementarian" view of leadership. Complementarians believe that men and women are

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<sup>31</sup> Bill Henard, *Can These Bones Live*, (B&H Publishers: Nashville, TN, 2015), 74.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

equal in worth, but only men can have leadership positions over men. In contrast, “egalitarians” believe that women are equal with no gender discrimination in church leadership. Some believe that egalitarians align themselves with the feminist agenda, and others believe that complementarians are misogynistic in practice. Equal biblical justification can be made depending on what side of the coin one finds themselves on. However, roles must be clearly defined. Cole states, “If I could choose one word to describe what it is like to be a female leader in most ministries, it’s confusing...But for a women who is trying to lead in a church setting, these issues of clarity are often compounded by mixed messages about what, how, and whom she is allowed to lead.”<sup>33</sup> Carving out a few Sundays of the year will not suffice, and giving the women a few hours of attention will eventually turn back into despair. The Bible refers to this as hope being deferred. “Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.”<sup>34</sup> Langston Hughes’s poem, *Harlem*, reads, “What happens to a dream deferred? Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun? Or fester like a sore—And then run? Does it stink like rotten meat? Or crust and sugar over— like a syrupy sweet? Maybe it just sags like a heavy load. Or does it explode?”<sup>35</sup> This church, as well as most denominational churches, has become divided, selfish, individualist, and consumed with religious traditions that are choking the life out of its members. The 21st-century church is demanding that church cultures must shift to survive, especially since women are the majority in churches. Women are not the only subgroup that is demanding this change, but it is also coming from millennials who have too many other options to satisfy them spiritually. Millennials are identified as individuals between the ages of 22-37

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<sup>33</sup> Kadi Cole, *Developing Female Leaders: Navigate the Minefields and Release the Potential of Women in Your Church*. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2019), 17.

<sup>34</sup> Proverbs 13:12.

<sup>35</sup> Langston Hughes, “Harlem,” Poetry Foundation, access August 25, 2019, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46548/harlem>.

born between 1981 and 1996. The millennial generation would rather watch television on their smartphone, in the comfort and convenience of home than attend a church service. The church has to offer more than good preaching and teaching to attract people because good preaching and teaching can be found on YouTube and can be accessed from any mobile device.

George Barna conducted a research study on three unique single adult populations consisting of “the never been married group” the largest of the three, “the divorced adults’ group” which comprised mostly of middle-aged women, and the “widowed group” who were mostly women above 60 years of age.<sup>36</sup> Each group was studied independently, and each had a different set of needs that must be addressed within the church. The research study reveals that

those who have never been married make up the lion’s share of America’s 82 million single adults, representing nearly six out of every ten singles. Adults who are currently divorced are one-quarter of the singles population, while widowed adults form the remaining one-sixth. Whereas men slightly outnumber women among those who have never been married and divorced women slightly outnumber divorced men, widowed women dwarf widowed men by a 4.3-to-1 ratio.<sup>37</sup>

The research also reveals that the role of faith was different but significant amongst them. “Barna found that faith plays a significant – and changing – role in the lives of singles. Substantial majorities of each of the three dominant singles segments say they are “spiritual.” Most single adults – about four out of five – think of themselves as Christian, although their depth of commitment to the Christian faith varies considerably.”<sup>38</sup>

### Purpose Statement

According to Mazak’s thesis, *A Call to Excellence: Leadership Training and Mentoring Manual for Women in Ministry*,

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<sup>36</sup> George Barna, “A Revealing Look at Three Unique Single Adult Populations,” (March 2002), <https://www.barna.com/research/a-revealing-look-at-three-unique-single-adult-populations>.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.



The church continues to reinforce antiquated traditions of division by denomination, culture, race, and gender. Segregation in its truest sense “is the separation or isolation of a race, class, or ethnic group by enforced or voluntary residence in a restricted area, by barriers to social intercourse, by separate educational facilities, or other discriminatory means.”<sup>39</sup>

Therefore, this author’s purpose for this thesis is to focus on meeting the needs of the women by creating biblically based and culturally relevant programs that will cater to their specific individual needs for growth and development. The church will become relevant again and a recognizable institution with the community.

### Basic Assumptions

A basic assumption that affects the writing of this thesis project is that this author believes that the problem will not only be addressed, but solutions will be found to fix the problems that are affecting this church. This author believes in Apostle Paul’s bold declaration that “my God will meet all of your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.”<sup>40</sup> The church has all the answers to heal all of those who are broken-hearted. Despite everything going on in society, the church is the “supposed” haven for people from all walks of life, regardless of sex, race, religion, or creed. In Jesus’ parable concerning the great banquet, the “master told his servant, Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full.”<sup>41</sup> His final commandment to His followers was to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”<sup>42</sup> This author also assumes that the church’s leaders are

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<sup>39</sup> Verna Mazark, “A Call to Excellence: Leadership Training and Mentoring Manual for Women in Ministry”. (Thesis., Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016) 3.

<sup>40</sup> Philippians 4:19.

<sup>41</sup> Luke 14:23.

<sup>42</sup> Matthew 14:19-20.

equally passionate to adhere to this parable and the commandment to fill His house and make disciples.

Another basic assumption is that all the women interviewed will provide honest answers and feedback to their specific ministerial and personal needs. The researcher assumes that this will reduce the amount of time expected to complete the research analysis and data collection. The researcher expects a free-flowing dialogue that will produce impactful results, and common themes to emerge.

### Definitions

This project will utilize terms such as “single,” “married,” “widow,” and “abuse” victims throughout entirely.

**Abuse** is defined as to treat or misuse someone or something in a negative manner as to cause harm or damage.

**Married** is defined as relating to marriage.

**Single** is defined as not married or in a relationship.

**Widow** is defined as a woman whose spouse has died, and they have remained unmarried.

### Limitations

There are limitations and delimitations factors within the scope of this project. First, although women make up much of the populace in America’s churches regardless of race, and denomination, the focus of this thesis paper is not a comprehensive study of all women in multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and local churches within this region.

These are women who are single, married, divorced, widowed, and have experienced physical, emotional, social, and psychological abuse in and out of the church and whose needs are not being met. A further limitation is that this study is focused on the church leaders and

leadership factors at the Salvation Church of North Dallas that is causing the cycle of neglect and unmet needs of women within the church.

#### Delimitations

The data collected will be limited to only women, and no men or children will be surveyed or interviewed. In addition, this project will not collaborate with the local churches in the area that are facing similar situations in ministering to and meeting the needs of the women in the church. Therefore, in summation, the focus for this proposed Doctoral Thesis is to introduce resources and programs to help women, from all occupations regardless of socio-economic status, education, and positioning in the church to reach their desired goals and dreams.

#### Thesis Statement

This author believes that if specific ministries are developed to meet the needs of the women within this local church, it will grow by 10% within three (3) months. In addition, once this ministry meets the needs of the current body, they will invite others, and the church will grow.

## Chapter 2

### Conceptual Framework

#### Literature Review

The church has always been met and viewed with a mixed set of emotions. Churches are filled with imperfect people trying to find the meaning of life and make sense of it. The members filled the pews with unmet needs; they are holding on by a thread wishing and hoping for change to come. Despite the constant setbacks, culture shifts, and the world is in a state of flux, women have remained a constant figure of stability for the church. Women have been the backbone of the church throughout this last century despite the barriers placed before them. They must overcome labeling, mistreatment, abuse, and unequal treatment at home and in industry. Studies reveal that women have a longer life expectancy than men. According to the CDC, the average American man will live to be 76 years old, while the average American woman will live to be 81 years old.<sup>43</sup>

Research conducted by George Barna revealed that widowed adults tend to be primarily female, are generally in their sixties and beyond, and possess an entirely different view on the future than do their younger, single counterparts.<sup>44</sup> Barna studied three but separate unique groups, the never-been-married group, which is the largest subset, divorced adults, and widowed women, which overshadowed men by a 4.3 to 1 ratio. Widowed women tend to be more active spiritually and that this population will continue to increase as time goes on. Barna believes that this population will explode with growth and will double due to

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<sup>43</sup> Sherry L. Murphy, B.S., Jiaquan Xu, M.D., Kenneth D. Kochanek, M.A., and Elizabeth Arias, Ph.D., "Mortality in the United States, 2017," *NCHS Data Brief No. 328*, November 2018. Retrieved September 18, 2019 from <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db328-h.pdf>.

<sup>44</sup> Barna, "Three Unique Single Adult Populations."

the aging process. The author provides valuable insight into widowhood and how attempts and strategies used to meet this growing populace. Even though this author provided valuable research, additional strategies need exploration to meet this growing population. Nanez believes that a curriculum, earmarked for widowed women, is needed to address the lack of programs and support services for them.<sup>45</sup>

Thomas' research took a different approach towards meeting the needs of women within the local church by introducing female mentorship programs.<sup>46</sup> She proposes to add a comprehensive and integrated approach towards women's ministries by training female mentors who can connect with women on their level. This is a mature approach that will add additional programs since most church programs for women are only one day a year or catered to a specific event such as "women's day." Women, young and old, have specific ministry needs and questions that only trained women mentors can address. Also, women training programs are a much-needed resource within the local body. This is especially true in urban and low socio-economic communities where women are becoming mothers and at an early age. This approach addresses the mandate of Titus 2:3-5, which will meet the spiritual needs of future generations of women and will teach them to be godly women in all stages of life as young women, wives, daughters, and leaders within the community and church. This approach is a form of discipleship.

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<sup>45</sup> Gail Nanez, "Developing A Curriculum Ministry For Widows In The Local Church". (Thesis., Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016).

<sup>46</sup> Iva Thomas, "Revitalizing the Women's Ministry: Women Mentoring to the Women A Titus 2 Project" (Thesis., Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014).

The lack of ministry programs in the church is not just a leadership problem but a problem with discipleship.<sup>47</sup> Clifton's research reveals that those churches that are not making disciples are the churches that are not addressing the needs of the church and community. Discipleship is not a program but a process that shares life and reproduces life in others.

One of the issues that the church must face in correlation with the discipleship problem is that spiritual leaders were not trained in discipleship. The lack of training is a leadership problem, especially when trying to reach and disciple women. Also, to be effective, leaders must address questions, concerns, and views of male leadership concerning women serving within the local church. Culturally, many societies misidentified women as subservient to men because of the abuse and misunderstanding of Scripture. This has been an ongoing issue in business circles, which creates a "glass ceiling" effect, preventing women from rising higher. In religious circles, leaders often misinterpret scripture on "women being the weaker vessel" (1 Peter 3:7) and the Apostle Paul's directions concerning "women learning in silence" (1 Timothy 2:11). Plamadeala addresses this issue head-on and offers an additional view in which Paul's writing and leadership could have and may have been misconstrued.<sup>48</sup> In one sense, he could be viewed as an advocate for women, and on the other, he can be viewed as a misogynist.

Although Thomas and Clifton agree that leadership is a key component in meeting the needs of women in the church, their findings also reflect that the leader must have the vision to be an effective leader. This includes a vision for the women's ministry as well. Medley concurs, and Pettit reiterates, that vision is a recurring concept for the leader in which it will provide clear

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<sup>47</sup> Mark Clifton, *Reclaiming Glory: Revitalizing Dying Churches*. (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2016), 7.

<sup>48</sup> Cristina Plamadeala, "Paul and Women: An Analysis of 1 Corinthians Reflecting Paul's Contradictory Attitudes." *Currents in Theology and Mission* 45 (2) (2018): 34–37, accessed July 10, 2019, <http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLAn4298170&site=ehost-live&scope=site>

guidance for the purpose and development of God's people.<sup>49 50</sup> Visionary leadership requires an individual to become an effective leader in which they see beyond the organization's current position. Pettit emphasizes that the way to become like Christ focuses more on the individual relationship with other Christians within the concept of community. This Christian life is meant to live with others and by helping one another achieve goals and dreams while pursuing personal ones as well. When pastors and leaders meet the needs of the women within the church, without ulterior motives, undermining, or sabotage, the local ministry will grow.

Maxwell utilizes another term for visionary leadership and calls them "influencers." Influencers have integrity with people, nurtures other people, has faith in people, listens to people, understands people, enlarges people, navigates for other people, connects with people, empowers people, and reproduces other influencers.<sup>51</sup> The North American Mission Board (NAMB) identifies eight characteristics that pastors must have to transition a dying church, and being a visionary shepherd is one of those characteristics.<sup>52</sup>

The concern here is the gap between becoming a leader, identifying leaders, and accepting the leadership mantle. Leaders must be identified and developed; however, an essential problem with leadership lies within the process of developing leaders. Everyone wants the title of a leader because of prestige until it is time to do what leaders do. Leadership does not mean that an individual can do whatever he or she chooses to do without having to face any

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<sup>49</sup> Sylvia Dilworth Medley, "Establishment of M7 Dream Builder Pastoral Care Ministry: A Christ-Centered Spiritual Oasis for Women with Dreams Deferred." (Thesis., Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016).

<sup>50</sup> Paul Pettit, *The Foundations of Spiritual Formation: A Community Approach to Becoming Like Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel. 2008).

<sup>51</sup> John C. Maxwell, "Becoming A Person of Influence" in *The Winning Attitude: Three Books in One Volume.* (Nashville, TN Thomas Nelson Inc.) 2000.

<sup>52</sup> Brian Croft, *Biblical Church Revitalization: Solutions for Dying & Divided Churches.* (Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2016).

consequences or repercussions. Sanders states, “Most Christians have reservations about aspiring to leadership. They are unsure about whether it is truly right for a person to want to be a leader.”<sup>53</sup> Jumping, headfirst, into leadership is not advisable without first counting up the costs. Sanders also sheds some insight into what the true motives of 21st-century spiritual leaders should be. “The real spiritual leader is focused on the service he and she can render to God and other people, not on the residuals and perks of high office or holy title. We must aim to put more into life than we take out.”<sup>54</sup> This type of leadership will influence the community and reinforce that the church is more concerned about giving and providing instead of taking. Also, this type of leadership will combat negative stereotypes and stigmas that the church has developed over time due to the misdeeds of a few leaders. Concerning whether individuals have leadership potential, Sanders recommends a series of questions to investigate their leadership potential. The list is not exhaustive; however, he also recognizes the fact that leaders must be tried and tested. Nonetheless, everyone can become a leader.

Perhaps the final test of leadership potential is whether you “sit” on the results of such an analysis or do something about it. Why not take some of the points of weakness and failure you just identified or are already aware of and, in cooperation with the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of discipline, go into intentional character training. Concentrate on strengthening those areas of weakness and correcting faults.<sup>55</sup>

The Holy Spirit must guide and direct the leader with their plans, actions, and decisions. Getz states that the Holy Spirit “is directly involved when godly men and women prayerfully and carefully evaluate a potential leader’s character, utilizing the Holy Spirit’s inspired Word of God and at the same time, being sensitive to His personal presence and guidance in each of their

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<sup>53</sup> J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence For Every Believer*. (The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago), 11.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 36.



lives.”<sup>56</sup> Discipline is an area in which the leading subject matter experts in leadership agree that aspiring leaders should have within themselves. The Apostle Peter identifies discipline as self-control and recommends that it should be added along with goodness, knowledge, perseverance, godliness, mutual affection, and love. “For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.”<sup>57</sup> Sanders reiterates that,

A leader is a person who has learned to obey a discipline imposed from without, and has then taken on a more rigorous discipline from within. Those who rebel against authority and scorn self-discipline—who shirk the rigors and turn from the sacrifices—do not qualify to lead. Many who drop out of ministry are sufficiently gifted, but have large areas of life floating free from the Holy Spirit’s control. Lazy and disorganized people never rise to true leadership.<sup>58</sup>

He also identifies several other essential leadership qualities such as vision, wisdom, decision, courage, humility, integrity and sincerity, humor, anger, patience, friendship, tact and diplomacy, inspirational power, executive ability, the therapy of listening, and the art of letter writing.<sup>59</sup>

Heath and Heath refer to these characteristics as habits. According to them, “Habits are behavioral autopilot, and that’s why they’re such a creative tool for leaders...Leaders who can instill habits that reinforce their team’s goals are essentially making progress for free. They’ve changed behavior in a way that doesn’t draw down the Rider’s reserves of self-control”.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Gene A. Getz, *Elders and Leaders: God’s Plan for Leading the Church*. (Moody: Chicago, 2003), 204.

<sup>57</sup> 2 Peter 1:8-9.

<sup>58</sup> Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 51.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 51-68.

<sup>60</sup> Chip Heath and Dan Heath, *Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard* (New York: Broadway, 2010), 215.

Motivating men and women into action require a specific type of leader and leadership characteristic. Transformational, transactional, and servant leaders possess the characteristics above, but the enduring question is, what type of leader is the most effective? Servant leaders place others and their needs before themselves and often are the most biblical.

Transformational leaders are a catalyst that causes a positive change in individuals, organizations, and systems. Women ministries need transformational leaders to promote individual and church growth and development. Transactional leadership is the opposite of transformational leadership in which transactional leadership is more directive in style. Transactional leadership is effective depending upon the situation, but it is not effective for long term sustainable transformation. The Apostle Paul and Jesus were both servant leaders and vacillated between these two leadership styles to grow their disciples. It was Jesus who taught Paul these leadership principles after He revealed himself on the Damascus road. Paul went to the desert to learn from Jesus directly for three years.

But when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, my immediate response was not to consult any human being. I did not go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went into Arabia. Later I returned to Damascus.<sup>61</sup>

Paul's vision made him be both a transactional and transformational leader. "Visionary leadership shows how the personal characteristics of the leader guide transformational leaders' actions."<sup>62</sup> His vision of Christ birthed his visionary leadership position, which pushed him forward to endure many hardships and sufferings. As a transformational leader, Paul mentored both Timothy and Titus and appointed them to be pastors and overseers to churches in Corinth

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<sup>61</sup> Galatians 1:15-17.

<sup>62</sup> Pettit, *Foundations of Spiritual Formation*, 157.

and Ephesus. His transactional leadership was displayed in his instructions to Timothy to “command certain people not to teach false doctrines any longer or to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies.”<sup>63</sup> In his writings, Stanley believes that during the early stages of church revitalization, many people will have to be told what to do. According to Stanley, “Unchurched, unbelieving people are attracted to communicators who have a *here’s what to do next* tacked on the end of their messages.”<sup>64</sup> Paul’s passion for all things Christ that propelled him forward towards building up the kingdom of God is rarely seen in 21st-century leaders.

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.<sup>65</sup>

According to Cooper, “Paul epitomized what many contemporary observers call visionary leadership. Most assuredly, he would not have used this taxonomy as a self- description. However, if he would have, it would have indicated a person whose eye was set on God rather than one who designed ministry methodologies.”<sup>66</sup> When considering differing designed ministry methodologies, many questions have bombarded the church concerning what evangelism methods are best to build the church and engaging unbelievers. People are drawn to different kinds of churches, such as the attractional church, the missional church, and traditional church. The traditional church focuses on keeping the status quo, following rules, regulations, and procedures. Also, this approach is mired in doctrinal practices which many Christians are turning

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<sup>63</sup> 1 Timothy 1:3-4.

<sup>64</sup> Andy Stanley. *Deep & Wide: Creating Churches Unchurched People Love to Attend* (Zondervan, 2016), 114.

<sup>65</sup> Philippians 3:12-14.

<sup>66</sup> Michael T. Cooper, “The Transformational Leadership of the Apostle Paul: A Contextual and Biblical Leadership for Contemporary Ministry.” *Christian Education Journal* 2, no. 1 (Spr 2005): 52, accessed September 20, 2019, <http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/>.

away from. Jesus, being both fully God and fully human, was attractional and missional in His approach to evangelism. He told Peter and Andrew to “Come, follow me and I will send you out to fish for people.”<sup>67</sup> The big difference between Christianity and other religions is the fact that God, through Jesus Christ, is interested in the well-being of His people. “Talk with Jesus about how it’s going, your hopes, ways to do your work more excellently, and new ideas to fulfill your company’s overall mission.”<sup>68</sup>

In his writing, Jarrod Wilson identifies the different types of churches as Traditional, Attractional, Seeker, and Contemporary, and it could be construed that he was against mega-churches, traditional churches, and non-denominational churches. His book requires readers to consider past and present actions, and question their methods, doctrinal beliefs, practices, and their fruitfulness within the Kingdom of God. The seeker and attractional church are synonymous, and Wilson’s definition of attractional sparks a fascinating argument on what it takes to win the lost and to what lengths the church should go to win them. The Apostle Paul stated that

Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.<sup>69</sup>

Wilson defines attractional as “a way of ministry that derives from the primary purpose of making Christianity more appealing...the attractional church’s primary aim in worship to get as

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<sup>67</sup> Matthew 4:19.

<sup>68</sup> Klaus Issler. *Living into the Life of Jesus: The Formation of Christian Character*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012) 197.

<sup>69</sup> 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.

many people through the doors of the church as possible so that they may hear what it means to have a relationship with Jesus Christ.”<sup>70</sup> Wilson’s concern is that the attractional church is too complex (bloated) in its structure and can become more consumed with large church attendance, and funding programs,

A more simple church can be more passionate about church planting, because a simpler church is easier to replicate and because it seems as more preferable to send a growing number of people out to start a new work than to face the difficulty of accommodating more people in the original community.<sup>71</sup>

Wilson also highlights the fact that the differences between these evangelistic models are in their approach to missions and evangelism. “The attractional church sees evangelism mainly happening inside the church building, so the attractional attempts are myriad and always increasing.”<sup>72</sup> On the other hand, “the attractional church of Christendom is being systemically dismantled for an incarnational, missional model.”<sup>73</sup> The positive effect of the missional approach to ministry is that this approach favors community involvement. However, there are misinterpretations that “in a postmodern world, the mission of Christianity is understood as cultural oppression. Properly understood, mission is holistic, and is much broader than evangelism.”<sup>74</sup>

Addressing the leadership and evangelism issues within the church is paramount to reaching women. The environment and culture must be conducive for women to be transparent in their issues and struggles. Kinnaman and Lyons asked, “Have we created relationships and

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<sup>70</sup> Jared C. Wilson, *The Prodigal Church: A Gentle Manifesto against the Status Quo* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 25-26.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>73</sup> Beville Kieran. *Preaching Christ in a Postmodern Culture*, (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publisher, 2010), 4.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

expectations within our churches in which older women are accessible and transparent with younger women about their struggles—not just occasionally, but an ongoing, real-life way?”<sup>75</sup> They studied two generational groups, aptly named “Mosaics” and “Busters.” Mosaics are those born between 1984 and 2002, and Busters are those born between 1965 and 1983. Within this study, they addressed six broad themes or stereotypes that outsiders have raised as objections or what they are unconvinced about. Outsiders are those who are outside of the Christian faith, including atheists and agnostics. These themes, which are addressed in their chapters, are as follows: Hypocritical, Get Saved!, Antihomosexual, Sheltered, Too Political, and Judgmental. They state from the beginning that Christianity has a PR/image problem. The current image that Christianity presents has created confusion and frustration within society, and young millennials are wondering if this faith is real. Also, with Christianity being in disarray, hindered in scandal and abuse, is the gospel really the Good News? According to Kinnaman and Lyons,

Their impressions of the Bible are mixed: most think it has good values, but only three out of ten believe that it is accurate in all the principles it teaches. And Jesus draws an interesting set of reactions. Jesus receives outsiders’ most favorable feelings, but even the clarity of his image has eroded among young people. They are more likely than previous generations to believe he committed sins; they are also more likely to believe that people can live a meaningful life without him.<sup>76</sup>

Along those lines, the church must be filled with both older men and women to promote health and growth to combat the decline in church services. Kricher echoes this sentiment and states,

Most churches tend to become “aging” churches with fewer and fewer children and young adults attending church services. That is why none of us as church leaders or

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<sup>75</sup> David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *unChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christianity...and Why It Matters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 57.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

members should ever assume that our church will be able to avoid decline—and even extinction—unless we intentionally pursue perpetual church revitalization.<sup>77</sup>

Attracting new believers and church growth has been the focus of the pastors and leaders, and at times their focus has been myopic, concentrating on the younger generation and new believers while neglecting the needs of the older generation and widows in their local churches. Nanez further reiterates that “the support of women and widows of the church that sustain a firm and biblical foundational belief of certain kinds of ministry will support the present century. Many women of the church are not only a financial support for the church but a support for their family as well.”<sup>78</sup>

When ministering to women, it takes someone who understands and one who can empathize with their issues and concerns. Women will open to sincere individuals who will accommodate their cause. Wilson states,

But venturing into the middle of someone’s pain with them, holding their hand physically or spiritually, listening to their story, praying with them, offering biblical counsel, knowing how to be leader and a friend, knowing when to give words and when to simply lend an ear...that’s the hard work that necessitates wisdom, discernment, the kinds of Spiritual fruit that comes with time and experience and having been deeply wounded oneself<sup>79</sup>

Venturing into someone else pain requires pastors to enter into an area in which makes them uncomfortable but also shows the individual that they are willing to help. It also shows that they are willing to step into someone else’s arena and meet them where they are. Ezekiel states, “I came to the exiles who lived at Tel Aviv near the Kebar River. And there, where they were living, I sat among them for seven days—deeply distressed.”<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Lee Kricher, *For a New Generation: A Practical Guide for Revitalizing Your Church*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 19.

<sup>78</sup> Nanez, “Curriculum Ministry For Widows,” 11.

<sup>79</sup> Wilson, *The Prodigal Church*, 140.

<sup>80</sup> Ezekiel 3:15.

Churches with successful women ministries and community influence have ministries that effectively counsel women battling depression, anger, loneliness. Neuger believes that pastors must accept this challenge to meet women on this level and effectively provide them with effective counseling.

Although certainly issues like depression are addressed in a variety of places, the intent of this book is to explore them from the perspective of women's experience and from the clear starting place of a culture that is problematic for women at many levels. Women's susceptibility to a particular distress is not the central issue; rather, women are understood to be living and making decisions in some very complex and oppressive situations."<sup>81</sup>

Neuger also believes that women deal with depression on a larger scale than men. She states, "various studies confirm that depression is between two and six times more prevalent in women than men. Although all women, despite their racial or ethnic group membership, have higher rates of depression than men, European American women have the highest rates."<sup>82</sup>

However, a study conducted by Eatough, Smith, and Shaw reveals subtle differences in how women deal with anger and aggression. Also, women express anger and aggression more intensely in close interpersonal relationships.

The overwhelming majority of anger episodes happened between people who had close interpersonal ties. That our close intimate relationships should generate anger more than other contexts is hardly surprising. There is more opportunity, people are more likely to care about and feel hurt over the actions of loved ones, and they are likely to feel more confident and secure about expressing anger.<sup>83</sup>

Usually, women who battle depression and anger, also have bouts of loneliness during specific periods in their lives. Loneliness is not restricted to specific relationship status, and "the

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<sup>81</sup> Christie Cozad Neuger, *Counseling Women: A Narrative, Pastoral Approach*. (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2001), 28.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>83</sup> Virginia Eatough, Jonathan A. Smith, and Rachel Shaw. "Women, Anger, and Aggression: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 23, no. 12 (December 2008): 1770, accessed November 24, 2019, <http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/>.



literature on loneliness suggests that all individuals experience loneliness; however, the duration and intensity of loneliness varies among individuals over their lifespan.”<sup>84</sup>

Loneliness is described as a “multifaceted phenomenon,” which may include “interpersonal and intimate loneliness,” feeling isolated from a group, or feeling a sense of marginality from the culture surrounding an individual.”<sup>85</sup> Loneliness has been linked to negative contributions to individual health and lifestyles. Thurston and Kubzansky found that “Loneliness has emerged as a key social-emotional factor linked to health outcomes. Although related to social isolation, loneliness is an aversive emotional response to a perceived discrepancy between the desired and actual level of social interaction”.<sup>86</sup>

For the church to grow and develop, women must not be neglected. Getz states that “all believers—both men and women—are necessary for every local church to function as God intended.”<sup>87</sup> Programs must be created for the singles, married, divorced, and widowed women of Salvation Church of North Dallas.

### Theological Foundations

Women’s ministry is not a new concept within the local church. As a matter of fact, churches in America have some form of a women’s ministry. The project researcher intends to examine the role and effectiveness of church revitalization efforts through a concentrated focus on women’s ministry. The prophet Isaiah declared, “The Lord will call you back as if you were a

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<sup>84</sup> Jama L. Davis, “Alone in a Crowd: A Phenomenological Inquiry Into Loneliness As Experienced By Pastor’s Wives.” (PhD diss., Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007), 9.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Rebecca C. Thurston and Laura D. Kubzansky, “Women, Loneliness, and Incident Coronary Heart Disease.” *Psychosomatic Medicine*. 71, no. 8 (October 2009): 836, accessed November 24, 2019, <http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/>.

<sup>87</sup> Gene A. Getz, *Elders and Leaders: God’s Plan for Leading the Church*. (Moody: Chicago, 2003), 111.

wife deserted and distressed in spirit—a wife who married young, only to be rejected,” says your God. “For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with deep compassion I will bring you back.”<sup>88</sup>

If the church is going to have an effective women’s ministry, then it is going to have to acknowledge that women have been major influencers throughout the Old and New Testament literature.

The Bible, without a shadow of a doubt, can be interpreted as misogynic and sexist, which has resulted in oppressing women throughout history. Culturally, Old Testament literature presents men as the dominant figure and focus throughout, while the women were subservient and considered insignificant. Men have always played the leading character and taken center stage in the Biblical plot. However, women have always played a significant role in Old Testament literature and the birth and growth of the early church. Women’s contribution to the growth and development of men and God’s agenda is prevalent throughout as well. It was Moses’s wife, Zipporah, who had the spiritual insight and discernment to see that God was angry with him and was going to kill him, saved him from the hand of death. It was a woman who helped Jacob’s secure his place in scripture. His mother aided in the deception of Isaac and secured the birthright for Jacob since Esau was his father’s favorite son. Esther saved a nation from destruction, and Ruth found her family kinsman-redeemer. To be considered a woman of importance in the Bible, her name must be mentioned favorably, or she was well known for a specific issue or condition. Biblical literature also reflects women that were nameless such as Lot’s wife, Lot’s daughters, Job’s wife, the woman at the well, the woman caught in adultery, to name a few. Even though they were nameless, they left an undeniable impact because of their

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<sup>88</sup> Isaiah 54:6-7, NIV.

deeds or service. Women were included in the beginning conversations with Godhead which states,

Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground. So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."<sup>89</sup>

This foundation attests to the fact that women were created to be non-distinct from men. They were created to be equal with men and have dominion together. This relationship is shown in the context of marriage, but it is also paralleled in the church. Notwithstanding that, the roles men and women have within the church may be different but also can be analogous. Both men and women can be deacons, preach and teach the Word of God, and serve in administrative duties. However, complementarianism versus egalitarianism theological views still causes controversy in marriage and ministry. These are the issues that get pushed to the forefront while the other needs of women are dismissed and ignored. To be effective in meeting the needs of neglected women in the church, one must begin with the leadership of the church. Old Testament and New Testament literature focuses on the leadership aspect of dealing with the care and feeding of single, married, divorced, widowed, and those who are in other forms of crises.

Widows, women, and children have always been a passion for God. "Leave your fatherless children; I will keep them alive. Your widows too can depend on me."<sup>90</sup> Historically, God has always had concern for the women and widows and mandated His creation to take responsibility to take care of the women and widows. The social responsibility for this group was so significant that God warned the children of Israel, "Do not take advantage of the widow or the

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<sup>89</sup> Genesis 1:26-27.

<sup>90</sup> Jeremiah 49:11.

fatherless. If you do and they cry out to me, I will certainly hear their cry. My anger will be aroused, and I will kill you with the sword; your wives will become widows and your children fatherless.”<sup>91</sup> He declares to be “A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows.”<sup>92</sup> Scripture further affirms that “The Lord tears down the house of the proud, but he sets the widow’s boundary stones in place.”<sup>93</sup>

An example of how God used His people to take care of women and widows is found in the historical book of 1 Kings. God used one man to meet the need of a woman in crisis. Elijah, the prophet, had just prophesied to King Ahab that there would be no rain or dew except by his word. The people of Israel were in a severe state of famine, and the people were starving to death. Afterward, he encountered a woman who was barely surviving during the famine and was preparing to make her last meal and die with her only son. Scripture tells us that she was a widow from Zarephath and at the prophet’s urging, gave him her last portions of food. Elijah promised her that God would sustain them until the famine is over, and the jar of oil was not used up, and the jar of oil did not run dry until the famine ended. Also, Elijah resurrected the woman’s son after he fell ill and died. Because of his demonstration of love, concern, and power, she boldly declared, “Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the Lord from your mouth is the truth.”<sup>94</sup>

A similar story is told in 2 Kings with Elijah’s protégé Elisha. Elisha was being sustained by a Shunamite woman and her husband and was thankful for her hospitality. This couple decided to build a small room for him to stay since he often traveled that way. When Elisha

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<sup>91</sup> Exodus 22:22-23.

<sup>92</sup> Psalm 68:4.

<sup>93</sup> Proverbs 15:25.

<sup>94</sup> 1 Kings 17:24.

inquired about what he can do to repay them, she mentioned that she had everything that she needed. His servant noticed that she did not have a son, and Elisha prophesied to her that she would conceive and have a son. In ancient times, having children meant that your legacy would be carried forth, and to be barren was a sign of disgrace. The fruitfulness of the womb was considered as evidence between God's covenant of blessings with Himself and Israel. "The fruit of your womb will be blessed, and the crops of your land and the young of your livestock—the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks. Your basket and your kneading trough will be blessed."<sup>95</sup> Elisha also had to revive her son when he had died prematurely. The issues that these two women (one was married and the other a widow) faced were not visible, nor were they voiced by both women. In each case, the prophet Elijah and Elisha's servant, Gehazi, had to discern the needs of both women. The two women were suffering in silence.

A widow's loss and experience cannot be measured the same as those who are single or divorced, even though they all have experienced a level of pain through the process. "Grief is the normal reaction to loss of any kind...All relationships are unique. No one can assume they know how another feels, even if they have experienced some aspect of a similar grief."<sup>96</sup> The author further recapitulates concerning the grieving process that, "Certainly there is agreement that no matter how this process is described, it is not predictable. That is, not every person going through emotional pain will walk an identical path. It is not a linear experience."<sup>97</sup> Naomi and Ruth's experience, though similar, cannot be fairly compared with that of the widow from Zarephath. The book of Ruth introduces the reader to three ladies who all experienced the loss of their

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<sup>95</sup> Deuteronomy 28:4-5.

<sup>96</sup> Bev Hislop, *Shepherding Women in Pain: Real Women, Real Issues, and What You Need to Know to Truly Help* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2010), 21.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

husbands, and in the case of Naomi, she also loses her two sons. Naomi was an Israelite, and her two daughters-in-law were Moabites. Naomi's husband, Elimelek, moved his family to the land of Moab because of a severe famine in the land of Judah. After her husband and children died, Naomi decided to go back to her homeland of Judah and compelled her daughters-in-law to go back to their homeland. Orpah decided to return to her homeland, but Ruth vehemently refused. Ruth told Naomi, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me."<sup>98</sup> In the experience that Naomi and Ruth shared, the reader is introduced to the subject and role of the kinsman-redeemer.

If a foreigner residing among you becomes rich and any of your fellow Israelites become poor and sell themselves to the foreigner or to a member of the foreigner's clan, they retain the right of redemption after they have sold themselves. One of their relatives may redeem them: An uncle or a cousin or any blood relative in their clan may redeem them. Or if they prosper, they may redeem themselves. They and their buyer are to count the time from the year they sold themselves up to the Year of Jubilee. The price for their release is to be based on the rate paid to a hired worker for that number of years. If many years remain, they must pay for their redemption a larger share of the price paid for them. If only a few years remain until the Year of Jubilee, they are to compute that and pay for their redemption accordingly. They are to be treated as workers hired from year to year; you must see to it that those to whom they owe service do not rule over them ruthlessly.

Even if someone is not redeemed in any of these ways, they and their children are to be released in the Year of Jubilee, for the Israelites belong to me as servants. They are my servants, whom I brought out of Egypt. I am the Lord your God.<sup>99</sup>

Widowhood in the Old Testament must be seen through a socio-economic and historical lens to understand the burden that is placed on them. Culturally, a woman's worth and relevance were known through their family lineage and to whom they were married. Their survival ability was

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<sup>98</sup> Ruth 1:16-17.

<sup>99</sup> Leviticus 25:47-55.

tied to whom they were married to and their male children that were born. Boaz redeemed everything that belonged to Naomi and Ruth's family and secured their family through marriage. Under Jewish customs, there was law titled a "Levirate Marriage," which allowed the brother or the next of kin of the deceased to marry his widow. This custom was first introduced in Genesis 38 in the story of Judah and Tamar. It provided the security for the widow and secured the lineage of the deceased. "If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, his widow must not marry outside the family. Her husband's brother shall take her and marry her and fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to her. The first son she bears shall carry on the name of the dead brother so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel."<sup>100</sup> The story of Naomi and Ruth is one of redemption and restoration.

She undergoes a transformation from foreigner to resident in the course of the story through her confession of loyalty to Naomi in 1:16-17, her characterization by Boaz as a "worthy woman" in 3:11 (the same designation given to Boaz in 2:1), and the role occupied by her offspring in the genealogy of David at the end of the book. Her access to the social regulation of the kinsman redeemer simply underscores this transformation, as the custom was unavailable to the resident alien.<sup>101</sup>

Boaz did not have to marry Ruth, but if he refused, he would have been labeled as one who did not obey the law. "One such piece of legislation is the levirate marriage, which is a loose piece of legislation that allows the relevant person the freedom to accept or reject the responsibility stipulated in the law with no stringent penalty except the negative appellation attached to the

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<sup>100</sup> Deuteronomy 25:5-6.

<sup>101</sup> Brad Emery, "'Redemption-Acquisition': The Marriage of Ruth as a Theology Commentary on Yahweh and Yahweh's People." *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 7 (2013): 261, accessed November 30, 2019. <https://search-ebshost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=oah&AN=OTA0000061035>.

man who rejects the marital arrangement.”<sup>102</sup> Ruth’s faithfulness, obedience, and loyalty to Naomi propelled her to be in the lineage of Jesus Christ.

New Testament literature provides more specific and detailed instructions on how to care for women and widows. In the Gospels, widows play an important part in Jesus’ ministry and His teachings. During his consecration as a child, Prophetess Anna, a widow for eighty-four years who worshipped God day and night through prayer and fasting, “gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.”<sup>103</sup>

Jesus portrayed a loving, caring, and compassionate disposition towards widows. When the widow placed her two coins in the offering, Jesus commended her and told the disciples, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.”<sup>104</sup> Similar to the widows of the Old Testament, New Testament widows were still dependent on the generosity of others.

The woman at the temple was not a poor Widow; she was poor because she was a widow. My understanding of sociology and economics in first-century Palestine tells me there was no such thing as a rich widow in that culture. Women were totally dependent on their male relatives for their livelihood. To be widowed meant not only losing someone you may have loved, but more tragically, it also meant that you were losing the one on whom you were totally dependent. Widows were forced to live off of the good graces of other male relatives and anyone in the community who might provide a meal here, a little money there.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Samson O. Olanisebe and Olusegun A. Oladosu. “Levirate Marriage amongst the Hebrews and Widow’s Inheritance amongst the Yoruba: A Comparative Investigation.” *Verbum et Ecclesia* 35 (1) (2014): 3, accessed November 30, 2019. doi:10.4102/ve.v35i1.826.

<sup>103</sup> Luke 2:38.

<sup>104</sup> Mark 12:43-44.

<sup>105</sup> Mary W. Anderson. “Widow's walk.” *The Christian Century*, November 1, 2003, Gale General OneFile: 18, accessed November 30, 2019, [https://link-gale-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/apps/doc/A110736488/ITOF?u=vic\\_liberty&sid=ITOF&xid=690583de](https://link-gale-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/apps/doc/A110736488/ITOF?u=vic_liberty&sid=ITOF&xid=690583de).



Jesus taught His disciples through a parable about the persistence of the widow. In this parable, Jesus taught the disciples that widows are often placed in a position in which rejection is commonplace and that they are forced to be tenacious in obtaining life-sustaining sustenance. “For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care what people think, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually come and attack me!’”<sup>106</sup> Likewise, they must also be persistent in prayer in supplication. He showed compassion towards the widow in Nain and raised her only son from the dead. “When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, “Don’t cry.”<sup>107</sup> Furthermore, Jesus condemns the authorities who were abusing the widows.

While all the people were listening, Jesus said to his disciples, “Beware of the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. They devour widows’ houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. These men will be punished most severely.”<sup>108</sup>

These were men who took advantage of the widow’s condition and charged them a great deal for advice and prayer and manipulated them to the point of taking all of their possessions.

The Apostle James declares that taking care of widows and orphans is part of religion, “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”<sup>109</sup>

Moreover, the Apostle Paul’s concern for widow’s paralleled the ministry of Jesus Christ in which they were to show no respect of person. Every widow with a need should have the proper attention directed towards them. The Apostle Paul provides Timothy with more

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<sup>106</sup> Luke 18:4-5.

<sup>107</sup> Luke 7:13.

<sup>108</sup> Luke 20: 45-47.

<sup>109</sup> James 1:27.

instruction for taking care of widows based upon age and family responsibility. He left Timothy in Ephesus to address the needs of the church, beginning with addressing those teaching false doctrines and blasphemy. The letter does not go into detail on what the false doctrines were, but he did name “Hymenaeus and Alexander,” whom he turned over to Satan to be “taught not to blaspheme.”<sup>110</sup> After providing this instruction, he turned his attention towards the widows.

Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need. But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God. The widow who is really in need and left all alone puts her hope in God and continues night and day to pray and to ask God for help. But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives. Give the people these instructions, so that no one may be open to blame. Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. No widow may be put on the list of widows unless she is over sixty, has been faithful to her husband, and is well known for her good deeds, such as bringing up children, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the Lord’s people, helping those in trouble and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds.<sup>111</sup>

“The term “proper recognition” demanded that the church treat the widow with respect. It would have been natural for the church to give financial support as a result of the respect.”<sup>112</sup> The Apostle Paul further iterates throughout the entire chapter of 1 Timothy 5 that widows should receive the proper care without being a burden to the church and their families. No widows should be left behind to fend for themselves.

The first deacons of the early church were chosen to address the needs of the widows and community of believers. The number of disciples was growing at an alarming rate through the preaching, teaching, and miracles performed by the Apostles. However, the community outreach ministry was not being seen to be effective enough, and the widows were being overlooked.

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<sup>110</sup> 1 Timothy 1:20.

<sup>111</sup> 1 Timothy 5:3-10.

<sup>112</sup> Thomas Lea. *New American Commentary Vol 34: 1, 2 Timothy, Titus* (B&H Publishing Group, 2012), 118.

“Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.”<sup>113</sup>

The New Testament change in basic assumptions of ministry towards women began with the ministry of Jesus. God promised a man named Simeon that he would not see death until he had seen the coming Messiah. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”<sup>114</sup>

Jesus’ ministry and view were counter-culture to the times that He was living in. He welcomed and treated women in the same manner that supported His purpose. “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”<sup>115</sup> Women were treated as fellow human beings who had a purpose and potential, and they were relevant to His ministry. The women in His ministry were taught to be disciples, evangelists, and had equal fellowship along with the men. He spoke freely to the Samaritan woman at the well while His disciples were perplexed at His actions. He allowed a woman who had an issue with blood and was considered unclean to touch Him and be healed. He rescued a woman caught in adultery and placed conviction upon the men that were waiting and willing to kill her. The Synoptic Gospels all record that women were followers of His Galilean ministry, women were the last to be with Jesus at his crucifixion, and they were first to carry the message that He has risen.

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<sup>113</sup> Acts 6:3-4.

<sup>114</sup> Luke 2:34-35.

<sup>115</sup> John 3:16.

After Jesus had risen, the Pentecost account recorded the Holy Spirit falling upon all who occupied the Upper Room, which included women. Peter testified of this account and told the crowd,

These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.<sup>116</sup>

The Holy Spirit empowered all of the disciples to preach, teach, and evangelize the world with the message of the kingdom of God. Many scholars still debate whether women were present or they were present but silent. However, "historical evidence for women in teaching and authority roles in the early church may be ambiguous, but the evidence for other ministerial roles are more conclusive."<sup>117</sup>

The Holy Spirit was evident throughout their lives, especially during the conversion of the Apostle Paul, who was also known as Saul of Tarsus. Saul was a Pharisee who was extremely feared by the early church. As a Pharisee, Saul was known as a Christian killer and persecutor. "But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison."<sup>118</sup> On his way to persecute more Christians, Saul had an encounter with the Holy Spirit on the Damascus Road, and he redirected the same fervor and tenacity to kill Christians towards spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Before launching his ministry, Paul spent time with Jesus after his conversion and stated that "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by

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<sup>116</sup> Acts 2:15-18.

<sup>117</sup> Carrie L Bates, "Gender Ontology and Women in Ministry in the Early Church." *Priscilla Papers* 25, no. 2 (Spring 2011): 10.

<sup>118</sup> Acts 8:3.

faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”<sup>119</sup> McClendon believes that Paul’s entire ministry focus was founded and built upon Galatians 2:20 and “that this passage provides a concise summary of Paul’s model the life a believer should live with and for God”<sup>120</sup>. Paul is talking about living a renewed life that is focused on living in the Spirit and no longer walking in and fulfilling the lust of the flesh.

Apostle Paul’s ministry was complemented with women being essential to helping him spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. His letters reflect a man who was open to women being equal partners in the perfecting and advancement of the kingdom of God. Paul effectively utilized women to be leaders in the development of the early church. Priscilla was a teacher of Apollos and held the church in her home with Aquila. Nympha also held church in her house. Lydia welcomed Paul into her home after her conversion, and Phoebe was recognized as a deacon. He also mentions Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis, and describes them all as “women who work hard in the Lord.”<sup>121</sup> “The way Paul describes his women colleagues...shows that he believes the Holy Spirit gifts and guides women as well as men for church leadership.”<sup>122</sup>

The church is also tasked to have ministries dedicated to the married and single women of the church. Paul iterates that both are gifts from God, has advantages, disadvantages, and his recommendation if he had to choose between both gifts. “I wish that all of you were as I am. But each of you has your own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that.”<sup>123</sup> Being single has

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<sup>119</sup> Galatians 2:20.

<sup>120</sup> P. Adam McClendon, *Paul’s Spirituality in Galatians: A Critique of Contemporary Christian Spiritualities* (Wipf & Stock, 2015), 5.

<sup>121</sup> Romans 16:12.

<sup>122</sup> Payne, Philip Barton. *Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul’s Letters* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2009), 71.

<sup>123</sup> 1 Corinthians 7:7.

had the advantage because one can do more for Christ without having the additional responsibilities that come with having a family.

Holistically reaching women has always been a part of the Christian church's nexus. The role of the church in reaching women is through worship, genuine caring, and sharing the love and purpose of the gospel.

This eschatological transformation of the community explains Paul's extraordinary affirmation that the purpose of God's reconciling work in Christ is "that we might become the righteousness of God," nor even "that we might receive the righteousness of God." Instead, the church is to become the righteousness of God: where the church embodies in its life together the world-reconciling love of Jesus Christ, the new creation is manifest. The church incarnates the righteousness of God.<sup>124</sup>

Recognizing women's contributions towards ministry is one step towards effectively bridging the gap, healing women, and revitalizing the church. It will take a team approach to combat this mentality, and this problem was identified several decades ago through a study done by Chambers and Chalfant. They stated:

That the available literature indicates that the only potential role for women entering the professional ministry/priesthood will be the one traditionally held and built around the concept of a male-dominated occupation rather than through the creation of new role definitions that might be applicable regardless of gender.<sup>125</sup>

This author believes that women do have roles in ministry and are not just regulated to the pew or as laypersons regulated to supporting roles. James Beck discusses two contemporary views concerning women in ministry. The two views discussed in this book are the Egalitarian view and the Complementarian (traditionalists) view. The complementarian view seeks to answer:

1. Does the Bible teach a hierarchical structuring of male and female relationships?
2. Do we find women in leadership positions in the Bible?

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<sup>124</sup> Thomas John Hastings. *Practical Theology and the One Body of Christ: Toward a Missional-Ecumenical Model*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007, 24-25.

<sup>125</sup> Chambers, Patricia Price, and H. Paul Chalfant. "A Changing Role or the Same Old Handmaidens: Women's Role in Today's Church." *Review Of Religious Research* 19, no. 2 (Winter78 1978): 192.

3. Do women in the Bible assume the same leadership roles as men?
4. Does the Bible limit women from filling certain leadership roles?<sup>126</sup>

He enlists the help of two scholars who debate and define their views on this issue. The egalitarian view believes that women and men are equal partners in ministry, and the roles are delineated based on gender. They believe that the Scriptures were misinterpreted to promote a “patriarchal” hierarchy, and they seek to clarify the interpretation. The complementarian view is the more traditional view that one will find in most “evangelical” circles. Depending on one’s age demographic, most individuals grew up within this viewpoint. The complementarian believes that Scripture clearly defines the roles of men and women in all aspects of the ministerial application.<sup>127</sup> In a study done by Dennis Horton in which he examined the correlation of resurgent Calvinism, and theological perspectives of Baptist ministry students about the view of women’s role in ministry, he gathered some interesting data. The survey data reflected that strongly egalitarian ministry students were much less likely to be Calvinistic than participants who hold a strongly complementarian/patriarchal understanding of women’s ministerial roles.<sup>128</sup>

### Theoretical Foundations

God has consistently proven that He is relational and takes a personal interest in the details and affairs of His creation. The significance of establishing an effective women’s holistic ministry cannot be overemphasized since women have been strategically neglected in the church. There is a need for adequate care, and the church must meet the need.

I have come to realize that women everywhere have the same basic needs! We all want to have positive influence on those around us; we all need the fellowship of other Christian

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<sup>126</sup> James R Beck. (Ed.). *Two Views on Women in Ministry*. Revised. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005, 189.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 189.

<sup>128</sup> Dennis J. Horton, “Resurgent Calvinism's Influence among Baptist Ministry Students and Its Implications for Women in Ministry.” *Baptist History and Heritage*, 45.2 (2010), 23.

women; and all of us desire to use the abilities and talents God has given us. We might not fully understand how God wants to work through us and we may even be hesitant to seek out that will, but the neat thing is that God has a plan for every woman.<sup>129</sup>

The Apostle Paul instructed Titus to build a church that teaches the people how to become Godly men and how to become Godly women. He commanded Titus,

Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can urge the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.<sup>130</sup>

An effective and successful women's ministry builds a platform for the up and coming generation to have a foundation in which they can study the word of God, be taught the Word of God, and teach others what they have learned through the Scriptures. This must be a non-threatening environment whereby women can feel safe to explore and share similar contextual experiences. Women sharing and teaching the younger generation of women will birth future leaders needed to combat the rise of feminism in the church. When this author discusses the rise of feminism, in a negative disposition, a disclaimer must be noted that this form of feminism disregards the proper roles and responsibilities that God has given for men and women. This author believes that "women ministers bring sensitivity to lay concerns and to families, as well as to issues related to gender and inclusion."<sup>131</sup>

Women teaching women will also awaken leadership potential that has been dormant or suppressed. Younger women will realize that they have a purpose in God and that they are called

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<sup>129</sup> Linda Clark, *5 Leadership Essentials for Women: Developing Your Ability to Make Things Happen* (Birmingham, AL: New Hope Publishers, 2004), 9.

<sup>130</sup> Titus 2:3-5.

<sup>131</sup> John L. Allen, Jr. "The Feminization of the Church." *National Catholic Reporter* 43, no. 34 (Aug 17, 2007): 13, 17, accessed December 8, 2019, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/215293964?accountid=12085>.



to be leaders for the generation coming behind them. Daigle states that “God has a unique plan for you that utilizes your personality, gifting, and life situation to intentionally influence others. It may be time to take that truth seriously and open your heart to follow him on a journey to fulfill his purposes.”<sup>132</sup>

It has been historically noted that women have been foundational pillars of the church and usually are the largest demographic in American churches. Their faithfulness and sacrifice to the church and mission of Christ have often been paid with personal neglect to themselves. Pastors must understand the dynamics that women face, which leads to frustration and exhaustion.

...today’s Christian woman is tired...they want you to understand that their attendance and church involvement often comes at great personal sacrifice. In order to attend and work at church, a woman will often give up sleep, rest, solitude, and all personally refreshing activities-such as walk in the woods or coffee with a friend. She will drive herself to exhaustion in order to accept the jobs you request of her.<sup>133</sup>

Leadership Models and training for women must be unique and specific for their needs.

Harris and Leberman noted that,

As women face unique challenges in leadership which are not always appreciated by others, Hopkins, O’Neill, Passarelli, and Bilimoria stress that it is imperative that leadership development strategies are advanced to meet their specific needs. Women-only leadership training, along with other leadership development initiatives, is essential for women to develop a stronger sense of self and stronger relationships to other women.<sup>134</sup>

These unique challenges are further strengthened by society’s view of what constitutes leadership or what a good leader looks like. Role congruity theory examines the perceptions and

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<sup>132</sup> Kay Daigle, *From Ordinary Woman to Spiritual Leader: Grow Your Influence* (Bloomington, IN: WestBow Press, 2003), 1.

<sup>133</sup> Denise George, *What Women Wish Pastors Knew: Understanding the Hopes, Hurts, Needs, and Dreams of Women in the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 21.

<sup>134</sup> Candice A Harris and Sarah I. Leberman, “Leadership Development for Women in New Zealand Universities: Learning From the New Zealand Women in Leadership Program.” *Advances in Developing Human Resources* 14, no. 1 (February 2012): 28–44, accessed September 8, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1525001312444444>

belief systems of gender and social roles. Good leaders and leadership are still viewed from a gender-specific perspective and has been dominated by men, especially in the political, military, and corporate arenas. Ferguson notes, “The leadership role is perceived as an agentic role most closely connected to the stereotypic male role.”<sup>135</sup> Additionally,

When people are asked to picture what a leader looks like, they most often visualize a male, a practice commonly known as think manager—think male. Therefore, male leaders experience role congruity because their descriptive and prescriptive gender norms state they are and ought to be suited for leadership. For women, there is role incongruity, and they experience two types of prejudice. First, women are seen as less capable for leadership positions because the descriptive gender norms for women state that they are not as agentic as men are. This leads to fewer women having access to leadership. Second, women already in leadership positions experience a backlash. They are evaluated less favorably than men are because female leaders violate the prescriptive gender norm that agentic behavior is less suited for women. Therefore, women have difficulty both entering into leadership positions and maintaining legitimate authority once there.<sup>136</sup>

A unique theoretical model, from a Biblical perspective, is the Titus 2 ministry model that focuses specifically on ministering to widows within the ministry. This approach is useful because it focuses on a specific need that addresses areas of loss, grief, dreams, hope deferred, anger, and depression. This plan, when implemented correctly, is sound and effective and touches on every need for the widow. However, because it is specifically for widows, it is myopic and will not be effective for those that are married and single. Parris and Leberman did a research study on Servant Leadership Theory from an organizational perspective and noted:

Servant leadership theory’s emphasis on service to others and recognition that the role of organizations is to create people who can build a better tomorrow resonates with scholars and practitioners who are responding to the growing perceptions that corporate leaders

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<sup>135</sup> Todd W Ferguson, “Female Leadership and Role Congruity within the Clergy: Communal Leaders Experience no Gender Differences Yet Agentic Women Continue to Suffer Backlash.” *Sex Roles* 78, no. 5-6 (2018): 41, accessed December 11, 2019, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/2002038595?accountid=12085>.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

have become selfish and who are seeking a viable leadership theory to help resolve the challenges of the twenty-first century.<sup>137</sup>

Another theoretical model is a Jesus Model in which builds upon the same principles that He used and modeled to train his disciples. His leadership model inspired, instructed, and implanted discipline into both men and women. According to Nsiah, Christ's models of leadership involved servant leadership, vision, inter-personal intelligence, non-segregationist, teaching, being a resource provider, compassion, a sense of purpose, and delegation of authority.<sup>138</sup> Also, "His leadership qualities are incomparable to those of any human leader. By making Christ our role model, we would lead aright and be able to change society for the better."<sup>139</sup>

The Transformational Model of Leadership addresses leadership for women's ministry in a modern context. This model of leadership is useful for churches that want to be culturally relevant for the younger women but will alienate the older generation. Finding a balanced model of leadership that bridges the generational gap has been the struggle that most churches are facing in this millennial generation.

Edwards and Matthews introduce six models of women's ministry that have used from the mid to late 1800s. They are the: Tea Party Model, The Social Activism Model, The Missions Model, The Parachurch Bible Study Model, The Formal Model, and The One-Size Fits All

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<sup>137</sup> Denise Linda Parris and Jon Welty Peachey. "A Systematic Literature Review of Servant Leadership Theory in Organizational Contexts: JBE JBE." *Journal of Business Ethics* 113, no. 3 (03, 2013): 377-93, accessed December 7, 2019, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview>

<sup>138</sup> Gabriel Nsaih, "Leading as Jesus Led: Christ Models of Leadership." *Open Journal of Leadership*, 2, (2013): 103-105, accessed September 8, 2019. <http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/doi:10.4236/ojl.2013.24016>, 103-105.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 105.

Model.<sup>140</sup> The Tea Party Model gathered for social events and activities. These were effective in providing training women on how to conduct themselves while out in public and met only a social need.<sup>141</sup> The Social Activism Model focused more on service during the 1850s through an organization such as the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) and did not focus much on the ministry of Christ.<sup>142</sup> The Missions Model was a model that sent women out into the mission field as missionaries and church programs focused more on missional training. However, “daughters of the new millennium fail to see the need for world missions.”<sup>143</sup>

The Parachurch Bible Study Model was a model that provide Bible studies outside of the church, and services were conducted in the comfort of the home. This model was sufficient for women at a time when Bible Study meetings were not being conducted or were held at an inconvenient time for women to attend, or the church did not have a women’s ministry.<sup>144</sup> The Formal Model is a model that is non-existent today. Men and women are no longer dressing to impress or wearing formal wear to church. The modern church has a “come as you are” culture.<sup>145</sup> The One-Size Fits All Model focused on provided women’s ministry and programs during the standard day time. However, we have several different categories of women in which some are staying at home mothers, while others are actively involved in the industry. <sup>146</sup>

These models, when first introduced, were considered to be revolutionary for its time. This same revolutionary mindset is needed for the 21<sup>st</sup>-century church. “Revolutionary Christians

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<sup>140</sup> Sue Edwards and Kelley Matthews, *New Doors in Ministry to Women: A Fresh Model for Transforming Your Church, Campus, or Mission Field* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2002), 19-23.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>146</sup> Edwards and Matthews, *New Doors in Ministry to Women*, 23.

are people who want more-much-of God in their lives. And they are doing whatever it takes to get it.”<sup>147</sup> This attitude and mindset often come with a price that few are willing to pay.

Revolutionary mindsets when it involves women and ministry will lead to a head-on collision with those operating with older models of church leaders. To overcome the status quo, women and leaders must understand their roles in revolution and transformation. Barna further iterates, “Wrap your mind and heart around this realization: You are a slave to Christ, an ambassador of God, a servant of the King, a soldier in the invisible battle of purity and evil. You will find inner peace only when you know who you truly are.”<sup>148</sup>

Although the interest in influencing women has increased, discipling women, finding events that reach women, and encouraging them while ensuring that they are not walking alone is paramount in reaching women. Regardless of what model is used, church leaders must understand that there is no one model for every situation.

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<sup>147</sup> George Barna, *Revolution*, (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, INC., 2005, 2012), 9.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

#### Intervention Design

The methodology presented in this chapter speaks to the research steps that address the problem and purpose of this plan. The accentuating thesis is to expose the need that specific ministries for women are lacking, and churches must design programs to meet their needs and grow the church effectively. As stated earlier in chapter one, this church is struggling to improve and meet the needs of the women within its local walls resulting in a plateau effect and rapid decline. Therefore, it is imperative that a solution must be sought, worked out, and implemented to address this problem. This chapter outlines the design, interview questions, participants, the researcher's role, procedures, settings, data collection, and analysis based on the best methodology for this research study.

The action research plan for this study is designed to be qualitative instead of quantitative. "Fundamentally, action research is grounded in a qualitative research paradigm whose purpose is to gain greater clarity and understanding of a question, problem, or issue."<sup>149</sup> Stringer states that quantitative studies are "based on the precise definition, measurement, and analysis of the relationship between a carefully defined set of variables, action research commences with a broadly defined question, problem, or issue."<sup>150</sup> This study is designed specifically for women as a subunit and not the entire church organization. The hope for this study is to provide insights for other churches that are experiencing this same issue, and if the research proves successful, a blueprint is thus created that others can build upon. Denton County

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<sup>149</sup> Ernest T Stringer, *Action Research*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2014), 36.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

is filled with churches, with a similar size and demographics that are looking for answers and solutions to why this phenomenon occurs. Sensing cites Yin, one of his researchers, using a research method in a similar context, “Yin defines the case study research method as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not evident, and in which multiple sources of evidence are used.”<sup>151</sup> Stringer further iterates that “action research is necessarily based on localized studies that focus on the need to understand how things are happening, rather than merely on what is happening, and to understand the ways that stakeholders—people concerned with the issue—perceive, interpret, and respond to events related to the issue investigated.”<sup>152</sup>

### SWOT Analysis

Before the action research study, the researcher performed a SWOT Analysis of the pastor, pastoral leadership, and the church. SWOT is an acronym that stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. This analysis provided the catalyst to begin brainstorming ideas and review ministry strategies, positions, vision, and directions. During this analysis, the researcher looked for strategic opportunities, trends, and concerns.

The strength of the church is that the ministry is in a location that is close to a major interstate that members and future members can easily access. Also, the members are committed to being a part of this ministry. They have a heart of compassion for the ministry and are willing to do whatever it takes to keep the church going. Also, being a small church, the members have easy access to the pastor and familiarity with each other and the communities that can be serviced. Being a small church is an often-overlooked opportunity because it negates feelings of

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<sup>151</sup> Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 141.

<sup>152</sup> Stringer, *Action Research*, 36.

loneliness and isolation. Also, the church can experiment with new ideas and strategies with minimal risk.

The weakness of the church is that the location of the church is hidden from the street, and no visible signs are pointing future members to its site. Services are currently operating in the business center mall connected to other small businesses and an Alcoholics Anonymous center. Also, the members are getting discouraged that the ministry is stagnant, not growing, and they are confused as to why the church is not progressing despite their eagerness to do whatever it takes to remove the stagnation to help the ministry grow. In addition, there are no systems in place for the church to be healthy, and thus systems are being created by default. The church needs an evangelism system, volunteer system, small group system, Sunday morning or weekend service system, stewardship system, and a leadership system.

The leadership system is the first system that should be created because the church will go and grow as the leadership grows. Leadership expert John Maxwell is often quoted, stating, "Everything rises and falls on leadership." Whether it is in the business, political, or religious arenas, this statement proves to be prophetic. The pastor is bi-vocational and is often tired and becoming burned out from the additional duties assigned by the church. He does not have time to train and develop his leaders. His burn out has led to discouragement and financial struggles, which leaves the church in a constant state of need. Implementation training is also needed when the systems are put in place.

The opportunities of the church are that the ministry consists of 15-25 members, which are majority women, and can provide wide-open space for leadership and training opportunities. Because it is currently small, these opportunities can be catered to its size.



The threats of this church are also due to its size. Because the church is small, the opportunities offered at larger churches become more enticing for the current members to leave and explore. Larger churches can provide opportunities such as financial assistance, children's ministry, men and women's ministry, and more areas to serve in.

The SWOT analysis showed that there is much room for improvement and that ministry systems must be created to meet the needs of the people. The report showed that women are becoming weary and are developing feelings of hopelessness and helplessness because their needs are not being met. The primary conclusion from this analysis is that, since women are the majority population within the church, the implementation strategy must focus on them.

#### Procedures

The project required the researcher to submit and secure approval from the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) (see Appendix A) to begin the research study. In addition to receiving support from the Liberty University IRB, the researcher provided consent forms (see Appendix B) to the interview participants, and requested and received approval from the pastor to conduct the research at the church (see Appendix C).

Upon securing approval from the IRB and permission from the pastor acquiescing to the researcher's request, the researcher began eliciting the current female members to participate in the study. The interviewees were asked open-ended questions (see Appendix D) to facilitate discussions and gather information. "Researchers of all philosophical shapes and ontological sizes use three overarching data collection methods. These are as follows: (1) In-depth, open-ended interviews; (2) direct observation; and (3) written documents."<sup>153</sup> The interviews will be recorded via audio technology and will be transcribed by the researcher for further analysis. This

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<sup>153</sup> Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 79.

process will assist the researcher to “record accounts that are both detailed and accurate.”<sup>154</sup> Also, if additional women join the church, they will be offered the same opportunity to participate.

### Participants

To participate in the research study, the participants had to meet specific criteria. The participants must be active adult "female" members of the church. The female members must be 18 years or older and attend church services regularly. Active members are those who have completed a membership class, completed and signed a membership form, and made a pledge of record to give their time, talent, and financial contributions to support the church. A list of members meeting the criteria was obtained from the Pastor and recruited for the study.

Since the researcher is a pastor within this local church, a rapport and trust have already been established. The participants were offered the opportunity to be interviewed at other locations besides being inside the church or on the church grounds. The researcher preferred to conduct interviews away from the church because it would allow the participants to have a better sense of anonymity and comfort. After all, they will not have a feeling of being watched or wonder if someone else is trying to listen to their responses. If the participants choose to go off-site, such as going to a Starbucks, the researcher will buy the first cup of coffee as an added incentive. Ironically, the majority of the members preferred to be interviewed at the church due to their busy work schedules and family commitments. The church's regularly scheduled program for Bible study, prayer, and Sunday morning worship was conducive to the times these ladies had already built into their schedules.

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<sup>154</sup> Stringer, *Action Research*, 109.

## Interviews

The researcher expected to interview approximately nineteen of the active and eligible women in the church for the study. However, only thirteen participants agreed to be interviewed.

The questions for the interviewees were designed and directed towards identifying and meeting the women's needs and implementing programs and systems that will foster growth and development. A consent form was provided to them to sign, which represented their approval for recording the interview. Before each meeting, the researcher described to them the current situation at Salvation Church of North Dallas and how their participation would help the church to get healthier and grow. The purpose of describing the situation to them is to express a different perspective from someone viewing the church with a different set of lenses. When individuals have been in a state of disarray, the situation becomes their new standard because they have learned to adapt to their environment and make concessions to survive. This state of existence fosters an environment of stagnation, uncomfortable accessibility, and despair.

The standard open-ended questions given to the female members of the church are:

1. What is your age?
2. What is your ethnicity?
3. What is your marital status?
  - a. Single
  - b. Married
  - c. Divorced
  - d. Divorced and remarried
  - e. Widow
4. If you answer *Yes* to questions c through e:
  - a. How long were you married?
  - b. How long have you been divorced?
  - c. How long since you have remarried?
  - d. How long have you been a widow?
  - e. Do you live alone?
5. Do you have any children? If so, what are their ages?
6. What is your current employment status?
7. How long have you been attending this church?
8. What attracted you to this church?

9. Has there ever been a women's ministry at this church?
  - a. If so, was it effective?
10. Have you ever been involved in a women's ministry?
11. Are you interested in being in a women's ministry?
12. When you hear the phrase "women's ministry", what comes to mind?
13. In what areas of your life can the church assist you?
  - a. Personal
  - b. Financial
  - c. Counseling
  - d. Visitation
  - e. Other
14. Do you feel that the church has neglected you in these areas?
15. Have these areas resulted in any of the following negative issues?
  - a. Depression
  - b. Addiction
  - c. Anger
  - d. Other
16. What gifts, talents, or passions would you like to share with the church?
  - a. Drawing
  - b. Music: Instruments and singing
  - c. Drama
  - d. Book clubs
  - e. Other
17. What are the most important things you would like to see in the church's women's ministry?
18. What days would you like to meet for women's ministry meetings and events?
19. What barriers exist that may prevent you from participating?
20. What recommendations would you suggest to meet the needs of the women here?

The following interview statements will be measured on a Likert scale to judge the current success of the church in meeting the needs of the women:

1. I feel that the church is aware of my needs as a woman.
2. I believe that the church is meeting my needs as a woman.
3. I feel that I am connected to this church.
4. I believe that a women's ministry will help me to further grow and development.
5. I believe that a women's ministry will strengthen the entire church.
6. I believe that, along with a professional counselor (if needed), a women's ministry can help with negative issues.

(Likert scale: 1-Strongly Agree, 2-Agree, 3-Neutral, 4-Disagree, 5-Strongly Disagree)

The researcher believes that these questions are substantive to the overall purpose of the thesis and are designed to be used for later analysis and research. Questions 1 through to 4 are demographic questions that are intended to indicate any significant differences concerning life

experiences, cultural and sub-cultural ideologies, and familial upbringing. Also, these four questions build upon the foundation on how to develop and implement an effective women's ministry. The remaining questions were also explorative and were used to address and identify the areas of satisfaction, frustration, and that could potentially lead to solutions for these issues.

The ladies were very eager and excited to participate. During the interview, many of the ladies wished that they had received an advanced copy of the questions so that they could formulate more articulate responses. The researcher had to encourage them that there are no right or wrong responses to the questions and reiterated that these questions were to help implement a women's ministry and to identify the women's needs that are not being met in the church. For instance, if one of the interviewees is widowed, an implementation strategy based on 1 Timothy 5:3-16 can be explored. Exploring widowhood is crucial because widowhood is not based on age, even though it is normalized for an older population. Widow's needs include financial assistance, visitation, security, and other support that is consistent with a 21st-century ministry.

The research questions that identified the successes or failures of the church used a Likert scale and measured their satisfaction or frustration with the church and their willingness to proceed forward with this ministry. With each response, the researcher asked additional questions to ascertain the "why" of their responses. The "why" of their decisions cannot be ignored and must be furthered explored. The "why" provides clarity to their confidence or lack thereof. It explains their motivations and decision making. Understanding the "why" also gives the researcher insight into whether these ladies know their purpose in Christ or life in general.

According to Sinek,

Energy motivates but charisma inspires. Energy is easy to see, easy to measure and easy to copy. Charisma is hard to define, near impossible measure and too elusive to copy. All

great leaders have charisma because all great leaders have clarity of WHY; an undying belief in a purpose or cause bigger than themselves.<sup>155</sup>

The researcher noticed that many of the ladies were extremely appreciative that someone was genuinely concerned about their needs and felt safe in sharing their ideas and feelings. Sinek further reiterates that “with trust comes a sense of value-real value, not just value equated with money.”<sup>156</sup> When trust is earned, individuals tear down internally built walls and allow others to come in. “The purposes of a person’s heart are deep waters, but one who has insight draws them out.”<sup>157</sup>

### Implementation of the Intervention Design

#### **Data Collection**

The data collection was gathered through recorded and transcribed interviews and observations of each interviewee. In addition to conducting interviews, the researcher also requested documents from pastoral leadership. The documents that were requested to be reviewed were:

1. Organizational chart
2. By-laws
3. Budget materials for all ministries and ministry journals
4. Sermon and Church calendar
5. Vision board

The organizational chart revealed if the leadership has a plan in place for its leaders. The by-laws allow one to explore if the ministry is following its plans and procedures for the church.

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<sup>155</sup> Simon Sinek, “Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action.” London, England: Penguin Books Ltd, 2009, 134.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>157</sup> Proverbs 20:5.

The budget materials for all ministries, including the women's ministry, were explored to find any correlation to the church decline. This collection also helped to gauge the overall financial health of the church's finances. The ministry journals, sermons, and church calendar were also requested to see if they are plans to celebrate the women besides the traditional Mother's Day or women's day programs designated once each year. Finally, the vision board was requested to examine any plans or forethought to meet the needs of the women and grow the church. The researcher was not able to obtain the church's by-laws, budget materials for all ministries and ministry journals, and vision board but was able to review the organizational chart, sermon calendar, and church calendar.

The data that was collected by the researcher from the pastoral staff provided the needed supplemental information to be used for data triangulation, which was a perfect method for the issues presented in this research. Data triangulation is defined as "the use of a variety of data sources in a study."<sup>158</sup> Stringer states that triangulation provides additional credibility to the research study.

The credibility of a study is enhanced when multiple sources of information are incorporated. As Stake (2005) suggests, the inclusion of perspectives from diverse sources enables the inquirer to clarify meaning by identifying ways the phenomena are being perceived. These perspectives may be complemented and challenged by information derived from observations, reports, and a variety of other sources.<sup>159</sup>

The implementation of the intervention design will also include scriptural preaching and teaching of sermons that speak to the uplifting of women and congregants. The researcher believes that the Word of God knows how to find and reach an individual where they are and speak to that specific need or crisis experienced.

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<sup>158</sup> Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 73.

<sup>159</sup> Stringer, *Action Research*, 93.

## Observation

The researcher began, after completing the interview process, observing the interviewees for any changes in morale. The researcher observed and took notes of their responses to sermons preached by the pastor or researcher that was directed to them. Some of the sermons that were taught and preached were titled “Expect a Shift,” “Carried by Faith and Friends,” “Pursue it,” “Don’t Look Back,” and “Walk it Out.”

Afterward, many of the ladies were eager to get started on their suggestions and were questioning when they can get started. The researcher observed their willingness and eagerness and assured them that implementation would begin as soon as possible and practical. “Observation enables researchers to record important details that become the basis for formulating descriptions from which stakeholding groups produce their accounts.”<sup>160</sup> This will provide more data for analysis and answering the research questions. These observations allow the researcher to make changes to the intervention strategy by revealing new and innovative strategies that can be implemented into the women’s ministry that will promote hope, vision, direction, and positively influence growth and development at Salvation Church of North Dallas. Also, it will reveal if intervention is sufficient or if the methods need to be adjusted. During this process, the researcher will take detailed notes as comments are being made concerning the research question.

The researcher plans to observe for a quarterly trial period to evaluate the intervention strategy. The researcher will group all the data collected from each interviewee’s responses to each question and will assess their responses without bias. The researcher believes that the data

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<sup>160</sup> Stringer, *Action Research*, 113.



analysis conducted from the interviews will reveal themes, similarities, and differences and allow gaps in the literature to be filled.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis was conducted on each interviewee's answers to the research question and from observations during implementation. Sensing states that "data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the complicated mass of qualitative data that the researcher generates during the research process."<sup>161</sup> The researcher will be looking for a solid foundation to build best practices. Data triangulation will also be conducted by comparing and contrasting the data from the interviews, observations, and documents obtained from the pastoral leadership.

Stringer lists a methodical way of doing data analysis that is effective for managers and professionals. Procedures for this form of analysis involve

- Reviewing the data
- Unitizing the data
- Categorizing and coding
- Identifying themes
- Organizing a category system
- Developing a reporting framework<sup>162</sup>

Reviewing the evidence is self-explanatory and is the catalyst to begin the process of reviewing each issue based on the questions. Unitizing the data involves connecting the ideas, events, and experiences. Categorizing and data coding is the third step in analyzing the research and requires grouping and categorizing the information collected. The interviews for this research were transcribed, categorized, and coded by the researcher using a software system called

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<sup>161</sup> Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 194.

<sup>162</sup> Stringer, *Action Research*, 140.

HyperRESEARCH. It is a software that provides coding and mind-mapping tools, which are excellent resources for data analysis. Several themes emerged and were captured utilizing this software. Themes such as “trust,” “confidentiality,” “consistency,” “unity,” and “safety,” which are essential to women regarding having an effective women’s ministry. The women also expressed interest in performing outreaching activities to meet other women. These outcomes will be discussed thoroughly in the next chapter.

After concluding with the analysis and observations, the researcher held a meeting with the pastor to discuss the research themes and observations thus far and to discuss the possibility to make plans to begin a women’s ministry on the first Saturday of each month. The researcher did not disclose any names of the individuals who participated in the study nor provided any information that they contributed towards the interview questions. All the research data is kept in a secure location and on a password protected and encrypted computer for additional privacy and protection of the individual.

The goal of this thesis project is to meet the needs of the women within this local church, which will result in the church growing by 10% within three (3) months. Effectiveness will be measured through post-observation studies, interviews, and providing questionnaires to the ladies that participated in the study. Church health and church growth terminology will be used synonymously because this researcher believes that healthy churches, organisms, or organizations will grow. Church health/growth will be measured through new member’s attendance, baptisms, salvations, and offerings.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Results**

Chapter Four presents the results of the data analysis and collection from the interviews and observations. This presentation assists the researcher in forming a basis on which an examination will produce a response to the researcher's thesis statement.

The research resulted in direct and indirect discoveries in which several themes emerged concerning the standard open-ended questions. The indirect findings are discussed and further explored in Chapter 5, Conclusion. Additional questions were developed and graded on a Likert Scale that assessed the thoughts, actions, and feelings of the participants.

#### **Direct Result**

The interviews conducted provide much purposeful information concerning the needs of the women at the Salvation Church of North Dallas. The researcher conducted interviews on 13 out of 19 women requested and began by asking each individual twenty open-ended questions. From the outcome of these interviews, several themes emerged from the observation that will impact the ministry going forward. The seven major themes that emerged and captured include trust, confidentiality, unity, safety, consistency, leadership, and outreach. These themes provided the researcher with insight into the influences that are essential to women regarding having an effective women's ministry. Outreach was a surprising theme that emerged in which many of the participants felt that it was essential to reach out and help other women who are hurting and in need of a safe place to express themselves. The themes of the twenty open-ended questions are explained below.

## Trust

Trust emerged as a theme throughout several inquiries of the interview. Trust is an earned process that involves understanding, empathy, listening, and connecting. One author noted that when connecting to people, especially the younger generation, which “you don’t just ‘make friends’ with young people, and, bingo, they trust you. You’d have to make a commitment to being a part of their lives, to understand what makes them tick and how they think...”<sup>163</sup> The author’s statement implies that trust is developed through relationships and is a crucial ingredient to the success of the individual and the health of the church.

## Confidentiality

The second theme that emerged from the interview questions was the issue of confidentiality. The interviewees voiced concern that if they choose to disclose private matters, there is a high probability that their private conversations would not be contained and eventually shared with others and possibly echoed from the pulpit. Trust and confidentiality are closely related, but the importance of confidentiality requires it to be separate from the trust factor as a theme. King Solomon states, “Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a bad tooth and a foot out of joint.”<sup>164</sup> Poirier notes that “In conflict resolution, the more private a matter can be kept, the greater hope there is for reconciliation because confidences are more apt to be broken as more people become involved in a dispute.”<sup>165</sup> Confidentiality is the building block of trust and promotes authentic conversation and shared experiences, especially when dealing with private, painful, and conflicting issues.

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<sup>163</sup> David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons: *unChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christianity...and Why It Matters*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 110.

<sup>164</sup> Proverbs 25:19, NKJV.

<sup>165</sup> Alfred Poirier, *The Peacemaking Pastor: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Church Conflict* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006), 29.

## Unity

A consistent theme that emerged from the interviews was the theme of unity. Jesus spoke about the importance of this concept with His disciples. “Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”<sup>166</sup> Many ladies communicated that for the women’s ministry to be fruitful, unity must exist. Unity promotes vision, strategy, and victory. Scripturally, this concept is demonstrated throughout the relationships shown in Old and New Testament Literature.

## Safety

Safety is a theme that emerged during the interviews in which the interviewees expressed that they must feel safe to share and connect with others. They feel safe, at times, but not consistently. Women love safety and need a safe place to talk and find support. A safe environment fosters growth in their relationship with God and with others. When women see a mutual connection with each other, regardless of age, marital, or any other socio-economic status, they flourish. A safe environment eliminates fear and allows God and others to minister to their needs effectively.

## Consistency

Another important theme that emerged was the theme of consistency. While conversing with the interviewees, many uttered that this was a source of frustration from within the church. The members that have been with the ministry for at least four years articulated that they had a woman’s ministry at one point in time, but they stopped meeting. Some of the members viewed it as a women’s get together and not as a ministry event. They revealed that this process was

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<sup>166</sup> Matthew 18:19-20.

repeated several times throughout the years but eventually topped. They mentioned their concerns with the pastoral leadership, but actions to address their concerns remained non-existent. Consistency, within a ministry context, provides individuals with a sense of routine and reliability. Consistency will build commitment and attendance and must begin with leadership.

### Leadership

Another essential theme emerged during the interviews, and that was the theme of leadership. Leadership was a significant factor for 90% of the interviewees that joined the church. However, over time, 52% now expressed concern with the church's leadership team and its effect on the success of implementing a women's ministry. The concept of this finding and theme is discussed in Chapter 5 as an indirect result.

### Outreach

The final theme that emerged from the interviews was the theme of outreach. Fourteen interviewees, which represents 56% of the total population and 73% of the interviewees expressed a desire to do outreach activities to reach other women. Rainer states that "When a church ceases to have a heart and ministry for its community, it is on the path toward death. Whenever local churches are mentioned in the New Testament, they are always exhorted to be other-centered."<sup>167</sup> Rainer further iterates that being other-centered requires intentionality on following the Great Commission.

"Going" in Christ's power requires effort. Certainly the results are dependent upon Him, but obedience is work. And obedience in His power means that we are praying to Jesus so we can reach others. That requires an "other" focus. That requires us to look beyond ourselves. That requires us to get uncomfortable. That requires us to go.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Thom S. Rainer, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church: 12 Ways to Keep Yours Alive* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2014), 28.

<sup>168</sup> Rainer, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church*, 42.

## Interview Questions Results

The researcher utilized two identifying questions from the twenty standard open-ended questions, which identified the respondent's age and marital status for background informational purposes.

### Background Information

Under background information, the researcher concentrated on beginning particulars such as participant's age and marital status as provided below.

#### Participant's Age

Since the researcher is focusing on women and women's ministry, it was necessary for the determination of the participant's age categories, and the results are provided in the below table as follows. This data demonstrates that age is an essential factor in the lives of the respondents and shapes their perspective concerning the church.

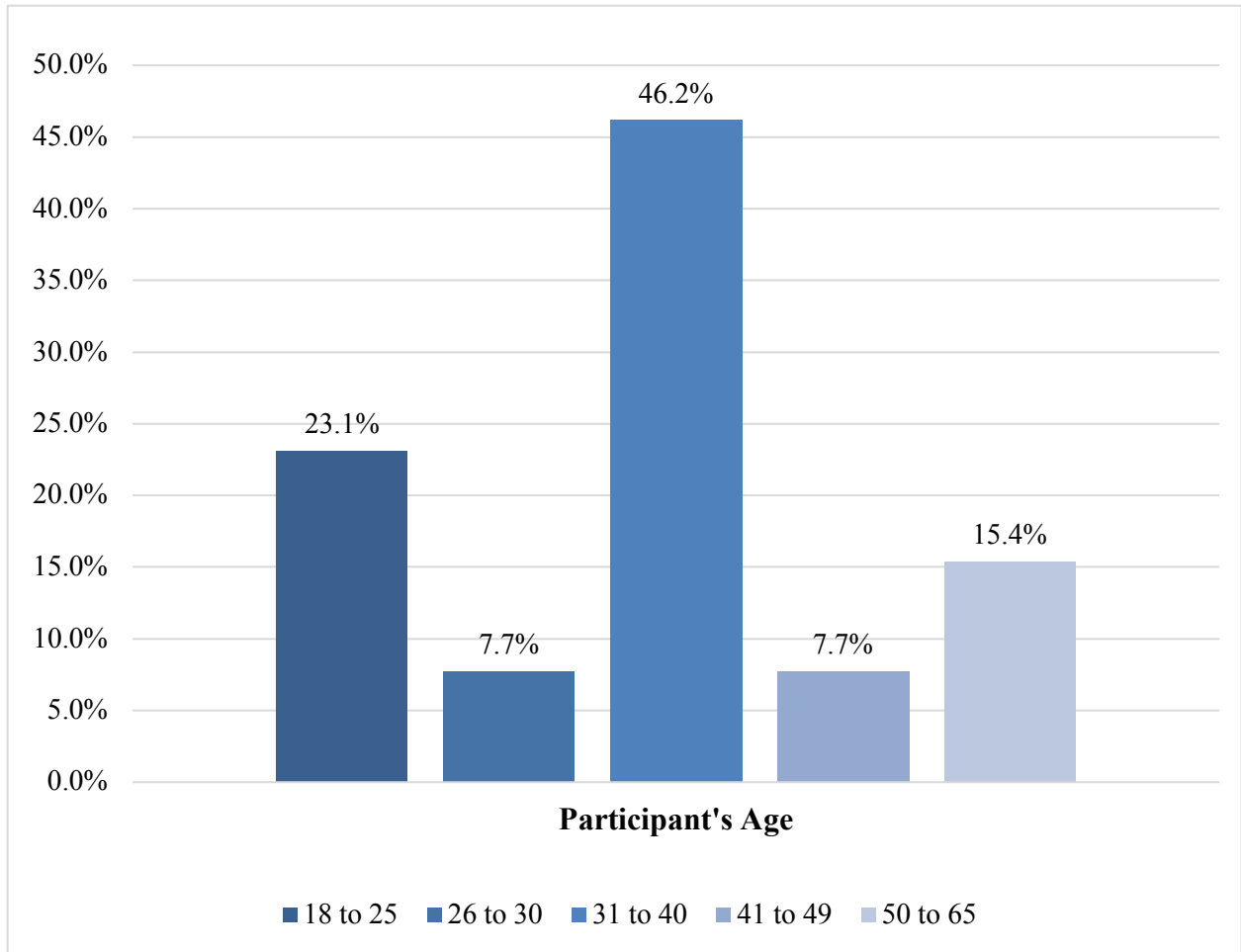


Figure 1. Distribution of Participants age

From the data above, it was clear that the majority of the participants were from the ages ranged from 31 years to 40 years. This majority age group is classified as “Millennials,” at 46.2%, followed by those in the 18 to 25 years at 23.1%, then those between 50 to 65 years at 15.4%, and finally those in the 26 to 30 years and those in 41 to 49 years were equal at 7.7%.

#### Marital Status

Second, in background information, it was necessary to determine the participant’s marital status. The results are provided in the figure below.



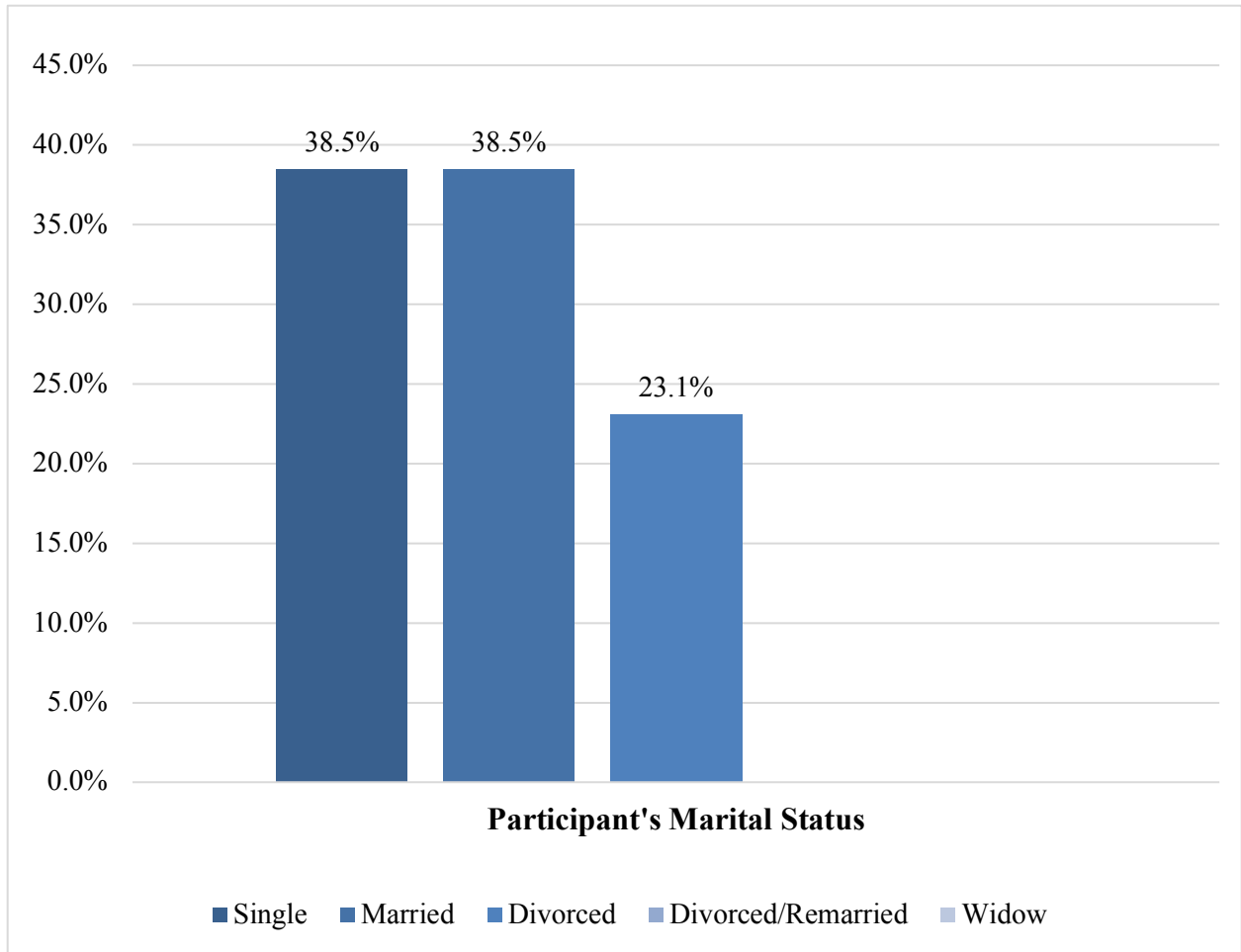


Figure 2. Distribution of Participants Marital Status

Results indicated that the single and married categories were equally represented at 38.5%, followed by those who were divorced and 23.1%. There were no participants who were widowed.

The researcher concluded that age demographics and marital status provided insight into how the respondents navigated through their experiences of physical, emotional, social, and spiritual changes.

Six additional questions were examined to the participants, which asked whether they strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree. These questions were based on a Likert scale to elaborate more on the standard open-ended questions and measure the

participants' individual and collective satisfaction of the church. The findings of the individual questions from the Likert Scale reveal surprising information that was not evident during the regular interactions of the Sunday morning or mid-week Bible study experiences. These findings were not observed based on body language, verbal, and non-verbal expressions.

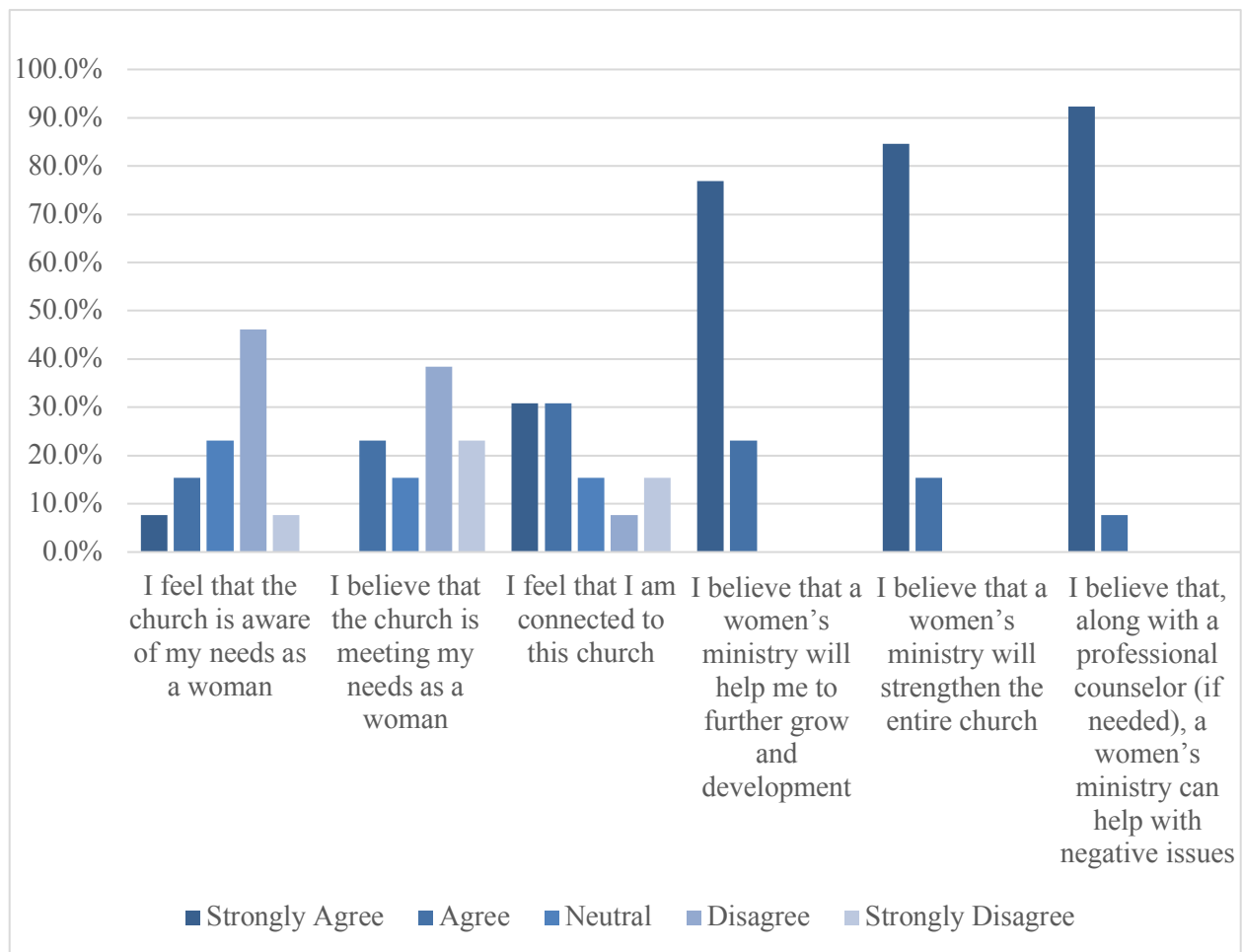


Figure 3. Likert Questionnaire Results

The above chart represents the total calculation of the interviewee's responses to all six questions. The researcher will go into a deeper depth of each category below but notes that every church needs some form of a women's ministry in operation. The data revealed that percentages for the first three categories ranged higher in the "Disagree" category, which signals a disconnection and disengagement in the church and highlights a potential danger in the church to

lose members who were actively engaged in the ministry at one point in time. Many factors contribute to women becoming disengaged, and Barna notes that five trends are contributing factors to why women are becoming more disengaged from the church. These trends are competing priorities, busyness, lack of emotional engagement and support, changing family structures, and changes in belief.<sup>169</sup> Regarding the lack of emotional engagement and support factor, the author iterates that, “another factor potentially contributing to women’s disengagement from church communities is that they report finding little or no emotional support there.”<sup>170</sup>

Survey Question 1: I feel that the church is aware of my needs as a woman.

The researcher sought to determine how the women felt towards the church’s awareness of them as individual and unique individuals outside of the church as a whole. The results are provided below.

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<sup>169</sup>George Barna, “Five Factors Changing Women’s Relationship with Churches.” (June 2015), <https://www.barna.com/research/five-factors-changing-womens-relationship-with-churches/>.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

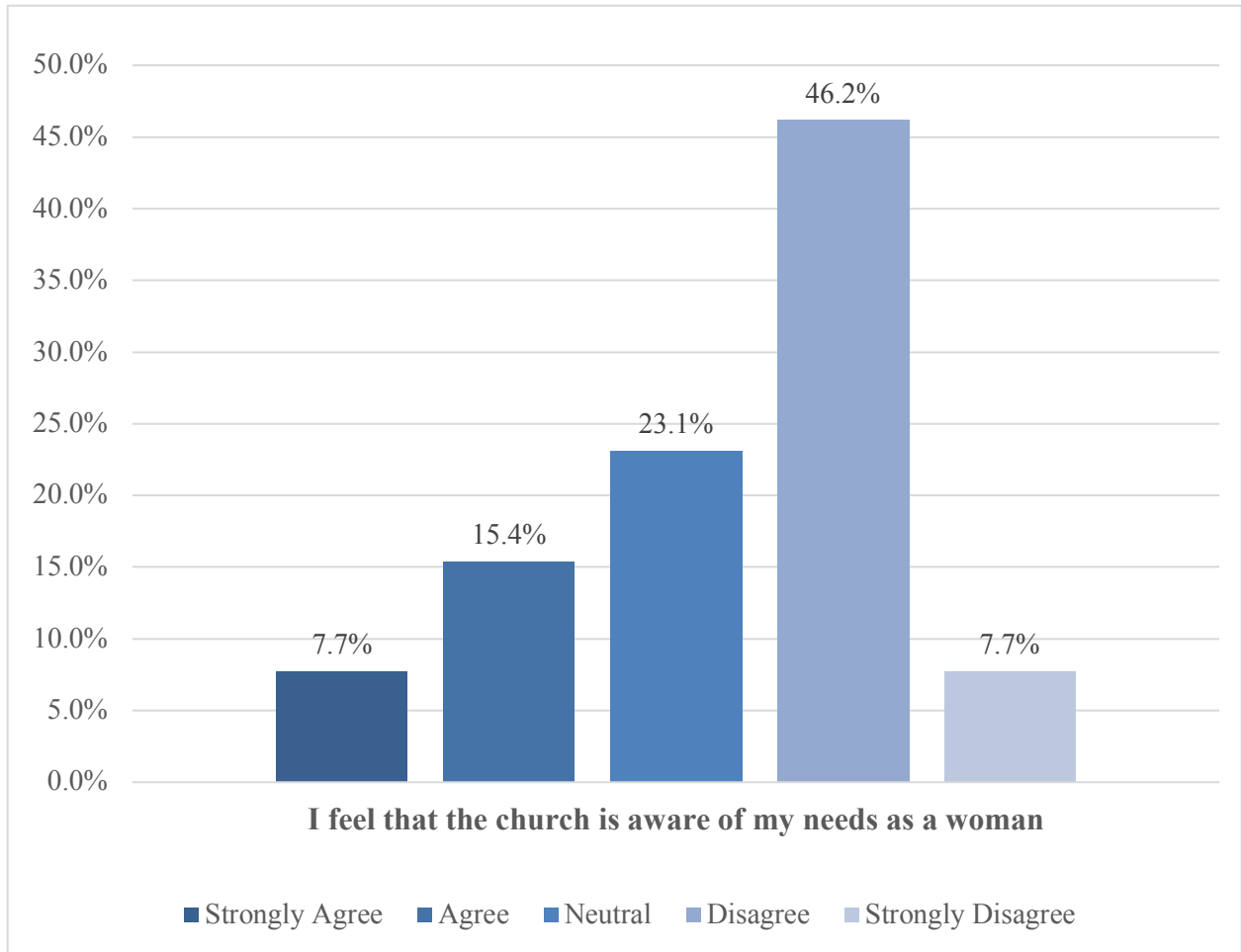


Figure 4. Response to Survey Question 1

The first statement posed to the participants was in regard to whether they believed that the church is aware of their needs as a woman. The responses varied in which 7.7% strongly agreed, followed by 15.4% agreed, while 23.1% was neutral, 46.2% disagreed, and finally, 7.7% strongly disagreed that the church is aware of their needs as a woman. 46.2% disagreement is an alarming percentage since the researcher has observed that the pastor has an exceptional relationship with the women in his church. He seemed to connect with them on a personal and professional level. This observation also highlights the fact that those who are in leadership positions can believe that they know their members but do not. When questioned about why they thought that the church was not aware of their needs, the majority responded with “the pastor and

the co-pastor are good people, and I believe that they care about me as a person, but they never asked what my needs are as a woman.”

Survey Question 2: I believe that the church is meeting my needs as a woman.

It was essential to find out if the church is meeting the needs of the women that they are serving. The results are provided in the figure below.

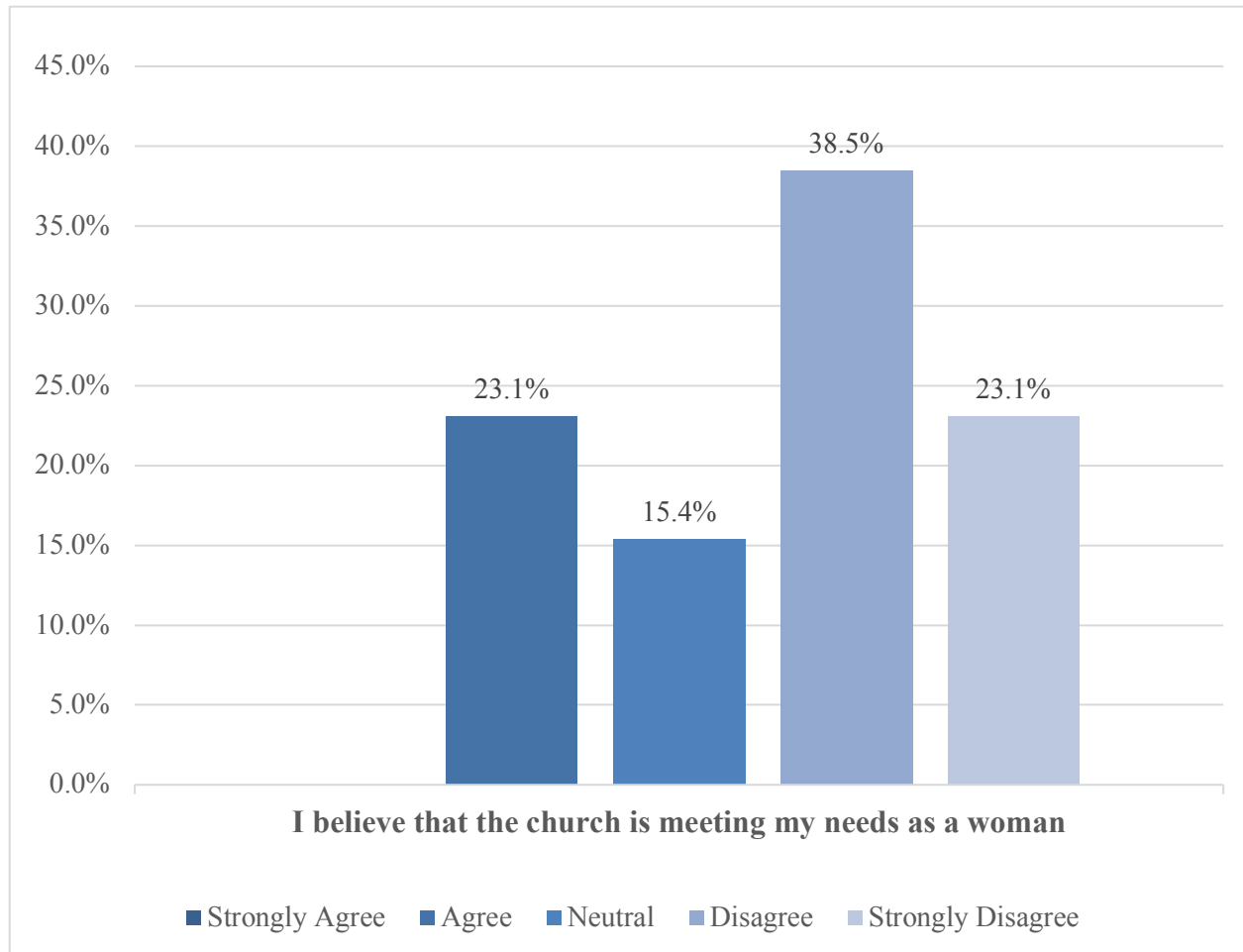


Figure 5. Response to Survey Question 2

Results indicated that most of the women in the church did not believe that the church was meeting their needs as a woman. The research revealed that 0.0% strongly agreed, while 23.1% agreed, 15.4% were neutral, 38.5% disagreed, and 23.1% strongly disagreed. Even though the numbers were equal between the participants who agreed and strongly disagreed concerning

the church meeting their needs, the combined total in the disagreed and strongly disagreed categories combined to a total of 61.6%, respectively.

Survey Question 3: I feel that I am connected to this church.

The study sought to find out if the women of the church felt connected to the church. The responses to this question are represented in the figure below.

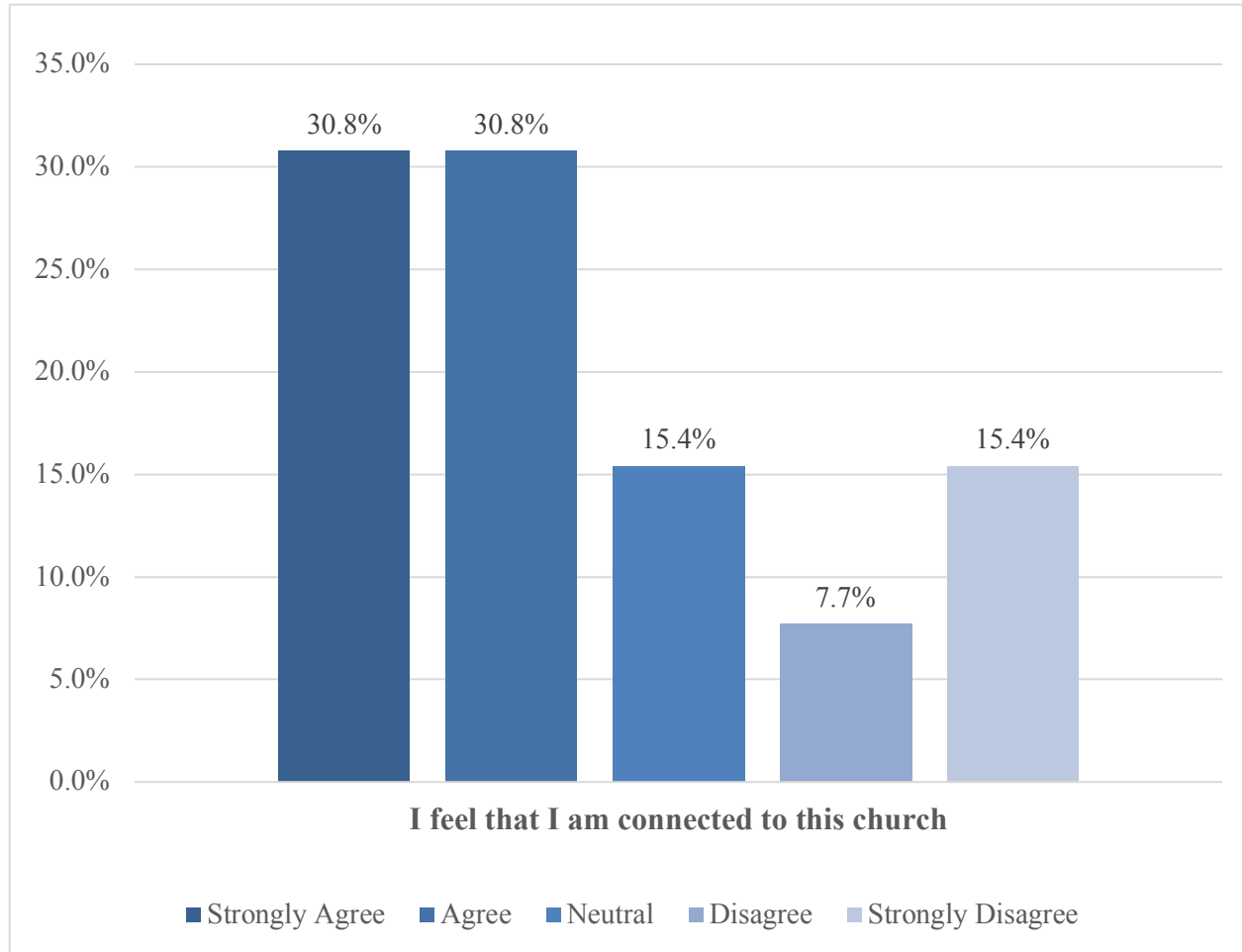


Figure 6. Response to Survey Question 3

As shown in the table above, Questions 3 focused on the participants' personal connection with the church. The participant's responses were equal in the strongly agree and agree category at 30.8%, which combined for 61.6%. Also, the reactions were identical in the neutral and strongly disagreed category at 15.4%, while 7.7% disagreed.

Having a connection with members of your congregation requires intentionality and creativity from the pastor and leadership staff. The researcher inquired on why the participants felt connected to the church; they responded to having feelings of being welcomed and relaxed in their environment. The participants that disagreed and strongly disagreed did not share the same sentiments. They believed that the church's climate has become stale; they are not being utilized productively in which they can use and or discover their gifts and that the church is just going through the motions of just having a service without any authenticity.

Survey Question 4: I believe that a women's ministry will help me to further grow and development.

The survey sought to investigate how much value-added a women's ministry would be, if implemented, to their personal and spiritual development. The results of their responses are represented in the below table.

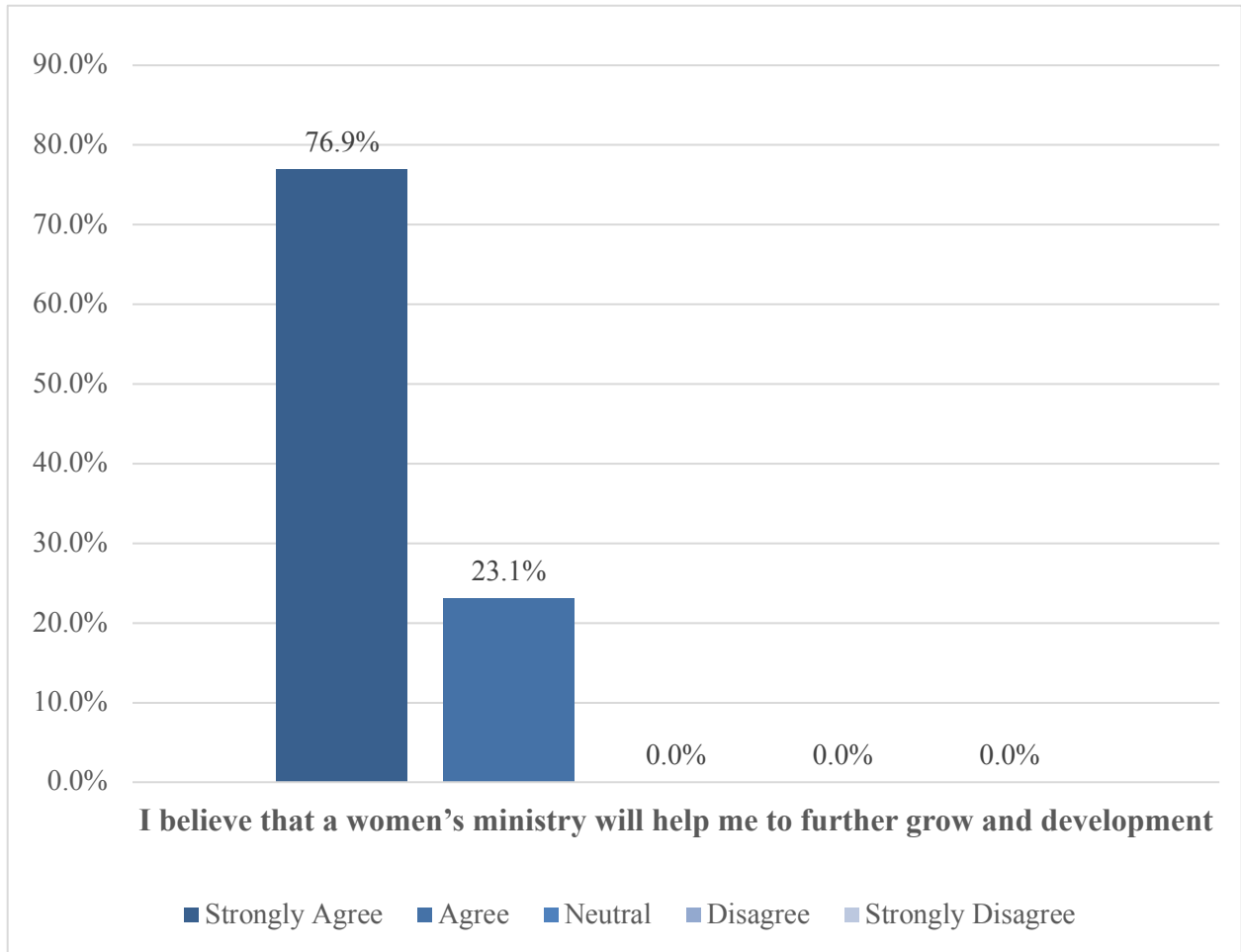


Figure 7. Response to Survey Question 4

The results indicated that many of the participants strongly agreed and agreed that a women's ministry would help them to grow further and develop. 76.9% of the participants strongly believed, while 23.1% agreed. There were no responses in the other three categories. The responses above are a positive result since all the participants want to be involved in a women's ministry, want to connect with other women on their spiritual journey and provide mentorship and meaningful sharing.



Survey Question 5: I believe that a women’s ministry will strengthen the entire church.

The researcher sought to determine if the women believed that if the church instituted a women's ministry, it would be useful in strengthening them personally. It would also add value to enhancing the church in its entirety. The results are provided in the table below.

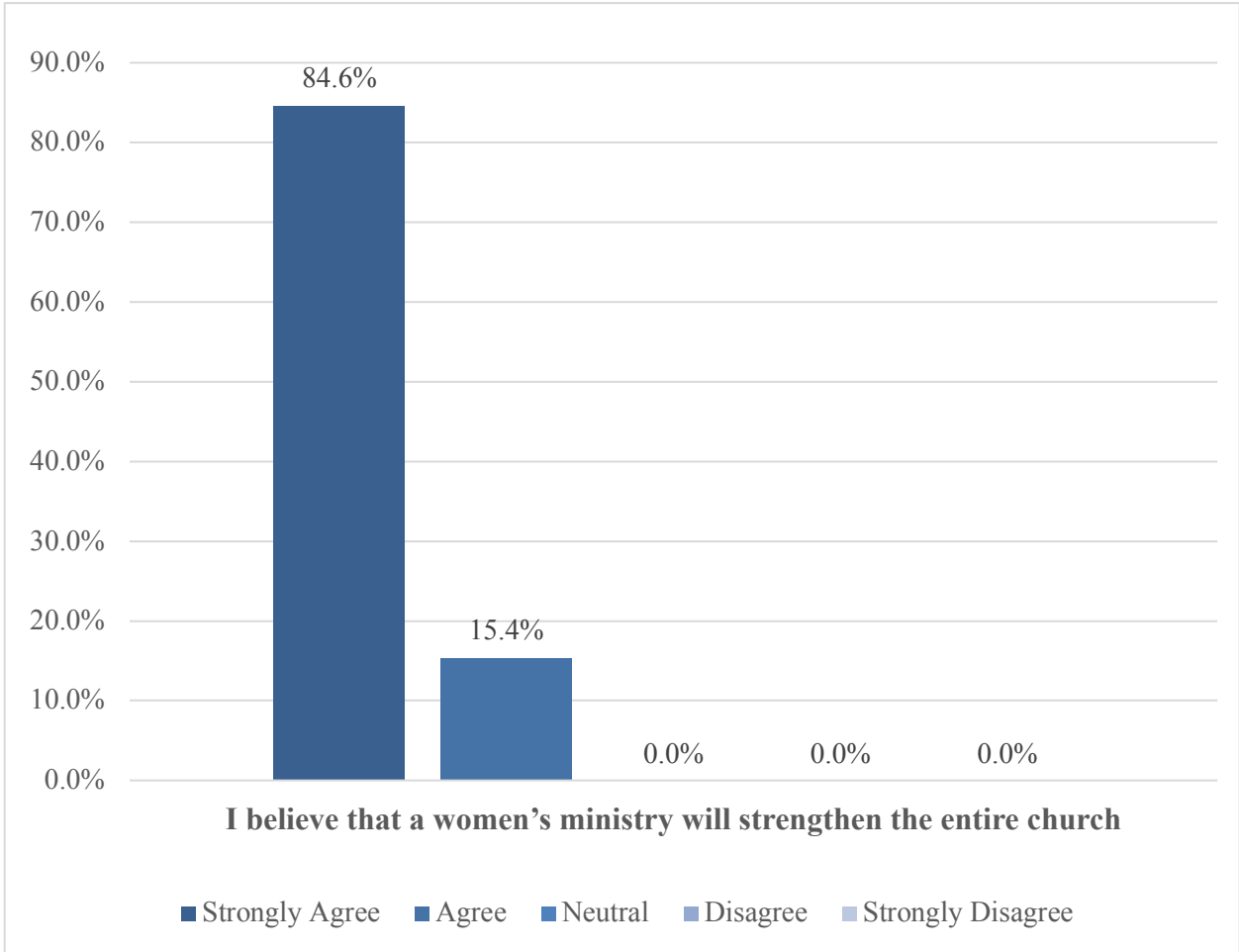


Figure 8. Response to Survey Question 5

Results obtained from Question 5 elaborates that many women participants agree that a women’s ministry will strengthen the entire church in which 84.6% strongly agreed, while the remaining range was 15.4%. There were no responses in the other three categories. Particular attention should be made to the fact that many expressed that if the church implements a women’s ministry, that a person other than the Co-Pastor leads the women’s ministry.

Survey Question 6: I believe that, along with a professional counselor (if needed), a women’s ministry can help with negative issues.

The researcher sought to determine if the participants would seek professional help outside of the church walls if needed. The results are provided in the table below.

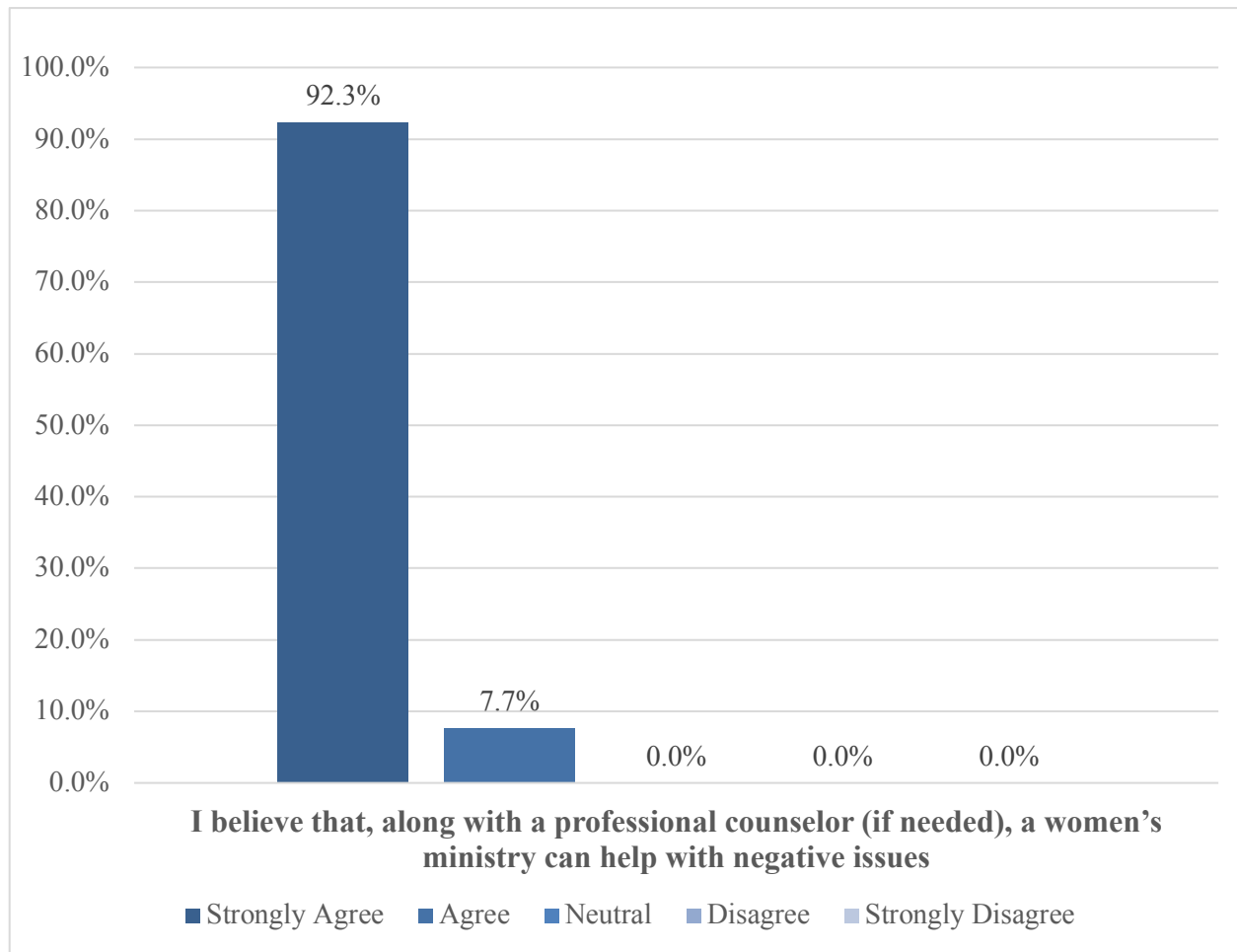


Figure 9. Response to Survey Question 6

The results revealed that 92.3% responded strongly agree, while the remaining agreed at 7.7%. There were no responses in the other three categories. The responses above are a positive result since all the participants would seek professional if help if needed. The church is severely lacking in this department. There is an unspoken stigma about seeking professional advice,

outside of the church, when it involves mental health. Many members and church leaders considered it taboo to seek counseling because the "anointing" should cure any and every issue. However, with the recently increasing number of suicides within the church and amongst leaders, the effect of mental health has been gaining public attention. The recent increase of suicides in the Christian community, especially amongst church leadership, could be due to the lack of self-care provided to themselves. Scazzero states,

Spiritual deficits typically reveal themselves in too much activity. Unhealthy leaders engage in more activities than their combined spiritual, physical, and emotional reserves can sustain. They give out *for* God more than they receive *from* him. They serve others in order to share the joy of Christ, but that joy remains elusive to themselves. The demands and pressures of leadership make it nearly impossible for them to establish a consistent and sustainable rhythm of life. In their more honest moments, they admit that their cup with God is empty or, at best, half full, hardly overflowing with the divine joy and love they proclaim to others.<sup>171</sup>

Carter and Narramore further iterate that “this fearful avoidance of feelings and intimacy in the Christian life has encouraged many to erect or maintain rigid barriers against deep involvement with other persons and has caused others to approach Christian service as an obligation rather than the natural result of living a fulfilling life.”<sup>172</sup>

The Christian community should be doing more to ensure that religion and psychology are married together to have a significant impact on confronting this issue.

### Summary

The project proposal designed for this Doctor of Ministry study and thesis was to provide revitalization methods through the implementation of effective women's ministry at the Salvation Church of North Dallas.

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<sup>171</sup> Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader: How transforming your inner life will deeply transform your church* (Downers Grove, IL, 2015), 26.

<sup>172</sup> John D. Carter and Bruce Narramore, *The Integration of Psychology and Theology: An Introduction* (The Zondervan Corporation, Grand Rapids, MI, 1979), 44.

The intervention plan was not successful. When the data from the research was presented to the Senior Pastor, he was concerned and reluctant about implementing a women's ministry constructed from past experiences within the tenure of his ministry. The researcher also informed him that 100% of the participants desire to have a women's ministry and believe that it would help them with their spiritual growth. The researcher then suggested starting the following month and do a "kick-off" meeting with the ladies, and the pastor was still apprehensive. He mentioned that they had done things like this in the past, and eventually, the people stopped coming. He also acknowledged that people can and do change and that he would consider it. Also, he will re-consider implementing an evangelism system to engage the community. The unexpected results of this research provide new information to this Doctor of Ministry study. The issue is that the Salvation Church of North Dallas can grow and has the desire to do so through women's ministry efforts; however, the fundamental concern is that this church has a leadership problem.

Therefore, an unwavering effort will be channeled to implement a women's ministry by beginning a book club, small group activities, and consistent monthly gatherings outside of the church walls. The researcher is assuming that the participant's perseverance will allay the pastoral leadership's current apprehensions.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this Doctor of Ministry study is to address the lack of an effective women's ministry at the Salvation Church of North Dallas. The researcher sought to identify and address the needs of the women at the church while looking for creative ways to change its culture and views on ministering to women. By addressing the current issues, the researcher believed that it would help the women within this local body heal spiritually and to grow, thus affecting the church health and growth positively.

Even though the researcher did not reach its objective, there were positive findings that can assist in the church's overall growth and development. The SWOT analysis shows that the church is operating in a strategic environment that is close to a major interstate that members and future members can easily access. In addition, there are two major colleges in the area that is ripe for outreach. If the church establishes an evangelism system that will ignite the entire church to participate, it will cause the community to know that they are here and do care.

Another strength is that the participants are willing to engage in women's ministry. If the themes (trust, confidentiality, unity, safety, consistency, leadership, and outreach) that emerged during the research are addressed and honored, there are no foreseeable reasons as to why the ministry will not be successful and productive.

Fundamental weaknesses from the SWOT analysis revealed that the church needs to do a better job in advertising its location. It is currently located in a business district with no visible signage. Also, the church currently has no systems in place to ensure continued healthy and sustainable growth. Systems build churches, not just preaching or teaching. Systems provide the necessary structure and discipline. The history of creation, as defined and described in Genesis

chapters 1 and 2, reflects that God adheres to systems. According to Searcy, “God must be into systems. He organized the universe with systems. He established the measurement of time through systems. From the beginning, He formed our bodies as a cohesive unit of systems.”<sup>173</sup> Our educational institutions are designed according to systems. A requirement to accelerate to the next higher grade level requires a mastery of the current systems. From the author’s SWOT analysis, the research indicated that the church has no systems in place to support growth and development. “A system is any ongoing process that Saves You Stress, Time, Energy and Money, and continues to produce results. Good systems function under the surface to keep things running smoothly so that you can concentrate on more important priorities.”<sup>174</sup> The church needs to strengthen its Sunday morning or weekend service, create an evangelism system, volunteer system, small group system, stewardship system, and a leadership system.

#### Sunday Morning or Weekend Service System

This system is a crucial element to the success of the church. Since this occurrence happens regularly, planning and implementing the worship music, transitions, preaching, teaching, announcements, and offerings must be evaluated and tweaked consistently. It must be willing to change or stay in a state of flux, depending on the flow of the service. Obtaining regular feedback can assist with the church being culturally relevant as well to meet the needs of the multi-generational congregation. Society is used to 24-hour entertainment, and this church system must straddle this line gently to provide its members with a heightened worship experience that supports the real intent of worship. Jesus told the woman He encountered at the well, “Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father

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<sup>173</sup> Nelson Searcy, *Healthy Systems, Healthy Church* (Boca Rotan, FL: Church Leader Insights, 2010), 7, Kindle.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 11, Kindle.

in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.”<sup>175</sup>

### Evangelism System

The Evangelism System adheres to Jesus’ mandate regarding the Great Commission, “Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”<sup>176</sup> This system ensures that the people are seeing that they are sinners who need to hear the Good News about the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Also, they get to see first had a church that cares about them and wants to help fulfill their needs. Reaching the community is accomplished through outreach. Evangelism can be conducted through social media, handing out pamphlets or cards, emails, and phone calls.

This researcher believes that people still desire to have a personal touch. Even though technology has enhanced the way that church is being conducted, it has hindered the church as well. Technology has provided humanity with too many options in which people are not going to come to church just because the pastor can preach or teach well or that the choir can sing. Thanks to the various social media platforms, individuals can get this same experience without leaving the comfort of their homes.

### Volunteer System

Volunteers are a crucial element to the sustainment of the church. Everyone cannot be a paid staff member and must be willing to work within the church without being on salary.

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<sup>175</sup> John 4:23-24.

<sup>176</sup> Matthew 28:18-20.

Positions include being ushers, deacons, greeters, working in the parking lot ministry, children's ministry, and many others. The children's ministry is another essential system that can be categorized by itself. Families are known to choose their churches based on this ministry alone. Recruiting people to volunteer must be an intentional process and cultural driven. Edwards states, "volunteers don't just show up because you made an announcement. They are drawn to a team or organization because of relationships. When they show up to volunteer, don't tie them to a ministry for a lifetime. You and your executive team are recruiting for a defined season of time."<sup>177</sup> Finding areas where individuals may want to serve can be accomplished through questionnaires or asking individuals to fill in where there are gaps.

#### Small-Group System

This system allows individuals to get a deeper meaningful relationship with others outside of the church's four walls. Small groups create a smaller community within a community that allows for more interpersonal connection with the ultimate goal of grower closer to Jesus Christ. These groups meet in various locations to discuss relevant issues to include the Sunday morning or mid-week service, areas of personal struggle, or to discuss life events.

#### Stewardship System

Stewardship is a system that has been discussed for centuries involving all manner of believers and unbelievers regarding money. Scripture has often been quoted to encourage but also manipulate people into giving tithes and offerings. We have all heard scriptures regarding money, "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs,"<sup>178</sup> "A feast is made for

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<sup>177</sup> Dr. Conway Edwards, *20/80 Rule: Making the Shift to a Volunteer-Driven Culture* (NP, 2018), 28.

<sup>178</sup> 1 Timothy 4:10.



laughter, wine makes life merry, and money is the answer for everything,” “For wisdom is a defense as money is a defense, But the excellence of knowledge is that wisdom gives life to those who have it,”<sup>179</sup> and all are valid if placed in the right application and context. The church does not operate on faith alone and needs more than just faith to pay the bills. The church needs money, and the church must find ways that involve people growing from one-time givers to recurring givers. Small churches are often faced with limited resources, and money is essential for kingdom growth and development.

### Leadership system

This system involves how the church grows and develops its leaders. In order for leaders to grow and develop, they must first be identified and strategically placed in positions in the church. The pastor must be hands-on in this system, and this could be difficult for small churches such as this one. Many small church pastors are over-tasked and reaching a burn-out status that possibly be alleviated with the creation of an assistant or an executive pastor position. The assistant or executive pastor can absorb some of the administrative burdens placed upon the senior pastor. These burdens can cause the pastor to lose focus, have him majoring on minor issues, and can allow him to focus on the ministry of the Word.

### Indirect Results

Jesus asked His disciples a very poignant question in which the answer would seem to be elementary. However, they could not answer the question correctly. He asked them, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”<sup>180</sup> The disciples responded with many names until Peter finally spoke forth and gave Him the correct answer in which Jesus replied, “Blessed are you,

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<sup>179</sup> Ecclesiastes 7:12.

<sup>180</sup> Matthew 16:13.

Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.”<sup>181</sup>

The indirect result can also be categorized as an unexpected observation. Even though the intervention plan did not yield the expected results of growing the church by 10% through effective women’s ministry, it did reveal that senior leadership has a profound consequence on the effectiveness of a successful women’s ministry. Based on the data presented in this research study and the willingness of the members to participate in a women’s ministry, this researcher concludes that the Salvation Church of North Dallas has a leadership problem that must be addressed. This leadership problem has caused the church to become stagnate and ineffective. If not corrected, this church will not grow, and possibly have to close its doors.

Tony Morgan states, “Churches have the world’s greatest mission; after all, eternity is at stake. I’m convinced we should be doing everything possible short of sin to see lives changed forever. With that, I want churches to strive for the pinnacle of the life cycle, where are continually making new disciples and experiencing what I refer to as sustained health.”<sup>182</sup> The author further reiterates that there seven phases of the church’s life cycle, as depicted in Figure 1. The church’s life cycle includes Launch, Momentum Growth, Strategic Growth, Sustained Health, Maintenance, Preservation, and Life Support.<sup>183</sup> The Pastors, leaders, and members of Salvation Church of North Dallas find themselves stuck in one of the above-mentioned life cycles.

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<sup>181</sup> Matthew 16:17-18.

<sup>182</sup> Tony Morgan, *The Unstuck Church: Equipping Churches to Experience Sustained Health* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2017), 5-6.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

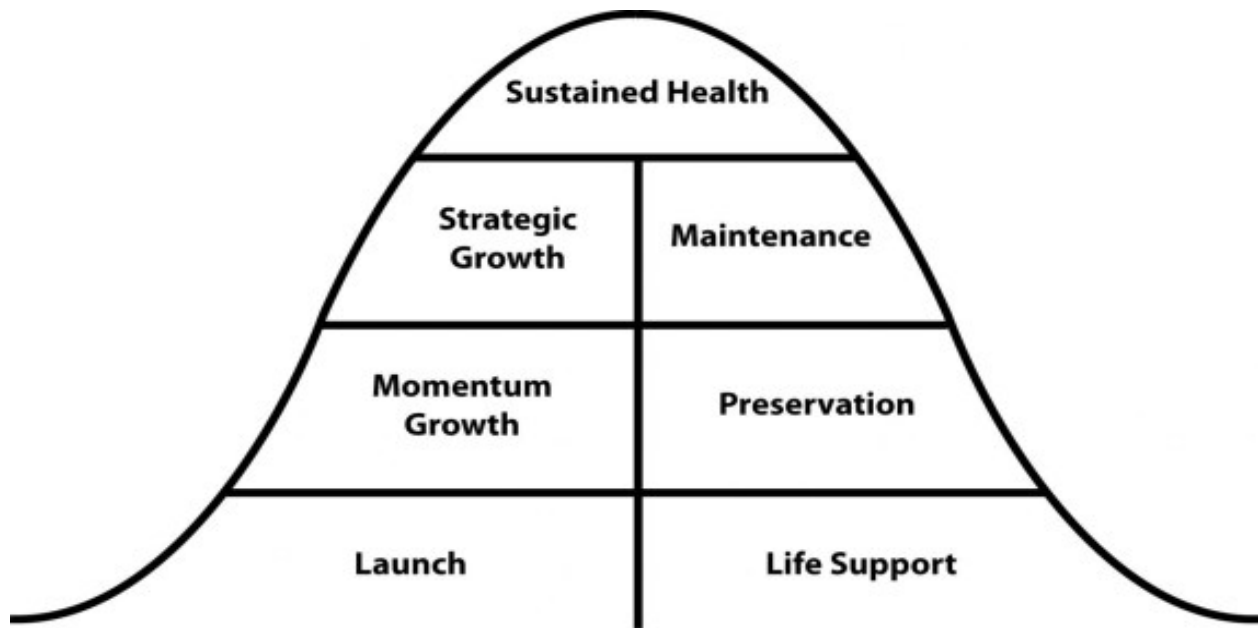


Figure 10. Church Life Cycle

Future Direction

### **Reignite passion**

This researcher believes that in order to address the leadership problem at Salvation Church, the pastor must find a way to reignite his passion for ministry. Reigniting his passion can be accomplished by remembering why and when God called him into ministry and get back to the basics of doing ministry. Some leaders call this doing a complete reset. Resetting may require an individual leader to take some time off, de-stress, and reflect.

### **Reignite vision**

Reigniting vision involves reassessing and possibly recasting one’s vision. Dr. Myles Munroe states, “Vision is the primary motivator of human action, and, therefore, everything we do should be because of the vision God has placed in our hearts. Vision influences the way you conduct your entire life, such as what you spend your time and money on and what your

priorities are.”<sup>184</sup> Reigniting vision will cause conflict, which is not necessarily a bad thing.

Poirier states that “Since all things, including conflict, are from God and through God and to God (Rom. 11:36), then conflict itself has a place in God’s great plans and purposes. In fact, Scripture tells us that God ordains conflict for his redemptive purposes.”<sup>185</sup> In reigniting one’s passion and vision, one can decide on what size he truly believes that God is calling him to. Callahan mentions that “God gives us four futures for congregations: small, strong congregations, middle-sized congregations, large, regional congregations, and mega-congregations.”<sup>186</sup> By addressing the leadership issues at the Salvation Church of North Dallas and implementing the appropriate systems, the church can achieve sustainable growth and development.

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<sup>184</sup> Dr. Myles Munroe, *The Principles and Power of Vision: Keys to Achieving Personal and Corporate Destiny*, (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 2003), 32.

<sup>185</sup> Alfred Poirier, *The Peacemaking Pastor: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Church Conflict* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006), 71.

<sup>186</sup> Kennon L. Callahan, *Small, Strong Congregations* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 2-3.

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## Appendix A

### IRB Approval

# LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

## INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

February 6, 2020

Dennis J. McCullough

IRB Exemption 4147.020620: Church Revitalization Through Effective Women's Ministry

Dear Dennis J. McCullough,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101(b)(2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:101(b):

(2) Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

(iii) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

Sincerely,



*Administrative Chair of Institutional Research*

**Research Ethics Office**

*Liberty University | Training Champions for Christ since 1971*

## Appendix B

### Consent Form

#### Church Revitalization Through Effective Women's Ministry

Dennis J. McCullough  
Liberty University  
School of Divinity

You are invited to be in a research study of successfully implementing an effective women's ministry within your church. You were selected for this study because you are a woman 18 years or older, and an active member of this congregation. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Dennis J. McCullough, a doctoral candidate in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

**Background Information:** The purpose of this study is to identify processes and procedures to effectively implement a women's ministry in this church that will meet the growing needs of the women who attend.

**Procedures:** If you agree to participate in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Be interviewed by the researcher in person, by phone, or via Skype. The interview will be recorded and will last approximately 20 minutes.

**Risks:** The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

**Benefits:** Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from participating in this study. Information provided may help the female members within this local body to grow and develop individually and will spark church growth and development. Also, after successful implementation, the strategies can be shared to help other local churches who are dealing with similar issues.

**Compensations:** Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

**Confidentiality:** The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject.

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has approved this document for use from 2/6/2020 to --  
Protocol # 4147.020620

- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Research data will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Pseudonyms/codes will be used to conceal participant identities, and I will refer to individuals by their pseudonyms/codes in my thesis.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:** Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

**How to Withdraw from the Study:** If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

**Contacts and Questions:** The researcher conducting this study is Dennis J. McCullough. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at 609-217-1951 or email at [djmccullough41@gmail.com](mailto:djmccullough41@gmail.com). You may also contact the researcher’s faculty chair, Dr. Douglas Munton, at [dwmunton@liberty.edu](mailto:dwmunton@liberty.edu).

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

*Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.*

**Statement of Consent:** I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

---

Signature of Participant

Date

---

Signature of Investigator

Date

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has approved this document for use from 2/6/2020 to -- Protocol # 4147.020620

**Appendix C**  
**Church Approval**



Date: September 24, 2019

Dear Pastor Dennis, Doctor of Ministry Researcher

The church and I are in acceptance of your desire to conduct your research study in regards to the women's ministry within our church. I approve of your request to conduct interviews with the pastoral staff and the female members of this congregation for your study.

If you have any questions or concerns while conducting your research study, please feel free to contact my administrative assistant or converse with me directly.

Sincerely,



**Appendix D**  
**Questions for Participants**

---

1. What is your age?
2. What is your ethnicity?
3. What is your marital status?
  - a. Single
  - b. Married
  - c. Divorced
  - d. Divorced and remarried
  - e. Widow
4. If you answer *Yes* to questions c through e:
  - a. How long were you married?
  - b. How long have you been divorced?
  - c. How long since you have remarried?
  - d. How long have you been a widow?
  - e. Do you live alone?
5. Do you have any children? If so, what are their ages?
6. What is your current employment status?
7. How long have you been attending this church?
8. What attracted you to this church?
9. Has there ever been a women's ministry at this church?
  - a. If so, was it effective?
10. Have you ever been involved in a women's ministry?
11. Are you interested in being in a women's ministry?

12. When you hear the phrase “women’s ministry”, what comes to mind?
13. What areas can the church assist you in?
  - a. Personal
  - b. Financial
  - c. Counseling
  - d. Visitation
14. What are some of the areas that you feel neglected?
15. Have these areas resulted in negative issues such as:
  - a. Depression
  - b. Addiction
  - c. Anger
  - d. Other
16. What gifts, talents, or passions would you like to share with the church?
  - a. Drawing
  - b. Music: Instruments and singing
  - c. Drama
  - d. Book clubs
17. What are the most important things you would like to see in the church’s women’s ministry?
18. What days would you like to meet women’s ministry meetings and events?
19. What barriers exist that may prevent you from participating?
20. What recommendations would you suggest to meet the needs of the women here?

The following interview statements will be measured on a Likert scale to judge the current success of the church in meeting the needs of the women:

1. I feel that the church is aware of my needs as a woman.
2. I believe that the church is meeting my needs as a woman.
3. I feel that I am connected to this church.
4. I believe that a women’s ministry will help me to further grow and development.



5. I believe that a women's ministry will strengthen the entire church.
6. I believe that a women's ministry can help with negative issues along with a professional counselor (if needed).

(Likert scale: 1-Strongly Agree, 2-Agree, 3-Neutral, 4-Disagree, 5-Strongly Disagree)