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Pepperdine University  
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF HOW BIBLICAL SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES  
INFLUENCE WOMEN'S CHARACTER AND LEADERSHIP PRACTICES IN CHRISTIAN  
FAITH-BASED INSTITUTIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN NORTH AMERICA

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Educational Leadership, Administration, and Policy

by

Kristin Michelle Bailey

June, 2017

Linda Purrington, Ed.D. – Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

Kristin Michelle Bailey

under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to leaders who have searched whole-heartedly to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the Lord” (Jeremiah 29:11-14).

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“I thank my God every time I remember you” (Philippians 1:3). I am overwhelmed with gratitude when I think of the many people who have supported me along the journey in earning my doctorate degree. I vividly remember the panic I felt when I sensed God calling me to apply to a doctoral program. With tears in my eyes, I whispered, “Okay, but I am really going to need your help.” He not only sustained me through this journey, He sent an entire army in to help me along the way! First, to my parents, who provided a loving home and a Christian foundation to last a lifetime. You have supported me in every way possible and pushed me to do things I never thought I could do. You two have had the greatest influence on my life. To my four siblings, Charlie, Amy, Jason, and Eric, you set the standard high. Is there room in this family for Dr. Bailey #5? Beyond your many accomplishments, I admire the love and care that you show others.

My deepest gratitude to my Dissertation Committee, who I have also had the great honor to call my colleagues and my friends. Each one of you demonstrate the true meaning of Christian leadership. Dr. Purrington, you have supported me throughout my career at Pepperdine and have shaped the leader I am today. I have watched you encourage, educate, and inspire SO many students, faculty, and staff. Thank you for modeling what it looks like to be a strong and compassionate leader. Dr. Jago, well before I considered getting my doctorate, I recall several conversations when you would sneak in, “Kristin, *when* you get your doctorate...” You believed in me from the beginning and played a major role in giving me the flexibility and encouragement I needed throughout my dissertation studies. Your legacy as an ethical leader is something that I will always admire. Dr. Kirnon, your commitment in developing others is truly remarkable. There was never a time that you were too busy to listen or give me advice. Thank you for

always being honest with me and challenging my thinking. This journey would not have been the same without you.

I would like to acknowledge the lifetime work of Dr. Karen Longman. Her work continues to impact numerous women leaders in Christian higher education. Attending the Women's Leadership Development Institute (WLDI), that she founded, changed my life.

A special thank you to the eight women who participated in this study. Your authentic stories truly honor and glorify God. Thank you to my expert reviewers, coders, transcribers, and editors who played a very important part in helping me reach my goals on time.

To my dear cohort member and friend, Kelly Donovan (aka S.A.), thank you for being with me every step of the way. You pushed me towards excellence and supported me in my times of doubt. I will always admire your resilience and strength as a woman.

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Finally, to my faithful neighbor, Wendy, who always cared for my little Lucy while I was gone. This journey would not have been possible without you---thank you.

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## ABSTRACT

As Christian faith-based institutions of higher education strive to uphold Christian values, there is a need to be intentional in identifying and developing future leaders. This study was viewed through the lens that women are underrepresented in senior-level positions in Christian institutions, they have unique leadership attributes to offer, and learning more from their lived experiences might increase the number of women in senior-level roles in Christian institutions of higher education.

This study utilized a qualitative phenomenological research design. The researcher interviewed 8 Christian women leaders who serve as Deans in institutions that are full members of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities. The interviews were conducted face-to-face and virtually using a semi-structured interview protocol comprising of 11 questions. The questions explored the lived experiences and perceptions of these Christian women leaders.

Three conclusions resulted from this study. First, prayer, study, and meditation were the most influential of the 12 spiritual disciplines. Second, spiritual disciplines may have a transformative effect on the character and leadership practices of women leaders in Christian higher education. Third, faith was integrated into the identity and daily practices of these Christian women leaders.

The researcher recommended that Christian women leaders in higher education must prioritize, or “make time,” for regular practice of the spiritual disciplines, particularly prayer, study, and meditation. The practice of spiritual disciplines, or the Christian way of life, should be incorporated into professional development and mentorship opportunities for Christian women leaders.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

This study focused on how Biblical spiritual disciplines influence women's character and leadership practices in Christian institutions of higher education. Chapter 1 includes the background of the study, problem statement, purpose statement, importance of the study, and definition of terms. Next, the research question, delimitations, limitations, and assumptions are presented. The chapter concludes with a summary of how this study is organized.

### **Background of the Study**

Christianity has had a significant impact on the educational system in the United States dating all the way back to the founding of the country's first university, Harvard University in 1636. The Christian perspective has been a leading force in shaping society, specifically in the areas of education and health care. For the centuries that followed, the University's curriculum maintained a close connection between students' moral and academic development (Fitzgerald Henck, 2011; House, 2003; Jeynes & Robinson, 2010). The moral teaching was based on the belief that God's truth is universal and timeless; therefore, could be used as a standard in developing productive citizens.

Christian universities have a unique calling to not only impart knowledge, but also provide wisdom and guidance in how personal faith impacts students' personal and professional goals (Glanzer, 2012; Ikenberry, 1997). Christian universities have relied on faculty members and administration to address student moral and academic development by creating an environment that demonstrates effective teaching strategies and models a values-based lifestyle. Jeynes and Robinson (2010) assert that, "Institutions of higher education made certain that the college president was known not only as the school's best scholar, but one of the foremost examples of upright living in the college" (p. 298).

Although Christian universities have remained steadfast in their mission to provide a Christ-centered curriculum that models a values-based lifestyle, it has not been without encountering a number of challenges. For example, as Christian universities look to the future, they are facing key issues such as: (a) changing student demographic, (b) transitions at the presidential level, (c) decrease in economic stability, (d) greater accountability, (e) increase in enrollment with limited resources, and (f) resistance towards Christian mission (Fitzgerald Henck, 2011; Jackson Teague, 2015; Perez, 2013). In order to face these ongoing challenges, Christian universities will need to look to their key leaders and continue to prepare their graduates to lead with mission-driven values. Ikenberry (1997) states,

The time has come for higher education to expand its role in equipping students to live productive lives through and beyond their careers---to be civic-minded, to embrace civic life, to take on leadership roles, and to exercise personal and professional, and ethical judgements that are based on values. (p. 9)

There is a need for moral/ethical leadership in today's society (Schulte, 2009). Based on the multidimensional definition of character, moral/ethical leadership will be used interchangeably throughout this study. This study is particularly timely as citizens across the country appear to be longing for leaders with strong character and leadership skills. The media is filled with examples of leaders who are being removed, or being asked to step down, from their positions due to a number of character flaws (Schulte, 2009). There is not an industry, including Christian higher education, that is immune from this risk. However, Christian institutions are in a unique position to provide leadership in this area. House (2003) affirms that, "A renewal of intellectual, moral, and spiritual vitality and integrity is the aspiration of the evangelical Christian college" (p. 489).



Most Christians believe that character development does not occur without help from God. For centuries, Christians have sought ways to become closer to God and seek His guidance. One of the most common ways Christians have connected with God is through the practice of spiritual disciplines. Spiritual disciplines are habits that are modeled after the life of Jesus Christ and are found in Biblical Scripture.

**Underrepresentation of women leaders.** Vongalis-Macrow (2016) highlights the lack of women in senior-level positions by stating,

As recently as 2006, women made up an average of 40% of academics, yet only 23% of women were in the senior-levels of academia. From the period 2002-2006, there was only a 5% increase in the number of women occupying senior academic roles. (p. 90)

The underrepresentation of women in senior-level positions has also been a perpetual issue among the members of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU). Figure 1 shows how men drastically outnumber women on leadership teams within the CCCU from 1998-2015.

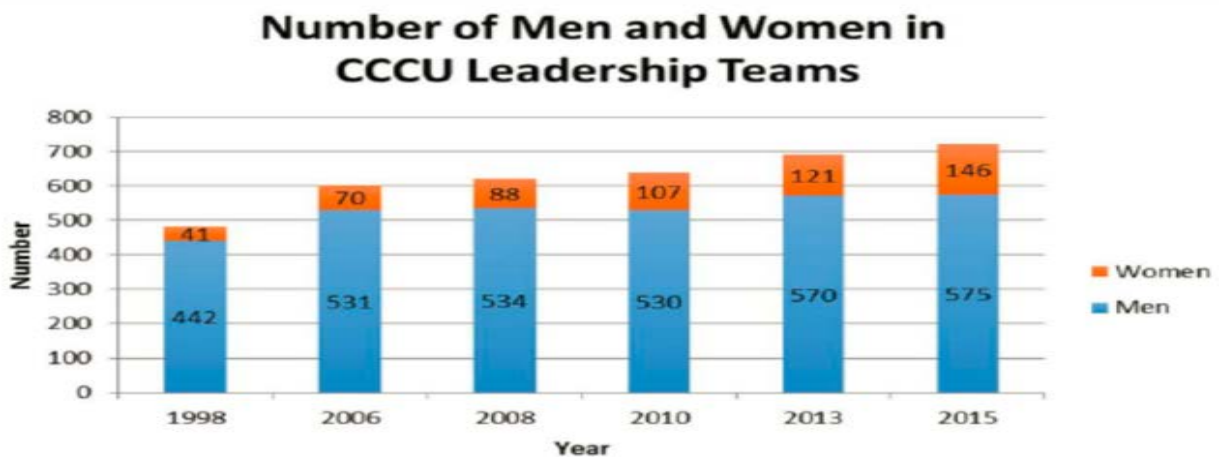


Figure 1. Number of men and women in CCCU leadership teams. Adapted from “Women in leadership: The future of Christian higher education,” by K. A. Longman & P. Anderson, 2016, *Christian Higher Education*, 15, p. 30. Copyright 2016 by Routledge Taylor and Frances Group. Reprinted with permission.

Over the years, the data shows that there has been an increase in the number of women in leadership positions; however, when examining the overall percentage of women in leadership positions within CCCU institutions, there are still significant gains to be made (see Figure 2).



*Figure 2.* Percent of institutions and number of women in leadership positions 1998-2015. Adapted from “Women in leadership: The future of Christian higher education,” by K. A. Longman & P. Anderson, 2016, *Christian Higher Education*, 15, p. 30. Copyright 2016 by Routledge Taylor and Frances Group. Reprinted with permission.

Perhaps this data should not come as a surprise considering the strong hierarchical traditions within the church. Yet, Longman and Anderson (2016) argue that, “Christian colleges and universities should be setting the standard across higher education for identifying, encouraging, and deploying the gifts of individuals across racial and gender lines” (p. 25). Members within the CCCU have taken steps to better align with their belief in Scripture and more fully embrace the full picture of God’s Kingdom, by including men and women. In 1998, the Women’s Leadership Development Initiative was started as a means for identifying and supporting up and coming women leaders within the CCCU. This program is intentional in

helping women navigate the potential barriers in career advancement within the Christian higher education system. Notably, “40% of the 34 women currently serving in a Provost or Vice President for Academic Affairs role have participated in the CCCU’s leadership development programming” (Longman & Anderson, 2016, p. 32). However, Vongalis-Macrow (2016) warns that, “Simply getting more women into leadership does not mean that their leadership will be more effective” (p. 100). Instead, the author opts for more leadership development opportunities that are realistic about the strengths and weaknesses of various leadership styles.

### **Problem Statement**

Fitzgerald Henck (2011) suggests that, “Christian universities are deeply embedded in and accountable to two worlds, each of which has a distinctive culture: the world of higher education and the church world” (p. 196). Balancing the expectations and values of these two entities requires strong leadership. Yet, leadership is increasingly more challenging in higher education institutions because of three major shifts in (a) demographics, (b) economics, and (c) technology (Hulme, Groom, & Heltzel, 2016). In addition, faith-based institutions need to consider how to honor their values and uphold their Christian heritage (Fitzgerald Henck, 2011; Ikenberry 1997; Perez, 2013). During these uncertain times, there will be a continual need to develop leaders who will demonstrate ethical characteristics that translate into strong leadership practices (Eastwood, 2010). Surprisingly, most universities have not prepared a succession plan for identifying and developing leaders to ensure the sustainability of their university (Jackson Teague, 2015; Longman & Anderson, 2016).

Moving forward, Christian universities will need to equip leaders who are aligned with their mission. Reave (2005) makes a connection between spiritual disciplines and leadership by suggesting that, “Spirituality encompasses character, motivation, and behavior, providing an

integrated way of examining leader values and practices” (p. 661). However, what has not been fully studied, and warrants further study, is how Biblical spiritual disciplines influence women’s character and leadership practices in Christian faith-based institutions of higher education. Currently, women are underrepresented in senior-level position in Christian institutions. To increase the number of women in senior-level roles, additional research is needed to learn the factors that help and/or hinder women in their career advancement in higher education (Airini et al., 2008; Vongalis-Macrow, 2016). Longman and Anderson (2016) suggest that, “Christian higher education can and must be more proactive and strategic to unleash the capacity of all those who have been called to be partners in preparing the next generation for leadership and service” (p. 35).

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the perceived influence of Biblical spiritual disciplines on women’s character and leadership practices in Christian faith-based institutions of higher education in North America. This study conducted individual semi-structured interviews of eight to ten Christian women leaders who serve as Deans or Associate Deans in institutions that are full member of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU).

### **Importance of the Study**

This study could be important to Christian leaders, or anyone, who is seeking ways to increase their closeness with God and have a positive impact on their work environment. Increasing knowledge on how spiritual disciplines can build a leader’s character has the potential to strengthen their leadership practices. Moreover, personal stories from women who are effectively incorporating their spiritual practices into the workplace could serve as models for

developing leaders within, and outside, of Christian faith-based institutions of higher education. Developing a deeper understanding of the connection between spiritual disciplines and women's leadership in higher education could add to the current body of literature. Current researchers have addressed the unique leadership qualities of women leaders and the importance of diversifying upper administrative teams; however, additional research is needed in how the practice of spiritual disciplines may positively impact the leadership practices of women. Lastly, this study is particularly compelling at this time as Christian institutions of higher education aim to deliver a relevant curriculum and build up leaders who are equipped to advance their Christian mission.

### **Definition of Terms**

*Bible/Biblical:* "The sacred Scriptures of Christians comprising the Old Testament and the New Testament" (Bible, n.d.).

*Biblical spiritual disciplines:* "Spiritual disciplines are those practices found in Scripture that promote spiritual growth among believers in the gospel of Jesus Christ. They are the habits of devotion and experiential Christianity that have been practiced by the people of God since Biblical times" (Whitney, 1991, p. 4).

*Character:* "Consistent moral and ethical actions for the purposes of maintaining congruence with one's own and the organization's values and beliefs, and to serve the greater good of the community" (Sweeney & Fry, 2012, p. 91).

*Christian:* "A person who believes in the teachings of Jesus Christ" (Christian, n.d.).

*Christian faith-based institutions:* "Colleges and universities with curricula rooted in the arts and sciences and whose missions are Christ-centered and rooted in the historic Christian faith" (Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, 2016, para 1).

*Leadership*: “A process of influence leading to the achievement of desired purposes” (Spendlove, 2007, p. 408).

*Spirituality*: “Is the presence of a higher power that affects the way in which one operates in the world, inner motivations, or our response to a deep and mysterious human yearning for self-transcendence and surrender, a yearning to find our place” (Benner, 1989, p. 20 as cited in Klenke, 2003, p. 59).

### **Theoretical/Conceptual Framework**

This study is viewed through the perspective of a model and emerging theory in women’s leadership development in Christian higher education (Dahlvig & Longman, 2014) and Foster’s (1998) classic spiritual disciplines as a conceptual framework. The women’s leadership development in Christian higher education model and emerging theory asserts that there are three motivating factors that lead women into leadership: (a) relational responsibility, (b) awareness of calling/giftedness, and (c) mentoring/external encouragement. Throughout a woman’s career, these factors are either met with resistance or validation, which can ultimately have an impact on their career trajectory. Self-awareness and the environmental factors also influence how women view themselves as leaders, their leadership practices, and their willingness to take risks in the workplace.

The women’s leadership development in Christian higher education model and emerging theory is based on data that indicates that women are underrepresented in senior-level leadership positions (Longman & Anderson, 2016). In an effort to create leadership teams that are more gender balanced, Christian universities are taking steps to identify and develop women in leadership (Longman & Anderson, 2016). Finally, more women might fulfill senior-level roles if

more were to be learned about factors that influence their career trajectory and their leadership practice (Airini et al., 2008; Vongalis-Macrow, 2016).

Like the model and emerging theory for women leadership development in Christian higher education, this study is viewed through the lens that women are underrepresented in senior-level positions, they have unique leadership attributes to offer, and learning more from their lived experiences might serve to increase the number of women in senior-level roles in Christian institutions of higher education. Subsequently, investing in women's leadership development may also serve to advance the Christian mission. Furthermore, studying the lived experiences and perspectives of women leadership in Christian higher education led the researcher to select a qualitative phenomenological design for this study.

Willard (1988), Foster (1998), and Whitney's (1991) writings on spiritual disciplines were compared as a way of determining a list of spiritual disciplines that are aligned with Biblical Scripture. These authors define the spiritual disciplines, examine the historical use and implications for today's society, and warn about the possible misunderstanding or misuse of the spiritual disciplines. For the purposes of this study, the researcher chose to focus on Foster's (1998) work on spiritual disciplines as it is time-tested, is categorized in a way that represents the various parts of the spiritual life, and is more closely related to the development of leadership qualities. Foster's (1998) work identified twelve spiritual disciplines: (a) solitude, (b) fasting, (c) study, (d) worship, (e) celebration, (f) service, (g) prayer, (h) confession, (i) submission, (j) meditation, (k) simplicity, and (l) guidance. Foster's (1998) classical spiritual disciplines provided the conceptual model for the Biblical spiritual disciplines variable that was addressed in this study. Foster's (1998) spiritual disciplines was provided as an example for participant interviews.

In order to identify a framework for the variable of leadership practices, the researcher compared four articles that addressed competencies for effective leadership in higher education. These articles identified a total of twenty-eight leadership practices which are discussed in greater detail in the literature review of leadership practices in Chapter 2.

### **Research Question**

How, if at all, do Biblical spiritual disciplines, influence women leaders' character and leadership practices in Christian faith-based institutions of higher education in North America?

### **Delimitations**

There were three delimitations in this study: (a) geography, (b) sample, and (c) sampling criteria. First, the researcher was intentional about interviewing women who were serving in leadership positions at institutions who are full members of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities in North America. There are five characteristics that are required for full membership: (a) accreditation, (b) Christian mission, (c) hire Christian faculty/staff who acknowledge Jesus Christ, (d) support the CCCU, and (e) demonstrate institutional integrity (Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, 2016, para. 2). Next, the researcher sought to interview women who serve as Deans or Associate Deans in the academic field. This decision was made because the roles and responsibilities of Deans and Associate Deans are typically consistent across institutions of higher education and are positioned to have greater influence over departments and schools. Lastly, the women who were selected to participate have served in this leadership position for at least three years.



## **Limitations**

There were three limitations in this study: (a) the focus on the Christian faith, (b) the sample size, and (c) the researcher is a Christian woman. First, this study was limited in sampling only women of the Christian faith; therefore, the results cannot be generalized to individuals in other faiths or non-believers. Secondly, the sample size was limited to eight to ten women sharing their unique personal experiences with spiritual disciplines and leadership. Thirdly, there was potential for bias as the researcher is a Christian woman herself. The researcher attempted to reduce potential bias by seeking feedback from the Dissertation Committee and other outside experts.

## **Assumptions**

The researcher made six assumptions in this study. These assumptions included that: (a) God uses Biblical spiritual disciplines to develop and transform a leader's character, (b) Christian leaders practice Biblical spiritual disciplines, (c) Selected Deans/Associate Deans understood the concepts associated with Biblical spiritual disciplines and leadership practices, (d) Participants were candid and responded to the best of their ability, (e) Instruments were used appropriately and measured the variables, and (f) Interpretation of the data accurately reflected the participants' perceptions.

## **Organization of the Study**

The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 included the background of the study, problem statement, purpose statement, importance of the study, definition of terms, an overview of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks, research question, delimitations, limitations, and assumptions. In Chapter 2, the researcher provided an in-depth literature review on the emerging theory of women's leadership development in Christian higher education and an

explanation of the classic Biblical spiritual disciplines. Chapter 3 discusses the research methodology and rationale for the study. Upon completion of the interviews, Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study. Finally, Chapter 5 offers a summary of the study as well as a discussion of the findings and conclusions.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **Organization of the Chapter**

This chapter presents the rationale for conducting research on Biblical spiritual disciplines and the influence on women's character and leadership practices in Christian faith-based institutions of higher education. Across the country, institutions of higher education are facing a number of complex issues. During these uncertain times, Christian universities wrestle with these challenges, while also contemplating how to stay committed to their Christian mission statement and heritage. House (2003) shares that, through the process of secularization, "Many institutions and their leaders have lost the vision embraced by the founders and supporters of the early institutions" (p. 481). In order to further their founding mission to educate the mind and the spirit, Christian universities need to develop strong leaders who are dedicated to upholding these values and who are intentional about influencing society as a whole. One aspect that is essential to strong leadership, is the development of a leader's character. The notion of whether character can be developed has been debated for some time. Sosik and Cameron (as cited in Crossan, Mazutiz, Seijts, & Gandz, 2013) assert that, "Values and character strengths can be developed through life events and experiences" (p. 288)."

The three key variables that were addressed in this study were: Biblical spiritual disciplines, leadership character, and leadership practices. First, to avoid losing sight of their original purpose, Christian leaders will need to invite God into their professional and personal lives. A relationship with God may be developed through the practice of Biblical spiritual disciplines. It is through these practices that God begins to develop and strengthen leaders' character. Finally, as leaders grow spiritually, many leadership attributes have the potential to be strengthened as well.

The literature review was organized into seven sections: (a) historical background on Christian faith-based institutions in higher education, some unique challenges they face, and how women leaders are in a position to address some of these challenges, (b) theoretical framework that addresses the motivation and experiences that contribute towards the development of Christian women leaders, (c) conceptual framework, based on the work of Foster's (1998) inward, outward, and corporate disciplines, (d) importance of Biblical spiritual disciplines, (e) connection between Biblical spiritual disciplines and leadership practices, (f) importance of strong character and leadership practices, (g) barriers and future opportunities in women's leadership.

### **Historical Background**

The focus on the moral development within the American education system can be dated all the way back to the Country's founding fathers. Washington and Jefferson envisioned an educational system that would focus on professions, such as law enforcement and public administration, that would serve the greater community and develop the ethics and morals of the citizens that live there (Murdock, 2004 as cited in Bugenhagen, 2009). In addition to educating students in specific content areas, society looked to universities to prepare respectful citizens who would contribute to the greater good in their communities.

In 1636, Harvard College was founded as the first institution of higher education. At its inception, the primary focus was on training ministers (House, 2003; Jeynes & Robinson, 2010). As Harvard expanded its degree offerings, moral development stayed at the forefront of its mission. Moreover, as other institutions began to develop, they followed suit in keeping moral instruction at the core of the curriculum. This is evident in that, "121 of the first 122 colleges founded in the nation were Christian Institutions" (Jeynes & Robinson, 2010, p. 295-296).

The mission statements of these universities acknowledged that, “The curriculum existed to form the man, and not simply to convey information” (Jeynes & Robinson, 2010, p. 307). This holistic approach aimed to educate more than just the mind, but also the inward spirit.

Although there appeared to be a universal acceptance for the moral purpose of education, early Greeks and Romans believed that character development was set aside for the nation’s leaders while Christians advocated that God’s truth should be accessible to all people (Jeynes & Robinson, 2010). Furthermore, they believed that God was the ultimate authority; therefore, His truth could be consistently applied universally over time. The goal in reinforcing these universal truths was to ultimately impact the attitudes and behaviors of college students and graduates. It was expected that the faculty and administration, all the way up to the university president, would play a vital role in helping shape students’ character. At that time, it was not unusual for the university president to teach courses on moral philosophy. However, the faculty and administration mainly demonstrated virtue by living a life of righteousness.

**Conflicting views.** Over time, there were multiple factors that began to impact the dual purpose of education and moral development in higher education. First, the promise of an opportunity for a better life separated those who were given access to higher education from those who were not. Slowly, contributing to the common good began to shift to an individualistic goal of getting ahead (Bugenhagen, 2009). Second, the impact of the industrial revolution propelled universities to be “more businesslike,” more “organized and efficient,” and less “wasteful” (Robinson & Jeynes, 2010, p. 318). Third, Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution began to challenge the principle of absolute/universal truths. Scientific views, like Darwin’s, suggested that everything was always changing and learning should be approached pragmatically. Fourth, Supreme Court decisions in the early 1960s sparked a renewed discussion

on the debate between religion and education. Removing prayer and Bible study from public schools, along with an increase in the number of institutions with diverse religious viewpoints, resulted in questions arising on whether the university setting was the proper place for moral development. Bugenhagen (2009) notes that, “Many higher education institutions turned away from their founding mission, which was generally based in education for the common good and public service” (p. 69). Jeynes and Robinson (2010) assert that Christian institutions of higher education must hold fast to their commitment to moral instruction and, once again, take a proactive role in becoming cultural leaders.

**Early contributions of women leaders.** For decades, women have been underrepresented in leadership roles within the university (Airini et al., 2008; Jackson Teague, 2015; Longman & Anderson, 2016; Parker, 2015; Vongalis-Macrow, 2016; Wolverton, Bower, & Maldonado, 2006). A historical view provides meaningful insight into how the economy and society’s expectations of women, have prolonged women’s quest to obtain leadership positions (Parker, 2015). Between 1836 and 1875, there were a total of 50 women’s colleges. As the female population grew, women began to serve in faculty and administrative positions. A peak in women’s leadership in higher education occurred when a large number of men were away fighting World War II. As the men returned from war, the female population in higher education declined and women were encouraged to go back to a domestic role.

Sokoloff (as cited in Parker, 2015), identified some male dominated professions (i.e. medicine and law) as well as some female semi-professional roles (i.e. teaching and nursing) within the higher education setting. He noted during the 1960s through the 1980s that the highest paying professions were mainly afforded to white males. He went on to explain some possible reasons why women were not obtaining positions at the same level as men in these

professions. There were some factors that were imposed on women, such as universities setting quotas on the number of women they would accept each year. However, other barriers such as choosing to balance a career with motherhood or becoming a two-income household to maintain a standard of living were individual choices often made by women.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this study was comprised of Dahlvig and Longman's (2014) emerging theory on women's leadership development within Christian institutions of higher education. This theoretical framework was chosen for this study as it addressed the motivation of Christian leaders and the experiences that contribute towards the development of women leaders, specifically in Christian institutions of higher education.

Longman and Dahlvig (2014) have conducted several studies that are contributing towards a theory in women's leadership development in Christian higher education. The researcher sought and received written approval from the authors to use their model in this study (see Appendix A). The underlying belief is that individuals are internally motivated when they are given the freedom to make choices, also known as autonomy, coupled with the opportunity to work in an environment that allows them to demonstrate their competency.

The women's leadership development in Christian higher education theory (Dahlvig & Longman, 2014) suggests that several dynamic variables impact a woman's development as a leader. First, there are three unique motivational factors that women consider when entering into leadership. Next, there are specific experiences that are either met with validation and/or resistance which impacts their leadership self-efficacy. Finally, there are other factors, such as self-awareness and the cultural environment that affect their leadership development process.

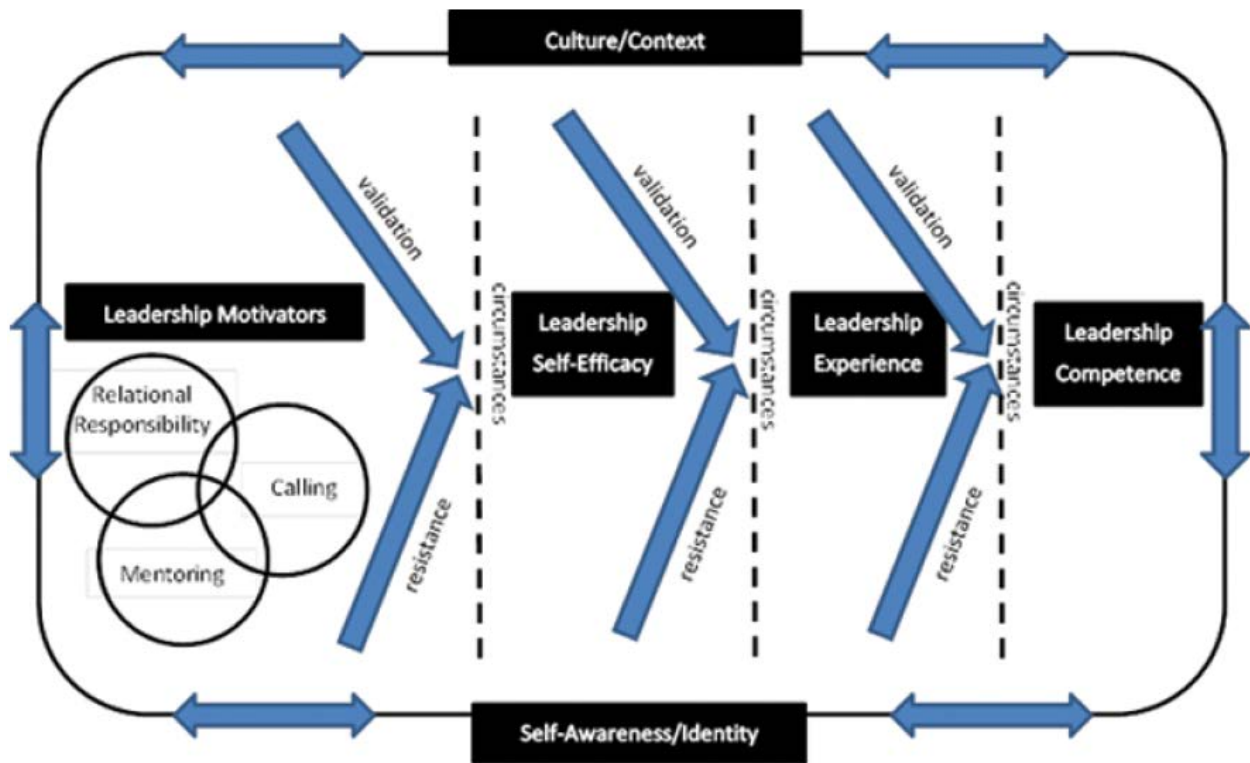


Figure 3. Contributors to women’s leadership development in Christian higher education. Adapted from “Contributors to women’s leadership development in Christian higher education: A model and emerging theory,” by J. Dahlvig & K. A. Longman, 2014, *Journal of Research on Christian Education*, 23(1), p. 5-28. Copyright 2014 by Taylor & Frances Online. Reprinted with permission.

**Three key motivational factors.** There are three key motivational factors that contribute toward women’s decisions to pursue a position in leadership: (a) relational responsibility, (b) awareness of calling/giftedness, and (c) mentoring/external encouragement. First, relational responsibility can be described as, “Dedication to personal connections with individuals above, alongside, or beneath--in support of the institutional mission” (Dahlvig & Longman, 2014, p. 12). Interestingly, women are more inclined than men to associate their spirituality with being connected to and caring for others (Longman, Dahlvig, Wikkerink, Cunningham, & O’Connor, 2011). A second leadership motivational factor is awareness of calling or giftedness. Calling is defined as, “A clear sense of purpose, of making a difference in the world and contributing to



society in a worthwhile manner” (Dahlvig & Longman, 2014, p. 258). Longman et al. (2011) suggest that women’s leadership development could be enhanced if a stronger focus was placed on helping women discover their calling. Thirdly, women are motivated to pursue leadership through mentorship or external encouragement. Mentors, both male and female, play a central role in training and encouraging new leaders and modeling behaviors they would want to emulate (Dahlvig & Longman, 2014).

**Leadership self-efficacy: Validation and resistance.** In addition to these motivational factors, Dahlvig and Longman (2014) suggest that leadership self-efficacy impacts a woman’s leadership development. Leadership self-efficacy is defined as what leaders believe they can do with their skills under certain circumstances (Dahlvig & Longman, 2014). A leader’s self-efficacy can be influenced in positive or negative ways by the feedback that she receives from others. The more positive feedback, or validation, a leader receives, the more likely she is to seek leadership opportunities and manage the negative feedback, or resistance, that she receives from others.

**Environment and self-awareness.** The three motivational factors, as well as the validation and resistance that contribute towards a leader’s self-efficacy, are continually influenced by the environment and the leader’s level of self-awareness. The authors suggest that the environment within Christian institutions may have had limited advancement opportunities for women in the past. However, they also acknowledge that the movement towards a more collaborative environment has the potential to better align with women’s leadership styles and positively impact their leadership development (Dahlvig & Longman, 2014).

The researchers also acknowledge that women may have different needs at various stages within their careers. For example, they identify women who are newer to leadership as being in

the idealistic achievement stage. These women are encouraged to spend time reflecting on what is motivating them to lead. Women who are in the middle stages of their career, or the pragmatic endurance stage, might benefit by focusing on building their skills and reflecting on their self-efficacy as it relates to resistance to their leadership. Finally, more experienced women who are in the re-inventive contribution stage of their careers, should partner with a coach to contemplate both the validation and the resistance that they have received in regard to their leadership (Dahlvig & Longman, 2014).

**Conceptual Framework: Biblical Spiritual Disciplines**

As women leaders work through the stages of leadership development, their spiritual growth is fundamental in living out their true calling. The foundation of Christianity is solidified in the Scripture of John 3:16 (New International Version), “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.” Christians believe that God sent his Son, Jesus, to save the world and provide humans with an opportunity to have eternal life after death. They believe that Jesus lived the perfect life of character and demonstrated leadership qualities through the regular practice of spiritual disciplines. Therefore, Christians around the world seek to emulate His spiritual life.

The researcher studied Willard (1988), Whitney (1991), and Foster’s (1998) work to gain further insight on the use of spiritual disciplines.

Table 1

*Comparison of Willard, Whitney, and Foster’s Spiritual Disciplines*

Willard	Whitney	Foster
Solitude	Solitude	Solitude
Silence	Silence	
Fasting	Fasting	Fasting

(continued)

Willard	Whitney	Foster
Frugality		
Chastity		
Secrecy		
Sacrifice		
Watch		
Study		Study
Worship	Worship	Worship
Celebration		Celebration
Service	Service	Service
Prayer	Prayer	Prayer
Fellowship		
Confession		Confession
Submission		Submission
		Meditation
		Simplicity
		Guidance
	Evangelism	
	Stewardship	
	Journaling	
	Learning	

Although each author highlighted slightly different spiritual disciplines, there were five disciplines that were mentioned in all three books: (a) solitude, (b) fasting, (c) worship, (d) service, and (e) prayer. For the purpose of this study, the researcher chose to focus on Foster's (1998) twelve spiritual disciplines. In comparison with the other authors, the researcher believed that Foster's (1998) work is time-tested, is categorized in a way that represents the various parts of the spiritual life, and is more closely related to the development of leadership qualities.

**Foster's twelve spiritual disciplines.** Many Christian women leaders rely on the practice of spiritual disciplines as a way to draw closer to God to receive the power, authority, guidance, and ability to live out the responsibilities associated with leadership. Foster's (1998) twelve spiritual disciplines are categorized into three sections: (a) the inward disciplines (meditation, prayer, fasting, and study), (b) the outward disciplines (simplicity, solitude,

submission, and service), and (c) the corporate disciplines (confession, worship, guidance, and celebration). The following section defines and describes the purpose of each discipline, connects it to a Biblical Scripture, provides suggestions for application, and finally, highlights areas of caution, or possible misuse, of the disciplines.

***Inward discipline: Meditation.*** Meditation is defined as, “The ability to hear God’s voice and obey His Word” (Foster, 1998, p, 17). Christians believe that the purpose of meditation is to create a sacred space so that God has the opportunity to transform their hearts and minds. It is through this time spent with God that they are able to gain a spiritual perspective that will assist them in everyday living. Jesus Christ, also referred to as the Son of God, revealed that time spent meditating translated into a better understanding of God’s character. John 5:19 (New International Version) states that, “The Son can do nothing by Himself; He can do only what He sees His Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.” Christians are encouraged to meditate on Scripture as a way of centering themselves on the Word of God with the intention to become more Christ-like. Christian meditation can sometimes be confused with Eastern meditation. Foster (1998) explains that, “Eastern meditation is an attempt to empty the mind; Christian meditation is an attempt to fill the mind” (p. 20). The main difference is that the purpose of Christian meditation is an invitation for God to enter their minds and bring about wholeness and transformation.

***Inward discipline: Prayer.*** Foster (1998) asserts that, “Of all the spiritual disciplines, prayer is the most central because it ushers one into perpetual communion with the Father” (p. 33). Christians use prayer as a means to communicate with and hear from God. Jesus modeled the importance of praying throughout His life. In Mark 1:35 (New International Version), the Scriptures state that, “Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the

house and went off to a solitary place, where He prayed.” When learning how to pray, Christians have often used the acronym ACTS. ACTS stands for Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication. Foster (1998) warns that prayer should not become too complicated and should be used as a means of understanding God’s will for living a Christian life; as opposed to a way of living life on their own terms.

***Inward discipline: Fasting.*** Foster (1998) reminds Christians that, “Throughout Scripture fasting refers to abstaining from food for spiritual purposes” (p. 48). The main purpose of fasting is to reveal anything that might have control over one’s life while seeking complete reliance on God to restore balance to life. In John 4:32, 34 (New International Version), Jesus explains to His followers that, “I have food to eat that you know nothing about...My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work.” Fasting is typically done individually. Christians are encouraged to do so without calling attention to themselves, but rather keeping it between themselves and God. On occasion, groups of Christians who have a common purpose will come together to pray and fast. Christians may begin with what is considered a partial fast, or a “restriction of diet, but not total abstention” (Foster, 1998, p. 49). Over time, one might be guided to work up to a full fast that includes drinking water, but abstaining from food for a period of time. There has been some disagreement on whether or not the Bible commands Christians to fast. Foster (1998) concludes that although Jesus makes reference to when you fast, this is not to be taken as a command. He also warns that one should examine their motives before fasting and that it should not be used to manipulate.

***Inward discipline: Study.*** Foster (1998) describes study as, “A specific kind of experience in which through careful attention to reality the mind is enabled to move in a certain direction” (p. 63). The purpose of studying the Bible is to not only gain knowledge of what it

says, but also to apply the words so that one's life can be changed. One well-known Scripture stated in John 8:32 (New International Version) claims that, "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." Jesus spent time teaching others how to focus their thoughts for the purpose of impacting their behaviors. In Philippians 4:8 (New International Version), Jesus said, "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things." Even today, Christians are challenged to learn Scripture by regular repetition, intense concentration and comprehension, and deep reflection on the meaning of the passage. Foster (1998) reinforces that studying the Scriptures should be for self-growth and should not be used as a means to "condemn or judge anyone" (p. 75).

***Outward discipline: Simplicity.*** Foster (1998) describes simplicity as a means to, "Set us free to receive the provision of God as a gift that is not ours to keep and can be freely shared with others" (p. 85). The spiritual discipline of simplicity is a way of life that yields to trusting in God and gaining a clear perspective. When Christians move outside of the boundaries of simplicity, it is natural to become overly attached to material possessions. Simplicity brings forth a different mindset that views material possessions as a gift, or on loan from God, releasing an unhealthy attachment and creating a willingness to share materials things with others. The Bible teaches in Matthew 6:33 (New International Version) that Christians are to, "But seek first His Kingdom and His Righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." This Scripture asserts that maintaining a Biblical perspective will allow worldly wants and needs to fall into place. Furthermore, "The Christian discipline of simplicity is an inward reality that results in an outward lifestyle" (Foster, 1998, p. 79). Evidence of a simplistic lifestyle includes focusing on what is needed, as opposed to overindulging in an excess of material possessions,

freeing oneself of anything addictive, exploring the possibility of utilizing things without owning them, and finally, “Reject anything that breeds the oppression of others” (Foster, 1998, p. 94).

Foster (1998) recognizes that living a lifestyle of simplicity can be very difficult for Christians who are used to, or aspire to, living an affluent lifestyle.

***Outward discipline: Solitude.*** Although solitude can easily be associated with an inward discipline, Foster (1998) states that, “Inward solitude has outward manifestations” (p. 97). This idea is supported by defining solitude as an, “Inner fulfillment, or more a state of mind and heart, than it is a place” (Foster, 1998, p. 96). Silence is often associated with solitude, as it encourages one to quiet themselves long enough to be able to listen carefully. “Silence is one of the deepest disciplines of the Spirit simply because it puts the stopper on all self-justification. One of the fruits of silence is the freedom to let God be our justifier” (Foster, 1998, p. 101). Jesus spent much of His time among people, but was intentional in modeling the importance of finding time to be alone. In Matthew 14:23 (New International Version), the Scripture says that, “After He had dismissed the crowds, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. When evening came, He was there alone.” This verse demonstrates that this time alone was a means to replenish and that Jesus accomplished this through prayer. Solitude, however, is not always done when alone or for long periods of time. If this were the case, it would feel almost impossible to practice this spiritual discipline with such a busy lifestyle. However, as stated in the definition, solitude is more than a place. Christians are encouraged to look for small segments of time throughout the day, whether that be sitting in traffic or waiting in line at the store. A planned retreat may be another way to reap the full benefits of silence and solitude. Foster (1998) warns that, “One reason we can hardly bear to remain silent is that it makes us feel so helpless. We are so

accustomed to relying upon words to manage and control others” (p. 100-101). With time, Christians can grow to feel more comfortable being in silence and solitude.

***Outward discipline: Submission.*** The sinful nature of humans sometimes referred to as the human condition, can make the discipline of submission extremely difficult. By definition, submission is, “The ability to lay down the terrible burden of always needing to get our own way” (Foster, 1998, p. 111). Christians often realize their need for God as they struggle with letting go of their own plans and trying to control the outcome of their circumstances. Jesus modeled several ways in which He was submissive to his Heavenly Father. Even when facing death, Jesus’s words demonstrate His commitment to His Father’s will; “Father, if You are willing, take this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours, be done” (Luke 22:42- New International Version). Ultimately, His Father’s will was for Jesus to die on a cross for the salvation of humankind; however, this act was not done in vain. In Matthew 10:39 (New International Version), Jesus shares with His followers that, “Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.” Christians believe that there is freedom and spiritual power as individuals submit themselves to the will of God. Foster (1998) claims that there are many areas of one’s life that require the act of submission. First and foremost, Christians are to submit to the will of God and the truth that is found in the Holy Scriptures. Other areas include submitting to their neighbors, the community of believers, those in need, and to the world. Foster (1998) warns that, “Of all the spiritual disciplines none has been more abused than the discipline of submission” (p. 110). The urge to be self-serving can be so strong that Christians need to continually evaluate their true motivation when dealing with others.

***Outward disciplines: Service.*** Service is defined as the, “Supportive action towards others” (Hale, n.d., para. 4). Jesus spent His time serving others and teaching His followers to do



the same. The Bible speaks of Jesus' humble service in Mark 10:45 (New International Version), "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many." Foster (1998) names several different types of service including hospitality, listening, bearing the burdens of others, and evangelism. There are many ways in which one can choose to serve; however, Christians must once again examine their motives for serving. Service is meant to be supportive of others and is not intended to bring attention and recognition to the one doing the service. This type of service, known as self-righteous service, can be harmful to a community.

***Corporate discipline: Confession.*** Confession is defined as, "Acknowledging one's sin with and to others in the community of faith" (Hale, n.d., para. 5). The purpose of confession is to bring healing and strengthen one's relationship with God. James 5:16 (New International Version) states, "Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working." Although Christians are encouraged to confess their wrongdoings to one another, it is God who is the one that forgives them. Foster (1998) describes three elements that are to be a part of confession: (a) an examination of conscience, (b) sorrow, (c) and a determination to avoid sin (p. 151). First, examining one's conscience suggests an openness to God so that He can reveal areas that need improvement. Second, sorrow is a feeling of regret or remorse for one's actions. Thirdly, a determination to avoid sin means that there is a sincere effort to not repeating one's wrongdoing. Foster (1998) cautions Christians not to abuse this discipline to the point where it becomes self-condemnation. Confession is meant to bring healing and transformation.

***Corporate discipline: Worship.*** Worship is defined as, "Giving God glory through attitudes and actions" (Hale, n.d., para. 5). The Bible refers to the Ten Commandments in both

Old and New Testament teachings. These commandments are given as a way to live a fulfilling life that is pleasing to God. Matthew 4:10 (New International Version) states that, “You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve.” Although one could argue that there are endless reasons to serve God for all that He has done, practicing the discipline of worship is, “An ordered way of acting and living that sets us before God so He can transform us” (Foster, 1998, p. 166). Worship can be done individually or in a group setting. Foster (1998) states, “When the people of God meet together, there often comes a sense of being ‘gathered’ into one mind, becoming of one accord” (p. 164). Here, Foster (1998) reinforces how the sum of individuals coming together make up the whole church. Foster (1998) provides many different expressions of worship. For example, he encourages believers to prepare to spend time with God on a daily basis. Furthermore, that worship is about God and the need for Him. It can be tempting to turn worship into how it makes one feel; however, Foster (1998) cautions that, “If worship does not propel us into greater obedience, it has not been worship” (p. 173). Although worship is often viewed as an outward expression, it is the internal admiration and relationship with God that transforms individuals.

***Corporate discipline: Guidance.*** The discipline of guidance is defined as, “Giving and receiving direction from others along the journey with Jesus” (Hale, n.d., para. 5). Guidance is often associated with individuals hearing from God; however, the Bible stresses the importance of also using the strength and power of the faith community as a whole, to completely interpret and understand the message from God. Matthew 18: 19-20 (New International Version) states, “If two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by My Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.” Foster (1998) asserts that Western culture’s emphasis on individualism can create challenges in seeking

to come together as a community. Jesus encouraged believers to ask each other for feedback by testing what they believe they have heard from God. The assumption is that everyone is first listening to what God is saying to them, and then coming together to gain a clearer picture of what the message might mean. Foster (1998) explains that the goal is not to seek complete agreement with one another, but rather to come together in unity in what they believe God is saying to them. Like with every discipline, there is a potential risk for abuse or manipulation. Foster (1998) warns that leaders can knowingly, or perhaps, unknowingly restrict the potential of individuals who are truly seeking to walk in the Spirit. To try and limit this from happening, Foster (1998) encourages Christians to constantly check their motives and actions to closely align them with Biblical teaching that is being prompted by the Spirit.

***Corporate discipline: Celebration.*** Foster (1998) describes the twelfth spiritual discipline of celebration as, “Taking joy in what God has done” and that, “It is at the heart of the way of Christ” (p. 190). Galatians 5:22-23 (New International Version) states that, “The Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.” The purpose of this discipline is to free individuals from the anxiety and worries of this world. Jesus teaches that bringing our concerns to Him, regardless of the circumstances, will result in the sense of freedom and joy. Foster (1998) states that, “Joy produces energy” and that this strength is obtained through obedience (p. 192). As Christians seek to be obedient to God in their daily lives, God begins to transform their thinking and their behavior. Foster (1998) describes several benefits to remaining in a joyful state which includes not taking oneself too seriously, freedom from depression, and the ability to gain a new perspective. Lastly, as individuals practice the discipline of celebration, this tends to lead to even greater celebration.

## **Importance of Biblical Spiritual Disciplines**

Whitney (1991) suggests that the purpose of the spiritual disciplines can be found in 1 Timothy 4:7-8 (New International Version), “Train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.” Even though the life and death of Jesus Christ solidified eternal life, Christians continue to pursue spiritual growth while on earth. Spiritual disciplines are a means for becoming holy, or more Christ-like. Practicing spiritual disciplines allows individuals to go before God and seek to be transformed. There are three ways in which God can transform individuals who are open to receiving His mercy: (a) through positive and negative relationships with other people, (b) through good and difficult circumstances, and (c) through personal choices in how one lives from day to day. God has invited everyone to be a part of this process; however, the gift of spiritual transformation can only be received from God.

## **Biblical Spiritual Disciplines and Leadership**

There has been a recent interest in paying closer attention to spirituality in the workplace. Researchers have attributed this interest to employees wanting to feel more connected to others at work and seeking to create a sense of meaning and purpose within their own lives (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000 as cited in Klenke, 2003). Another driving force may be that studies have shown that spiritual organizations have produced more effective leaders (Druskat, 1994, as cited in Reave, 2005). Furthermore, spirituality is one avenue that reveals the motivation, character, ethics, values, and effectiveness of leaders (Reave, 2005).

**Commonality of quality leadership attributes.** In a review of the literature, the researcher found that there were numerous attributes associated with strong leadership practices. The researcher attempted to depict the most salient literature; however, there is more leadership

literature than what is captured in Table 2. Table 2 shows the literature sources, their relationship to the key leadership attributes, and a summary of the findings.

Table 2

*Commonality in Leadership Attributes*

Leadership Attributes	Spendlove (2007)	Wolverton et al. (2006)	Workman & Cleveland-Innes (2012)	Reave (2005)	Frequency
Credibility	X	X			2
Honesty	X			X	2
Listens	X			X	2
Reflection		X		X	2
Respect for individuality		X		X	2
Thinks Strategically	X		X		2
Care/Concern				X	1
Communication		X			1
Competency		X			1
Consults with others	X				1
Cultural Sensitivity		X			1
Empowerment			X		1
Energy		X			1
Experience	X				1
Fair treatment				X	1
Focus		X			1
Forward thinking		X			1
Humility				X	1
Influence, motivation, Inspiration			X		1
Integrity				X	1
Negotiates/Persuades	X				1
Openness	X				1

(continued)

Leadership Attributes	Spendlove (2007)	Wolverton et al. (2006)	Workman & Cleveland-Innes (2012)	Reave (2005)	Frequency
Passion		X			1
Recognizing contributions of others				X	1
Resiliency		X			1
Shared values			X		1
Stamina		X			1
Vision/Mission			X		1

In tallying the frequency of the attributes mentioned in these four articles, there were six attributes that were mentioned in more than one article: (a) credibility, (b) honesty, (c) listening skills, (d) reflection, (e) respect for individuality, and (f) strategic thinking. First, credibility is referred to as maintaining a strong reputation among the academic community. This is often accomplished over time and by establishing trusting bonds with others (Spendlove, 2007; Wolverton et al., 2006). Second, honesty with oneself and others is one leadership attribute that is universally endorsed and is extremely important, specifically in times of crisis (Reave, 2005; Spendlove, 2007). Third, effective listening skills went beyond hearing, but also recognizing new ideas (Reave 2005; Spendlove, 2007). Fourth, participating in reflective practices was associated with leadership identity, resilience, and an improvement in overall health (Reave 2005; Wolverton et al., 2006). Fifth, respect for individuality includes honoring diversity, showing appreciation, fairness, and acknowledging a collective effort (Reave, 2005; Wolverton et al., 2006). Lastly, strategic thinking involves thinking broadly to develop and implement the organization’s vision (Spendlove, 2007; Workman & Cleveland-Innes, 2012).

These attributes alone do not clearly distinguish a spiritual leader from a non-spiritual leader; however, one of the main differences is the reason behind “why” the leader behaves the

way they do. Christian leaders often describe service and accountability to God and others, as a personal value. This can be best summarized by stating that, “Ethical behavior is required to demonstrate spirituality, but spirituality is not required to demonstrate ethical values and practices” (Reave, 2005, p. 657).

**Christian leadership.** Hanna (2006) defines Christian leadership as, “A dynamic relational process in which people, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, partner to achieve a common goal, which is serving others by leading and leading others by serving” (p. 21). Hanna (2006) identifies what he calls four leader-follower synergies: confession, repentance, obedience, and perseverance. First, the author suggests that effective leaders need to be willing to admit wrongdoing and take corrective action when necessary. Second, through repentance, leaders aim to work together as a team to serve Christ. Thirdly, Christian leaders continually seek to be obedient to God’s will. Lastly, Christian leaders recognize their own shortcomings and are committed to a process of growth for themselves and others. Several of these leadership attributes could also be associated with leaders within the secular world; however, the main difference is the role of the Holy Spirit. JACL Editors (2014) and Patterson (2013) suggest that without the Holy Spirit there is no transformation. A spiritual leader is described as, “Someone who is guided by the Spirit of God. If you have the Spirit of God residing within you--guiding, empowering, equipping you—then you’ve got everything that God has available to you” (Patterson, 2013, p. 28). It is through this guidance from God, that leaders begin to see a transformation in themselves and, in turn, are then able to influence others.

**Benefits to incorporating spirituality at work.** Research studies have examined the impact of incorporating spirituality into the workplace. How the leader chooses to reflect their values can, “Motivate followers, create a positive ethical climate, inspire trust, promote positive

work relationships, and achieve organizational goals” (Reave, 2005, p. 656). These benefits are threefold in that they contributed to the success of the leader, the follower, and the organization as a whole. Other benefits included increasing productivity, improving teamwork, creating sustainability, and increasing innovation (Klenke, 2003; Reave, 2005). Reave (2005) specifically focused on how the leader’s behavior can influence his/her followers; suggesting that the climate the leader reinforces can help his/her followers make more ethical decisions.

Although some studies have made a connection between spiritual values and effective leadership, there appears to still be a lack of discussion on this topic within leadership programs in higher education. Regardless of the level of success in one’s career, moral development and finding greater meaning are two areas that individuals still wrestle with throughout their professional lives (Bugenhagen, 2009).

**Potential concerns.** Aside from the many benefits that spirituality can have on the workplace, the potential for harm is also expressed in the literature. One concern is that spirituality can be, “Used as a way to manipulate and exploit workers to fulfill the selfish or materialistic objectives of some business owners” (Nadesan, 1999 as cited in Reave, 2005, p. 656). This harmful approach is often identified as not meeting the standards of ethical leaders in general. One way to overcome this potential concern is to rely less on the words communicated by the leader and focus attention on how their actions are aligned with spiritual principles. It is suggested that further research in defining and measuring spirituality in the workplace could be beneficial (Reave, 2005). Additional empirical research could also further develop the leaders’ motivation and values, as well as examining the positive and negative effects on their followers.



## **Character and Leadership Practices**

In one research study that explored character development in a business school setting, researchers spoke to 300 senior-level leaders from Canada, China, England, and the United States. A common theme that was raised in these discussions was the role that character played in leading organizations. Interestingly, the researcher noted that even though there was an overwhelming agreement on the importance of character, the senior-level leaders had difficulty articulating a clear definition of what it meant (Crossan et al., 2013). Sweeney & Fry's (2012) definition of character includes behavioral, psychological, and social components. They define character as the, "Consistent moral and ethical actions for the purposes of maintaining congruence with one's own and the organization's values and beliefs, and to serve the greater good of the community" (p. 91).

Although leaders inside and outside of higher education agree that character is a key leadership quality, others argue whether character can be taught at all. Critics contend that, "Strong character alone cannot prevent unethical behavior" (Crossan et al., 2013, p. 290). Yet, for generations, institutions of higher education have strived to develop leaders with strong moral character. According to Crossan et al. (2013), there are six universal virtues: (a) wisdom, (b) courage, (c) humanity, (d) justice, (e) temperance, and (f) transcendence. Those in favor of teaching character believe that character can be taught through life experiences, interpersonal relationships, observations, role-playing, and self-reflection.

Even among those who agree that character can be taught, how character or ethical decision-making are implemented can look very different depending on the values of the leader (Garza Mitchell, 2012). A situation can be addressed ethically, but with different results, based on what value the leader chooses to focus. For example, when facing financial cuts, one leader

might consider the human resource aspect, while another leader may put more emphasis on the bottom line. Both leaders are exercising their best judgement and are putting forth their best effort to uphold the mission of the University. McFadden, Miller, Sypawka, Clay, and Hoover-Plonk (2013) stress that this is one of the reasons why leadership development programs are necessary. One study explored a Leadership Development Institute that connected Boleman and Deal's (1984) Leadership Orientation Instrument and Lind's (1978) Moral Judgement Test (as cited in McFadden et al., 2013). Not surprisingly, the human resource was used most frequently, followed by the structural, political, and symbolic frames (McFadden et al., 2013). Surprisingly, the researchers noted that, "79% of the participants scored in the low to moderate range on the MJT" (McFadden et al., 2013, p. 72). The researchers inferred that, "As the strength of one frame becomes dominant, then that frame and its associated characteristics, becomes the driving force and ethical considerations might be disregarded in the decision making process" (McFadden et al., 2013, p. 72). Thus, the researchers concluded that leadership programs would benefit by addressing moral and ethical decision making so that leaders become more aware of how their natural leadership preferences impact their decisions.

A lack of character has often been associated with the downfall of ethical leadership. Crossan et al. (2013) state that, "The crisis of confidence in leadership has manifested itself not only in business, but also in public administration, the sports arena, cultural organizations, and religious institutions" (p. 285). Scholars and influential Fortune 1000 companies have expressed the importance of strong character in leaders. Sparks (2001) claims that, "The world is crying out for effective leaders today. We live in a complex world that is seeking individuals who will lead in accordance with measured thought and principled behavior" (p. 509).

## **Women's Leadership**

**Gender and leadership.** There are various views on the role of gender as it relates to leadership ability and style. When women first entered the workforce in the United States in the 1920s, they represented 21% of the workforce and were viewed as lacking the education and skills for leadership (Hennig & Jardin, 1977 as cited in Northouse, 2009; Our History, n.d., para 2). By 2010, women represented 47% of workforce and have acquired education and developed leadership skills, thus, shifting the discussion to a comparison in leadership styles with men (Our History, n.d., para 2).

Today, some researchers argue that the women's leadership styles are the way of the future and that women are even more effective leaders than men; while others assert that there is no difference in leadership style among men and women. One area that gender did play a role was when women or men were put in an environment that was dominated by the opposite gender (Northouse, 2009). For example, when women were leading in a male dominant profession, such as the military, they were viewed as less effective in leadership.

Unlike much of the research, Vongalis-Macrow (2016) attempts to stay away from gender stereotypes around effective leadership. Instead, the author puts an, "emphasis on how leaders perform leadership as a leadership style not on reinforcing claims about male and female leadership" (Vongalis-Macrow, 2016, p. 93). Thus, communal leadership is defined as, "The capacity to garner support and cohesion" (Vongalis-Macrow, 2016, p. 92). Communal characteristics are described as, "affectionate, helpful, kind, sympathetic, interpersonally sensitive, nurturant and gentle" (Eagly et al., 2002 as cited in Isaac, Behar-Horenstein, & Koro-Ljungberg, 2009, p. 137) or "more caring, collegial, and social" (Vongalis-Macrow, 2016, p. 92). On the contrary, agency characteristics are described as, "assertive, controlling, confident,

aggressive, ambitious, dominant, forceful, independent, self-sufficient, self-confident, and prone to act as a leader” (Eagly et al., 2002 as cited in Isaac et al., 2009, p. 137) or “more decisive, active, assertive, and less emotional” (Robertson et al., 2011 as cited in Vongalis-Macrow, 2016, p. 92).

In a study of ten women Deans, the data showed the women used feminine language such as organizing and planning for the service of the greater good when describing more masculine characteristics such as achievement and hierarchy (Isaac et al., 2009). Another area where more feminine language was preferred was when describing power or authority. Women tended to view their role as empowering or influencing others. Isaac et al. (2009) concluded that, “Feminine values were incongruent with the masculine discourse and created inner conflict” for several women leaders (p. 148). Wolverton et al. (2006) appear to agree that much of the existing literature stems from the male perspective. In their study of college and university women Presidents, they outlined the following nine leadership tenets: (a) passion, (b) reflection, (c) competency, (d) communication, (e) cultural sensitivity, (f) stamina, (g) energy, (h) resiliency, (i) ability to be focused yet engaged in forward thinking (j) respect for individuality, and (k) credibility. The study concluded the competence, credibility, and communication were the most important characteristics for women leaders.

**Barriers.** Several research studies have identified possible barriers women face when aspiring for leadership positions. Table 3 names the literature sources and outlines potential obstacles.

Table 3

*Potential Obstacles Faced by Women in Higher Education*

Obstacle	Author
Gender stereotypes/backlash for demonstrating male characteristics (i.e. assertiveness)	Northouse (2009) Wolverton, et al. (2006)
Conflicting expectation	
Conformity to male-norms	Longman & Anderson (2016)
Less encouragement and formal training	Northouse (2009)
Lack of confidence	Longman & Anderson (2016) Jackson Teague (2015)
Balancing profession & family life	Wolverton, et al. (2006)
Greater loss after quitting due to family obligations	
Lack of flexibility in schedule	Northouse (2009) Airini et al. (2008) Longman & Anderson (2016) Jackson Teague (2015)
Female discrimination	Vongalis-Macrow (2016)
Lack of support (from males/females)	Airini et al. (2008) Jackson Teague (2015)
Different motivational factors for leadership	Longman & Anderson (2016)

These negative experiences can create future stumbling blocks in women’s careers.

Despite these barriers, Wolverton et al. (2006) encourage women to overcome them by being, “Purposeful in obtaining the education and experiences that prepare them for leadership. They must engage in long range career planning that moves them through a series of jobs that provide professional development through hands-on experience” (p. 135).

**Motivation to remove barriers.** Dahlvig and Longman (2014) suggest several motives for removing gender barriers. For example, equal opportunity for all applicants continues to be a pressing issue in today’s society. Expanding the pool of applicants increases the possibility in hiring the most qualified candidate. Longman and Anderson (2016) and Jackson Teague (2015) note that intentionally diversifying the leadership team promotes productivity, financial gain within organizations, positive work environments, better decision making, and an increase in

innovation. Lastly, women in leadership roles are role models for the student body, which is almost 60% female.

**Future opportunities.** As barriers continue to be removed, the potential for more women in leadership positions increases. The US Department of Education (2010) revealed in 2007-2008, women were obtaining the, “Majority of bachelor’s degrees (57.3%), master’s degrees (69.6%), and doctoral degrees (51%)” (Dahlvig & Longman, 2014, p. 6). Beyond education rates, the research further asserts that women will continue to grow and develop if domestic responsibilities are more equally shared, organizations move towards greater work/life balance, and more women are successful in their businesses. Other contributing factors that are known to advance women’s careers are the role of collegial relationships and male mentors (Airini et al., 2008; Isaac et al., 2009). In a male-dominated profession, women are frequently surrounded by male role models. Since often times women never set out on a path a leadership, they reported these relationships lead to an increase their confidence, greater recognition, and access to future job opportunities.

Jackson Teague (2015) outlines several steps associated with the *Moving the Needle Initiative* which aims to increase the number of women in senior-level leadership positions in higher education by 50% by the year 2030. The steps included the following: (a) generate a sense of urgency for advancing women in higher education, (b) recruit and hire women into senior-level leadership positions, (c) build capacity in mid-level and senior-level positions within the institutions, and (d) define standards that outline success in advancing women.

Despite the numerous articles written on effective leadership, continued research is necessary to learn how women view themselves as leaders, as well as, the unique barriers that they face along their path to leadership (Airini et al., 2008; Wolverton et al., 2006). Longman

and Anderson (2016) assert that, “If progress is to be made toward the goal of Christian higher education being guided by leadership teams that more fully reflect the Kingdom, attentiveness to women’s inner dialogue, values, and motivations will be necessary” (p. 28).

## **Summary**

This chapter presented the historical background on Christian faith-based institutions commitment to academic and moral teaching in higher education. Over time, a number of factors have challenged, and even attempted to shift the purpose of education. As Christian institutions look towards the future, Dahlvig and Longman’s (2014) believe that developing the next generation of women leaders is an essential part of the solution. Their theory examines three key motivational factors for women who pursue a leadership role, the validation and/or resistance that impacts their leadership self-efficacy, and the interplay between self-awareness and the environment that informs their leadership development process.

Another avenue to support women leaders is encouraging them to strengthen their spiritual lives. The literature review of Foster’s (1998) inward, outward, and corporate spiritual disciplines addressed the numerous benefits and areas of caution to ensure that the spiritual disciplines are not misused. There can be multiple benefits to leaders, followers, and the organization as a whole when the leaders choose to positively demonstrate their values within the workplace. Some positive benefits of incorporating spirituality into the workplace include creating a positive culture and promoting a positive work relationship (Reave, 2005). Although practicing spiritual disciplines does not automatically equate into a person with strong character, according to Crossan et al. (2013) there are six universal virtues: (a) wisdom, (b) courage, (c) humanity, (d) justice, (e) temperance, and (f) transcendence that can be taught through life experiences, interpersonal relationships, observations, role-playing, and self-reflection.

Finally, the literature review reinforced the ongoing debate between male and female leadership styles; however, one researcher suggested that it may be more beneficial to focus on leadership behavior instead of the gender of the leader (Vongalis-Macrow, 2016). The barriers and future opportunities for women leaders were examined since women are still underrepresented in senior-level leadership positions, particularly in Christian institutions of higher education.



### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

This chapter begins with a review of the purpose of this phenomenological study and the research question. It continues with a description of the methodology, the setting, population, sample, and sampling procedures. It includes human subject considerations, the instrumentation that was used, the data that was collected, how the data was managed, and the process for analyzing the data. The chapter concludes with the positionality of the researcher.

#### **Study Purpose**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the perceived influence of Biblical spiritual disciplines on women's character and leadership practices in Christian faith-based institutions of higher education in North America. This study conducted individual semi-structured interviews of eight to ten Christian women leaders who serve as Deans or Associate Deans in institutions that are full member of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU).

#### **Research Question**

How, if at all, do Biblical spiritual disciplines, influence women's character and leadership practices in Christian faith-based institutions of higher education in North America?

#### **Research Methodology and Rationale**

This study utilized a qualitative phenomenological research design. The researcher proposed to interview eight to ten Christian women leaders who serve as Deans or Associate Deans in institutions that are full members of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities. The interviews were conducted face-to-face and virtually using a semi-structured interview protocol consisting of eleven questions. The questions were designed to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of these Christian women leaders.

According to Creswell (2014), “Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 4). A qualitative approach was best suited for this study because it, “Allows the researcher to discover new variables and relationships, to reveal and understand complex processes, and to illustrate the influence of the social context” (Shah & Corley, 2006, p. 182). There are several key qualitative features that were utilized in this study. For example, the researcher played an intentional role in gathering data through in-depth interviews of the participants. Through these interviews, the researcher aimed to understand the women’s unique stories.

Since the purpose of this study was meant to deeply understand the lived experiences of women leaders, a qualitative approach with phenomenological methodology was chosen. Creswell (2014) defines phenomenological research as, “A design of inquiry coming from philosophy and psychology in which the researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants” (p. 14). A phenomenological approach was best suited for this study as the researcher is, “Interested in describing a person’s experience in the way he or she experiences it” (Bevan, 2014, p. 136).

The researcher had targeted interviewing 8-10 women Deans and Associate Deans who served at institutions who are full members of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) in North America. During the face-to-face or virtual interviews sessions, the participants were asked a set of eleven semi-structured interview questions. Lunenburg and Irby (2008) define semi-structured interview questions as, “Questions that are developed in advance. Follow-up questions are developed as the interview progresses based on participant responses” (p. 192). Furthermore, the researchers go on to suggest that one of the benefits of a semi-structured interview technique is that it, “Provides reasonable standard data across

participants but also allows the flexibility to probe answers more deeply and gather more information” (Gall et al., 1996, as cited in Lunenburg & Irby, 2008, p 193). All interview questions were aligned with the overarching research question and the conceptual framework. These questions were designed to elicit a thoughtful response about how spiritual disciplines influence women leaders’ character and leadership practices.

**Credibility/trustworthiness for study design.** Past qualitative studies have reinforced the importance of establishing trustworthiness within the study design. Guba (as cited in Shenton, 2004) suggests that there are several steps, or credibility measures, that a researcher can employ to, “Ensure that their study measures or tests what is actually intended” (p. 64). The credibility measures that were used in this study included: (a) well-established research methods, (b) peer scrutiny, (c) researcher’s reflective commentary, (d) member checks, and (e) thick and rich description of the phenomenon (Shenton, 2004).

### **Setting**

This study focused on female Deans or Associate Deans who have been leading three or more years at universities that are members of the CCCU in North America. The mission of the CCCU is to, “Advance the mission of Christ-centered higher education and to help our institutions transform lives by faithfully relating scholarship and service to Biblical truth” (Dahlvig & Longman, 2014, p. 10). The study locations were held in public places that were convenient for the participants and the researcher, such as a public site on a university campus or through virtual means such as Adobe Connect.

### **Population, Sample and Sampling Procedures**

**Population.** Women leaders who work in universities that are full members of the CCCU constitute the target population for this research study. The CCCU is a, “Higher

education association of 178 Christian institutions around the world. The 115 member campuses in North America are fully-accredited, comprehensive colleges and universities with curricula rooted in the arts and sciences” (Council for Christian Colleges & Universities, 2015, para. 1).

**Sample.** Creswell (2013) offers some common guidelines when determining a reasonable sample size in qualitative studies. He suggests that researchers, “Not only study a few sites or individuals but also collect extensive detail about each site or individual studied” (p. 157). Unlike quantitative studies that aim to generalize information, he notes that the goal of a phenomenological study is to demonstrate the particulars of the phenomenon being studied. Thus, the sample size can range from, “Studying 3 to 10 subjects” (p. 157). The ideal sample for this study consisted of 8-10 women leaders who met the following criteria:

- Christian women serving in leadership positions (Deans/Associate Deans) at a college or university that is a member of the CCCU;
- Women leaders who have held a leadership position for 3 or more years; and
- Women who have expressed an interest in how Biblical spiritual disciplines influence women’s character and leadership practices in Christian faith-based institutions of higher education, understanding spiritual disciplines is not a criteria for participant inclusion in study.

**Sampling procedures.** Lunenburg and Irby (2008) name purposive sampling as one means for obtaining a sample for a qualitative research study. “Purposive sampling involves selecting a sample based on the researcher’s experience or knowledge of the group to be sampled” (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008, p. 175). Purposive sampling was used to identify women leaders who are current leaders in Christian institutions. Both criterion and snowball sampling strategies were also used in this study. In criterion sampling, the researcher was, “selecting

participants who meet some criterion” (Lunenberg & Irby, 2008, p. 176). Snowball sampling means, “selecting a few people who can identify other people who can identify still other people who might be good participants for a study” (Lunenberg & Irby, 2008, p. 176). The researcher focused on networking with the Director of the Women’s Leadership Development Institute (WLDI) that is associated with the CCCU, and a former Dean with connections to Christian-faith based institutions across the country, for recommendations of potential participants. The researcher obtained e-mail addresses of potential participants from the Director of Women's Leadership Development Institute and/or a former Dean. The participants were e-mailed an individual invitation, which included details about the study, asking them to participate in this research study (See Appendix D).

In the event that more than 10 participants were interested in participating in this study, the researcher would have selected the final sample to ensure representation of more universities and a fairly equal distribution of women in Dean and Associate Dean positions. For example, the researcher would have reviewed the university and positions of the first 10 participants. Without exceeding a total of 15 participants, the researcher would have only added participants if their university or position was not already represented in the sample.

### **Human Subject Considerations**

The purpose of human subject considerations is to, “Protect the rights and welfare of human subjects participating in research activities” (Graduate and Professional Schools IRB, 2016, para 3). Permission to conduct this study was sought and obtained through Pepperdine University’s Graduate Professional Schools (GPS) Institutional Review Board (IRB). The approval to conduct the study is included as Appendix B.

As an IRB requirement, the researcher completed the online training for human subject research (see Appendix C). Using a recruitment script template (see Appendix D), provided by the university, the researcher e-mailed potential participants to elicit interest to participate in the study. A follow up e-mail was sent one week after the original recruitment script to elicit an increase in response rate (see Appendix E). Upon successful recruitment of the participants, the researcher e-mailed each of the participants a consent form prior to the interview date (see Appendix F). The consent form provided an overview of the purpose of the study, any potential risks, benefits of the study, described how the data will be used, and requested that the interview be audio recorded. In addition to the consent form, the participants were emailed the participant's interview guide (see Appendix G) that included interview questions and key terms that were discussed during the interview. Providing the interview guide in advance helped to assist the participants with preparation for the interview.

Due to the voluntary and confidential nature of this study, there was minimal risk involved in participating; however, some participants may have experienced mental fatigue or the loss of personal time for the length of the interview session. In attempt to avoid any risk of fatigue during the interview, the researcher reminded the participants that breaks could be taken as necessary. Additionally, participants could have chosen not to answer questions or stopped the interview if they were uncomfortable at any point within the session. There was also a risk for breach of confidentiality. Lastly, the researcher reminded the participants that, per the consent form, they could follow up with the researcher, the dissertation chair, or the IRB chairperson should they have any questions or concerns after the interview. The participants could have chosen to opt out of the study at any point in the study. The benefits of this study would likely exceed the minimal risks. The benefits of this study may have been of importance

in the development and sustainability of women leaders in Christian institutions of higher education. The impact of this study may have informed Christian institutions on the influences of spiritual disciplines within the context of women's leadership. Finally, a deeper understanding of the connection between spiritual disciplines and leadership practices might have resulted in the advancement of Christian missions.

To maintain confidentiality, the participants were given the informed consent form, but were not asked to sign it. Additionally, the use of pseudonyms were used to protect the real identities of the participants. Lastly, the audio recordings and transcripts were kept separate from the master list of participant identities and pseudonyms and study data will be properly deleted a minimum of three years upon completion of this study.

The participants were asked to participate in a one- hour face-to-face or virtual interview that was audio-recorded. If a participant chose not to be recorded, the researcher asked to take written notes. If the researcher observed that the participant was uncomfortable for any reason or if the participant requested a break, the researcher paused the interview and resumed when appropriate. Several steps were taken by the researcher to minimize the potential risk to the participants. As previously stated, the identities of the participants were protected through the use of pseudonyms. The researcher maintained two separate lists; one list of pseudonyms and the other, a master list of pseudonyms and actual names. All data was kept confidential and access to raw data was limited to the researcher and dissertation chair. This data was stored on a password protected personal computer in the researcher's home of residence. Lastly, findings were presented in overall themes when sharing outcomes. In the event that a negative issue should occur, the researcher would have submitted an adverse event form to the GPS IRB. Upon

completion of the study, participants would have access to a digital copy that would be stored on ProQuest, a public database of dissertations.

### **Instrumentation**

**Interviews.** The researcher conducted one-on-one semi-structured interviews with women who met the outlined criteria for this study. Since it was anticipated that the participants were selected from colleges and/or universities in multiple geographic locations, the format of the interview varied from face-to-face to other virtual platforms such as Adobe Connect. Interview questions were designed around information gained from the in-depth literature review and the following guiding research question: How, if at all, do Biblical spiritual disciplines influence women's character and leadership practices in Christian faith-based institutions of higher education in North America?

There were eleven interview questions that guided this study (see Appendix H). The first set of interview questions were centered on gathering demographic information about the participants that aligned with the criteria for this study. Questions such as:

1. To what denomination or community of faith do you belong?
2. What is your position at your university?
3. How long have you held this position at the university at which you currently work?

The next set of questions asked were to find out information about their personal practices with spiritual disciplines. The women were provided a definition of spiritual disciplines from the literature and a list of possible spiritual disciplines to help guide their responses to the next set of questions (see Appendix H). Questions such as:

4. Which spiritual disciplines do you practice and how often?



5. Which spiritual disciplines do you practice alone and which do you practice in community?

6. Are there any spiritual disciplines to which you wish you gave more time/attention? Which one(s) and why?

The last set of questions were aimed to solicit a response on the impact of practicing spiritual disciplines. Questions such as:

7. How, if at all, has practicing spiritual disciplines influenced your character?

8. In your opinion, how has practicing spiritual disciplines influenced your leadership practices?

9. Can you share a story of how you handled a leadership experience, whether positive or negative, differently because of your spiritual disciplines practices?

10. Can you give a specific example of how Jesus' leadership influenced your response to a leadership situation?

11. Which spiritual disciplines do you think are essential for Christian women who seek leadership positions in Christian faith-based institutions of higher education?

**Content validity.** As cited in Creswell (2014), Gibbs (2007) states that, "Qualitative validity means that the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures" (p. 201). Content validity for this interview instrument was addressed through (a) literature support, and (b) expert review.

**Literature support.** Table 4 represented the alignment between the guiding research question and interview questions. Table 4 also depicted the literature support for the interview questions.

Table 4

*Relationship between Research Question, Interview Questions, and Literature*

Research Question	Interview Questions	Literature Source
How, if at all, do Biblical spiritual disciplines, influence women's character and leadership practices In Christian faith-based Institutions of higher education in North America?	To what denomination or community of faith do you belong?	
	What is your position at your university?	
	How long have you held this position at the university at which you currently work?	
	Which spiritual disciplines do you practice and how often?	Willard (1988) Whitney (1991) Foster (1998)
	Which spiritual disciplines do you practice alone and which do you practice in community?	Willard (1988) Whitney (1991) Foster (1998)
	Are there any spiritual disciplines to which you wish you gave more time/attention? Which one(s)? Why?	Willard (1988) Whitney (1991) Foster (1998)
	How, if at all, has practicing Spiritual disciplines influenced your character?	Yanikoski (2004) Sparks (2001) Crossan et al. (2013) Sweeney & Fry (2012) Reave (2005)
	In your opinion, how has practicing spiritual disciplines influenced your leadership practices?	Bughenhagen (2009) Klenke (2003)

(continued)

Research Question	Interview Questions	Literature Source
	Can you share a story of how you handled a leadership experience, whether positive or negative, differently because of your spiritual disciplines practices?	Willard (1988) Whitney (1991) Foster (1998)
	Can you give a specific example of how Jesus' leadership influenced your response to a leadership situation?	Willard (1988) Whitney (1991) Foster (1998)
	Which spiritual disciplines do you think are essential for Christian Women who seek leadership positions in Christian faith-Based institutions of higher education?	Wolverton et al. (2006)  Reave (2005) Vongalis-Macrow (2016)

**Expert review.** The researcher sought the assistance of two experts in the field of leadership and spirituality by requesting feedback on the interview questions. The first expert reviewer was a retired Dean of a Graduate School at a private Christian University in Southern California. The second expert reviewer was a Professor of Leadership in Spiritual Formation at a private Evangelical Seminary in Oregon. The two experts were asked to provide specific feedback on the nature of the questions, the number of the questions, the clarity of the question language, and the appropriateness of the data collection procedures (see Appendix I). Expert feedback was utilized to revise the instrumentation as appropriate.

On November 14, 2016, the first expert review was conducted on the telephone with a retired Dean of a graduate school in Southern California. She did not recommend any changes to the interview questions; however, suggested a few adjustments to the participant interview guide. For example, she suggested that the researcher define the term character and create an organizational chart for categorizing spiritual disciplines that are practiced alone vs. practiced in

community. Additionally, she suggested adding another category to allow participants to incorporate spiritual disciplines that may not be included in Foster's (1998) twelve spiritual disciplines. She also encouraged the researcher to conduct a pilot study and have specific notes so that questions would be clarified in the same way for all participants. Furthermore, the expert reviewer noted that in her own research on faith and women's leadership that participants had stated that this is not a topic that is widely discussed, yet it has an enormous impact on how women lead and make decisions. Lastly, the expert reviewer shared that she is a member of a group of administrative women leaders within the CCCU and volunteered to assist the researcher in recruiting participants.

The second expert reviewer was a Professor of Leadership in Spiritual Formation. Using the Instrumentation Validity Questionnaire (see Appendix I), she returned her written feedback via email on November 14, 2016. Like the first expert reviewer, she suggested that the researcher define the term character. Additionally, she recommended some changes in wording on three of the eleven interview questions. The purpose of these recommendations were to help participants focus their responses and also align with the overall research question. Lastly, the expert reviewer shared where there might be some potential bias in the choice of certain words; for example, how individuals within the Christian faith might view the practice of spiritual disciplines differently. She expressed her belief that character and leadership development is bigger than the practice of the disciplines. She cautioned the researcher to be careful in explaining how spiritual disciplines may lead to character or leadership development.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

The researcher audio recorded the interviews so that full attention could be given to the participants and the researcher could easily ask clarifying questions while noting observations

throughout the interview process. The audio-recording also ensured that the transcribed interviews accurately reflected the participant's experience. See Appendix J for the interview script that the researcher utilized. The following procedures were followed while conducting this study:

- Compile of list of colleges and universities that are full members of the CCCU
- Identify female Deans and Associate Deans within the CCCU
- Network with the former Dean and Director of Women's Leadership Development Institute to recommend possible participants
- Obtain potential participant email contact information from leaders
- Obtain IRB approval (see Appendix B)
- Recruit possible participants via an email invitation to participate in the study (see Appendix D)
- Send a follow up reminder via e-mail one week later (see Appendix E)
- Schedule face-to-face or virtual interviews with the participants
- Upon confirmation, e-mail consent form and participant's interview guide (see Appendix G) to assist participants with preparation
- Confirm the interview day, time, and format via email with the participants two days prior to the interview
- Utilize the interview script (see Appendix J)
- Audio record the one hour interviews
- Record observations via observation log (see Appendix K)
- Transcribe interview sessions, make edits, and store on Google Drive
- Upload transcribed interviews to Hyper-research

- Use Hyper-research to code the data with two experienced coders
- Send the key themes to participants to check for accuracy and thoroughness
- Write a narrative of the participants' experiences in chapter 4 of this study

### **Data Management**

The researcher took precautionary steps to ensure that the data was securely stored for the participants' protection. First, the participants were provided an informed consent form for their records, but were not asked to sign it. Second, the use of pseudonyms were used by numbering the interviews in the order that they took place. The researcher kept a master list of participants' real names and the pseudonyms were kept separately from the data to protect the participants' identities. Third, the audio-recording, the list of pseudonyms, and the observation log were kept on the researcher's personal password protected computer. Fourth, the raw data collected was limited to the researcher and the dissertation chair. Fifth, a summary of each participant's story was included along with overall themes. Finally, the data collected in this study will be destroyed after three years.

### **Data Analysis**

The researcher engaged in several analytical techniques to gain in-depth knowledge of this phenomenon. Upon completion of the interview, the researcher de-identified the audio-recording before providing the recordings to an external transcriber. The transcriber was asked to maintain confidentiality and immediately transcribed the audio-recording. Time was allotted to re-listen and compare the audio-recording to the transcribed document to check for accuracy. Edits were made as necessary, and then the researcher uploaded the transcribed document into the Hyper-research software to begin the coding process. Moustakas (as cited in Creswell, 2013) recommends that the researcher, "Highlight significant statements, sentences, or quotes that

provide an understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomenon,” (p. 82) also known as horizontalization. The researcher collaborated with another experienced coder to create a codebook for further analysis. Once all the interviews had been coded, the researcher examined the document looking for themes to emerge. The researcher then provided the code book and the overall themes to a second experienced coder for further analysis. Finally, “These significant statements and themes will be used to write a description of what the participants experienced” (Creswell, 2013, p. 82).

### **Positionality**

The researcher in this study has a Bachelor’s Degree in Elementary Education and a Master’s Degree in Community Counseling. The majority of the researcher’s work experience has been in the higher education environment. The last nine years have been dedicated to serving as the Associate Program Director for several Master’s Programs and one Doctoral Program at the Graduate School of Education and Psychology, Pepperdine University. Being raised in a Christian home and a strong belief in Jesus Christ have been foundational in the researcher’s personal and professional life. The researcher’s personal journey to leadership has resulted in a renewed commitment to a life of faith. The researcher believes living an authentic life that demonstrates strong character and integrity is fundamental in the life of a Christian leader. Christians often seek God’s wisdom when dealing with challenges and the responsibility of leading others. Luke 12:48 (New International Version) states, “From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.” This particular scripture reinforces why leaders are in continual need of God’s direction and guidance.

With past experience in higher education, along with being a lifelong Christian woman, the researcher was required to set aside certain bias and assumptions. The researcher was intentional in seeking feedback from various perspectives within the Christian faith. For example, the composition of the Dissertation Committee and expert reviewers consisted of members of the Mormon, Catholic, Church of Christ, Quaker, and Methodist denominations. The researcher was also mindful in asking probing questions, participating in careful listening, and thoughtful reflection. Additionally, the researcher relied on the use of thick and rich description and instrument review.



## **Chapter 4: Results**

This chapter presents the findings of this research study. The chapter begins by restating the purpose, research question, and the study design, which includes individual reflections of eight women leaders in Christian higher education.

### **Re-Statement of the Purpose**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the perceived influence of Biblical spiritual disciplines on women's character and leadership practices in Christian faith-based institutions of higher education in North America. This study conducted individual semi-structured interviews of eight Christian women leaders who serve as Deans in institutions that are full members of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU).

### **Research Question**

How, if at all, do Biblical spiritual disciplines, influence women's character and leadership practices in Christian faith-based institutions of higher education in North America?

### **Research Design**

This study utilized a qualitative phenomenological research design. Criterion and snowball sampling strategies were used in this study. The researcher focused on networking with the Director of the Women's Leadership Development Institute (WLDI) that is associated with the CCCU, and a former Dean with connections to Christian-faith based institutions across the country, for recommendations of potential participants. The researcher interviewed eight Christian women leaders who serve as Deans in institutions that are full members of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities. The interviews were conducted face-to-face and virtually using a semi-structured interview protocol consisting of eleven questions. The questions were designed to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of these Christian women leaders.

To validate this study, the researcher utilized two experts in the field of leadership and spirituality by requesting feedback on the interview questions. The one- hour interviews were audio- recorded and transcribed by external transcribers. For further analysis, the researcher collaborated with two experienced coders to create a codebook and determine emerging themes.

**Participants’ Demographic Information**

Each of the eight participants were asked three demographics questions that provided information on their faith background, the title of their leadership position, and their length of service in their current leadership position. These questions ensured that participants met the criteria of the study. Table 5 depicts a summary of participant demographic information, including the regional location of participants’ universities.

Table 5

*Participants’ Demographic Information*

Participant Pseudonyms	Faith Orientation
P1: Mary	American Baptist Churches
P2: Eve	Christian and Missionary Alliance Church
P3: Esther	Evangelical Free Church of America
P4: Ruth	Lutheran Missouri Synod
P5: Sarah	Lutheran Missouri Synod
P6: Elizabeth	Presbyterian Church USA
P7: Martha	Evangelical- Covenant Church
P8: Rebekah	Church of Nazarene

(continued)

Participants	Position	Years of Service	University Location
P1: Mary	Dean of the School of Arts and Humanities	4	Midwestern U.S.
P2: Eve	Provost (former Dean of the School of Education)	5	Western U.S.
P3: Esther	Dean of Education	10	Western U.S.
P4: Ruth	Dean of the School of Education	3	Western U.S.
P5: Sarah	Dean of the School of Education	7	Western U.S.
P6: Elizabeth	Dean of Natural and Social Sciences	16	Midwestern U.S.
P7: Martha	Dean of Education	4	Midwestern U.S.
P8: Rebekah	Dean of the School of Education	5	Western U.S.

Six out of the eight participants served as Deans in Education Divisions. The other two participants served as a Dean of Arts and Humanities and a Dean of Natural and Social Sciences. Three participants served at Universities in the Midwestern United States and five participants served at Universities in the Western United States. Although this study did not include any participants from the Eastern United States, the consistency in responses from women across two regions, seem to suggest that the conclusions of this study would not change if conducted in another region within the United States.

### **Profiles of Participants**

The profiles that follow represent the dialog between the researcher and the eight women Deans that were interviewed for this study. The participants were asked the same eleven open-

ended questions to gather information on their personal lived experiences. Specific quotes from the women were used to adequately represent their unique voice.

**Participant 1 (Pseudonym: Mary).** After serving 4 years as the Dean of the School of Arts and Humanities, Mary was recently promoted to Associate Vice President for Academic Administration, a position that she will begin later this year. Mary is a member of the American Baptist Churches. In reviewing the spiritual disciplines, Mary began by stating,

I've been a Christian since I was four years old so I've been at this for a long time. For me, I think the reality is that my disciplines are organic, rather than set asides, so they are integrated with everything that I do and say. (Participant 1, Mary, personal communication, February 8, 2017)

*Spiritual discipline practices.* Mary shared that the inward disciplines of meditation, prayer, and study were practiced on a daily basis, both alone and in community. She provided several examples that reinforced her description of an integrated lifestyle. For example, Mary shared that she prays before each class that she teaches. Additionally, she used prayer as a way to seek guidance before entering a meeting. She noted that, "I do not like to go into a situation or walk out of a meeting without asking God to direct what I am going to say." Her time set aside for study was often related to the course that she is currently teaching. She stated that, "I will study the scriptures just so I can make connections in the classroom that are natural and not artificial." Mary described how meditation is reflected in her own life by sharing that meditation is, "The moments I think about what it is I need to do, or who I am. It happens along with the pauses between activities." Fasting was the one spiritual discipline that Mary stated that she did not practice.

Mary acknowledged that the outward disciplines of simplicity, solitude, submission, and service were sometimes practiced alone and other times within community. One example of simplicity is the time she takes to grow food in her garden during the summer time. Whereas, the winter months might be spent restoring an oak table that was once a piece of furniture in her grandfather's house. Mary expressed that, "There's a lot of sentimentality, but it is also functional. It is reusing, recycling, and restoring. It is all part of simplicity." As a self-described introvert, her definition of solitude was, "Finding that place of peace, where what's going on in your head, isn't going on in your head anymore. I find that when I run." Mary also felt that she gained much personal fulfillment by spending time in nature with her husband. Activities such as kayaking or biking allowed them to be together, but also to spend some time in solitude. Submission was another spiritual discipline that Mary practiced at work and in her home. Although her personality might be described by others as opinionated or "strong-willed," she prided herself on being able to change her mind in the course of a meeting. She asserted that, "I can have an opinion that is real strong at the beginning of the meeting and completely change my mind by the end. I can say, those are good points, and I think I would go that direction." To Mary, practicing submission was closely related to being an effective leader. She stated that, "I don't think that you can be an effective leader unless you are able to find ways to find consensus and common ground." Mary spoke passionately about service. She said that service "describes my life." She viewed her service as a Dean as, "Letting your faculty do their jobs and doing everything you can to facilitate that process."

The corporate disciplines of confession, worship, guidance, and celebration seemed to come naturally to Mary. Confession occurred on a weekly basis during her prayer time at church. She always tried to acknowledge her shortcomings and take corrective action, when necessary.

She described this by saying, “I like to be conscious of when I have sinned or done something that’s ungodly and take care of it right away. I really try hard not to burn bridges.” Mary interpreted worship as a state of being. She provided an example of worship as, “Giving thanks after a good meeting, where you had a clear sense that the Holy Spirit was present.” Guidance was another spiritual discipline that was done in community. She described her daughters as a source of guidance, stating that, “They are both good at giving and receiving direction and they help me in my decision making.” Mary shared that she often found herself in a spirit of celebration. This spiritual discipline mainly occurred in community with her family and her local church. She confessed that prayers around meal time can sometimes be viewed as ritualistic; however, this is not always the case:

Prayer before a meal is not just ritualistic. It's rejoicing that we have food to eat and that we have opportunities to be together. Celebration also happens in our local church.

Instead of just having the annual meeting, two Sundays ago, we had the annual meeting and then we had a meal afterwards. That's a celebration of community in community.

(Participant 1, Mary, personal communication, February 8, 2017)

***Influence on character and leadership practices.*** When asked which discipline she wished she gave more time to, she replied that she needed to spend more time re-reading certain passages in the Bible. Mary recalled how she spent more time reading the Bible in her younger years and that it had a profound impact on her character. Later in life, she now finds herself spending more time in prayer. Mary again references the organic nature of prayer by stating that, “It’s not even on my knees in prayer, but organic and integrated prayer that is part of my walking from one office to another.” Through years of practice, Mary shared that her actions have become somewhat second nature; for example, “When a situation arises, I try to act like a

Christian because that is who I am. I am doing that because Jesus has formed my character.”

When asked about Jesus’ leadership style, Mary said that, “Jesus was relational. He didn't burn bridges and he was always very aware of the marginalized.” She also used an example from Scripture when Jesus had gone out on a boat with his disciples to get away from the crowds and get some rest. The disciples frantically awoke Jesus as a thunderstorm threatened to sink the boat. After Jesus had miraculously calmed the winds and the rain, He asked His disciples why they were fearful? (Mark 4:35-41). Mary’s lesson in this story was that, “Jesus knew when to shut it down and say, ‘enough.’ I think sometimes leadership is knowing when to go on vacation.”

*Advice for women leaders.* When asked which spiritual disciplines are essential for women entering into Christian leadership in higher education, Mary responded by saying, “I think your whole approach to the day has to be based in prayer.” She spoke about how ongoing communication should occur throughout the day with the expectancy of receiving answered prayers in return. Mary also mentioned a discipline that was not included on the list: paying attention to physical exercise. She referenced a Bible verse that describes our, “bodies as temples” and the need to attend to our physical heart. Next, she talked about how leaders need to know when to defer to authority. Mary recalled how her upbringing causes her to seek guidance and knowing when to submit to authority. She stated that,

I was raised in a very authoritarian home and church that was very patriarchal. I need to decide when to step up and say, “No, that's not a good idea or let's try this instead” vs. “Ok, you are the boss, and although I disagree with you on this, I will submit to your authority.” (Participant 1, Mary, personal communication, February 8, 2017)

Mary closed by saying that we need to, “Find ways to do these things: to worship, to confess, to celebrate and to receive guidance in community, because otherwise you are all alone.”

**Participant 2 (Pseudonym: Eve).** After serving as the Dean of the School of Education at two different Christian Universities, Eve currently serves as the Provost at her university. As a long-time member of the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church, Eve has spent many years practicing spiritual disciplines.

*Spiritual discipline practices.* With the exception of fasting, Eve shared that she practiced the inward disciplines of meditation, prayer, and study. She spends three to four days a week in some kind of meditation. She viewed prayer as a necessary requirement to complete her daily job duties and stated that, “I do less of it at scheduled times and more of it as a normal part of my day.” Eve placed great importance on the practice of study. She shared that she leads a weekly Bible study for professional women. Additionally, she is committed to reading the Bible in its entirety every other year. On the off years, she chooses to read a book that offers daily personal reflection.

Eve described simplicity and solitude as spiritual disciplines that she does alone, while submission and service were spiritual disciplines that she practices in community. Eve associated living a simple life with the Biblical practice of tithing, or giving 10% of your income back to the church. Her view was that, “The things that I have, have never been mine.” She shared that her husband and she support four different missionaries on a regular basis. As an example, she stated that, “We support a high school student in Kenya. We pay his school fees and supplies. We are people that don’t worry too much about things.” Eve shared that she used her hour commute to and from work as a time of solitude. She acknowledged that submission would not have been a practice that she engaged in 20 years ago; however, it has become a daily



practice at this stage in her career. Often times, the opportunity to practice submission happened when working in teams. She asserted that,

For me, getting your own way is not part of what I do as an administrator. Making sure that the people that I work with, and the conversations that we have, are always focused on what is best for our students and our employees and the University. We have been doing a lot of work around building high performance teams and that requires listening to other people. You can go into a meeting with a plan, but what you get at the end of the meeting could look very different. (Participant 2, Eve, personal communication, February 17, 2017)

Eve viewed herself in a support role as a leader and considered this service to the university. She expressed that, her “role is to connect people with resources, to encourage really good ideas, to refocus them when they are headed in a direction that I know will be unproductive.” She was passionate about identifying others’ strengths and expressed a commitment to their personal and professional development in the workplace.

The corporate disciplines of confession, worship, and guidance were spiritual disciplines that she practiced on a daily and weekly basis. Eve shared that she confesses her sins to God on a daily basis through prayer. Aside from apologizing directly to people she had offended, Eve was cautious about confessing her sins in community. She noted that, “I have hesitations about confession in community because so many times confession involves other people. Dragging that sort of thing out into the public eye for me is not useful.” Eve attends a weekly church service that incorporates worship. When asked about guidance, Eve spoke about both giving and receiving guidance. She shared that she volunteers as a leader in a program called “Life Groups” with the students at her university.

She shared that,

The Spiritual Life Department provides a variety of different curricula that we can choose to use. Part of that is getting to know the students well enough that we can be resources for them if they bump into life issues that are troubling. We pray with them and stay connected. Mostly what I do is listen and only give advice if they ask. (Participant 2, Eve, personal communication, February 17, 2017)

Eve's thoughts on celebration were associated with singing and dancing. Since this is not something that she does, she didn't believe that she practiced the spiritual discipline of celebration. Interestingly, when asked which spiritual disciplines she wished she gave more time and attention to, she stated that she would like to learn more about celebration and spend more intentional time in prayer.

*Influence on character and leadership practices.* When thinking about how spiritual disciplines have influenced her character, Eve believes that she has become more intentional and mindful of her interactions with others. Admittedly, empathy is not one of her spiritual gifts so relying on prayer and reading scripture has helped form her character. Eve stated that, "Time in prayer and study of the scriptures has helped me learn how to pay more attention to people, which I think is incredibly important." Additionally, she explained that having read through the Bible several times allowed her to gain a unique historical perspective. She provided an example of when individuals have the tendency to really get, "bogged down or think the world is falling apart," she is reminded that some of these issues have been going on for a very long time historically.

When relating her leadership style to her practice of spiritual disciplines, Eve referenced a man in the Bible named Nehemiah. She described him as her role model as he was, "always

listening for God's call on his life." After hearing God's call to go fix a wall in Babylon, Nehemiah prepared himself by carefully assessing the situation and listening closely to the feedback of others. He built trust with others by delegating responsibilities and empowering them to repair the wall within their community. Eve connected the story of Nehemiah to her own leadership style by particularly focusing on the importance of servant leadership. She shared that, "I think the whole piece about service has to do with coming along side and providing resources, but also being very honest with people." She acknowledged a difficult situation that she faced when having to advise a faculty member against going up for tenure promotion. The committee had discussed possibly letting the faculty member move forward to another committee that would provide the necessary feedback, but eventually decided that they needed to address the situation directly with the faculty member. Unfortunately, the faculty member did not take the feedback well and wrote a critical response about how the feedback was shared with her. In reflecting on the outcome of this situation, Eve admitted that, "I hadn't really thought about spending a lot of time in prayer and listening to God before I met with her." If faced with a similar situation in the future, Eve said that she would be mindful of engaging in these spiritual disciplines beforehand.

Eve spoke about how Jesus had also served as a strong role model in leadership. She shared an example in how he approached his relationships with the twelve disciples:

Something that has always been interesting to me is that Jesus didn't ever really condemn anybody. He always just asked really hard questions. For me that has been an incredibly important modeling. You typically don't have to tell people what they are doing poorly. A few carefully crafted questions can lead them to examine their own practices. Since they have uncovered it, this will do far more when they identify what is not going

well because they own it. (Participant 2, Eve, personal communication, February 17, 2017)

*Advice for women leaders.* Eve identified study, simplicity, and celebration as foundational spiritual disciplines for women who seek to enter leadership in Christian higher education. Her vision of celebration included, “Taking note of all of the good things that people do and finding ways of making them public so that other people can honor them in the work that they do.” She also noted that prayer and solitude are essential spiritual disciplines that are typically done in one’s private life. In closing, Eve added that, “I think finding a way to be comfortable in who you are and what you do and not feeling like you have to make excuses is important.”

**Participant 3 (Pseudonym: Esther).** Esther has served as the Dean of Education for the last 10 years. Esther is a member of the Evangelical Free Church of America. Practicing the spiritual disciplines was evident in her professional and personal life.

*Spiritual discipline practices.* When considering the inward discipline of meditation, Esther recalled her daily practice of reading Scripture and journaling. She also mentioned that she participates in quarterly retreats where she spends three or four days in the mountains and focuses a significant number of hours of meditation and prayer. Esther and her husband host a group of missionaries in training each month in their home, where they spend time reading Scripture, praying, and meditating on God’s Word. She described her prayer life as, “Moment by moment.” She often prays during her commute to work and asks the Spirit for guidance before entering a meeting. Esther and her husband also spend time in prayer after the workday as well as in the adult fellowship group that they lead at their church each week. Due to medical reasons, she does not practice the spiritual discipline of fasting. Esther describes herself as, “A

student of the Word.” Her lifetime journey has led her to pursue a degree in seminary. Studying God’s Word takes place in multiple settings such as weekly church services, adult study groups, alone, and in communion with her husband.

Esther provided several practical examples of how she practices the outward disciplines of simplicity, solitude, submission, and service. First, she defined simplicity as, “Practicing giving to free yourself up from being so attached to material goods.” She shared that she doesn’t become overly focused on the clothes that she wears. Over the years, she has also learned to release herself from becoming overly stressed about having a perfectly clean house before having guests over. To her, simplicity might be inviting others over for a potluck and purchasing the food that she will contribute. Esther is intentional about spending time in solitude. This tends to require an early start to her mornings where she drinks tea, reads the Bible, and spends time journaling in a quiet place. In her position as Dean, it can be difficult to find a quiet time during the day. She went on to explain that,

Today, I have 30 minutes scheduled for that time. I can't enter into a frenzy. I need to be peaceful moving and transitioning from one meeting to the next. Sometimes I just have to close my door for a little bit and ask my administrative assistant to stop the traffic for a little bit while I regroup for my next meeting. (Participant 3, Esther, personal communication, February 20, 2017)

Esther warns about the possible consequences of not inviting the Spirit into your daily work. She stated that, “If you're trying to do your Dean work, or your leadership work, on your own strength, you will crash and burn somewhere along the way.” Just as other women leaders have mentioned, Esther has to discern when she needs to submit to the authority of her direct

supervisor. She acknowledges that submitting to others at work, at home, or in community can be difficult. She stated that,

Submission is a tough thing. If you're in leadership for getting your own way, you might as well step out now. The higher you go, the more you need to submit to the needs of others, the more you need to listen to others, the more you need to be sensitive to others. (Participant 3, Esther, personal communication, February 20, 2017)

Esther spoke about the self-sacrifice in service. She made a connection between willfully submitting to the guidance of the Spirit in order to serve others. She urged leaders to seek guidance to be able to fully understand the needs of the members within the organization. She believes that leaders should, “Hold a non-defensive posture and be spiritually aware, emotionally sensitive, and open.”

The corporate disciplines of confession, worship, guidance, and celebration were integral disciplines in Esther’s spiritual walk. She shared how her daily study of the Bible often led to the confession of her sins. For example, she honestly confessed that, “I want my identity to be fully in Him, but I still struggle with the temptation of my identity being in my work performance.” Another example was turning to prayer after receiving a difficult e-mail from a colleague. Although perhaps justified in her anger, Esther turned to prayer so that her feeling did not result in judgment of the other person’s behavior. She recognized that misunderstandings are going to happen and emotions are a natural part of the human experience; however, to stay in a healthy place emotionally, she needed to ask God for guidance. She also relied on the trusting relationships in her life to confess her wrongdoings. When necessary, she readily apologized to individuals that she had unintentionally offended. Esther has found time to make worship a daily practice. She viewed singing songs and appreciating nature as acts of worship. She shared that

she meets with a Spiritual Director once a month for guidance. She also receives guidance through weekly church services and group Bible studies. Esther also felt that God has called her to provide guidance to other women in leadership through mentorship. She described one experience where she was mentored by women who attended the Women's Leadership Development Institute several years ago. She shared that,

I don't know if I would have continued in leadership without that experience. I was feeling burned out and feeling pretty alone as one of the very few females in leadership at the institution at that time. There are a lot more women in leadership now at our institution. It makes me happy to know that I can provide guidance to female leaders who are early in their career in leadership and it was helpful to me to hear from other women in leadership that were further along. (Participant 3, Esther, personal communication, February 20, 2017)

Esther felt that she spent most of her day with an attitude of celebration. Her thoughts of gratitude for the smaller things in life often led to thanking God. She shared that there are upcoming plans for a university celebration as their latest campaign resulted in the largest donation in the history of the university.

There were two spiritual disciplines that Esther mentioned that were not listed in Foster's (1998) spiritual disciplines. First, Esther referenced taking care of the body, which is considered a temple in the scriptures. She asserted that, "It is important to practice hydration and regular nutrition so that your body is in optimal working condition." She continued by stating that,

If I leave those areas unattended, they are going to leak out in other ways. When you're in a leadership role, that leakage is magnified and it affects others. I think that staying healthy emotionally, however that works in your life, is a spiritual discipline because,

once again, it is being a steward of how God made you. I very much believe that we are holistic human beings, embodied souls, eternal souls. (Participant 3, Esther, personal communication, February 20, 2017)

The second spiritual discipline that she mentioned was honoring the Sabbath and taking time for rest. Esther warns that trying to keep a fast pace can lead to other consequences. She goes on to explain that,

If we don't practice those things, which is what God intended for us, then we will have consequences. I think that is why a lot of leaders burn out. That motivation to achieve supersedes the foundational pieces of living life at the pace that God designed for us. We surpass the speed limits of that pace. (Participant 3, Esther, personal communication, February 20, 2017)

***Influence on character and leadership practices.*** When asked if there are any spiritual disciplines that she wishes she gave more time to, Esther stated that she would like to carve out more time for solitude. She believed that many of the other disciplines could be practiced in solitude and that it was “very critical for forming the foundation of who you are as an individual and as a leader.” Over time, Esther has seen a change in her character. By practicing the spiritual disciplines, she sees herself, “walking in a more peaceful posture.” She believes that she is more patient and has a greater sense of discernment, or hearing God’s voice, when making decisions.

Esther spoke about how practicing spiritual disciplines has made her a better leader. She talked about the pressure of a packed schedule and constantly being pulled into the public eye. However, she also acknowledged how spending time in solitude can be very beneficial. She emphasized that, “When you pull back into quietness and you let your body rest, and let your



mind rest, some of the most creative ideas and solutions to problems emerge in that quietness.” Esther reflected on her years in leadership and can see an improvement over time. For example, she is more likely to hesitate in sending an email, or being intentional about listening when having a difficult conversation.

Esther admired that Jesus led with compassion and humility. Based on accounts in scripture, he did not condemn those he encountered, but treated everyone with love and respect. She recalled the story of Jesus calming the stormy seas. Esther’s lesson in this story was that Jesus remained calm in the face of adversity.

*Advice for women leaders.* Esther stated that it would be difficult to narrow down which spiritual disciplines are most essential for women seeking leadership positions as she sees value in them all. She referred back to the discipline of solitude as it allows for alone time with God and the opportunity to listen to the Spirit. In closing, she reinforced the regular practice of study. She believed that, “It is important for women in leadership to be very disciplined in study. They need to have clear minds, they need to be strategic, and they need to seek the wisdom and guidance of others.”

**Participant 4 (Pseudonym: Ruth).** Ruth is a member of the Lutheran Missouri Synod Church and has served as the Dean of Education for the last three years at her university. She described herself as an “inward person,” who listens to hear God’s voice, and is always seeking to learn something new. Throughout the interview, Ruth reinforced her identity in Christ by stating,

When I look at these disciplines, I don’t look at them as disciplines; I just look at them as extension of my reality and what makes me who I am. That is said with great humility

because over time these things have become second nature to me. (Participant 4, Ruth, personal communication, February 21, 2017)

*Spiritual discipline practices.* When asked about the inward disciplines of meditation, prayer, fasting, and study, Ruth began by stating that she does not fast; however, she noted that she, “can delay gratification in almost every area except eating.” Working at a Christian university, she felt like she could openly talk about the things that she was meditating about. She shared that she finds herself in prayer multiple times a day and also prays when attending chapel four times a week. Study is part of Ruth’s regular rhythm in life. In community, she leads a monthly book club for faculty and staff, but also spends time alone listening to audio-recordings on her way to work. She emphasized that, “The main thing is that if you learn something, or study something, you have to implement it or see it in action.”

Ruth provided several examples of how she incorporates the outward disciplines of simplicity, solitude, submission, and service into her Christian practice. One way that she tries to simplify her life is by having an organic garden at home. Ruth went on to add that she has, “chickens and I do a lot of preserving of food. Constantly freezing or preparing food for the future.” Living in the same house for forty years, she noted that, “I would rather use our gifts in different way, in being a good steward, and helping other people along the way.” When thinking about solitude, Ruth shared that having time alone actually helps her deal with the stress of her busy days as a Dean. For example, if given a choice to eat lunch in the cafeteria or grab lunch and eat in her office, Ruth chooses to go to her office and studies over her lunch break. The spiritual discipline of submission reminded Ruth of how she viewed her role as the Dean. She stated that,

My job and my vocation is about helping others find their way, finding solutions to the

issues that we are dealing with. It isn't up to me to construct the reality, it's up to me to help others cope with that reality and together finding ways of getting things done.

(Participant 4, Ruth, personal communication, February 21, 2017)

Ruth thought of service as a way to anticipate and meet the needs of others. There was a time when an employee was in need of a car so she connected with a group of people who were able to find a car for this individual. She also was intentional about walking around the hallway on a daily basis to learn more about her colleagues' needs. Ruth went on to explain that she feels mutually supported from them by stating that, "The supportiveness is there because we trust each other. When you need support and you feel trust, then that trust works both ways. It's really a cool, outward way of expressing spiritual gifts."

Lastly, Ruth believed that there was some overlap in the corporate disciplines of confession, worship, guidance, and celebration. Although attending weekly church services allowed for a time of confession, she also shared that planning for a weekly Bible study often times also led to confession. Furthermore, she found herself celebrating and praising God in the act of prayer. She also shared that the staff get together to celebrate birthdays and the end of the year accomplishments by stating that, "The last meeting in May will be Spirit Day so we will be celebrating all that God has done for us as a school of education and as individuals." She affirmed that guidance should be directly related to what we have learned in scripture. Reflecting on her personal experiences, Ruth noted that, "I know the trials that I went through were used by God. Maybe the pieces don't fit right now, but they will fit sometime down the line." She did acknowledge that guidance can also be difficult in stating that, "It is hard sometimes to remain open and not look at guidance as criticism." When asked which disciplines

she wishes she gave more attention to, she quickly responded, “Celebration.” Even during times of trial, Ruth shared that there is still reason for celebration. She shared that,

There is much to celebrate in life and we have to make a conscious decision to do that. As I get older, that is really something that I am trying to emphasize because otherwise you don’t have meaning and purpose and you can’t share meaningfully with other people. (Participant 4, Ruth, personal communication, February 21, 2017)

***Influence on character and leadership practices.*** Ruth recognized that practicing spiritual disciplines had impacted her character. She started out by saying that, “For me, integrity is job one.” She believed that the spiritual disciplines had formed her and, in turn, made her a wiser leader. Within the context of her leadership experience and her walk of faith, she thought that practicing spiritual disciplines gave her insight into other people that she wouldn’t have had otherwise.

In addition to forming Ruth’s character, practicing spiritual disciplines had also influenced her leadership practices. Reflecting on how she has grown as a leader, Ruth believes that she is now slower to act. She went on to explain that, “I’m slow to make a judgement because I’m looking at each facet of the situation.” She viewed this deliberate behavior as a benefit to the university because it is an example of when she has been able to come back and say that, “Here’s a strategy that we might be able to apply that goes beyond our initial thought.” She related how this pause in decision-making has also helped build relationships with other schools within the university. Representing her school at meetings, such as Academic Council, she has the privilege of seeing the larger context and can share with her team that, “We are contributing in a way that is so valuable. Don’t get hung up on what’s just happening in front of you.”

Ruth lit up when asked about how Jesus' leadership had influenced her own leadership style. She described Him as a man who knew everything and had an amazing grasp on who people really were. She went on to explain that, "He knew so much about the hearts of men, their insecurities, and their vulnerabilities and He took it into account. He was a healer, but He also held people accountable." Like Jesus, she aspired to directly and indirectly influence the lives of others.

*Advice for women leaders.* When asked which spiritual disciplines are essential for women leaders, Ruth named prayer, meditation, and the study of God's Word. She believed that, "Women need to be patient and they need to be wise. They need to be insightful. We need to put negative emotions aside and be looking deeply at what is the spiritual nugget here that will turn this situation around. (Participant 4, Ruth, personal communication, February 21, 2017)"

Ruth acknowledged that it can be difficult to be a woman in leadership. She personally reflected on how her faith tradition had put limits on what women could and could not do. Professionally, she mentioned that she is the only woman Dean at her university. She often found herself in meetings where she was the only woman. In these situations, she said that she tries to listen carefully and then offer meaningful insights that contribute to the conversation. She warned about becoming aggressive in getting one's point across and reinforced that practicing the spiritual disciplines helped her behave in a level-headed manner. In closing, Ruth talked about the big responsibilities and the big opportunities that come along with leadership. She believed that, "If you practice the spiritual disciplines, it gives you a powerful presence." She wanted to be known as, "Being that steady influencer, being a listener, being a person that contributes quietly, but with confidence." Her outlook on women's leadership was positive.

She ended in saying that, “It’s a new world for women and we need to take advantage of it, but the way to do it is through your faith life.

**Participant 5 (Pseudonym: Sarah).** Sarah was unique in that she was a retired Dean. Previously, she served 7 years as the Dean of Education. Throughout her life, she attended the Missouri Synod Lutheran Church.

*Spiritual discipline practices.* After reviewing the inward disciplines of meditation, prayer, fasting, and study, Sarah shared that she listens to a devotional every day and meditates on its meaning. In community, she participated in a weekly Bible study that included a time for meditation. While working at a Christian institution, Sarah noted that every meeting would begin in prayer. These days she spends her time working at an after-school rescue mission program, which also involves daily prayer. She added that, “When you do it often enough and when it is part of your profession, it gets pretty easy.” Sarah stated that she has never practiced fasting as a spiritual discipline. Study was a discipline that was practiced alone and in community; however, she said that she wished she spent more time in studying God’s Word. She reflected back on regularly leading Bible study and said, “That is one reason I liked to lead Bible class because it forced me to study.”

When asked about the outward disciplines of simplicity, solitude, submission, and service, Sarah acknowledged that some were easier to practice than others. She defined her simple life as, “I work part time at the university helping faculty with grants, but that's give away money.” She finds herself spending most of her money buying things for children or giving back to the university. Sarah’s perspective was that, “I never lived an extravagant lifestyle; although, compared to people who I work with, who are living in the shelter, I have a lot.”

After reading the definition of solitude, Sarah shared that,

I have a lot of inner fulfillment. If I wasn't fulfilled by what I do, I wouldn't keep doing it, I would do something else. I get fulfillment out of serving. That is what I do most of the time. (Participant 5, Sarah, personal communication, February 21, 2017)

Living alone, Sarah finds time to “process the up and down in life, how God is using me, or is this still the way God wants to use me, or does he want to use me in a different way?” This practice also leads Sarah to be confident in the area that she was called to serve. She recalled one situation where others were trying to convince her to go into youth ministry. Her response was, “If I'm going to spend my life serving God, I'm going to choose which area that I do it best, and that is in formal education, not the youth ministry.” She acknowledged that submission could sometimes be tricky, “Depending upon whether we think it is God's way that we are submitting to, or somebody else who is not acting in the best interest of the group.” First and foremost, she tried to submit to the will of God. She said that she had always been good at accepting the life situations that she faced, whether that be health issues or other family circumstances.

The corporate spiritual disciplines of confession, worship, guidance, and celebration were also a part of Sarah's spiritual practice. She found it beneficial to confess her sins to God and to others. When reflecting on worship, she thought back to when she was a child and would fall asleep singing her favorite hymns. Sarah believed in the importance of giving and receiving guidance. She recalled one situation in which she was leading a session and a child reminded her to end in prayer. Instead of saying the prayer herself, she asked the child to say a prayer. She shared that, “She prayed a beautiful prayer.” Lastly, Sarah likened worship to the act of celebration. She said that, "Throughout my life there have been times of celebration in terms of

God's grace to us, His love for us, His sending of a Savior; all that needs to be celebrated.”

When asked if there were any other spiritual disciplines that she would add to her list of practices, she mentioned patience and kindness. She referenced the patience and kindness that Jesus showed when working with His disciples. She noted that, “There was just a ton of kindness and patience and sense of bringing them along. They were not finished products. Sometimes we forget people are not finished products.” When thinking about which spiritual disciplines she wished she gave more attention to, she mentioned service and worship. She believed that, “It's critical that one is in corporate worship in order to be nurtured and be in that fellowship of believers. I think in isolation there is a lot missing.”

*Influence on character and leadership practices.* When thinking about how the practice of spiritual disciplines has influenced her character, Sarah said, “It has made me who I am.” Sarah recalled how she would have constant dialogue with God when she was growing up. This laid the foundation as she would later be called to lead others in higher education, devotionals, worship, and Bible studies. She jokingly shared that, “Jesus and His disciples never talked about retirement.” Earlier in her career, she chose to teach in a Lutheran school so that she could share the Gospel. Even after retirement, her service has continued. She shared that, “I know reality is age makes us slow down on serving. Our bodies just can't do it quite the same way; however, we can learn to serve in a different way.”

In Sarah's opinion, prayer, reading God's Word, and submission were the disciplines that mostly shaped her leadership practices. She viewed herself as a team leader. She added that, “I was not afraid of the buck stops here, but I also tried to make decisions fairly, collaboratively. I tried to help other folks grow in their spiritual life.” She strongly believed that the leader should model taking responsibility for their actions and apologize when necessary.



Sarah noted that Jesus was a servant leader who regularly focused on groups that had been marginalized.

*Advice for women leaders.* Sarah felt that all the spiritual disciplines were important for women who were entering leadership positions in higher education. She chose to highlight three disciplines: prayer, study, and servant leadership. Overall, she believed that, “One has to be looking for and responding to hearing God's voice and obeying His Word.”

**Participant 6 (Pseudonym: Elizabeth).** Elizabeth is a member of the Presbyterian Church, USA. For the past 16 years she has served as the Dean of Natural and Social Sciences. Her experience has taught her that, “The Lord enables you in unique ways to satisfy whatever the requirements are for good leadership.”

*Spiritual discipline practices.* Elizabeth shared that she continuously spends time alone, and in community, in prayer and meditation. She described her time in meditation as, “Listening for the voice of the Lord.” Although she did not practice the spiritual discipline of fasting, she does spend time every morning and evening studying the Scriptures. She mentioned that there are times that require even more study, for example, when she is leading a meeting devotional or leading chapel that week.

Elizabeth noted that she practices the spiritual disciplines of simplicity, solitude, submission, and service alone and in community on a regular basis. She described herself as committed to sustainability and believes she lives a simple lifestyle. In addition to her daily practice of solitude, Elizabeth stated that she intentionally sets aside time for solitude if she has a big decision to make. She goes into a time of solitude so, “I can sort out all the dynamics of what I’m working with.” Elizabeth shared that it has become easier for her to submit to God’s will than when she was younger. She spoke about the balance between submitting to God and

fulfilling her obligations as a leader. Lastly, she shared that she has always been committed to meeting the needs of her university, her church, and her community through the gift of service.

The corporate disciplines of confession, worship, guidance, and celebration are all spiritual disciplines that Elizabeth practices on a regular basis. In addition to her daily confession, she shared that she also plans communion services at her church. Through her perspective as a Dean of Natural and Social Sciences, Elizabeth saw several opportunities for worship. For example, she stated that, “Whether we are just looking at the stars at night, or at a human body, all of that is acknowledging that the Lord is creator of all things.” Elizabeth finds herself receiving and giving a lot of guidance to others through work. She also believes that it is important to celebrate and take joy in what God has done. Elizabeth highlighted that, “Sometimes it’s about healing, sometimes it’s about goodwill that people have extended to each other, and sometimes it’s directly gifts of time, treasures and gifts of the heart.” When asked if there were any spiritual disciplines that she wished she gave more time to, she replied, “I’m always looking for the deeper meaning of things so probably prayer and study.”

***Influence on character and leadership practices.*** When thinking about how spiritual disciplines influence her character, Elizabeth expressed that, “Virtuous behavior is learned through practice. One of the things that I have observed through the years is that experiential learning is very important in terms of re-enforcing character traits.” She went on to say that, “It’s not just behavior but it is deep, dedicated responses to God’s will.” One character trait that Elizabeth values is trustworthiness. As the Dean of the division, there are several areas that have been entrusted to her care. For example, ensuring that faculty governance is adhered to, making wise decisions regarding the budget, or guiding direct reports.

Elizabeth credits memorizing Scripture as one practice that has helped shape her leadership. She was amazed how certain Scripture verses will become even more relevant throughout the course of the day. She shared that reading books on Christian leadership can, “Open up new avenues for problem solving.” She recalls being tested as a Dean after receiving board approval to design a \$62 million building. This was a time met with various opinions on how the space should be utilized. Elizabeth recalls that, “I had to hold to budgets that I knew were real, and of course, the faculty dreamed for the sky. We had to negotiate out many circumstances.” Throughout her leadership experience, Elizabeth has relied on Jesus as an example. She reflected on the Gospel of John when Jesus was warning His disciples that he would soon be killed, but He was preparing a place in heaven for them. Naturally, the disciples were looking for a way to avoid such a terrifying loss. Elizabeth described Jesus’ character and lessons she tries to use in her own leadership by stating,

What I see there is Jesus’ perseverance; He is gentle with His disciples, He doesn’t scold or shame them in any way, He is just trying to reason with them. I think there is a big lesson on how He communicated and lead them in a gentle way. Jesus was patient; He knows He is going to face death and yet He doesn’t lose His cool. (Participant 6, Elizabeth, personal communication, February 28, 2017)

***Advice for women leaders.*** Elizabeth believed that all of the spiritual disciplines were important in the life of a Christian leader. In addition to the spiritual disciplines, Elizabeth stated that patience, perseverance, trustworthiness, mentorship, knowing one’s limits, and finding one’s voice are also essential when developing as a leader. Throughout the interview, Elizabeth stressed the importance of perseverance. She believed that, “Female leaders have to keep knocking at the door, keep bringing up the conversation, and literally persevere until you change

the part of the culture that you are trying to change.” She also acknowledged that the road to leadership can be a difficult one and encouraged women to find mentors who will help them establish their voice. One way to establish one’s voice is, “Through contemporary interactions with colleagues, with students, and with faculty.” She also encouraged women to be intentional about publishing articles and books to share their perspectives and accomplishments with others. As opportunities begin to open, Elizabeth warned that, “It is very important to know your limits.” She shared that she has turned down two promotional opportunities after careful consideration. In closing, Elizabeth was pleased with the progress women have made in leadership; however, she believed that there is still more work to be done. She stated,

Part of the question is, do you lead from behind, do you lead from within, or do you lead up front? I’ve watched with distain, sometimes as women have had to lead from behind because I think their gifts are so great that they should be leading from among or from right up front. (Participant 6, Elizabeth, personal communication, February 28 2017)

**Participant 7 (Pseudonym: Martha).** As a member of the Evangelical Covenant Church, Martha describes herself as someone who, “tries to discern the Word of God and once it’s discerned, hopes to have the courage to act on it.” She has served as the Dean of Education for the last 4 years. She enjoys helping to develop faculty and guiding them through the tenure promotional process.

***Spiritual discipline practices.*** In reviewing the inward disciplines of meditation, prayer, fasting, and study, Martha began by sharing that she meditates a couple of hours per week, mainly by reading and studying God’s Word. Prayer was a spiritual discipline that she practiced daily on her commute to work. In addition to daily prayer, Martha also prayed in community

during her weekly Bible study. Fasting was not a spiritual discipline that Martha has ever practiced. She set aside several hours on a weekly basis to meet with a group for Bible study.

Next, the outward disciplines of simplicity, solitude, submission, and service were discussed. Martha believed that simplicity was, “A philosophy or a state of being,” and therefore found it difficult to measure in a specific quantity of time. She honestly stated that, “In an ideal world, I would like to say that I don’t care about material things at all, but the reality is that I know I do.” Although an over reliance on material belongings can be a temptation, Martha shared that she would rather, “Focus on experiences over things.” During her time in solitude, Martha was intentional about asking God to, “show her, her blind spots.” Recently, she felt that she had a revelation that God was showing her that, “You don’t reflect as much as you used to and you’re letting the busyness of life kind of take over.” When considering the spiritual discipline of submission, Martha felt that it was important to consider the context of the situation. Never wanting to deny her own belief system, she would first question, “What is the thing that you are submitting to and to whom you are submitting?” Recognizing her sinful nature, she was forthright in saying that submitting to God’s will can be difficult at times. Previously, she would have described service as teaching Sunday school or serving on a committee; however, during this season in life, she finds herself helping a friend who is facing a terminal illness.

Finally, the corporate disciplines of confession, worship, guidance, and celebration were considered. Martha shared that she confessed her sins on a daily basis through prayer. In addition to confessing her sins to God, she also acknowledged that she also apologizes to others for her wrongdoing. She said that she regularly finds herself in a place of worship. One example is taking time to give God the glory by saying, “God made that happen. Thank you, Lord. You

did that one for us.” The nature of the Deanship often requires giving guidance to others; however, Martha also noted that she needs personal guidance as well. Particularly when it comes to decision-making, she said that, “A lot of decisions are based on what’s the right thing to do, not what’s the most efficient or what do I want to do.” Lastly, Martha took joy in the fact that she works at a Christian university where she could openly celebrate her love and appreciation for God. If there was one spiritual discipline that Martha wishes she gave more time to it would be meditation as she believes that is where one gains wisdom.

*Influence on character and leadership practices.* Martha believes that practicing spiritual disciplines has had an impact on her character. She described this impact by sharing that,

I would say the way it influences my character is that I try very hard to “walk the talk.”

If I say that I believe in extending grace that means that I extend grace. For example, you forgive people when they do something that was sinful or wrong. I think it pervades our decisions and our moral choices. (Participant 7, Martha, personal communication, February 28, 2017)

She described herself to be a very “task-driven” person, but later realized that she needed God’s help to become more “people-driven.” Through prayer, she asks for God’s help in leading others at work and at home. One example at work included showing grace to a difficult faculty member. Martha noted that it can be natural as a leader to want to withhold opportunities from someone who is being difficult; however, she combated this by, “Trying to see others through God’s eyes and appreciating the value in them that way, as opposed to viewing them through the world’s eyes.” Martha also shared an example of a time that she was intentional about listening to the Holy Spirit. After writing several monthly newsletters, she was running out of ideas so

she asked the Holy Spirit to guide her. She said, “I started praying about it and what happened is, I don’t write them anymore ~ the Holy Spirit writes them, and you know what? They are really good. I say that because I am not writing them!”

***Advice for women leaders.*** In closing, Martha shared her thoughts on Christian women leaders who are interested in seeking leadership in faith-based institutions. When asked which spiritual disciplines were most essential, she replied, “All of them. You can’t compartmentalize them out.” Martha asserts that,

You need to be studying, you need to be meditating, you need to be worshipping, you need to be celebrating and you need to be confessing your sins. You need to do all those things. If God commands we do them, we need to be doing them. (Participant 7, Martha, personal communication, February 28, 2017)

**Participant 8 (Pseudonym: Rebekah).** Rebekah first served as the interim Dean of Education before accepting the full-time position just over 5 years ago. Rebekah and her husband are members of the Church of the Nazarene. She described herself as a strong extrovert, who is a critical thinker, and a reflective person of faith.

***Spiritual discipline practices.*** After reviewing the inward disciplines, Rebekah began by stating that she rarely fasts. If she does fast, it may be just once a year for a brief period of time. Rebekah shared that she has incorporated prayer into her daily practice. She stated that, “Prayer is a fairly regular practice, but the beginning and ending of each day with prayer is very scheduled. Beyond that, it is a way of life.” She commented that it is not uncommon to pray for a colleague or begin a meeting in prayer. Rebekah said that she often meditates on a Scripture verse by, “Focusing on a particular issue in a reflective way and then really having a period of allowing space.” She noted that prayer can sometimes feel like a one way conversation, whereas

meditation encourages speaking and listening. She described study as something that ebbs and flows. Typically, study might include participating in a book club or exchanging thoughts on a book with a prayer partner. She often will pick up a book when she feels that there is an area in her life where she wants to be more grounded.

Next, the outward disciplines of simplicity, solitude, submission, and service were discussed. Rebekah wrestled with the thought of simplicity after spending some time in a Third World country. She stated that, "Traveling gives a whole new meaning to what we think of as simple versus what simple really is." She gave one example of being intentional about living a simplified life. When she was considering accepting the position as Dean, she told her husband that even though the position would come with a pay raise, she still wanted to live off the salary that she made as a faculty member. She warned that, "I've seen people often lose their way as they become intoxicated by the benefits of the role and they can never step out of it. Should I ever feel that I want to return to faculty, I do not want the fact that we have become used to the money to be a reason not to." Since making this commitment, she feels like she has been able to be more generous and saved more money than she would have otherwise. Rebekah also shared that the increase in constant demands has caused her to prioritize spending time in solitude. She stated that, "I have learned that the more the demands are on being fully engaged all the time, the more I find I need intentional solitude." She stressed the importance of spending time in solitude and how it allowed her, "to rebalance other parts of my life so that I am not always on." She described her view in the difference between meditation and solitude. For Rebekah, "Meditation is listening to the Lord; while solitude is sometimes listening to my inner voice." She referred to her marriage of 38 years as a lesson in submission. Another example of submission is having a willingness to submit to your boss. She went on to explain that, "In a work relationship, do you



really have enough confidence in the integrity of the person you are working for?” Rebekah shared that in this season of her life she spends most of her time serving her family. Right now, she is helping out by watching her daughter’s child while she is returning to school. In addition, she is taking care of an elderly parent. Professionally, Rebekah serves on a board for a faith-based organization that supports after school tutoring as well as a National Board for Christian Leadership.

When reviewing the corporate disciplines of confession, worship, guidance, and celebration, Rebekah acknowledged that confession was not formal part of her faith tradition growing up. Through a “Moms in Touch” group, she learned the value in confessing her sins. She described this period in her life by saying that, “I found it very freeing and really one of those ‘jumps’ in growth of my own faith that happens periodically.” Admittedly, she has not been a part of a confessional community in quite some time. Rebekah shared that serving as a Dean on a Christian campus has allowed her to participate in worship multiple times a week. She expressed that, “There is something wonderful about being able to worship with people you work with.” Due to her experience, Rebekah felt that, “More people come to me asking for guidance than at other stages of my life.” In addition to giving guidance, she also shared how she receives guidance,

By the same token, for my own guidance I have been blessed over the years. There have been women who are deeply grounded in their faith that I have had as prayer partners, who have also spoken truth into each other’s lives. (Participant 8, Rebekah, personal communication, March 1, 2017)

Rebekah believed that the one thing she does not do well is celebrate. She described herself as someone who feels very blessed; however, wasn’t as, “outwardly exuberant as some

are.” She described herself as celebrating God’s good deeds in her life and others, in a more private way. Interestingly, Rebekah noted that, “When I think of how these were in my twenties versus how these are in my fifties, in some ways it feels like a totally different discipline.” Over time, she feels that she has grown in, “That space of waiting has become something that I embrace, where in the past, I endured.” Rebekah stated that she would like to increase her time spent in confession, celebration, and fasting. She went on to say that regarding the other spiritual disciplines that, “I wouldn’t say that I feel that I have arrived or I won’t go any further, but I rather that I feel like I’m on a rhythm which is sort of a normal and natural part of life.”

***Influence on character and leadership practices.*** When asked how she believes practicing spiritual disciplines has influenced her character, Rebekah added that, “The character piece is really still holding myself accountable to my standards, which are not things I just made up, but I really think things God has called me to be.” Rebekah recalled specific spiritual practices such as, “meditative thoughtfulness, prayer, seeking the advice of others, looking at it against reason and tradition and scripture,” as ways that have contributed towards building her character. She also gave the example of waiting to pursue a doctorate degree until she really understood her true motive behind doing so, as another way that the practices have strengthened her character.

Rebekah shared that practicing spiritual disciplines has held her accountable to a higher standard in her leadership practices. She acknowledged that a position in leadership comes with power, which can lead to temptation. Her view was that, “Leadership is not about power, it’s about influence; it’s not about domination, it’s about responsibility; it’s not about seeing people as tools, but seeing people for whom we are responsible for nurturing and moving forward.” Rebekah’s personal values were so intertwined with her leadership that she stated, “I don’t know

what it would be like to be a leader who didn't have a faith." Rebekah shared that not having the content knowledge in the area in which she was called to lead, has stretched her in her faith. Her transition into the role of Dean of Education came with one week's notice. As she began to build trust with her new employees, she found herself relying on prayer and working on, "Staying true when you're in the midst of a lot of chaos." Reflecting back on that time, Rebekah said, "I don't think that I could have done it if I was going home at the end of the day and didn't have prayer, Scripture, and Godly guidance." One lesson from Jesus' leadership style that Rebekah tries to emulate is, "Not stepping in and giving answers." She admired how Jesus would, "Ask people questions and let them find their own answers."

*Advice for women leaders.* Without hesitation, Rebekah stated that the advice that she would give women entering into leadership would be, "Begin your day in prayer and end your day in prayer." She also added that,

I do think guidance becomes pretty important. I don't think good leaders are lone rangers and I do think women in leadership in Christian higher education have a unique path to traverse, depending upon the institution and what it means to be in a leadership role as a female. (Participant 8, Rebekah, personal communication, March 1, 2017)

She encouraged women leaders to continue to remain open and reflective while reading Scripture. Lastly, making time for worship and finding a place of solitude are spiritual practices that Rebekah believed can help nurture and support women in leadership. She stressed the importance of solitude by sharing how it allows the space to, "Regroup so we're not reactive." In closing, Rebekah shared that she would like to see the conversation between the church and higher education continue on the role of women in leadership. Her church tradition allowed women to be ordained as ministers; however, she realized that others interpret Scripture

differently. She reflected on her personal experience and shared her approach in moving this conversation forward. She stated that,

I do not feel as if I have been specifically hindered in my development as an adult, as a female leader in the church, but neither was I supported within the church. I think that intersection becomes pretty important and we still have to unpack it a bit more. We need to put the question out there for people to think about rather than pounding our fists and saying, “It has to be done this way.” (Participant 8, Rebekah, personal communication, March 1, 2017)

### **Spiritual Discipline Practice Collective Responses**

Questions four through six inquired about participant spiritual discipline practices.

**Question 4.** Question 4 asked participants which spiritual disciplines they practiced and how often they practiced. Table 6 presents a summary of participant responses. Some participants provided multiple responses; for example, they might study the Bible alone on a daily basis and also participate in a weekly Bible study in community.

Table 6

#### *Spiritual Disciplines and Frequency Practiced*

Spiritual Discipline	Frequency Practiced			No. of Responses
	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	
Prayer	7	3	0	7
Meditation	3	6	1	7
Study	3	4	1	5
Service	4	1	0	4
Solitude	3	2	1	5
Confession	3	2	0	5
Celebration	2	1	1	5
Submission	2	0	0	2
Worship	1	3	0	4
Guidance	0	2	1	2
Fasting	0	0	0	7
Simplicity	0	0	0	0

Spiritual disciplines such as prayer, meditation, and study were easier to quantify the amount of time dedicated to the disciplines; whereas a spiritual discipline, such as simplicity, was more difficult for participants to quantify.

**Question 5.** Question 5 asked participants which spiritual disciplines do they practice alone and which do they practice in community? Table 7 presents a summary of participant responses.

Table 7

*Nature of Spiritual Discipline Practiced*

Discipline Practiced Alone	Frequency
Solitude	8
Prayer	8
Meditation	7
Simplicity	7
Study	7
Confession	6
Submission	4
Worship	4
Celebration	3
Service	2
Fasting	1
Guidance	1
Discipline Practiced In Community	Frequency
Guidance	8
Service	8
Submission	8
Worship	8
Study	8
Prayer	8
Celebration	7
Confession	7
Simplicity	6
Meditation	5
Solitude	4
Fasting	0
Discipline Practiced Alone and In Community	Frequency
Prayer	8
Study	7
Simplicity	5
Confession	5

(continued)

Discipline Practiced Alone and In Community	Frequency
Worship	4
Solitude	4
Submission	4
Meditation	4
Celebration	3
Service	2
Guidance	1
Fasting	0

Aside from fasting, all of the spiritual disciplines were practiced both alone and in community. Prayer was the only spiritual disciplines that 100% of the participants reported as practicing alone and in community.

**Question 6.** Question 6 asked participants if there were any spiritual disciplines that they wish they gave more time/attention to and why? Table 8 presents a summary of participant responses.

Table 8

*Spiritual Disciplines Participants Wished They Gave More Time/Attention*

Spiritual	Number of Responses	Explanation of Why
Celebration	3	Learn to do more frequently Helps through difficult times Creates meaning and purpose
Study	2	To find new meaning
Prayer	2	For guidance
Solitude	1	Foundational in who you are as a leader
Worship	1	To be nurtured & in fellowship with others
Service	1	No reason given
Submission	1	To address difficulties in life
Meditation	1	To gain wisdom & spiritual growth
Fasting	1	To hear God's voice
Confession	1	Community confession is different than individual confession

Although the responses varied, participants’ reasoning for wanting to give more time and attention to a specific spiritual discipline showed that they were seeking a closer relationship to God for guidance, to create meaning, and for support through difficult times.

**Spiritual Discipline Influence on Character and Leadership Practices**

Interview questions seven through ten inquired about how practicing spiritual disciplines have influenced women’s character and leadership practices.

**Question 7.** Question 7 asked how, if at all, has practicing spiritual disciplines influenced participants’ character. Table 9 presents a summary of responses of all eight participants.

The top three responses of prayer, study, and meditation are all considered inward disciplines, or disciplines that focus on becoming more “Christlike.” The participants’ responses show a reliance on the Holy Spirit for guidance and a belief that this relationship can change their behavior. For example, participants reported that they believed that they were more empathic towards others and overall were able to lead a life of integrity.

Table 9

*Spiritual Disciplines Influence on Character*

Spiritual Discipline	No. of Responses	Influence on Character
Prayer	4	Open communication with Holy Spirit Increase in empathy Seeking guidance Trust in God over humans Self- accountability
Study	4	Being mindful of others Gain historical perspective Feed mind and heart Think critically Habits of the heart

(continued)

Spiritual Discipline	No. of Responses	Influence on Character
Meditation	2	Forms integrity Increases compassion for others Encourages reflective thought Time to process issues
None given	2	Value on trustworthiness Behavior learned through practice “Walk the talk” Extend grace and forgiveness
Solitude	1	Walked in more peaceful posture Increased discernment Increased attention on Holy Spirit
Service	1	Giving to others Recognizing the marginalized

**Question 8.** Question 8 asked how has practicing spiritual disciplines influenced participant leadership practices? Table 10 presents a summary of the participants’ responses. Similar to the influence on character, participants’ responses of service, study, and prayer were all inward disciplines. Again, their responses suggest a reliance on the Holy Spirit for guidance in serving and seeking input from others.

Table 10

*Spiritual Disciplines Influence on Leadership*

Spiritual Discipline	No. of Responses	Influence on Leadership
Service	3	None given Servant leadership Showing appreciation to others

(continued)



Spiritual Discipline	No. of Responses	Influence on Leadership
Study	3	Answer God's call Seek input from others Feeds soul—provides guidance Helps with problem solving
Prayer	2	Increased accountability Deliberate in action Slow to judgement Seek input from others Looks for larger perspective
Confession	1	Remain humble
Guidance	1	Rely on intuition
Solitude	1	Rest and spiritual, emotional, & intellectual renewal
Submission	1	Shared leadership style Helping others grow

**Question 9.** Question 9 asked participants to share a story of how they handled a leadership experience, whether positive or negative, differently because of their spiritual discipline practices. Table 11 presents a summary of the participants' responses. All of the participants' examples were relational in nature and required problem solving. The responses focused on seeking guidance through prayer and using listening skills.

Table 11

*Applying Spiritual Disciplines to Leadership Experiences*

Leadership Experience	No. of Responses	Application & Lessons Learned
Leading Faculty Meeting/Department	2	Listening skills Seeking input Grounded in prayer Build trust with others

(continued)

Leadership Experience	No. of Responses	Application & Lessons Learned
Handling a difficult faculty member	2	Deliberate hesitation in response Seek guidance from Holy Spirit Increase listening skills Apologize when necessary Treating others fairly (even if they don't deserve it)
Tenure Review Process	1	Speak honestly Spending more time in prayer to listen to God's voice
Handling difficult situation	1	Start & end in prayer Take responsibility Apologize when necessary
Designing a new building	1	Negotiation skills Persistence Staying connected to God

**Question 10.** Question 10 asked if the participants could give a specific example of how Jesus' leadership influenced their response to a leadership situation? Table 12 presents a summary of the participants' responses.

Participants provided an example from their own leadership; however, most of their responses tended to focus on the character traits of Jesus that they would most like to emulate, such as being a relational leader, not condemning, and asking leading questions that led others to discover their own answers.

Table 12

*Leadership Experiences Influenced by the Example of Jesus*

Leadership Experiences	Reference to Scripture	Jesus' Character
PI: Create boundaries Go on vacation	Calm Storm (Matthew 8:23-27)	Rested Created boundaries

(continued)

Leadership Experiences	Reference to Scripture	Jesus' Character
P2: Jesus as a role model	Leading 12 disciples	Did not condemn Hard questions to examine own practices
P3: Jesus as a role model	Women at the well (John 4:1-26) Died on the cross (Matthew 27: 45-54) Calm Storm (Matthew 8:23-27)	Lead by example  Did not condemn  Humility Self-sacrifice Calm
P4: Aim to positively influencing others	None given	Knowledgeable Insightful Relational Healer Held other accountable
P5: Going above and beyond	Washed disciples feet (John 13:1-17)	Servant leader Working with the marginalized
P6: Dealing with faculty/staff	Preparing disciples for his death (Matthew 16:21-28)	Perseverance Gentle Patient Calm
P7: Being forgiving Protecting employees Guided by the Spirit when writing monthly newsletter	None given	None given
P8: While problem solving Rely on expertise of others Serving as interim program chair Building capacity in others	None given	Asked guiding questions

### Advice for Women Leaders

**Question 11.** Interview Question 11 inquired about which spiritual disciplines are perceived as essential for Christian women leaders. Table 13 presents a summary of the participants' responses.

Table 13

*Spiritual Disciplines Perceived as Essential for Christian Women Leaders in Faith Based*

*Institutions of Higher Education*

Spiritual Disciplines	No. of Responses
Prayer	7
Study	6
Celebration	4
Guidance	4
Worship	3
Solitude	3
Meditation	3
Confession	3
Submission	2
Simplicity	2
Service	2

Aside from fasting, participants reported that all the spiritual disciplines were important in leadership. Some participants mentioned specific spiritual disciplines and others did not use the exact spiritual discipline titles, but their responses could be categorized according to the spiritual disciplines. For example, one participant said, "Be strategic within the will of God," this response was categorized as "guidance."

**Summary**

This phenomenological study explored the lived experiences and perceptions of eight female leaders who serve as Deans within the CCCU. Two of the participants were members of the Lutheran Missouri Synod and two were members of the Evangelical Church. The remaining participants were members of the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church, Presbyterian, American Baptist, and Church of Nazarene. The participants' experience ranged from three to sixteen years with six out of the eight participants servings as Deans within a School of Education. One participant was the Dean of Arts and Humanities and the other participant was

the Dean of Natural and Social Sciences. Three of the participants served at universities in the Midwestern Region and six of the participants served at universities in the Western Region of the United States.

Participants were asked eleven semi-structured interview questions relating to the following research question: How, if at all, do Biblical spiritual disciplines influence women leaders' character and leadership practices in Christian faith-based institutions of higher education in North America?

In response to the interview questions about participants spiritual discipline practices, participants reported that eight of the twelve spiritual disciplines were practiced on a daily and weekly basis. With the exception of fasting, the remaining eleven disciplines were practiced both alone and in community. Participants wished they dedicated more time to the spiritual disciplines of celebration, study, and prayer.

In response to the interview questions about how practicing spiritual disciplines has influenced their character and leadership practices, participants named prayer, study, meditation, and service as the top four influential spiritual disciplines. The leadership examples that they provided were relational in nature and required problem solving skills. The participants relied on the guidance of the Holy Spirit and referred to Biblical examples noting the leadership characteristics of Jesus that they would like to emulate.

In response to the interview question about which spiritual disciplines were perceived as essential for Christian women leaders, the participants believed that all spiritual disciplines were important with prayer, study, celebration, and guidance receiving the highest response rate. Overall, the top three spiritual disciplines that were mentioned across all interview questions were prayer, study, and meditation.

Chapter 5 will discuss how these findings relate to the literature review. Additionally, conclusions, recommendations for practice, and further research will also be addressed.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations**

Christian institutions of higher education have a unique role of educating students within their content area, as well as, shaping their character in a way that reflects Christian values and heritage (Fitzgerald Henck, 2011; Ikenberry 1997; Perez, 2013). To accomplish this goal, Christian universities will need to develop leaders who are aligned with their mission. Reave (2005) makes a connection between spiritual disciplines and leadership by suggesting that, “Spirituality encompasses character, motivation, and behavior, providing an integrated way of examining leader values and practices” (p. 661). However, what has not been fully studied, and warrants further study, is how Biblical spiritual disciplines influence women’s character and leadership practices in Christian faith-based institutions of higher education. Currently, women are underrepresented in senior-level position in Christian institutions. To increase the number of women in senior-level roles, additional research is needed to learn the factors that help and/or hinder women in their career advancement in higher education (Airini et al., 2008; Vongalis-Macrow, 2016). Longman and Anderson (2016) suggest that, “Christian higher education can, and must, be more proactive and strategic to unleash the capacity of all those who have been called to be partners in preparing the next generation for leadership and service” (p. 35).

The final chapter of this dissertation discusses the key findings that were developed from interviewing eight women who serve as Deans at universities within the CCCU. These findings were compared with the literature review in Chapter 2. Next, the researcher draws conclusions and implications from the findings. Finally, a series of recommendations are made for future study.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the perceived influence of Biblical spiritual disciplines on women's character and leadership practices in Christian faith-based institutions of higher education in North America. The researcher conducted individual semi-structured interviews of eight women leaders who served as Deans in institutions that are full members of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU).

## **Research Question**

This study explored the following research question:

How, if at all, do Biblical spiritual disciplines, influence women leaders' character and leadership practices in Christian faith-based institutions of higher education in North America?

## **Research Design Overview**

This study utilized a qualitative phenomenological approach to research design. The data was collected from eight female leaders who serve as Deans within the CCCU in North America. The interviews were conducted face-to-face and virtually, using a semi-structured interview protocol, consisting of eleven interview questions (See Appendix H) that were related to the review of the literature in Chapter 2. The questions were designed to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of how spiritual disciplines influence women leaders' character and leadership practices. The data was reviewed by experienced coders who assisted in ensuring that the codes and themes that emerged from the data were adequately analyzed.

## **Discussion of Key Findings**

The following two key themes emerged from this study:

- 1) Although participants value all 12 spiritual disciplines, women leaders practice prayer, study, and meditation more frequently and were intentional about practicing



- the spiritual disciplines, alone and in community.
- 2) Participants reported that they relied on guidance from the Holy Spirit, believed that this relationship could change their behavior, and referenced Biblical examples of the leadership characteristics of Jesus that they would emulate.

**Nature of spiritual disciplines.** This study found that all 12 spiritual disciplines were important to Christian women leaders in Christian institutions of higher education, however, prayer, study, and meditation were the spiritual disciplines most valued and most regularly practiced. Prayer, study, and meditation were perceived as the most influential of the disciplines. Next most important were celebration, guidance, and service. The literature encourages reflective practice and highlights some benefits, such as leadership identity, resilience, and an improvement in overall health (Reave, 2005; Wolverton, et al., 2006). These findings were also aligned with Dahlvig and Longman's (2014) framework naming relational responsibility, awareness of calling/giftedness, and encouragement through mentorship as three key motivational factors that impact female leaders' choices to pursue leadership positions in Christian higher education. For example, through the regular practice of prayer, study, and meditation, women leaders were often able to discern their personal calling by listening to God. It is through this personal relationship with God that they were motivated to serve others and feel a relational responsibility to lead. Finally, through this continued relationship, God encouraged and equipped these women to mentor other developing leaders. Additionally, Dahlvig & Longman (2014) assert that the level of self-awareness may impact a women's leadership development. It was evident through these women leaders' stories that the spiritual disciplines helped them gain personal insights.

Participant 4, Ruth, stressed the importance of these inward disciplines in stating that, “Prayer and meditation are really at the heart of everything. It is crucial to take time to study God’s Word, meditate on it, and pray about it.” She went on to explain one of the purposes in practicing the disciplines by sharing that, “Meditation, prayer, and study are very important in gaining that wisdom that we need to keep a balance.” Participant 2, Eve, spoke about how prayer is incorporated into her daily practice by sharing that, “Prayer is something that I do less at scheduled times and more of it as a normal part of my day.” Spiritual disciplines, such as prayer, study, and meditation created a space for reflection and needed to be practiced on a regular basis to become habits. Christians seek to practice spiritual disciplines as a way to maintain a healthy/ongoing relationship with God and others.

The spiritual discipline that was least practiced was fasting. Several of the women stated that their lack of fasting was due to medical reasons. For example, Participant 3, Esther, stated that, “I rarely fast because I have low blood sugar issues. Fasting invites a headache within three or four hours so I don’t practice it at all.” Participant 4, Ruth, said, “When I don’t eat, I don’t think.” Similarly, Participant 1, Mary, stated that, “When I get hungry, I get really crabby.” Despite the agreement in not fasting among these women leaders, the literature suggests that there are benefits to fasting and ways to help them overcome these physical conditions. Foster (1998) states that the main purpose for fasting is to reveal anything that might have control over one’s life while seeking complete reliance on God to restore balance to life. One possible explanation for this difference might be that fasting is often misunderstood by some Christians. Foster (1998) concluded that although Jesus made reference to fasting, He did not consider it to be taken as a command.

**Guidance through the Holy Spirit.** This study also revealed that Christian women leaders intentionally seek guidance from the Holy Spirit and look to Jesus to serve as an example. Throughout the interview, women referenced specific Scripture that called for them to lean on the guidance of the Holy Spirit. For example, Participant 8, Rebekah, shared that, “It really does mean that you have to rely on Him, not leaning on your own understanding, but in all your ways you follow Him, and He will direct your path.” Beyond just hearing from God, the women felt moved to act upon what they heard, and believed that God would supply them with the skills necessary to lead. Participant 7, Martha, reported that, after you, “Discern the word of God, you have to have the courage to act on it.”

Dahlvig & Longman (2014) framework suggests that a leader’s self-efficacy maybe influenced, in a positive or negative way, by the feedback they receive from others. Through the examples that these women leaders provided, it appears that their reliance on the Holy Spirit empowered them with the skills and abilities necessary to accomplish their personal calling. Participant 6, Elizabeth, believed that, “If you bring Christian character into that, I’m convinced that the Lord enables you in unique ways to satisfy whatever requirements are for good leadership.” Often times, they took less credit and suggested that it was their faith that paved the way to their success. For example, the spiritual disciplines were such a regular practice for Participant 4, Ruth, that she stated, “I don’t know how people can live without having dependence on God.” Additionally, the practice of the spiritual disciplines and reliance on the Holy Spirit were necessary for these women leaders to handle the resistance that can be associated with serving as a Dean. Participant 3, Esther, asserted that, “I think abiding in the Spirit, John 15, is the most essential.” John 15: 5 states, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If

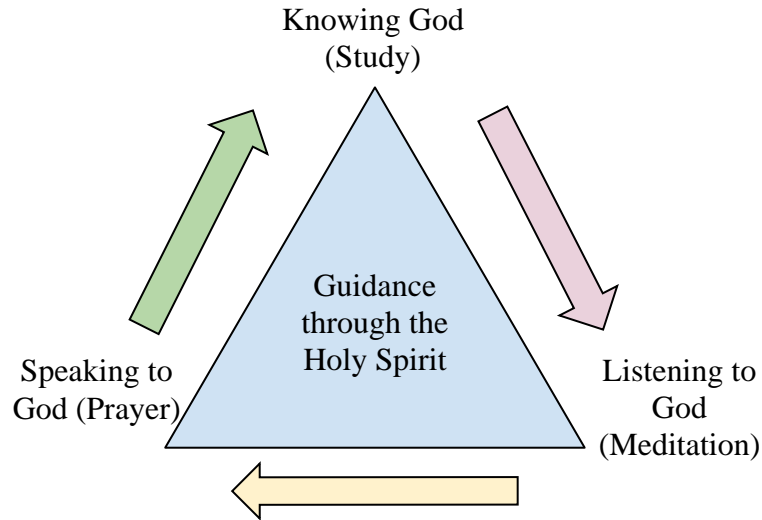
you remain in Me, and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing” (New International Version).

## **Conclusions**

There were three conclusions that were made in this study which are supported by the literature review and the participants’ experiences.

**Conclusion one.** Prayer, study, and meditation are the most influential of the twelve spiritual disciplines. These results are consistent with Foster (1998) who found, “Of all the spiritual disciplines, prayer is the most central because it ushers one into perpetual communion with the Father” (p. 33). The participants also identified prayer as the most important discipline. Participant 1, Mary, reinforced that, “I think your whole approach to the day has to be based in prayer.” Participant 3, Esther, was in agreement about the daily practice of prayer. She shared that, “I think prayer is about the disposition of your heart, the posture of your heart in your daily work.” When asked about what spiritual disciplines were most essential for women entering into leadership, Participant 8, Rebekah, replied, “To start with prayer and end with prayer.”

Not surprisingly, the inward spiritual disciplines of study and meditation were also perceived as highly influential. The participants often described the regular practice of the spiritual disciplines as a way to receive guidance from the Holy Spirit (see Figure 4). Studying the Bible was a means to knowing the character of God, receiving guidance from Him, and understanding His will. Meditation was a means through which Christians are quiet and intentional in listening to hear the voice of God. Finally, prayer was a means of having direct dialogue and relationship with God.



*Figure 4.* The practice of spiritual disciplines.

It is through regular study, meditation, and prayer that Christians reflect on the Word of God, hear his voice, and act on His will. Research suggests that listening skills and reflection were listed among the top six attributes associated with strong leadership practices (Reaves, 2005; Spendlove, 2007; Wolverton, et al., 2006). Participant 8, Rebekah, also believes that, “It is important for women in leadership to be very disciplined in study. They need to have clear minds, they need to be strategic, and they need to seek the wisdom and guidance of others.” According to the literature, effective listening skills went beyond hearing, but also recognizing new ideas (Reave, 2005; Spendlove, 2007). Participant 5, Sarah, saw that, “One has to be looking for, and responding to hearing God’s voice, and obeying His Word.” The inward disciplines of prayer, study, and meditation were closely connected and served as a means for strengthening the women’s relationship with God and, in turn, strengthening their leadership practices.

**Conclusion two.** Spiritual disciplines may have a transformative effect on the character and leadership practices of women leadership in Christian higher education. Some of the

findings in this study were affirmed in the literature; however, other findings were unique to this study and may help inform future research or practices. The literature focused more on the benefits of incorporating faith into the workplace. For example, research studies have examined the impact of incorporating spirituality into the workplace. How the leader chooses to reflect their values can, “Motivate followers, create a positive ethical climate, inspire trust, promote positive work relationships, and achieve organizational goals” (Reave, 2005, p. 656).

The women leaders in this study helped formulate exactly how the practice of spiritual disciplines influenced their character and leadership practices. First, they recalled how the spiritual disciplines had impacted their character. Participant 6, Elizabeth, shared that, “Learning about the disciplines corporately with others and then practicing them in solitude has been very powerful. I can see changes in my character.” She acknowledged that the shaping of her character occurred over time. She shared that, “There definitely is a change in my character over the years towards being more attuned to listening to His voice in decision making.” She went on to share how practicing, “The spiritual disciplines helps form us in how we should behave and how we should behave before God. It’s not just behavior, but it is deep, dedication to God’s will.” Participant 3, Esther, also acknowledged how time spent in solitude resulted in hearing from God. She stated that, “When I go away to be alone completely with the Lord, those are the times that are most transformative, when you’re really listening to what He has to share with you.” Other women spoke about the particular ways in which the spiritual disciplines had impacted their character and leadership practices. For example, Participant 4, Ruth, said, “I have integrity because I practice these spiritual disciplines. I also think it has made me a wise leader by giving me insights into others;” while Participant 7, Martha, asserted that, “I think it pervades our decision and our moral choices.” Lastly, Participant 8, Rebekah, defined character as, “Still

holding myself accountable to my standards, which are not things I just made up, but I really think things God has called me to be.” The shared experiences in this study provided some insight into how women believe their relationship with God is transformative; furthermore, they articulated self-awareness in the particular changes they saw in their character and leadership practices.

**Conclusion three.** Faith is integrated into the identity and daily practices of these Christian women leaders. Participants in this study specifically articulated how they viewed faith and leadership as deeply intertwined. There is limited research in the area faith identity and leadership; however, the results of this study suggest these women leaders were committed to honoring the role of faith in their leadership styles. Seven out of the eight participants made reference to how their faith was a part of their identity, but most notably were Participant 4, Ruth, and Participant 8, Rebekah. When describing the spiritual disciplines, Participant 4, Ruth, said, “I don’t look at them as disciplines; I just look at them as an extension of my reality and what makes me who I am. That is said with great humility because over time these things have become second nature to me.” Throughout the interview, she expressed the integration between faith and leadership by sharing, “It’s just part of who I am and what I do” or “This is my life, the spiritual disciplines have formed me.” Similarly, Participant 8, Rebekah, said, “It is a way of life.” In fact, she could not separate her faith from being a leader. She stated that, “I don’t know what it would be like to be a leader who didn’t have faith.” Like Rebekah, Participant 1, Mary, also shared that, “I think the reality is that my disciplines are organic rather than set asides. They are integrated into everything that I do and say.” Later, she went on to say that, “It’s so who I am, that I don’t even really have to stop and think, oh, should I act like a Christian right now? I just do and I know that I am imperfect at it.” Participant 5, Sarah, also believed that, “Spiritual

disciplines have made me who I am.” Participant 3, Esther, and Participant 5, Sarah, spoke about how the frequent practice of spiritual disciplines turn them into regular habits. Esther stated that, “I think the key with leadership is that you have practices and habits that form the spiritual core of who you are, help you steward who you are, and how you have been created in all different capacities.” Sarah went on to say that, “When you do it often enough and when it is part of your profession, it gets pretty easy.”

In addition to the lived experiences and strongly held beliefs of these women leaders, Longman and Anderson (2016) assert that, “If progress is to be made toward the goal of Christian higher education being guided by leadership teams that more fully reflect the Kingdom, attentiveness to women’s inner dialogue, values, and motivations will be necessary” (p. 28). The findings of this study and the literature call for a closer examination of how faith and leadership are interwoven in how women approach their work.

## **Recommendations**

This study was designed to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of eight female Deans within the CCCU. The findings of this study can be used to inform practitioners who serve in leadership roles within Christian institutions of higher education and have a desire to learn how the integration of faith can strengthen their leadership practices.

**Recommendation one.** Christian women leaders in higher education need to prioritize, or “make time,” for regular practice of the spiritual disciplines, particularly prayer and study. The experiences of these women leaders indicate that prayer and study are the top two spiritual disciplines that influenced their character and leadership practices. For example, Participant 8, Rebekah, shared that, “I don’t think that I could have done it if I was going home at the end of the day and didn’t have prayer, Scripture, and Godly guidance.” Participant 2, Eve, expressed



that “My leadership practice has been deeply influenced by what I read in Scripture. The study discipline has been incredibly important for me.” The women in this study were examples of leaders who were dedicated to prioritizing prayer and study in their personal and professional lives.

Table 14

*Practical Ways for Women Leaders to Integrate Spiritual Disciplines into Their Personal/ Professional Lives.*

Spiritual Disciplines	At Work	Outside of Work
Prayer	Praying for a colleague or student	Having a prayer partner
Study	Engaging in a book club	Going to weekly Bible study
Celebration	Leading a devotional at a meeting	Participating in family dinners
Guidance	Seeking guidance before and after a meeting	Having a Spiritual Director
Worship	Leading a chapel service	Attending church
Solitude	Scheduling a quiet time at lunch	Gardening
Meditation	Participating in retreats	Engaging in reflective journaling
Confession	Having an accountability partner	Apologizing to others
Submission	Seeking consensus	Honoring significant others
Simplicity	Living below your means/saving money	Supporting missionaries
Service	Networking with other women to develop relationships and a community of practice	Caring for those in need
Fasting	Spending a lunch hour on a prayer walk	Trying a one day fast & spending more time in Scripture

Although not included in Foster’s (1998) list of spiritual disciplines, there were two additional disciplines, physical exercise and honoring the Sabbath, that were highlighted by the women of this study. These additional spiritual disciplines are supported Biblically; therefore, would likely have a positive impact on a leader’s personal and professional life.

**Recommendation two.** The practice of spiritual disciplines, or the Christian way of life, should be incorporated into professional development and mentorship opportunities for Christian women leaders. This study found that faith plays a fundamental role in the everyday practices of

women leaders in Christian institutions of higher education. Therefore, in addition to applying successful leadership practices, Christian leaders need guidance and accountability on the integration of their faith and leadership practices. There appears to be a lack of literature on professional development programs that intentionally incorporate spirituality and leadership. Yet, Bugenhagen (2009) suggests that regardless of success in one's career, moral development and finding greater meaning, these are two areas that individuals still wrestle with throughout their professional lives.

One way women leaders might be supported is through focused spiritual leadership retreats and mentorship programs. Longman et al. (2011) highlight that women's leadership development could be enhanced if a stronger focus were placed on helping women discover their calling. Women are motivated to pursue leadership through mentorship or external encouragement. Mentors, both male and female, play a central role in training and encouraging new leaders and modeling behaviors they would want emulated (Dahlvig & Longman, 2014). Participant 3, Esther, agreed with the research on the importance of mentorship by stating that, "I don't know if I would have continued in leadership without the experience of mentorship." The majority of the participants were seasoned leaders and also spoke about serving in the role of a mentor. Participant 3, Esther, went on to say that, "Mentoring is a part of what I feel like the Lord is calling me to in leadership." The research suggests that it can be beneficial for women to be mentored by both male and female leaders. Airini et al. (2008) and Isaac et al. (2009) suggest that the role of collegial relationships and male mentors are known contributing factors that advance women's careers. Women who have male mentors have reported an increase in confidence, greater recognition, and access to future job opportunities.

## **Recommendations for Further Research**

There were six recommendations for further research identified in this study.

**Study male deans within the CCCU.** To replicate this study with male Deans would allow for a comparison in perspective on this topic. Do male counterparts perceive the influence of spiritual disciplines on their character and leadership practices the same or differently? If so, what are the differences? If not, how can Christian males and females come together to strengthen the unique leadership practices that are essential in Christian higher education?

**Study Christian women within a secular setting.** It might be noteworthy to explore if there are contextual differences in female Deans who hold leadership positions in secular universities versus faith-based institutions of higher education. Is there a difference between women leaders who are, and are not able, to openly practice spiritual disciplines within the workplace? What challenges do women leaders in both settings face when it comes to practicing spiritual disciplines? What is the impact on those who follow a Christian leader in either setting?

**Study the leadership traits of Jesus through a women's lens.** The findings of this study show that Christian women leaders often look to the life of Jesus as a positive leadership example. Further investigating the character traits and leadership practices of Jesus might help inform and shape professional development training, particularly for women seeking leadership roles in Christian higher education.

**Study the individual spiritual disciplines in-depth.** There appears to be a lack of literature on certain spiritual disciplines and the impact on leadership practices. One approach might be to take an in-depth look into how the top three disciplines, prayer, study, and meditation influence leadership practices. Another approach might be to conduct a study on less practiced, or understood, spiritual disciplines such as fasting, submission, or simplicity.

**Compare Christian spiritual practices to other faith traditions.** Since this study solely focused on the spiritual disciplines practiced in Christian tradition, it would be interesting to examine the spiritual practices of other faith traditions to see if, and how, their practices influence character and leadership practices. Is there a direct correlation between faith and leadership regardless of the belief system?

**Adjust the interview instrument to include survey questions.** To increase the accuracy of the data, the researcher suggests making questions four through six into a survey that participants complete prior to the face-to-face or virtual interview. This will decrease the number of participants who do not respond to certain questions. Requiring a forced response for these questions will assist with future data analysis.

### **Final Thoughts**

After taking an in-depth look into how Christian women approach leadership, the researcher is even more convinced of the importance of developing and supporting individuals who are called to lead. The women in this study shared a glimpse into how they live out their faith every day. Despite the demanding nature of a Deanship, these women were intentional, and even protective, of their time devoted to strengthening their relationship with God. Not surprisingly, the most influential spiritual disciplines were the inward disciplines of prayer, study, and meditation. These inward disciplines foster a close relationship through knowing, listening, and speaking to God. It is through this relationship, that these women believed that God has transformed their character and continues to guide them on their path in leadership. Their identity in Christ Jesus was so strong that they were unable to separate their faith from their everyday leadership practices. These women leaders expressed how they continually relied on the Holy Spirit to direct both their personal and professional lives. In order to learn from

these valuable experiences, Christian leaders need to hold each other accountable and grow together spiritually. The literature identified some of the benefits to incorporating spirituality into the workplace; however, one might argue that the Christian call to leadership goes beyond those parameters and seeks to answer a much more meaningful Kingdom call. As Jesus prepared to leave this earth, He shared that, “I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in Me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father” (John 14: 12). It is through the power of His Spirit that the work of God will continue to be accomplished here on earth.

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APPENDIX A

Permission to Use Theoretical Framework

Re: Request to Use Model/Theory in Dissertation Study at Pepperdine University

---

Jolyn Dahlvig <xxxx@xxxx.xxx>

Mon, Sep 26, 2016 at 8:04 AM

To: Kristin M Bailey <xxxx@xxxx.edu>

Cc: Karen Longman <xxxx@xxxx.edu>

Hello Kristin,

The connection between spiritual disciplines and the women's leadership development model sounds interesting. You have my permission to use the model. I know Karen is traveling right now, so she may be delayed in responding. Thank you for reaching out - I wish you well in your dissertation journey.

Jolyn

On Sat, Sep 24, 2016 at 2:56 PM, Kristin M Bailey [REDACTED] wrote:

Dear Dr. Longman and Dr. Dahlvig,

I am writing to request your permission to use the model and emerging theory in women's leadership development in Christian higher education in my doctoral dissertation at Pepperdine University.

I will be interviewing women deans and associate deans within the CCCU to explore how Biblical spiritual disciplines influence their beliefs and leadership practices.

Thank you for your consideration,

Kristin Bailey

## APPENDIX B

### IRB Approval



Pepperdine University  
24255 Pacific Coast Highway  
Malibu, CA 90263  
TEL: 310-506-4000

#### NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

Date: January 20, 2017

Protocol Investigator Name: Kristin Bailey

Protocol #: 16-12-461

Project Title: A Phenomenological Study of How Biblical Spiritual Disciplines Influence Women's Character and Leadership Practices in Christian Faith-Based Institutions in Higher Education in North America

School: Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Dear Kristin Bailey:

Thank you for submitting your application for exempt review to Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101 that govern the protections of human subjects.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Since your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the IRB and documenting the adverse event can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* at [community.pepperdine.edu/irb](http://community.pepperdine.edu/irb).

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional questions or require clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On behalf of the IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

Judy Ho, Ph.D., IRB Chair

Page: 1

## APPENDIX C

### Certificate of Completion Human Subjects Research (CITI)

#### COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI PROGRAM) COMPLETION REPORT - PART 1 OF 2 COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS\*

\* NOTE: Scores on this Requirements Report reflect quiz completions at the time all requirements for the course were met. See list below for details. See separate Transcript Report for more recent quiz scores, including those on optional (supplemental) course elements.

- **Name:** Kristin Bailey [REDACTED]
- **Email:** [REDACTED]
- **Institution Affiliation:** Pepperdine University (ID: 1729)
- **Institution Unit:** Education
  
- **Curriculum Group:** GSEP Education Division
- **Course Learner Group:** GSEP Education Division - Social-Behavioral-Educational (SBE)
- **Stage:** Stage 1 - Basic Course
  
- **Report ID:** 21602193
- **Completion Date:** 17-Dec-2016
- **Expiration Date:** 16-Dec-2021
- **Minimum Passing:** 80
- **Reported Score\*:** 88

REQUIRED AND ELECTIVE MODULES ONLY	DATE COMPLETED	SCORE
Belmont Report and CITI Course Introduction (ID: 1127)	17-Dec-2016	3/3 (100%)
History and Ethical Principles - SBE (ID: 490)	17-Dec-2016	5/5 (100%)
Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBE (ID: 491)	17-Dec-2016	4/5 (80%)
The Federal Regulations - SBE (ID: 502)	17-Dec-2016	5/5 (100%)
Assessing Risk - SBE (ID: 503)	17-Dec-2016	4/5 (80%)
Informed Consent - SBE (ID: 504)	17-Dec-2016	5/5 (100%)
Privacy and Confidentiality - SBE (ID: 505)	17-Dec-2016	3/5 (60%)

For this Report to be valid, the learner identified above must have had a valid affiliation with the CITI Program subscribing institution identified above or have been a paid Independent Learner.

Verify at: [www.citiprogram.org/verify/2k0d5cb71c-47ce-40fc-a433-59a94782998a-21602193](http://www.citiprogram.org/verify/2k0d5cb71c-47ce-40fc-a433-59a94782998a-21602193)

#### CITI Program

Email: [support@citiprogram.org](mailto:support@citiprogram.org)

Phone: 888-529-5929

Web: <https://www.citiprogram.org>

## COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI PROGRAM)

### COMPLETION REPORT - PART 2 OF 2 COURSEWORK TRANSCRIPT\*\*

\*\* NOTE: Scores on this Transcript Report reflect the most current quiz completions, including quizzes on optional (supplemental) elements of the course. See list below for details. See separate Requirements Report for the reported scores at the time all requirements for the course were met.

- **Name:** Kristin Bailey [REDACTED]
- **Email:** [REDACTED]
- **Institution Affiliation:** Pepperdine University (ID: 1729)
- **Institution Unit:** Education
  
- **Curriculum Group:** GSEP Education Division
- **Course Learner Group:** GSEP Education Division - Social-Behavioral-Educational (SBE)
- **Stage:** Stage 1 - Basic Course
  
- **Report ID:** 21602193
- **Report Date:** 17-Dec-2016
- **Current Score\*\*:** 94

#### REQUIRED, ELECTIVE, AND SUPPLEMENTAL MODULES

	MOST RECENT	SCORE
History and Ethical Principles - SBE (ID: 490)	17-Dec-2016	5/5 (100%)
Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBE (ID: 491)	17-Dec-2016	4/5 (80%)
Belmont Report and CITI Course Introduction (ID: 1127)	17-Dec-2016	3/3 (100%)
The Federal Regulations - SBE (ID: 502)	17-Dec-2016	5/5 (100%)
Assessing Risk - SBE (ID: 503)	17-Dec-2016	4/5 (80%)
Informed Consent - SBE (ID: 504)	17-Dec-2016	5/5 (100%)
Privacy and Confidentiality - SBE (ID: 505)	17-Dec-2016	5/5 (100%)

For this Report to be valid, the learner identified above must have had a valid affiliation with the CITI Program subscribing institution identified above or have been a paid Independent Learner.

Verify at: [www.citiprogram.org/verify/?k0d5cb71c-47ce-40fc-a433-59a94762998a-21602193](http://www.citiprogram.org/verify/?k0d5cb71c-47ce-40fc-a433-59a94762998a-21602193)

#### Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI Program)

Email: [support@citiprogram.org](mailto:support@citiprogram.org)

Phone: 888-529-5929

Web: <https://www.citiprogram.org>



## APPENDIX D

### Participant Recruitment E-mail

Dear [Name],

My name is Kristin Bailey and I am a doctoral student in the Graduate School of Education and Psychology at Pepperdine University. I am conducting a research study examining how Biblical spiritual disciplines influence women's beliefs and leadership practices in Christian faith-based institutions of higher education. If you agree to participate in this study, you are invited to participate in a one-on-one semi-structured interview and a brief post-interview follow-up to ensure the accuracy of your collected interview responses.

The interview is anticipated to take no more than 60-90 minutes and the interview will be audio-recorded. Participation in this study is voluntary. Your identity as a participant will remain confidential during and after the study. Your identity will be protected by assignment of an alias. The audio-recording and any written notes from the interview will be destroyed after the dissertation is completed.

If you have questions or would like to participate, please contact me at:

xxxx.xxxx@pepperdine.edu

Thank you for your participation,

Kristin Bailey

Pepperdine University

Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Doctoral Student

## APPENDIX E

### Participant Follow-Up E-mail

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I am writing to follow- up on the email I sent you last week to see if you are interested in participating in my research study on examining how Biblical spiritual disciplines influence women's character and leadership practices in Christian faith-based institutions of higher education. You are one of ten women within the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) who was asked to participate in a 60 minute semi-structured interview.

If you are available to participate in this study, please contact me at your earliest convenience so we can schedule an interview session.

Sincerely,

Kristin Bailey

Pepperdine Doctoral Student

## APPENDIX F

### Informed Consent for Participation

**PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY**  
*Graduate School of Education and Psychology*

<b>INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH ACTIVITIES</b>
--

**“A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF HOW BIBLICAL SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES INFLUENCE WOMEN’S CHARACTER AND LEADERSHIP PRACTICES IN CHRISTIAN FAITH-BASED INSTITUTIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN NORTH AMERICA”**

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Kristin Bailey, Doctoral Candidate of Education in Educational Leadership, Administration, and Policy with Dr. Linda Purrington, Committee Chair, at Pepperdine University, because you are a Christian women who is in a leadership position in a faith-based institutions of higher education. Your participation is voluntary. You should read the information below, and ask questions about anything that you do not understand, before deciding whether to participate. Please take as much time as you need to read the consent form. You may also decide to discuss participation with your family or friends. You will also be given a copy of this form for your records.

#### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore the perceived influence of Biblical spiritual disciplines on women’s character and leadership practices in Christian faith-based institutions of higher education in North America. This study proposes to conduct individual semi-structured interviews of 8-10 Christian women leaders who serve as Deans or Associate Deans in institutions that are full member of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU).

#### **STUDY PROCEDURES**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in a one- hour face-to-face or virtual interview with Kristin Bailey. During your participation in this study, you will be asked eleven interview questions that relate to your experience on how Biblical spiritual disciplines have influenced your character and leadership practices in higher education. The interview will be audio-recorded and later transcribed by an external transcriber. The transcriber will be asked to maintain confidentiality and the audio recording will be de-identified before being provided to transcriber. If you chose not to be recorded, the researcher will ask to take written notes.

## **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

The potential and foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study include mental fatigue or a loss of personal time for the length of the interview session.

## **POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

While there are no direct benefits to the study participants, there are several anticipated benefits to society which include: (a) possible development and sustainability of women leaders in Christian institutions of higher education; (b) increased awareness of the influences of spiritual disciplines within the context of women's leadership; (c) increased understanding of the connection between spiritual disciplines and leadership practices in relationship to the advancement of Christian missions.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

The records collected for this study will be confidential as far as permitted by law. However, if required to do so by law, it may be necessary to disclose information collected about you. Examples of the types of issues that would require me to break confidentiality are if disclosed any instances of child abuse and elder abuse. Pepperdine's University's Human Subjects Protection Program (HSPP) may also access the data collected. The HSPP occasionally reviews and monitors research studies to protect the rights and welfare of research subjects.

The data will be stored on a password protected computer in the researcher's place of residence. The data will be stored for a minimum of three years. The data collected will be de-identified, transcribed by an external transcriber, and coded. Any identifiable information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential. Your responses will be coded with a pseudonym and transcript data will be maintained separately. The audio-recordings will be destroyed once they have been transcribed.

## **SUSPECTED NEGLECT OR ABUSE OF CHILDREN**

Under California law, the researcher(s) who may also be a mandated reporter will not maintain as confidential, information about known or reasonably suspected incidents of abuse or neglect of a child, dependent adult or elder, including, but not limited to, physical, sexual, emotional, and financial abuse or neglect. If any researcher has or is given such information, he or she is required to report this abuse to the proper authorities.

## **PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

Your participation is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

### **ALTERNATIVES TO FULL PARTICIPATION**

The alternative to participation in the study is not participating or only completing the items for which you feel comfortable. Participating in this study will not in any way, shape or form infringe upon the relationship between you and your employer.

### **EMERGENCY CARE AND COMPENSATION FOR INJURY**

If you are injured as a direct result of research procedures you will receive medical treatment; however, you or your insurance will be responsible for the cost. Pepperdine University does not provide any monetary compensation for injury

### **INVESTIGATOR'S CONTACT INFORMATION**

You understand that the investigator is willing to answer any inquiries you may have concerning the research herein described. You understand that you may contact: Kristin Bailey (Researcher) at xxx-xxx-xxxx or email xxx@pepperdine.edu; or Dr. Linda Purrington (Committee Chair) at xxx-xxx-xxxx or email xxx@pepperdine.edu; if you have any other questions or concerns about this research.

### **RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT – IRB CONTACT INFORMATION**

If you have questions, concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant or research in general please contact Dr. Judy Ho, Chairperson of the Graduate & Professional Schools Institutional Review Board at Pepperdine University 6100 Center Drive Suite 500 Los Angeles, CA 90045, 310-568-5753 or gpsirb@pepperdine.edu.

APPENDIX G

Participant Interview Guide

**Spiritual Disciplines:** “The Spiritual Disciplines are those practices found in Scripture that promote spiritual growth among believers in the gospel of Jesus Christ. They are the habits of devotion and experiential Christianity that have been practiced by the people of God since biblical times” (Whitney, 1991, p. 4).

**Character:** “Consistent moral and ethical actions for the purposes of maintaining congruence with one’s own and the organization’s values and beliefs, and to serve the greater good of the community” (Sweeney & Fry, 2012).

**Spiritual Disciplines:**

Meditation	Study	Submission	Worship
Prayer	Simplicity	Service	Guidance
Fasting	Solitude	Confession	Celebration

**Example of Spiritual Disciplines: Richard Foster’s Celebration of the Spiritual Disciplines**

**INWARD**

***Meditation:*** “The ability to hear God’s voice and obey his word” (Foster, 1998, p, 17).

\_\_\_\_\_ Alone      \_\_\_\_\_ In community      \_\_\_\_\_ Both      \_\_\_\_\_ How Often

***Prayer:*** “Ushers us into perpetual communion with the Father” (Foster, 1998, p. 33).

\_\_\_\_\_ Alone      \_\_\_\_\_ In community      \_\_\_\_\_ Both      \_\_\_\_\_ How Often

***Fasting:*** “Abstaining from food for spiritual purposes” (Foster, 1998, p. 48).

\_\_\_\_\_ Alone      \_\_\_\_\_ In community      \_\_\_\_\_ Both      \_\_\_\_\_ How Often

**Study:** “A specific kind of experience in which through careful attention to reality the mind is enabled to move in a certain direction” (Foster, 1998, p. 63).

\_\_\_\_\_ Alone            \_\_\_\_\_ In community            \_\_\_\_\_ Both            \_\_\_\_\_ How Often

**Other:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Alone            \_\_\_\_\_ In community            \_\_\_\_\_ Both            \_\_\_\_\_ How Often

**Other:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Alone            \_\_\_\_\_ In community            \_\_\_\_\_ Both            \_\_\_\_\_ How Often

## **OUTWARD**

**Simplicity:** “Set us free to receive the provision of God as a gift that is not ours to keep and can be freely shared with others” (Foster, 1998, p. 85).

\_\_\_\_\_ Alone            \_\_\_\_\_ In community            \_\_\_\_\_ Both            \_\_\_\_\_ How Often

**Solitude:** “Inner fulfillment or more a state of mind and heart than it is a place” (Foster, 1998, p. 96).

\_\_\_\_\_ Alone            \_\_\_\_\_ In community            \_\_\_\_\_ Both            \_\_\_\_\_ How Often

**Submission:** “The ability to lay down the terrible burden of always needing to get our own way” (Foster, 1998, p. 111).

\_\_\_\_\_ Alone            \_\_\_\_\_ In community            \_\_\_\_\_ Both            \_\_\_\_\_ How Often

**Service:** “Supportive action towards others” (Hale, n.d., para. 3).

\_\_\_\_\_ Alone            \_\_\_\_\_ In community            \_\_\_\_\_ Both            \_\_\_\_\_ How Often

**Other:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Alone            \_\_\_\_\_ In community            \_\_\_\_\_ Both            \_\_\_\_\_ How Often

**Other:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Alone            \_\_\_\_\_ In community            \_\_\_\_\_ Both            \_\_\_\_\_ How Often

## CORPORATE

**Confession:** “Acknowledging one’s sin with and to others in the community of faith” (Hale, n.d., para. 5).

\_\_\_\_\_ Alone            \_\_\_\_\_ In community            \_\_\_\_\_ Both            \_\_\_\_\_ How Often

**Worship:** “Giving God glory through attitudes and actions” (Hale, n.d., para. 5).

\_\_\_\_\_ Alone            \_\_\_\_\_ In community            \_\_\_\_\_ Both            \_\_\_\_\_ How Often

**Guidance:** “Giving and receiving direction from others along the journey with Jesus” (Hale, n.d., para. 5).

\_\_\_\_\_ Alone            \_\_\_\_\_ In community            \_\_\_\_\_ Both            \_\_\_\_\_ How Often

**Celebration:** “Taking joy in what God has done” (Foster, 1998, p. 190).

\_\_\_\_\_ Alone            \_\_\_\_\_ In community            \_\_\_\_\_ Both            \_\_\_\_\_ How Often

**Other:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Alone            \_\_\_\_\_ In community            \_\_\_\_\_ Both            \_\_\_\_\_ How Often

**Other:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Alone            \_\_\_\_\_ In community            \_\_\_\_\_ Both            \_\_\_\_\_ How Often

### **Interview Questions:**

To what denomination or community of faith do you belong?

What is your position at your university?

How long have you held this position at the university at which you currently work?

Which spiritual disciplines do you practice and how often?

Which spiritual disciplines do you practice alone and which do you practice in community?

Are there any spiritual disciplines to which you wish you gave more time/attention? Which one(s) and why?



How, if at all, has practicing spiritual disciplines influenced your character?

In your opinion, how has practicing spiritual disciplines influenced your leadership practices?

Can you share a story of how you handled a leadership experience, whether positive or negative, differently because of your spiritual discipline practices?

Can you give a specific example of how Jesus' leadership influenced your response to a leadership situation?

Which spiritual disciplines do you think are essential for Christian women who seek leadership positions in Christian faith-based institutions of higher education?

## APPENDIX H

### Interview Instrument

1. To what denomination or community of faith do you belong?
2. What is your position at your university?
3. How long have you held this position at the university at which you currently work?
4. Which spiritual disciplines do you practice and how often?
5. Which spiritual disciplines do you practice alone and which do you practice in community?
6. Are there any spiritual disciplines to which you wish you gave more time/attention?  
Which one(s) and why?
7. How, if at all, has practicing spiritual disciplines influenced your character?
8. In your opinion, how has practicing spiritual disciplines influenced your leadership practices?
9. Can you share a story of how you handled a leadership experience, whether positive or negative, differently because of your spiritual discipline practices?
10. Can you give a specific example of how Jesus' leadership influenced your response to a leadership situation?
11. Which spiritual disciplines do you think are essential for Christian women who seek leadership positions in Christian faith-based institutions of higher education?

## APPENDIX I

### Instrumentation Validity Questionnaire

Dear Expert Reviewer,

Thank you for agreeing to review my interview instrument. I plan to interview 8-10 Christian women leaders who serve as Deans or Associate Deans in institutions that are full members of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities. The 60-minute interviews will be conducted face-to-face and virtually using a semi-structured interview protocol.

**Purpose Statement:** The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore the perceived influence of Biblical spiritual disciplines on women's character and leadership practices in Christian faith-based institutions of higher education in North America.

**Research Question:** How, if at all, do Biblical spiritual disciplines, influence women's character and leadership practices in Christian faith-based institutions of higher education in North America?

As you review the questions below, will you please focus on the following:

1. Am I asking questions that will generate responses that are aligned with my research questions?
2. Based on the interview protocol, am I asking the right number of questions?
3. Is the language phrased in an understandable manner?

#### DEMOGRAPHICS:

To what denomination or community of faith do you belong?

Keep     Do not keep

Clear     Unclear

Suggestions: \_\_\_\_\_

What is your position at your university?

Keep     Do not keep

Clear     Unclear

Suggestions: \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you held this position at the university at which you currently work?

Keep     Do not keep

Clear     Unclear

Suggestions: \_\_\_\_\_

**PERSONAL PRACTICES WITH SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES:**

Which spiritual disciplines do you practice and how often?

Keep     Do not keep

Clear     Unclear

Suggestions: \_\_\_\_\_

Which spiritual disciplines do you practice alone and which do you practice in community?

Keep     Do not keep

Clear     Unclear

Suggestions: \_\_\_\_\_

Are there any spiritual disciplines to which you wish you gave more time/attention? Which one(s)? And why?

Keep     Do not keep

Clear     Unclear

Suggestions: \_\_\_\_\_

**IMPACT OF PRACTICING SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES:**

How, if at all, has practicing spiritual disciplines influenced your character?

Keep     Do not keep

Clear     Unclear

Suggestions: \_\_\_\_\_

In your opinion, how has practicing spiritual disciplines influenced your leadership practices?

Keep     Do not keep

Clear     Unclear

Suggestions: \_\_\_\_\_

Please share a positive or negative leadership experience that you have encountered when practicing spiritual disciplines?

Keep     Do not keep

Clear     Unclear

Suggestions: \_\_\_\_\_

In what ways has Jesus served as an example in your leadership experiences?

Keep     Do not keep

Clear     Unclear

Suggestions: \_\_\_\_\_

What advice might you have for Christian women who seek a leadership role in higher education?

Keep     Do not keep

Clear     Unclear

Suggestions: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX J

Interview Protocol

Pseudonym for participant: \_\_\_\_\_

University: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Interview Date/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank the participant for their time and remind them of the details outlined in the consent form.

Remind participant that the interview will be audio-recorded and she can take breaks or stop the interview, if needed.

DEMOGRAPHICS:

To what denomination or community of faith do you belong?

What is your position at your university?

How long have you held this position at the university at which you currently work?

PERSONAL PRACTICES WITH SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES:

Which spiritual disciplines do you practice and how often?

Which spiritual disciplines do you practice alone and which do you practice in community?

Are there any spiritual disciplines to which you wish you gave more time/attention?

Which one(s)? And why?

IMPACT OF PRACTICING SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES:

How, if at all, has practicing spiritual disciplines influenced your character?

In your opinion, how has practicing spiritual disciplines influenced your leadership?

Can you share a story of how you handled a leadership experience, whether positive or negative, differently because of your spiritual discipline practices?

Can you give a specific example of how Jesus' leadership influenced your response to a leadership situation?

Which spiritual disciplines do you think are essential for Christian women who seek leadership positions in Christian faith-based institutions of higher education?

Ask participants if they have any additional information that they would like to share.

Thank participants for their time. Remind them that the interview is confidential and follow up contact information is provided in the consent form should they have additional questions or thoughts upon the conclusion of the interview.

APPENDIX K

Interview Observation Log

Pseudonym for participant: \_\_\_\_\_

University: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Interview Date/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

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Notable Experiences

Personal Thoughts

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