

# A STUDY OF RELATED FACTORS TO THE SPIRITUAL FORMATION SCORES OF WOMEN IN SELECTED SOUTHERN BAPTIST CHURCHES IN TEXAS

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## ABSTRACT

The problem of this study was to determine the relationship between Spiritual Formation Inventory (SFI) scores of women in selected Texas Southern Baptist churches and seven predictor variables. Four predictor variables measured the level of participation in activities sponsored by a women's ministry: organized Women's Bible Study, Mentoring Ministry, Missions Activity, and Outreach/Evangelistic Event. The remaining predictor variables measured the participation level in corporate worship, Sunday School, and Quiet Time. The SFI and Disciple Participation Survey were compiled into one online survey. The director's of women's ministry at two Southern Baptist Churches in Texas encouraged 9,468 women to respond to the online survey. They solicited women's participation by making an announcement in their email newsletter. The return rate was 1.09 percent. Standard multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis. The data was computed in the *Statistical Package for Social Sciences* software (SPSS) 18.0 graduate package.

The standard multiple regression analysis revealed that the model was significant. Quiet Time, Corporate Worship, and Sunday School were found to have a significant relationship with the SFI score. A stepwise regression analysis revealed Quiet Time, Corporate Worship, Sunday School, and Missions Activity to have a significant relationship with the SFI score. Additional simple regression analysis of each variable revealed Quiet Time, Corporate Worship, Sunday School, Missions Activity, and Outreach/Evangelistic Event to have a significant relationship with the SFI score. The results indicate that women's ministry leaders need to evaluate organized Women's Bible Study, Mentoring Ministry, Missions Activity and Outreach/Evangelistic Event programs. Church leaders can find satisfaction in the consistent significant results of the church related variables. Women can be encouraged to continue with their Quiet Time since it provides a significant relationship with the SFI score.

## Introduction

The Great Commission is Christ's final instructions to his followers. Reid suggests that these final words, found in Matthew 28:18-20, provide followers with instructions to be witnesses of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. The Great Commission calls Christians to make disciples. Furthermore, Doriani contends that Christians can rely on Gods' promise in the Great Commission to provide them with all the authority and power they will ever need as they speak His name to others. This specific order from Christ, although the same for all followers may be accomplished in different ways. Church leaders, or specifically the director of Women's Ministry, may seek to establish ministry opportunities to reach women for Christ and to grow women spiritually. Evaluating women's

participation in these various ministry opportunities and determining if there is a correlation to women's spiritual formation level enables church leaders to assess the overall success of the ministry.

### **Scope of the Project**

The purpose of this study was to determine whether a relationship existed between women's spiritual formation scores and their participation level in a specified set of predictor variables: organized Women's Bible Study class, Mentoring Ministry, Missions Activity, Outreach/Evangelistic Event, Corporate Worship, Sunday School (Bible Fellowship), and number of hours spent alone with God. The selected population consisted of women who were 18 years of age or older and church members of either Prestonwood Baptist Church in Plano, Texas or Lake Pointe Baptist Church in Rockwall, Texas for at least twelve months. Lastly, the women had to have an email address on file in the church database.

Permission was obtained from the director of women's ministry at both churches regarding their cooperation to conduct the study. In their monthly women's ministry email newsletter each director of women's ministry provided a request to the women in the church to participate in the study as well as a website link for the survey. The sample consisted of 9,468 women's email addresses. The Spiritual Formation Inventory (SFI) and the Disciple Participation Survey were combined into one online survey. The online survey was completed by 126 women. Of these 126 responses, 103 were qualified as usable surveys for the study.

The null hypothesis of this study was that the variables Women's Bible Study, Mentoring Ministry, Missions Activity, Outreach/Evangelistic Events, Corporate Worship, Sunday School (Bible Fellowship), and Quiet Time are not significant positive predictors of overall spiritual formation. A standard multiple regression was conducted to test the hypothesis. After reviewing the standard multiple regression, further testing with the stepwise regression model as well as the standard regression for each variable was also conducted.

### **Discussion**

The null hypothesis of this study was that Women's Bible Study, Mentoring Ministry, Missions Activity, Outreach/Evangelistic Event, Corporate Worship, Sunday School, and Quiet Time were not significant predictors of a woman's Spiritual Formation Inventory score. Based upon this sample, the standard multiple regression results show that the model was a good model [ $F(7, 102) = 14.894$ ;  $p = .000$ ;  $\alpha = .05$ ]. However, the variables Women's Bible Study ( $p = .092$ ), Mentoring Ministry ( $p = .621$ ), Missions Activity ( $p = .091$ ), and Outreach/Evangelistic Event ( $p = .368$ ) are not significant predictors of the overall Spiritual Formation Inventory score. The other three variables, Quiet Time ( $p = .000$ ), Corporate Worship ( $p = .000$ ), and Sunday School (Bible Fellowship) ( $p = .001$ ) are significant predictors of the overall Spiritual Formation Inventory Score. Because not every predictor variable was found to be significant, the null hypothesis in its originally stated form, was retained.

Further analysis with the stepwise regression model results showed four variables to be significant predictors of a woman's overall Spiritual Formation Inventory score. They are Quiet Time

( $p = .000$ ), Corporate Worship ( $p = .000$ ), and Sunday School (Bible Fellowship) ( $p = .002$ ), and Missions Activity ( $p = .011$ ). The remaining variables Women's Bible Study, Mentoring Ministry, and Outreach/Evangelistic Event did not show to be significant predictors of a woman's overall Spiritual Formation Inventory score. The stepwise regression model was found to be a good model [ $F(4,102) = 24.657$ ;  $p=.000$ ;  $\alpha=.05$ ]. The null hypothesis was only rejected in part.

The same mixed results followed with the standard regression for each variable. Five of the seven variables, Quiet Time [ $F(1,102)=33.094$ ;  $p=.000$ ;  $\alpha=.05$ ], Corporate Worship [ $F(1,102)=25.188$ ;  $p=.000$ ;  $\alpha=.05$ ], Sunday School [ $F(1,102)=18.649$ ;  $p=.000$ ;  $\alpha=.05$ ], Missions Activity [ $F(1,102)=10.939$ ;  $p=.001$ ;  $\alpha=.05$ ], and Outreach/Evangelistic Event [ $F(1,102)=11.433$ ;  $p=.001$ ;  $\alpha=.05$ ] were found to be statistically significant predictors of a woman's Spiritual Formation Inventory score. The remaining two predictor variables, Women's Bible Study [ $F(1,102)=2.582$ ;  $p=.111$ ;  $\alpha=.05$ ] and Mentoring Ministry [ $F(1,102)=1.645$ ;  $p=.203$ ;  $\alpha=.05$ ] were not found to be significant. These varying results from each of the different multiple regression models lead to the conclusion that there were mixed results found with the testing of this hypothesis.

### **Theological and Ministry Implications**

The biblical basis of women's ministry has guided the theological and ministry implications of this study. Martin and Stovall recognize the Scripture passages for the biblical basis for women's ministry to be found in Titus 2:3-5, Matthew 28:18-20 (the Great Commission), and Mark 22:37-40 (the Great Commandments). These passages provide the framework from which the tasks of women's ministry are identified. In these passages of Scripture, instructions are provided for how women are to mentor other women, how believers are to make disciples, and how believers are to love God and love one another. More specifically, however, are the responsibilities of local church leaders and the responsibilities in the life of a Christian woman. These areas of responsibilities are the focus of the theological and ministry implications.

There are many responsibilities for local church leaders. However, church leaders must remain committed to serving the local church in at least three ways. First, church leaders must always be committed to follow the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20; John 17:14-18). Bright suggests four reasons why it is important to inform church members about the need to fulfill the Great Commission. He suggests the reasons include the fact that Jesus commanded His followers to do so, the fact that people are lost without Christ, the fact that people are hungry for God, and the fact that there is an urgency to complete the task while the opportunity to do so still exists in this world.

Second, church leaders must always be willing shepherd the flock (Acts 20:28; John 21:15-17; 1 Peter 5:2; Titus 2:1, 15; and Matt. 25:31-46). This means that church leaders are to love, direct, and serve the followers of Christ in the local church. It is by directing and serving the flock that love for one another is visibly expressed. It is important for church leaders to be sensitive to the needs of the flock so that they can respond appropriately. God has placed His children, the flock, in the hands of His church leaders. It is vital that church leaders recognize and follow the orders of God as they seek to minister to the flock.

Third, church leaders must always be willing to evaluate ministry-related activities and

events (Acts 2:41, 47; 4:4; 5:14, 6:1, 7; 9:31; 11:21-24; 14:1, 21; 16:5, 17:12). Malphurs contends that evaluating church ministries is an effective method to avoid mediocre ministry.

There are also responsibilities for the Christian woman. Christian women can assist with their own spiritual development by living lives that are a reflection of Christ. Following Christ's example (Eph. 5:1; John 13:15; and 1 Peter 2:21), following His commandments (1 John 2:3; 1 John 3:23; and 2 John 4-6), being intentional at growing in Christ (Jude 20-21; Proverbs 4: 20-27; Romans 8:4; Galations 5:16; and Colossians 1:10), as well as making and revisiting spiritual markers (Luke 22:17-20; Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-26; and 1 Cor. 11:23-26), serve to expand a woman's spiritual formation.

In summary, it is important for church leaders to approach ministry programming and church-wide services and ministries with a thorough understanding of the Great Commission, which is to evangelize, baptize, and teach. Without the teaching part of the equation fulfilled, women lose the opportunity to learn how to grow spiritually. Teaching women how to share the gospel as well as how to walk with the Lord is essential. It is only after church leaders seek to fulfill all three parts of the Great Commission that the spiritual formation of women will increase and healthy spiritual fruit will be visible.

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