

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

**Woman in the Mirror: Precious Child of God, or Just a Rib?**

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

by

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**Thesis Project Approval Sheet**

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## THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity, September 21, 2021

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This thesis entitled, “Woman in the Mirror: Precious Child of God, or Just a Rib?” is based on a request from colleagues to create a curriculum as a companion piece to the Rev. Dr. Kevin Frederick’s curriculum, “Men in the Mirror: Orienting Our Lives Toward a Christ-Centered Masculinity.” The curriculum will be used by pastors and pastoral counselors working with women who struggle with self-esteem and/or are victims of domestic violence. This thesis explores the problem that some women seem to lack a clear understanding of their position in the kingdom of God. Looking at how women understood God, their identity as followers of Jesus Christ, and how they live their faith in their identity, this thesis used qualitative research and a triangulation of a questionnaire, an inventory tool and interviews with women. The results of the research provided the data necessary to create the content for the curriculum.

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God, thank you for having a sense of humor and being able to laugh at me when I tell you my plans. Jesus, thanks for all the little nudges that encourage me to wander down new paths all the time and to move over and allow You to drive. You are my Lord and my Savior. Holy Spirit, I get it. Without you, I am lost and nothing!

To the members of Mayfield Central Presbyterian Church, you were my first church and because of our ministry together, my only church. Thank you for your faithful encouragement, support, and prayers. Without each one of you, I would not be the person or minister I am today.

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### **Abbreviations (if needed)**

DMIN	<i>Doctor of Ministry</i>
LUSOD	<i>Liberty University School of Divinity</i>
MCPC	Mayfield Central Presbyterian Church
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
PCUSA	Presbyterian Church of the United States of America



## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

Women of all ages in society hear and internalize various messages about the definition and appropriate expression of their femininity. What does it mean to be created in the image of God? While some of these messages have a positive impact on women, others can have destructive implications for their well-being and their relationships. Exploring and examining the messages that women receive from the church offers them an opportunity to develop a strong positive spiritual identity and become more Christ-like in their discipleship.

Some of the messages that women hear may seem contradictory and confusing as they seek to define their femininity and identity as disciples of Jesus Christ and scripture can be both a roadblock and a resource for women in understanding their role in the kingdom. What does it mean for women to know that they are created in the image of God? The church has been silent for many years, but needs to proclaim that women are indeed made in God's image and are essential in the kingdom.

Exploring the conflicting messages using a curriculum could help a pastoral counselor who works with Christian women. Women presenting with low self-esteem, those living in domestic violence situations, and those seeking a more mature faith can use a curriculum to evaluate and understand their place in Christ's plan for the kingdom.

### **Ministry Context**

The Mayfield Central Presbyterian Church, located in Mayfield, New York, is the community context for this research. Sitting in the foothills of the Adirondack Mountains, on the

Great Sacandaga Lake in Fulton County, the Town of Mayfield has a population of 6,495, according to the 2010 United States Census Bureau.<sup>1</sup>

As of the 2000 United States Census, the racial makeup of Mayfield's town was 97.99% White, 0.39% Black or African American, 0.22% Native American, 0.42% Asian, 0.47% from other races, and 0.51% from two or more races. Hispanic or Latino of any race were 0.87% of the population.

There were 2,535 households, out of which 33% had children under the age of 18 living with them, 56% were married couples living together, 10% had a female household with no husband present, and 29% were non-families. 23% of all households were made up of individuals, and 11% had someone living alone who was 65 years of age or older. The average household size was 3, and the average family size was 3.

The population was spread out, with 25% under the age of 18, 6% from 18 to 24, 28% from 25 to 44, 26% from 45 to 64, and 14% who were 65 years of age or older. The median age was 39 years. For every 100 females, there were 98 males. For every 100 females aged 18 and over, there were 96 males.

The median income for a household in the town was \$37,982, and the median income for a family was \$42,289. Males had a median income of \$30,326 versus \$22,105 for females. The per capita income for the town was \$17,972. 5.9% of families and 8.6% of the population live below the poverty line. 11.9% of those under age 18 and 7.4% of those aged 65 or over live below the poverty line.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics for Town of Mayfield, Fulton County extrapolated from: U.S. Department of Commerce United States Census Bureau, State & County QuickFacts.<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/36/36119.html> (accessed June 18, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., June 18, 2020.

Organized initially in a village then called Fonda's Bush, Broadalbin Church and Mayfield Central Presbyterian Church were linked as the Low Dutch Reformed Church. In 1794, Mayfield's people voted to leave the Low Dutch Reformed Church and move closer to Mayfield's village and join the Albany Presbytery. Construction of Mayfield Presbyterian Church began in 1823 as numbers of the "flock" increased. Original records list the church's name as Central Presbyterian Church, Mayfield Central Presbyterian Church, and Mayfield Presbyterian Church, leading to confusion over the years. This thesis will refer to Mayfield Central Presbyterian Church as MCPC.

The first pastor of MCPC was the Rev. Jeremiah Wood serving the church for fifty years from 1826 to his death in 1876. Albany Presbytery authorized him to preach in 1826, ordained him in 1828, and officially installed him in 1840. Original letters from Rev. Wood, written to his betrothed, Thankful, recount the story of his horseback journey to the Presbyterian Church General Assembly in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1837.

When money was tight during the Civil War, the church held a donation meeting requesting that congregants support the Rev. Wood with cash. He was having difficulty sustaining his family on the produce he received as payment for his pastoral services.

Many church members can trace their ancestral roots back to the founding mothers and fathers of the church. Records from the late 1800s and early 1900s reveal many surnames that still sit in the pews today. Despite being located in upstate New York, where winters can be harsh, MCPC has never closed on a Sunday.

In the early years, male members of MCPC held all the leadership roles. Even the stained-glass windows dedicated in the 1800s suggest that women could be seen but not heard by the inscriptions on the windows such as "Dedicated by Isaac Hathaway and Wife." No name for

the wife seemed necessary. The ratio of men to women in leadership has changed in the recent past with significantly fewer men in the congregation. Evidence suggests that women have done a great deal of the church's work from day one to the present.

Since its inception, members of MCPC have been an essential part of the day-to-day life of the Mayfield community. MCPC started a food pantry almost fifty years ago and today serves over sixty families each week. Until a few years ago, all the food and supplies were donated by members of the church. The church now supplements the food pantry with purchases from a regional food bank. Eighty percent of the food pantry volunteers are women.

On August 28, 2011, the MCPC congregation awoke to the news that lightning had struck the steeple, and the church was on fire. Though firefighters in Mayfield and surrounding communities did all they could, the church was a total loss. On that day, the members realized more than any other day in history that they are the church.

Not missing a worship service, the congregation began meeting in the high school auditorium and started the process to decide their future. With God's help, the support of the members, friends, and others, MCPC found joy working together to plan and then create a modest, country church that is both energy-efficient, modern, comfortable, and meets the needs of the community.

At one point during the rebuilding journey, the pastor and members realized that to begin to heal, they needed to find a way to express their laments. They created and developed two unique services. The congregation was asked to think about their sadness and laments since the fire.

Explaining to the congregants that we all have laments, not just because of the fire, MCPC shared a service of laments. Like the people of the Psalms, these people spoke, sang, read, and cried out their lamentations.

At one point in the service, everyone wrote their laments anonymously on special white paper. Each lament was read aloud during the service and then torn into pieces and put into the baptismal font, a punch bowl because of the fire. Each member of the congregation came forward to stir the laments with their fingers. Watching their laments disintegrate before their eyes, the people understood when they cry out to God, naming their laments, they begin to dissolve.

The next morning, many women of the church gathered to make new paper from the lament pulp. They placed the "lament" paper into a blender and added things salvaged from the burned church. Adding to the lament pulp, pieces of quilting thread, seeds gathered from the church property, parts of special bulletins, envelopes that contained the donations toward the rebuilding from sister churches, and a variety of food colorings, new beautiful rag paper emerged.

The following Sunday, the "blessing" service found the congregants reading aloud their blessings written on the beautiful rag paper that once held their laments. The "blessing" papers became artistic collage pieces, one of which hangs in the new church, and another passed on, along with the church story to First Presbyterian Church in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, destroyed by a tornado. First Presbyterian Church was encouraged to keep the collage and storybook to help them heal. They were encouraged to add their story to the book and pass it on to another church in crisis. As of September 2021, this collage now resides at First Presbyterian Church in Wetumpka, Alabama.

An integral part of the identity of MCPC has always been its recognition as a quilting church, famous for its "crazy" quilts. Many members learned to quilt from their mothers, grandmothers, and great-grandmothers, using the same quilting rack as their ancestors. The quilting group has met weekly for as long as most participants can remember, cutting, sewing, embroidering, and tying quilts together. The church sold the crazy quilts as a fund-raiser.

An interesting fact is that the only two things that survived the fire were two quilts, the bi-centennial quilt, and a quilt signed by the entire congregation made during the current pastor's sabbatical. These quilts were hanging on the wall in the sanctuary during the fire. Most members believe the force of the fire hoses saturated the quilts and knocked them from the wall. Recovered and carefully cleaned by the quilting group, the two quilts now hang as a special memorial in the new church.

The church's matriarch recalls there were no female elders in the church when she was born in 1921. Women wore dresses or skirts to all church functions. The matriarch remembers the day that she and her friend broke the rules and came to the church in pants. She recounted how excited they were and recalled that the entire church was stunned. She also remembers the punishment that occurred at home after church that day. In 1960, she was ordained as an elder and served four more terms over the years.

It took 186 years to ordain a female to a leadership role in the church. The first female elder, the current matriarch, was ordained in 1978. MCPC records three female pastors, including the present pastor, who began her call in 2001.

Other important events in the women's group include the famous bi-annual rummage and bake sale where everything sells for a quarter. The current pastor recalls twenty years ago when

the price of each item was a dime. The women had a lively discussion about raising the cost to a quarter, with many certain that no one would come.

There continue to be two fund-raising dinners held each year, organized, and led by women, a chicken barbeque in July, and a ham supper in November. The current pastor claims one of her most outstanding achievements was the ham supper changing leadership without bloodshed. The quilting group meets weekly, along with a knitting and crocheting group that makes hats and mittens to gift them to every recipient of the food pantry in their Christmas basket. Other than one husband and wife knitting team, all participants are women.

A central value at MCPC is fellowship, and the women organize, bake, serve, and clean up after the coffee hour each week. The majority of the congregation stays after church to chat and share food.

A weekly women's jail ministry offers Bible study at the local jail, and MCPC does five Christmas Eve services at the jail for all inmates. Women lead the jail Bible studies. Five people usually help with the Christmas Eve services, and four are usually women.

MCPC is a small country church with a rich history, a vital ministry, and currently a strong female base. Traditions run deep in the church. Like many churches, change comes slowly; however, the congregation of MCPC is open to new ideas and willing to try new things. The church fire turned out to be one of the greatest blessings for MCPC. Since the fire, the church has renewed vitality and has grown substantially.

Despite having many female elders, there are still many women in the church who resist leadership roles. Watson writes, "While women have made inroads into leadership positions in the world today, culture, social norms, and gender-role stereotypes seem to restrict their impact

and ability to achieve the use of their power.”<sup>3</sup> Some women seem to prefer to stay in traditional female roles in the church and question whether it is "proper" for females to be in a leadership role. Some women present for counseling with issues related to domestic violence, self-esteem, and anger.

Watson suggests that some women must gain awareness of inhibiting factors that negate their ability to lead, influence, and develop relationships. They must learn to navigate distressing thoughts, feelings, and sensations of self and others accordingly. They must also build the capacity and competencies to employ the ability to use tools and strategies around and within them to become the women God intended them to become and to do the work God wants them to do.<sup>4</sup>

Scott believes that God is working through Christian women, and the first challenge is to think you are a leader. It is crucial to believe that one has gifts, and that God wants to use their life as a reasonable force. Scott claims women must dream big dreams, believe they can make a difference, and that fighting to overcome obstacles and facing challenges is worthwhile.<sup>5</sup>

How did the women of MCPC perceive God? Sosin and Thomas report, people with histories of insecure attachment, tend to perceive God as controlling, less accepting, nurturing, and distant, and these "gut-level" experiences of God are unconscious.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Nadine Watson, "Equipping Women to Become Christ's Servant Leaders in their Communities." Order No. 27542491, Faith International University, 2018. In PROQUESTMS ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/2312608905?accountid=12085>., 2.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>5</sup> Halee Gray Scott, *Dare Mighty Things: Mapping the Challenges of Leadership for Christian Women* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 15.

<sup>6</sup> Jacqueline L. Noffke, and Todd W. Hall. "Chapter 4. Attachment Psychotherapy and God Image." *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health* 9, no. 3-4 (2007), 63.



Buchanan offers, variables of parenting and perceptions of God seem to be particularly important for females. The development of God-concepts has found significant relationships between God's views and environmental influences, including religious education.<sup>7</sup>

### **Problem Presented**

The problem is some of the women in Mayfield Presbyterian Church seem to lack a clear biblical understanding of their position in the kingdom.

Some women in MCPC wonder where they fit in. They have been in the church for as long as they can remember. Many have relatives who were founding mothers and fathers of the church. Some of the women thought they were satisfied and happy serving coffee at fellowship hour or helping with the food pantry twice a month, but they were questioning who they were. Were they precious children of God or just a rib?

These women have read the Gospel stories of Jesus exalting women. They saw Mary sitting as a disciple at Jesus' feet. Yet still, they have also grown-up understanding Eve as the cause of original sin, a temptress rather than God's image-bearer. They were confused and longed for answers. Having heard so many conflicting messages about women and their role in the church, they struggled to figure out whether they were welcome at Jesus' feet or should stay in the kitchen.

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<sup>7</sup> Lynelle J. Buchanan, "Perceptions of God and Father among Female, Young Adult Protestants and Non-Protestants." Order No. 10270608, Northcentral University, 2016. In PROQUESTMS ProQuest Central; ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fdocview%2F1906683674%3Faccountid%3D12085>

Taylor writes that her religious language clearly speaks of what it means to be authentically human. In Christian terms, it means to be made in the image of God, not just one person, but everyone.<sup>8</sup> Some women at MCPC do not seem to be as clear in their understanding.

MCPC has 169 members. Like many churches, it has its share of married, divorced, and single people, along with many of the problems seen in most churches, broken relationships, domestic violence, mental illness, addictions, poverty, and abundance.

MCPC's mission states, "It is the mission of Mayfield Central Presbyterian Church to unite people of our congregation and community by providing them with worship, spiritual nurture, and sharing the Lord's gospel and love. Our goal is to serve as disciples being faithful to God."

The call of Jesus' commission included women. The call is to "make disciples of all nations," as seen in (Matt. 28:19).<sup>9</sup> Does this mean that Jesus wanted women to be disciples, to take leadership roles in the church, and even to preach the word of God? The Bible is clear that many women supported and followed Jesus. Johnson writes that although women continue to engage in ministry in more significant numbers, their presence and activity continues to be an unresolved issue in terms of ecclesial structure and meaning.<sup>10</sup> Johnson continues, women have always been ministering in the church in undervalued, unofficial, and irreplaceable ways.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Barbara Brown Taylor, *Holy Envy: Finding God in the Faith of Others First edition*. (New York, NY: HarperOne, an imprint of HarperCollinsPublishers, 2019), 193.

<sup>9</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced employ the *New Revised Standard Version* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1989).

<sup>10</sup> Elizabeth A. Johnson, "'Your One Wild and Precious Life': Women on the Road of Ministry." *Theological Studies* 80, no. 1 (March 2019), 202.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.

The history of MCPC suggests that traditionally it is a male-led church, although it is changing, and change is slow. Many women are hesitant to step out of traditional roles, to explore and accept leadership positions, and to embrace their inheritance as precious children of God, created in God's image.

MCPC encourages the community of believers to participate in Bible study courses to become stronger disciples. Ongoing education and training are essential to building church structure, using individual spiritual gifts for leadership positions, and making them aware that the body works in unity.

Previous Bible studies with women in the church raised the following questions, "Who am I in Christ?" "Who are we in Christ?" "Where do I fit in?" and "What does God want me to be and do?" Some women struggled with the above questions, and those struggles often affected multiple areas of their lives, causing them distress and confusion. Often, these women presented for counseling.

Sosin and Thomas write, it is not easy to appraise a counselee's experience of God because there is a vast difference between what one intellectually knows about God and what one experiences.<sup>12</sup> Christian counselors need tools to help female counselees deal with confusion about God, discipleship, and their role in the kingdom.

Although there are numerous Bible studies designed for women, this author has not seen any that address the issue of women's identity in Jesus Christ and their place in the kingdom of God from an egalitarian point of view.

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<sup>12</sup> Lisa Sosin and John C. Thomas, John. *Therapeutic Expedition: Equipping the Christian Counselor for the Journey*. (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2011). Accessed June 9, 2020. ProQuest Ebook Central, 361.

This research project explored how women understand God, their identity as followers of Jesus Christ, and how they live out their faith in their identity. Using the data collected, the researcher plans to create a curriculum and gauge its effectiveness with the women of MCPC.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this DMIN research was to create a curriculum based on the research data collected to help the women of MCPC understand their position in God's kingdom. Some women in Mayfield Presbyterian Church participate in Bible studies, studying God's word, discussing contemporary issues, and growing in spiritual maturity and faith. Yet, other women struggle with what is and is not appropriate in their role as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Some women read (Eph. 5:21-23) as a roadblock. "Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Savior."

A scripturally based curriculum explaining what it means to be created in God's image and how that knowledge could change lives and strengthen ministry as disciples of Jesus Christ could be a complimentary educational resource as well as a resource for counseling these women. Exploring other scriptures used for centuries to tell women their "place" in the kingdom and studying them as resources instead of roadblocks may help these women see God's word differently.

This curriculum will be a companion piece to Frederick's men's curriculum. Like Frederick, this author will also focus on the way Jesus engages in relationships. It will also present particular passages by asking the following questions: Who are the text's primary characters? What is the relationship that Jesus has with each of the primary characters of the text? What are

the problems that Jesus confronts in the text? What does Jesus communicate about his values of men, women, and children in the text? What are the relationship dynamics (both overt behaviors and subtle attitudes) that Jesus teaches in the text? What issues of behaviors in our lives or society are similar to what Jesus criticizes in scripture? How do the issues revealed in this text apply to the way we live our lives? How do the issues revealed in this text apply to the way we engage in our relationships? How does this text challenge our growth as disciples of Jesus Christ?<sup>13</sup>

Using a similar format allows for the use of these curriculums simultaneously with both men and women separately and with couples in groups. Participating in a study using this curriculum will hopefully enable the women of MCPC to use their spiritual gifts and understand that they are precious children of God, invaluable as disciples in the building of the body of Christ.

### **Basic Assumptions**

Leedy and Ormrod posit that without basic assumptions, a research problem itself could not exist.<sup>14</sup> A thorough history of MCPC revealed a small country church where the value of tradition runs high.

There were several basic assumptions made in this thesis. The first assumption was that the women of MCPC would allow the pastor to research a DMIN thesis, interview them in privacy, and participate in the project with confidence. The women would fully understand the

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<sup>13</sup> Frederick, Kevin E., *Men in the Mirror: Orienting Our Lives Toward a Christ-Centered Masculinity*. Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Health, Education, and Welfare Association/Presbyterians Against Domestic Violence Network, 2014, 7.

<sup>14</sup> Paul D. Leedy and Jeanne Ellis Ormrod. *Practical Research: Planning and Design Tenth edition*. Boston, MA: Pearson, 2016, 62.

questions asked in the study and would answer honestly because the author strictly honored anonymity and confidentiality. The women would also understand they were volunteers who could withdraw from the study at any time and with no ramifications.

The second assumption was that there is a problem with some women in MCPC and their identifying as God's precious children. These women experienced some confusion about their place in the kingdom, which caused them distress and anxiety in their lives.

The third assumption was that the pastor and the women in the congregation were willing to identify the problem and resolve it as a community of believers. This willingness would allow the pastor to determine when this type of issue may present again and to address the situation in the future before it disrupts the women.

Another assumption was that the pastor would gain more insight into the thinking and lives of the women participating and, as a result, would be able to lead the women of MCPC more effectively.

All scripture, unless otherwise noted, was taken from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

### **Definitions**

Imago Dei - Merrill defines Imago Dei in classical Christian theology as the idea that humankind, because of creation and mandate, corresponds somehow to the creator. There are many ways of interpreting correspondence that range from sharing of characteristics and attributes, including the physical realm, to a relationship in which humankind does not resemble

God in any way but represents him. The fundamental question is whether humanity is like God, or does it only serve God as God's agent?<sup>15</sup>

Anderson reports Imago Dei means so much more. Each life has purpose and meaning because God made humans like God's self, one's life has intrinsic value because of who God is, and each person's life is sacred because God stamps His identity onto each person.<sup>16</sup>

Stained glass ceiling refers to the obstacle for women who seek to gain a role within church leadership.<sup>17</sup> Stained glass ceiling occurs when a promotion for a female clergy or worker in the church is possible, but discrimination prevents it. The term's use is metaphorical and indicates that women tend not to rise above a certain level of power and authority within church hierarchies.

### **Limitations**

This researcher was aware of limitations as she entered the process. Internal and external factors can interfere with both the project and the results. Stating that there are limitations in almost everything one does, Simon explains that limitations are the study's potential weaknesses and are not under the researcher's control.<sup>18</sup> The most significant limitation in this study was the fact that the participants were mainly European American, Christian adult women. Therefore, this study's findings cannot be generalized across samples of diverse ethnicity, age, and other

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<sup>15</sup> Merrill, E. H. "Image of God." In *The IVP Bible Dictionary Series: Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, edited by David W. Baker, and T. Desmond Alexander. InterVarsity Press, 2002.

<sup>16</sup> Hannah Anderson, *Made for More: An Invitation to Live in God's Image* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 32.

<sup>17</sup> J. Rois, D. Rixon, and A. Faseruk, "Organizational perspectives on stained glass ceilings for female bishops in the Anglican Communion: A case study of the Church of England" (2013), 23.

<sup>18</sup> Marilyn Simon, *Dissertation and Scholarly Research: Recipe for Success*, (Seattle, WA: Dissertation Success, LLC., 2011)

religious affiliations. There should be further research to investigate whether a similar religious specific curriculum designed for women might be similarly effective. Further research should also investigate if women of diverse ethnicity answering the same surveys and interview questions would produce similar results.

Additionally, participants of this project were all members or friends of MCPC. Although each woman was unique, the women shared a common church culture, which could have affected the participants' responses and the results. Future research should include other Presbyterian churches, and other Protestant denominations. Future research in other churches, and even internationally, would add to this study's findings, generalizability, and application.

The women who chose to participate in the study may not have represented a random sample of MCPC women. Because MCPC is a small church, the pastor knows most of the participants well, and some consider her a friend, which could have limited the responses. Sensing posits an inherent limitation in qualitative studies linked to the relationship between the researcher and participants; the distance between the participant and the researcher enhances the responses' reliability.<sup>19</sup>

Participants also had the opportunity to leave the study for various reasons that may have nothing to do with the topic or study.

This study focused on a small church leadership model and ministry, where there is only one paid staff, the pastor. These principles could be transferrable to a larger, multi-staff model with possible modifications. This project explored a single staff, under 200-member church, which is the norm for most North American congregations today.

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<sup>19</sup> Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses*. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2011), 21.



A final limitation of this project is that fact that the research took place during the COVID19 global pandemic. The pandemic may have influenced how many women participated, why some women chose not to participate, and could possibly have influenced how the women responded to the questionnaire, survey and interview questions.

### **Delimitations**

Sensing writes that delimitations arbitrarily narrow the scope of the researcher's project. To narrow the scope, one must set boundaries.<sup>20</sup> The researcher invited all the women in MCPC to participate in this study. Not all women chose to do so. Some women were secure in their identity as women and as disciples of Jesus Christ. These women seemed to be clear about their place in the kingdom and the church. MCPC is a small church, and there was a limited pool of participants.

Delimitations in this project were essential because of the activity taking place in the church and the women's lives. Within the church, many distractions could assume priority over this project's primary purpose, to research women's understandings of their place in the kingdom and how a curriculum might address the problem. With the church not having a formal structure or leadership other than the pastor, it was easy to disrupt the activities.

MCPC encourages the community of believers to participate in Bible study courses to become stronger disciples. Ongoing education and training are essential to building church structure, using individual spiritual gifts for leadership positions, and making them aware of how the body works in unity.

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<sup>20</sup> Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: a Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses*, 20.

The pastor also assured the participants that the women's identities would remain anonymous and unrecognizable in the final drafts. This not only included the anonymity of names, but also the avoidance of any detailed description of specific church members that could lead to their identification.

### **Thesis Statement**

If the women at Mayfield Central Presbyterian Church understand their identity as precious children of God and their roles as disciples of Jesus Christ, they may be more stable in their understanding of what it means to live in the kingdom.

The Bible shows that God created man and woman in His image and planned for Adam and Eve to have dominion over creations, living in peace and harmony with each other. God created man and woman to be in close relationship with Him and to live into the unique potential that He places in each person. God desires each person to flourish and grow.

Jesus Christ repeated these messages, calling women and men to deny themselves, take up the cross, and follow him.

It is a goal that the development of a scripturally based curriculum explaining and demonstrating women are created in the image of God to live and serve Jesus Christ as beloved disciples will benefit the women of Mayfield Presbyterian Church and hopefully others.

The goal of this project is that the development of a scripturally based curriculum that explains and demonstrates that women are created in the image of God will benefit the women of Mayfield Presbyterian Church and hopefully others.

## Chapter 2

### Conceptual Framework

Chapter two presents the theoretical basis for developing a curriculum for women exploring and clarifying their role as disciples made in the image of God in the kingdom. This chapter also reviews a curriculum for men entitled, "Men in the Mirror: Orienting Our Live Toward a Christ-Centered Masculinity," by the Rev. Dr. Kevin E. Frederick. The curriculum resulting from this research will hopefully be a companion curriculum to Frederick's curriculum.

### Literature Review

#### Imago Dei

Made in the image of God, what does it mean? Sosin and Thomas say, "Being created in God's image is the basis of our meaning."<sup>21</sup> Taylor believes that being authentically human means God creates one in God's image, not just oneself, but everyone.<sup>22</sup> Watson suggests that man in God's image speaks to the outer part of man.<sup>23</sup> Watson's goal was to demonstrate that human beings, made in God's image, have tripartite qualities that enable them to live, move, and have their being.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Lisa Sosin and John C. Thomas, John. *Therapeutic Expedition: Equipping the Christian Counselor for the Journey* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2011). Accessed June 9, 2020. ProQuest Ebook Central, 25.

<sup>22</sup> Barbara Brown Taylor, *Holy Envy: Finding God in the Faith of Others* First edition (New York, NY: Harper One, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, 2019), 193.

<sup>23</sup> Nadine Watson, "Equipping Women to Become Christ's Servant Leaders in their communities." Order No. 27542491, Faith International University, 2018. In PROQUESTMS ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, 14. <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/2312608905?accountid=12085>.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

Humankind are tri-partite beings consisting of body, soul, and spirit. The body is the physical creation that allows one to relate to this world and other people in this world. The soul contains the realm of emotions and the will, as well as the conscious and subconscious minds. The soul is what gives one personality, self-awareness, rationality, and feeling. It is with one's spirit that one worships and relates to God.

Burden et al. acclaim God's intentions toward women as both humbling and awe-inspiring. God creates women in the Imago Dei, and so something about them reveals something about the creator. The authors ponder how a woman, living when Genesis was written, and hearing the words read, would have responded given that only ruling kings are the image of a deity in the ancient Near East. Women resemble God and represent God in the world.<sup>25</sup>

Burden et al. continue, women have a responsibility, not a role, together with Adam. Men and women have broad, sweeping instructions to represent God by using, caring for, and creatively overseeing God's world. Making a woman in God's image says something strong and wonderful about every woman in the world, as well as saying something fascinating about her Creator. One can recognize God in both male and female characteristics because God transcends the categories humans understand.<sup>26</sup>

Reiss infers that man in God's image is a physical, bodily image and the Midrashic idea is that God creates man in God's image and angels.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Suzanne Burden et al., *Reclaiming Eve: The Identity and Calling of Women in the Kingdom of God* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press), 2015.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 25-26.

<sup>27</sup> Moshe Reiss, "Adam: created in the image and likeness of God." *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 39, no. 3 (2011): 181. *Gale Academic OneFile* (accessed June 15, 2020). 181. [https://link-gale-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/apps/doc/A259381109/AONE?u=vic\\_liberty&sid=AONE&xid=5a5944a8..](https://link-gale-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/apps/doc/A259381109/AONE?u=vic_liberty&sid=AONE&xid=5a5944a8..)

Burden et al. claim that many women have a faulty perception of the image of God in women. Taught that women were an afterthought, and, at best, only received half of the image of God, women came to believe they are not as valuable to God as men.<sup>28</sup>

Anderson says Imago Dei means so much more. Each life has purpose and meaning because God made humans like Himself. One's life has intrinsic value because of who God is, and each person's life is sacred because He stamps His identity onto each person.<sup>29</sup>

God created women in His image to be what He wants them to do and to be. Women also reflect and represent God, proclaiming what He is like by doing what He does, and God makes women for glory.<sup>30</sup> Anderson believes the paradox of personal identity is that once women accept they are not what they should be, it is then women finally can become what they could be.<sup>31</sup> At its root, Imago Dei's knowledge is the capacity to wonder and to look for God's fingerprint everywhere and to search for God with childlike curiosity, wide-eyed, and eager to discover who God is and God's creation.<sup>32</sup>

Anderson continues, entire ministries are often shaped by our identities, separating ourselves by age, theology, and worship style and one is defined not by categories but by being made in the image of God. One's ultimate identity is to reflect and represent God on this earth.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Suzanne Burden et al., *Reclaiming Eve: The Identity and Calling of Women in the Kingdom of God*, 64.

<sup>29</sup> Hannah Anderson, *Made for More: An Invitation to Live in God's Image* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 32.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-14.

Research shows one often fails to reflect God's love by loving the wrong things or loving the right things in the wrong way.<sup>34</sup>

Reminding readers of the contrasting side, Frederick writes that fundamentalist Christianity teaches that only the male reflects God's actual image.<sup>35</sup> Going back to the fourth century, Augustine introduces a form of hierarchy into gender relationships surmising that because males are the same gender as Jesus Christ, they are the godlier gender. Some authors use scriptures to highlight Augustine's point. Frederick points out that it has only been in the past fifty years that our culture and mainline religions display an understanding of women as being created equal in God's image.<sup>36</sup>

There are still significant gaps in the literature about women also being created in God's image, and more research is necessary for this area. It is no surprise that some women are confused about their identity in Christ. Were they ordained to be equal to man, made in God's image, or are they indeed less than their male counterparts? To begin to answer this question, one must look closely at the identity of men and women.

### Identity of Men and Women

Despite education, independence, and relationships, women have yet to answer the most basic questions about their identities and, ultimately, have little or no idea how to answer them. It is vital to know their mothers' history and grandmothers' identity struggles to understand why

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<sup>34</sup> Hannah Anderson, *Made for More: An Invitation to Live in God's Image*, 51.

<sup>35</sup> Kevin Frederick, "Men in the Mirror: Orienting Our Lives Toward a Christ-Centered Masculinity (Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Health, Education, and Welfare Association/Presbyterians Against Domestic Violence Network, 2014), 15.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

women struggle with identity issues.<sup>37</sup> Historically, women look to their husbands and children for their fundamental source of identity.<sup>38</sup> Martin and Stovall write, God creates man and woman in God's image. Although man was created first, this does not diminish the value of a woman. A woman was part of God's original plan and so establishes the ontological equality of the two. This ontological equality dispels any idea that one gender is superior to the other, by showing that men and women are equal in who and what they are.<sup>39</sup>

Gray suggests the failure to encourage women's giftedness and leadership abilities comes from the insufficiency of one's expectations. When trying to identify and promote female leaders, one cannot help what one cannot see, and one cannot see what one does not expect, and women learn to hide their abilities.<sup>40</sup>

Elliot would counter Paul's understanding of the mystical marriage bends gender one way, and one way only, there are male brides, but no female grooms. This thinking prevails in the emerging orthodox circles; however, it is not the only thinking.<sup>41</sup> Gnostic Christians believe everyone began as a bride and everyone had an equal shot at becoming a groom. Elliot asserts this egalitarian view is supported by an allegorical reading of the same texts that orthodoxy uses for the opposite purpose.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Hannah Anderson, *Made for More: An Invitation to Live in God's Image*, 18.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>39</sup> Jaye Martin and Terri Stovall, *Women Leading Women: The Biblical Model for the Church* (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2009), 14.

<sup>40</sup> Halee Gray Scott, *Dare Mighty Things: Mapping the Challenges of Leadership for Christian Women* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 47-50.

<sup>41</sup> Elliott, Dyan. *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell: Metaphor and Embodiment in the Lives of Pious Women* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012) Accessed May 27, 2020. [www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt3fhpmr.2](http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt3fhpmr.2), 23.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

Anderson would counter that both men and women are equal image-bearers, and each is different from the other and therefore dependent on the other. Revealing God's nature through both men and women, God's identity lives in both. While scripture records that God formed woman in direct response to the fact that man was alone, this is not loneliness in the commonly understood manner. Instead, it is a deep, persistent sense of isolation and incompleteness that reaches every aspect of man's identity and directly impedes man's ability to live in *Imago Dei*.<sup>43</sup>

Proclaiming detailed exegetical support for why the Bible gives abiding sanction to an eldership of spiritual men, Piper and Grudem cite 1 Timothy 2:11–15; and 1 Corinthians 11:2–16; 14:34–36 as relating directly to men's leadership in the church. They assert the biblical connection between family and church strongly suggests the husband's headship at home, indicating the primary leadership of spiritual men in the church.<sup>44</sup>

Piper and Grudem argue the Bible teaches that God intends the relationship between husband and wife to portray the relationship between Christ and his church and write that husbands are to model Christ's loving, sacrificial leadership, and wives are to model the glad submission offered freely by the church. The authors clarify submission as a wife's divine calling to honor and affirm her husband's leadership and help carry it through according to her gifts.<sup>45</sup>

Burden et al. assert that God decided it was not good for man to be alone and so created an Ezer suitable for him. God could have, but did not, use the Hebrew word meaning “female

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<sup>43</sup> Hannah Anderson, *Made for More: An Invitation to Live in God's Image*, 37.

<sup>44</sup> John Piper and Wayne A. Grudem, *50 Crucial Questions: An Overview of Central Concerns about Manhood and Womanhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 21.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 21-22.



slave” or the Hebrew word meaning “wife.” Instead, He offered a strong term repeatedly describing how He comes through for people in times of desperate need.<sup>46</sup>

The mathematician, Euclid, said, “Two things that are equal to the same thing are equal to each other.” Burden et al. comment that God intends that man and woman be equal partners before God and one another.<sup>47</sup>

According to Burden et al., Eve was a strong helper before having sexual relations with Adam and before giving birth to children. The fact that God did not use the word for a wife when creating Eve sets women free to be the strong helpers and strong powers that God intends for them to be, whether single or married, mother or not.<sup>48</sup>

The authors continue, Matthew 5:48 reads, “Be perfect; therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” This verse has been troublesome to some women who find the idea of perfection crippling and yet understand the scripture as profound.<sup>49</sup> Humans all fall short of the glory of God yet striving for perfection can lead one to feeling like a failure or to continuing the quest. It reminds one that perfection is becoming all that God intended for one to be and reflecting Christ’s love to the world.

Watson argues that women are disciples or "scholars" as defined by the Easton Bible Dictionary because they followed Jesus and continued His stead. Since the beginning of creation, women are present throughout the Bible; and they also walked with and followed Jesus, even to the cross.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Suzanne Burden et al., *Reclaiming Eve: The Identity and Calling of Women in the Kingdom of God*, 29.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, 64.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>50</sup> Nadine Watson, "Equipping Women to Become Christ's Servant Leaders in their Communities," 19.

There is a need for women in leadership roles in the church. Barna's research reveals that women are not honest about their struggles with their faith.<sup>51</sup> Survey results were conflicting because while women overwhelmingly report experiencing joy and finding fulfillment in their faith, this finding conflicts with other surveys revealing the same women experience depression, grief, and have personal issues.

Kinnaman admits this conflict in survey results makes it difficult to meet women's needs. Kinnaman adds, "this current study shows that most women tend to offer one-dimensional, emotionally guarded responses about their spirituality. This is not because they are trying to be misleading; they simply don't know what is missing."<sup>52</sup>

While domesticity of the 1950s may have truncated women's identity in one respect, subsequent feminist thought chopped it off in another. As women find their identity as image-bearers of God, they must learn to live in a dependent communion with God.

Developing a sense of self that accepts the inclusion of traditional masculine qualities is essential to enhancing women's well-being. Although self-acceptance is not a cure for women, it enhances resilience and hardiness. Women will gain the most if they exceed gender self-acceptance and focus on self-acceptance as an individual.<sup>53</sup>

Frederick writes, males of all ages, in every society, hear and internalize various messages about the definition and "appropriate" expression of their masculinity. Messages such

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<sup>51</sup> Barna Research Group. "20 Years of Surveys Show Key Differences in the Faith of America's Men and Women". (Ventura, CA: The Barna Group, 2011). Retrieved from <https://www.barna.org/>

<sup>52</sup> D. Kinnaman, "Christian Women Today, Part 3 of 4: Women Give Themselves an Emotional and Spiritual Check-up. Ventura, CA: The Barna Group, 2012. Retrieved from <https://www.barna.org/>

<sup>53</sup> Michael E. Bernard, *The Strength of Self-Acceptance: Theory, Practice, and Research*. (New York, NY: Springer, Science and Business Media, 2013), 244.

as exercising patience and empathy toward others positively impact men's development and sense of identity, and other internalized messages can have destructive implications.<sup>54</sup>

Henry, Figueroa, and Miller write, identity begins to emerge when the mind considers self in relationship to others, the future, and the world together. At the same time, scripture teaches it is the inside activity that influences self-concept. A person will eventually merge who they are on the inside and the outside.<sup>55</sup>

Bessey offers that patriarchy is not God's dream for humanity, and Christ invites women to participate in the kingdom of God through redemptive movement toward equality and freedom. Both egalitarians and complementarians can treat the Bible as a weapon, and there are extremists and dogmatists on each side.<sup>56</sup>

Flying in the face of cultural expectations of his time, and even our own time, Jesus loves women, and treats them as equals to men, listening to them, not belittling them, honoring and challenging them as he teaches them. When women were almost silent and invisible, scripture affirmed and celebrated women as a part of Jesus' life and ministry, and women were there for it all.<sup>57</sup>

Jesus subverted the social norms of the way rabbis spoke to women, the rich and powerful, the despised, the prostitute, the adulteress, the demon-possessed, and the mentally ill

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<sup>54</sup> Frederick, Kevin E. *Men in the Mirror: Orienting Our Lives Toward a Christ-Centered Masculinity*. Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Health, Education, and Welfare Association/Presbyterians Against Domestic Violence Network, 2014, 3.

<sup>55</sup> Philip J. Henry, Lori Marie Figueroa, and Daniel R. Miller, *The Christian Therapist's Notebook* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2007), 253.

<sup>56</sup> Sarah Bessey, *Jesus Feminist: An Invitation to Revisit the Bible's View of Women* (New York, NY: Howard Books, 2013), 14-15.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

and spoke directly to them instead of through the man. Seven times, the New Testament describes women using the Greek verb *diakoneo*, to minister or to serve.

Mary Magdalene is the first witness and preacher of the resurrection, charged to go, tell, and proclaim Christ is risen indeed. Bessey argues that the lack of a woman in the twelve disciples is not a precedent for exclusion or prescriptive, any more than the choice of twelve Jewish men excluding gentiles from leadership.<sup>58</sup>

### Gender Roles

Miville explains that gender roles express one's place or position in the larger society in relation to traditional beliefs about masculinity and femininity. They reflect qualities of appearance, mannerisms, personality traits, and expectations regarding domestic and work roles.<sup>59</sup>

Traits traditionally associated with masculinity are action, competition, and instrumentality. Similarly, traits associated with femininity are passivity, cooperativeness, and expressiveness. Since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, researchers and anthropologists have found many societies and cultures no longer adhere to these kinds of roles.<sup>60</sup> Scholars point out that gender roles often instill social status and differential access to power and resources, resulting in men being dominant or superior and women being submissive or inferior.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Sarah Bessey, *Jesus Feminist: An Invitation to Revisit the Bible's View of Women*, 21-22.

<sup>59</sup> Marie L. Miville, *Multicultural Gender Roles Applications for Mental Health and Education* (Hoboken, N.J: Wiley, 2013), 2-3.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

Strictly holding on to stereotypes harms both men and women, including psychological theory and research conducted on gender roles.<sup>62</sup> The impact can be observed in adolescence when girls become passive, waiting to have their identity defined by the men they marry, while boys actively make their way to adulthood.<sup>63</sup>

Today, gender roles are not distinct, resulting in both men and women juggling multiple roles like homemaker, parent, partner, worker, caregiver, and volunteer. It appears for both men and women, the more roles a person has, the more it improves their well-being.<sup>64</sup> In his research, Bernard found that in juggling multiple roles, women had lower self-acceptance than men.<sup>65</sup>

Martin and Stovall reflect what a woman does directs from who she is, created from the man and for the man. God gives men and women roles and jobs to do, flowing directly from who they are, and both fulfill their divine purposes when living like people, glorifying God and revealing God to the world.<sup>66</sup>

Research on women's leadership shows gender-role stereotypes impact women's behavior both socially and as leaders despite strong evidence that stereotypes do not accurately reflect men and women's realities. These gender-role stereotypes have deep roots in one's culture, and one assumes them to be true.<sup>67</sup> Dzubinski explains, typically, stereotypes assign agentic, task-oriented behaviors like assertiveness, dominance, competence, and authoritativeness to men.

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<sup>62</sup> Marie L. Miville, *Multicultural Gender Roles Applications for Mental Health and Education*, 4.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>64</sup> Michael E. Bernard, *The Strength of Self-Acceptance: Theory, Practice, and Research*, 237.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 237.

<sup>66</sup> Jaye Martin and Terri Stovall, *Women Leading Women: The Biblical Model for the Church*, 14.

<sup>67</sup> Leanne M. Dzubinski, "Taking on Power: Women Leaders in Evangelical Mission Organizations," *Missiology. An International Review* 44, no. 3 (2015): 281-295. DOI: 10.1177/0091829615583732 mis.sagepub.com, 282.

Communal, relational behaviors, including being warm, supportive, kind, and helpful are assigned to women. Society values agentic behavior in a leader more than communal behavior.<sup>68</sup>

When reading the Bible, one can see that God does not use perfect women to carry out God's plan; instead, using women who recognize God as the one true, living God. Martin and Stovall assert that Tamar, Rahab, and Bathsheba understood that they were created in God's image. Although some consider women inferior, it does not mean that those who do are obeying the scripture's commands. It also does not mean women are damaged or unusable to God.<sup>69</sup>

Martin and Stovall affirm that Jesus saw women as individuals and persons rather than objects to be owned and acknowledge this fact was a foreign idea to the culture of the time. Jesus saw sex and gender as a part of, but not the whole of a woman. Moreover, Jesus held women accountable for their actions. At a time when the head of the house determined the family's faith, Jesus confronts women individually and challenges them to make their own faith decision.<sup>70</sup>

For over a century, gender essentialism, the idea that men and women are fundamentally different based on biology, continues to be a vital aspect of the evangelical tradition. Feminist scholars deconstruct the notion of gender essentialism to show that gender is constructed, not biologically determined.<sup>71</sup>

The church is known to be inclusive and manifests the kingdom through the love and acceptance of all its members, despite any natural hostility people have toward one another. Barnewall writes that inclusion is God taking groups separated by natural hostility and suspicion

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<sup>68</sup> Leanne M. Dzubinski, "Taking on Power: Women Leaders in Evangelical Mission Organizations," 282.

<sup>69</sup> Jaye Martin and Terri Stovall, *Women Leading Women: The Biblical Model for the Church*, 16.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 283.

and uniting them as one body and one temple whose members love one another as empowered by the Holy Spirit. It gives up the rights that provide the critical component for promoting cohesion and intimacy among the members.<sup>72</sup>

The Presbyterian Church of the United States of America (PCUSA) celebrates sixty-four years of ordaining women. Two early female ministers of the word and sacrament reflect on their challenges and struggles in early ministry, including the need to add an "S" to the printed "He" on the certificate and having "her" typed over "him" on an IBM Selectric typewriter. Commissioning women as deacons began in 1935 and allowing women to preach in 1949.<sup>73</sup>

Tunheim and DuChene proclaim that although more than 50% of the Lutheran church population is women, their gender and voices are not being represented or heard at the highest levels of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).<sup>74</sup> Ordaining women to ministry in 1970, the ELCA has been slow to ordain a woman to the bishop of a synod.

Questioning ordination and voting to allow it in 1938, the Lutheran Church ordained the first woman a quarter-century later. Attempting to bridge the gender gap of leadership in the church, Tunheim and DuChene report increasing women's participation in both scholarship and leadership in the church.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Michelle Lee-Barnewall, *Neither Complementarian nor Egalitarian: A Kingdom Corrective to the Evangelical Gender Debate* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2016), 101.

<sup>73</sup> Rhaskell Hunter, "Remembering Six Decades of Pioneering Pastors," *Presbyterian News*, Presbyterian Church (USA), Louisville, KY, May 24, 2016, <https://www.pcusa.org/news/2016/5/24/pcusa-celebrates-60-years-womens-ordination/>

<sup>74</sup> Katherine A. Tunheim, and Mary Kay DuChene. "The Professional Journeys and Experiences in Leadership of Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Women Bishops." *Advances in Developing Human Resources* 18, no. 2 (May 2016), 204. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1523422316641896>.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.

Frederick tackled many traditional gender-roles presenting other options for men trying to live Christ-centered lives. Highlighting a traditional gender stereotype such as men having an overinflated sense of the importance of their work, Frederick explains that this perception discounts interpersonal relationships. The curriculum helps men to contemplate gender roles relative to their relationship with their partner or spouse.<sup>76</sup>

### Counseling Implications

Many women struggle with self-esteem, self-concept, self-worth, body image, and feelings of shame, guilt, and anger. Some women present feeling hopeless and powerless. Some women experience confusion about their role in life, in the church's life, and who they are as children of God. Grappling with these problems, women often present for counseling. Sosin and Thomas write that what a person knows about God cannot supersede what they experience and feel on the inside.<sup>77</sup>

Sosin and Thomas report that Christian counselees are often puzzled by intermittent feelings of terror, shame, anger, and guilt, and worry that their "lack of faith" is displeasing to God. The authors assure this confusion makes sense when looked at from the bio-psycho-social-spiritual ramifications of their early developmental experiences, their trauma history, temperament, processing styles, constitution, and the influences of a sinful world.<sup>78</sup>

Sosin and Thomas suggest counselors should help believers understand their internal experiences and provide hope for healing, combining the therapeutic relationship with God's

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<sup>76</sup> Kevin Frederick, "Men in the Mirror: Orienting Our Lives Toward a Christ-Centered Masculinity, 20.

<sup>77</sup> Lisa Sosin and John C. Thomas, John. *Therapeutic Expedition: Equipping the Christian Counselor for the Journey*, 359.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 359.



unfailing love.<sup>79</sup> The most critical attribute of any relationship is love, which involves accepting people for who they are, even with their choices or actions. Sosin and Thomas encourage counselors to be grace-filled, non-judgmental, accepting, filtered with humility and compassion, and view counselees as God would see them.<sup>80</sup>

Wright offers low self-concept and a feeling of lack of worth are at the heart of many people's problems.<sup>81</sup> A person must choose to remain the same or to change and grow, and one of the many goals of counseling is to help a person in need to take and accept responsibility for their life and well-being.<sup>82</sup>

Clinton and Hawkins see Christian counseling as a form of discipleship designed to help free people to experience God's pardon, purpose, and power to become wholly devoted disciples of Jesus Christ.<sup>83</sup> The problems people suffer have many layers of causation and impact, and the counselor's goal is to help people possess their souls.<sup>84</sup>

People need resources and motivation to put off old patterns of behavior and put on new, healthy ones pleasing to God. People need a heart-changing, life-transforming, genuine encounter with Jesus Christ.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Lisa Sosin and John C. Thomas, John. *Therapeutic Expedition: Equipping the Christian Counselor for the Journey*, 359.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>81</sup> Norman H. Wright, *The Complete Guide to Crisis & Trauma Counseling: What To Do and Say When it Matters Most* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2011), 19.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>83</sup> T. Clinton & R. Hawkins, *The New Christian Counselor: A Fresh Biblical & Transformational Approach*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Harvest House, 2015), 31.+

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

Believing counselors play an important role in challenging, correcting, and replacing old patterns, Clinton and Hawkins remind counselors that unhealed wounds are time bombs waiting to explode.<sup>86</sup> Counselors have the unspeakable privilege of stepping into a client's life as God's representative and ambassador in times of desperate need.<sup>87</sup>

Hope anchors our souls to the assurance of God's promises regardless of one's circumstances. Many counselees seek help because they do not have hope, so it is essential to help them experience hope as an integral part of the counseling process.<sup>88</sup> Clinton and Hawkins highlight research demonstrating the value of teaching and imparting resilience, assisting clients in bouncing back from adversity, and dealing with wounds from their past. Resilience aids counselees in developing new thoughts, behaviors, and actions.<sup>89</sup>

Henry, Figueroa, and Miller present helpful activities for use with counselees.<sup>90</sup> Many of the ideas and activities can be adapted and are useful to include in a curriculum designed for women struggling to find their place in the kingdom.

### Complementary Curriculum

Frederick's work in the field of domestic violence led to the creation of this curriculum. Men throughout the world hear and internalize mixed messages regarding masculinity. These

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<sup>86</sup> T. Clinton & R. Hawkins, *The New Christian Counselor: A Fresh Biblical & Transformational Approach*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Harvest House, 2015), 162.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>88</sup> Timothy E. Clinton and Ronald E. Hawkins, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Christian Counseling*, (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2012), 154.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

<sup>90</sup> Philip J. Henry, Lori Marie Figueroa, and Daniel R. Miller, *The Christian Therapist's Notebook* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2007) 38, 51-55, 64-65, 132, 191-194, 241, 253-258, 320-321.

messages can have both positive and negative impacts on men's development and sense of identity and can be confusing and contradictory.

Frederick created a thirteen session Christian curriculum believing the church provides men and boys with the opportunity to explore healthy relationships. Churches have a communal set of values and an ongoing tie that binds a faith community together and affords them the unique opportunity to reach out to men in a constructive, non-judgmental way, exploring conflicting messages about masculinity.<sup>91</sup> The curriculum is grounded in the authority of scripture, and in the theological doctrine that Jesus Christ is fully human and fully divine, and encourages the centering of men's identities on the model of Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 13:9-13, presents the metaphor of a mirror in describing how human beings view their lives. Frederick's curriculum uses this metaphor of a mirror to examine the often conflicting and varied messages about masculinity. It proposes, by studying the life and humanity of Jesus Christ, men have a mirror to evaluate their interpersonal skills and orientation to life.<sup>92</sup>

The mirror Paul refers to represents all humanity; however, there is a literature gap about women made in God's image. Although women also struggle with conflicting and varied messages about their femininity, and there is a plethora of research about women and self-esteem, self-concept, self-image, self-worth, shame, and guilt, rarely does one read about the *Imago Dei* in women.

The basic premise behind Frederick's curriculum also applies to women. If one studies the life and humanity of Jesus Christ, women have a mirror to evaluate their interpersonal skills

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<sup>91</sup> Kevin Frederick, "Men in the Mirror: Orienting Our Lives Toward a Christ-Centered Masculinity, 4.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

and orientation to life. Using the same metaphor of a mirror, women can examine and explore their conflicting and varied messages about femininity and how they may or may not view themselves as precious children of God.

There is an implicit message that it is not appropriate for men to share private emotions in our society. There is little or no opportunity for them to examine the messages regarding their masculinity with other men.<sup>93</sup> Frederick offers a scripturally based curriculum exploring conflicting messages about masculinity and provides the church with a unique opportunity to reach out to men in a constructive and non-judgmental manner. The curriculum also offers an excellent opportunity to evangelize men to develop healthy, positive personal and spiritual maturity, accountability, and healthy relationship skills.<sup>94</sup>

According to Martin & Stovall, the programs that help meet women's needs include Bible studies, prayer, fellowship, mentoring, discipleship, and counseling. These programs are most effective if facilitated by women with training, specifically in ministry and administration in the church.<sup>95</sup>

Developing a similar curriculum to Frederick's, that is designed for women would be helpful. Using the two curriculums together in couple sessions could also be beneficial for pre-marital and marital counseling.

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<sup>93</sup> Kevin Frederick, "Men in the Mirror: Orienting Our Lives Toward a Christ-Centered Masculinity, 3.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>95</sup> Jaye Martin and Terri. Stovall. *Women Leading Women: The Biblical Model for the Church* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2008), 101.

## Theological Foundations

In the theological basis for this study, the researcher will provide a sound and systematic exegesis of critical scriptural passages related to this problem and provide a firm theological basis for this thesis. Several scriptures can be problematic for women concerning their place in the kingdom and who they are as disciples of Jesus Christ.

One must begin by establishing a biblical foundation for this study's setting, which is the church, in this case, Mayfield Central Presbyterian Church (MCPC). Matthew 16:18 gives the first mention by Jesus Christ of the church in the New Testament. The passage occurs immediately after Simon Peter makes his confession that Jesus is "the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16). Jesus responds that Simon is Peter (a small stone), and "on this rock"(Petra, a massive rock) "I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it." This scripture establishes that Jesus is the sole foundation for the church and is also the builder of the church (ekklesia = called out ones).

This study explores women as disciples of Christ equal to men. The first reference to woman appears in Genesis. God created humankind in his image, "in the image of God, he created them; male and female, he created them (Genesis 1:27)." Bailey identifies four texts significant to understanding that Jesus chose women as disciples. First, the word disciple in a feminine form (*mathetria*) describing Tabitha or Dorcas (Acts 9:36). Second, when Jesus' family is outside and wants to speak with him, and Jesus replies, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" And pointing to his disciples, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.' (Matthew 12:46-50). Bailey points out that one speaks to women only if they are present in the ancient Middle Eastern context, clearly indicating that the people in front of Jesus were both men and

women. The third is the remarkable fact that Jesus has women traveling with him. Fourth, in Luke 10:39, Luke states Mary “sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to what he was saying.” Bailey continues Paul describes himself being “brought up at the feet of Gamaliel.” Acts 22:3; and points out to “sit at the feet” of a rabbi means to become a disciple of the rabbi.<sup>96</sup>

Peppiatt offers that there is a plethora of male figures, masculine imagery, and language in the scriptures and questions where this reflects a God-ordained order or whether there is another message woven into this supposedly obvious message. She questions whether the Bible's patriarchal narratives are an endorsement of Biblical patriarchal structures of the church, home, and society. Or, whether it is possible that there are other narratives in the texts leading one to conclude that the Bible subverts these patriarchal structures and offers other ways of relating for men and women?<sup>97</sup>

One way to provide Biblical texts from a different view is to tell the women’s stories or tell the other stories from a woman’s perspective. Peppiatt claims this is an invaluable exercise for both male and female preachers. It is incumbent on all teachers, preachers, theologians, Bible study leaders, and youth and children’s workers to focus equally on men and women's stories.<sup>98</sup> This author believes that everyone needs to hear the stories of women in the Bible, and the ways God includes them in the big story. Hearing such stories allows the listener to see women in a different light and opens possibilities for listeners to imagine the compelling ways God used

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<sup>96</sup> Kenneth E. Bailey, “Women in the New Testament: A Middle Eastern Cultural View”, *Theology Matters* 6, no 1 (2000), 1-2.

<sup>97</sup> Lucy, Peppiatt, *Rediscovering Scripture’s Vision for Women: Fresh Perspectives on Disputed Texts* (Downers Grove: IL, InterVarsity Press, 2019), 11-12.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

women. Hearing these ancient stories also allows one to glimpse how God may be using women today.<sup>99</sup>

Bessey states, “People want black and white answers, but scripture is a rainbow arch across a stormy sky.”<sup>100</sup> The Bible is a grand story, not an indexed answer book, and is full of mystery, truth, wisdom, invitation, and a clear message of God’s love for God’s people. We are meant to wrestle with the Bible as Bessey offers, “until Jacob-like, you walk with a limp ever after and you receive the blessing of the Lord.”<sup>101</sup>

God refers to Godself as Ezer throughout the Old Testament; He uses the same word to name the first woman. The word that accompanies Ezer is *kenegdo*, usually translated as “helpmeet” or “suitable,” suggesting that is man’s assistant.

James argues focusing on the wife as the husband’s helper leads to the belief that God gives primary roles and responsibilities to men, and secondary, supporting roles to women, communicating that women are second-class citizens at home and in the church.<sup>102</sup>

Brueggemann states that the creator has a purpose and a will for creation, and creation is not a careless, accidental, or simple matter. Although not a significant stress of the text, sexuality is ordained by God as part of creation and good.<sup>103</sup> The commentary continues that the text provides no merit for any idea of masculinity or femininity or androgyny of God. Sexual

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<sup>99</sup> Lucy, Peppiatt, *Rediscovering Scripture’s Vision for Women: Fresh Perspectives on Disputed Texts*, 12.

<sup>100</sup> Sarah Bessey, *Jesus Feminist: An Invitation to Revisit the Bible’s View of Women*, 56.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>102</sup> Carolyn Custis James, *Half the Church*, 111.

<sup>103</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1982), 13.

metaphors are useful for speaking of God's mystery because humankind is an analogy of God's image.<sup>104</sup>

Peppiatt encourages those who believe in male headship read the Genesis 2 creation story. Peppiatt summarizes the story as Adam and not Eve is made first and is preeminent. Adam, not Eve, is given commands by God regarding the tree of good and evil knowledge, indicating he is the head or leader. The woman is made from the man and is therefore dependent on the man. Adam names Eve, which reads as a sign that Adam has authority over her. Women are to be man's "helper." Eve sins first. Those who read the text this way argue that the man's preeminence and precedence are seen in this creation story and lay the foundation for man to take the role of the head and one in authority over the woman and the family.<sup>105</sup>

It is noteworthy that of all the creatures of God's eight creative acts, God speaks directly only to human creatures. In Genesis 1:28, God speaks to the human creatures, and in verse 29, God calls man and woman "you." Humankind has a different, intimate relationship with the Creator. These creatures are the ones to whom God has made a remarkable, powerful commitment (by speaking) and to whom total free will has been granted (in responding).<sup>106</sup>

Genesis 1:27, speaking of humankind as singular (he created him) and as plural (he created them), makes an important affirmation. While humanity is a singular entity, it is also a community, and God is mirrored not as an individual but as a community in this affirmation.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 33-34.

<sup>105</sup> Lucy, Peppiatt, *Rediscovering Scripture's Vision for Women: Fresh Perspectives on Disputed Texts*, 45.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 34.



Peppiatt records there are three creation stories in the Bible. The first shows humanity in the image and likeness of God. The second shows humans come from the dust of the earth. The woman comes from man and is the flesh of his flesh. The third shows humanity is reborn through a Savior, born of a woman and flesh of her flesh.<sup>108</sup>

There are two main views of women's roles in the Bible, egalitarian and complementarian. The egalitarian theory proposes God creates men and women equally. In contrast, the complementarian view espouses God makes men and women in God's image, but God gives men and women different roles to fulfill.

Barnewall states there are two main books that describe the differences of views: Piper and Grudem's *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* from a complementarian point of view and Pierce and Groothius' egalitarian response, *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*. Both books illustrate how the evangelical gender debate is a choice between two sides and highlights the specific questions where battle lines are drawn.<sup>109</sup>

Barnewall suggests one suspends the need to address practical questions to reexamine scripture without predetermined goals. If one presents the questions as a starting point, one can miss the larger picture and do more harm in the long run. The focus on leadership, authority, equality, and rights leads to yes or no answers that do not prompt deeper questioning.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>109</sup> Michelle Lee-Barnewall, *Neither Complementarian nor Egalitarian: A Kingdom Corrective to the Evangelical Gender Debate*, 2.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 13.

Brueggemann's comments support the egalitarian perspective that God created male and female equal in all respects. Equally made in God's image (ontological equality), and both have the responsibility to rule over God's creation (functional equality).

Piper presents a complementarian exegesis of Genesis 1, claiming we cannot understand the logic of God's decision to describe the human race as "man" unless it serves against a backdrop of male headship. The burden of Genesis 1:26-28 states Piper is male-female equality, since God did not name the human race "woman," anticipating the male headship, which Piper claims is presented in Genesis chapter 2.<sup>111</sup>

The second creation story states that it is not good to be alone (2:18), and other creatures will not do (2:19-20). Moving systematically from not God, to not alone, to not other creatures, the text shows that none of the known elements will suffice. The well-being of man requires a fresh, new creative act of God. Brueggemann suggests the emergence of the woman is as stunning and unpredictable as the surprising emergence of man. Male and female belong together, and woman, like man, is also God's free creation.<sup>112</sup>

Complementarians use this narrative to justify women's subordination, stating woman is the temptress of man and is a copy of man but not equal. Brueggemann argues an egalitarian view of the text, claiming the complementarian exegesis betrays the text and is an example of how values and presuppositions can control exegesis. Brueggemann states woman is the most extraordinary event in the narrative and humanity's fulfillment, creating mutuality with man and

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<sup>111</sup> John Piper and Wayne A. Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood a Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2006), 98.

<sup>112</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, 47.

woman. It is only after the fall when one sees a distorted human community and trouble and inequity between the two.<sup>113</sup>

Complementarians would purport there is distorted desire (3:16) and a gesture by which the man controls the woman in pronouncing her name (3:20). However, nowhere is it suggested this is normative.<sup>114</sup>

Brueggemann counters with the contrast between God's faithful work in the second creation story. The result of human distrust in the "fall" story is an eloquent observation of the man and the woman's relation. In God's garden, after the second creation, there is equality and mutuality. After the fall, there is control and distortion and invasive distrust in God's garden, which is not the Gardener's will.<sup>115</sup>

The title of this thesis is taken in part from 1 Corinthians 13:9-13. The Apostle Paul uses the metaphor of a mirror to describe how human beings view their lives. This thesis also utilizes the mirror's metaphor to examine the varied and often conflicting messages about women and femininity. By studying the life and humanity of Jesus Christ, women have a mirror to evaluate interpersonal skills and orientation to life. Hayes claims this text is originally a passionate vision of a better way for the Corinthian church to treat each other.<sup>116</sup>

God calls humankind to fulfill the Great Commission cited from Matthew 28:19-20, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 50-51.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 50-51.

<sup>115</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, 50-51.

<sup>116</sup> Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians: Interpretation, A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville, Ky: John Knox Press, 1997), 231.

remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” A similar text also appears in Mark 16:15, Luke 24:46-49, John 20:21-23, and Acts 1:8, calling disciples to fulfill the Great Commission.

The call of the Great Commission included women. Luter offers, the presence of women in multiple texts leading up to the Commission is obvious (Matt. 27:56, 61’ 28:1-8; Mark 15:40-41, 47; 16:1-8; Luke 23:49, 55; 24:1-10; John 19:25-27; 20:1, 11-18; Acts 1:14).<sup>117</sup> Luter shares a disciple of Jesus Christ is one who believes his doctrine rests on his sacrifice, imbibes his spirit, and imitates his example. Women are following Jesus to the cross and the tomb. The women at the empty tomb are the first disciples witnessing the resurrection and the ones who are to inform the apostles.<sup>118</sup>

Peppiatt reminds us of the multiple times God is referred to in the Bible as feminine. On multiple occasions, the Bible describes God in maternal terms. For example, God is: A mother suckling her children and responsible for their care (Numbers 11:12), a mother who does not forget the child she nurses (Isaiah 49:14-15), a mother who calls, teaches, heals, and feeds her young (Hosea 11:1-4). Scripture also describes God relating to humans as a mother and a father and speaks about God using a female bird or animal's imagery.<sup>119</sup>

Peppiatt continues, Jesus chose male apostles for the same reason that he chose twelve apostles and Jewish apostles. The twelve apostles typologically represent the twelve tribes of

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<sup>117</sup> Asa Boyd Luter, “Women Disciples and the Great Commission,” *Trinity Journal* 16, no. 2 (September 1995) 174, accessed September 9, 2020, ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost.

<sup>118</sup> Asa Boyd Luter, “Women Disciples and the Great Commission,” 174.

<sup>119</sup> Lucy, Peppiatt, *Rediscovering Scripture’s Vision for Women: Fresh Perspectives on Disputed Texts*, 20.

Israel, and specifically, the twelve patriarchs from who the nation of Israel descended, fulfilling the story of Israel.<sup>120</sup>

Women walked, talked, and followed Jesus from the beginning of his ministry, and they were witnesses to his teaching, his healings, and his miracles. They were supporters of the mission Jesus was enacting, and they continue, after his death and resurrection. One may conclude women, because of all their actions, are disciples or "scholars" as defined by Easton.<sup>121</sup>

Martin and Stovall argue that Jesus has significant, intentional conversations with women, approaching them not as people of inferior intellect, but expects them to learn and understand as shown in the account of Mary sitting at Jesus' feet and learning in Luke 10:38-43. Jesus also addressed non-Jewish women, as evidenced in John 4:1-42, the Samaritan woman, and Mark 7:26, the Syrophenician woman.<sup>122</sup>

Women in the Bible follow and minister to Jesus, including the Samaritan woman who leads many to faith, John 4:1-42, and Mary and Martha, who offer Jesus rest and nourishment, Luke 10:3-42. Jesus honors the widow who sacrificially gives all, Mark 12:42-43; Luke 21:2-3.

Martin and Stovall point out women in the Bible pray after the resurrection, Acts 1:13-14. Paul finds himself in Philippi on the Sabbath and goes to a place he knows to be a place of prayer, finding a group of women there. He visits with them and does not find it unusual that the women gather to pray, Acts 16:13 and instructs women to cover their heads when praying in the church, 1 Corinthians 11:2-26.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>121</sup>M. G. Easton, *Christian Classics Ethereal Library. Illustrated Bible Dictionary: And Treasury of Biblical History, Biography, Geography, Doctrine, and Literature: With Numerous Illustrations and Important Chronological Tables and Maps*. 3rd ed. London, ENG: T. Nelson, 1897.

<sup>122</sup> Jaye Martin and Terri. Stovall. *Women Leading Women: The Biblical Model for the Church*, 17.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 19.

Women are among the first converts, Acts 5:14, and early followers of Christ in Samaria, Acts, 8:12. Paul and Silas lead many prominent Greek women to Christ in Thessalonica and Berea, Acts 17:4, 12.

Martin and Stovall assume many unnamed women heroes of faith and those persecuted and jailed as Christ-followers (Acts 8:3, 9:2, 22:4), and Priscilla “risked her neck” for Paul, Romans 16:3.<sup>124</sup>

Sayer’s quote sums women in the Bible perfectly and bears repeating. “Perhaps it is no wonder that the women were first at the Cradle and last at the Cross. They had never known a man like this Man—there had never been another. A prophet and teacher who never nagged at them, who never flattered or coaxed or patronized; who never made arch jokes about them, never treated them either as “The women, God help us!” or “The ladies, God bless them!”; who rebuked without querulousness and praised without condescension; who took their questions and arguments seriously, who never mapped out their sphere, for them, never urged with them to be feminine or jeered at them for being female; who had no ax to grind and no uneasy male dignity to defend; who took them as he found them and was completely unselfconscious.”<sup>125</sup>

Paul acknowledges Lois and Eunice's influence on the life of Timothy, 2 Tim 1:3-5, and Chloe, in the church in Corinth, as a trusted woman of faith and one he seeks out to discover what is happening in the church, 1 Cor 1:10-11. Euodia and Syntyche are so influential in the church, their disputes are threatening the unity of the church causing Paul to encourage the church to help them work it out, Phil 4:2-3.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>125</sup> Dorothy L. Sayers, *Are Women Human? Penetrating Sensible and Witty Essays on the Role of Women in Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2005), 68.

<sup>126</sup> Jaye Martin and Terri. Stovall. *Women Leading Women: The Biblical Model for the Church*, 20.

Ephesians 5:21-23 is a problematic text for many women to read. Martin writes, one must examine two preliminary issues before one can get to the text's details. First, it is unclear where the paragraph begins and whether 5:21 belongs to the preceding or the following text. The division comes after verse 21 in the NSRV. Other scholars argue verse 21 acts as a bridge between what has gone before and what follows because of the absence of a verb from the Greek of verse 22, and it is unlikely that the author would begin a new section with no verb in the sentence. Martin argues the verb must be carried over from verse 21, as in the NRSV, which inserts "Wives, be subject. . . ." Martin explains the submission of verse 21 refers to the description given of the church at worship (vv. 19–20) and forward to the attitude of a woman to a spouse in verse 22. It is in services of public worship where a woman should be submissive to her husband.<sup>127</sup>

Burden et al. assert the Ephesian text, written to a church full of new believers, encourages them as servants of Christ to be servants of one another. Within this group, Paul speaks to the married couples reminding them of the same type of mutual submission found within the Holy Trinity, with an attitude or posture where each bow down before one another.<sup>128</sup>

The words of 1 Timothy 2:9-10, "women should dress modestly and decently in suitable clothing, not with their hair braided, or with gold, pearls, or expensive clothes, but with good works, as is proper for women who profess reverence for God," also raise some reader's hackles and blood pressure. Because one's emotions enter strongly into dialogue with the text, Olden

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<sup>127</sup> Ralph P. Martin, *Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon: Interpretation, A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Westminster John Knox Press, 1991), 68.

<sup>128</sup> Suzanne Burden et al., *Reclaiming Eve: The Identity and Calling of Women in the Kingdom of God*, 45.

claims this attests what Paul says is essential to us, especially when saying things with which the reader disagrees.<sup>129</sup>

The text's subject is public prayer, which Paul discusses in terms of two genders, male and female. Olden acknowledges that this text's connection with 1 Timothy 2:8 seems odd initially since it encourages men to pray without anger, and women to pray without ostentation.

Paul is not forbidding all jewelry or unique clothing or promoting plainness, which can be a matter of display and pride. Instead, Paul resists the hypocrisy when one pretends verbally to come before God in penitence but shows no evidence of that penitence in oneself and when extravagance and ostentation substitute for religion. Paul particularly calls out the elaborate interweaving of the hair with fine jewelry. Oden explains communication of one's value system occurs through body language and dress. Paul communicates to the reader one should seek the inward life and outward profession consistency and writes the faithful adorn in the good deeds that correspond with their faith profession.<sup>130</sup>

Paul again seems to equate men and women and assumes women share responsibility with men for eliciting or resisting sexual advances or fantasies and urges removal from the worship of whatever draws the eye away from God.

Oden says Paul's injunction is not to prevent women from learning Christian teaching, but to permit, "Let a woman learn" (v. 11). This injection is a significant step beyond the late Judaic view of women's status, who were not allowed to prophesy or read the Torah or enter the temple's inner court. Greek women experienced even more limiting conditions. Oden reflects

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<sup>129</sup> Thomas C. Oden. *First and Second Timothy and Titus: Interpretation, A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1990), 92.

<sup>130</sup> Thomas C. Oden. *First and Second Timothy and Titus: Interpretation, A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, 94.



that a few women causing disruption for Timothy at Ephesus is indirect evidence of the improvement of women's position in Christianity.

Paul believes learning for women should include an attitude of tranquility fitting to women's unique gifts: in *hesuchia* (tranquility, quietness, calm), silence with all submissiveness. The Greek phrase (gune en hesuchia manthaneto en pase hupotage) implies: Let a woman be a learner under tranquil conditions inwardly and outwardly, showing attentiveness to the received teaching. Oden proclaims the point is not to be silent and submissive but to seek inward quietness and attentiveness to the proclamation.<sup>131</sup>

Oden continues, it appears certain women in Ephesus are disturbing worship services in unspecified ways because of disruptive teachers and this behavior is happening in Corinth and perhaps Ephesus but not in Thessalonica, Rome, or Philippi. Paul's concern is with those who are not listening, and Paul believes in encouraging, centering, and resourcing because the exercise of power occurs with inner serenity.<sup>132</sup>

Paul fortifies both men and women not to resist and protest the limitations of their sexuality because sexuality is a gift and a responsibility. Men are to refrain from complaining to God about their maleness burdens, and women are to resist crying out against God for their femaleness tasks. Both should embrace the challenges of having been born a man or a woman. The text says nothing, and Oden affirms, it is an enormous leap of logic to assume that Paul means here that women are to be submissive to men.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Thomas C. Oden. *First and Second Timothy and Titus: Interpretation, A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, 96.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

Bessey believes it is misguided and even profane to look at the Bible, written over thousands of years, accepting the writings as absolute literal instructions without context. One can miss the gospel forest for the word-by-word trees.<sup>134</sup>

Peppiatt lists fourteen times women are named in the book of Acts and the Epistles indicating Paul knows and would have been friends with these women. The fact is the women are named in the Bible, and they are named without reference to men.<sup>135</sup>

Peppiatt offers, it is now accepted that Junia, of Romans 16:7, was outstanding and notable among the apostles and a woman. Junia, in the past, Bible translators attribute the name Junia to Junias, a man's name, assuming no woman would have status. Peppiatt writes the acknowledgement of Junia is a "modern day parable."<sup>136</sup>

It is important to remember that women have teaching roles and offices in the New Testament church: Titus 2:3–4 particularly calls and authorizes older women to be good teachers of the younger ones. It is evident in Paul's writings that Priscilla serves as a teacher, even of Apollos, "a native of Alexandria . . . an eloquent man, well versed in the scriptures." For Priscilla and Aquila "explained the way of God to him more accurately," to enable Apollos to answer critics, "showing by the scriptures that the Messiah is Jesus" (Acts 18:24, 26, 28). It was this same Priscilla (Prisca) whom Paul continually commends (Rom. 16:3; I Cor. 16:19; II 4:19). In Philippians, Paul praises the way in Euodia and Syntyche labor with him in the gospel (Phil. 4:2–3). Acts defines Philip's four daughters as prophetesses (Acts 21:9).<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Sarah Bessey, *Jesus Feminist: An Invitation to Revisit the Bible's View of Women*, 58.

<sup>135</sup> Lucy, Peppiatt, *Rediscovering Scripture's Vision for Women: Fresh Perspectives on Disputed Texts*, 118–119.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>137</sup> Thomas C. Oden. *First and Second Timothy and Titus: Interpretation, A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, 98.

Galatians 3:28 seems radical for its time. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus," Cousar suggests the conviction that God is one, and since God is one, must also be the God of the Gentiles as well as the Jews (so also of slaves and free, of males and females). Cousar notes, Paul argues this idea again in Romans 3:29-30, stating it is a Christological rather than a theological conviction and the premise of this logic is fundamental to Israel's faith. Because Christ's death as a means of salvation rejects all other means; there is one community, not many; and so, there can no longer be barriers separating otherwise disparate groups.<sup>138</sup>

Cousar continues, this unity is not one in which social, sexual, and ethnic differences vanish, but destroying the hostility, barriers, chauvinism, and sense of superiority and inferiority between respective categories.<sup>139</sup> The new unity in Christ has tremendous implications. Because differences no longer matter, Christians must treat all people and groups in this light in every arena of life, secular and sacred.<sup>140</sup>

Martin and Stovall argue, to understand Galatians 3:28, one must understand its context and the fact that it falls within the framework of salvation. Paul is writing to a particular group of people who must realize the only way to be Christ's followers is to become like the Jews and be circumcised. The primary message Paul is conveying in this passage is Christ died on the cross for all. The letter to the church in Galatia, and this passage specifically, reflect unity in Christ rather than total equality.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Charles B. Cousar. *Galatians: Interpretation, A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1982), 85.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>141</sup> Jaye Martin and Terri. Stovall. *Women Leading Women: The Biblical Model for the Church*, 24.

Paul's statement about women is also revolutionary, if a bit unclear. There are passages in Paul's writings affirming a healthy interdependence between men and women (1 Cor. 11:11-12), mentioning women by name, and always equal with men, never patronizing or condescending (Rom. 16; Phil. 4:2-3). Cousar posits, one gets the clear impression Paul could happily work side-by-side with women in his various missionary travels and views them as partners and not subordinates.<sup>142</sup>

Cousar concludes, if the parallel with slavery is correct (and it seems inescapable), then the church must listen to Paul's radical insights, drop its dominant male orientation, and discover the fellowship which can happen when everyone is genuinely free.<sup>143</sup>

Burden et al. proclaim Paul's teachings about the spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians affirm women. The authors believe Chapter 12 establishes women have many gifts but one spirit. Chapter 13 confirms these gifts are useless without love. Chapter 14, however, frustrates some women saying that women should remain silent in church.<sup>144</sup>

Why does Paul state women must be silent in church after proclaiming they will be prophesying and praying in the church? And is this the same man who greeted women as personal friends and ministers in Romans chapter 16, and reiterates there is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female in Galatians 3:26-29? What does this mean to women who have a call to preach and teach?<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Jaye Martin and Terri Stovall. *Women Leading Women: The Biblical Model for the Church*, 87.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>144</sup> Suzanne Burden et al., *Reclaiming Eve: The Identity and Calling of Women in the Kingdom of God*, 157.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

Piper and Grudem argue one should affirm the participation of women in prayer and prophecy in the church. Women's contributions should not be ignored or slighted. However, women should participate in these activities with hearts submissive to male leadership and should dress to retain their femininity.<sup>146</sup>

Other passages seem to advocate a submissive role for women (1 Timothy 2:8-15; 1 Peter 3:1-6). Cousar admonishes reading each text in terms of historical context to embrace its historical meaning, refraining from applying the perspective of a prevailing culture on the text, and staying true to the ancient principle of exegesis.<sup>147</sup>

### **Theoretical Foundations**

Theories allow one to roughly draw the boundaries of a concept using a unified framework and understanding the world, societies, and oneself. Orenstein and Hunkins explain theory as a "device for interpreting, criticizing and unifying established laws, and modifying them to fit data unanticipated in their formation, and guiding the enterprise of discovering new and more powerful generalization."<sup>148</sup>

Theoretical integration in the counseling world is an effective combination of aspects of one or more psychological theories providing a comprehensive understanding and treatment of a client.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> John Piper and Wayne Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2006), 139.

<sup>147</sup> Charles B. Cousar. *Galatians: Interpretation, A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* Ibid., 88.

<sup>148</sup> C. Ornstein and F. P. Hunkins, "Curriculum: Foundations, Principles, and Issues" (Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1993)

<sup>149</sup> Timothy E. Clinton and Ronald E. Hawkins, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Christian Counseling*, (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2012), 474.

To explore the problem of women's identity in the kingdom and how the women of MCPC understand themselves as disciples of Jesus Christ, made in the image of God, this author looks at attachment theory and a combination of core skills and character traits that can strengthen women. These skills include spiritual disciplines, faith, hope, assertiveness, and self-efficacy.

How does a woman's initial relationship with God, learned as an infant or child, play out in their relationship with God as an adult? Where do participants gain their understanding of and their relationship with God? Is their relationship with God vital to them? How do women maintain their relationship with God? Do spiritual disciplines help to keep this relationship?

Reinert and Edwards offer, the psychological source of our concept of God, has been a topic of discussion since Freud, and over the years, research has examined parents, self, and faith groups. These authors report a loving concept of God is referenced primarily to one's self-esteem instead of their experience of parent's nurturance or authority.<sup>150</sup>

Gillath et al, write, Bowlby's ideas about attachment began to publish as early as the 1940s. The full three-volume series organizes his various ideas developing over his career and provides an accessible means of sharing these ideas about the importance of early attachment experiences and their role in shaping personality development.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Duane F. Reinert and Carla E. Edwards, "Attachment Theory and Concepts of God: Parent Referencing Versus Self-Referencing," *SAGE Open* 4, no. 4 (2014), 1.

<sup>151</sup> Omri Gillath, Gery C. Karantzas, and R. Chris Fraley, *Adult Attachment: A Concise Introduction to Theory and Research* (London, UK: Academic Press is an imprint of Elsevier, 2016), 2.

Counted asserts that although traditionally ascribed to John Bowlby, in recent years, attachment theory credits as Bowlby and Ainsworth (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991).<sup>152</sup>

According to Clinton and Hawkins, attachment theory is a dominant theory in developmental research and the broad literature on counseling. Attachment theory provides a robust, integrative framework of how spirituality, socio-emotional development, and neurobiology interact.<sup>153</sup> The core tenets of attachment theory look at how one's core beliefs of God are formed and maintained, and the ways neurobiology, and early relationships strongly influence socio-emotional development.<sup>154</sup>

Liu and Hogg agree that attachment theory is one of the most comprehensive and leading theoretical frameworks for explaining how people approach and behave in interpersonal relationships. Attachment theory's central tenet is the innate human need to establish a psychological sense of felt security in relationships.<sup>155</sup>

Waters and Cummings offer attachment theory as a secure base relationship across age and culture integrates insights about affect, cognition, and behavior in closer relationships.<sup>156</sup> These authors continue the Bowlby-Ainsworth attachment theory can be a valuable legacy to explore the close relationship and reflects the nature and importance of Freud's insights about early relationships.

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<sup>152</sup> Victor Counted, "God as an Attachment Figure: A Case Study of the God Attachment Language and God Concepts of Anxiously Attached Christian Youths in South Africa," *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health* 18, no. 4 (2016), 316.

<sup>153</sup> Timothy E. Clinton and Ronald E. Hawkins, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Christian Counseling*, 50-51.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>155</sup> Chihling Liu and Margaret K. Hogg, "Using Attachment Theory to Understand Consumers' Tensions between their Sense of Self and Goal-Pursuits in Relationships." *Journal of Business Research* 92, (2018), 198-199.

<sup>156</sup> Everett Waters and E. Mark Cummings, "A Secure Base from which to Explore Close Relationships," *Child Development* 71, no. 1 (2000), 164.

Children form schemas, emotionally charged beliefs about themselves and others, in the context of intimacy and caregiving. Meta-emotions or core assumptions about these emotions and emotional related needs become shaped in the secure-base system. The core assumptions powerfully influence how one interprets and responds to one's feelings and feelings of others.

There are four core components of the secure-base system that unfold in a feedback loop. Component one is the safe haven. In safe haven, the child relies on his caregiver for comfort whenever they feel threatened, frightened or in danger.

The second component is secure-base experience, which is a child's felt sense of security directly related to the felt sense that the caregiver or parent is available and accessible. This component also relates to the child's felt sense of physical regulation and emotional security. The secure-base experience activates the child's exploration system. The child leaves the parent's safety and continually looks back to check for security and share the experience. A sense of curiosity and the beginning of a striving for autonomy accompanies the "I can do it" stage.

The third component is the beginning of a future understanding of self-confidence. When something threatens the child's sense of felt security, like the parent leaving the room or a stranger entering, the attachment behavior system activates, and the exploration system immediately shuts down. There are two types of attachment behavior, which are driven by intense emotions like anger and anxiety. Signaling is how a child communicates to the parent or caregiver that there is a problem. Proximity seeking, the behavior that helps the child obtain physical closeness to the parent or caregiver, can include crying, whining, crawling, running, and even screaming.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Timothy E. Clinton and Ronald E. Hawkins, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Christian Counseling*, (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2012), 51.



The fourth core component, goal-centered partnership, finds the parent or caregiver and the child working together to achieve a safe-haven experience, including a sense of calm and safety. When the fourth component is complete, the experience resets, and the child begins the explorations system again, completing the circle of security.

These secure-base scenarios repeat thousands of times during childhood. They have an enormous impact on how the child's brain develops and how well they learn neuro-cognitive skills like emotion regulation, social skills, cognitive flexibility, empathy, compassion, and social problem-solving skills. These scenarios also influence the schemas or core beliefs about self and others. Questions like, "Am I loveable?" "Am I capable?" "Are you reliable?" "Are you accessible and trustworthy?" "Is the world a safe place, or do I have to be on constant alert for danger?" are stored in the limbic system as implicit memories.<sup>158</sup>

There are many behaviors by the caregiver or parent that can affect the way the child develops their secure-base attachment scenarios. Avoidant or dismissing, ambivalent, or preoccupied or fearful/disorganized working models have different manifestations in children and adults and present differently.<sup>159</sup> When a child grows up in a healthy home with functional caregivers, they grow up with secure attachment models resulting in positive self-view and expressing emotions in healthy ways.

Knabb and Emerson offer, attachment theory is increasingly applied to the psychology of religion and seeks to better understand the correlation between parent-child attachments and attachment to God. Continuing attachment theory research typically lacks a strong theological

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<sup>158</sup> Timothy E. Clinton and Ronald E. Hawkins, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Christian Counseling*, 52.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

interpretation of attachment relationship between God and humankind and focuses instead on the cognitive and affective experiences believers have of a one-size-fits-all God.<sup>160</sup>

Knabb and Emerson argue that the prominent components of the attachment behavior system is apparent in the biblical story of creation and can help to deepen the Christian understanding of the original attachment relationship between God and His people. Many aspects of attachment theory can be integrated with the creation narrative and can deepen one's grasp of the motivation to be in relationship with both God and one another.<sup>161</sup>

Attachment theory can help humans understand the need for redemption and restoration. God pursues the relationship with humankind through the atoning work of Jesus on the cross, and humanity returns to a patiently waiting God.<sup>162</sup>

Knabb and Emerson conclude that attachment theory is a useful framework for better understanding the necessity of human interdependence. Pastoral counselors can improve their interventions with clients by integrating the attachment theory empirical base with God's story to restore relational unity. They offer suggestions for therapists and pastoral counselors, including using an integrative assessment strategy, helping Christian clients to narrate their God "attachment story," utilizing the therapist-client relationship as a corrective secure base, and exploring how safe-haven may deepen a client's attachment to God. The strategy for these suggestions begins with obtaining a detailed background of the client's most important

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<sup>160</sup> Joshua J. Knabb and Matthew Y. Emerson, "I Will be Your God and You Will be My People": Attachment Theory and the Grand Narrative of Scripture," *Pastoral Psychology* 62, no. 6 (2012, 2013);, 829..

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid*, 829.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid*, 829.

relationships, dating back to childhood, including an account of the relationship with the client's parents, important caregivers, and mentors throughout childhood.<sup>163</sup>

Aydar asserts that after birth, the relationship between child and caregiver shapes a child's perspective toward religion and God giving them a perception of God. The attachment patterns that children gain in their childhood form the attachment to God that they gain in their life. Perception of God shapes an individual's religious life and behaviors toward the social environment and sense of self.<sup>164</sup>

Counted records attachment theorists and psychologists of religion associate religious experience with a relationship between self and others. This relationship comes from experience with an early caregiver from which the individual forms their internal wording models for relations with close others.<sup>165</sup>

According to Counted, a religious believer's experience in a relationship with God is an attachment relationship. The believer sees God as a divine attachment figure and a reliable companion. Experiencing God as a divine attachment figure allows the religious believer to see God within the context of attachment language criteria.<sup>166</sup>

Reinert and Edwards explain that research shows the connection between a secure attachment to parents with a loving God image. In contrast, insecure, interpersonal attachment to

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<sup>163</sup> Joshua J. Knabb and Matthew Y. Emerson, "I Will be Your God and You Will be My People," 838.

<sup>164</sup> Ayse Aydar, and Behlul Tokur, "Attachment Theory and Child's Perception of God at 4-6 Ages." *Ulum* 2, no. 1 (2019): 51.

<sup>165</sup> Victor Counted, "God as an Attachment Figure: A Case Study of the God Attachment Language and God Concepts of Anxiously Attached Christian Youths in South Africa," 319.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.* 319.

one's parents presents with distant and controlling God images. The primary influence on the development of a child's God concept is the attachment to the mother.<sup>167</sup>

According to Gillath, Karantzas, and Fraley, attachment theory includes the desire to be reunited with someone who seems distant or inaccessible. The desire is a manifestation of an instinct that evolves from infancy to keep infants close to potential caregivers.<sup>168</sup>

Gillath, Karantzas, and Fraley continue in recent years, attachment theory is a prominent framework for understanding personality processes and close relationships in adulthood. The authors point out that one of the features setting attachment theory apart from other modern theories is its assumption that the same kinds of dynamics govern how adults function in a close relationship as in infant-parent relationships.<sup>169</sup>

Beck studies whether God provides a secure base for theological exploration, and if so, how does this manifest in one's relationship with God.<sup>170</sup> Beck reports that participants with secure base attachment with God have increased tolerance for different Christian groups and theological exploration. Concluding participants seeing God as a "Secure Base," Beck reports participants also report more peace and less distress in their lives.<sup>171</sup>

This thesis explores attachment theory as a possible factor in the confusion of some of the women of MCPC about their place in the kingdom and their identity as precious children of God.

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<sup>167</sup> Duane F. Reinert and Carla E. Edwards, "Attachment Theory and Concepts of God: Parent Referencing Versus Self-Referencing," 2.

<sup>168</sup> Omri Gillath, Gery C. Karantzas, and R. Chris Fraley, *Adult Attachment: A Concise Introduction to Theory and Research* (London, UK: Academic Press is an imprint of Elsevier, 2016), 2.

<sup>169</sup> Omri Gillath, Gery C. Karantzas, and R. Chris Fraley, *Adult Attachment: A Concise Introduction to Theory and Research*, 2.

<sup>170</sup> Richard Beck, "God as a Secure Base: Attachment to God and Theological Exploration," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 34, no. 2 (2018;2006), 126.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

Clinton and Hawkins state spiritual disciplines include any activity to achieve a closer relationship to God, and the common thread among these activities is the process of decreasing one's "worldly mindfulness and becoming more like Christ."<sup>172</sup>

Spiritual disciplines such as Bible study, prayer, meditation, confession, worship, fellowship, rest, fasting, and service will help develop a woman's curriculum. Participating in and developing spiritual disciplines will help women learn more about what it means to be Christ-like.

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<sup>172</sup> Timothy E. Clinton and Ronald E. Hawkins, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Christian Counseling*, 70.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

This chapter discusses the methodological approach that the researcher used to answer the research questions:

1. How do the women of Mayfield Central Presbyterian Church (MCPC) perceive themselves in the context of their identity in Jesus Christ?
2. How did the women of MCPC develop their understanding of who God/Jesus Christ/Holy Spirit is?
3. What barriers and challenges have the women of MCPC faced that may have impacted their spiritual, family, and professional lives?

God created man and woman in His image and desired that they would have dominion over the earth and would live in peace and harmony. God still desires this for man and woman. Jesus' ministry took place in a culture that placed women in a class below men, and was not often kind to women, treating them like property. Jesus' attitude toward women was revolutionary and countercultural. Christ treated women as God intended from the beginning of time.

Two predominant views of women's roles exist today, egalitarian (men and women are created equal) and complementarian (men and women are both made in God's image and have equal standing before God in the kingdom but have different roles to fulfill). Some women at MCPC struggle with their place in the church and the kingdom. These women struggle with the Bible's seemingly inconsistent messages as they seek to live as disciples of God.

These women are hesitant to accept leadership roles. Often if the women do take positions in the church, they may defer to men on the same committee and are often slow to

speaking their minds. When serving on the nominating committee, the female members seek out and consider men to fill positions before considering women.

For this project, this researcher used phenomenology as part of the research process. Zahavi defines phenomenology as the science or study of the phenomena.<sup>173</sup> Phenomenology reveals something about objects' apparent nature, what objects are, phenomena, in contrast to science's goal, to grasp objects as they are.<sup>174</sup> Phenomenological approaches to research understand that the investigation will have an impact on the research process. There is potential for bias because the researcher becomes an instrument in the research method.

### **Intervention Design**

The research was qualitative and used a triangulation consisting of a questionnaire, an inventory tool, and in-depth interviews of women at Mayfield Central Presbyterian Church (MCPC). The specific content conducting the research informed the research design of this project.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) ensures the protection of the participants' rights and welfare because it involves people or information about people. The IRB reviews, requests revisions of, and approves the application when it meets the standards for approval as set forth by the Office for Human Research Protections (a branch of the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services). After completing training through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) and applying to the Liberty University Institutional Review Board for this

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<sup>173</sup> Dan and Taylor and Francis Zahavi, *Phenomenology: The Basics. First ed.* (Boca Raton, FL: Routledge, 2018), 9.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid*, 13.

project, this researcher received the following information regarding the submitted IRB application.

“The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed this application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and found that this study does not classify as human subject research. This project will consist of quality improvement activities, which are not "designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge" according to 45 CFR 46. 102(l) of the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB). This means this author can begin research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in the IRB application.” (Appendix F)

The session of MCPC was aware this researcher was working on a DMIN thesis and supported the endeavor. The session permitted this author to conduct research with the female members and friends of the church, to use the church to conduct the interviews, and to store the data and results in the locked pastor’s office. Because of the global pandemic, most people were not comfortable welcoming visitors into their homes, and the personal interviews took place in the researcher’s office. The office was large enough for interviews and assured social distancing, privacy, and confidentiality.

A church newsletter article in December explained the project and the research to the congregants. Convenience sampling comprised the populations in the study. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling method that uses data collection from conveniently available people to participate in the study.

This researcher also asked the participants to complete a consent form (Appendix A). This consent form illuminates the risks and benefits of participating in the project. Risks associated with this research were explained as possibly including physiological and emotional



discomforts. Physiological risks may consist of being embarrassed or having uncomfortable memories triggered by the study. There may also be a risk of loss of confidentiality of sensitive information.

The consent form explained there were no direct benefits to the participants in this research study. The anticipated benefit of participation in this study was the possibility that the information collected would help create a curriculum for women to understand their identity as a disciple of Jesus Christ and their place in the kingdom and may help women in the future.

The informed consent form also stated that a woman may choose to drop out of this project at any point with no explanation necessary. If a woman decided to drop out, all information concerning that woman would be deleted.

The research portion of the project took place as follows: The researcher wrote and sent individual letters to each of the 120 women who are members of MCPC and ten additional women who attend regularly but are not yet members, explaining the project in great detail and inviting them to participate in the research.

To begin the intervention, the researcher used a survey as a screening tool to help narrow the participants' pool to those struggling with their identities and to “whet the whistle” of the participants on the subject matter (Appendix B). It was vital to offer all the women an opportunity to participate because the researcher should not assume knowing who would and would not be appropriate for this research project.

A survey is efficient and allows the researcher to collect a great deal of information in a reasonable time frame. Surveys also remove the potential for bias and the likelihood that the data can be manipulated by the bias of the researcher.

A survey also has weaknesses. The questions are quantitative and so cannot be placed within a context missing some variables. Also, the participants cannot explain any answers beyond the confines of the survey which could possibly eliminate helpful information for the researcher.

A timeframe of when the research project would begin and end accompanied the letter. The letter also included a self-addressed stamped envelope to be returned to the researcher at the church address, asking the women to respond, expressing if they wished or did not wish to participate in the project. A follow-up telephone call occurred, if the letter and survey were not returned within one month and the researcher assumed a participant did not want to participate in the remainder of the project.

Not all invited women wanted to participate. Some women dropped out for any number of reasons, including lack of interest in the project or lack of time commitment.

Because of COVID restrictions, all of the women who wished to participate attended the introductory session on Zoom.

The researcher should not assume how the women may feel and how they may identify themselves related to the project. Stringer writes one cannot allow one's perceptions, perspectives, interests, and agendas to taint research.<sup>175</sup> Simultaneously, one must also be aware that participants' answers may appear to be limited, biased, or wrong.<sup>176</sup>

The introductory session included an explanation of the overall project and its goal. This project's goal was to conduct research about participants history with God, their faith, and their faith journey to complete a thesis exploring women's understandings about who they are and

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<sup>175</sup> Ernest T. Stringer, *Action Research*, 4th Edition (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, 2014), 106.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

their place in the kingdom of God. After publication of the thesis, the researcher plans to create a curriculum, using the data from the project, for women called “Woman in the Mirror, Precious Child of God, or Just a Rib?”. The objective is this curriculum is to help more women understand who they are as precious children of God.

Resources needed for this project included audio and visual equipment in good working order and available to be used in the researcher’s office to conduct the personal interviews. The researcher used the computer in the secure office. Only the researcher has a key to this office. The desktop is password-protected, and the researcher also used a locked file cabinet in the office to keep all written records secured.

This session continued asking the women to fill out an adapted short form of the Religious Status Inventory (RSInv-S10) (see Appendix C). The short-form Religious Status Inventory consisted of 80 items, eight ten-item scales proposed by Francis and Pocock. RSInv-S10 uses a rating on a five-point scale, using agree strongly, agree, not certain, disagree, and disagree strongly. The adapted inventory contained 67 items. The inventory intended to assess awareness of God; acceptance of God’s grace and steadfast love, being repentant and responsible; knowing God’s leadership and direction; involvement in organized religion; experiencing fellowship; being ethical and affirming openness in faith.<sup>177</sup>

Spradley helps layout the interview process with the five principles of the Developmental Research Sequence Method (D.R.S. Method) and the twelve steps.<sup>178</sup> Initially, the twelve steps are necessary, including finding the interviewee, doing the interview, and making an

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<sup>177</sup> Leslie Francis and Nigel Pocock, “Assessing Religious Maturity: The Development of a Sort Form of the Religious Status Inventory (RSInv-S10) *Journal of Empirical Theology: JET* 20, no. 2 (2007), 185.

<sup>178</sup> James Spradley, *The Ethnographic Interview*, (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc., 2016), 227-234.

ethnographic record. According to Spradley, an ethnographic record consists of field notes, tape recordings, artifacts, pictures, and anything else that helps document the cultural scene under study.<sup>179</sup> It also includes asking descriptive questions, analyzing the interview, making a domain analysis, asking structural questions, making a taxonomic analysis, asking contrast questions, making a componential analysis, discovering cultural themes, and finally, writing the ethnography.<sup>180</sup> Ethnography is describing a culture and aims to understand another way of life. Instead of studying people, ethnography means learning from people.<sup>181</sup>

The researcher used the ethnographic interview with the women of MCPC. Spradley records that there are three ways to discover questions, recording the questions people ask in everyday life, inquiring directly about questions used by participants in a cultural sense, and merely asking participants to talk about a cultural scene.<sup>182</sup> The third approach to questioning appealed to this researcher. Spradley states asking general descriptive questions is like offering participants a frame and canvas and asking them to paint a word picture of their experience.<sup>183</sup> This type of word picture provided the data the researcher was looking for related to the problem. The women taught the researcher from the answers they provided.

Using structured interviews to ask the same set of questions to every participant assured an easier data comparison between participants. All interview questions were written in advance

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<sup>179</sup> James Spradley, *The Ethnographic Interview*, 69.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid, 227-234.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid, 84-85.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid, 85.

to maintain consistency across interviews. Questions were written in detail and used verbatim during interviews.

The ethnographer must know at least one setting where the participant carries out activities, and in the case of MCPC, that setting is the church. Spradley offers five different types of descriptive questions, along with several subtypes.<sup>184</sup>

For the individual interviews, the researcher used Typical, Specific, Task-Related, Grand and Mini-Tour Questions, Example questions, and Experience Questions. Grand Tour questions usually occur in a particular locale. In this study, the church made sense to the participant. In addition to space, grand tour questions can also include time, events, objects, people, and activities. Typical questions ask for a description of how things usually are and ask the person to generalize. Specific questions refer to the most recent day or services of events or locales. Guided questions ask the participant to give a virtual grand tour. Task-related items perform a simple task that aids in the description and allows the researcher to ask numerous questions along the way.<sup>185</sup>

Mini-Tour questions are identical to grand tour questions but deal with a much smaller item of experience. Example questions are even more specific, and experience questions simply ask participants about any experiences that have in a particular setting.<sup>186</sup>

Listening to the individual stories of the women and assessing the information provided in the survey provided the data necessary to analyze and complete a report based on the researcher's identified problem and perhaps offer opportunities to change the researcher's

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<sup>184</sup> James Spradley, *The Ethnographic Interview*, 86.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid*, 87-88.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid*, 88.

problem. Combining the interview data with the Religious Status Inventory (RSInv-S10) presented the researcher with a wealth of data.

The researcher prepared prior to each interview with a time of prayer, asking for God's wisdom and guidance in leading the researcher to ask the right questions in the right way, and to allow God to work through the participant to share their individual story. The researcher also prayed that the data collected from this project brings glory and honor to God, as the researcher attempts to help women become better disciples of Jesus Christ.

At the beginning of the interview, each woman was given a copy of Twelve Ground Rules for Interviews (see Appendix D). In-depth interviews allowed each participant to describe what they considered to be their identity in God and their place in the kingdom in their own words, and to reflect on their experience in detail. Each interview delved into the woman's history as a member or friend of the church, their participation or lack of involvement in activities of the church, leadership roles they have in the church, and what they are content with or wish to be different. The interviews sought data that related to both the definition of the problem (is the woman confused about her place in the kingdom, her identity as a child of God, and a disciple of Jesus Christ) and the possible change (what might better help the woman understand these concepts).

Realizing that there are many types of learning styles, the interview also incorporated a visual tool (see Appendix E).

Interviews used active listening and open-ended questions that were taped and recorded. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. Concept mapping helped the researcher visualize the collected data and document themes and concepts, and the interviews were written and

measured. Each interview began with a five-minute re-introduction to the research project, reminding the woman of the project and giving the woman a copy of their signed consent form.

The remainder of the hour included ten minutes to ask questions, and forty-five minutes to process inquiries. The researcher transcribed the interaction immediately after the women left, or as soon as possible to maintain accuracy.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Results**

This project sought to answer the questions: Do some of the women in Mayfield Central Presbyterian Church (MCPC) seem to lack a clear biblical understanding of their position in the kingdom? How do the women understand their identity as followers of Jesus Christ? And how do they live out their faith in their identity? This was done by exploring different topics and the ways women gathered knowledge about their careers, families, finances, hobbies, happiness, life, relationships, housekeeping, cooking, leadership, church, faith, and God. By exploring these topics through surveys and interviews, the author gained a better understanding of the women of the church.

This author will use the data collected from this project to create a curriculum that may be helpful to other women who may struggle with similar questions and issues. This curriculum will be used in MCPC and, hopefully, in the greater church.

The original goal was to invite all of the female members and friends of Mayfield Central Presbyterian Church (MCPC) to participate. There are 120 women members and 20 female friends of the church. One hundred and forty invitation letters were sent out. It was hoped that there would be at least twenty participants. There were several reasons women shared for not wanting to participate, including lack of time, lack of interest, fear of sharing personal information, and sicknesses. Twenty-nine women completed informed consent, the questionnaire, the survey, and the interview.

This author set the expectation for evaluation with the participants by informing them that at least a portion of the evaluation would be based on verbal reactions and shared responses



during the interviews. A signed agreement from participants was obtained with permission to use an audio recording, to allow the author to remain present and active during the interview.

As reported, this project used qualitative data and a triangulation of a questionnaire, an inventory tool, and in-depth interviews of the female members and friends of MCPC. The thought process behind inviting all of the women was to use purposeful sampling, selecting people for research based on a particular set of attributes. Stringer reports the major attribute is the extent to which a group or an individual has an effect on or is affected by the problem or issue of interest.<sup>187</sup> Stringer continues, researchers need to ensure all stakeholders participate in defining and exploring the problem or service under investigation. It is important that stakeholders feel that someone is speaking for their interests and is in a position to keep them in the loop of what is going on.<sup>188</sup>

This author knew that not all the women would choose to participate. The hope was to invite all and hopefully get a well-rounded sample of participants. This author was pleased with not only the number of respondents but also the variety of demographics of the respondents.

Stringer says action research, in its most effective forms, is phenomenological, focusing on people's actual lived experience and reality and hermeneutic (incorporating the meaning people make of events in their lives). It provides the means by which the stakeholders, those centrally affected by the issue investigated, explore their experience, gain greater clarity and understanding of events and activities, and use those extended understandings to construct effective solutions to the problem(s) on which the study was focused.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Ernest T. Stringer, *Action Research*, (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2014), 77.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

Merriam and Tisdell assert that some assume all qualitative research is phenomenological and that from the philosophy of phenomenology comes a focus on the experience itself and that experiencing something is transformed into consciousness.<sup>190</sup>

Stringer warns, however, that enthusiasm and interest should not be mistaken for sound research process. This researcher used Stringer's suggested checks for trustworthiness designed by Lincoln and Guba to establish the veracity, truthfulness, or validity of the information and analysis that emerged from the research process.<sup>191</sup>

Because of the enthusiasm and interest, this author took Stringer's advice and tried to carefully assess the attributes of credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability to establish the trustworthiness of the study.

To assure dependability and confirmability, this author asked an independent person to audit a detailed description of the procedures that were followed and to view the data collected, field notes, and the videotapes of the interviews. This person, named Pam, was allowed to view the surveys with all identifying information removed and to view the videotapes with no sound to assure that they were properly recorded but did not reveal any identifying information about the participants.

#### Questionnaire, Survey, and Interview Results

This author also used a triangulation, as reported above, to clarify the meaning identifying ways the phenomena were being perceived. Twenty-nine women returned informed consents to participate. The same twenty-nine women also completed a questionnaire, an initial survey, and a personal interview.

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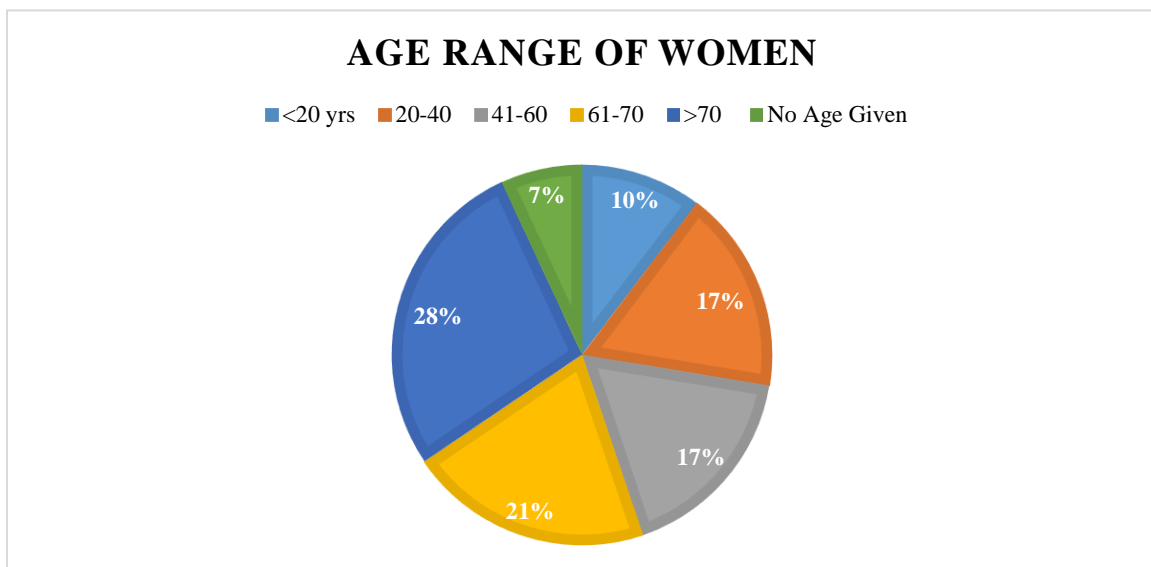
<sup>190</sup> Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A guide to Design and Implementation*, (Newark, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2015), 25-26.

<sup>191</sup> Ernest T. Stringer, *Action Research*, 92.

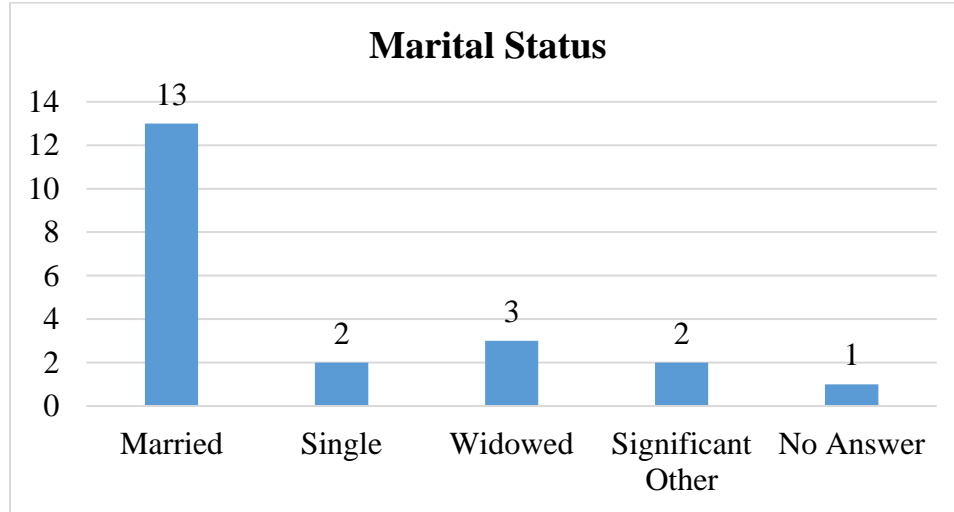


## Questionnaire

The project began with gathering some demographic information about the participants. All participants identified as Christian, female, and white. The age range of the women is shown in Chart 2,



This following histogram shows the marital status of the women:



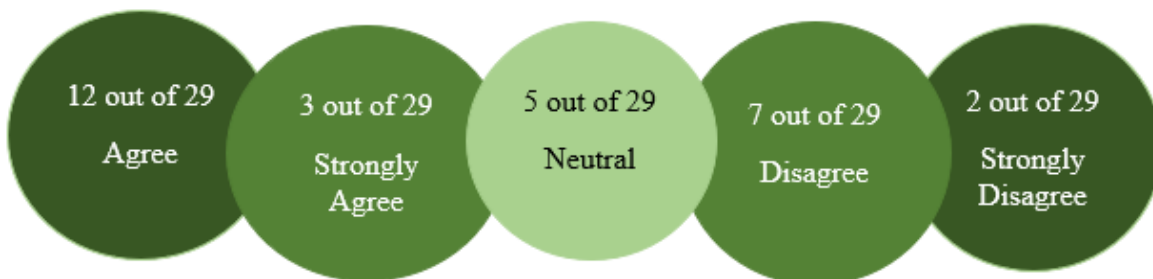
Of the twenty-nine participants, nineteen had children, eight did not have children, and two declined to answer. Twelve of the women are currently enrolled in Bible study at the church, one outside of the church and eight of the women are in school or taking professional courses.

The questionnaires yielded productive information regarding the ways the women learned about their career, church, cooking, decision-making, family, finances, God, happiness, health, hobbies, housekeeping, leadership, life, and relationships.

The questionnaire continued by offering statements asking how much the women agreed with statements relating to life and spirituality using a five-point Likert scale, with strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree.

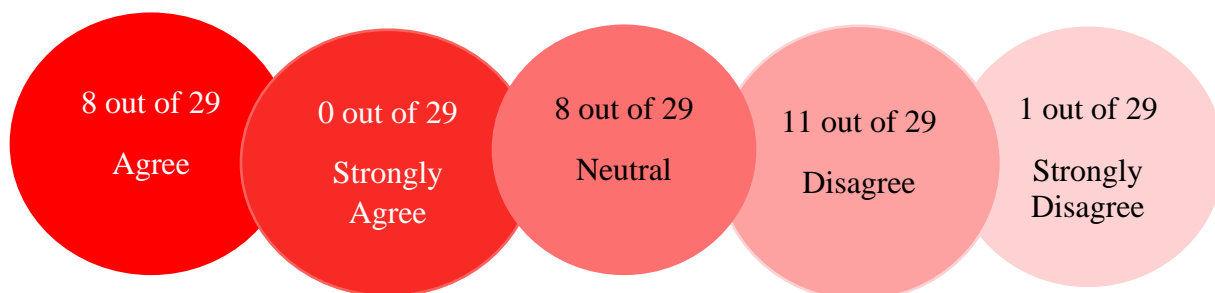
I am worried about the future.

Twelve of the twenty-nine responses agreed with this statement. Three strongly agreed. Five were neutral, neither agreed nor disagreed. Seven disagreed and two strongly disagreed. The results show that fifty-one percent, more than half of the participants worry about the future.



My life is stressful.

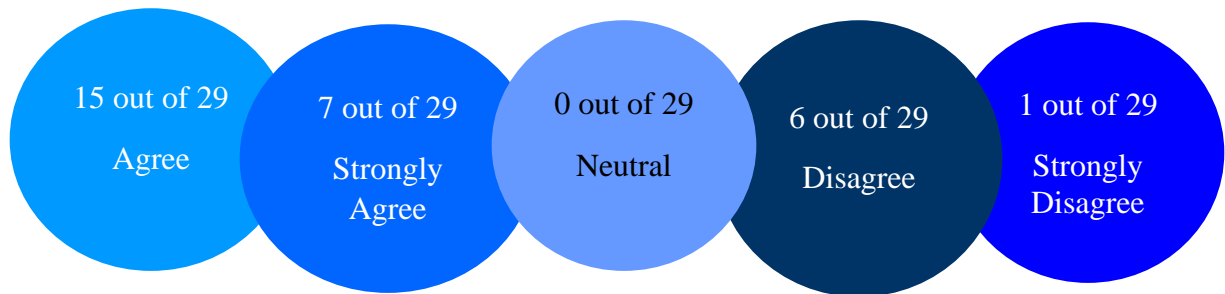
Eleven of the participants disagreed that their life is stressful. One strongly disagreed their life is stressful. Eight agreed their life is stressful and eight neither agree nor disagree. According to this questionnaire, forty-five percent of the women did not feel that their life is stressful and if you add in the women who neither agreed nor disagreed this percentage rises to seventy two percent.



I am experiencing stress.

It was interesting that the results of the next statement asking if the women are currently experiencing stress revealed different results from “My life is stressful.” Twenty-two

respondents or seventy-two percent agree or strongly agree that they are experiencing stress in their life as opposed to seven or twenty-four percent, who disagree or strongly disagree that they are experiencing stress in their life. The obvious question that came to mind in looking at the results was to question whether the pandemic is causing the large number who feel they are experiencing stress and yet do not consider their lives to be stressful. Additional questioning would be necessary to clarify if this indeed related to the pandemic.



Stress prevents me from getting enough sleep.

Fifty-five percent of the women reported that stress does not prevent them from getting sleep. Three strongly disagree, thirteen disagree, seven neither agree nor disagree and six women (twenty-one percent) reported they are not getting enough sleep because of stress.

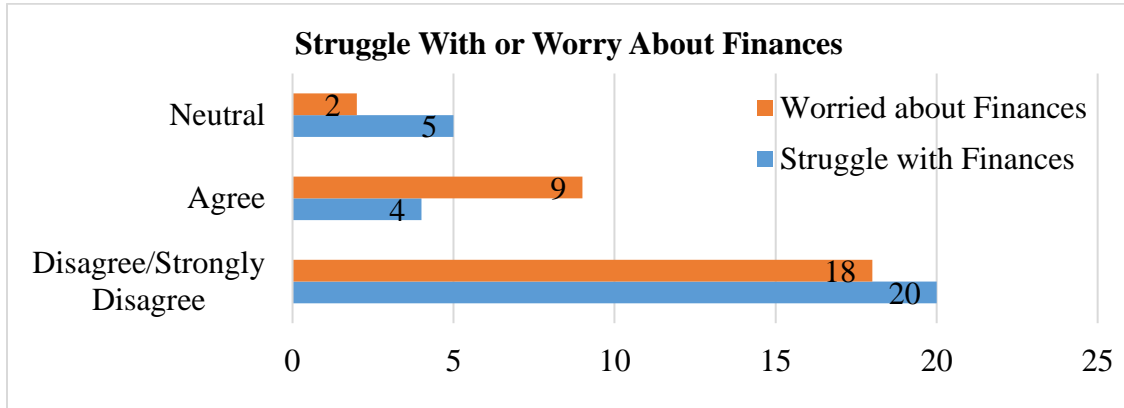
The next two statements dealt with finances and the results are combined into one chart below.

I am struggling with finances.

Twenty participants disagreed or strongly disagreed they struggle with finances. Five women stated they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement, and four women agreed that they struggle with finances. No one strongly agreed with this statement.

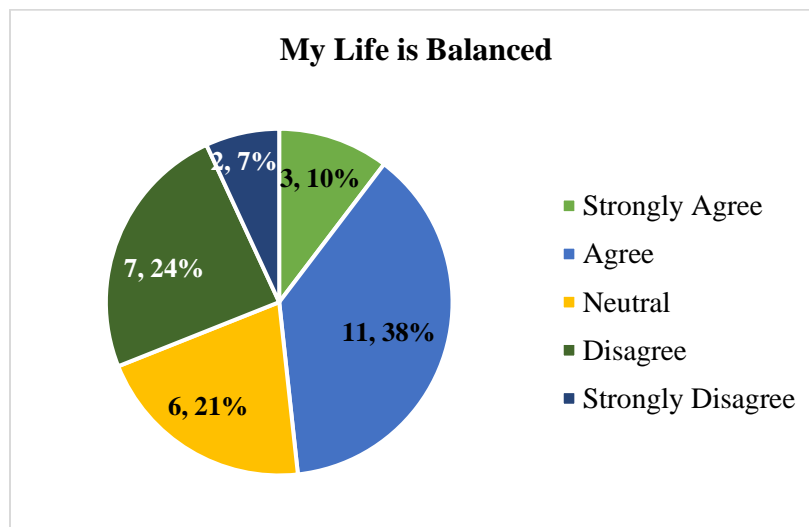
I am worried about finances.

Eighteen women strongly disagreed or disagreed that they worry about finances while nine agreed to worrying. Two women were neutral on this topic.



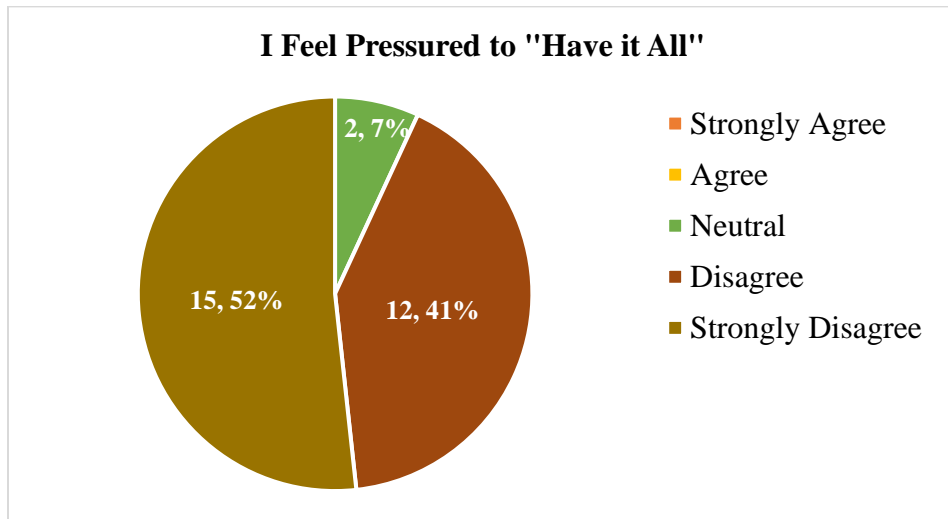
My life is balanced.

Eleven women responded they agreed their life is balanced. Three women strongly agreed. Seven disagreed, two strongly disagreed and six neither agreed nor disagreed. Being in balance can mean different things to different people. This author believes when one lives with balance in their life, they live with peace and harmony each day. Balance is often a combination of physical, emotional and spiritual well-being. It can mean creating time to do the things one has to do combined with the things one likes to do.



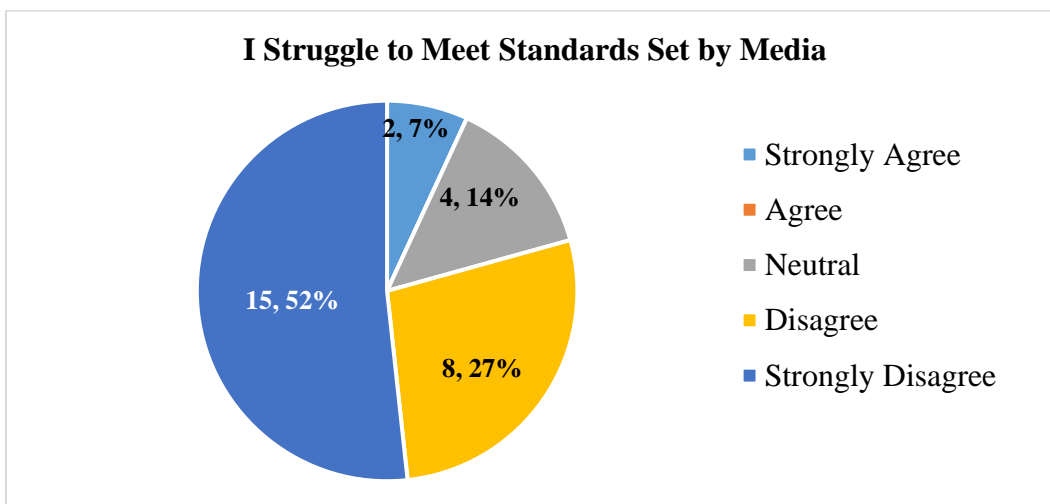
I feel pressured to “have it all.”

Ninety-three percent of the participants were clear on this statement. Fifteen strongly disagreed and twelve disagreed to feeling pressure to “have it all.” Two neither agreed nor disagreed.



I struggle to meet standards set by media.

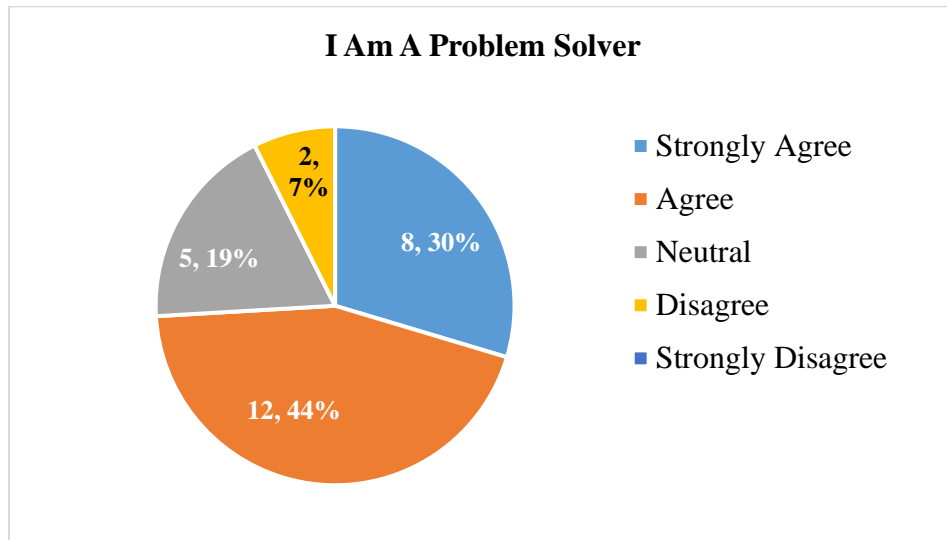
Fifteen participants strongly disagreed and eight disagreed with this statement. Four neither agreed nor disagreed and two women agreed that they struggle to meet standards set by media.





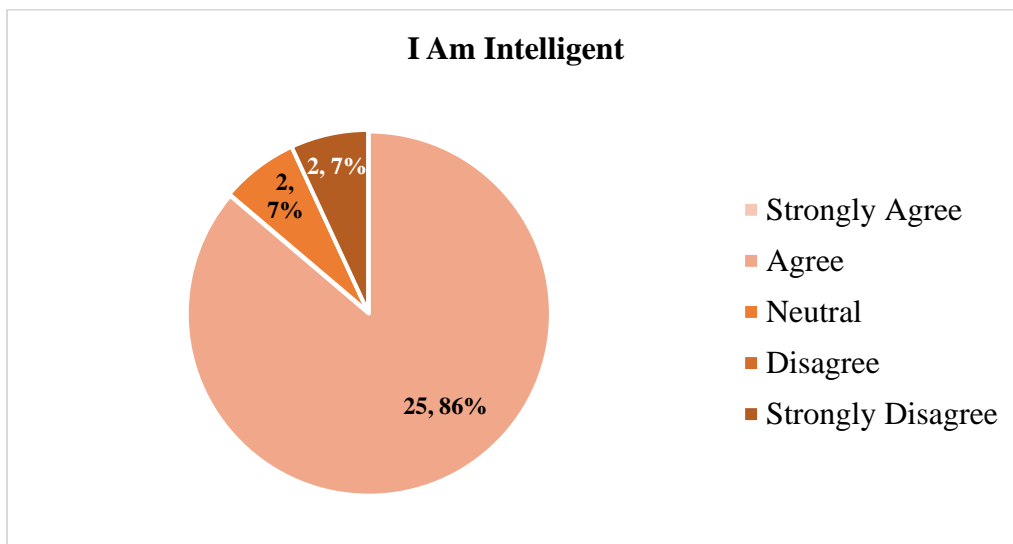
I am a problem solver.

Sixty-nine percent of respondents agreed (twelve) or strongly agreed, (eight) they are problem solvers. Five neither agreed nor disagreed and two women each disagreed and strongly disagreed.



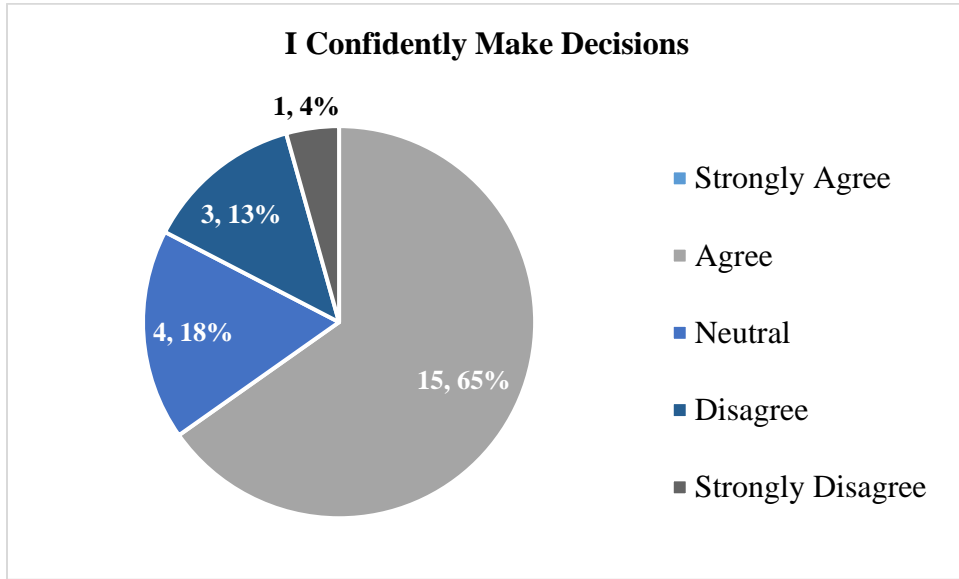
I am intelligent.

Twenty-five women, eighty-six percent, agreed that they are intelligent. Two neither agreed nor disagreed. And two strongly disagreed.



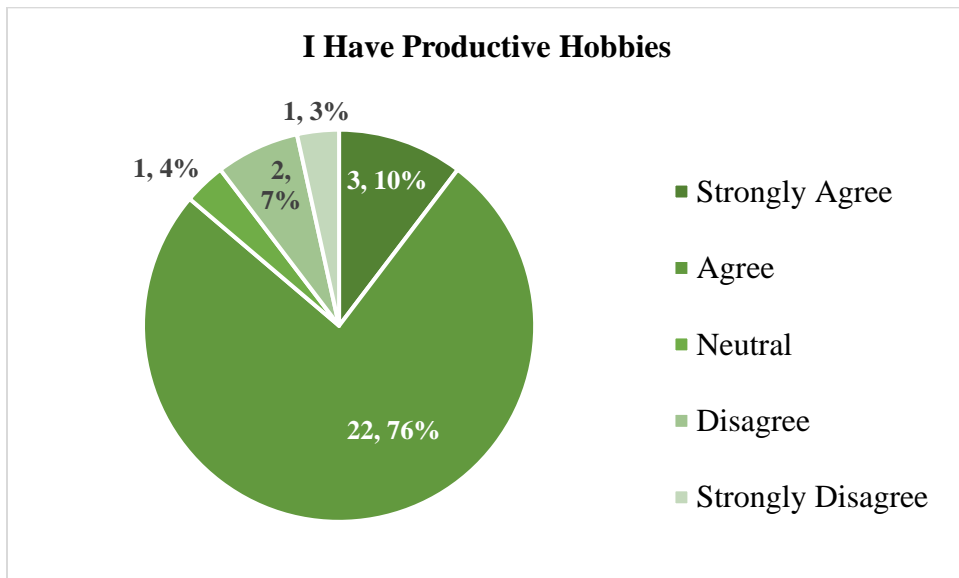
I confidently make decisions.

Fifteen women, fifty-one percent, agreed that they confidently make decisions. Four neither agreed nor disagreed. Three disagreed and one strongly disagreed.



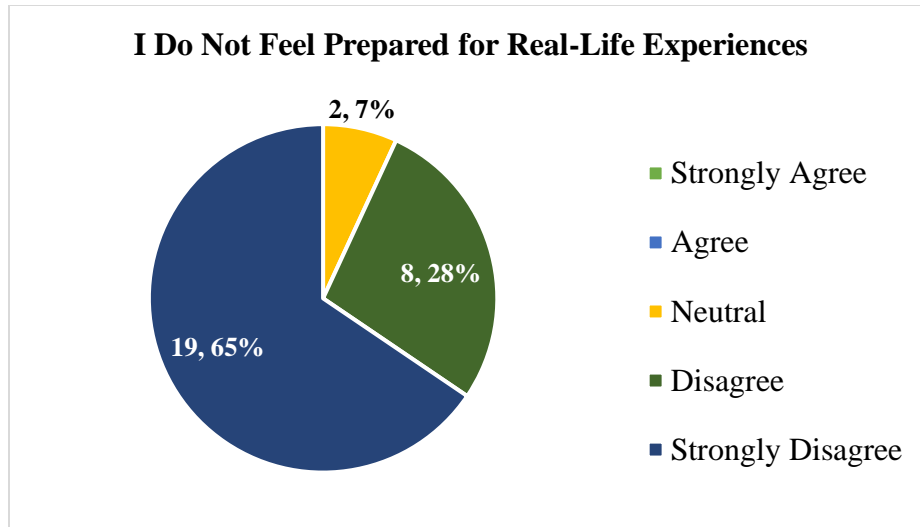
I have productive hobbies.

Twenty-five, or eighty-six percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed they have productive hobbies in their lives. One was neutral, two disagreed and one strongly disagreed.



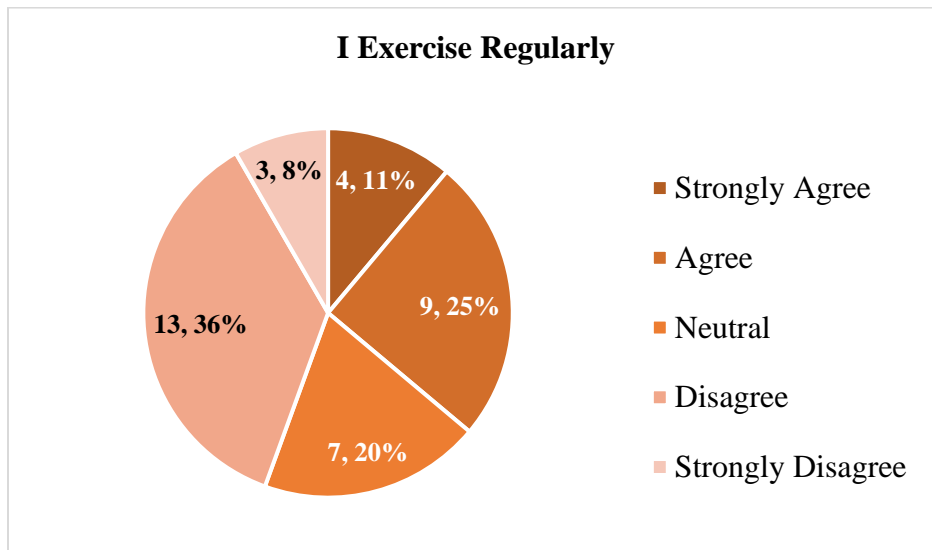
I do not feel prepared for real-life experiences.

Ninety-three percent of the women disagreed (eight) or strongly disagreed (nineteen) that they do not feel prepared for real-life experiences. Two neither agreed nor disagreed. It was encouraging to see that the vast majority of women felt prepared for what life may throw their way.



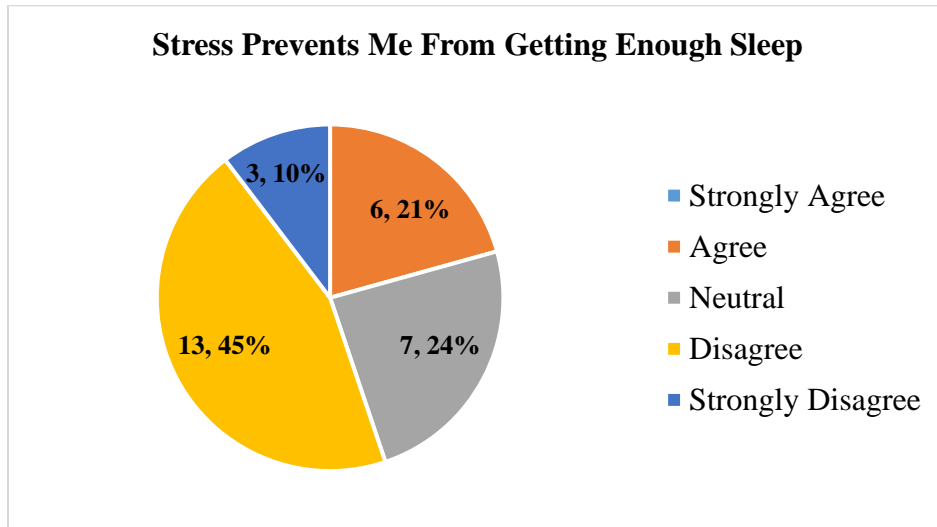
I exercise regularly.

Four women strongly agreed, and nine women agreed they exercise regularly. Three strongly disagreed, thirteen disagreed and seven more neither agreed nor disagreed.



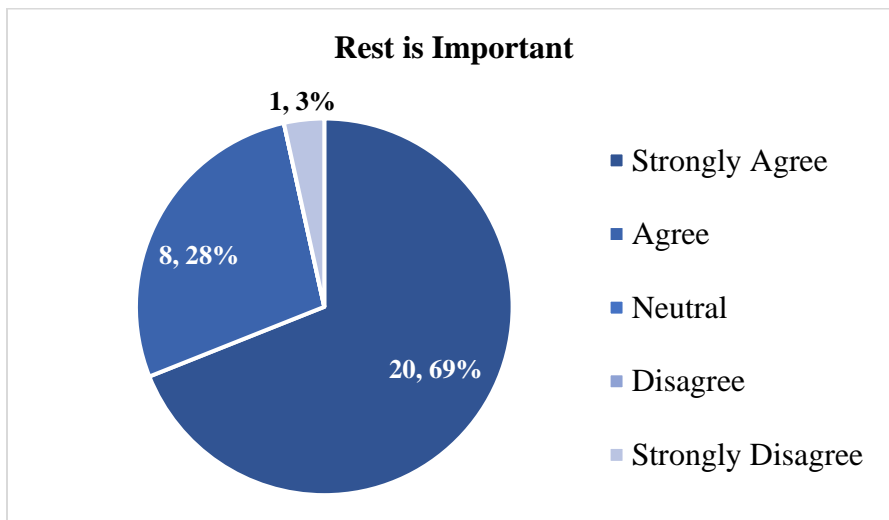
### Stress prevents me from getting enough sleep

Fifty-five percent of the women reported that stress does not prevent them from getting sleep. Three strongly disagreed, thirteen disagreed, seven neither agreed nor disagreed and six women (twenty-one percent) reported they are not getting enough sleep because of stress.



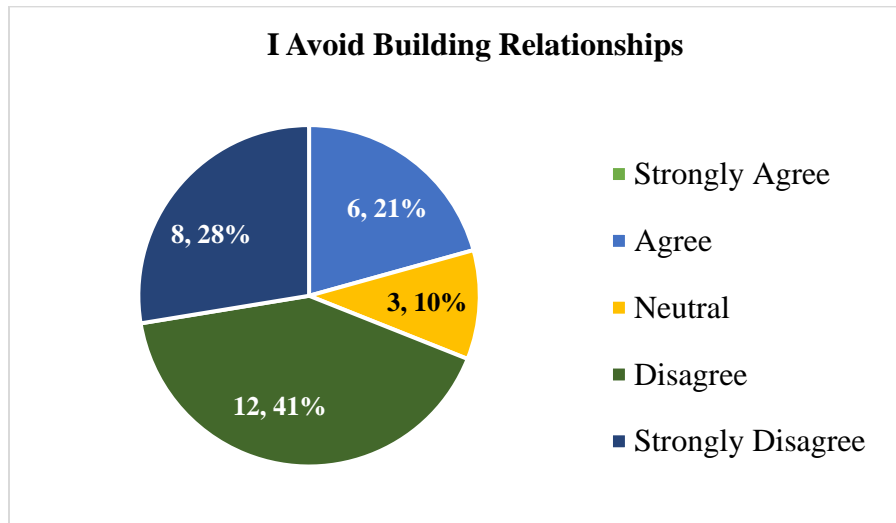
### Rest is important.

Ninety-seven percent of participants strongly agreed (twenty) and agreed (eight) that rest is important. One woman strongly disagreed.



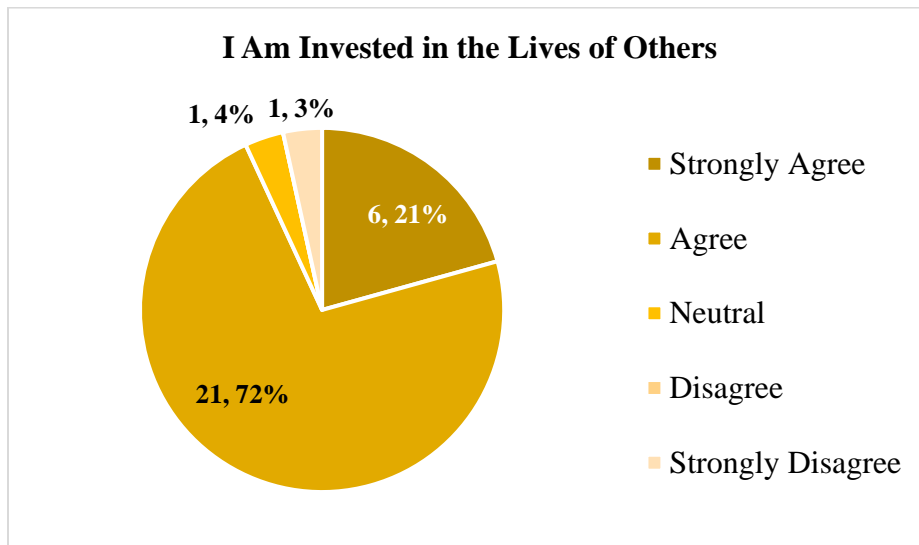
I avoid building relationships.

Twelve women disagreed they avoid building relationships, eight strongly disagreed, three neither agreed nor disagreed, and six women agreed. Sixty-nine percent of the women sought to build relationships with others.



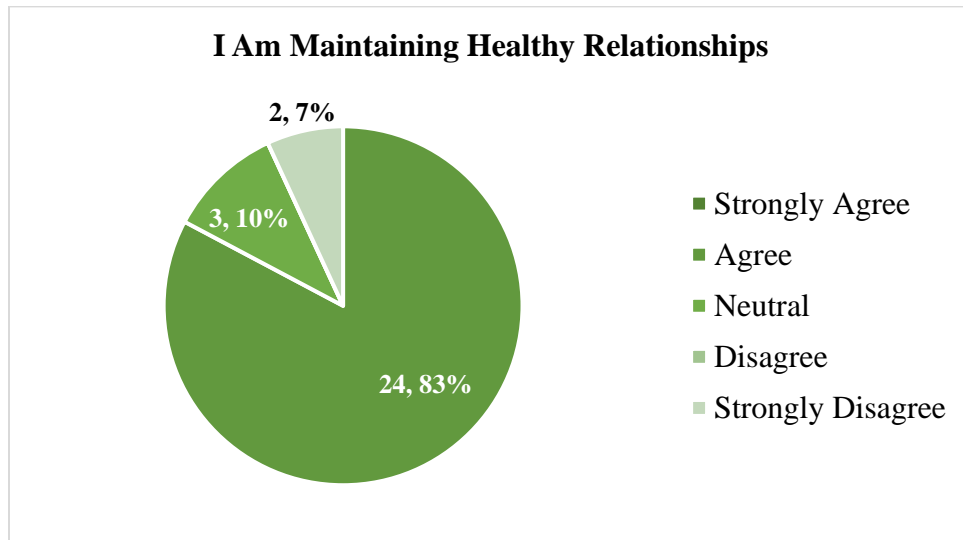
I am invested in the lives of others.

Ninety-three percent of the women agreed (twenty-one) or strongly agreed (six) that they were invested in the lives of others. One woman was neutral, and one woman strongly disagreed.



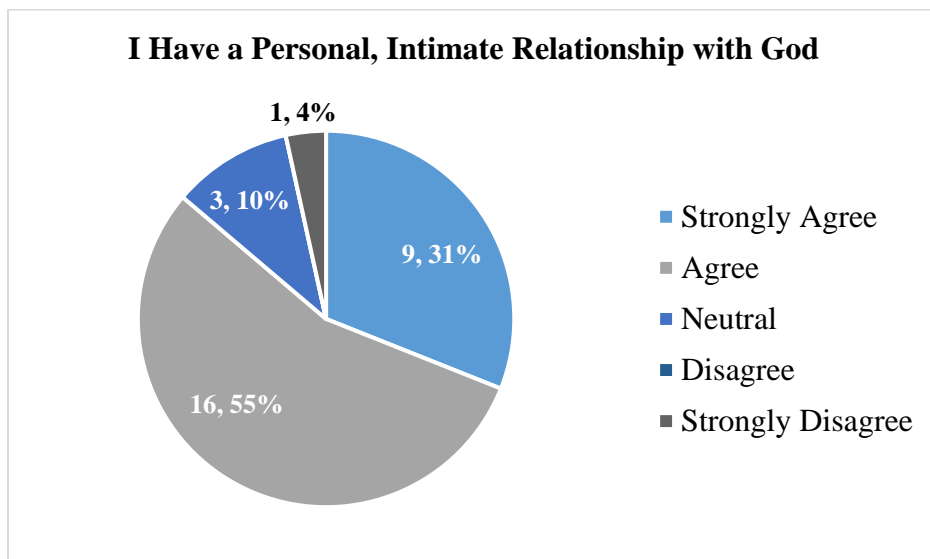
I am maintaining healthy relationships.

Eighty-three percent of respondents agreed they were maintaining healthy relationships in their lives. Three women were neutral on this topic and two women strongly disagreed about maintaining healthy relationships.



I have a personal, intimate relationship with God.

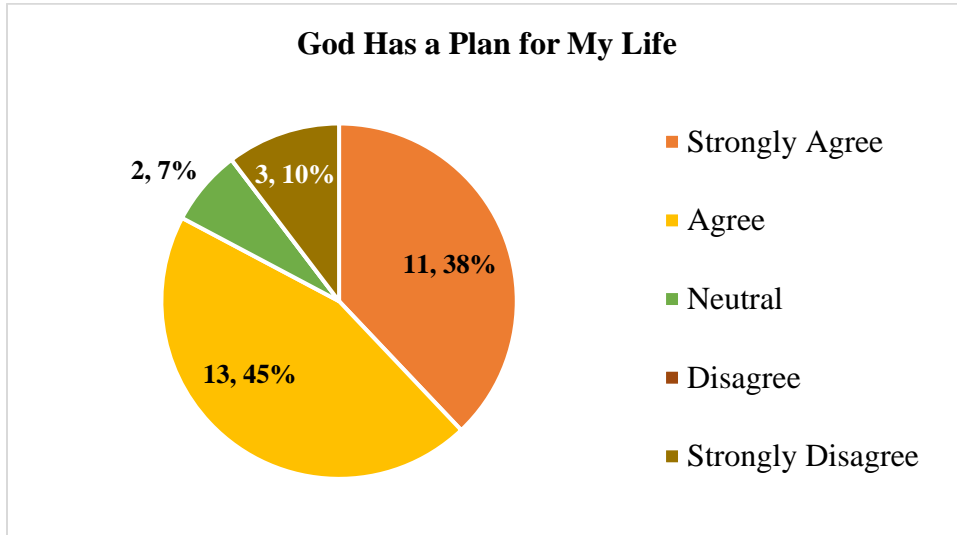
Sixteen women, or fifty-five percent, of participants agreed they had a personal, intimate relationship with God. Nine women, or thirty-one percent, strongly agreed with this statement. Three women were neutral, and one woman strongly disagreed with this statement.



God has a plan for my life.

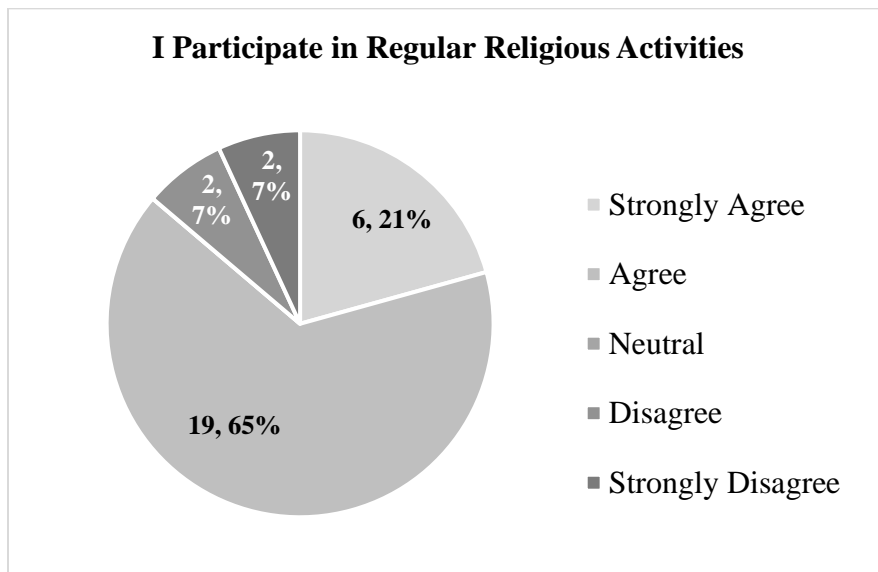
Twenty-four women or eighty-three percent believed that God had a plan for their life.

Three women strongly disagreed with that statement and two were neutral on the topic.



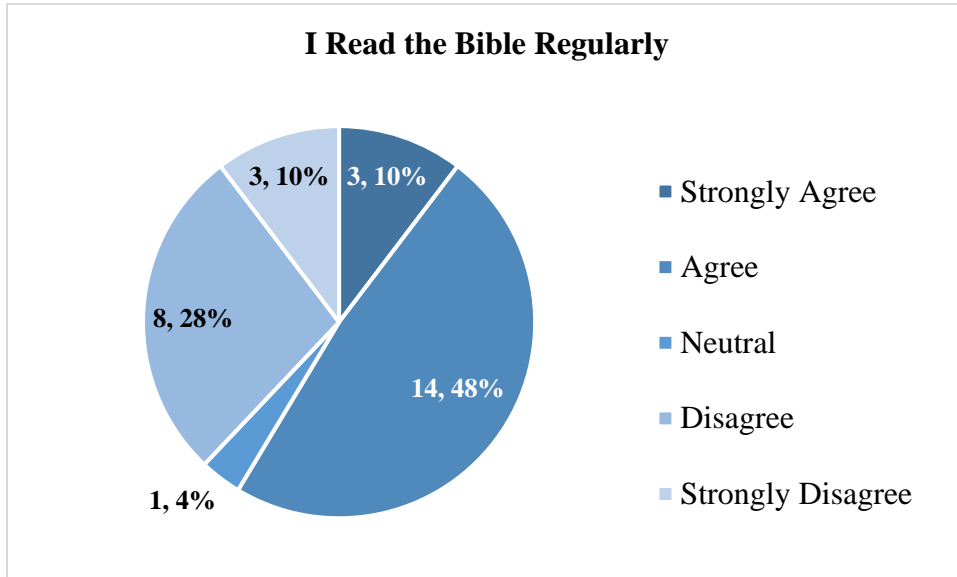
I participate in regular religious activities.

Eighty-six percent of respondents participated in regular religious activities. Four respondents did not.



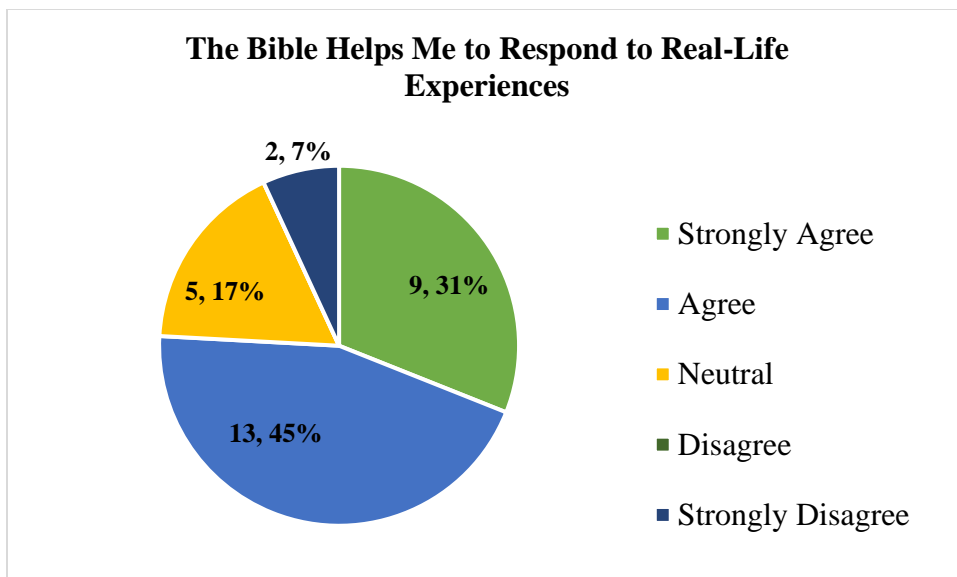
I read the Bible regularly.

Fifty-nine percent of women reported they read the Bible regularly. Forty-one percent of women did not regularly read the Bible.



The Bible helps me respond to real-life experiences.

Correlating with the previous question, nine women strongly agreed the Bible helps them respond to real-life experiences, thirteen agreed, five neither agreed nor disagreed, and two women strongly disagreed.





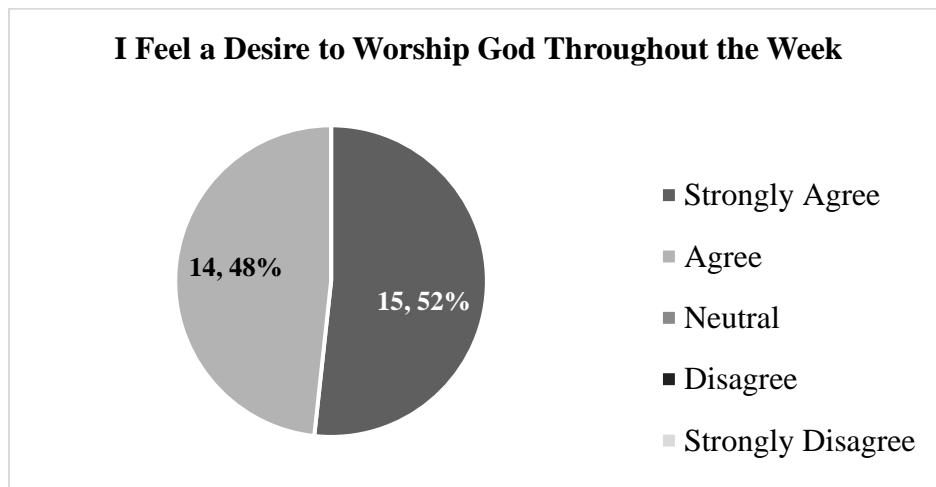
## Adapted Short Form of the Religious Status Inventory (RSInv-S10) Results

After receiving the initial questionnaires back from the participants, the Adapted Short Form of the Religious Status Inventory (RSInv-S10) was both emailed and mailed to the respondents. Twenty-nine inventories were sent out and all were returned. The inventories explored in greater detail the topics brought up in the initial questionnaire.

The inventory began by exploring statements about God and worship and led into investigating the participants' understanding of their acceptance of God's grace and steadfast love. After these statements, the inventory presented comments about God's leadership and direction and then explored the participants' involvement in organized religion. The inventory finished with the ways women experience fellowship and with statements about ethics.

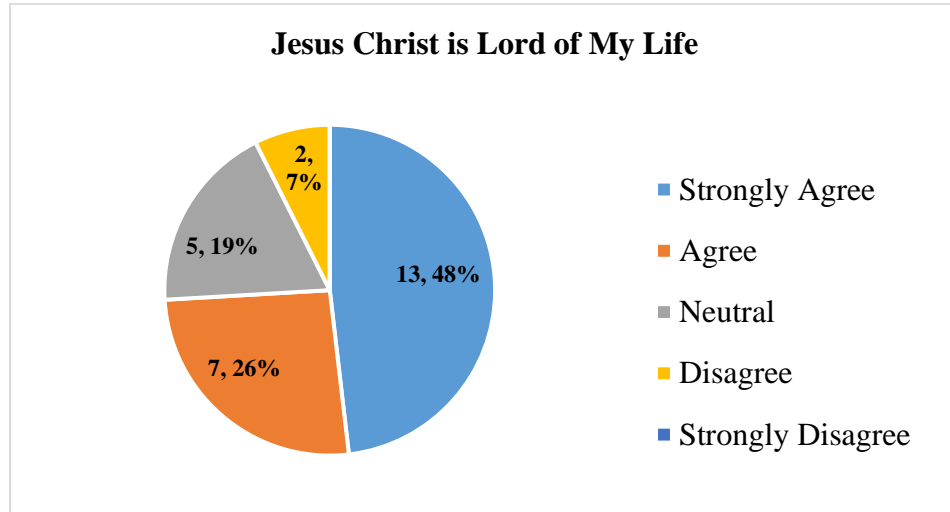
I feel a desire to worship God throughout the week.

One hundred percent of the women responded that they felt a desire to worship God throughout the week. Fifteen women strongly agreed with this statement and fourteen agreed.



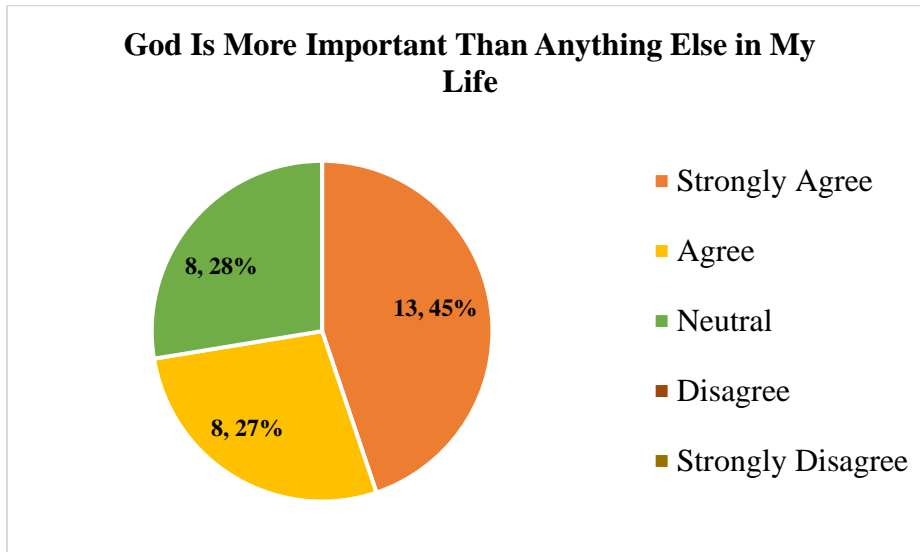
Jesus Christ is Lord of my life.

Thirteen women strongly agreed that Jesus Christ is Lord of their life, seven agreed, five neither agreed nor disagreed, and two disagreed.



God is more important than anything else in my life.

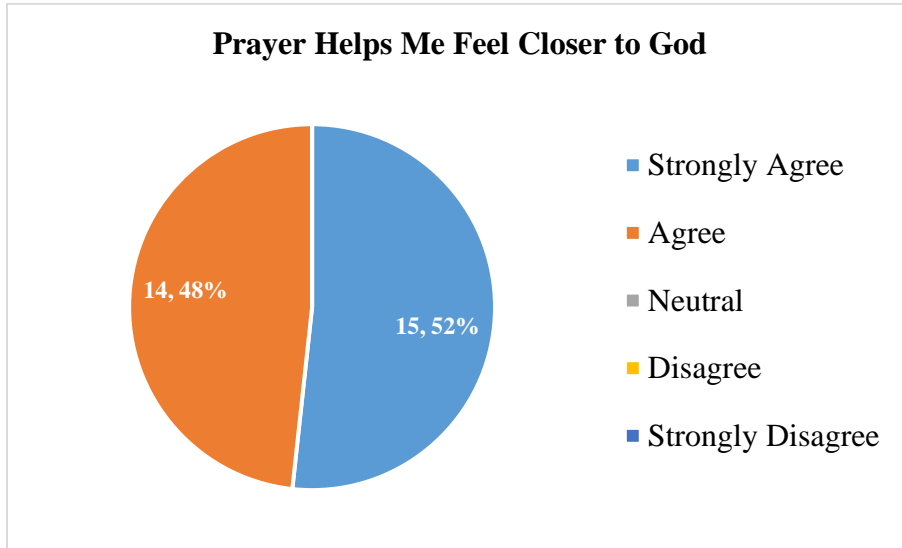
Thirteen participants state they strongly agreed that God is more important than anything else in their lives. Eight agreed with this statement and eight were neutral in their answer.



Prayer helps me feel closer to God.

One hundred percent of the respondents believed prayer helps them to feel closer to God.

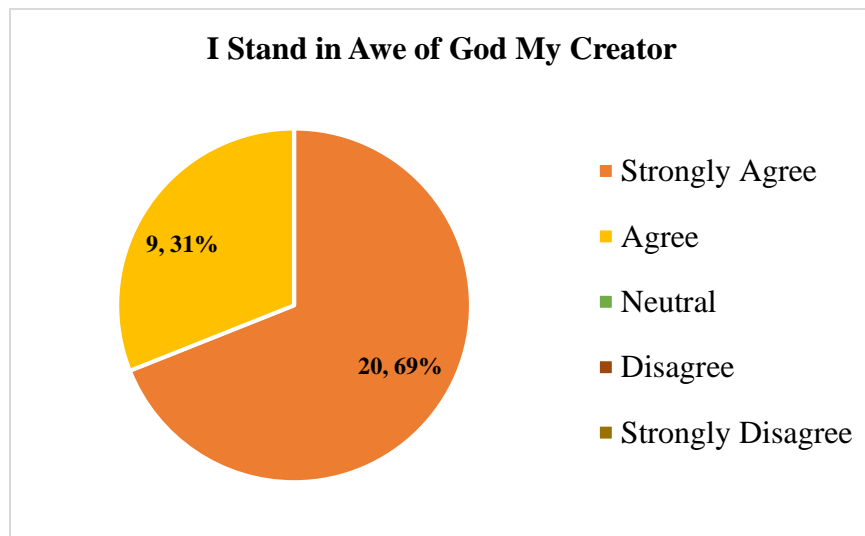
Fifteen strongly agreed and fourteen agreed with this statement.



I stand in awe of God my Creator.

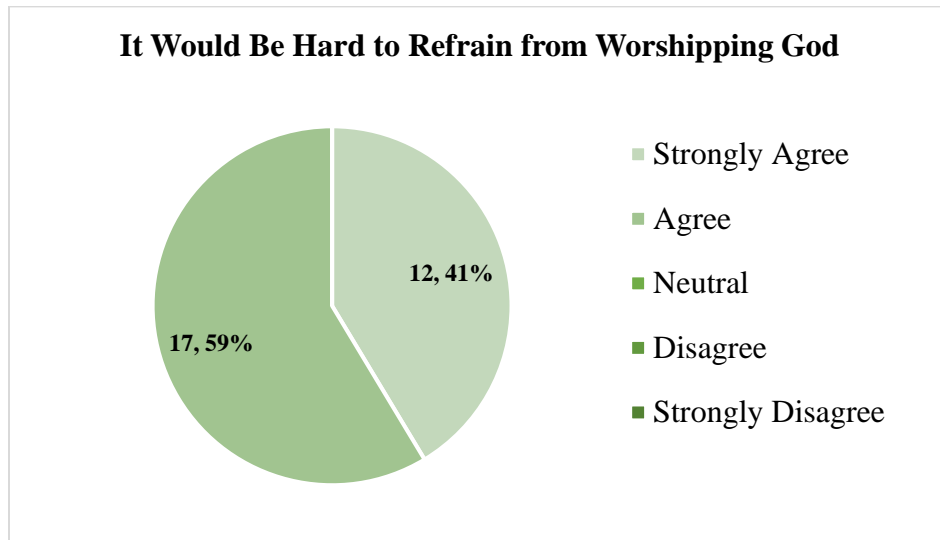
Psalm 33:8 says, *Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.* One hundred percent of the women reported that they stand in awe of God.

Twenty women strongly agreed and nine agreed.



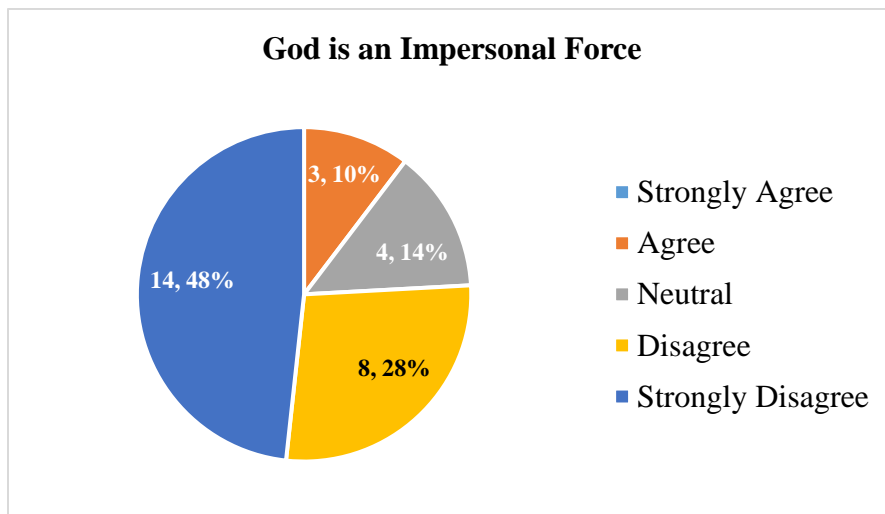
It would be hard to refrain from worshipping God.

Twelve women strongly agreed it would be difficult to refrain from worshipping God and seventeen women agreed. These scores correspond to the previous statements about worshipping God.



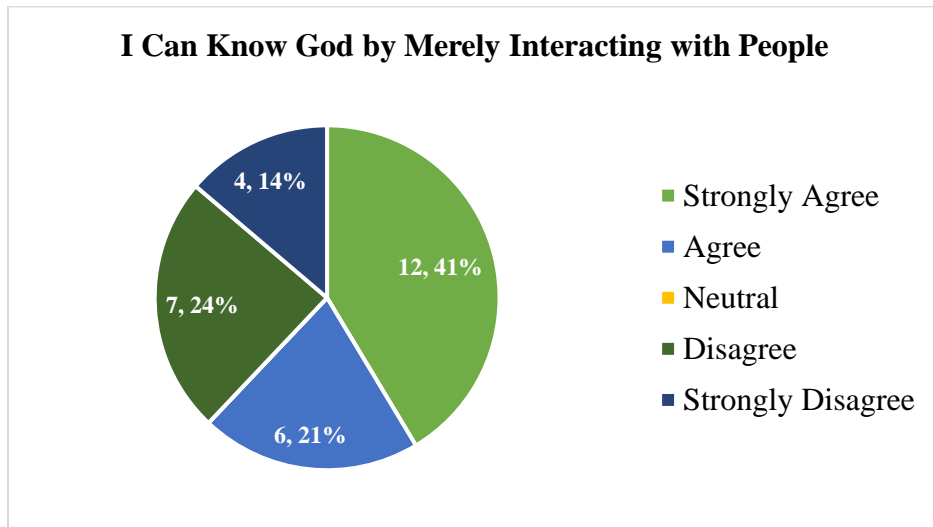
God is an impersonal force.

Eight respondents strongly disagreed that God is an impersonal force. Fourteen disagreed, four neither agreed nor disagreed and three agreed.



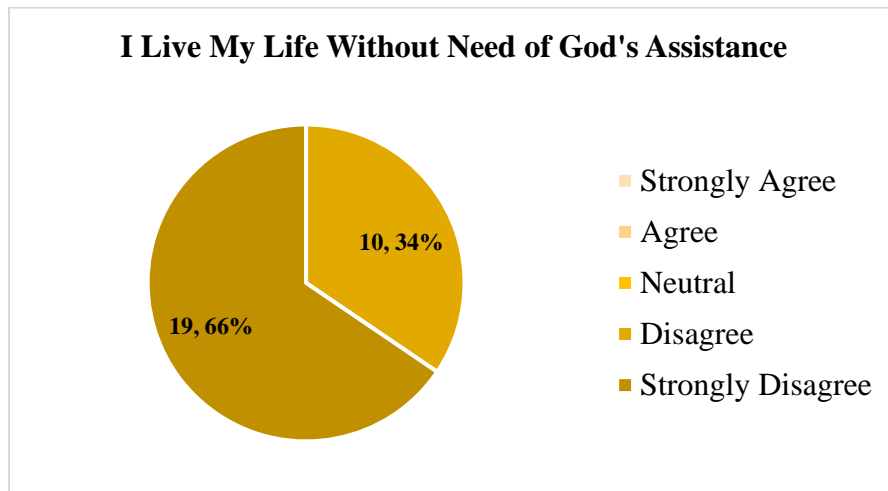
I can know God merely by interacting with people.

Twelve women or twenty forty-one percent of the women strongly agreed they can know God merely by interacting with people. Six women agreed, seven women disagreed and four women strongly disagreed with this statement.



I live my life without need of God's assistance.

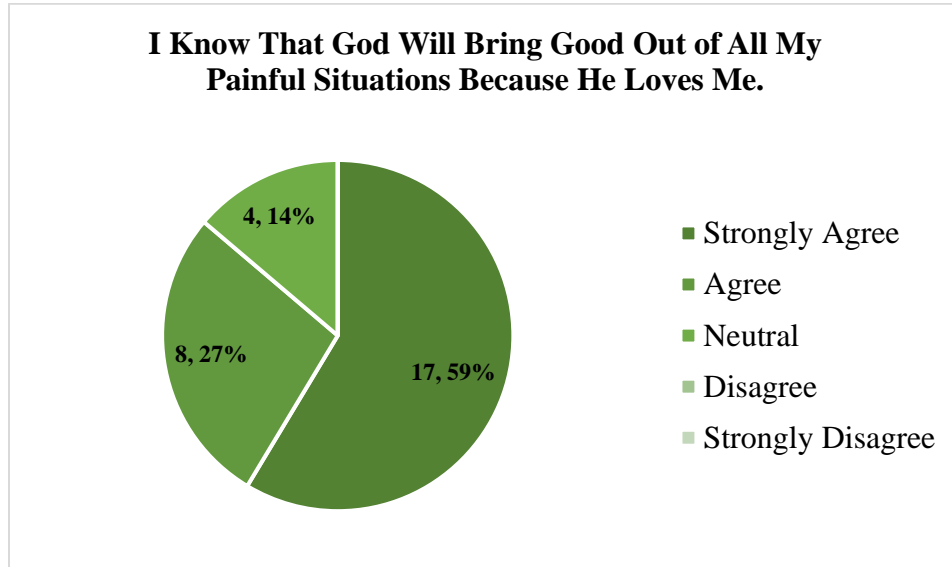
The respondents were clear that they need God's assistance in their lives. Nineteen strongly disagreed and ten disagreed that they cannot live without God's assistance.



The survey then explores the acceptance of God's grace and steadfast love.

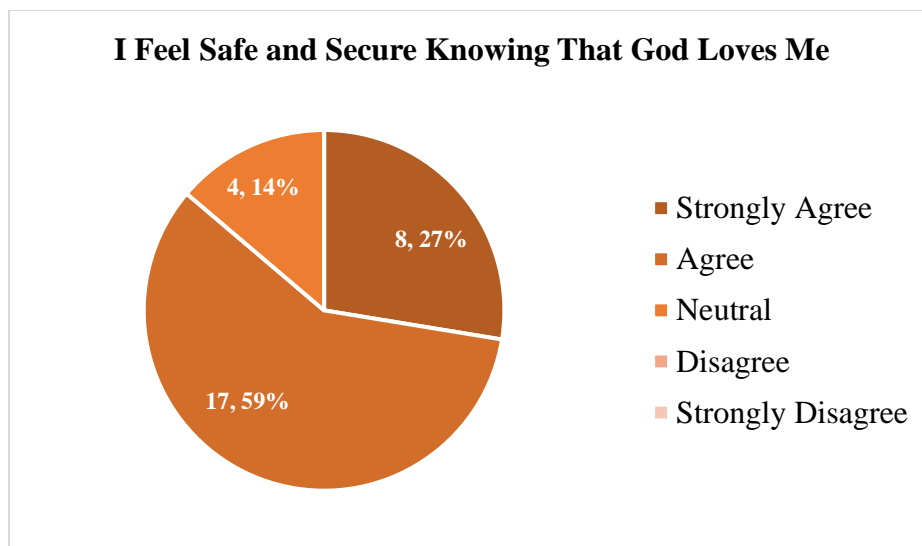
I know that God will bring good out of all my painful situations because he loves me.

Seventeen women strongly agreed God will bring good out of painful situations, eight women agreed and four women neither agreed nor disagreed.



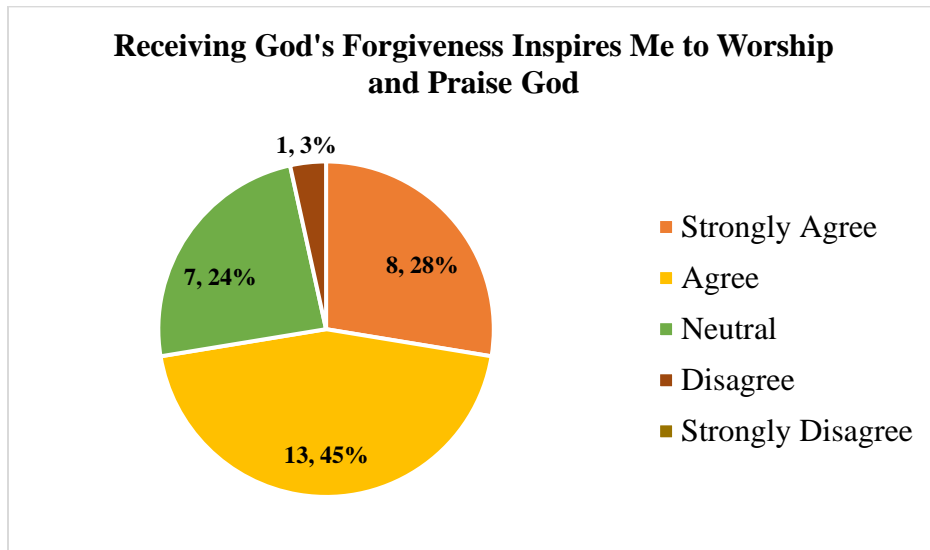
I feel safe and secure knowing that God loves me.

Seventeen of the participants agreed that knowing that God loves them makes them feel safe and secure. Eight strongly agreed with that statement and four neither agreed nor disagreed.



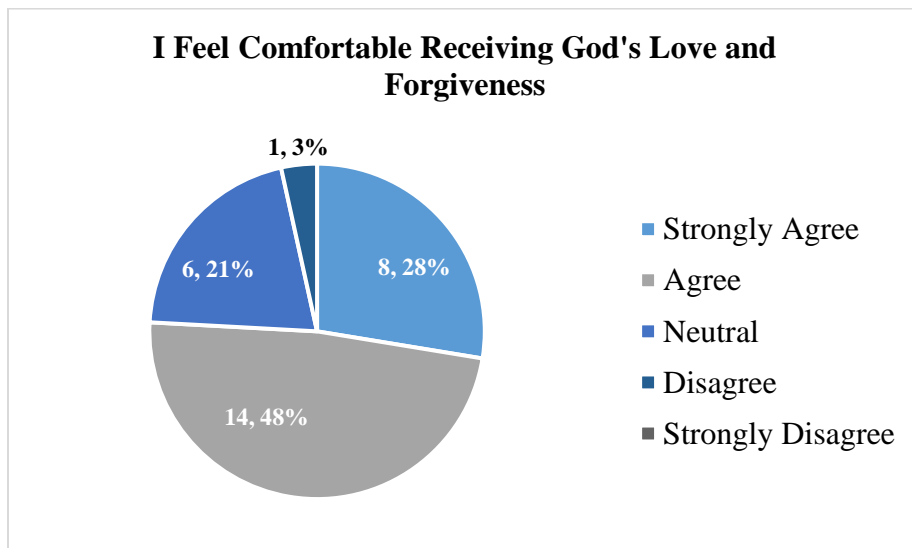
Receiving God's forgiveness inspires me to worship and praise God.

Thirteen women agreed that knowing and receiving God's forgiveness inspires them to praise and worship. Eight strongly agreed, seven neither agreed nor disagreed and one woman disagreed.



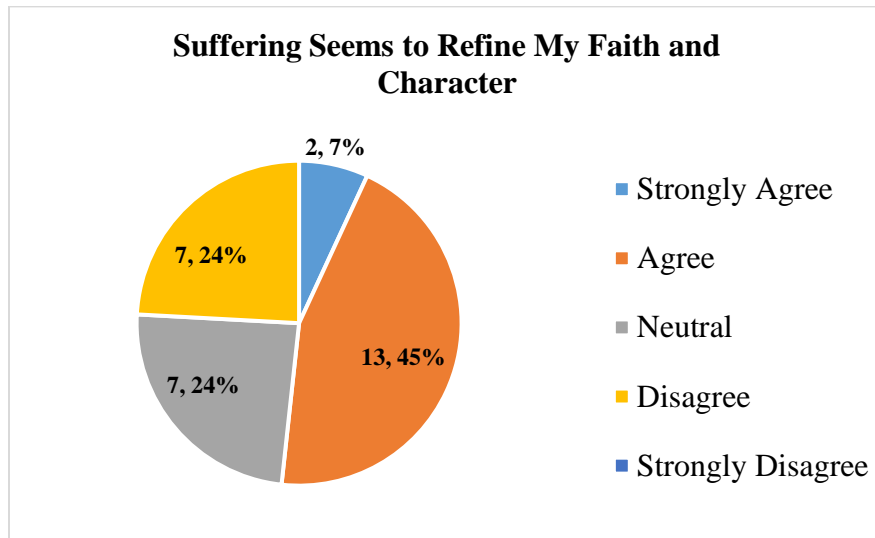
I feel comfortable receiving God's love and forgiveness.

Similarly, being inspired to worship and praise God by receiving forgiveness, fourteen women agreed to feeling comfortable receiving God's love and forgiveness, while eight strongly agreed, six neither agreed nor disagreed and one woman disagreed.



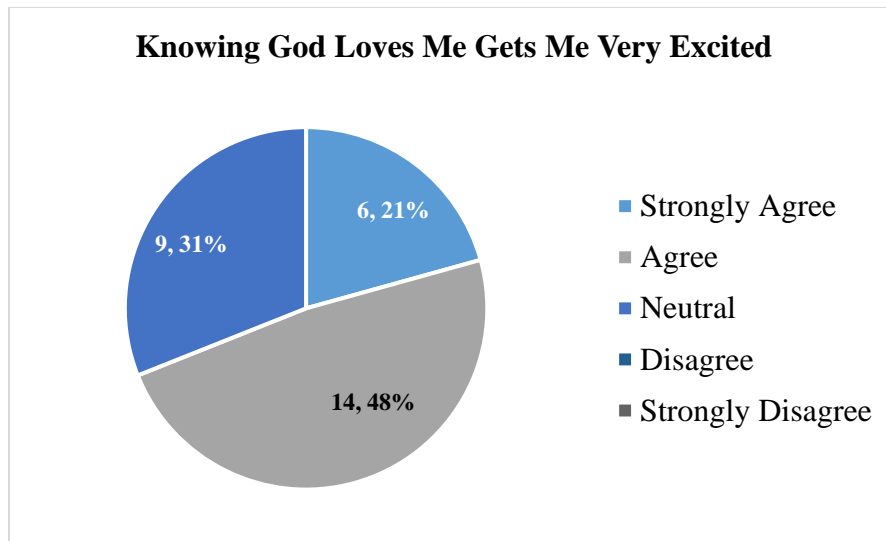
Suffering seems to refine my faith and character.

The results of this statement were spread differently. Thirteen women agreed that suffering seems to refine their faith and character and two women strongly agreed. Seven women neither agreed nor disagreed and seven women disagreed.



Knowing God loves me gets me very excited.

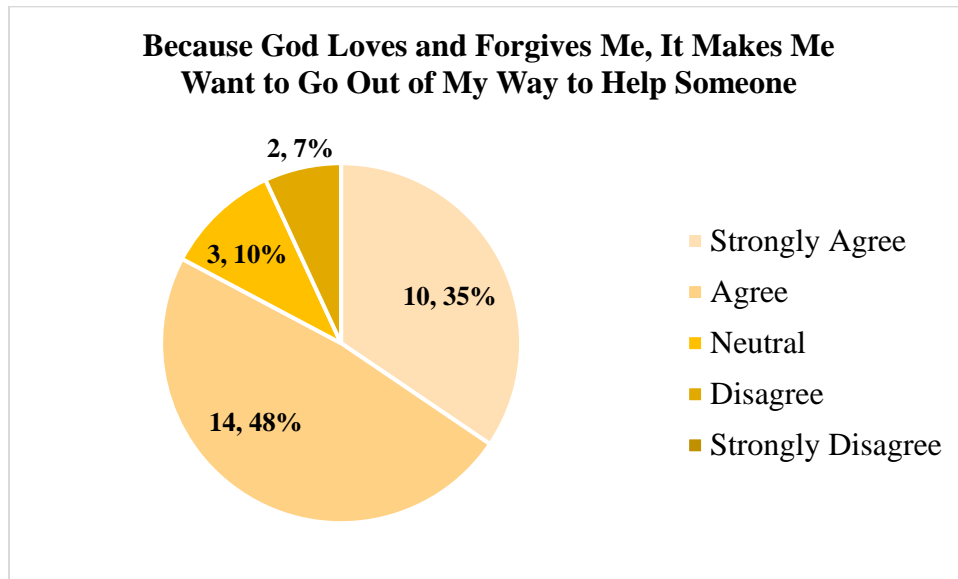
Fourteen participants agreed they get very excited knowing that God loves them. Six strongly agreed, and nine neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.





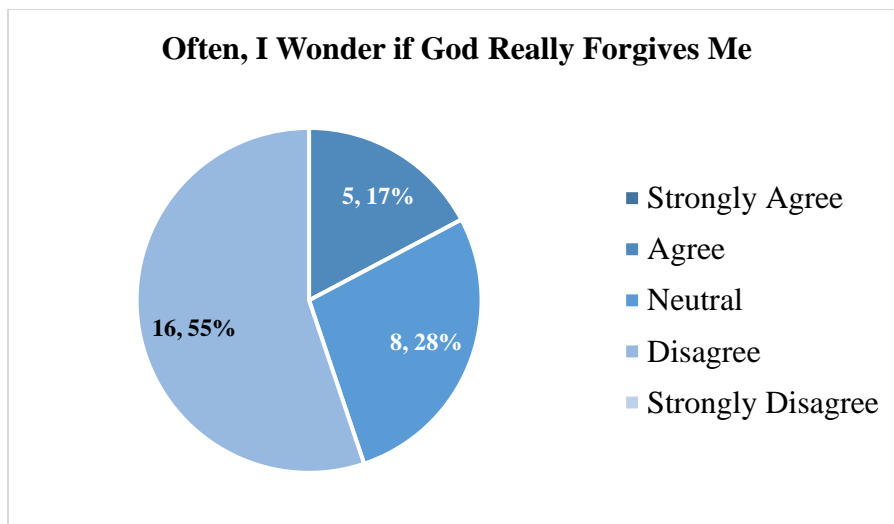
Because God loves and forgives me it makes me want to go out of my way to help someone.

Fourteen women agreed it makes them want to go out of their way to help someone because God loves and forgives them. Ten women agreed, three neither agreed nor disagreed and two women disagreed.



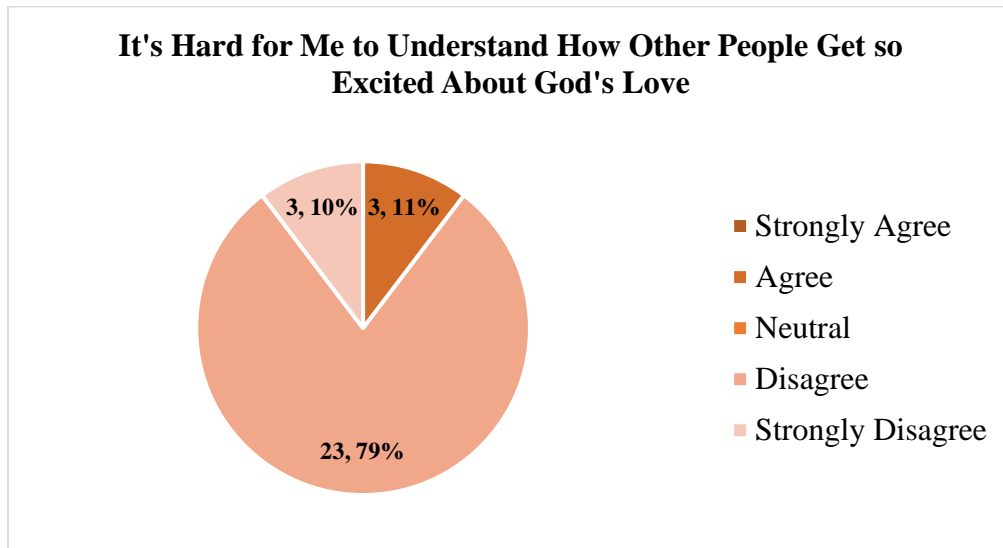
Often, I wonder if God really forgives me.

Sixteen women disagreed that they often wonder if God really forgives them. Eight women neither agreed nor disagreed, and five women agreed they wonder.



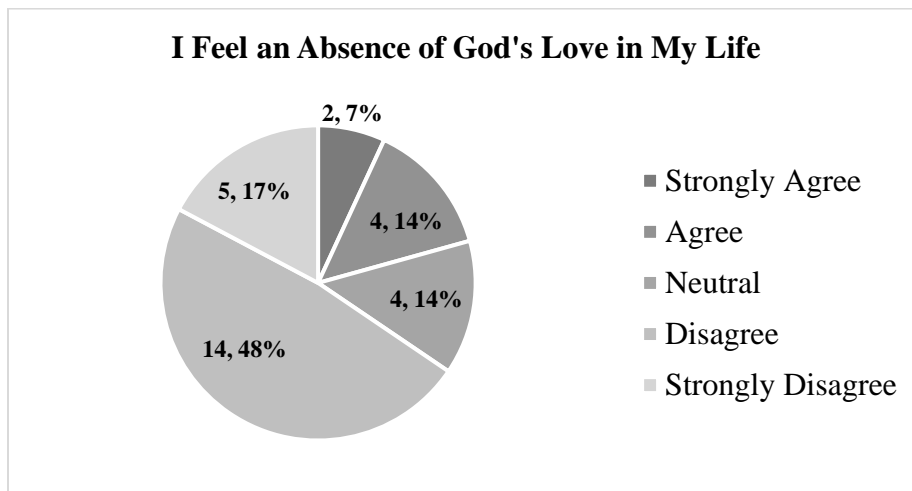
It's hard for me to understand how other people get so excited about God's love.

Twenty-three of the respondents disagreed it is hard for them to understand how other's get excited about God's love. Three respondents strongly disagreed and three agreed with this statement.



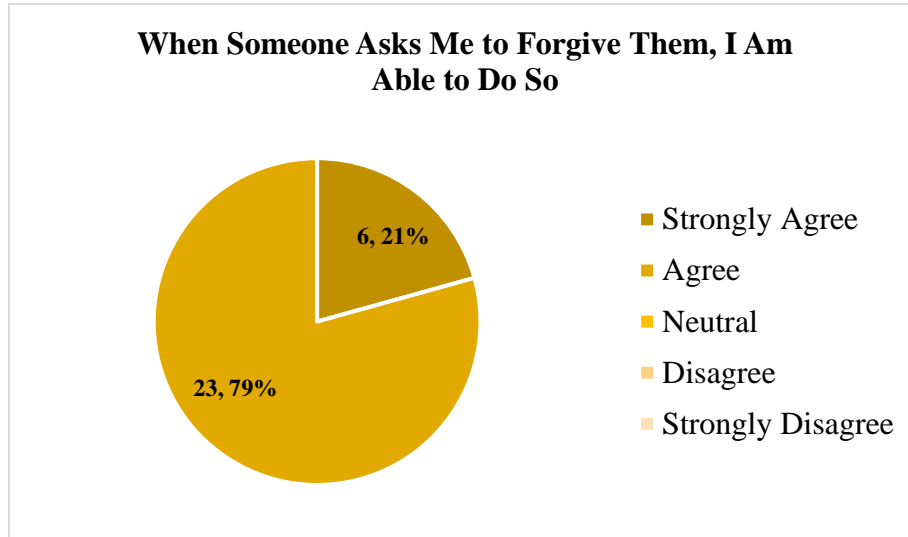
I feel an absence of God's love in my life.

Fourteen women disagreed that they feel an absence of God's love in their life. Five strongly disagreed with this statement, four neither agreed nor disagreed, four women agreed, and two women strongly agreed to an absence of feeling God's love in their life.



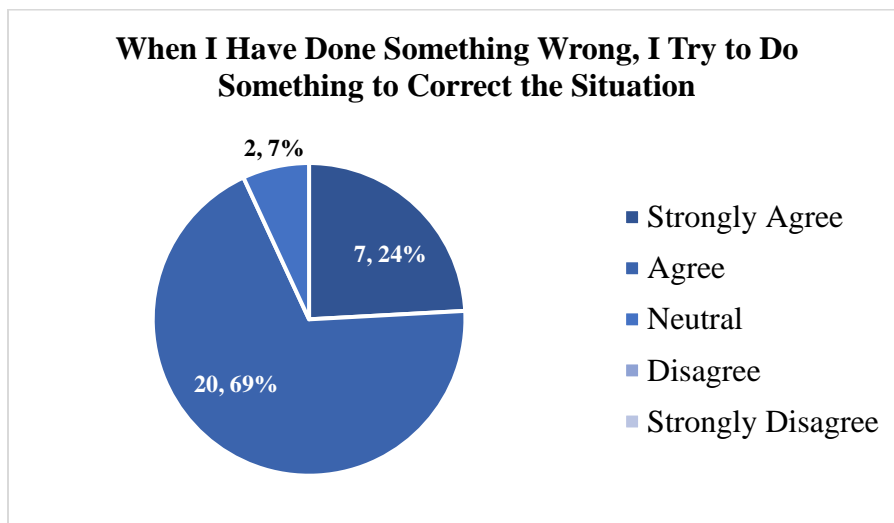
When someone asks me to forgive them, I am able to do so.

Twenty-three women agreed that they are able to forgive when asked and six strongly agreed they are able to forgive when asked.



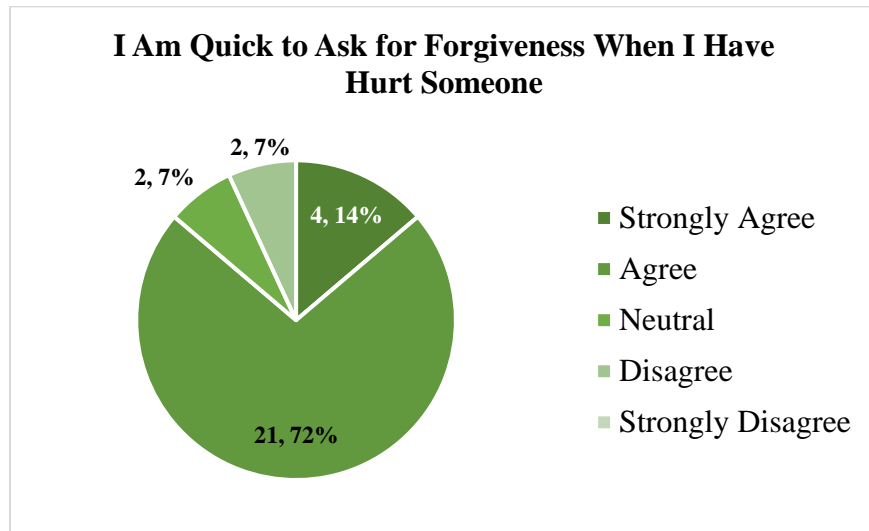
When I have done something wrong, I try to do something to correct the situation.

Twenty survey responders agreed they try to correct wrongful situations created by them. Seven strongly agreed and two neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement.



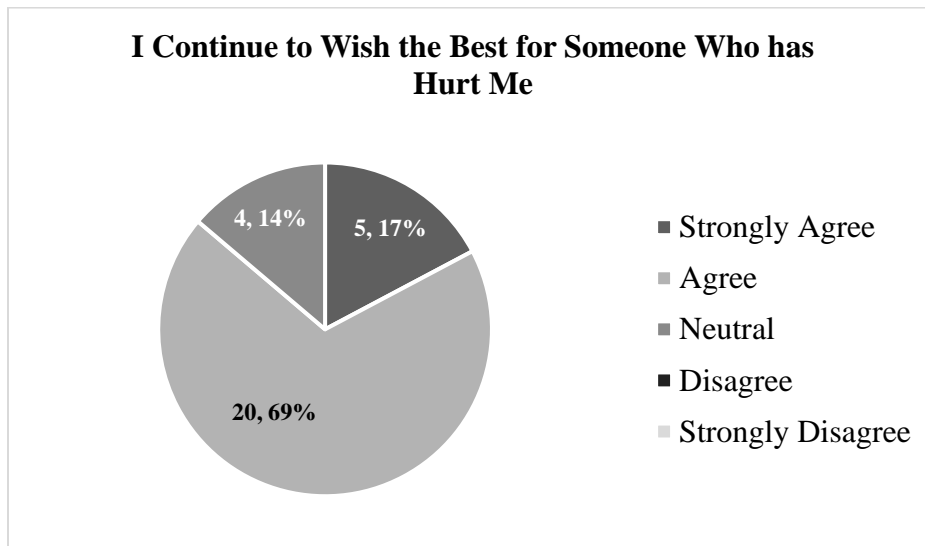
I am quick to ask for forgiveness when I have hurt someone.

Twenty-one women agreed they are quick to ask for forgiveness, four women strongly agreed, two neither agreed nor disagreed and two disagreed they are quick to forgive.



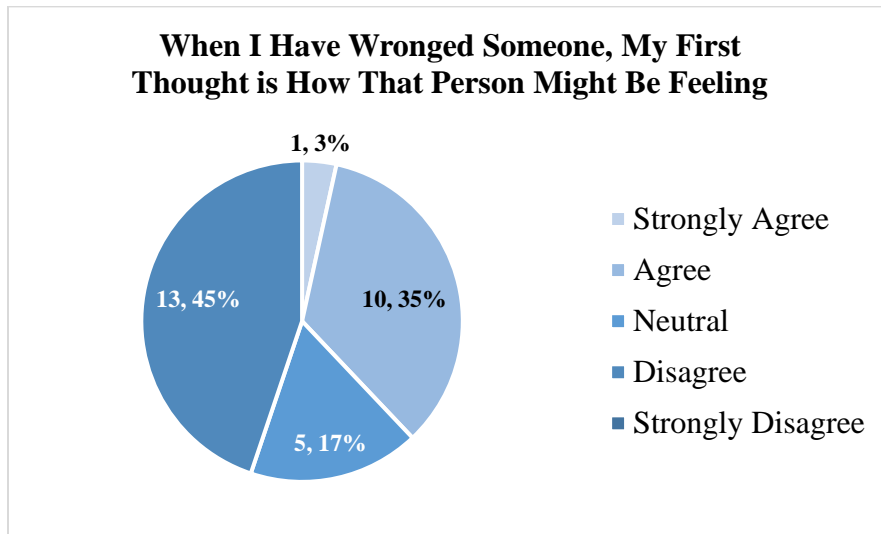
I continue to wish the best for someone who has hurt me.

Twenty individuals agreed they are able to wish the best for someone who has hurt them. Five individuals strongly agreed they are able to wish the best and four neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement.



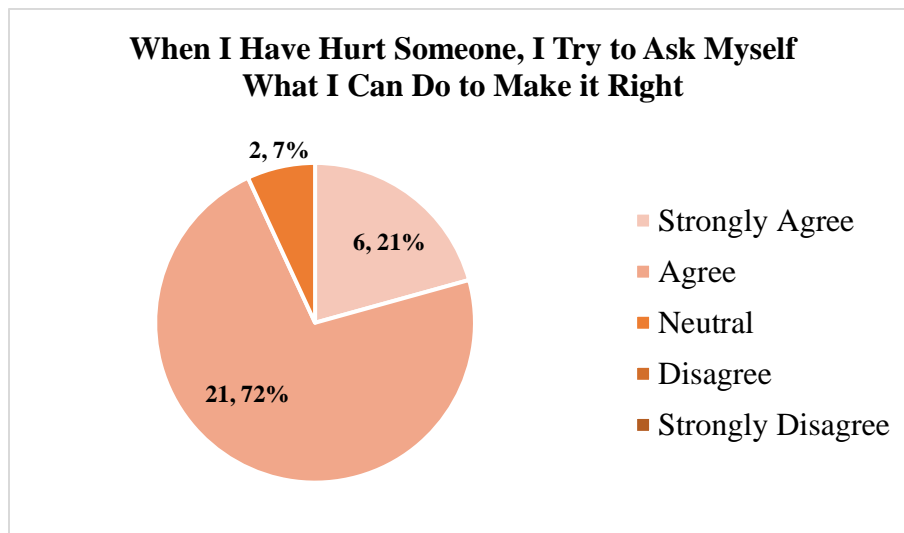
When I have wronged someone, my first thought is how that person might be feeling.

Thirteen women disagreed that their first thought is how a person they have wronged might be feeling. Five women neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement. Ten women agreed they think of others first and one woman strongly agreed.



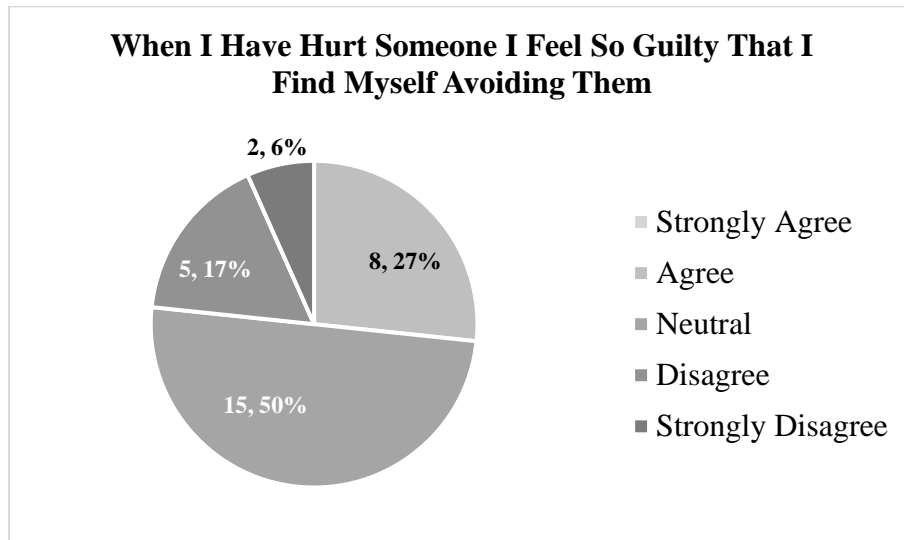
When I have hurt someone, I try to ask myself what I can do to make it right.

Twenty-one participants agreed that they try to make things right when they hurt someone. Six strongly agreed they do this and two neither agreed nor disagreed.



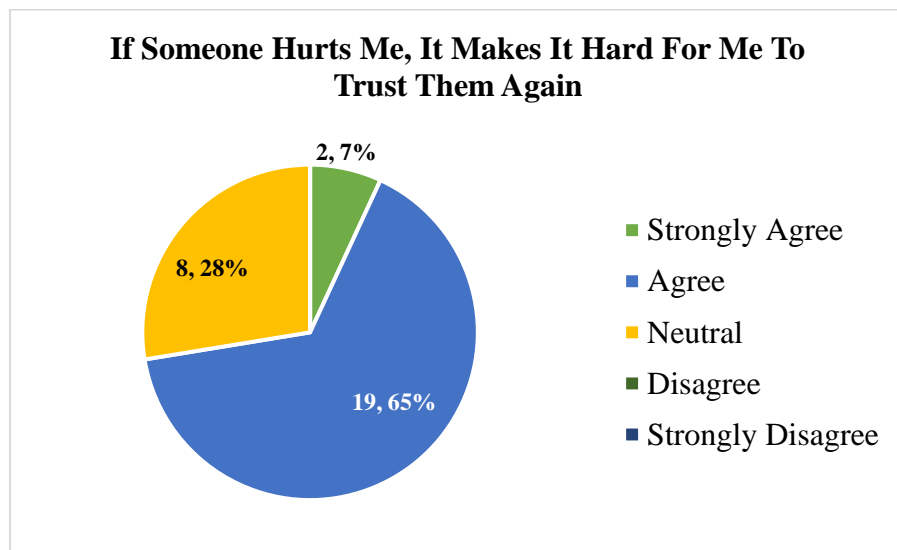
When I have hurt someone, I feel so guilty that I find myself avoiding them.

Eight women agreed that they try to avoid someone after they have hurt them because of feeling guilty. Fifteen women neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement. Five women disagreed and two strongly disagreed.



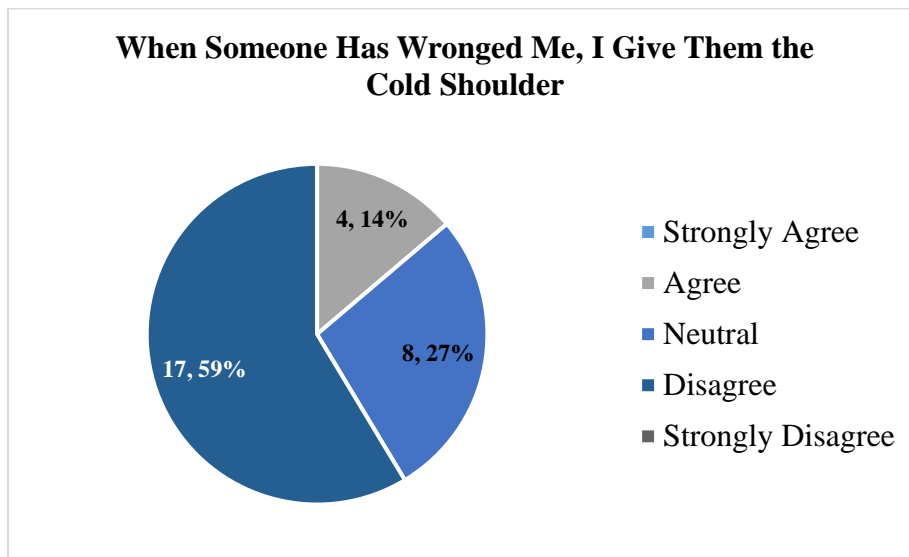
If someone hurts me, it makes it hard for me to trust them again.

Nineteen participants agreed to having a hard time trusting someone after they have been hurt. Two strongly agreed. and eight neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement.



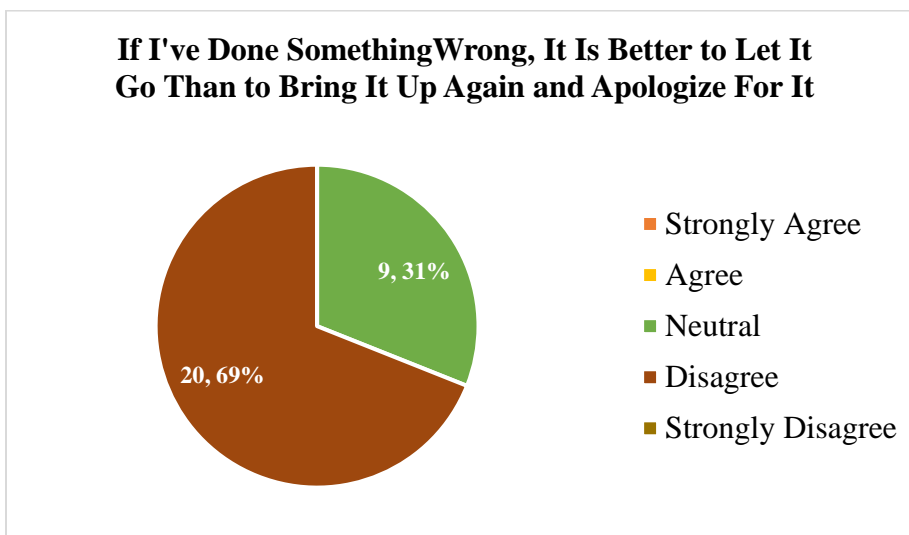
When someone has wronged me, I give them the cold shoulder.

Seventeen women disagreed with this statement. Eight neither agreed nor disagreed and four women agreed to giving the cold shoulder to someone who has wronged them.



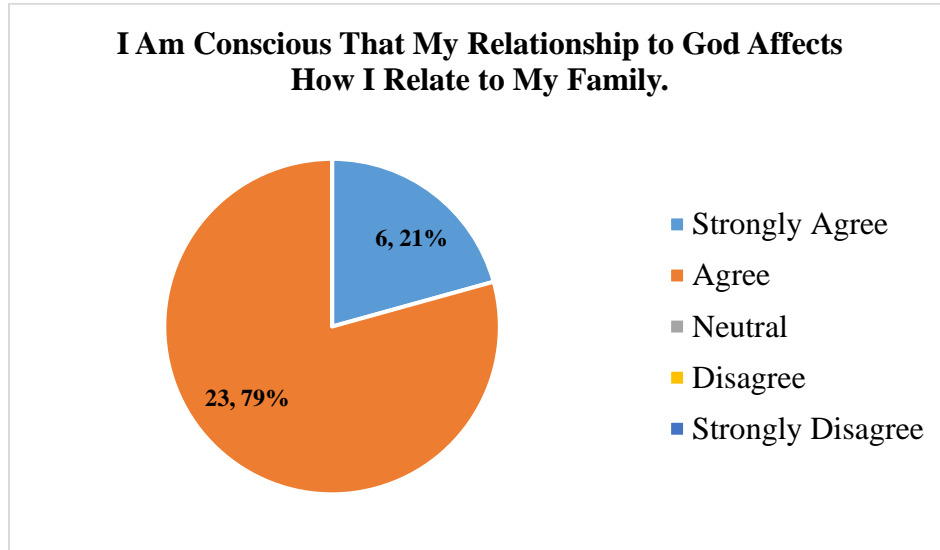
If I've done something wrong, it is better to let it go than to bring it up again and apologize for it.

Twenty respondents disagreed it is better to let something go when you have done something wrong rather than bring it up and apologize for it. Nine participants neither agreed nor disagreed.



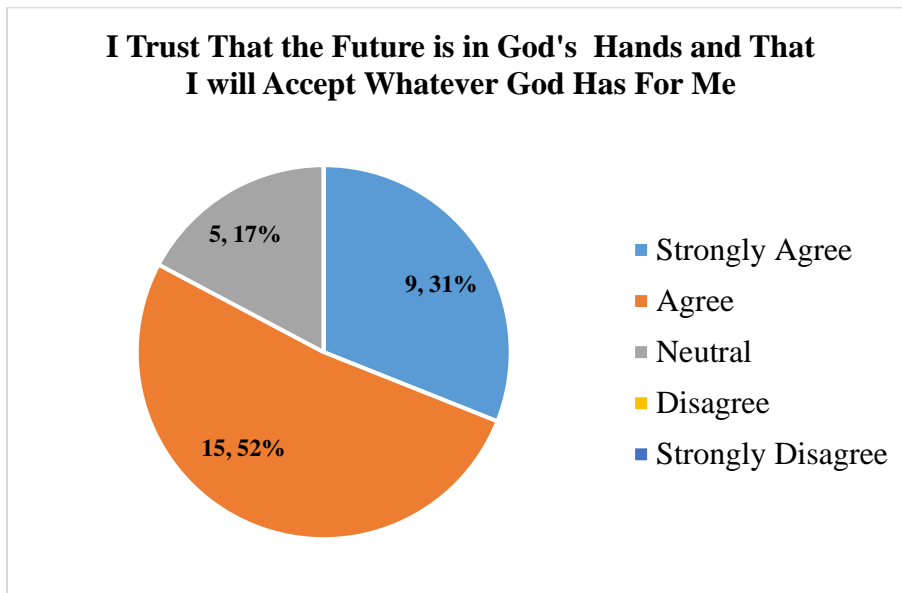
I am conscious that my relationship to God affects how I relate to my family.

Twenty-three women reported they are conscious that their relationship to God affects how they relate to their families. Six women strongly agreed this is true.



I trust that the future is in God's hands and that I will accept whatever God has for me.

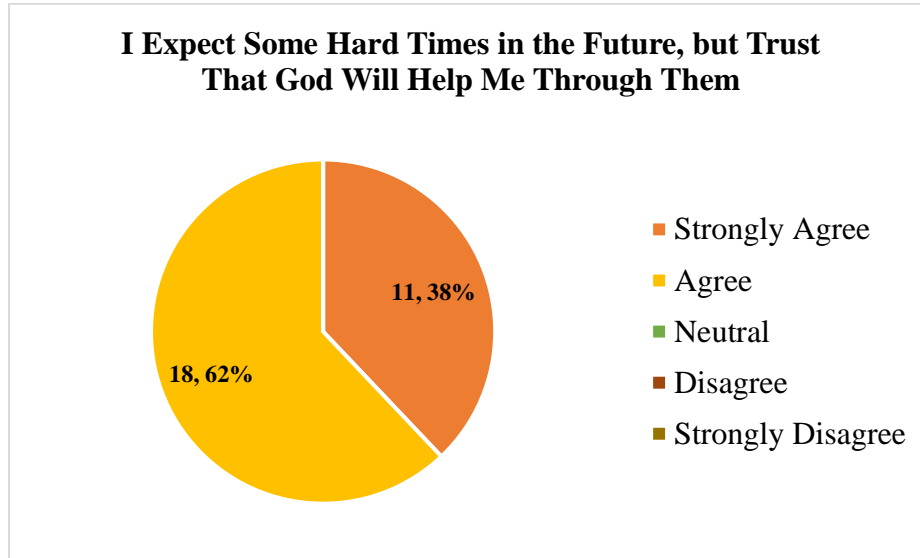
Fifteen participants believed the future is in God's hands and will accept what God has for them. Nine strongly agreed this is true and five neither agreed nor disagreed.





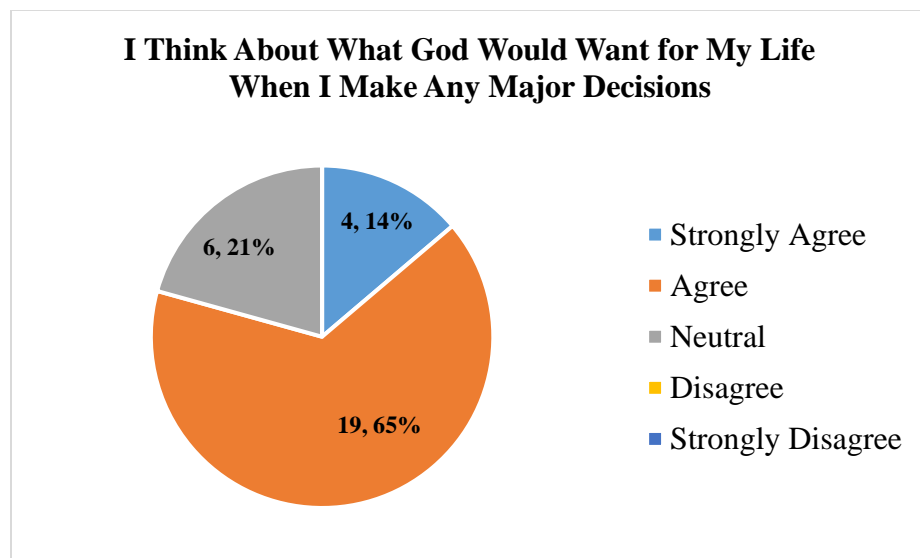
I expect some hard times in the future but trust that God will help me thorough them.

All twenty-nine women expected hard times and trust that God will help them through these times. Eighteen agreed and eleven strongly agreed with this statement.



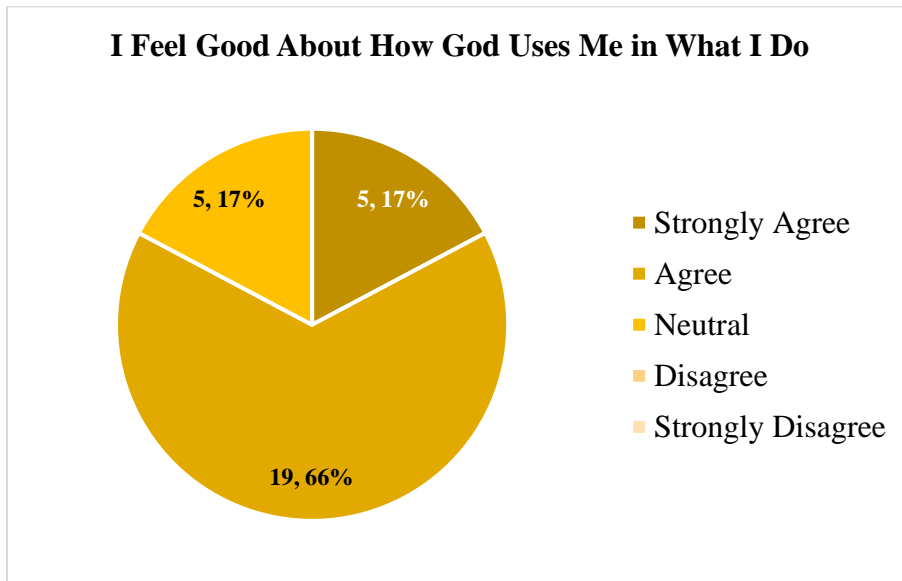
I think about what God would want for my life when I make any major decisions.

Nineteen respondents agreed and four strongly agreed to thinking about what God wants for their lives when they make major decision. Six respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.



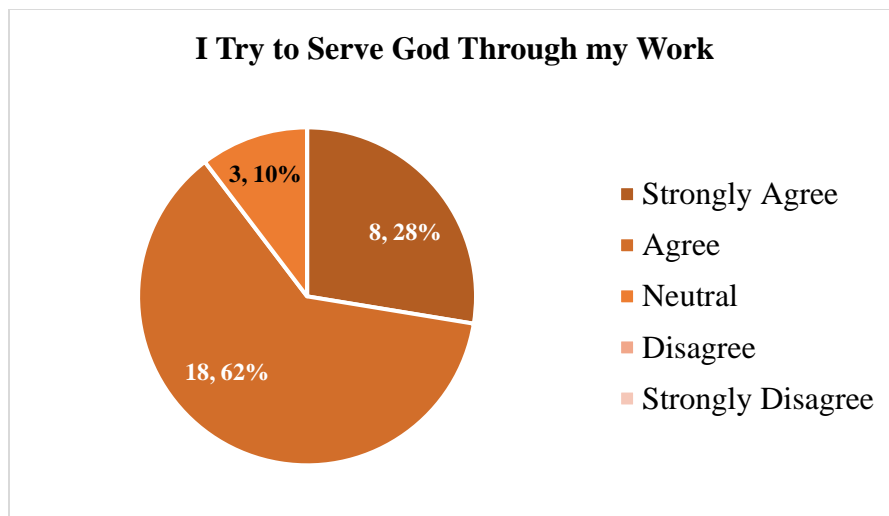
I feel good about how God uses me in what I do.

With results similar to the previous statement, nineteen respondents agreed and five strongly agreed to feeling good about how God uses them in their lives. Five neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement.



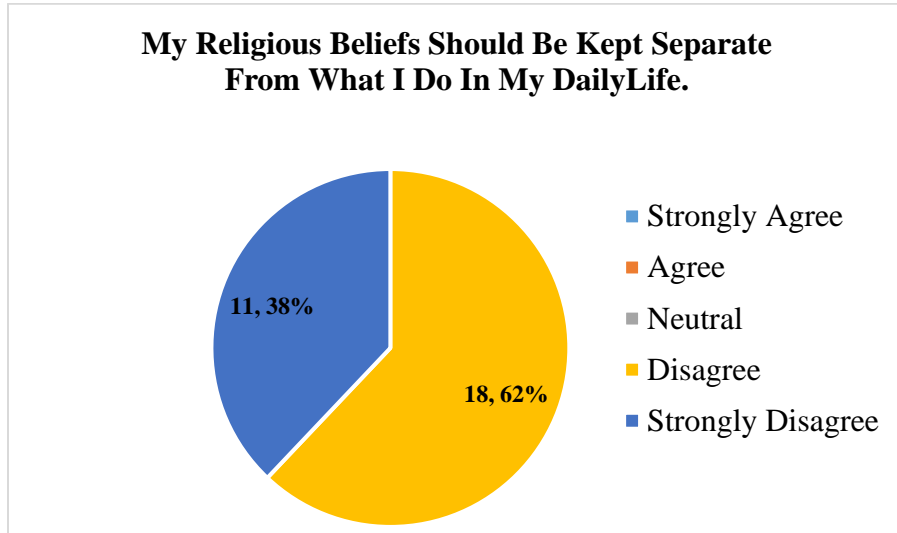
I try to serve God through my work.

Eighteen women agreed and eight strongly agreed trying to serve God through their work. Three women neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement.



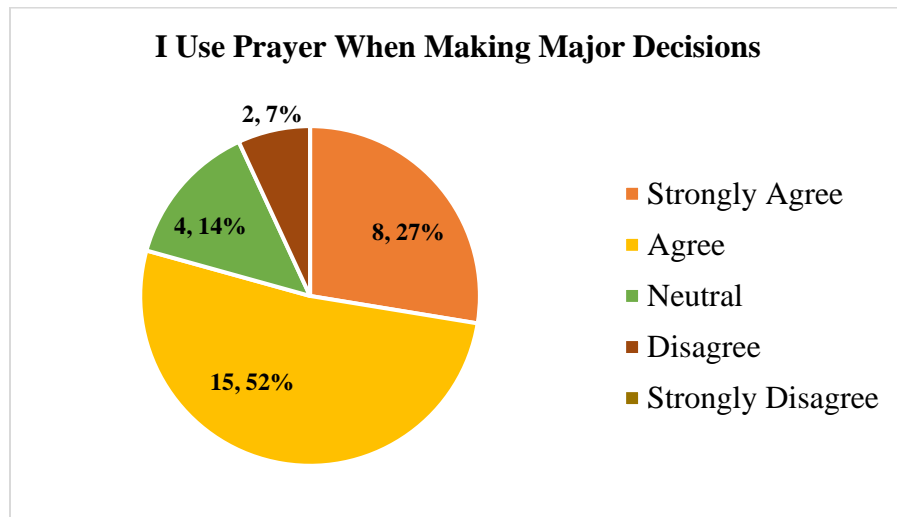
My religious beliefs should be kept separate from what I do in my daily life.

All of the participants disagreed, eighteen, or strongly disagreed, eleven, their religious beliefs should be kept separate from what they do in their daily lives.



I use prayer when making major decisions.

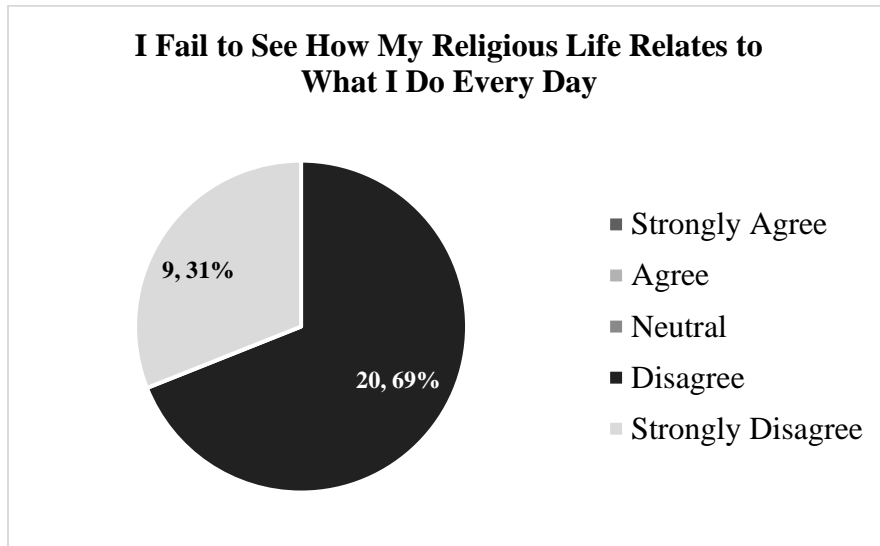
Fifteen women agreed and eight strongly agreed to using prayer when making major decisions. Four women neither agreed nor disagreed and two disagreed with this statement.



I fail to see how my religious life relates to what I do every day.

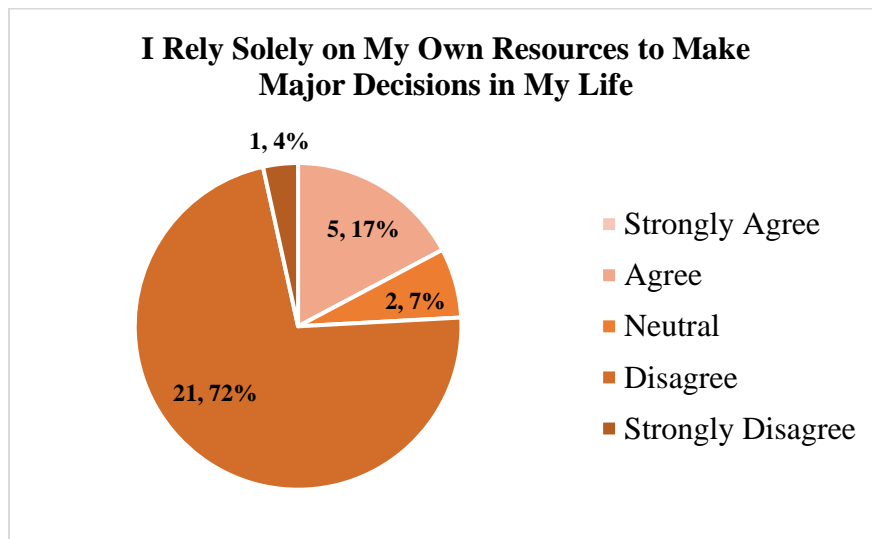
All the respondents disagreed, twenty or strongly disagreed, nine, with this statement.

They could see how their religious life related to what they do every day.



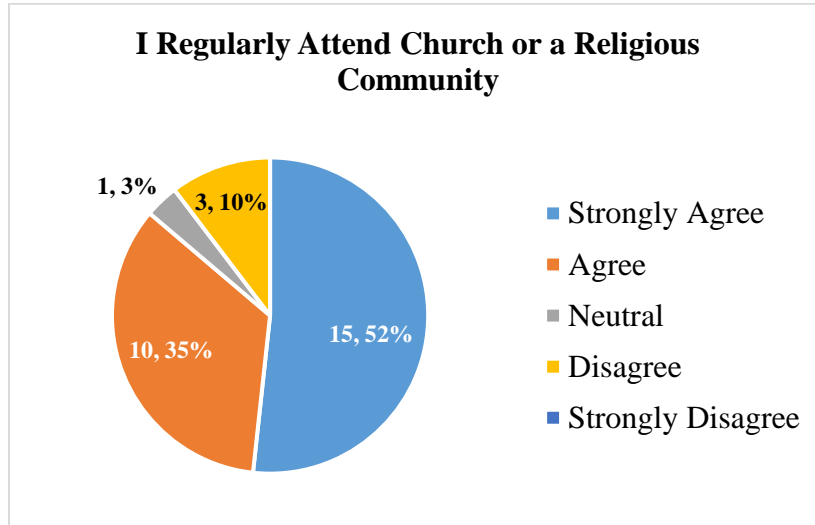
I rely solely on my own resources to make major decisions in my life.

Twenty-one women disagreed and one strongly disagreed to relying on their own resources when making major decisions in their lives. Two women neither agreed nor disagreed and five women believed they rely on their own resources.



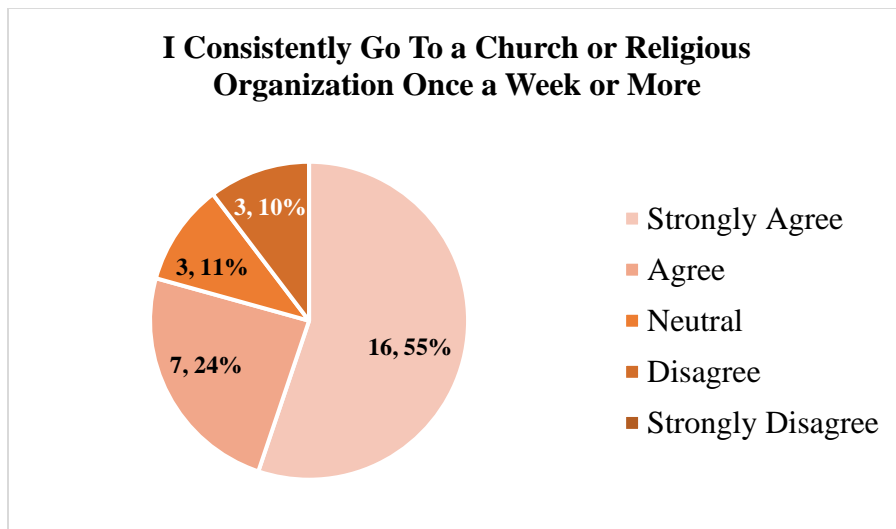
I regularly attend church or a religious community.

Fifteen women strongly agreed and ten agreed to regular church attendance. One woman neither agreed nor disagreed and three women disagreed to attending regularly.



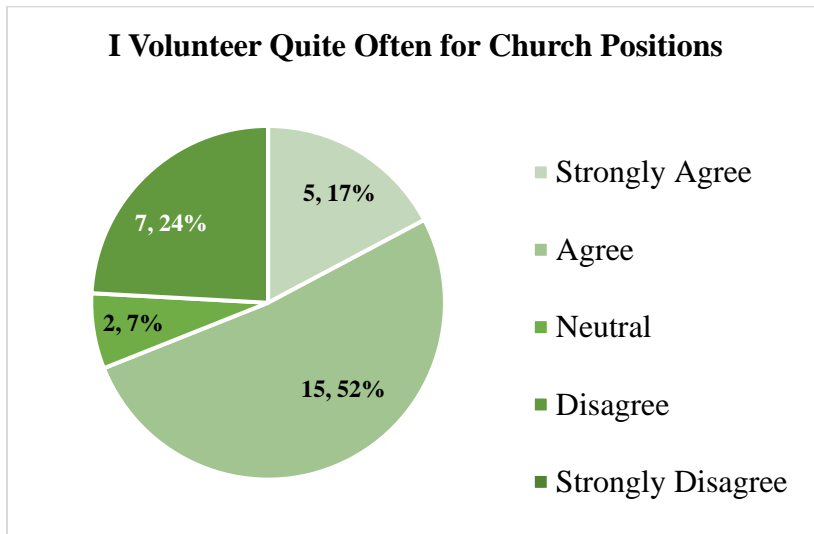
I consistently go to a church or religious organization once a week or more.

Exploring this topic further, sixteen women strongly agreed they consistently go to a church or religious organization once a week or more. Seven women agreed, three neither agreed nor disagreed and three disagreed with this statement.



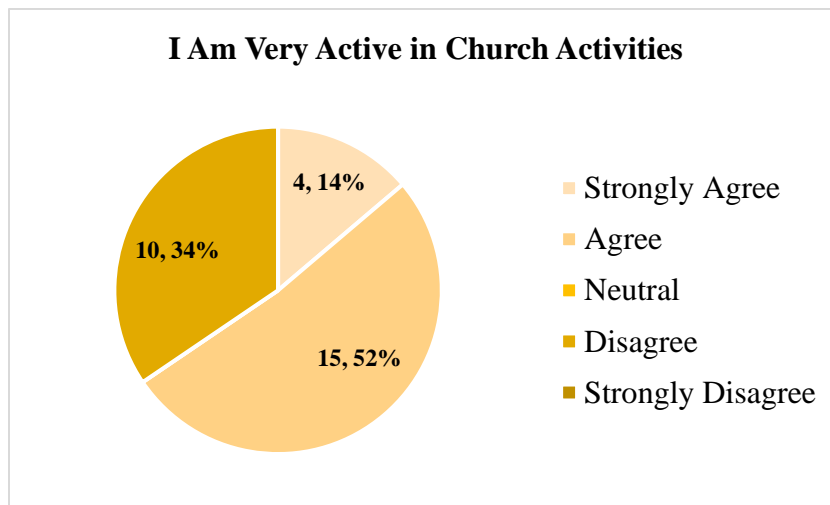
I volunteer quite often for church positions.

Fifteen of the respondents agreed and five strongly agreed they volunteer often for church positions. Two respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, and seven disagreed to volunteering often for positions in the church.



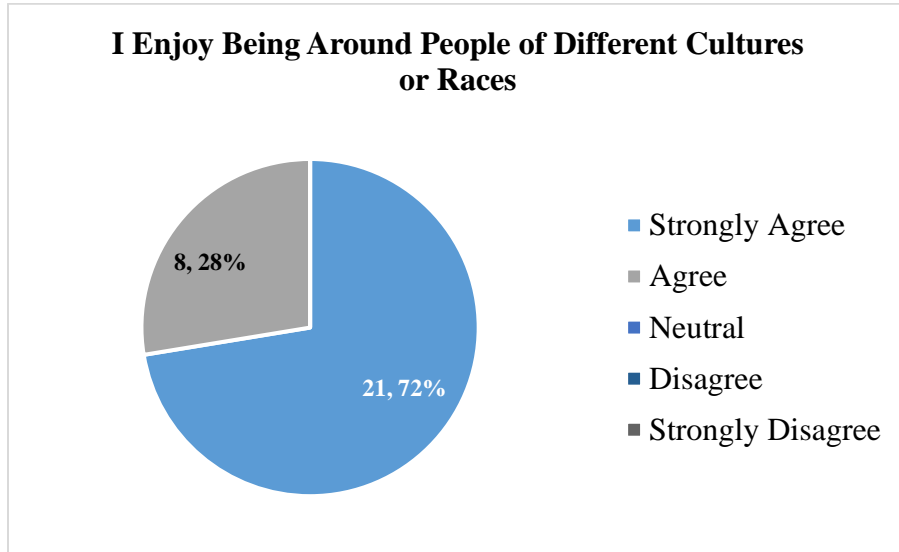
I am very active in church activities.

Fifteen women agreed and four strongly agreed they are very active in church activities. Ten of the women disagreed.



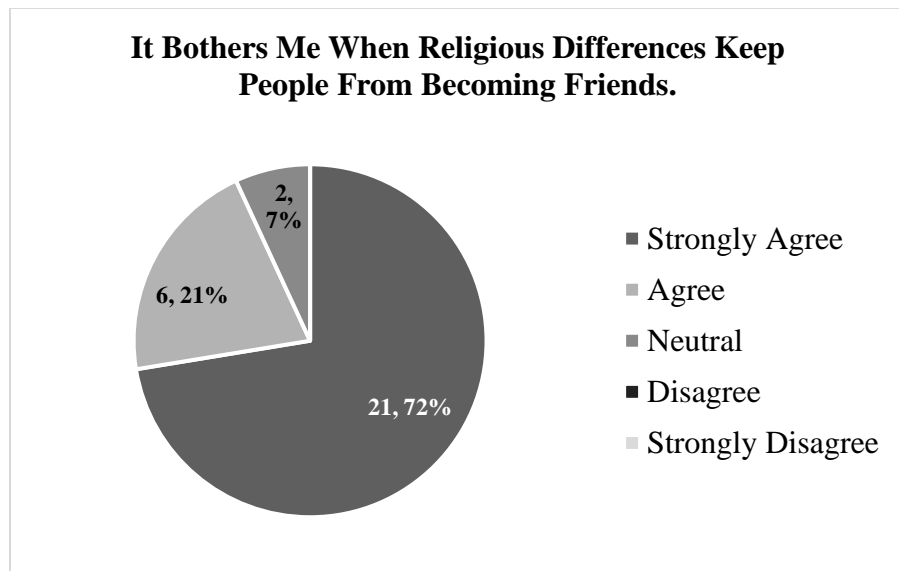
I enjoy being around people of different cultures or races.

Twenty-one participants strongly agreed and eight agreed they enjoy being around people of different cultures and races.



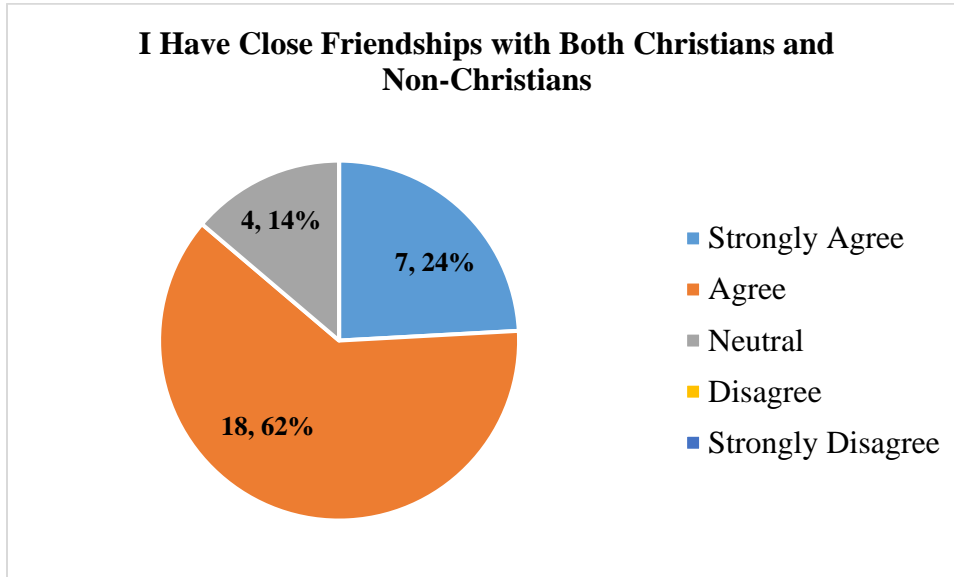
It bothers me when religious differences keep people from becoming friends.

Twenty-one respondents strongly agreed and six agreed it bothers them when religious differences get in the way of people becoming friends. Two respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement.



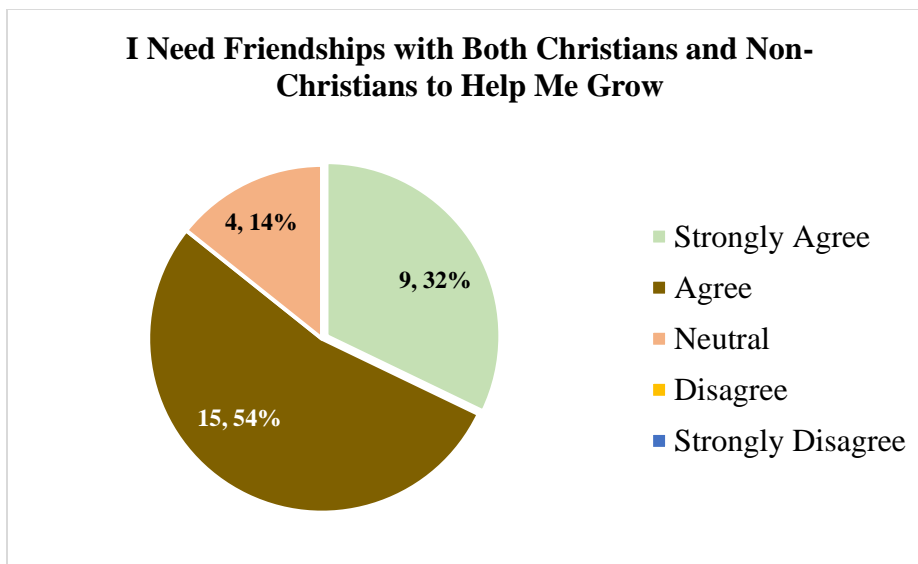
I have close friendships with both Christians and non-Christians.

Eighteen women agreed and seven women strongly agreed they have friendships with both Christians and non-Christians. Four women neither agreed nor disagreed.



I need friendships with both Christians and non-Christians to help me grow.

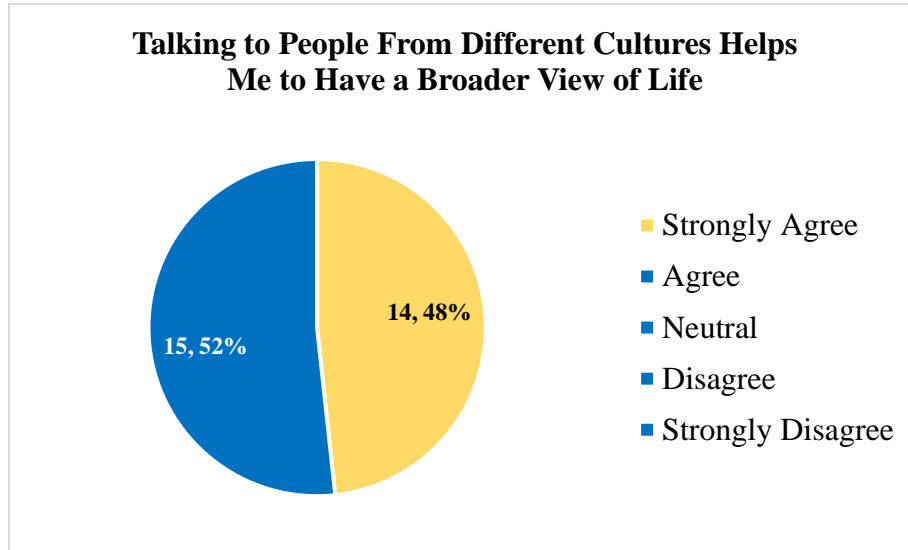
Fifteen participants agreed and nine strongly agreed they need friendships with both Christians and non-Christians to help them grow. Four participants neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement.





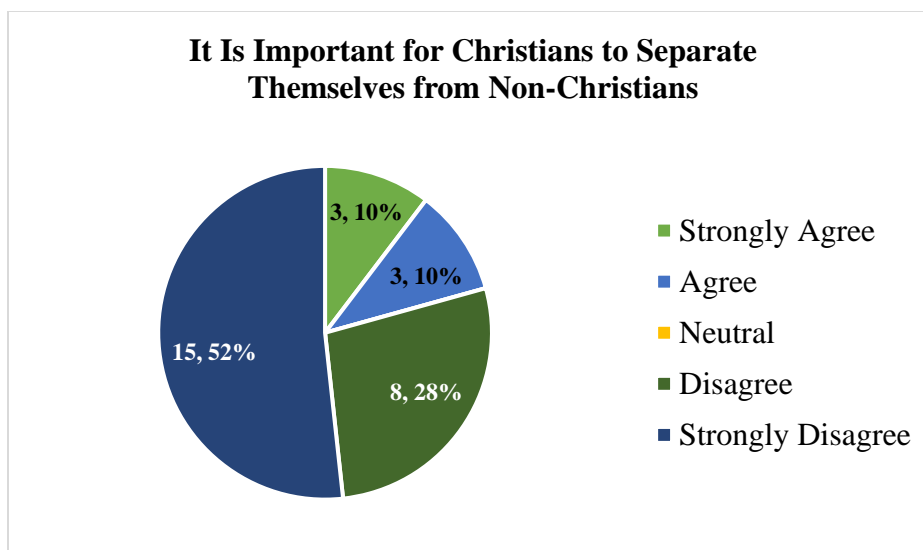
Talking to people from different cultures helps me to have a broader view of life.

All the respondents either agreed, fifteen, or strongly agreed, fourteen, that talking to people from different cultures helps them to have a broader view of life.



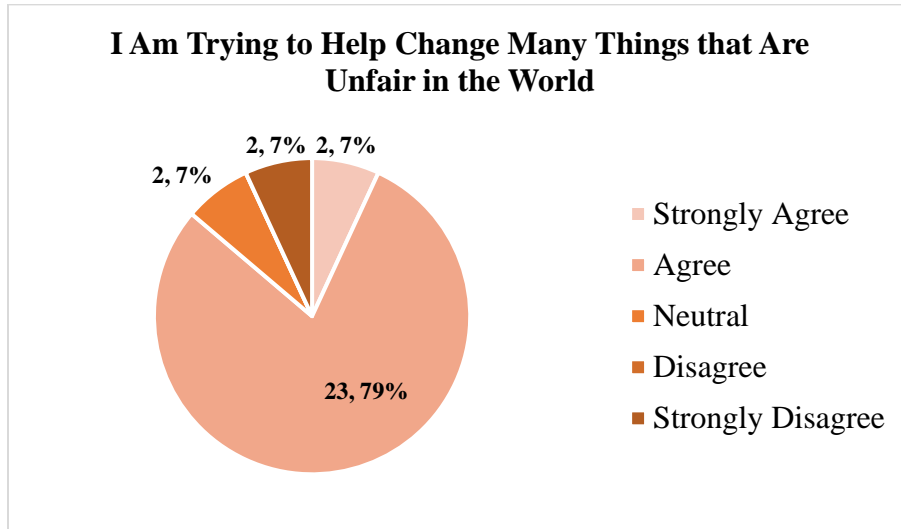
It is important for Christians to separate themselves from non-Christians.

Fifteen women strongly disagreed and eight disagree that it is important to separate themselves from non-Christians. On the other side of this statement, three women agreed, and three women strongly agreed it is important.



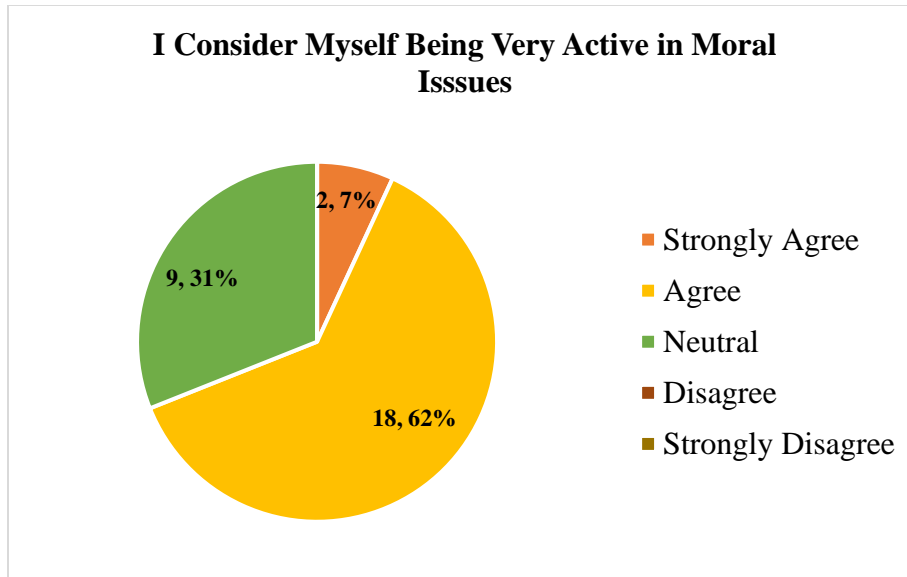
I am trying to help change many things that are unfair in the world.

Twenty-three women agree and two strongly agreed they are trying to change things they believe are unfair in the world. Two women neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement and two women strongly disagreed.



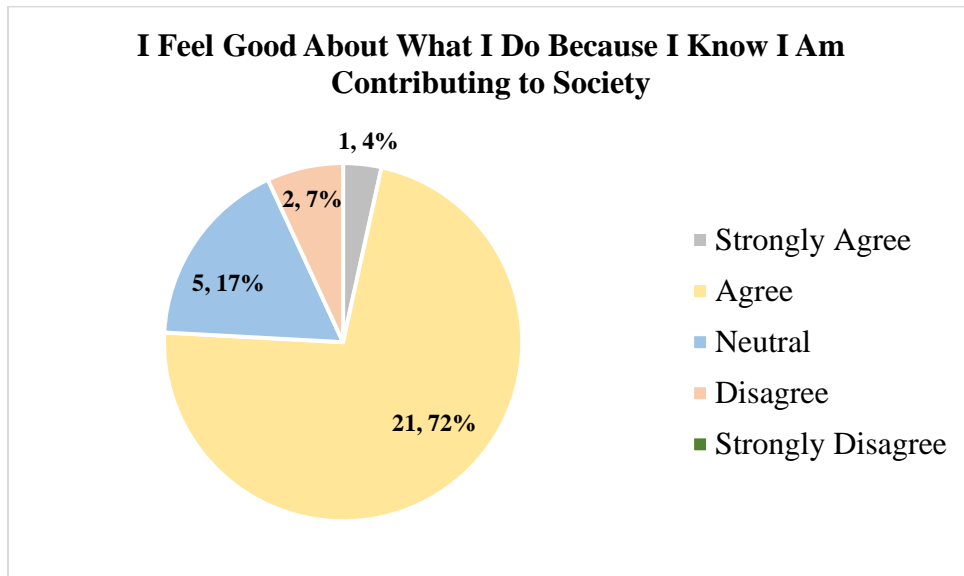
I consider myself being very active in moral issues.

Eighteen respondents agreed and two strongly agreed they consider themselves to be very active in moral issues. Nine respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement.



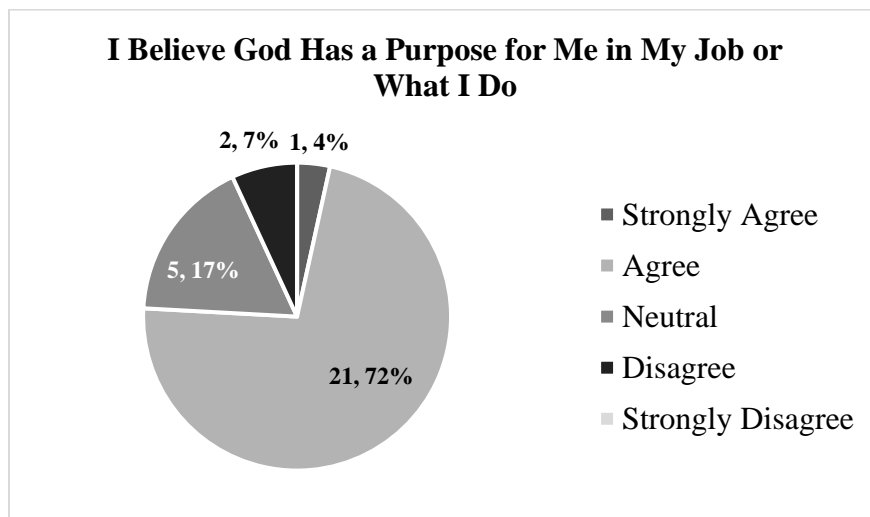
I feel good about what I do because I know I am contributing to society.

Twenty-one participants agreed and one strongly agreed they feel good about what they are doing because they know they are contributing to society. Five participants neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement and two disagreed.



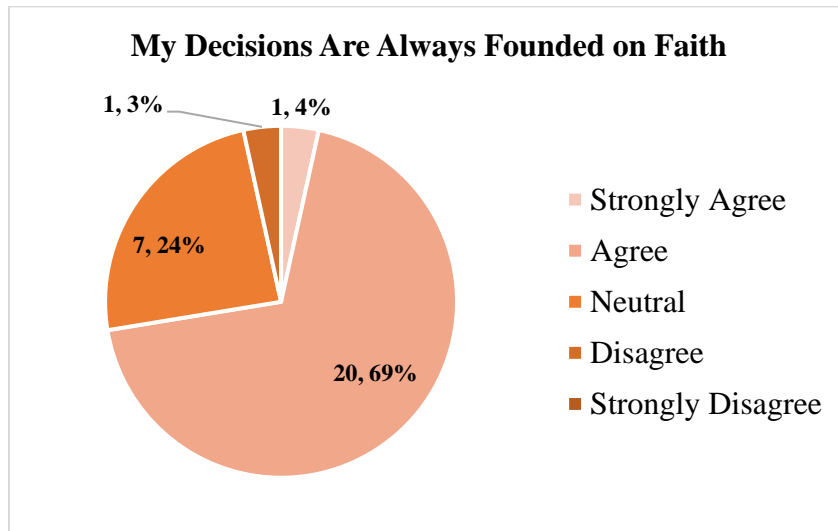
I believe God has a purpose for me in my job or what I do.

Twenty-one women agreed and one strongly agreed they believe God has a purpose for them in their job or what they do. Five women neither agreed nor disagreed and two women disagreed.



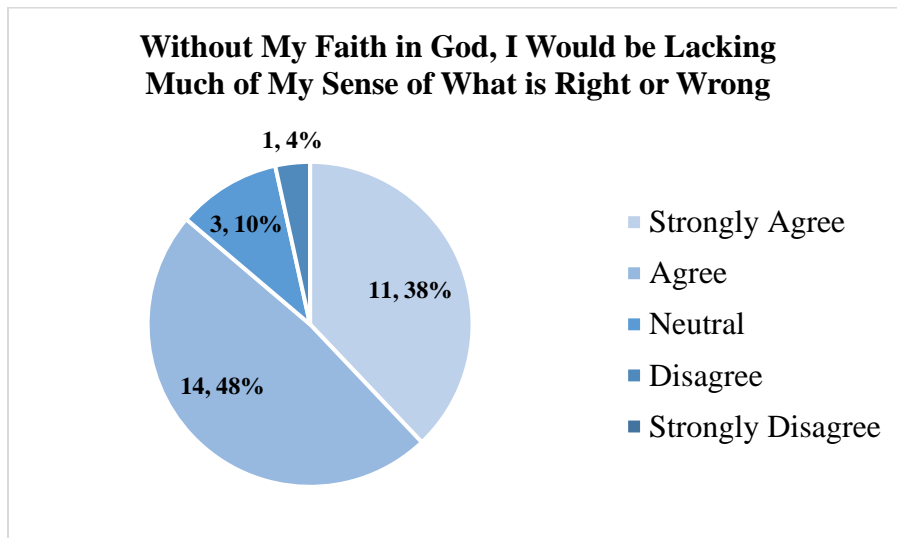
My decisions are always founded on faith.

Twenty respondents agreed, and one strongly agreed their decisions are always founded on faith. Seven respondents neither agreed nor disagreed and one respondent disagreed decisions are always founded on faith.



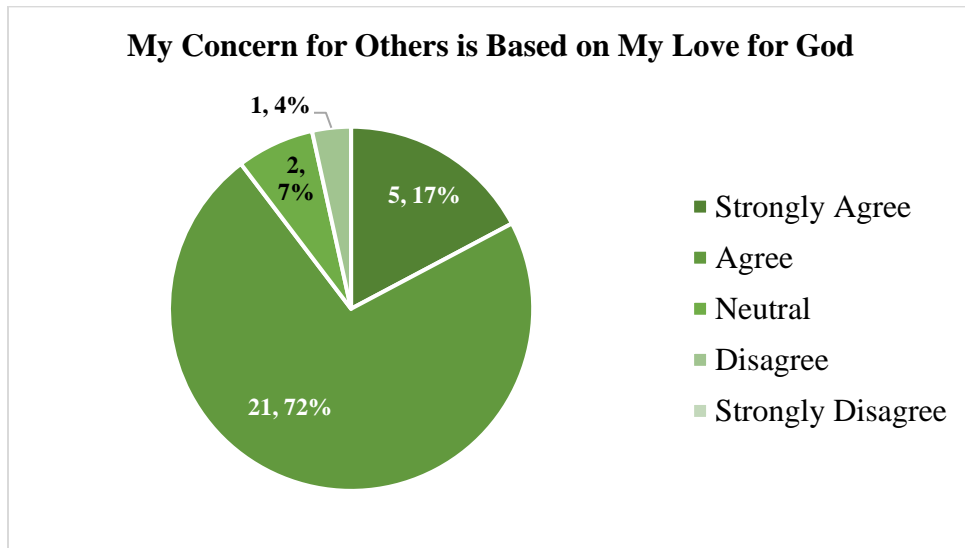
Without my faith in God, I would be lacking much of my sense of what is right or wrong.

Fourteen women strongly agreed, and eleven women agreed that without their faith they would be lacking a sense of what is right and wrong. Three women neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement and one woman disagreed.



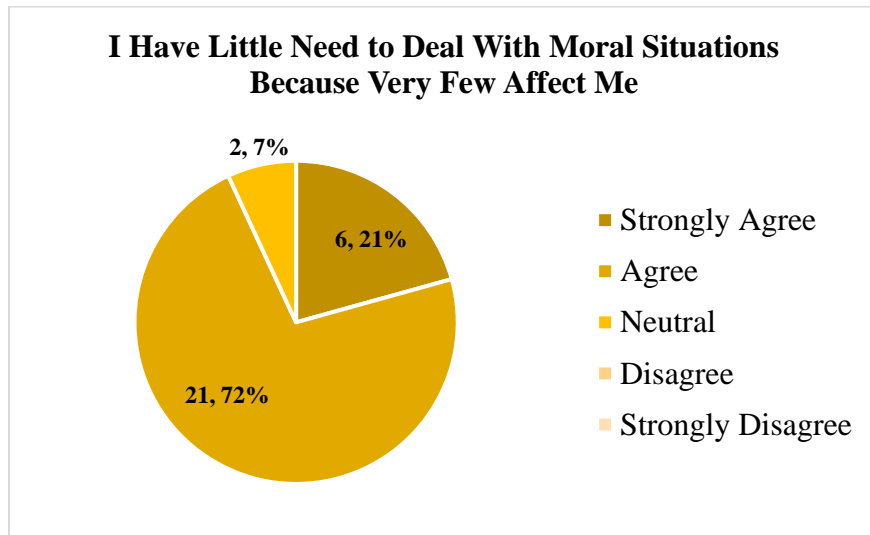
My concern for others is based on my love for God.

Twenty-one women agreed and five women strongly agreed their concern for others is based on their love for God. Two women neither agreed nor disagreed and one woman disagreed with this statement.



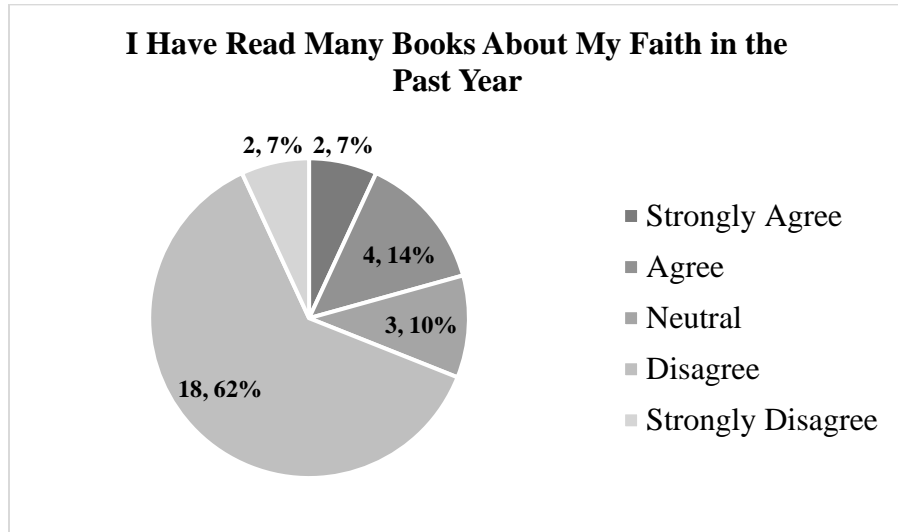
I have little need to deal with moral situations because very few affect me.

Twenty-one participants disagreed and six strongly disagreed they have little need to deal with moral situations because very few affect them. Two participants neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement.



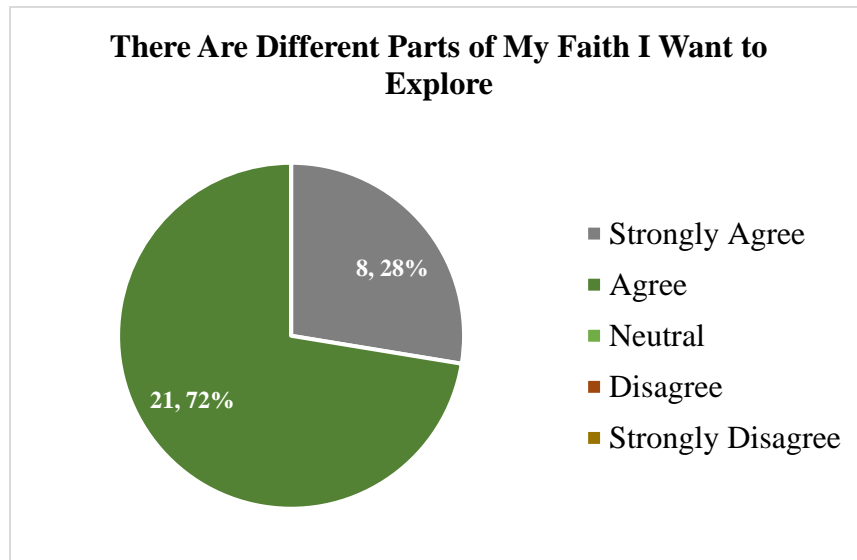
I have read many books about my faith in the past year.

Eighteen women disagreed and two strongly disagreed that they have read many books about their faith in the past year and three neither agreed nor disagreed. Four women agreed and two strongly agreed they have read many books about their faith in the past year.



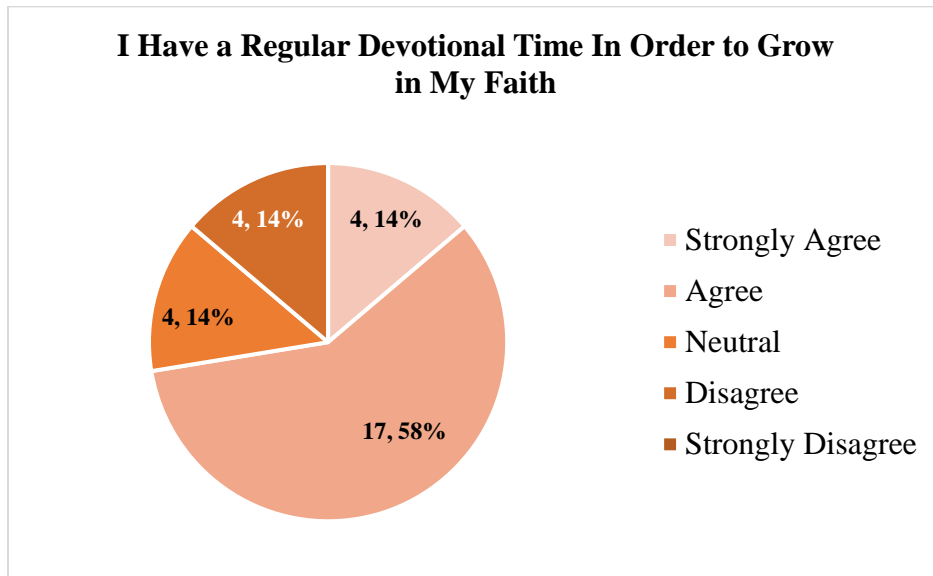
There are different parts of my faith I want to explore.

All the respondents, twenty-one agreed and eight strongly agreed there are different parts of their faith they would like to explore.



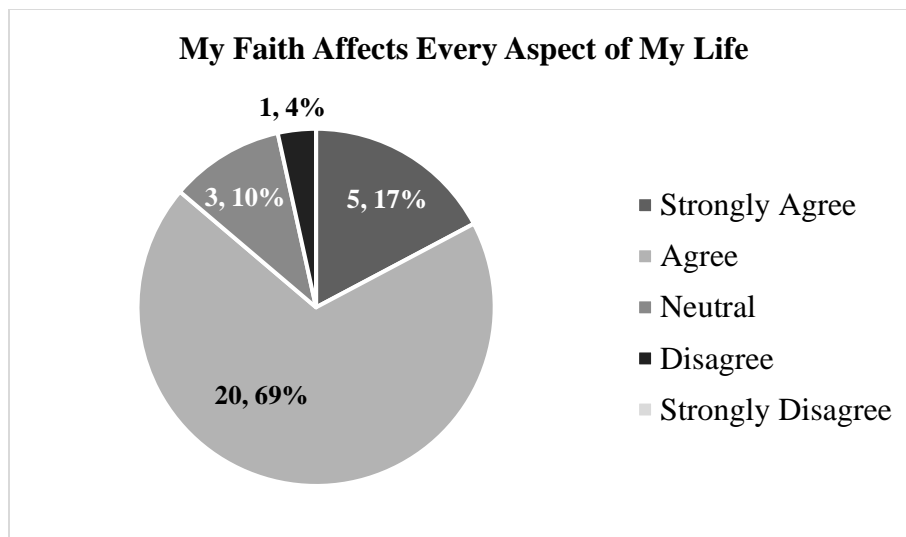
I have a regular devotional time in order to grow in my faith.

Seventeen women agreed and four strongly agreed they have a regular devotional time to grow their faith. Four women neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement and four women disagreed to having a regular devotional time.



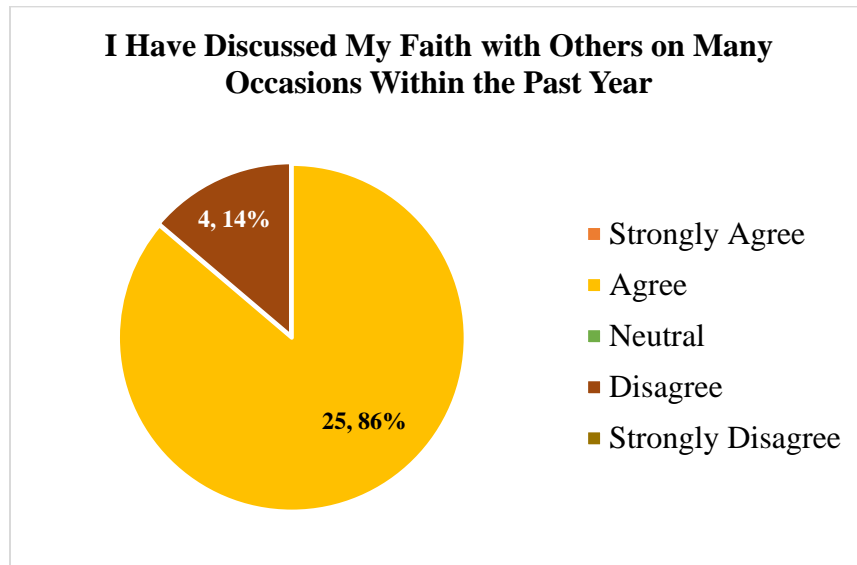
My faith affects every aspect of my life.

Twenty women agreed and five strongly agreed faith affects every aspect of their lives. Three women neither agreed nor disagreed and one woman disagreed.



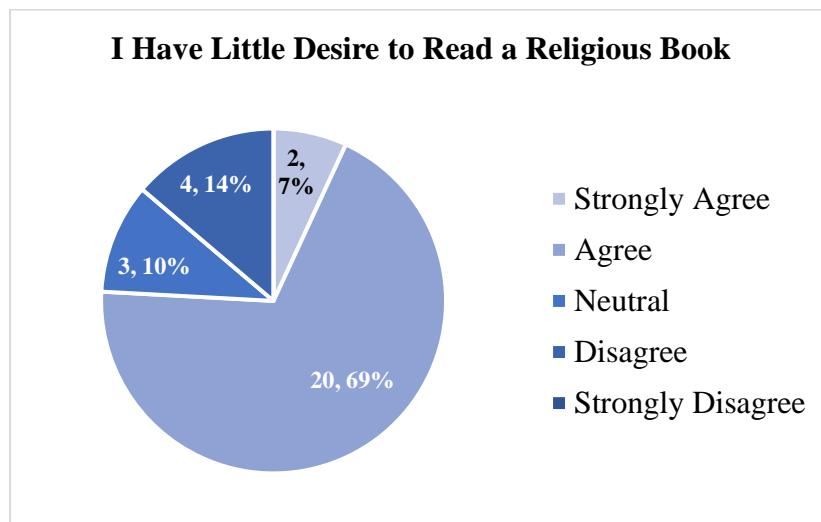
I have discussed my faith with others on many occasions within the past year.

Twenty-five participants agreed they have discussed their faith with others on many occasions during the past year. Four participants disagreed they have discussed their faith with others.



I have little desire to read a religious book.

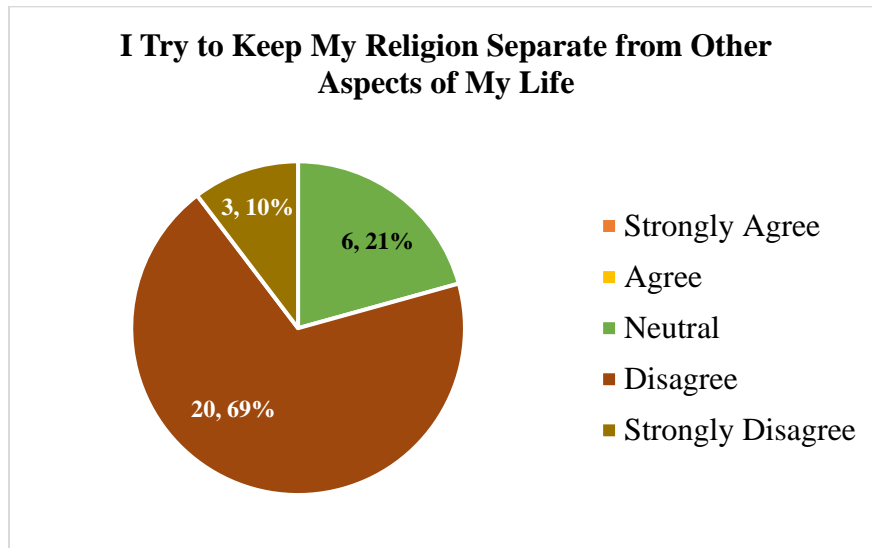
Twenty women disagreed and two strongly disagreed they have little desire to read a religious book. Three women neither agreed nor disagreed and four women agreed they have little desire to read religious books.





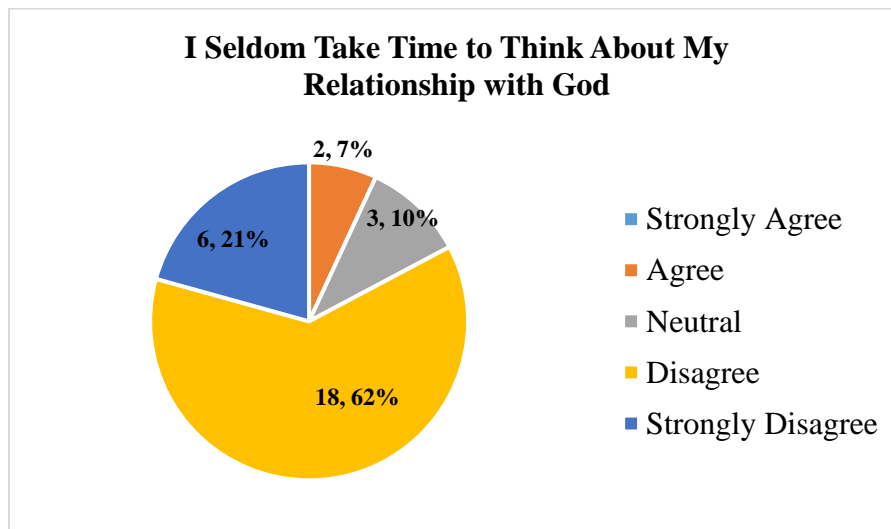
I try to keep my religion separate from other aspects of my life.

Twenty respondents disagreed and three strongly disagreed trying to keep their religion separate from other aspects of their lives. Six respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement.



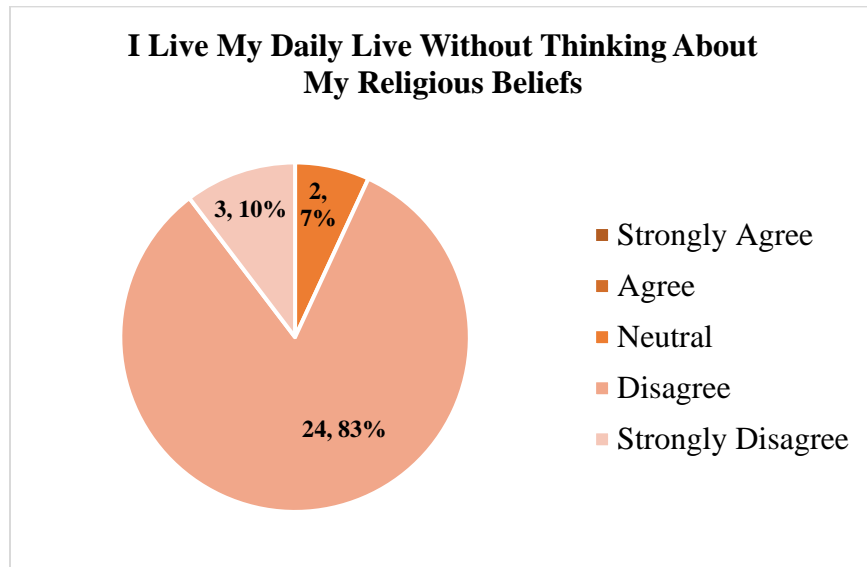
I seldom take time to think about my relationship with God.

Eighteen women disagreed and six strongly disagreed they seldom take time to think about their relationship with God. Three women neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement. Two women agreed they seldom take time to think about their relationship with God.



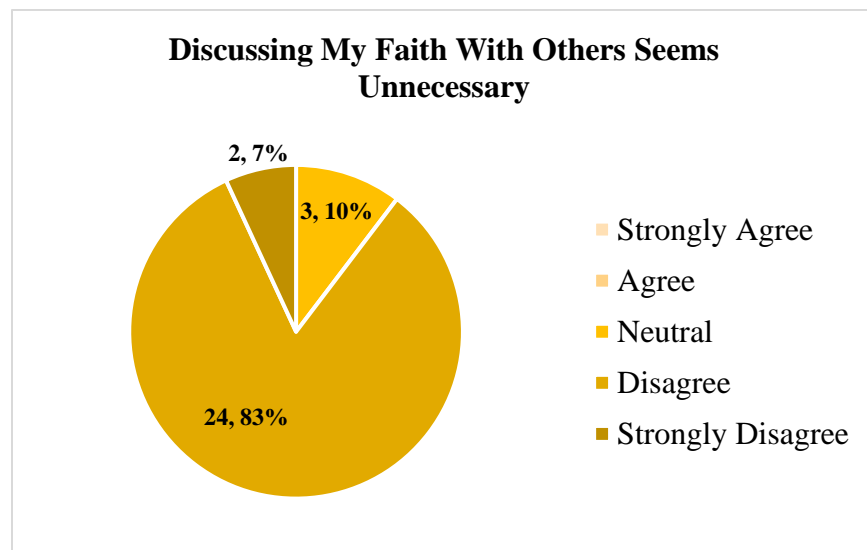
I live my daily life without thinking about my religious beliefs.

Twenty-four participants disagreed and three strongly disagreed they live their lives without thinking about their religious beliefs. Two participants neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement.



Discussing my faith with others seems unnecessary.

Twenty-four women disagreed and two strongly disagreed discussing their faith with others seems unnecessary. Three women neither agreed nor disagreed.



## Personal Interviews

Merriam and Tisdell report it is necessary to interview when one cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them. It is also important to interview when one is interested in past events that they cannot replicate.<sup>192</sup>

This author used a semi-structured interview. The questions were set, but had flexibility built in requiring specific data from all the respondents. The interviews were guided by a list of fifteen questions and issues to be explored. The interviews were conducted with no pre-determined wording or order of presenting to allow this interviewer to respond to the situation at hand and to be open to new ideas the interviewee might share.<sup>193</sup>

Because of concerns from COVID, the interviewer offered the women the opportunity to conduct the interviews on ZOOM or in person. All of the participants opted to have in-person interviews. The interviews were all conducted in this author's church office which is spacious enough for comfort and is locked when not in use. The interviews were all scheduled with an hour between each interview to allow for extended conversations, if necessary, as well as to offer the author the opportunity to make any notations about the interview immediately after to avoid forgetting important thoughts or information concerning the interviews.

Each woman was assigned a number at the beginning of the interview to maintain anonymity. Not every answer given by the women during the interview process was reported. Many of the answers were the same. Answers that are different are recounted.

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<sup>192</sup> Sharon B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, 108.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

Many of the women were extremely nervous at the beginning of the interviews, despite the pre-interview information given to each participant. They stated they were worried they would not have the “right” answers. Several women voiced their nervousness, others were fidgety and appeared nervous. After the first two women identified as being nervous, this author began asking each person if it was not obvious, “Are you nervous?” Each woman was reassured that there were no right or wrong answers to any of the questions, and they would not be asked questions requiring any specific biblical information.

After helping the women to feel comfortable, the interviewer reminded each person of the purpose of the interview, the topic of the thesis, and expressed gratitude for their willingness to participate and to take time from their schedules to come for the interview.

Interview Question One. If I were to ask you, as a disciple of Jesus Christ, do you think of yourself as a precious child of God, or just a rib, what would you answer and why?

Respondent number one states, “I consider myself a precious child of God because my mother told me that I was. Mainly as a child, I was made to feel that way by my parents, but not by others.”

Number twenty told the author, “Most of the time, I think of myself as a precious child of God but sometimes I think that I am just a rib. When I was married to my first husband who was abusive, I believed that I was just a rib.”

Number four replied, “I am more and more considering myself a precious child of God. There were many times in my life when I felt like I was just a rib, but I am feeling differently about myself these days,”

Woman number eighteen narrated, “Due to the last few years, I believe I am a precious child of God. But before that, I have always been just a rib.”

Interviewee number fifteen described, "I am a precious child of God, but I don't always deserve that title. Women in my family have always led that journey,"

Twenty-one pondered, "I think I am a precious child of God, but this is not reflected in society where am just rib."

Woman number two conveyed, "I am definitely a child of God. I am part of the universe and God is within me. Part of me is a rib, but that is only the physical part. The precious child of God part of me is so much more than that."

Number six explained, "I am a precious child of God. I was always taught that in Sunday school at First Presbyterian Church in Johnstown."

Respondent number nine testified, "I am a precious child of God because of a strong belief in God. I walked a mile each way to school as a child and the school was right next to a church. I told my mother I wanted to go to that church. So, on Sundays, I started going to that church."

Number eleven said, "I am a precious child of God. God works through me to touch others through education."

Interviewee number seventeen stated, "I am a precious child of God. God loves all his children. He created me and he has a purpose for me. I am not just a rib. All are his and created in his image."

Interview Question number two. How do you see the roles of male and female in the church today? Has this changed during your lifetime?

Woman number twenty replied, "I grew up in the Roman Catholic Church where men were everything. It was all men except for the nuns who seemed to do all the grunt work. This church has had three female pastors. I came to this church ten years ago and I have learned how

female pastors can be great. This church is more female centered, females are strong and do a great deal of the work at church.”

Respondent number eighteen proclaimed, “Thank God it has changed! It was one of the biggest problems for me since the beginning. I grew up being told that women are subservient to men and if you do not get married, you have wasted your life. My mother told me this and my father disagreed. I grew up in the Roman Catholic church, which seemed to support that thinking.”

Interviewee number fifteen reported, “My mom was Protestant, and my dad was Roman Catholic. My mom stayed out of church although we kids went, even though my dad didn’t go. There was always unspoken turmoil over religion in my family of origin. I am a woman of faith. I joined the United Methodist church when I married. Men used to be the power in the church. Now women are more the leaders. It is the same with women in education.”

Woman number seven said, “Things have changed a little bit in my generation. More in my mom’s and my mema’s. Women were support staff and some dude was always the head honcho. Mema was always a lector in the Roman Catholic church, even before most women were allowed to do that role.”

Number eight spoke, “Growing up it was always a male minister and male officers in the church. I was thirty before I knew that there were female ministers. Now I think women have taken over, and run things, and that is good.”

Respondent number one reflected that many things have changed since she was a child. “As a child and a teen, it was all men. I have memories of communion. It was all men in dark suits with sour looks on their faces. There were all men on session and women were finally

allowed to be deacons. I became a deacon in my teens, and I was also the first teen-aged elder in my church, First Presbyterian Church of Gloversville. I was naïve as a teen.”

Number two remembered, “Absolutely! Growing up in the Roman Catholic church, it was very male dominated. The Legion of Mary did the work for the church, which was, of course, all females. Having women pastors has been very uplifting.”

Woman number five described, “I had never been around a female pastor before or women in leadership. I never looked at it as unfair. It just is what it is. Growing up Baptist, I was only used to having females as Sunday school teachers. Females were not allowed in any other roles.”

Interviewee number three reflected, “I have seen a great deal of change in the roles of males and females in the church. Women have a chance to take part in more than just the kitchen. It has not been as dramatic a change in our denomination as in others. Women are seen pretty much as equals in our denomination.”

Number nine lamented, “The changes are sad. There are a lot less men going to church now. Men used to be active and leaders and now not so much.”

Woman number ten remembered, “I grew up in a college town, Ames, Iowa. We were ahead of the times. We had female pastors when other places would not have thought about that. This church is more female dominated.”

Number fourteen reflected, “Growing up in the Roman Catholic church, I had two pictures, it was male dominated with lots of nuns to help. But I also saw what happened when the priest got drunk, which was a lot. Mom and Dad had to take over and handle everything. So, I have a mixed bag of memories of how the church has changed. Now I have a leadership role in the protestant church which is mostly female dominated.”

Interview Question Three. How do you envision your part as a woman in the church?

Respondent number thirteen replied, “I am able to participate in anything that I am willing to do. But I am done with church politics, and I have no desire to take a leadership role anymore.”

Number one stated, “I envision my part as a woman in the church as the same as I do my life. I try to do good wherever I can and being a positive light in some way, shape, or form.

Interviewee number fourteen related, “Envisioning my part as a woman in the church has always been a real struggle for me. I have always had a strong sense of call and I have always had an interest in spiritual things. I feel more comfortable in a healing role, but I am still wrestling with a call to ministry.”

Woman number twelve informed, “I have always had an active part in the church. I support the church with my money and volunteering in music ministry or wherever I am needed. Prefer a small church community; however, I do not see myself involved in a leadership role again at this age.”

Number eleven summed up envisioning her part in the church with one word, “Nurturer.”

Respondent number four described her part as, “I am a worker bee. I like that role. I don’t mind being a worker bee.”

Interviewee number three remembered, “I have always had different parts in the church from the time I was a teenager. I began teaching Sunday school when I was in high school. I have led the women’s association groups in every church I have attended. I have been a deacon and an elder, in several different churches and have put together the newsletter for over thirty years at this church. I try to help out wherever I can.”



Number sixteen recounted, “I feel that I have a major responsibility to show my love for God by example. My daughter has many medical issues, I thank God that I can be a factor in her faith. I try to help the best I can.”

Interview Question Four: How does the Bible help you understand your role as a female? Can you offer some examples?

Woman number four replied, “Sadly, no, my reading of the Bible has not been good, so I cannot really answer that question.”

Respondent number six offered, “I have been familiar with the Bible from a little girl in Sunday school right through high school. We learned the stories and visited other churches and synagogues to learn about other religions and ways of thinking. I grew up with many traditional women’s roles.”

Interviewee number ten stated, “It really doesn’t. I am not a good student of the Bible.”

Woman number eleven quickly informed, “It didn’t for me. I think of the Bible as male focused. Occasionally there is a story about a woman, but it is definitely male dominated.”

Similarly, interviewee number twelve shared, “I am not a great student of the Bible. Because of my upbringing, I attended church and Sunday school every week, but I never read the Bible. I know many of the stories, Ruth and Naomi supported each other and respected one another. The stories offer examples of wives, mothers, teachers and friends.”

Number sixteen responded, “I am not really familiar with the Bible. In the Lutheran church, we were not encouraged to read the Bible.”

Woman number twenty-one said, “It doesn’t. I am not a huge fan of the Bible. I had to read it in high school, but I got more from reading *The Red Tent*. This helped me understand how I could be a woman and be strong and it helped me.

Interview Question Five: God is called our “helper” many times in the Bible using the same word that God gives to Eve (ezer). God creates Eve as a “helper” (ezer) for Adam. What does this mean to you?

Woman number one articulated, “Woman supports the man. I still see myself that way. It can also mean being a helper in the world.”

Number two offered, “The helper is the bridge or connection to the Divine. Divine interconnection with everything. A woman’s role is to bring the connection between the human and the Divine.”

Interviewee number four quipped, “Adam needed help. All men need help!”

Respondent number five said, “Historically that was exactly the role women had. Part of that was good and part of that is not good. Our role is to be there for men. God did not make everyone the same. He wanted everyone to be different. God wants everyone to help.”

Participant number seven reflected, “It could mean a lot of different things. Understanding that helping is a humbling thing and means taking action when needed. What else did Eve want to do in her life?”

Woman number ten answered, “I believe that to be true, but women have gifts of different sorts, and Adam can be a helper to Eve.”

Number fourteen told, “I am not a helper to my husband. It depends on the relationship. I don’t see a helper as negative or second best. Men have the wrong idea of what that means in marriage.”

Interviewee number fifteen imparted, “Men are programmed linearly and complete tasks. Women are multifaceted. They complement each other.”

Woman number eighteen contemplated, “Being a helper elevates Eve a little. It gives me hope that it doesn’t matter whether we are born male or female.”

Respondent number twenty said, “I can understand. A woman is a helper, a guide, a person behind the man. It helps life continue. A helper is a broad term and sometimes we are sly.”

Interviewee number twenty-one reflected, “This explains a lot. If that is true and a prominent teaching, it explains why I was molded as a helper. I always wanted to be a boy.”

Interview Question Six: What do you understand about women and their role in the Old Testament?

Participant number one stated, “Not a whole lot. I need more study. To cook, clean and support but also some very powerful women were in the Old Testament. They had a place that not everyone had in the grand scheme of things.”

Woman number two said, “Women were pretty active in the Old Testament. They gather during their periods and reflect and take time to nurture their bodies and spirits. It was pretty powerful.”

Respondent number five answered, “Women in the Old Testament had it both hard and easy. Esther, for example, was committed and faithful and had a purpose for her life. Ruth and Naomi did what they needed to do to survive. They were faithful but they knew their purpose and their place.”

Number eight replied, “I think of them as being objects and slaves, not partners with their husbands. They had no value, no worth, other than what they could do for the men in cooking, child-bearing, and fetching water from the well.”

Woman number ten offered, “They were always present but not featured as dominant.”  
And number eleven echoed, “They were there to serve.”

Interviewee number twelve responded, “Women’s roles were contained in the household, life was contained behind a gate of property.”

Number thirteen echoed, “Women in the Old Testament were considered property with no legal standing. But there are examples that shine through where they didn’t always put up with this.”

Woman number fourteen shared, “You don’t see the strength of women often. I look at Deborah and Miriam as strong women who did what needed to be done. But then there are stories like David and Tamar that just leave me baffled!”

Respondent number fifteen offered, “The women of the Old Testament were quietly supportive. Their leadership roles are there, they are just not quite as evident as those of the men, but they were active. They were smart, intelligent women who got things done.”

Finally, number twenty-one recorded, “I don’t see the women. You hear them mentioned. Women don’t have voices. Women don’t get to own the words.”

Interview Question Seven: Jesus seems to relate differently to women in the New Testament. Why do you think he did this and how does it impact your view of women in the Bible?

Respondent one offered, “Jesus knew the value of women and he knew they would bring a different view to things, and he was open to that.”

Woman number two quipped, “The women were the disciples, and the men wrote the book. We know that Jesus knew how to write but he didn’t. I wonder if we really have the true essence of all that Jesus was trying to impart. Jesus honors the women of the New Testament and supports them, and they support him. He listens to them.”

Number three said, “I think of how Jesus reacted to Mary at the wedding at Cana. We don’t hear a lot about Jesus’ relationships with women. He seemed to have a savior relationship with most of them.”

Interviewee number four stated, “Jesus had to see that women were more than a rib. He was eager and willing to let the women have more of a role. It took a long while.”

Woman number five contrasted, “Jesus cared for women and knew they were fragile and needed special attention.”

Interviewee number seven reflected, “Jesus is a radical and brought social and political upheaval.”

Woman number eight pondered, “Jesus made the point that women are not something you own. They are important. Maybe not equal, but he wanted them to be more important. Women were important from the get-go, but men did not see it that way.”

Number nine believed, “Jesus encountered women as equals and treated them with love. His love was influenced by his mother.” This thought was echoed by number ten, “Jesus portrayed women as more dominant perhaps due to the role of Mary.” Similarly, number eleven spoke, “Jesus does this out of respect for his mother. He had more respect for women.”

Interviewee number thirteen said, “I think it started with his relationship with Mary. He knew what a strong individual she had to be to accept her role. He carried that relationship through as he interacted with other women that followed him. He did not think of them as subservient or after-thoughts.”

Respondent number twelve verbalized, “Isn’t it great that Jesus did that! He really shook things up by giving them their say and stepping away from the Old Testament, creating a new way of participation and ministry for women.”

Woman number fifteen replied, “Jesus was more inclusive, but I never thought of that. He was a real person. I am not appalled if Jesus were married.”

Participant number seventeen offered, “Jesus was born to Mary and connected to her to be God’s child and not just a man. His ministry included healing and forgiving women. He got to see how women were affected by the culture and the times.”

Number eighteen stated, “If you only see the Old Testament, you would be a little discouraged. The New Testament gives women more hope showing how Jesus worked with and treated women.”

Number twenty pondered, “I wish I had met Jesus in person. He had a way that equalized people, and I wish I could have some of that in today’s world. Women are getting strength to do better and help other people.”

Number twenty-one contradicted, “I prefer the stories of the Old Testament. I don’t know or like the New Testament. Women in the Old Testament had to be more revolutionary. We have not kept the spirit of that today.”

Interview Question Eight: If you were to go to a new church plant (new ministry), what would your ideal leadership team look like? What role would you like to play?

Participant number one replied, “I would want a dynamic pastor, open to people’s ideas. It would have lots of music, children, and youth with a ministerial team who would make it fun for them. It would have lots of singing, with choirs and bells.”

Number two stated, “I would like to see a female pastor since that is the focal point of a church. I have been seeing the value of what women offer to the church. But male-female interaction is also important. Also, ethnic diversity would be very important.”

Woman number four offered, “I would like the elder role. I have found that to be one of my gifts. People are beginning to come to me to ask for help. Personality wise, I think it would be a good role for me. I understand people.”

Respondent number five said, “I want to be on the leadership team. It should be made up of men and women together in different roles, and not gender assigned roles. Perhaps with more of an equal balance of thought processes.”

Number seven wanted, “I would like to see an interfaith, non-denominational leadership team.”

Interviewee number eight answered, “I would like to be on the worship team doing bulletins and knowing what would be going on all year long. I would hope there would be a large presence of women on the leadership team.”

Respondent number nine wanted, “A church that reaches out to the community and the world doing mission, perhaps a food pantry.”

Woman number ten shared, “I don’t want a leadership role, that should go to someone younger. I would like to contribute ideas and I would like to see a leadership team that has equality with men and women.”

Number eleven pondered, “I would like to see shared decision making with identified goals and action steps to get there. I would like an active role as an equal member.”

Participant number twelve offered, “I don’t think of myself as a leader. I would like to play a supportive role. I would hope the leadership team would have a balance of male and female and would be intergenerational.”

Woman number thirteen disclosed, “I would want to take people from several different congregations not just mine. The leadership team needs the skills and gifts to start a new church. They need not only to participate but also to delegate for help.”

Number fourteen said, “I would like to play a supportive role, seeing a need and going in to help, being a bridge. I would like a team approach with good communication and with everyone fulfilling their roles.”

Interviewee number sixteen stated, “I would not be the top leader in the church. I would play a supportive role. I could write grants; I have strengths in writing, although my spelling needs help. There should not be one person ruling. I would like to see a balance of men and women on committees and different age groups and perspectives.”

Respondent number twenty reflected, “I would participate on the mission and outreach committee. I would like to play a role to get all the people involved in mission.”

Interview Question Nine: Where and how did you learn about God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit?

Woman number one told, “For me I learned by osmosis. As a little kid, I lived at the church participating in church school, choir, and bells.”

Interviewee number two said, “My first memory is of saying prayers at night and before meals with my parents., I went to Catholic school for eight years. I still have a hard time with Jesus being human. I feel more connected with the Trinity. God as Father seems too human.”

Number three offered, “I learned from Sunday school, confirmation class, reciting the Apostle’s Creed every week and dissecting it during confirmation.”

Participant number five shared, “I learned about Jesus at church. Our parents sent us to church but did not teach us about God. I did not learn about the Holy Spirit until high school. Up until about twelve years ago, I would not take communion if I felt I had done something bad. I



learned about the relationship with God and Jesus in high school. I went to many different churches, and I also learned watching television and reading.”

“I learned from my mom saying prayers and the Lord’s Prayer,” reported number six. “I also went to Sunday school.”

Interviewee number seven offered, “I grew up Roman Catholic and learned very young. I asked a lot of questions preparing for my first communion. Many more than the priest would have liked me to ask. I learned more in high school.”

Woman number eight stated, “I learned at my grandmother’s house and at the Methodist church. I went every weekend. I went to Sunday school, to VBS, and youth group. It was all wrapped around my grandmother.”

Number eleven declared, “I first learned when I was six or seven years old at Fremont Methodist Church.”

Respondent number twelve answered, “I grew up in Brooklyn in a very devout Roman Catholic family. They were very supportive and encouraging. We went to church as a family, even as a tiny child. We did not have Sunday school. I went to Catholic elementary school and learned a lot there. We had lovely nuns who taught me. The catechism I learned was very rote.”

Woman number thirteen, revealed, “I went to Sunday school. At home, I was read Bible stories and we said prayers. I had a Great Aunt who took me to church, and I always went to Sunday school. Youth group played a huge role in my faith journey.”

Interviewee number fourteen shared, “Growing up Roman Catholic, I went to church every week. I went to Sunday school. My Sunday school teacher gave me a statue of Mary and I realized how real it all was when I looked at that statue. The Catholics emphasized Mary more. And I always remember seeing Jesus hanging on the cross.”

Number fifteen exclaimed, “I learned at home! My mother always told me that God is real, and heaven is real. And she told me, if you are going to Albany, you will get there but there are a hundred different roads to take you, but you will get there. The same is true for your faith.”

Interviewee number eighteen offered, “I don’t remember much. I went to a Roman Catholic church and school. I went to Sunday school. I still have trouble with the Trinity. In college, I took a survey of religion course. I always looked at religion as an obligation, not something you enjoyed.”

Respondent number twenty shared, “I learned about God when I was very young. We went to a Roman Catholic church. I learned mostly about God and not a lot about Jesus. I then went to a small church where they told stories about Jesus. I read the book of Revelation, and it was a revelation! I also had a lot of God winks!”

Number twenty-one stated, “I don’t remember not knowing. I remember that I was always asking questions that no one really answered to my satisfaction. I never took anything at face value. I had an illustrated Old Testament that I loved. I was fascinated with it.”

Interview Question Ten: What do you remember as your first experience with God?

Woman number one remembered, “When I was little, I played the bells at church. Music is very moving for me. I remember when the organist played a particular piece, “Guide Me Now Thou Great Jehovah,” and I was overcome with a feeling of God.”

Number four pondered, “Probably when I was pregnant with my first baby.”

“When I was seventeen, at a Baptist church where I dedicated my life to Jesus,” woman five stated.

Respondents six, seven, and nine all echoed, “When I was little and was taught how to pray.”

Number eight shared a memory, “As far back as I can remember, my mom and dad held hands and prayed together saying the Lord’s Prayer. I felt God there in the room. When I think of God, I think of my grandfather’s face. When he died, my grandmother told me not to do anything wrong because he was watching me with God.”

Interviewees number eleven and twelve both said, “In elementary school, learning Bible stories and coloring pictures in Sunday school.”

For woman number thirteen there was no doubt, “When I was in youth group and went to Riverside gathering with other youth! I learned so much there and asked lots of questions.”

Number fourteen offered, “I don’t remember ever not understanding God’s presence. I knew he was there. The beauty of the world, the mystery. And always in the middle of the night, I felt God was there.”

Interviewee number fifteen remembered, “My sister was very sick with pneumonia. I was four or five. The doctor had come. My Mom went to get the medicine. While she was gone, my grandmother who was Roman Catholic called the priest to baptize my sister without my mother knowing. My mother came home as the priest was leaving and she started screaming. I ran to my room and on my dresser, there was a glowing beam of light and I remember feeling a sense of calm knowing God was there.”

Woman number seventeen reflected, “My first experience was in Sunday school where my teacher used felt boards to tell us the stories and I loved it so much. We also sang a lot of songs.”

Respondent number eighteen offered, “When I was in kindergarten, a neighbor’s little sister died. Everyone freaked out! But I knew that I wasn’t going to die. I knew I had time left. I believe that was my first experience with God.”

Number twenty reported, “I believe my first experience with God came later in my life. I was in between husbands. I was living in a trailer. It was a very bad winter, and I had no water because it froze. I went out to look at the well and it was all ice. I got on my knees and prayed. Then I picked up a big rock and dropped it in the well. The ice broke and it never froze again. I believe that was God’s hand in my life.”

Woman number twenty-one recalled, “I had an image of God as an old man watching me and I didn’t like it at all!”

Interview Question Eleven: Tell me about a time in your life when you felt God’s presence.

Number one imparted, “When I first found out my husband had cancer and my mom was dying and I was overwhelmed. I was driving and I came to a stop sign and I could feel God’s presence and I calmed down right away.”

Woman number three remembered, “When I got cancer the first time. We had just moved to Cincinnati, and we didn’t know a lot of people. My church from back east reached out to me and I felt a strong connection to them and to God.”

Respondent number four shared, “After my breast cancer surgery, I had to have radiation. I was all alone because of COVID. I remember feeling scared. I asked God to be with me. I felt a warm blanket around me and that feeling continued for every radiation treatment that I had.”

Number four disclosed, “When I was suicidal, I wanted to drive my car off the road. God physically stopped me. I felt God’s presence and even though I wanted to kill myself, I knew God did not want me to do that.”

Interviewee number six offered, “When I made major decisions like deciding on a college and spending a year in Europe. It was scary but somehow comforting.”

Number seven echoed the same thought, “When making major decisions or encountering beauty and awe.”

Participant number eight recalled, “When my mom took sick. I went into her house, and I found her unresponsive. I called 911 and I thought if she survives, she will be mad at me because that is not what she wanted. But she survived and made it home again. God directed me.”

Number nine said, “When I got engaged to my husband. He was a very good Christian. I felt God telling me it would be OK.”

Respondent number eleven answered, “When my mom had an aneurysm and was in the hospital. I was afraid and I prayed. I looked in the corner of the room and I saw Jesus smiling at me.”

Woman number twelve disclosed, “I definitely felt God’s presence in the situation with my granddaughter who was hospitalized for mental illness. It was devastating to all of us. I prayed constantly for help for her and for myself to handle stress better. Both worked and I knew God was there.”

Similarly, number thirteen remembered, “When my granddaughter was diagnosed with a brain tumor at two years old. The day of the surgery, we all circled her crib and held hands and prayed. I felt God there.”

Number fourteen shared, “When I am on the yoga mat, I always feel God’s presence.”

Interviewee stated, “My husband had to have surgery on his eyes for double vision. He was a cop and double vision would mean that he would lose his job. I prayed and felt God there saying it would be OK. Also, I remember when my son started having seizures and was on a medication that gave him sores in his mouth. I was praying again, and God told me ice cubes, and the next day he was better.”

Woman number twenty pondered, “When I was wrongly accused of stealing drugs. As a nurse, that is devastating. It was a horrible time, and I didn’t think I would make it through, but God was there leading me. I learned how to confront and forgive.”

Woman number twenty-one related, “When I get wrapped up in life, I feel God in the small spaces in between.”

Interview Question Twelve: Tell me about a time in your life when you could not feel God’s presence.

Woman number one immediately responded, “When my mom was dying. It took a while. I couldn’t get to Florida to be with her. I was shocked and angry. I was floundering and I felt alone. My pastor helped me a lot.”

Interviewee number two remembered, “When I was seven, my parents were going to take me to Puerto Rico. The idea of death and going on an airplane terrified me and I didn’t want to go. There was a strike at the airport and my parents decided to leave me home and go themselves. I remember feeling abandoned by them and by God.”

Number four recalled, “When my sister died, I was sad, and I was feeling guilty. It should have been me. I felt alone.”

Respondent number five lamented, “The night my husband told me to leave. It was Christmas Eve and I really needed God. But all I felt was alone.”

Participant number six remembered, “After I had my children, I got very depressed years ago and I was struggling. I could not feel God. My parents helped me a lot during that time.”

Number seven shared, “It was just in the last few years. I was doubting myself. I finally realized that God is within me.”

Participant number eight shared, “When my dad was dying, I felt separated from God because my dad did not have a close relationship with God, and I didn’t think it was going to happen. It was too late. I was sad.”

Woman number nine cried, “When my husband left me. He told me he was gay. We had two children. It was a very traumatic time for me. When I took my vows, it was forever, and I couldn’t understand how God could let this happen.”

Number ten offered, “When I talk to my son who struggles so much with his father, and I don’t know what to say to him.”

Respondent number eleven recalled, “When my father died, I was in my twenties. I was married and had a baby. He had pancreatic cancer and it was a real shock. I felt like the pins had been knocked out from under me. I didn’t feel rejected by God, just devastated and alone.”

Number twelve expressed, “When my mother was battling breast cancer and found out it had metastasized. I was at my aunt’s house, and I decided that I was not going to pray anymore. That did not last long.”

Woman number fourteen declared, “Beginning in 2016. I felt a very strong call from God to go to seminary. I prayed and prayed about it and felt like I was in the desert. I felt like I was a blind person, waiting in the dark. I am still waiting.”

Interviewee number fifteen quipped, “I got snarky with God! My son got seizures. My mom and my father-in-law got cancer on the same day. My mom was in Florida, and I couldn’t be with her. It was quite the conversation that I had with God!”

Number sixteen shared, “There was a dark time in my life. After my mother died and I was divorced, I investigated witchcraft. I wanted to go to Salem on Halloween. I left with my daughter and sister, and I forgot to take the turn to Boston. I believe it was God telling me to stay

away. Even though I had felt alone and away from him for quite a while, I think God was helping me through that time. That time saved my life and I have felt close to God ever since.”

Respondent number seventeen recalled, “There was a time many years ago when I went astray. I was dating a guy who I knew I shouldn’t be with. My mother was worried, but I felt that I needed something. I felt very lost. I knew that guy was using me. I tried to pray but nothing came or happened. I finally found my way through the darkness.”

Number eighteen offered, “I was having a lot of issues, I couldn’t feel anything. I hit menopause and I had anxiety and depression. I tried to self-medicate. At one point, I was very secretive. One day, I remember driving to work and praying, “O God, help me to stop this!” Two days later, I crashed my car into a ditch. No one was hurt, but I got arrested. God heard me. I quit self-medicating, went back to church, and started singing!”

Woman number twenty remembered, “When my husband was having severe headaches and the doctors could not figure out what was wrong. I couldn’t do anything to help him. I felt like I was abandoned. I went to church at night, and I cried and begged and prayed. I was down.”

Interviewee number twenty-one shared, “I have dealt with depression for as long as I can remember. Depression is hard to deal with. It is always a struggle, in school, with family, with friends, and everywhere. I often wondered if God meant for me to be here or if I had served my purpose and it was time to go. Belonging here is difficult.”

Interview Question Thirteen: Are there Bible stories or scriptures that play an important part in your journey?

The answers were as follows:

Psalm 100 and Romans 5:1-6 and 8 – Number one

Parables of Jesus – Number two



Revelation 2:10 and 2 Timothy – Number three

Psalms 103 and the story of Esther – Number five

Psalms 23 and Corinthians 13 – Number six

Song of Songs, Esther and Ruth and Exodus – Number seven

Isaiah 40:31 – Number eight

Birth of Jesus and the Prodigal Son – Number ten

Jesus on the boat in the storm and the loaves and fishes – Number twelve

All of Romans – Number thirteen

All of Ephesians – Number fourteen

Isaiah 40:31 and the Easter stories – Number seventeen

Transfiguration – Number eighteen

Jonah and Daniel and the Lion's Den – Number twenty

Ecclesiastes 3:1-15 and Jacob fighting the angel in the night – Number twenty-one

Interview Question Fourteen: Please share with me what you consider to be some of the gifts that God has given to you.

Woman number one shared, "I think my calm disposition is a gift from God. It has allowed me to deal with my husband and his myriad of serious health problems. My family and my furry companions, my dogs mean a lot to me. And God gave me wonderful parents to raise me."

Interviewee number two revealed, "God gave me deformity in my feet and that allowed me to become a dancer to strengthen my feet which led to me finding a career that I love doing."

Number three said, "I am a good wife and mother. I am patient and kind. I am a follower, so I do not get upset when someone wants to lead."

Respondent number four offered, “I have the ability to connect with and help people, and young people in particular. I fed people as a child. I have artistic talent and I have very good organizational skills. I am also not afraid, and I am pretty brave.”

Woman number five stated, “I have a gift with old people and the gift of health and service.”

Number six answered, “I have a wonderful family. I have two wonderful parents, two children, and two grandchildren.”

“God has given me the gift to be an advocate for marginalized groups,” pronounced number seven.

Interviewee number eight recalled, “I have been given the gift of storytelling. I help with the bulletin. I have gotten closer to my daughter during her illness. I have been participating in Bible study and prayer group and God has gifted me with those experiences.”

Number ten shared, “I have been given the gift of musical ability and love. I believe I am a giving person. I am also a helper.”

“I was given the gift of organization and determination and to find the positive side of things,” quipped number eleven. “Also, I have been given the gift of family.”

Number twelve recounted, “I am patient and loving. I exercise good judgement. I have good health, strength, and stamina. I was given the gift of education and many advantages. I have a wonderful husband and two healthy children and four grandchildren.”

Woman number thirteen replied, “Tough! I lost my husband when my children were young, I was given the gift of education to become a nurse. I am blessed with health, long life, a career, and grandchildren.”

Interviewee number fifteen offered, “I am an educator, and a caretaker. I am good in a crisis, and I have empathy.”

Respondent number seventeen stated, “I have been given life, and faith and a wonderful church. God has saved a place for me and written it in his book. I have a large family, a husband who is wonderful, friends, a warm home, food, and clothing. I had a wonderful career. I am filthy rich compared to others.”

Number eighteen shared, “I have been given many gifts. I am calm and enjoy listening to people. I don’t need everyone to be perfect. I enjoy people in general. I am a helper. I have a good singing voice. I am smart and resourceful. I have learned it is easier to give than to receive.”

Woman number twenty spoke, “I am slow to anger. It takes a long time to get me mad. I try to see others’ points of view. I have a good family, career, and health. I have the gift of sewing and cross stitch. I work with my hands and garden. I am a good cook.”

Interview Question Fifteen: Luke 10:38-42 reads, *Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to what he was saying. But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so, she came to him and asked, ‘Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.’ But the Lord answered her, ‘Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.’* After studying this picture of the story of Jesus dining with Mary and Martha, which woman do you identify with and why?

Number one – “Martha, I jump in and do things and help. I worry that I am going to miss something.”

Number two – “I have identified with Martha. I have to do something and be accomplished. I am grateful for the pandemic. I had a retirement fear, and the pandemic gave me time to read and reflect and to be more like Mary and listen.”

Number three – “I have identified with Martha most of my life.”

Number four – “I am Martha, a worker bee.”

Number five – “I was more Martha at one time in my life. Today, I am more like Mary, sitting next to Jesus and not baking a cake. I have changed my mindset. It is not what you are doing. I want to be more like Mary.”

Number six – “I am more like Martha, a worker bee.”

Number seven – “Neither, Martha is duty oriented. Mary is devotion beyond belief.”

Number eight – “I am a little of both. I like to be busy and helpful. And I like to sit at Jesus’ feet and read and pray. I want to be both.”

Number nine – “I want to be Mary and not cook.”

Number ten – “Martha, because that is the role that I am comfortable with.”

Number eleven – “Mary listening instead of doing so that I can see what comes next.”

Number twelve – “I can’t choose. I am both of them. I have always been a student and a seeker. I am always asking questions of Jesus.”

Number thirteen – “I’d say Martha, but in a way that is not true. I have been wanting to be more like Mary and I identify with Mary, but I would have been miffed at Martha.”

Number fourteen – “Always Mary. I hate housework. I am so disorganized. I would rather sit and listen.”

Number fifteen – “I am Martha, taking care is my way of showing love. I try to be Mary, but 99 percent of the time I am Martha.”

Number sixteen – “Mary, I am doing what I am supposed to be doing. I wouldn’t prepare meals. Things can wait. Being with Jesus is a priority.”

Number seventeen – “I identify with Martha. I would be the busy one. I am a good listener, but I am not sure I would be as drawn in as Mary. I would be listening like a mouse.”

Number eighteen – “I am Martha who feels obligated to do all the basic things to get everything done.”

Number nineteen – “I am Martha. I do, do, and do. I want to stop and listen, but I always feel like I have to be the one to take care of everything.”

Number twenty – “I am Martha wishing I were Mary.”

Number twenty-one – “I identify more with Mary. You don’t always have to be busy. When I take the time to listen and just be, I have more energy to do more.”

## **Chapter 5**

### **Conclusion**

Genesis 1:27 clearly states three times that God created humankind in God's image. The idea of Imago Dei is difficult for many people to accept. The results of this research show some of the women understand that they are made in the image of God and as such are God's precious children. Other women still struggle with this concept as shown in the results of statements such as, "I have a personal, intimate relationship with God," "God is an impersonal force," "It's hard for me to understand how other people get so excited about God's love," "I feel an absence of God's love in my life," "Knowing God loves me gets me very excited" and interview question number one.

This author has pastored most of these women for twenty years and has worked diligently to teach them about God's love for them. This author believes the results of this research would have been even more profound without this continuing work. It would be interesting to use this project with a group of women who have not been exposed to the idea that women are created in God's image and are equal partners with men to compare results.

God sent Jesus Christ, to be God's hands and feet in the world and when Jesus went back to the father, He passed that responsibility to his disciples, the original twelve and to all of us today. Helping women understand that they were created Imago Dei, to be the hands and feet of God in our world can be life changing and potentially world changing.

Owning one's identity as a precious child of God frees one to not only accept and face the challenges that life brings, but to seek out pursue new paths that God may present.

How do the women of MCPC understand God, their identities as disciples of Jesus Christ and how do they live out their faith in their identities? What does it mean to a woman to be created in

the image of God? As the pastor of MCPC, this author often finds herself in counseling situations with women presenting with low self-esteem or living in domestic violence situations. The results of the research from this thesis offer a great starting place to develop a curriculum that may help this counselor better address women presenting with these issues and may be beneficial for other counselors also.

The title for this thesis, “Woman in the Mirror: Precious Child of God, or Just a Rib?”, will also be the title of the curriculum that will be written based on some of the research results of this project. This researcher has worked in the field of domestic violence for many years, locally, nationally, and internationally. This researcher served for ten years as moderator of an organization called Presbyterians Against Domestic Violence Network. As a moderator, this researcher helped to develop training materials and worship resources for the greater church as well as organizing and participating in training workshops around the country and responding to domestic violence tragedies as requested by churches.

Traveling to Central America yearly, this researcher offers workshops to indigenous women on domestic violence. This researcher has also worked with the Reverend Doctor Kevin Frederick, author of the curriculum, “Men in the Mirror: Orienting Our Lives Toward a Christ Centered Masculinity.” The Presbyterian Church of the United States of America (PCUSA) published Frederick’s curriculum and then had it translated into Spanish. Frederick has been offering workshops for men in Central America using his curriculum. It is planned to eventually offer couples workshops with Frederick using both curriculums.

Action Research was an enjoyable part of this project. Gathering the data from the women and reading and listening to their responses provided a wealth of information and gave this researcher the privilege of getting to know many of the congregants and friends of Mayfield

Presbyterian Church on an entirely new level. It is not often that a pastor has the privilege of learning about a congregant's introduction to spirituality and to understand the impact their faith journey had on their life. It was fascinating to learn where and how the women learned about and developed their faith.

It was fun to see how excited the women were to participate in the project. Stringer offers that research can be confounded by a lack of interest of the participants and suggests that the collaborative process of action research is designed to promote high levels of enthusiasm and active participation.<sup>194</sup> This project was filled with enthusiasm and active participation from the beginning. It was a surprise to see how quickly the women responded to the surveys, and how many of the women set up their own appointments for interviews without waiting to be contacted by the researcher.

As discussed in Chapter four, many of the women were very nervous at the beginning of the interviews. As this researcher explored the cause of the anxiety, it was interesting to learn the participants were anxious that they did not know enough about the Bible to answer the questions and they would look "Stupid." Once this researcher explained carefully that the women were not expected to know details about the Bible, quote scripture, or know where a text was in the Bible, the women relaxed and freely offered answers to the questions.

Several women also shared the reason they do not attend Bible study is because they believe they do not know enough about the Bible. This was a surprising revelation, since it seemed obvious to the researcher that the purpose of Bible study is to learn more about the Bible,

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<sup>194</sup> Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A guide to Design and Implementation*, 91.



what it says, and how it applies to their lives today. This researcher has filed this important learning away to use as a teaching moment with the entire congregation.

The answers to the statement, “I read the Bible regularly,” referenced on page ninety-seven, came out about evenly with fifty-nine percent of the women saying yes and forty-one percent saying no. The answers to this statement seemed to contradict the anxiety of the women about not knowing much about the Bible.

It was interesting to experience what Sensing describes as the participants owning the inquiry.<sup>195</sup> The women’s involvement was real and not token. Once the women felt comfortable, they wanted to share, they were excited they had been asked to give input, and since the research has been completed, have offered to participate in a worship service highlighting people’s faith journeys. This was an unexpected positive coming out of this project.

The checks this researcher employed in this project included: to assure credibility, the researcher allowed the women to expand their answers during the interview process and express their experiences of the problem being investigated, making certain that all the interviews were audio and videotaped to assure the accuracy of the information provided.

Transferability could not be guaranteed. This study involved a specific group of women in a very specific context. Mayfield Central Presbyterian Church is located in a very rural county and is not ethnically diverse. It is important not to generalize the results to groups and contexts other than MCPC. However, this author suspects that some of the results may be transferable to other groups of women in some situations. To confirm transferability, a similar project should be conducted with a more ethnically diverse group.

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<sup>195</sup> Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Method Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses*, 58.

This project and the curriculum to be developed may not be transferrable to those who have a complementarian point of view of women in the Bible. Although both the complementarian and egalitarian viewpoints were examined in this project, this researcher will be developing a curriculum based on an egalitarian point of view.

This project should be transferrable to other denominations as low self-esteem, confusion about women's roles in the church, and domestic violence can happen to anyone regardless of class, gender, race, age, disability, or sexuality, religion, or educational background. Although most domestic violence is carried out by men against women, men can also suffer abuse by women. Domestic violence is equally common in same-sex relationships.

This researcher has worked hard over the past twenty years to encourage the women of MCPC to participate in Bible studies, prayer, and educational opportunities in the church and has had significant success. This project may have a distinctly different outcome with women in other churches who have not participated in Christian education.

Scripture can be used as a resource or a roadblock when talking about women in the Bible. This researcher will use the data collected on scriptural references in the Bible to create a section of the curriculum based on reading and understanding a particular scripture as both a resource and a roadblock. This allows a reader to hear a different perspective on the same scripture and may allow a new understanding of what it means to be a precious child of God.

Several of the statements and questions used in this project explored early experiences with God and the church. These statements were designed to explore attachment theory and to understand when women first experienced God in their lives and how that experience plays out in their lives now. The fact that one hundred percent of the respondents declared there are

different parts of their faith they want to explore opens the door for new educational opportunities and for the proposed curriculum.

There were several statements that the researcher felt, in retrospect, may have been too vague or needed to be reworded. For example, the statements, “I have a personal, intimate relationship with God,” and “God has a plan for my life,” leave this author wanting more. What do the women mean? For the eighty-three percent of women who believed that God has a plan for their life, how does this affect their faith journey or does it? And for the three women who strongly disagreed that God has a plan for their life, why did they think that way?

Another example is the statement, “I feel a desire to worship God throughout the week.” This researcher questioned whether the statement was too vague. Should the statement have been more explicit, with perhaps a follow-up question about whether the respondents would like to attend an additional service, Bible study, or other worship opportunity? With fifteen women strongly agreeing and fourteen agreeing, this researcher found the information to be encouraging in offering a new curriculum and opportunity for study.

The results for the statements, “I feel pressure to have it all,” and “I struggle to meet standards set by media,” were interesting. The two women who agreed they struggle with having it all were the two who were neutral on “having it all.”

This author wishes that the women who responded that they strongly disagreed with the statement, “I am intelligent,” could have shared why they felt that way. This result alerted this researcher to include discussion on this topic in the future curriculum.

There were other answers that did not come as a surprise. One hundred percent of the women agreed that they stand in awe of God, their Creator. All the women identified as Christian

and one needs only to look around at the beauty of the earth, the majesty of the mountains, and the power of the oceans and the storms to stand in awe.

One hundred percent of the women also believed that prayer helps them to feel closer to God. Prayer will be an integral part of the curriculum to be created.

The response to the statement, “I can know God merely by interacting with people,” presents sixty-two percent who agreed or strongly agreed and thirty-eight percent of the respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. The results showed this author the need to add a section to the curriculum based on Matthew 25, where Jesus says,

*“Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.” Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?” And the king will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” Then he will say to those at his left hand, “You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.” Then they also will answer, “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not*

*take care of you?" Then he will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me."*

What would it mean if we regularly recognized Jesus in others?

Many victims of domestic violence believe they are the only ones going through their situation. They often do not share their experiences and deny what they are going through because of fear and distrust. Finding a safe person, someone you can turn to and interact with, can provide solace and safety for a victim.

The women who responded negatively to the statements, "I feel comfortable receiving God's love and forgiveness," "I wonder if God really forgives me," and "It's hard for me to understand how other people get so excited about God's love," and responded positively to the statement, "Suffering seems to refine my faith and character," verify the need for this author's curriculum.

Six women feel an absence of God's love in their life. It is certainly possible that they are currently in the desert where one sometimes finds oneself in their faith journey or perhaps, they have always felt this way. Either way, these women could possibly be helped by learning more about God's love and faithfulness, through study and conversation.

As this author reviewed and assessed the results of the survey, inventory, and interview questions, it was necessary to remind herself that the purpose and goal of the research was to create a curriculum. The answers to the survey questions and the interview questions were designed to assess the need and provide information that could be incorporated into the curriculum and were not chosen to be specific or exact.

Based on the results of this author's research, the topics of love, faith, hurt, forgiveness, trust, stress, struggles, suffering, prayer, and religion will all be included in the proposed

curriculum in addition to the section on viewing scripture as a resource or a roadblock as previously stated.

In addition to validating the need to create the proposed curriculum, the questionnaire, survey and interviews exhibit the need for possible further training, prayer, fellowship, evangelism, and worship in the researcher's congregation. The results of the research provided helpful information for planning future learning opportunities at MCPC.

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## Appendix A

### Informed Consent to Participate in an Action Research Project

done by the Rev. Bonnie M. Orth,

to fulfill the requirements of a thesis toward her Doctor of Ministry degree

Title of Research Project: Woman in the Mirror: Precious Child of God or Just a Rib?

Rev. Bonnie M. Orth, XXX-XXX-XXXX

**A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND:** The Rev. Bonnie M. Orth is researching what it means to be a woman and a disciple of Jesus Christ. The purpose of your participation in this research is to help the researcher gain information and data to complete a thesis for a Doctor of Ministry degree from Liberty University. You are a possible participant in this study because you are a member of Mayfield Central Presbyterian Church (MCPC) and a woman who identifies as a follower of Jesus Christ.

This document is a statement of informed consent for this project. This informed consent form offers the participant information about this project and identifies the risks and benefits of participating in this project.

**B. PROCEDURES:** If you agree to participate in this research study, the following will occur: You will fill out the initial survey included with this consent form. This survey will gather some demographic information and explore a little about who you are. When you return the consent form and the initial survey, you will be sent a second survey based on the Religious Status Inventory (RSInv-S10). This inventory will assess your baseline awareness of God, your relationship with God, and your relationship with organized religion. After completing this inventory, you will set an appointment for a personal interview, which will take place at the

church in the pastor's office. This interview will take approximately one hour. To collect the data and remember everything from the interview, the researcher will use audio and visual equipment for data collection and reporting. The researcher will also be taking written notes. The entire process will use anonymity. The interview will discuss questions about your faith, your relationship to God, and how God works in your life, sharing this information in your own words, telling your own story. All information will help the researcher to write a thesis and create a curriculum for women called *Woman in the Mirror, Precious Child of God, or Just a Rib?*

**C. RISKS:** There are risks associated with anything. Risks associated with this research may include physiological or emotional discomforts. Physiological risks may consist of being embarrassed or having uncomfortable memories triggered. Emotional discomforts may consist of being uncomfortable with the questions asked. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. The researcher is trying to learn about people's ideas about God and discipleship and a woman's place in the kingdom. The data will be different and unique for each person. If you are uncomfortable at any point, tell the researcher, and the interview will stop.

**D. CONFIDENTIALITY:** This study's records will be as confidential as possible using no individual identities in any reports or publications resulting from the study. All the information collected for this research, including questionnaires, tapes, transcripts, and summaries, will be given codes and stored separately from any names or other participants' direct identification. Research information from this project is to secure at all times in the office of the Rev. Bonnie Orth. Rev. Orth is the only person who will have access to the paper and computer files. Only those with an essential need to see names or other identifying information will have access to

that particular file. After three years or by December 31 of 2024, all research materials from this project will be destroyed.

**E. BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION:** There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this research study. The anticipated benefit of a woman's participation in this study is the information that the interviewee provides. This data will help Rev. Orth write a DMIN thesis and create a curriculum for women. If you take place in this study, it may help other women in the future. There is no guarantee or promise that you will receive any benefits from this study.

**F. PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS:** After reading this form, if you decide to participate in this project, please understand your participation is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. The alternative is not to participate. You have the right to refuse to answer particular questions. The results of this research study may be presented at scientific or professional meetings or published in scientific journals. Your privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

**G. VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:** Your decision to participate in this study is voluntary and will not affect your relationship with MCPC or the Rev. Bonnie M. Orth. If you choose to participate in this study, you can withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without prejudice.

**H. QUESTIONS:** If you have any questions about the study, please contact The Rev. Bonnie M. Orth by calling XXX-XXX-XXXX. You can also contact the Institutional Review Board at Liberty University with any questions about research participants' rights or research-related concerns.

**CONSENT:**

YOU ARE MAKING A DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY. YOUR SIGNATURE BELOW INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY AFTER READING ALL OF THE INFORMATION ABOVE. YOU UNDERSTAND THE INFORMATION IN THIS FORM, HAVE HAD ANY QUESTIONS ANSWERED, AND HAVE RECEIVED A COPY OF THIS FORM FOR YOU TO KEEP.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Research Participant

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Rev. Bonnie M. Orth

**Your personal interview appointment is scheduled for \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_.**

**If you need to change your appointment, please contact the Rev. Bonnie M. Orth at XXX-XXX-XXXX.**

**Indicate *Yes* or *No*:**

I agree to complete an initial survey and return it to Rev. Bonnie Orth.

Yes       No

I agree to participate in the full research project including the RSInv-S10 survey and a personal interview.

Yes       No

I give consent to the use of audio equipment during this study.

Yes       No

I give consent to use video equipment during this study:

Yes       No

I consent for Rev. Orth to use data collected from the videotapes from this study to write a Liberty University thesis. This data collected may also be used to create a curriculum called Woman in the Mirror: Precious Child of God, or Just a Rib?

Yes       No

**TIME INVOLVEMENT:** Your participation will take approximately four hours, one hour for each survey and one hour for the personal interview and one hour if additional information is needed. The researcher anticipates that three hours should be sufficient to complete the study with each participant but included an extra hour in case the researcher or the participant wishes to provide or gather additional data.

**WHERE IS THE STUDY BEING CONDUCTED?**

This study will take place at Mayfield Central Presbyterian Church, 22 N. Main Street, Mayfield, New York 12117. The location of the interviews will be in the office of the pastor.

**WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY?**

Every woman 18 years of age or older, who is a member or attends Mayfield Central Presbyterian Church is eligible to participate in this research project. The researcher is only recruiting women for this project because it is about women's identity in God and their place in the kingdom. You may not qualify for this study based on other eligibility criteria not listed. The research coordinator will go over this information in detail.

## **WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF YOU TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?**

All of the women, over 18 years of age, who are Mayfield Central Presbyterian Church (MCPC) members and those who attend but are not members are welcome to participate. The Rev. Orth will ask permission from the session to use the church to collect the data for this research project and use the pastor's office to conduct the personal interviews.

The session of Mayfield Central Presbyterian Church has given permission to conduct this research. After receiving the returned initial survey and this informed consent with your signature, Rev. Bonnie Orth will also sign the consent and will return a copy to you.

After receiving the signed consent form and the initial survey, individual interviews will then be scheduled with Rev. Orth in the pastor's office. The interviewer will be taking notes during the interview and using audio and visual equipment to capture each woman's information. If because of COVID, you are not comfortable coming in to the pastor's office for an interview, Rev. Orth can arrange to set up a ZOOM interview for you. You will be the only participant in that meeting besides Rev. Orth.

All records, including audio and visual recordings, will be secured at all times in the pastor's office.

If you take part in this study, you may help others in the future. The data collected from this research will help to create a curriculum for women to help them better understand their identity as precious children of God and their calling to be disciples of Jesus Christ in the world.



## Appendix B

### Initial Assessment

Prayerfully complete the following assessment designed to evaluate a woman's current spiritual, relational, mental, emotional, financial, and physical status. Please answer this assessment in its entirety at one time. Allow approximately 10-15 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Because a woman's first answer is probably the most accurate reflection of her current status, participants are encouraged to respond quickly rather than deliberating over each response.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

What is your current relationship status?

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you have children? \_\_\_\_\_

If "Yes", how many children (biological and/or adopted) do you have? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your primary work/career focus?

\_\_\_\_\_

Are you currently enrolled in classes (educational, Bible study, professional/personal development, etc.)? \_\_\_\_\_

If "Yes", what class(es) are you taking?

\_\_\_\_\_

Where did you learn the most about the following?

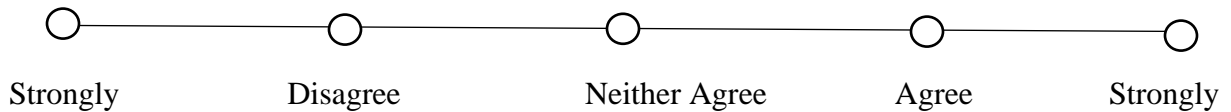
	Home	School	Church	Community	Media	Other (Please specify)
Career						
Church						
Cooking						
Decision- Making						
Family						
Finances						
God						
Happiness						
Health						
Hobbies						
Housekeeping						
Leadership						
Life						
Relationships						

Who taught you the **most** about the following?

	Community Member(s)	Family Member(s)	Friend(s)	Mentor(s)	Myself	Peer(s)	Public Figure(s)	Spiritual Leader(s)	Other (Please Specify)
Career									
Church									
Cooking									
Decision- Making									
Family									
Finances									
God									
Happiness									
Health									
Hobbies									
Housekeeping									
Leadership									
Life									
Relationships									

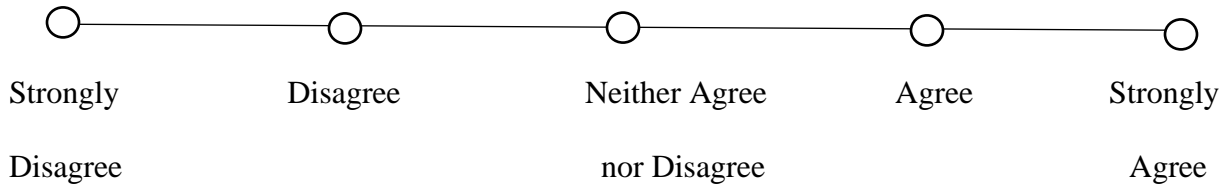
How much do you agree with each of the following statements?

I am worried about the future.

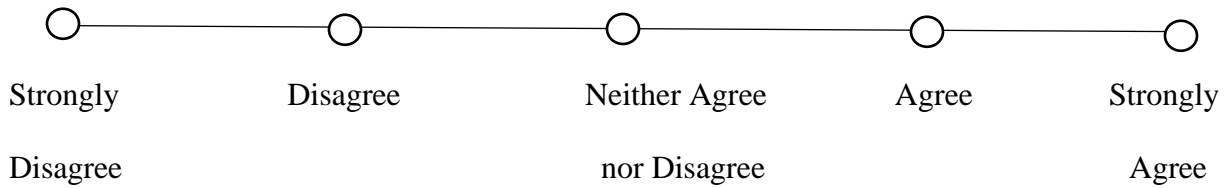




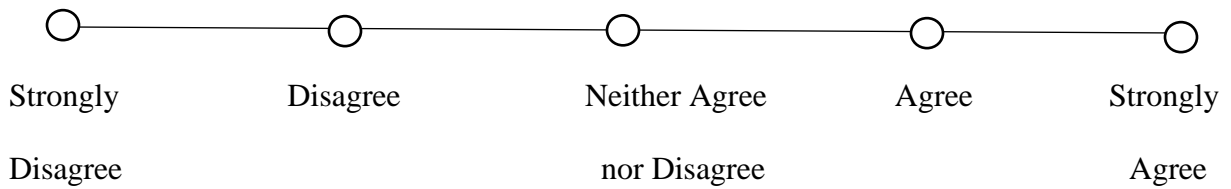
I feel pressure to “have it all”.



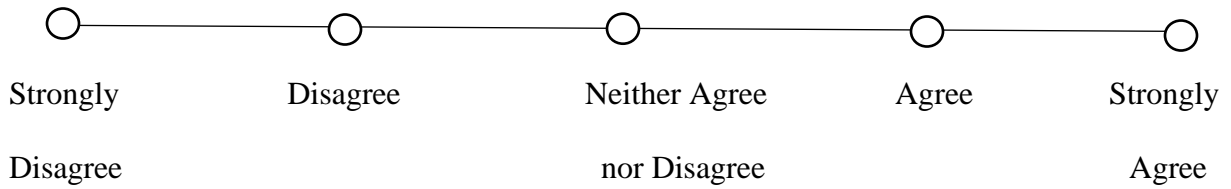
I struggle to meet standards set by media.



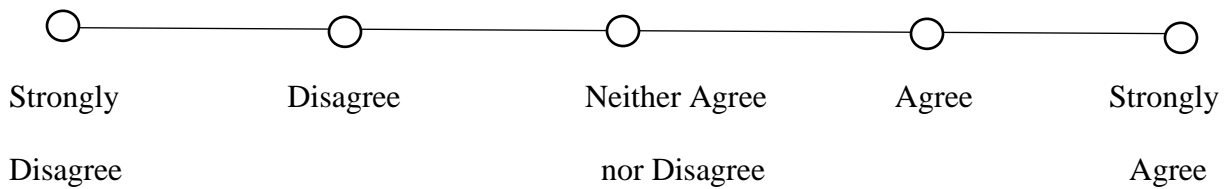
I am a problem-solver.



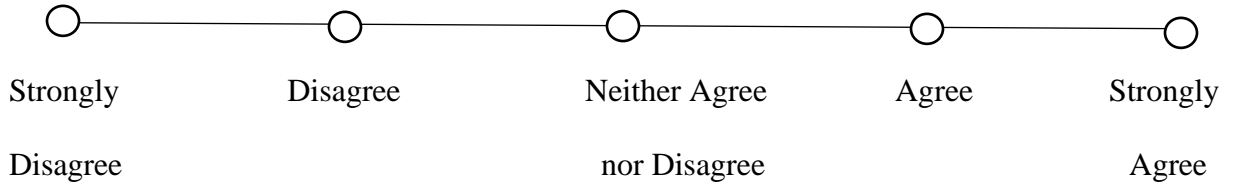
I am intelligent.



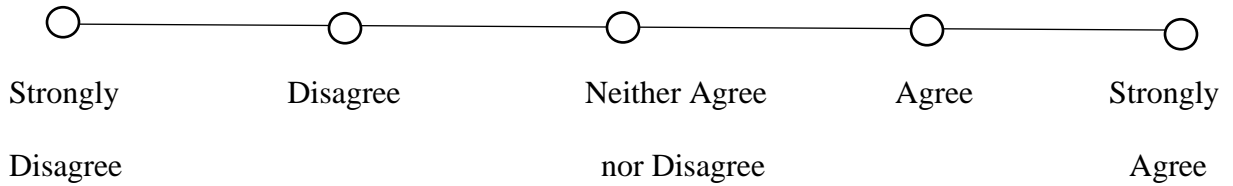
I confidently make decisions.



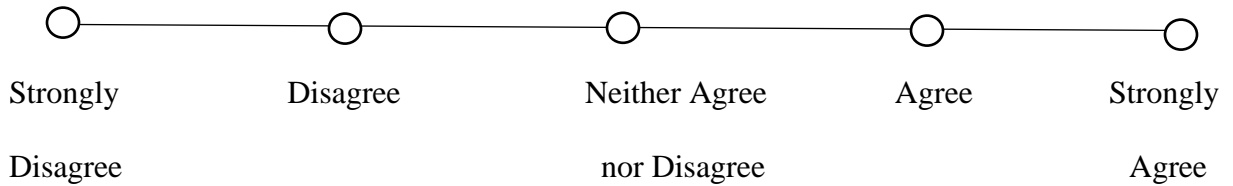
I have productive hobbies.



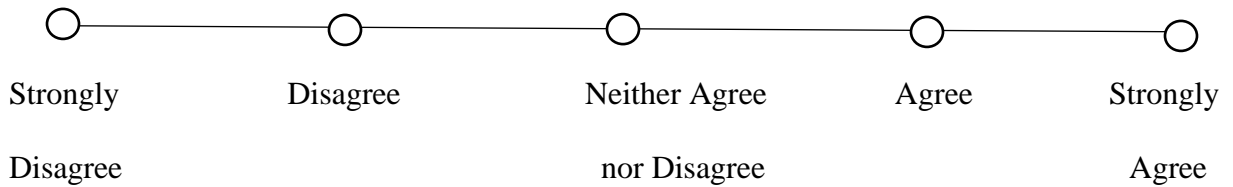
I do not feel prepared for real-life experiences.



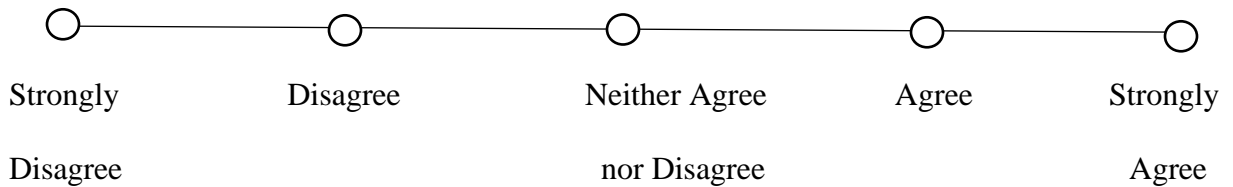
I exercise regularly.



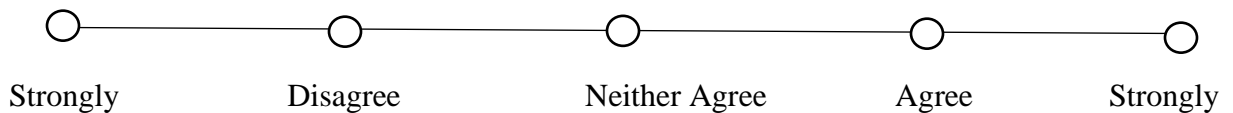
Stress prevents me from getting enough sleep.



Rest is important.



I am avoiding building relationships.

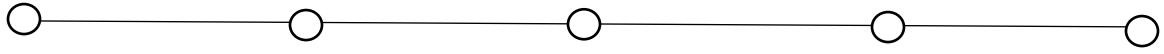


Disagree

nor Disagree

Agree

I am invested in the lives of others.



Strongly

Disagree

Neither Agree

Agree

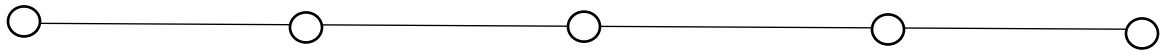
Strongly

Disagree

nor Disagree

Agree

I am maintaining healthy relationships.



Strongly

Disagree

Neither Agree

Agree

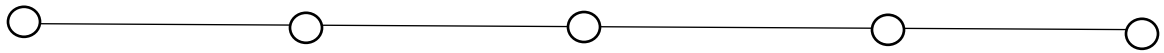
Strongly

Disagree

nor Disagree

Agree

I have a personal, intimate relationship with God.



Strongly

Disagree

Neither Agree

Agree

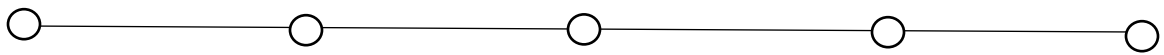
Strongly

Disagree

nor Disagree

Agree

God has a plan for my life.



Strongly

Disagree

Neither Agree

Agree

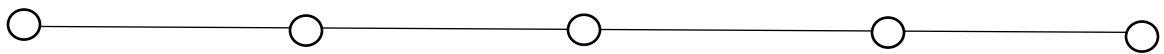
Strongly

Disagree

nor Disagree

Agree

I participate in regular religious activities.



Strongly

Disagree

Neither Agree

Agree

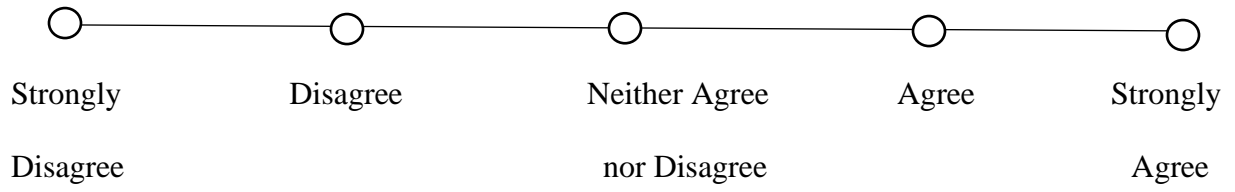
Strongly

Disagree

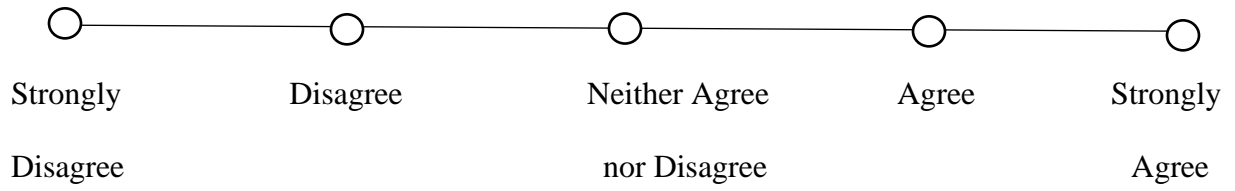
nor Disagree

Agree

I read the Bible regularly.



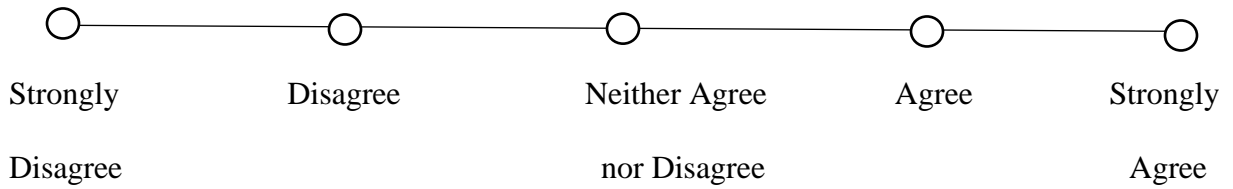
The Bible helps me respond to real-life experiences.



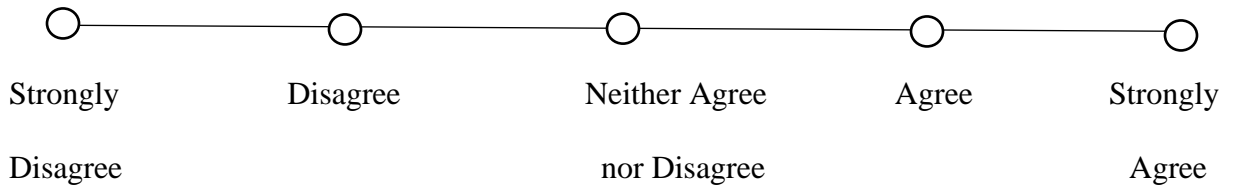




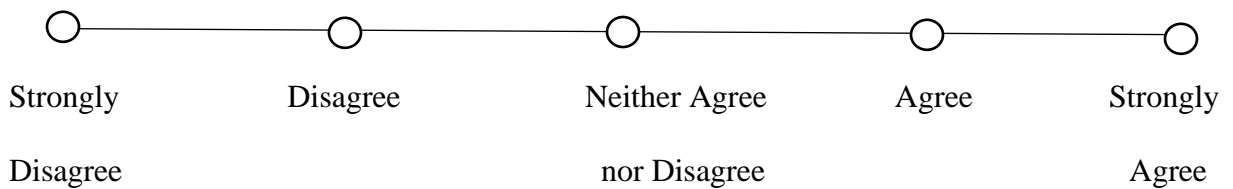
Prayer helps me feel closer to God.



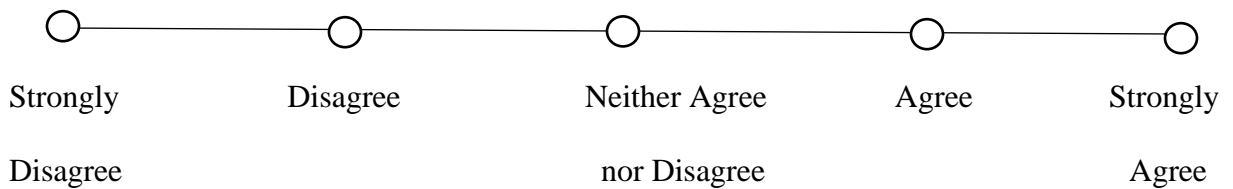
I stand in awe and wonder of God my creator.



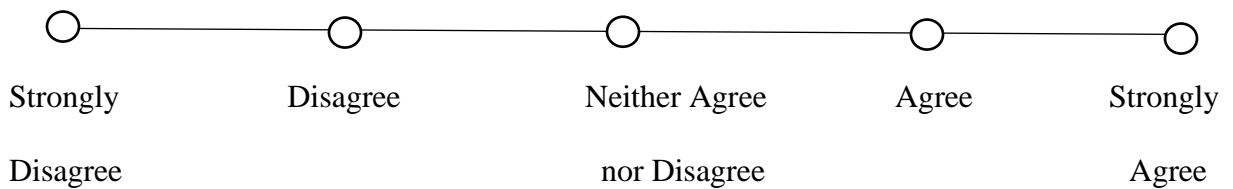
It would be hard to refrain from worshipping God.



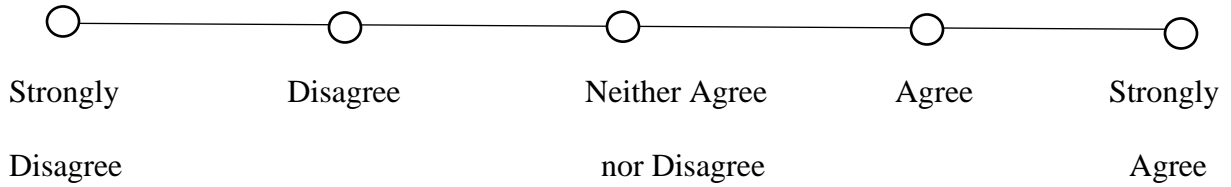
God is an impersonal force.



I can know God merely by interacting with people.

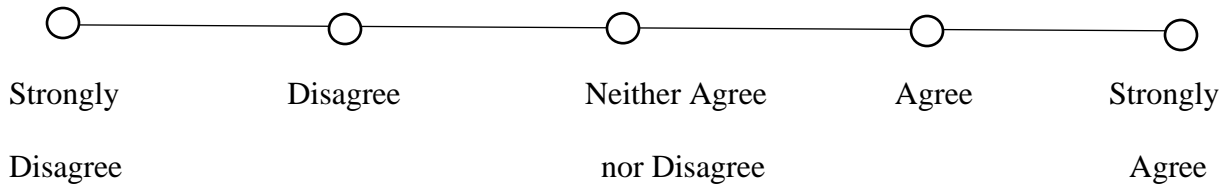


I live my life without need of God's assistance.

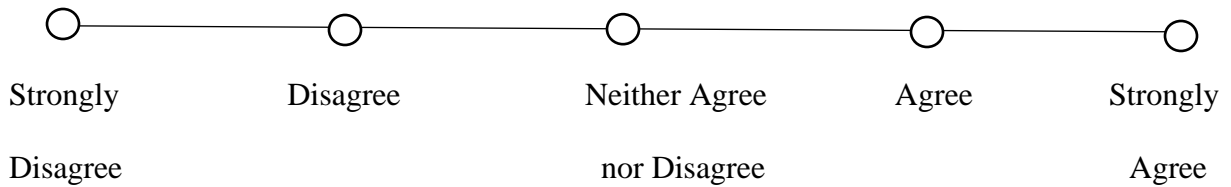


Acceptance of God's Grace and Steadfast Love

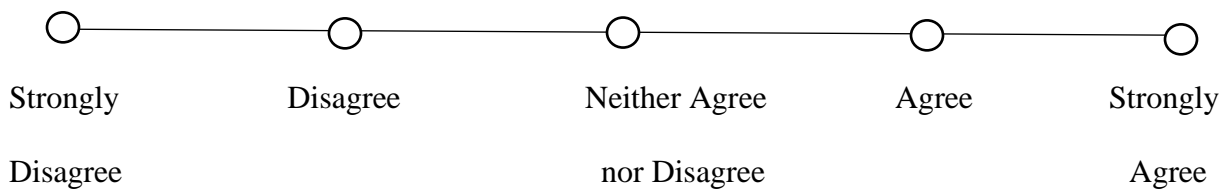
I know that God will bring good out of all my painful situations because he loves me.



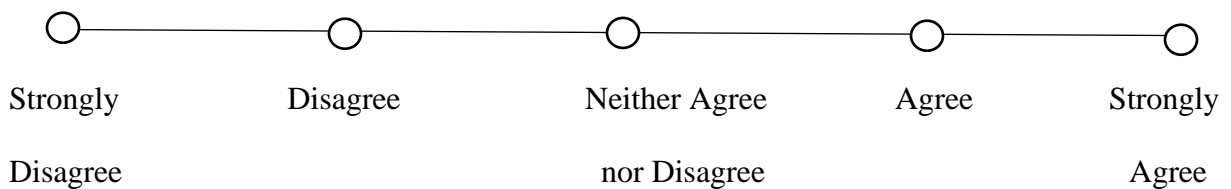
I feel safe and secure knowing that God loves me.



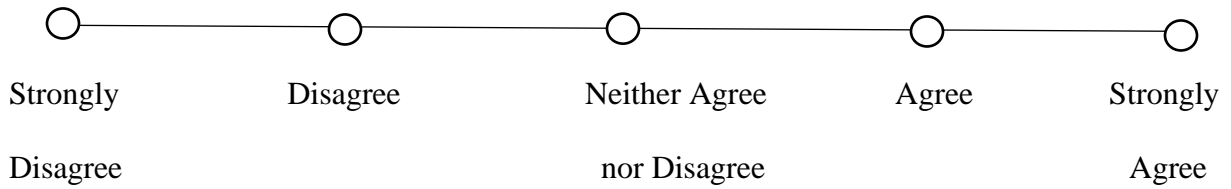
Receiving God's forgiveness inspires me to worship and praise God.



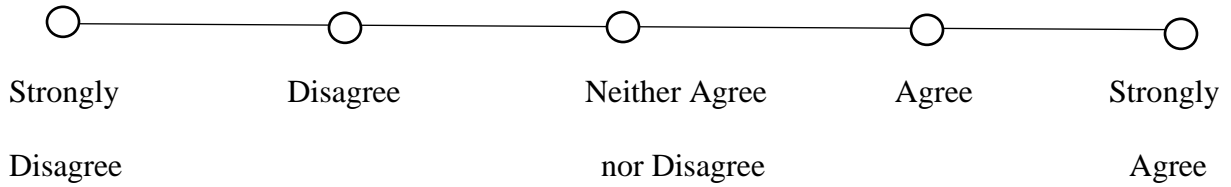
I feel comfortable receiving God's love and forgiveness.



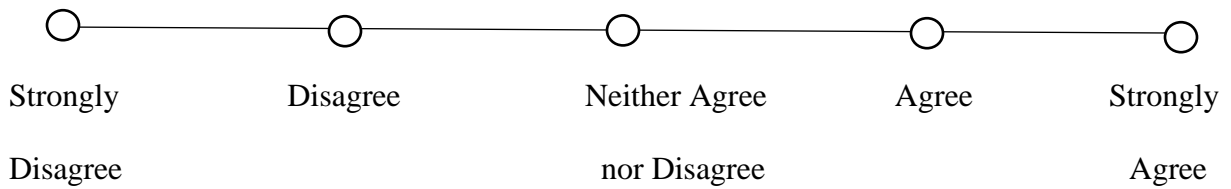
Suffering seems to refine my faith and character.



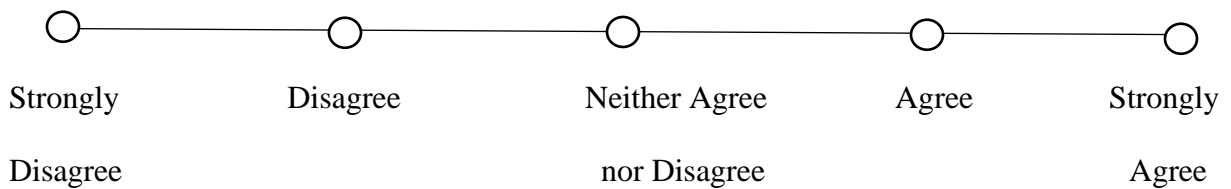
Knowing God loves me gets me very excited.



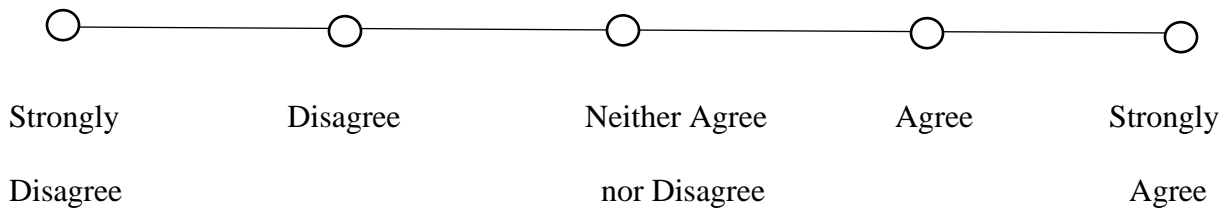
Because God loves and forgives me it makes me want to go out of my way to help someone else.



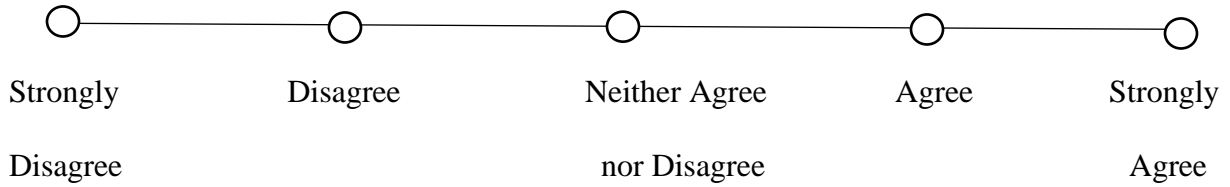
Often, I wonder if God really forgives me.



It's hard for me to understand how other people get so excited about God's love.

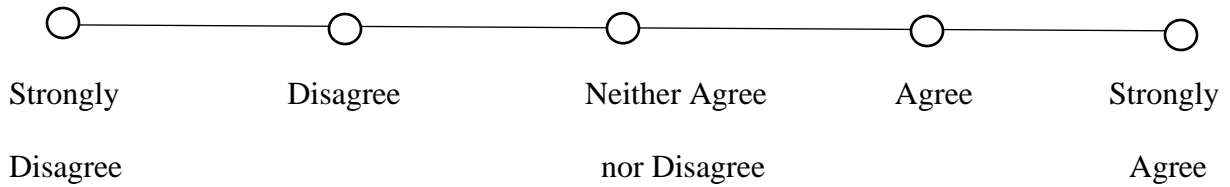


I feel an absence of God's love in my life.

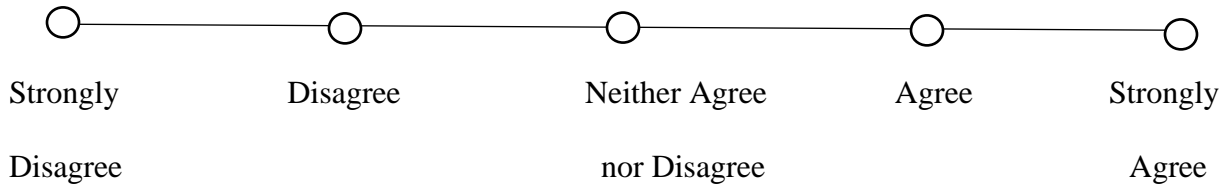


Being Repentant and Responsible

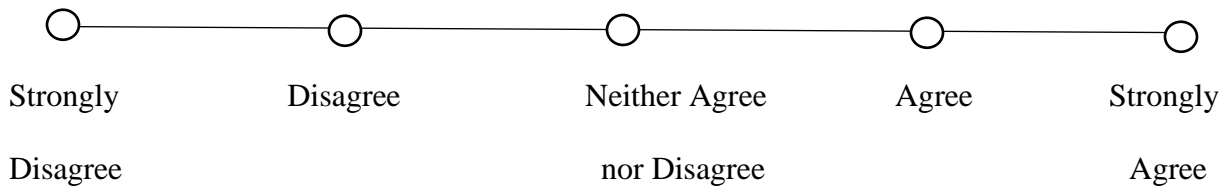
When someone asks me to forgive them, I am able to do so.



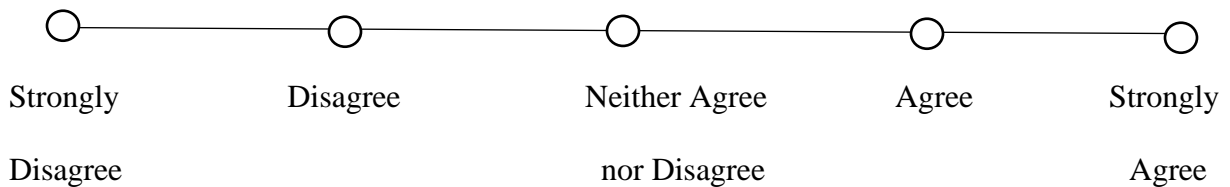
When I've done something wrong, I try to do something to correct the situation.



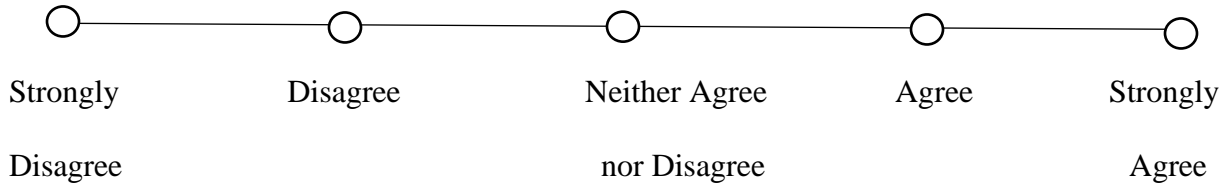
I am quick to ask for forgiveness when I have hurt someone.



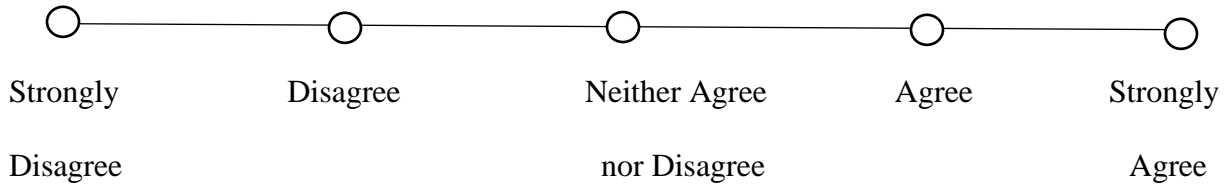
I continue to wish the best for someone who has hurt me.



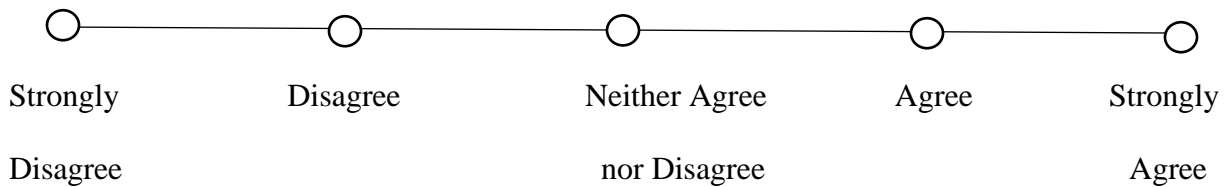
When I have wronged someone, my first thought is how that person might be feeling.



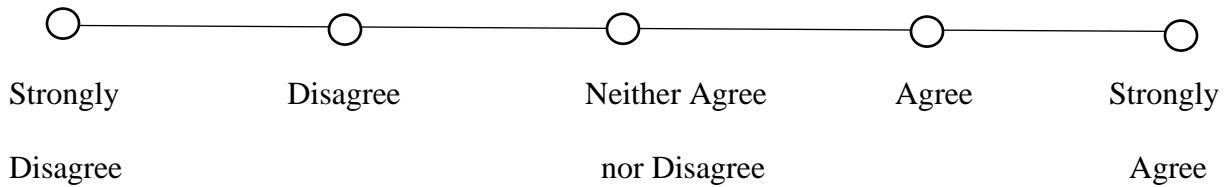
When I have hurt someone, I try to ask myself what I can do to make it right.



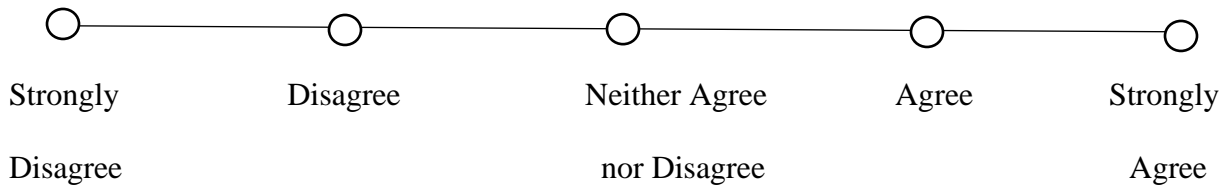
When I have hurt someone, I feel so guilty that I find myself avoiding them.



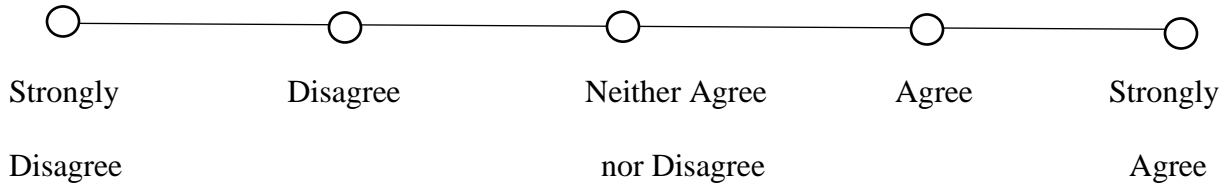
If someone hurts me, it makes it hard for me to trust them again.



When someone has wronged me, I give them the cold shoulder.

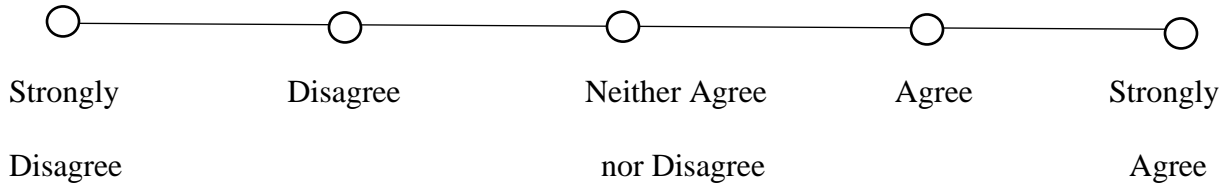


If I've done something wrong, it is better to let it go than to bring it up again and apologize for it.

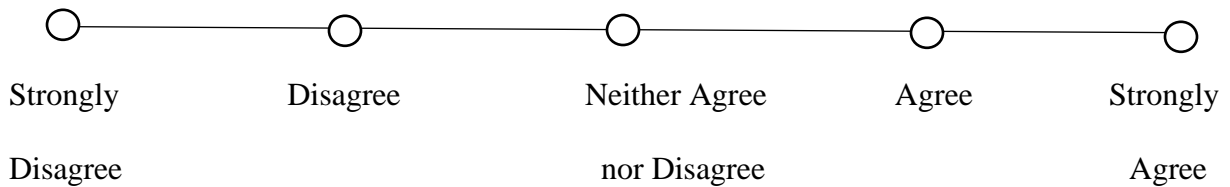


Knowing God's Leadership and Direction

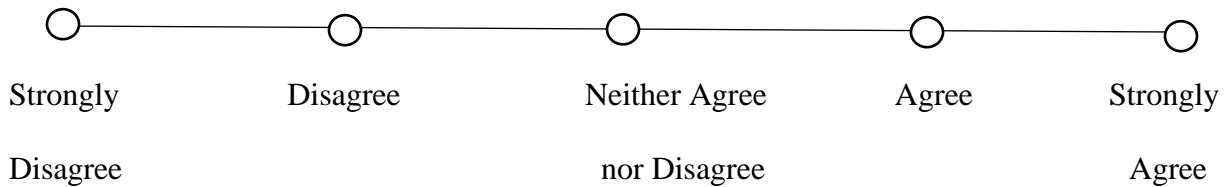
I am conscious that my relationship to God affects how I relate to my family.



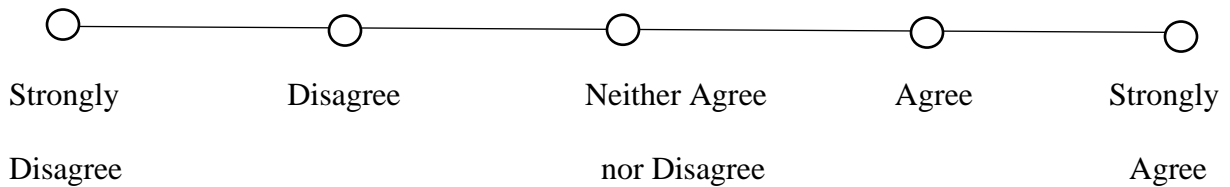
I trust that the future is in God's hands and that I will accept whatever he has for me.



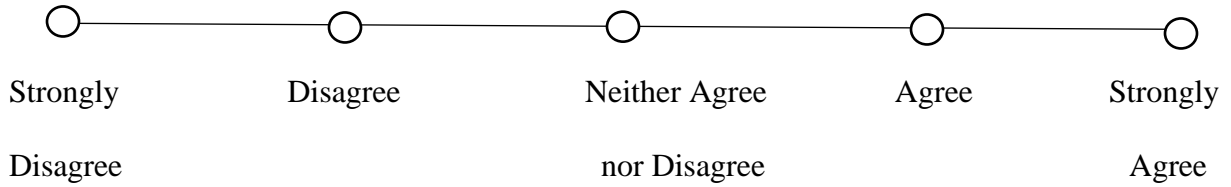
I expect some hard times in the future but trust that God will help me through them.



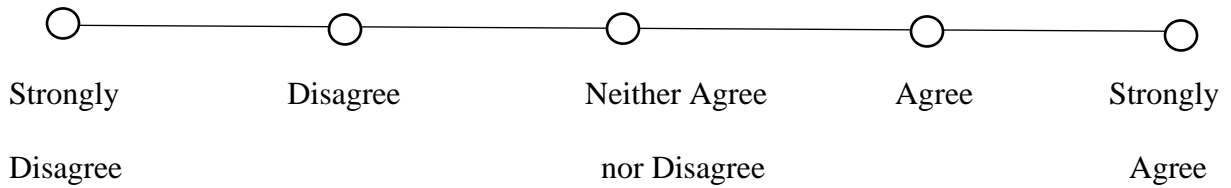
I think about what God would want for my life when I make any major decisions.



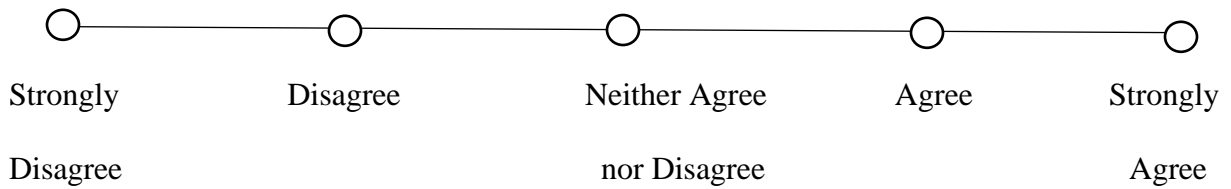
I feel good about how God uses me in what I do.



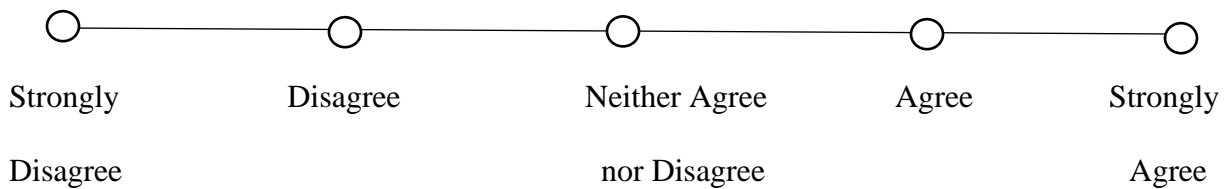
I try to serve God through my work.



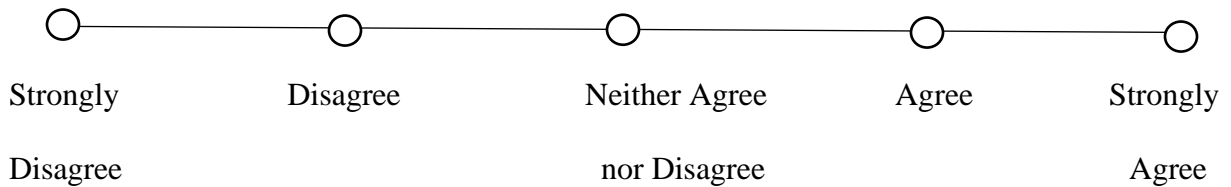
My religious beliefs should be kept separate from what I do in my daily life.



I use prayer when making major decisions.

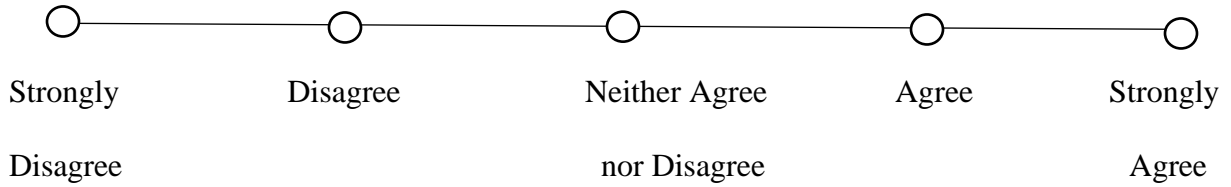


I fail to see how my religious life relates to what I do every day.



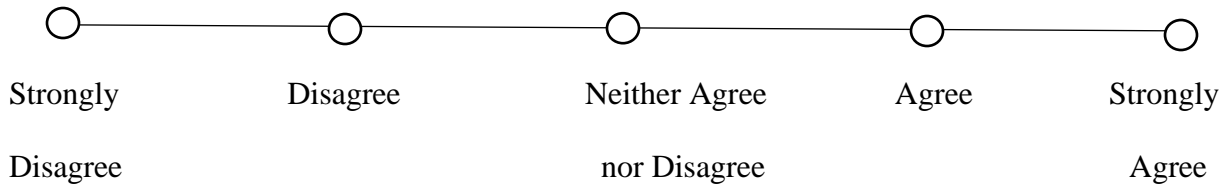


I rely solely on my own resources to make major decisions in my life.

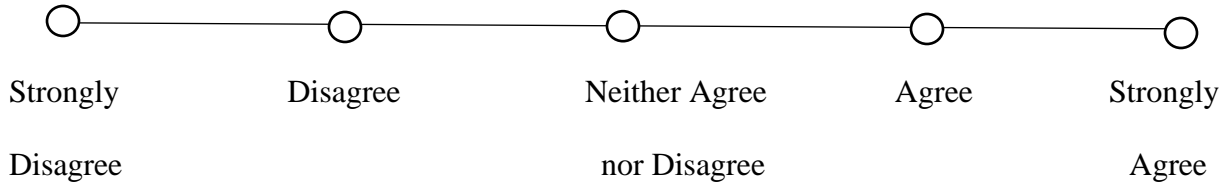


Involvement in Organized Religion

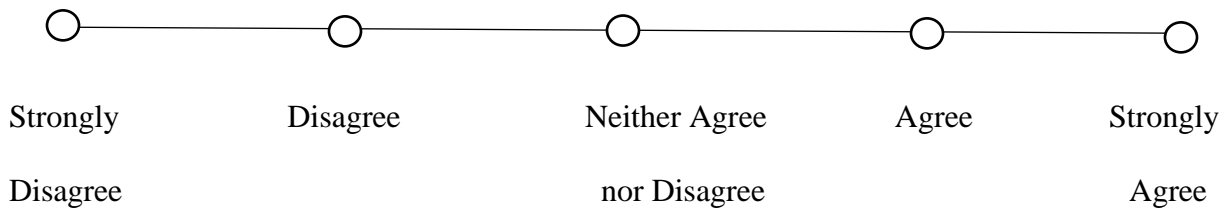
I regularly attend church or a religious community.



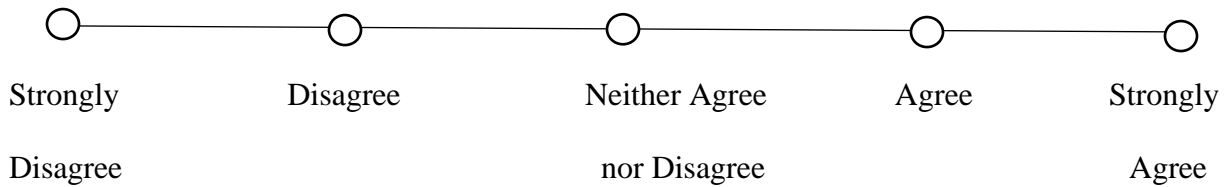
I consistently go to a church or religious organization once a week or more.



I volunteer quite often for church positions.

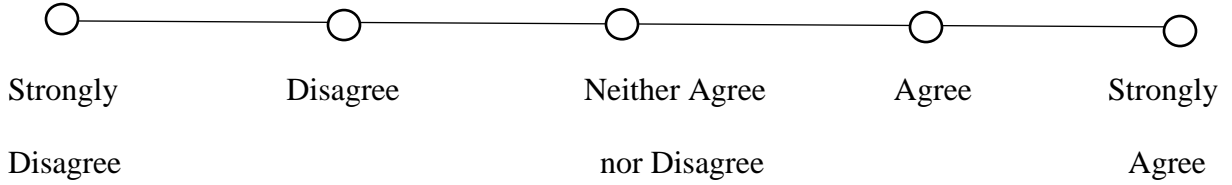


I am very active in church activities.

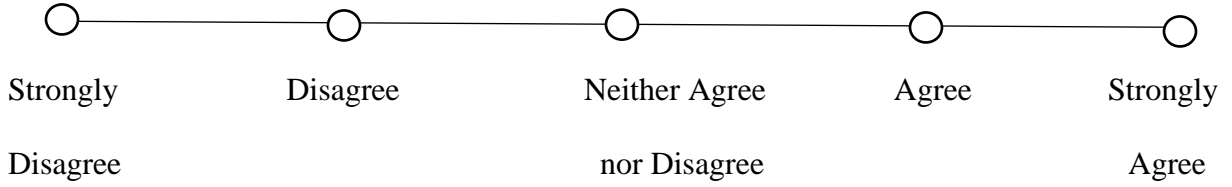


Experiencing Fellowship

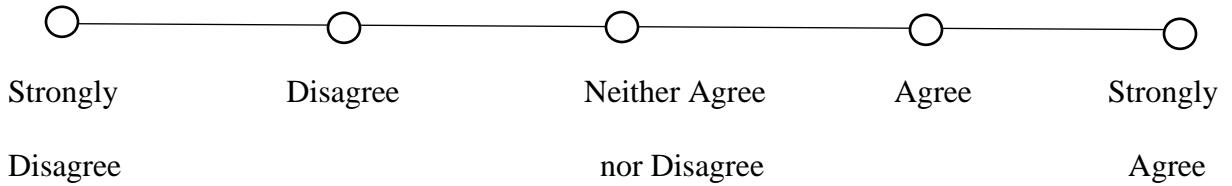
I enjoy being around other people of different cultures or races.



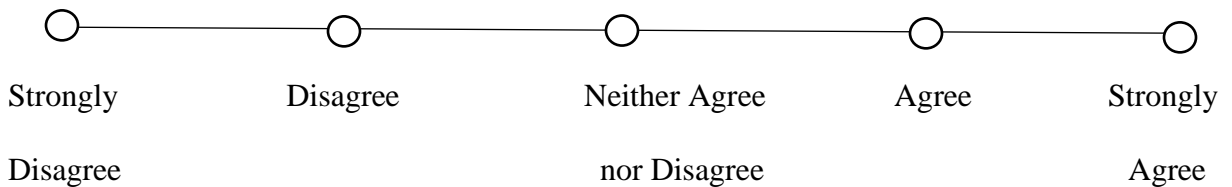
It bothers me when religious differences keep people from becoming friends.



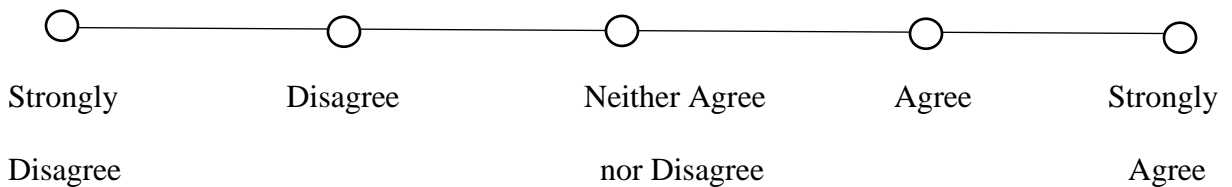
I have close friendships with both Christians and non-Christians.



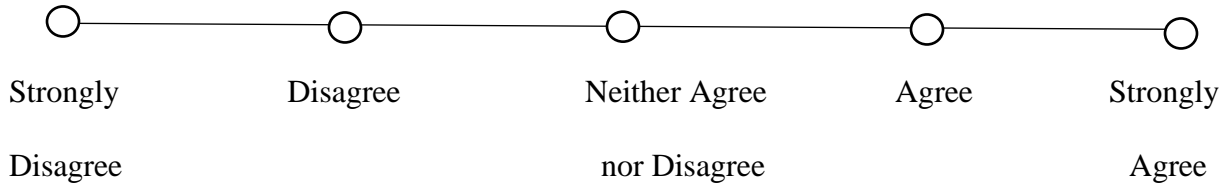
I need friendships with both Christians and non-Christians to help me grow.



Talking to people from different cultures helps me to have a broader view of life.

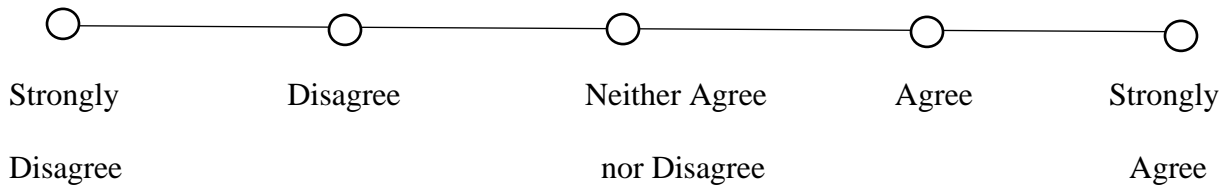


It is important for Christians to separate themselves from non-Christians.

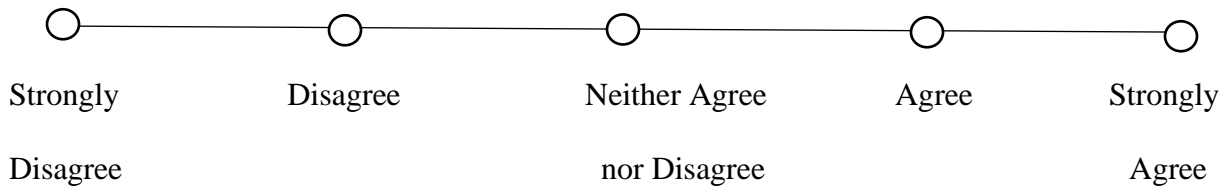


### Being Ethical

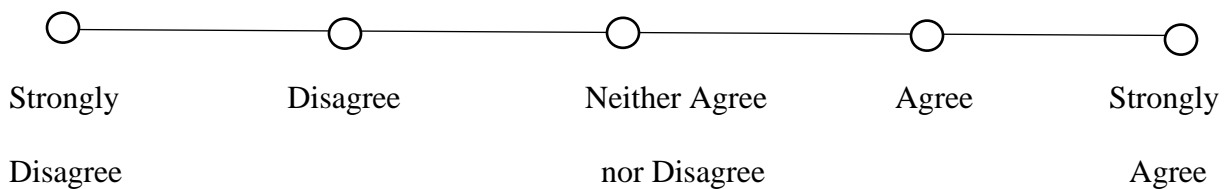
I am trying to help change many things that are unfair in the world.



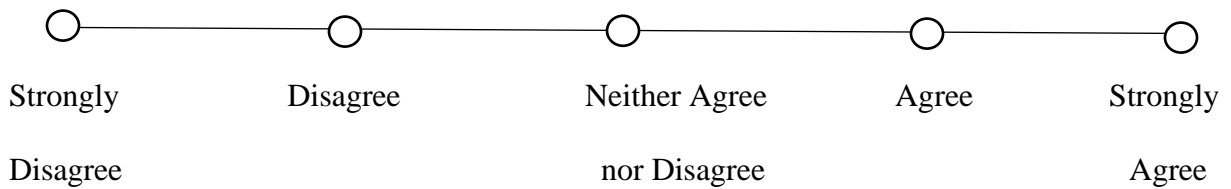
I consider myself being very active in moral issues.



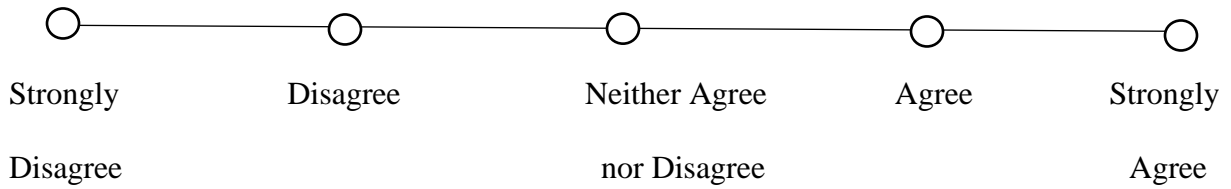
I feel good about what I do because I know I am contributing to society.



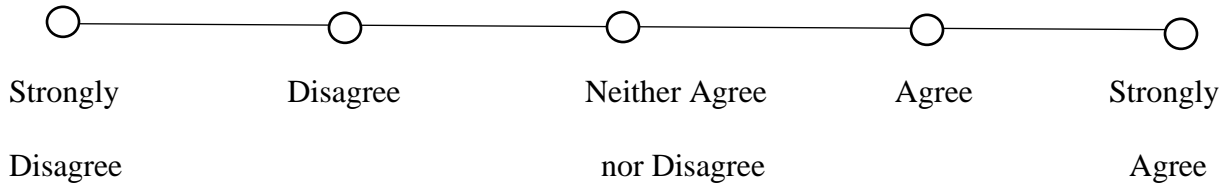
I believe God has a purpose for me in my job or what I do.



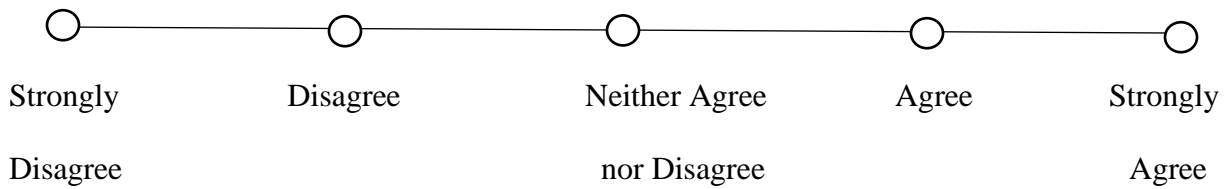
My decisions are always founded on faith.



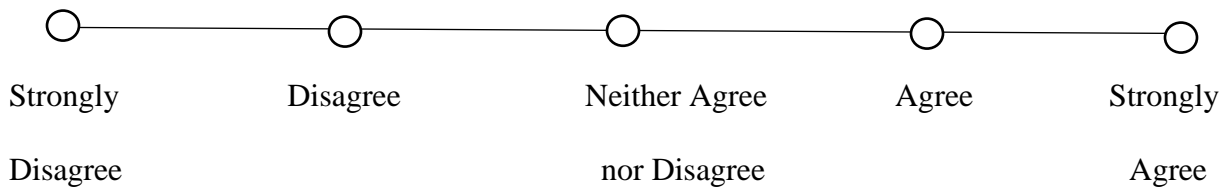
Without my faith in God, I would be lacking much of my sense of what is right or wrong.



My concern for others is based on my love for God.

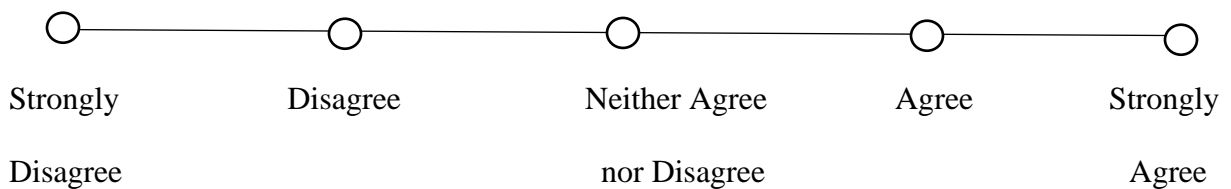


I have little need to deal with moral situations because very few affect me.

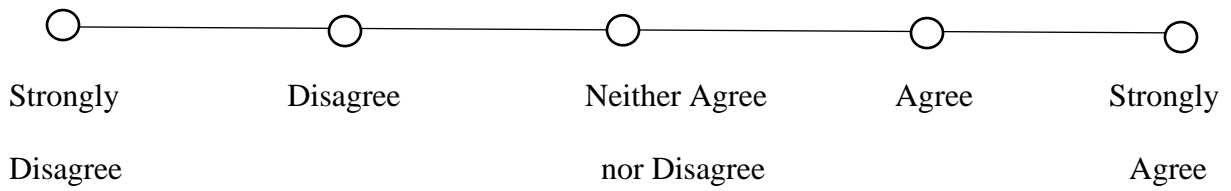


### Affirming Openness in Faith

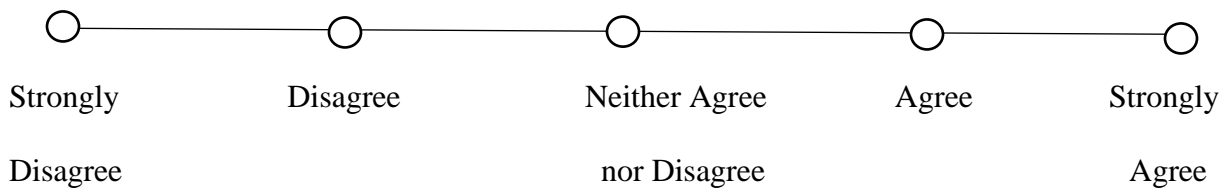
I have read many books about my faith in the past year.



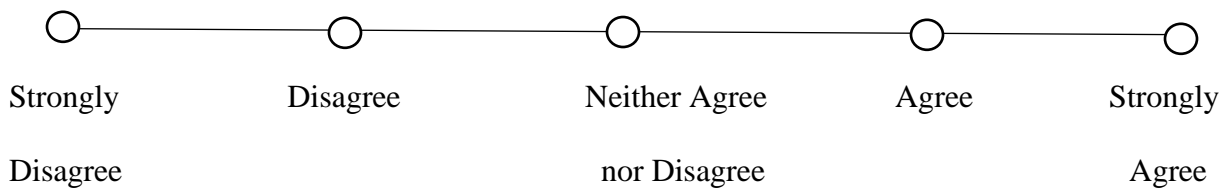
There are different parts of my faith I want to explore.



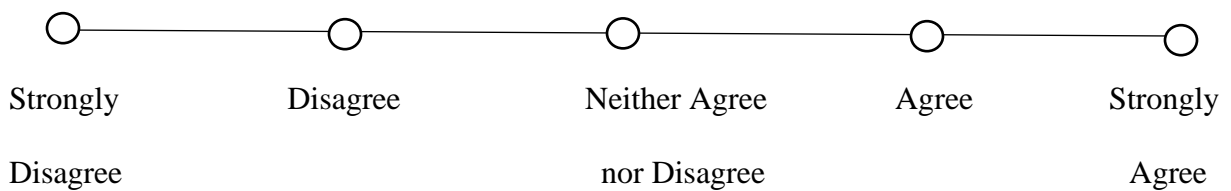
I have a regular devotional time in order to grow in my faith.



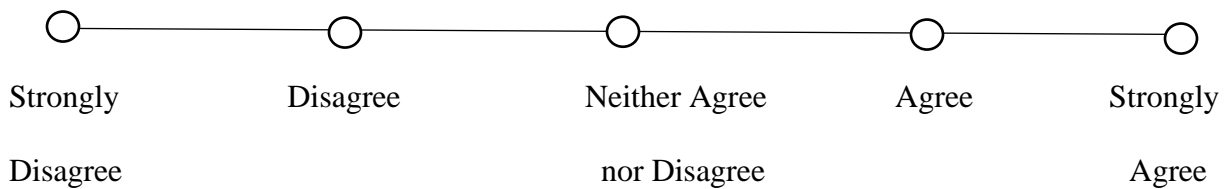
My faith affects every aspect of my life.



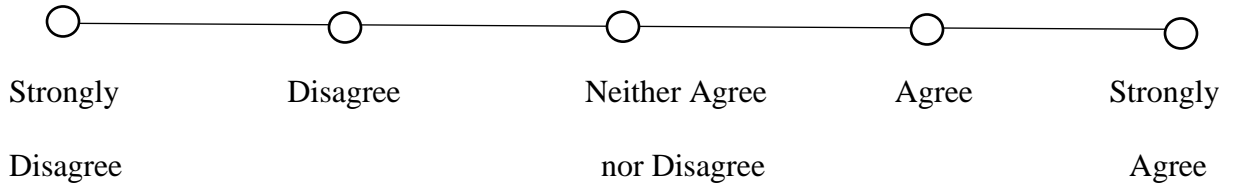
I have discussed my faith with others on many occasions within the past year.



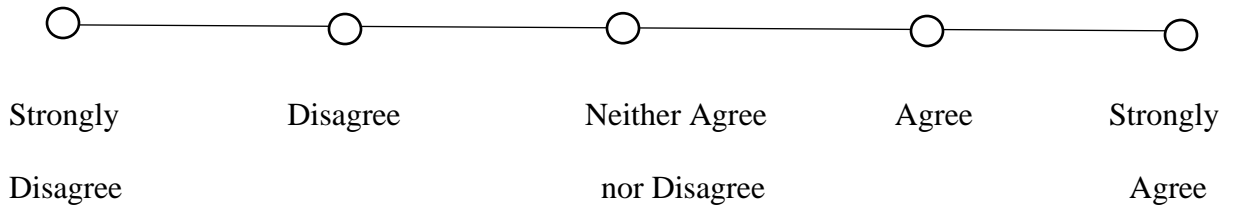
I have little desire to read a religious book.



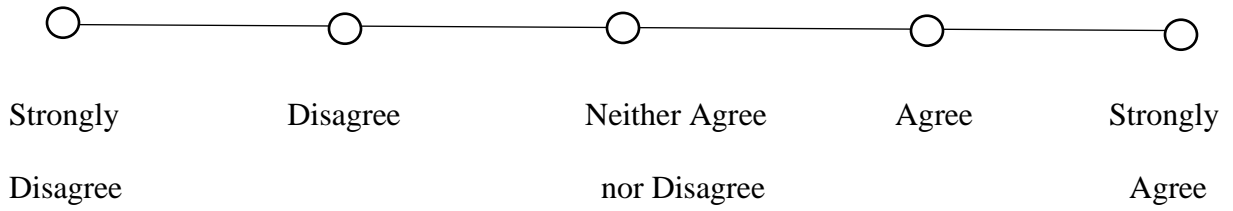
I try to keep my religion separate from other aspects of my life.



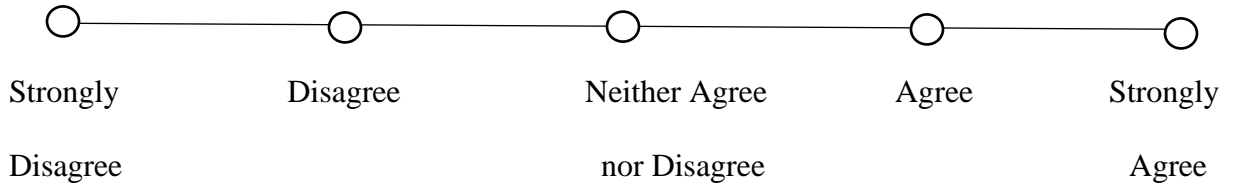
I seldom take time to think about my relationship with God.



I live my daily life without thinking about my religious beliefs.



Discussing my faith with others seems unnecessary.



## **Appendix D**

### Twelve Ground Rules for Interviews

1. Be on time
2. Silence electronic devices
3. Total confidentiality
4. Be honest
5. Be open
6. Be authentic
7. Be bold
8. It is OK to disagree
9. Be respectful
10. Be nonjudgmental
11. Have fun
12. There is no right answer

## Appendix E

### Personal Interview Questions

1. If I were to ask you, as a disciple of Jesus Christ, do you think of yourself as a precious child of God or just a rib, what would you answer and why?
2. How do you see the roles of male and female in the church today? Has this changed during your lifetime?
3. How do you envision your part as a woman in the church?
4. How does the Bible help you understand your role as a female? Can you offer some examples?
5. God is called our “helper” many times in the Bible using the same word that God gives to Eve (ezer). God creates Eve as a “helper” (ezer) for Adam. What does this mean to you?
6. What do you understand about women and their role in the Old Testament?
7. Jesus seems to relate differently to women in the New Testament. Why do you think he did this and how does it impact your view of women in the Bible?
8. If you were to go to a new church plant (new ministry) what would your ideal leadership team look like? What role would you like to play?
9. Where and how did you learn about God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit?
10. What do you remember as your first experience with God?
11. Tell me about a time in your life when you felt God’s presence.
12. Tell me about a time in your life when you could not feel God’s presence.
13. Are there any Bible stories or scriptures that play an important part in your journey?
14. Please share with me what you consider to be some of the gifts that God has given to you.



15. Luke 10:38-42 reads, *Now, as they went on their way, Jesus entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so, she came to him and asked, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.'* But the Lord answered her, *'Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.'* After studying this picture of the story of Jesus dining with Mary and Martha, which woman do you identify with and why?

#### MARY AND MARTHA



Source: Misty Liu, <http://www.jandmranch.com/2014/03/17/martha-and-mary/>

## Appendix F

# LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

## INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

January 11, 2021

Bonnie Orth  
Charity Williams

Re: IRB Application - IRB-FY20-21-330 Woman in the Mirror: Precious Child of God, or Just a Rib?

Dear Bonnie Orth and Charity Williams,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study does not classify as human subjects research. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your IRB application.

Decision: No Human Subjects Research

Explanation: Your study is not considered human subjects research for the following reason:

Your project will consist of quality improvement activities, which are not "designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge" according to 45 CFR 46. 102(l).

Please note that this decision only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued non-human subjects research status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

Also, although you are welcome to use our recruitment and consent templates, you are not required to do so. If you choose to use our documents, please replace the word *research* with the word *project* throughout both documents.

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

Sincerely,  
**G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP**  
*Administrative Chair of Institutional Research*  
**Research Ethics Office**