AN ANALYSIS OF WOMEN’S PERCEPTION OF BIBLICAL COMMUNITY WITHIN THE ENVIRONMENT OF FACEBOOK: A MIXED METHOD STUDY

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by
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APPROVAL SHEET

AN ANALYSIS OF WOMEN’S PERCEPTION OF BIBLICAL COMMUNITY WITHIN THE ENVIRONMENT OF FACEBOOK: A MIXED METHOD STUDY

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This research project is more than the dissertation enclosed. It comes with a deep sense of purpose and desire to continue moving ministry forward. The Lord has laid the desire on my heart to train and equip women for doing life in light of God’s Word. My heart aches to see women invest in one another, finding that true sense of community that I so often hear is a craving. My desire is also rooted in my conviction that women must fall in love with the Word of God that they might pursue it with every part of their being.

I could not have pursued this desire were it not for the gracious support of the community at Springdale Community Church in Louisville, Kentucky, and Woodland Community Church in Bradenton, Florida. I am appreciative for the opportunity to pursue this desire while continuing in full-time ministry. Similarly, unexpected financial gifts from my grandmother and late grandfather, Wilma and Larry Reed, have afforded me the opportunity to minister while growing as an academic. I am thankful for my grandmother especially, for continuing to support me as her and my grandfather always have.

Second, I have been the beneficiary of many great investors with their time, talent, and love. I have been shaped by faithful women and men who selflessly pointed me to Christ and shepherded me. I am indebted to my sister, Stevi A. Smith; my friend and mentor, Jaye Martin; Joel and Michelle Oates; Jason and Bonnie Autry; Dr. Terri Stovall; Dr. Denise O’Donoghue; Amanda Hartley; Tim Leadingham; Donald and Sue Nave; Alice and Ivan Read; and numerous others. Each one has spurred me toward this goal. I am undeserving of the impact each has left on my life.

The opportunity to serve alongside and learn under Dr. Brian Richardson has been a gift beyond words. His expertise in teaching, discipling, community, and family
ministry has molded me greatly. His unwavering love for God’s Word and the church has taught me more than any book I will ever encounter. Dr. Anthony Foster is wise beyond his years. His encouragement and criticism are a blessing that made me a better academic and overall person. He is sincere in his love for serving both colleagues and students. I am grateful for Dr. John David Trentham’s ongoing teaching and encouragement. To have him on my committee is an honor. I would also like to thank Betsy Fredrick for her meticulous shaping and sincere investment in this project.

Words simply do not cover my gratitude for my parents, David W. and Trena L. Nave. They have supported every move, educational goal, and desire that has come into my heart. They have raised me to love the Word of God and to serve each day, in every situation, as if I am serving the Lord. Their encouragement, prayers, and celebrations throughout this process are the keys to why it was possible. Thank you, Mom and Dad.

To my grandfather, Larry L. Reed, who always pointed me back to Christ and taught me the value of investing in people, I am forever indebted. He dreamed big dreams for me and left this legacy I now proudly push forward. I cannot explain why the Lord made our lives so intertwined, but it is an undeserved blessing. My heart aches that he did not get to see this work to its completion, but I celebrate that he is at home with his Lord and Savior.

My heart is bursting with humility as I realize the gifts the Lord has given me. The process has been challenging, but the Lord knew that it would sanctify me in a way I never could have dreamed. May my life always drive me to utter dependence on my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May I carry forward and pass on this precious legacy the Lord has granted to me.

Micah Nave

Bradenton, Florida
May 2018
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

A University of Chicago study has linked loneliness to early death. The study showed that those who wrestle with loneliness regularly are at a 14 percent higher risk of premature death than those who do not experience constant feelings of isolation. The study also revealed that loneliness alters the cardiac function of a person, which in turn disrupts their sleep and can lead to premature death.\(^1\) John Cacioppo is quoted as saying, “The strength of social isolation as a risk factor is comparable to obesity, sedentary lifestyle, and possibly even smoking.”\(^2\) The research defined loneliness as being in isolation, the feeling of being disconnected, or the feeling of not belonging.\(^3\) To address the link between loneliness and premature death, ministry can help overcome isolation, disconnection, and a lack of belonging.

One place these types of loneliness can appear is within the body of Christ—the church. Ministers of the gospel should seek to help people live in the community of believers. Scripture informs that people often shared possessions and did life in community (Ps 133:1; Heb 10:24-25; Rom 12:4-5, 16:17; Acts 4:32, 2:46-47; 1 Cor 12:13), and research supports the medical proof to affirm the ill effects of isolation. As a woman, my desire is to see women connected and living in biblical community rather


\(^2\)Ibid.

\(^3\)Ibid.
than living a life of loneliness. Unfortunately, the average American spends over five hours daily online, which makes it harder and harder to have face-to-face connection time.\textsuperscript{4} It is time to address loneliness by use of the large quantity of time people are spending on electronic devices to change loneliness into connection.\textsuperscript{5} To make that possible, it is important to learn if people perceive they are using a social media outlet, like Facebook, to practice biblical community. This research project lays the foundation for uncovering methods for using Facebook or other social media websites to better connect women in the church.

**Literature Gap**

In the 1970s, the introduction of computers changed the way people did life. In 1991, this revolution continued to develop with the introduction of the internet. The internet turned the computer into a new place for information sharing and community building. The internet removed the barrier of location as a community definition by allowing people to engage in widespread interactions with other people. As Paul Perkins put it, “When friends video conference on the Internet, they are not in the same place, yet they interact as if they are; they feel as though they are together, and they relate to one another in mutually beneficial ways.”\textsuperscript{6} The community within a virtual world was brought to the forefront again when Mark Zuckerberg launched Facebook as a social


\textsuperscript{6}Paul W. Perkins, “The Manifestation of Biblical Community Understanding in a Facebook Community: A Qualitative Study among Christian College Students” (Ph.D. diss., Liberty University, 2012), 4.
network application first to Harvard and then eventually to a global platform.\(^7\)

In 2014, the Central Intelligence Agency released internet user data in their Factbook. The data estimated that China had the highest number of internet users at approximately 626 million, while the United States was third behind the European Union with 277 million internet users.\(^8\) In May 2015, \textit{Time} reported that the total number of internet users had risen from 738 million in 2000, to 3.2 billion in 2015.\(^9\) The International Telecommunication Union noted that the numbers had grown in 2016 to 3.5 billion internet users.\(^10\)

A large part of internet usage has been established by social media platforms. The primary social media platform is Facebook which comes in at 79 percent of internet users using this platform. Instagram follows with 32 percent of all internet users using this platform for social interaction. Of those internet users that are women, approximately 83 percent have a Facebook membership. Of the male internet users, 75 percent have a Facebook membership.\(^11\)

According to a report posted on April 13, 2015, mobile internet has drastically increased over desktop usage: “Smartphone usage is up 394 percent, and tablet usage is

\(^7\) Jesse Rice, \textit{The Church of Facebook: How the Hyperconnected Are Redefining Community} (Colorado Springs: Cook, 2009), 60-72.


up a whopping 1,721 percent as these platforms now combine to account for 60 percent of digital media time spent.”

Facebook currently reports 1.15 billion mobile active users daily as of December 2016. It is apparent that a large part of the population is regularly accessing this social media platform via mobile device.

Ministry in the twenty-first century could develop community connections amongst individuals using new technological methods. Research has been conducted to view the world of social media as a platform for the creation of virtual biblical community for youth and emerging adults. Research exists around the concept of using social media as an instrument of church communication. The idea of an entire church based in a social media platform has also been the focus of recent projects. While there are numerous areas this research has yet to be taken into and used to address, there is one area of interest for the growing church.

The continued interest in understanding how the internet and social media specifically become a useful tool in the hands of ministry is a growing concern. This concern can be seen in the many dissertations written regarding social media. For example, there have been studies on churches being entirely internet based. Todd Mullins studied if a “real” church could exist entirely online and if it could grow in this form. Kelly O’Conner investigated the construction of an online church as an evangelism tool to create a church of believers. Smith reconnoitered the cyber church—he considered


the use of Facebook as a mission field to bring the church to the people.\textsuperscript{16} Jesse Rice offered a book on the use of Facebook as a church.\textsuperscript{17} These studies were looking for an answer as to what community looks like on Facebook.

In the search to understand building community online, Matthew Judkins proposed using the internet for Christian formation. He suggested replacing Sunday school, which is used to connect people into the body, through social media tools that add formal constraints to interactions among groups of people.\textsuperscript{18} Similarly Joyce Ann Johannesen Lighari sought to understand spiritual growth of individuals compared across standard church, social media platforms, and then a combination of the two communities. The findings revealed a potential for spiritual maturity using internet mediated social media.\textsuperscript{19}

A few studies have been conducted on the use of social networking to help create more effective platforms of communication for churches. Derick McKinney determined that social media could be effectively used for communication and marketing to church members.\textsuperscript{20} Christine Hinrichs discovered that church organizations at large, through effective computer-mediated communication, can see active growth in the church body. She also determined that computer-mediated communication was a means to alter the perception of the organizations relationship to the people. Her final conclusion was that an increase in organizational communication through computer-mediated

\textsuperscript{16}Dianna L. Smith, “Using Social Media to Reconnect Non-Active Youth to First Reformed Church of Hasbrouck Heights” (D.Min. thesis, Drew University, 2011).

\textsuperscript{17}Rice, \textit{The Church of Facebook}.

\textsuperscript{18}Matthew Blake Judkins, “Bridging the Gap: Developing an Alternative Entry Point for Christian formation at Church of the Servant United Methodist Church in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma” (Ph.D. diss., Drew University, 2010).


communication increases the growth of physical church attendance.\textsuperscript{21} Kenthea Fogenay studied how mega-churches can use Facebook and Twitter to communicate in a way that gratifies or fulfills the needs of the congregation.\textsuperscript{22} Each study found that social media could be an influential tool of communication.

Studies within recent years have also delved into specific ministry groups. Paul Perkins investigated social media in relation to college students. He sought to understand how college students manifest a system of community on Facebook.\textsuperscript{23} Matthew Alan Vander Wiele investigated the habits of high school students at church schools. He sought to understand if their behavior on social media reflected scriptural principles of biblical community.\textsuperscript{24} Heidi Campbell wrote on the correlation between Facebook use and the religiosity of users in the emerging adulthood stage of life. She looked to determine the individual user’s goal on social media.\textsuperscript{25} Kristen Ferguson took this concept of community and the internet into the world of theological-academia, asking about faculty perceptions of online learning communities.\textsuperscript{26}

In the academic quest to understand online community and the best practices for using social media as a tool in ministry, many areas are unearthed. One area where

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{21}Christine Syptak Hinrichs, “Exploring the Use and Effectiveness of Mediated Communication by Churches” (M.A. thesis, Gonzaga University, 2011).
  \item \textsuperscript{23}Perkins, “The Manifestation of Biblical Community.”
  \item \textsuperscript{25}Heidi D. Campbell, “The Relationship between Facebook Use and Religiosity among Emerging Adults” (Ph.D. diss., University of South Carolina, 2012).
  \item \textsuperscript{26}Kristen Ann Ferguson, “Evangelical Faculty Perceptions of Online Learning in Graduate-Level Theological Education” (Ed.D. thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016).
\end{itemize}
these questions have yet to probed thoroughly is within the spectrum of women’s ministry. As Facebook continues to remain the main social media platform, with women comprising the highest percentage of users, it is time to start asking how to use these two facts together to foster the women’s ministry community.

The literature has a gap where the two worlds are working together in unison. The literature fails to cover the combination because it has not fully addressed how women specifically use social media to offer connection to community. Furthermore, the literature lacks answers for how to practice biblical community within a virtual environment. This study addresses the biblical community behaviors of women when engaging with Facebook as well as perceived best practices for connecting women in the church.

The investigation looks at how Facebook might be used as a place where biblical community is displayed among women. It is unknown if women fail to take biblical community into their interaction on Facebook or not, but if so, this behavior necessitates change. The love of Christ needs to be displayed in every action of a believer’s life. It is the responsibility of the believer to live in such a way that Christ is glorified through them (1 Pet 2:12). The study considers Facebook as best used as a supplement to continue connection already established through face-to-face interactions. Connection primarily is made through face-to-face interactions, but that interaction has the opportunity to be cultivated biblically through the use of social media.

The study further explores best practices for connection to exist among women already connected through a women’s ministry in the local church as a supplement to

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27The research is aware of a recent thesis by Linda Reed on the subject of “Theological and Practical Training for Women in Complementarian Higher Education.” While this study is not the same because it does not address issues of social media, an overlap of women’s ministry training needs calls for the two projects to be incorporated and reviewed with the intention of gaining knowledge for future training and equipping of those engaging in women’s ministry. Linda Marie Reed, “Theological and Practical Ministry Training for Women in Complementarian Higher Education: A Mixed Methods Study” (Ed.D. thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017).
face-to-face biblical community interactions. The study identifies practices that have been repeatedly used by women’s ministries and offer potential reasons for the success or failure of such repeated practices.

**Research Concern**

In the current cultural trend, the world of digital media has come to affect the lives of almost every person. Vander Wiele points out in his thesis that there is a gap in the literature on biblical community in that it is environment specific. Current research on biblical community is placed in the framework of personal, physical interactions. While Vander Wiele defines it broadly for all digital media, the research must be taken a step further and defined specifically for the environment of Facebook and its style of interaction.

Beyond Facebook, women’s ministries around the United States have reported a lack of connection in biblical community among the women. It is worth investigating the self-reported habit of biblical community within the environment of Facebook as it relates to women that are connected through the local church. It is important to probe how women practice and perceive biblical community within Facebook and if the use of Facebook can alter perception of connection among women. This investigation allows researchers to begin to understand what opportunities this new environment offers to women when the characteristics of biblical community are applied.

**Methodology**

This project is an explanatory mixed-methods study designed to engage in the discovery of how Facebook is being used by women and the best practices for enhancing

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connections among women via Facebook who are already connected through the local church. The design used surveys and open-ended questions to collect and analyze both qualitative and qualitative data. The goal was to use the survey to inform the discovery of perceived best practices for connecting women in the church through the assistance of Facebook.

Participants were asked to answer questions related to biblical community as they relate to the environment of Facebook. The project involved a purposive sample, mediated by experts, who were asked to promote the survey link through social media so that a snowball sampling technique was commissioned. The sample was the women reached by the snowball sampling of purposive sampled women’s ministry leaders on their social media platforms. The landing page of the survey’s website was pre-written and all participants were directed there via the link shared through each ministry leader’s

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31 All of the research instruments used in this dissertation were performed in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use.

social media platform. Participants completed the surveys on a separate website where the data was compiled.

The instrumentation for the quantitative portion was from the thesis of Matthew Alan Vander Wiele.\(^{33}\) The instrument was designed to measure perceptions and was created based on a qualitative assessment of the essential of biblical community in current research.\(^ {34}\) The precedent literature reviewed by Vander Wiele informed the creation of the biblical principles of community followed by the application of those principles to the digital media environment. The principles were developed to exist outside of a given context so they could therefore be taken into any context and tested.\(^ {35}\)

Once the principles were compiled, they were reviewed and turned into survey questions. The results were validated by consensus of an expert panel before being generalized to the researcher’s particular sample population.\(^ {36}\) The goal was to measure the perception of a population regarding their online communal relationships and whether the population considered their online relationships to facilitate the principles of biblical community.\(^ {37}\)

Triangulation was the method used for validation. The components were (1) current research, writings, and scriptural support discovered through the process of a literature review; (2) consensus by an expert panel based on the findings in the literature review; and (3) the creation of the instrument from the literature review followed by validation by an expert panel consensus and pilot testing.\(^ {38}\)


\(^{34}\)Ibid., 63-38.

\(^{35}\)Ibid., 11.

\(^{36}\)Ibid., 63-38.

\(^{37}\)Ibid.

\(^{38}\)Ibid.
The exploratory design was warranted, due to the nature of the study. The quantitative exploration took place through a survey that measured perceptions of behaviors and how well they matched the essentials of biblical community, which was validated by an expert panel. The instrument was a quantitative survey in the form of a weighted Likert scale that measured women’s self-reported perceptions. The goal of the instrument was to determine whether or not, based on the questions in the survey, women perceived their online communal experiences to facilitate the essentials of biblical community. The qualitative component made use of open-ended questions, which were vetted through an expert panel. This was done through a series of six open-ended questions added to the survey. Each respondent was asked to answer the questions in a sentence or two. Responses to the open-ended questions were analyzed using conventional content analysis, which allowed the categories to emerge inductively from the data.39 The expert panel consisted of leaders in Women’s Ministry with publication and educational credentials. The panel was emailed and asked to evaluate the series of questions. Each member of the panel had the opportunity to critique and offer alterations to the survey, including the open-ended questions. These critiques were reviewed and necessary correction made before the expert panel was asked to assess the revised survey. The expert panel reviewed the edits to the original survey and provided any necessary feedback. At that time, the updated survey and open-ended questions were moved into a pilot testing stage. Once the pilot testing was completed and the survey could be disseminated, the purposive sample of women’s ministry leaders started the process of a snowball sampling.

After analyzing the results of the mixed-methods study, the results were compared to explore the various uses of Facebook for helping women establish biblical community, and if that community could create a perception of connection among the

women. The results also yielded information on the five perceived best practices currently proving effective for connecting women in the church through Facebook.

**Research Purpose**

This study addresses the biblical community behaviors of women when engaging with Facebook as well as perceived best practices for connecting women in the church. An explanatory mixed methods design was used, which involved collecting quantitative and qualitative data at the same time before compiling the results. The compiled data were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Then both sets of data were reported to enhance the overall findings.

**Limitations of the Study**

The data and analysis of the data from this research will not be able to be generalized to the following areas. First, the research will not reach women who are not networked to ministry leaders that are disseminating the survey on social media through the snowball method of sampling. The study will also not be applicable to those who do not use social media as they will not be made aware of the links to the survey. These links will only be advertised via social media by ministry leaders in contact with me.

The survey was created to separate the essentials of biblical community from the environment which they were being employed to measure perception. The survey was written in eighth-grade language to ensure understanding of the questions that led to an effective outcome of answers. There is a possibility of participants answering dishonestly or misunderstanding the questions.

**Research Questions Synopsis**

1. Do Christian women involved in women’s ministry in the local church self-report practicing behaviors of biblical community in their personal interactions on Facebook?

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2. What are the perceived best practices for connecting women in the church through Facebook according to current experience of women?

3. What are the habits of women as they operate on Facebook?
   a. What is the average age range of women in churches that are regularly using Facebook?
   b. How often do women report accessing Facebook within a given period of time?
   c. What are the top five best practices, as perceived by women, for using Facebook in ministry?
   d. What future training needs exist for women to practice biblical community behaviors when interacting on Facebook?

**Definition of Terms**

*Biblical community.* Biblical community is a community of people united by their belief in Christ and together participate in Spirit-filled ceremonies, rites, rituals, and discourse between God and man and between men. Those engaged in a biblical community regularly interact and share their lives and needs with one another. This sharing could be financial, emotional, or physical. Biblical community serves as an agent in the sanctification process of each member. Different biblical communities experience different depths and breadths of relation, but every community is united to some degree. The biblical community is not free from sin but is a group of imperfect sinners saved by grace. The success of persons within the biblical community is determined by their knowledge and belief of the truth of the gospel. The goal of the biblical community is not founded in a person’s ability, but is rooted in their union with Christ Jesus and his work started on the cross and yet to be completed.

*Virtual community.* Howard Rheingold defines virtual communities as “social aggregations that emerge from the [internet]Net when enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal _______________


42Ibid. Ebersole discusses membership, influence, integration, fulfillment of needs, and emotional connection as essentials of community.
relationships in cyberspace.”43 Rheingold also stated, “We are going to have to get used to the idea that the word ‘community’ is going to have to stretch to include groups of people who communicate socially and work together cooperatively and never meet in the real world.”44 Rheingold quotes a 1968 statement from Licklider and Taylor which predicts, “In most fields [communities] will consist of geographically separated members, sometimes grouped in small clusters and sometimes working individually. They will be communities not of common location, but of common interest.”45

Behaviors. Behavior, as used in phase 1 of this study, denotes the self-perceived practices of the respondent. These behaviors can be habits, thoughts, or approaches to social interaction. In the case of this study, the behaviors being referenced are expected to occur on the Facebook social media platform. The behaviors are the approach the respondent takes to a given situation in regard to a specific actions, or with respect to comments made by another person. Behaviors are specific to the situations being referenced in the questions and should not be assumed to be anything beyond what has been noted as happening.


44Ibid.

45Howard, “The Virtual Community,” chap. 1.
CHAPTER 2
PRECEDENT LITERATURE

Introduction

Christians should consider how they interact in the relatively new world of digital media. It has often been referenced as a community. If Christians are going to participate in the virtual community environment, then how should they engage from a Christian perspective? A distinctly Christian perspective needs to exist regardless of the environment in which the Christian is engaged. With this perspective comes uniquely Christian habits and behaviors. In this research project, those behaviors become known in light of biblical community principles defined through the use of relevant literature.

The literature lacks an understanding of biblical community that exists irrespective of the environment. Therefore, the literature is reviewed in order to understand digital media more fully. Then, working principles of biblical community irrespective of environment can be applied to the unique environment of digital media.

This literature review begins by investigating past and current secular writings on social networking theory, digital media, and technology. The review then progresses to Christian writings on digital media. Once this section on digital media is complete, the chapter moves into a discussion on community, specifically focusing on biblical community principles. The principles are discovered with the gospel meta-narrative serving as the structure to guide the movement. Matthew Alan Vander Wiele originally established these principles. The purpose of the literature review is to use writings to arrive at the principles he determined and his expert panel approved by consensus. Once each principle has been discussed in detail, a summary is provided of those approved by
Vander Wiele’s expert panel for use in his instrument. Vander Wiele’s research instrument is intended to be used for this study as well. As noted in chapter 1, the purpose of the project is to investigate the biblical community behaviors of women when engaging with Facebook as well as perceived best practices for connecting women in the church. The instrument serves as the tool for the project.

Research leaves a gap in defining biblical community regardless of environment. This project asks, “Do women self-report behaviors of biblical community, as outlined in Scripture, in their personal interactions on Facebook?” In order to answer this question, first, the principles of biblical community used in the tool must be validated by the literature.

**Social Network Theory**

Throughout history, the mathematical graph theory known as social networking has been adopted by the social sciences and psychology. Within these disciplines, the social network theory has been used to reconnoiter human social organization. Social networks allow for the study of human relational connections within a given population. This theory aids sociologist and social psychologist in determining connections and relationships within a population or across populations. Mark Schlager et al., defines social networks as “the evolving relationships among members and subgroups and the activities of those members using tools and other artifacts.” Scott, Wasserman, and Faust suggest

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that social networks include groups of people that exhibit patterns of interactions and relationships.4

Homophily theory takes a key role in social network theory. Homophily research indicates that people tend toward strong social connections with others that are similar to themselves in areas such as age, sex, race, and education.5 In research specific to online homophily, it was discovered that conventional interpersonal factors, such as age or economic class, did not influence the connection of group members.6 Online homophily research uncovered other factors at the core in social networking.

Social networks are noted as good predictors of connection or engagement throughout the precedent literature. The literature reported that a better understanding of the social dynamics of participants within a virtual community comes when the nature, content, and function of a virtual community are quantified.7 These quantifiable variables can be summarized into three distinctive categories: informal ties, formal ties, and network externalities.8

Formal ties refer to membership within an organization while informal ties are constituted by interpersonal relationships, such as parenthood and friendships. These two categories impact the intensity of participation and effect the third category of externalities.

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8Donatella Della Porta, Recruitment Processes in Clandestine Political Organizations: Italian Left-Wing Terrorism (Greenwich, CT: JAI, 1988); McAdam and Paulsen, “Specifying the Relationship,” 160-78.
Network externalities are the mutual benefits of the participants in a network and the increase in the networks value as the number of participants in the network rises. People are influenced to use a particular social network when it grows in popularity with other people and with people specifically in their circle of influence. The willingness of people to become members of a virtual community increases when they perceive friends and acquaintances are in the growing population that are joining and interacting through the virtual community.

**Virtual Social Networking**

In 1990, the worldwide web experienced quick growth in spite of its laborious and involved process for publishing information. Today’s internet is a far different virtual space, allowing for even the most unskilled user to publish content. Schauer explains that virtual communities are made of either user-contributed or co-creation methods. The creation of content in virtual communities assumes users contribute in various ways to a community, e.g., engaging in discussion forums, uploading media content, or commenting directly on specific user content. Virtual communities created within a given social network allow members to interrelate around a specified subject or intention.


Keith Hampton et al., recognize that “social networking services, such as Facebook, provide new opportunities for users to maintain core social networks.”\textsuperscript{14} Their research also reported a high correlation between the primary virtual communities’ users’ construction as a part of a social network and the influence of these communities on decision-making, inventiveness, arguments, and interpretations.\textsuperscript{15} Danah Boyd and Nicole Ellison define social networking:

Web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.\textsuperscript{16}

Social networks and the virtual communities contained within them are unique from other online communities in allowing users to define and share their chosen social networks and virtual connections.\textsuperscript{17}

In constructing virtual community, Palloff and Pratt offer a series of steps, beginning with establishing the community’s purpose and intended outcome.\textsuperscript{18} As a part of this first step, the organizer should launch a platform within a social network for members to gather. This group should breed governance, including guidelines for conduct, from within the community. Once the purpose is articulated with clarity, the gathering space is demarcated, and the governances are instituted, the community must


\textsuperscript{15}Ibid.


determine the range of roles from which a member can partake and a protocol for facilitating subgroups should be generated.\textsuperscript{19}

Virtual communities have changed the way relationships are built by establishing relationships across geographical and time barriers. Virtual technology has opened up the world to those using it and allowed the world to be more easily interconnected. Compared to traditional, physical communities, virtual communities differ on a few foundational aspects.\textsuperscript{20} Traditional communities have been thought of and defined by the physical location. Members often joined the community based on organizational norms. The traditional community has clear boundaries that determine who is a member and who is not. However, virtual communities are formed around an idea or task instead of a physical location. Virtual communities can be organized around a project, cause, activity, or a shared need.\textsuperscript{21} Kurt Squire and Christine Johnson denote that another difference is in the need for formal boundaries. Virtual communities are more fluid with the boundaries which govern the group. Norms are the main focus of behaviors in traditional communities, but in the virtual world members are not contrasted in physical relation to one another, removing norms as a driving force and allowing for more individual control. Virtual communities find their “space” in an online platform. Online virtual communication and interaction is the reason for the necessary change in the parameters of a community.\textsuperscript{22}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{19}Palloff and Pratt, \textit{Building Learning Communities in Cyberspace}, 4.
\item \textsuperscript{20}Ibid., 5.
\item \textsuperscript{22}Palloff and Pratt, \textit{Building Learning Communities}, 5.
\end{itemize}
Concerns with Digital Media and Community in Christian Circles

Sherry Turkle explains man’s modern relationship with technology in *Alone Together*: “These days, insecure in our relationships and anxious about intimacy, we look to technology for ways to be in relationships and protect ourselves from them at the same time.” The communal environment of digital media comes into full view in this section. Both past and present literature on the uniqueness of technology and the digital environment will be sifted.

Over time, the view of technology has changed from optimism over the power of technology to hesitancy over the positive and negative aspects of technology. Turkle started writing in 1984, with a positive view of technology, but as her writings has continued, a concern over the negative effects of technology has risen to the forefront. Technology may be doing more than merely replacing face-to-face relationships with relationships behind computers, tablets, and phones. It may be robbing people of community connections that can only be discovered through actual physical interactions.

Influential Technology: The Content or the Medium

As early as the 1960s, Marshall McLuhan is noted for prophesying the effects and growth of media long before it came to be a staple in people’s everyday lives. He exhibited great insight in the building of media into an empire far beyond what many could dream: “A characteristic of every medium is that its content is always another (previous) medium.” McLuhan was points out the fact that mediums of technology are

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23 Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* (New York: Basic, 2010), loc. 158, Kindle.

24 Turkle wrote a series of three books on technology. Her progression can be seen throughout these writings. Her third book, *Alone Together*, talks openly about people being dependent on the computer for relational encounters.

built on one another. The internet has aspects from television, movies, radio, and the printing press.\textsuperscript{26} The cellphone has replaced computers, televisions, instant messaging, and more.\textsuperscript{27} No technology can leave behind the technology before it, but must find a new way to continue to improve what already exists as a medium for communication.

McLuhan is known for his catch phrase, made popular by his book, “The medium is the message.”\textsuperscript{28} He proposed that the extension of man and man’s knowledge would ultimately infiltrate society; it would spread throughout mankind as the human consciousness was expanded.\textsuperscript{29} While the concept seems to hold true for every positive aspect of technology, there is the ability for it to be negatively used and for it to negatively affect people. Today, technology has made the world more accessible and brought people together. McLuhan held to the belief that people see the content of technology as the greatest influencer in their lives; however, he challenges this assumption suggesting that the media, the medium itself, is the most influential aspect of technology: “People become what they behold.”\textsuperscript{30}

In \textit{The Shallows}, Nicholas Carr discusses extensively the prophecies of McLuhan. Concerning the idea of the medium being the most influential aspect of technology, he writes,

\begin{quote}
McLuhan understood that whenever a new medium comes along, people naturally get caught up in the information—“the content”—it carries. They care about the news in the newspaper, the music on the radio, and the show on the TV. . . . The technology of the medium however, as astonishing as it may be, disappears behind whatever flows through it—facts, entertainment, instruction, conversation. When
\end{quote}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{26}McLuhan, \textit{Understanding Media}, 9.
\item \textsuperscript{27}Turkle, \textit{Alone Together}, loc. 149.
\item \textsuperscript{28}McLuhan, \textit{Understanding Media}, 19.
\item \textsuperscript{29}Ibid., 3.
\item \textsuperscript{30}Ibid., 19.
\end{itemize}
people start to debate whether the medium’s effects are good or bad it is always the content that is discussed.\textsuperscript{31}

Carr believes that McLuhan’s argument is what both sides, technology lovers and technology haters, miss in the discussion. The content of the medium matters less than the medium itself when it comes to the strength of influence on a person’s thoughts and actions.\textsuperscript{32} Carr reports that people cast the content and their use of technology as the most important influencer of their worlds, professing that the technology itself has no affect.\textsuperscript{33} McLuhan saw the content of the technology medium as the “juicy piece of meat carried by the burglar to distract the dog.”\textsuperscript{34} The intertwined relationship of content and technology force everyone to wrestle with the importance of content when discussing technology. Do messages on social media or via text message matter, or is it a person’s use of a given technology platform that has the greatest influence? Does society view the content or method in which they use technology as more important? The activity takes on a primary role and the content becomes secondary in social media and all other technologies.

Vander Wiele summarizes, “The community becomes subservient to the environment.”\textsuperscript{35}

In 1985, Neil Postman took on McLuhan’s argument and created his own literary work, called \textit{Amusing Ourselves to Death}. Postman argues that the message of the medium is actually a metaphor:

\begin{quote}
His [McLuhan’s] aphorism, however, is in need of amendment because, as it stands, it may lead one to confuse a message with a metaphor. A message denotes a specific, concrete statement about the world. But the forms of our media, including the symbols through which they permit conversation, do not make such statements. They are rather like metaphors, working by unobtrusive but powerful implication to enforce their special definitions of reality. Whether we are experiencing the world
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{31}Nicholas Carr, \textit{The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains} (New York: W. W. and Norton, 2011), loc. 97, Kindle.

\textsuperscript{32}Ibid., loc. 111.

\textsuperscript{33}Ibid., loc. 105.

\textsuperscript{34}Ibid., loc. 127.

\textsuperscript{35}Vander Wiele, “An Analysis of Students’ Perception,” 20.
through the lens of speech or the printed word or the television camera, our media-metaphors classify the world for us, sequence it, frame it, enlarge it, reduce it, color it, argue a case for what the world is like.  

Turkle remarks that people have used technology to substitute for the intimacy that is lacking in their personal life:

Technology is seductive when what it offers meets our human vulnerabilities. And as it turns out, we are very vulnerable indeed. We are lonely but fearful of intimacy. Digital connections . . . may offer the illusion of companionship without the demands of friendship. Our networked life allows us to hide from each other, even as we are tethered to each other. 

In this virtual world, people can have the bodies, lives, and loves that they dream in real life. In the virtual world, a person can create whatever identity they wish to portray to others. Turkle notices people using media for the very things it cannot provide—relationships and intimacy. Her research found that people avoid making phone calls because they are “fearful that they ‘reveal too much.’” Turkle concludes that digital media does not supply the intimacy or relational connection found in a traditional community setting.

In The Shallows, Nicholas Carr focuses on the advancement of scientific research related to understanding the brain. The brain is understood to have the ability to rewire itself according to a person’s consistent use. Carr writes, “The net differs from most of the mass media it replaces in an obvious and very important way: it’s bidirectional. We can send messages through the network as well as receive them.” Carr recently revised his beliefs and now holds that the internet negatively affects the brain. He also provides

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37Turkle, *Alone Together*, loc. 269.

38Ibid., loc. 475.

39Ibid., loc. 471.


41Ibid., loc. 1418.
commentary on McLuhan’s *Understanding Media* catchphrase, “The medium is the message.” Carr acknowledges, “As our window onto the world, and onto ourselves, a popular medium molds what we see and how we see it— and eventually, if we use it enough, it changes who we are, as individuals and as a society.”

Recent research has revealed the internet and digital media are often employed as a venue for constructing real life relationships while sacrificing true identity and traditional community.

**Digital Media and the Christian Community**

One of the early Christian writers on the subject of digital media and the church was Walter Wilson. In *The Internet Church*, he cautions that online relationships cannot replace face-to-face relationships, but he prognosticates a future of power of the internet to take a person in isolation and reach them in such a way as to bring them into the presence of the church. Samuel Ebersole and Robert Woods are some of the major Christian voices in the discussion of digital media and community. He has spent years defining the difference between a virtual community and a traditional community. Ebersole and Woods identified early on that the internet promised to generate intimacy in relationships where it had been lost with the technological advancements in printing.

Virtual community, as defined by Ebersole and Woods, is “interpersonal relationships

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founded and maintained by CMC [Computer-Mediated Community] in the place called cyberspace.” Their research concluded,

New communication media means that new social phenomena are going to arise that differ in significant ways from everything we’ve known and the word community is going to have to stretch to include groups of people who communicate socially and work together cooperatively and never meet in the real world.47 Ebersole and Woods find virtual communities to be “copies (in the Platonic sense) of the perfect or ideal community.”48 While it is clear to Ebersole and Woods that virtual community cannot replace traditional communities, they suggest these added communities will strengthen the already existing ones. The article continues on to note that the word “cyber” brings distinction to a virtual community. The word, meaning “to pilot . . . navigate or steer,” suggests a world that people must discover as it is maneuvered. In the world of a virtual community, comforts like stability and structure, which are common to traditional communities, are no longer primary values.49

Traditional and virtual communities are different. The virtual community lacks the physical interactions of being face-to-face with a person. However, new technology such as “FaceTime” and “Skype” offer people the ability to visually see the other person in an online environment. These virtual communities are different from traditional communities in that “they will be communities not of common location, but of common interest.”50 Community, traditionally defined as “making things common,” also involved the idea of communication.51 Ebersole and Woods note, “Communication and hence

47Ibid.
48Ibid.
49Ibid.
50Ibid., 192-93.
51Ibid., 189.
community thus understood is not simply the passing of information from source to the public via the particular channel of communication, but is a dialogue."\textsuperscript{52} Ebersole and Woods add,

\begin{quote}
The missing ontological linchpin for community loosen by radio and television and further stripped away by computer-mediated community (CPM) may be found in an understanding of Christian community, which at once embraces as understanding of communication as ritual, ceremony, and dialogue.\textsuperscript{53}
\end{quote}

Ebersole and Woods also caution against comparing virtual community with traditional community via quality of interaction. Instead, he encourages the reader to view community with this in mind:

\begin{quote}
Christian Theological studies of community have focused on the $\textit{koinoniai or fellowship}$ that results when believers, motivated by agape love of God, join together in fellowship and unity . . . success of community is centered on $\textit{sharing in something with someone}$, not merely an association.\textsuperscript{54}
\end{quote}

As Ebersole and Woods continue the discussion of virtual communities, bringing in Thomas Boomershine’s comment that earlier communal structures, such as found in the life of the Israelites, are not acceptable benchmarks for the unique environment of digital community.\textsuperscript{55} The conversation continues with Ebersole and Woods reasoning virtual communities to be “para-communities” or “secondary communities.”\textsuperscript{56}

While it has been noted that writers like Maggie Jackson believe digital media promotes isolation within community,\textsuperscript{57} Ebersole and Woods see online community as not

\textsuperscript{52}Ebersole and Woods, “Virtual Community,” 191.
\textsuperscript{53}Ibid., 194.
\textsuperscript{54}Ibid., 187.
\textsuperscript{56}Ebersole and Woods, “Virtual Community,” 188.
\textsuperscript{57}Jackson, \textit{Distracted}, 58-59.
having to create isolation, but that it does happen differently. Ebersole and Woods’ ideas should set the foundation for the Christian and biblical community. Biblical community can thrive in the digital world; it will simply take intentional interactions and engagement to overcome the environment’s natural pull toward isolation.

**Definition of Biblical Community**

In order to continue with the literature review, it becomes important to define community, particularly that which is biblical community in general. Ebersole and Woods define community as “making things common,” elaborating that community incorporates “ceremony, ritual, and dialogue.” According to George Woods, community is a group of people who have a sense of common purpose(s) and/or interest(s) for which they assume mutual responsibility, acknowledge their interconnectedness, respect the individual differences among members, and commit themselves to the well-being of each other and the integrity and well-being of the group.

Using these definition of community as a foundation, a definition of biblical community can be established. Biblical community makes things common or shares an interest “in Christ” with the Holy Spirit guiding ceremony, ritual, dialogue, mutual responsibilities, and interconnectedness. The spectrum of definition within the literature is wide; therefore, it will be generally stated that biblical community is a group of people, with Christ as their common thread, that participate in ceremonies, rituals, and dialogue as guided by the Holy Spirit in both relationship between God and man, and man and man.


59 Ibid.

60 Ibid., 194.


62 This definition primarily uses Ebersole and Woods’ definition but does have other elements from different readings. Though not exhaustive in nature, it is intended to be
**Principles of Biblical Community**

In completing this review, the goal is to create a list of biblical community principles that can be observed outside and regardless of a singular environment. Peter Blok offers a theoretical framework for social connectedness theory. Blok’s framework is constructed of nine characteristics that he determined to be present in thriving communities: belonging, gifts, decision-making, accountability, small groups, conversation, common purpose, ownership, and involvement.  

Paul Perkins, in his dissertation “The Manifestation of Biblical Community Understanding in a Facebook Community: A Qualitative Study among Christian College Students,” mapped where these characteristics are articulated in Scripture.

Table 1. Comparison of community characteristics and the Bible

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Characteristics</th>
<th>Supporting Scripture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belonging</td>
<td>Gal 3:29; 1 Cor 12:20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gifts</td>
<td>1 Cor 12; Eph 4; Rom 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision-making</td>
<td>Acts 6:2-6; 15:22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>Matt 18:15-18; 1 Cor 5:1-13; 2 Tim 4:2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small groups</td>
<td>Acts 2:46; 5:42; 20:20; Romans 16:5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversation</td>
<td>Titus 2:15; 3:8; Eph 4:25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common purpose</td>
<td>Eph 4:5; Phil 2:2; John 17:22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ownership</td>
<td>Eph 4:7-13; Gal 5:13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td>Phil 1:27; Rom 15:30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

only a beginning definition of biblical community. Ebersole and Woods, “Virtual Community,” 194.


*64* Paul W. Perkins, “The Manifestation of Biblical Community Understanding in a Facebook Community: A Qualitative Study among Christian College Students” (Ph.D. diss., Liberty University, 2012). The table of contents has been modified for scriptural accuracy.
For the purpose of this review, the starting point for the principles of biblical community will be within the meta-narrative of Scripture. The principles are determined as originating in the order of the meta-narrative; the triune God established, accessible to man, broken by man, and reinstated by Christ. The biblical framework sets out this meta-narrative for the principles of biblical community. The biblical narrative obviously starts with God himself, as the Trinity; Father, Spirit, and Son. From this point, the direction shifts to the creation of man, which is quickly followed by the fall of man. The hope for restored biblical community comes in the redemptive work of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit in the consummation of the church. The categories of the meta-narrative offer an observable set of principles for biblical community.

Biblical community does not hinge on community but rather finds its core in the theological presupposition of God and the Bible, and is familiar through behaviors. Finding the core of community in theological presuppositions as opposed to the environment runs in direct contrast to McLuhan’s writings. McLuhan held that the setting is primary and the content is ancillary. The Christian holds the opposite understanding: the content is the truth of God and His Word. This content should always be held for a Christian as the primary driver while the environment plays either an ancillary role or does not factor in at all. As defined by the message of Jesus and the gospel, biblical community is not dependent on the setting. The actions of a person in a given environment do not control the success of one’s biblical community behaviors. There is a need to establish an understanding of the principles and essence of biblical community that exist outside of any environment so that biblical community is easily able to be determined as present or lacking in the modern model where technology is changing how people connect.

Paul Pettit compiled what is known as foundations for spiritual formation. His model uses the meta-narrative of the Scripture to place a framework around the theological implications of spiritual formation. The five categories he outlines from Scripture include the Trinity, humanity as the image of God, the sin and depravity of man, the God-man who
is Jesus Christ, and salvation. Pettit creates a picture of his explanation by calling the sin and depravity of man a valley where the other four categories are to be viewed as peaks of a mountain. This model supplies a helpful path for the discussion of biblical community. While his model is intended as one for spiritual formation, it can be used here as a model for biblical community because both biblical community and spiritual formation find foundation and substance in the same theological presuppositions.

The Trinity: Origin and Model of Biblical Community

The Trinity is the origin and model of true biblical community. Regardless of environment or setting, biblical community must recognize God, specifically the Trinitarian relationship, as the origin of community. All community should imitate the ideal set forth by the Godhead. Paul Fiddes affirms Stephen Holmes’ belief that while the Trinity is not “a mere model for human community . . . the doctrine does enable us to find ourselves in God in everyday life and experiences.” Bruce Marshall writes, “The Christian community lives by celebrating and serving the deeds, presence, promise and commands of the God whose identification constitutes this doctrine.” In Bowling Alone, R. D. Putnam describes “true community” as “something the human heart longs for and something that a lot of us seem to feel missing in some measure from our modern life.”

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66 Ibid.
67 Ibid., 37-45.
70 Spyker, *Technology & Spirituality*, loc. 774.
Community success is chiefly based on the people in the group and the environment around them. In order for community to be effective, it must have a well-defined origin. In the case of biblical community, this would be the Godhead of the Trinity and for the individuals in the group of believers it would be found in Christ, who is led by the Spirit. The doctrine of the Trinity is described by Scott Horrell as “the one divine Being eternally exists as three distinct centers of consciousness, wholly equal in nature, genuinely personal in relationships, and each mutually indwelling the other.”

Wayne Grudem summarizes the Trinity by writing, “God is three persons. Each person is fully God. There is one God.” Grudem’s summary covers the biblical teaching of the plurality of the Trinitarian community and yet explains their singular role as God. John Metzger adds to the conversation by explaining that the trinity exists in relationship and community as a “plurality of oneness.” He later explains that in Genesis 1, this plurality of oneness is exhibited when Moses uses the plural noun form of “God” with “created” in the singular form. The Godhead functions in their oneness in perfect community with Himself through all of eternity. Ebersole and Woods believe that “Community is thus clothed in an understanding of the Trinity itself and is understood best when it is understood ontologically,” meaning that the idea of community is displayed through the comprehension of the Trinity. Individuals need to be viewed as persons who find true being-in-communion with God and with others rather than as a person in isolation. God

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73 John Metzger, *Discovering the Mystery of the Unity of God* (London: SPCK and Sheldon, 2010), 15.

74 Ibid., 59.

lived in communion with others as an example of how community should operate. James Torrance explains what man is to experience:

What we need today is a better understanding of the person not just as an individual but as someone who finds his or her true being-in-communion with God and with others, the counterpart of a Trinitarian doctrine of God. The God of the New Testament is the God who has his true being as the Father of the Son, and as the Son of the Father in the Spirit. God is love, and has his true being in communion, in the mutual indwelling of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. . . . This is the God who has created us male and female to find our true humanity in “perichoretic unity” with him and one another, and who renews us in his image in Christ.76

God is one to be known, experienced, and then experienced with others in the relational life of unified community. The Trinity is a unified relationship and therefore believers can find relationship and community in Him. The first relationship and community on earth occurred between God and Adam in Genesis. Once Adam knew God, he experienced him in relationship, and finally Adam experienced relationship with Eve when God made her and placed her in the garden. This community was ruined by sin, though through Christ it was made available once again to all who believe.

For Christians, the origin of biblical community is found in the Trinity, regardless of the environment in which community is being undertaken. In order to properly imitate the biblical community seen in the Godhead, one must believe in the one true God and observe the behaviors in order to imitate them. Environment does not have to be a part of the understanding of community. Irrespective of environment, a principle of biblical community has to do with being united in Christ, having Him as a common thread. Christopher Mwoleka writes that the “three Divine Persons share everything in such a way that they are not three gods, but only one. . . . Christ’s wish is: that they (believers) may be one as we were one, with me in them and you in me, may they be

completely one.” 77 While this statement is rather simplistic, it is hard to put into quantifiable terms. Many theologians seek to comprehend the Trinity from a strictly academic perspective; however, this is problematic. The Trinity is not solely a concept that one must believe, but rather it is a something revealed to a person through general and special revelation so that it might serve as a model of true biblical community. 78 Mwoleka is convinced that if people would start sharing in aspects of one another’s lives, then it would become clear what the Trinity’s community is all about. 79

The Trinity provides a model for biblical community through a structure of submission. This principle of biblical community is found in the way each member of the Trinity relates to the other members. The hierarchy and submission structure can be observed by believers and then modeled in their personal community relationships in any environment. This principle refers to the plurality of oneness of the Godhead. Horrell explains that the “one divine Being eternally exists as three distinct centers of consciousness” in relationship as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. 80 God created man in his own image and because of the community relationship of the Trinity, it allowed God to create man with this in mind so that man has community not only with God but also with man. Klaus Issler defines a life of biblical community as one characterized by “a deepening trust and friendship with God for those who are in Christ Jesus. More specifically, it is an ever growing, experientially dynamic relationship with our Trinitarian God.” 81 Submission behavior is exhibited with the relationships of the

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78 Ibid.

79 Ibid., 204.

80 Horrell, “Toward a Biblical Model.”

Trinity as they submit to the authority of the other members of the Godhead, which serves as a model for submission within biblical communities regardless of environment. In Christianity community, submission exists in the authority and under the authority of Jesus Christ. Nona Verna Harrison notes that the members of the Trinity are equal, but function within a hierarchy:

The Father, who is the source of hierarchy, is simultaneously the source of humility, self-offering, and kenosis, of conciliarity, relationality, and perichoresis. He eternally begets the Son and breathes forth the Spirit so as to endow them with all he is, all his divinity, glory, creative power, and authority. He lets them act on his behalf to create, sustain, and perfect the universe; he allows them to represent him and make him known in the world. He does not keep anything for himself alone but shares everything he is and everything he has with them.

There are hints of the hierarchical structure of the Trinity in Scripture. This community is composed of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In Scripture, God the Father is the one who sends God the Son (John 3:16-17; Luke 20:13). Never does the Son send the Father. The Holy Spirit is actually sent by both the Father and the Son, but the Spirit is not a sender of either the Son or the Father (John 14:26, 15:26, 16:7). In Philippians 2:8, the Son shows his submission to the Father by being obedient to die on the cross as was in accordance with God’s Word (Mark 1:35-39; Luke 4:21, 6:12-13; John 17:12, 19:24, 28). The Holy Spirit is seen to be responsible for glorifying the Son, not the other way around (John 16:13-14).

This same concept of hierarchy was established in the relationships God made between man and man. God created all of humanity equally; both male and female, but he gave them different functions (Gen 1:26-28). The husband is called to submit to God while the wife is entrusted to her husband in the submission hierarchy (1 Cor 11:3; Eph 5:22). In Ephesians 6, children are charged to submit to their parents. However, all

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Christian are to live in submission to one another (Eph 5:21). The concept of hierarchical submission is modeled by the Trinity and offered as prescriptive for mankind’s relationships. The submission to authority is modeled by the Godhead, but can also be found throughout the full canon of Scripture (Ps 8:6; 1 Cor 15:27; Heb 2:6-8).

**Humanity and Biblical Community**

Next in the meta-narrative of Scripture comes the creation of humanity. Genesis 1:26-27 describes how God made man in his own image, as male and female, and allowed them to experience community as male and female, husband and wife, within a hierarchical structure. As a being created in the image of God, man desires relationship and is a relational being. However, if the Trinity existed in perfect relationship and community with this Godhead, why would God choose to create another being that would need community? Pettit suggests that God created man as a community of “image bearers in Christ to participate in the eternal love relationship that the Trinity enjoys, thus displaying his glory.”84 In reference to his “plurality of oneness,” Metzger proposes that this relationship of the Trinity is given as a model for humanity. He notes that God exists in three persons, but as one God while man exists as mankind in two parts, male and female.85 Metzger is acknowledging that God is a singular being with a plurality of person, so humanity or mankind is a singular being with a plurality in kind; male and female.86

As humanity works together in one accord, the experience is community. In Genesis 1:26-28, God gave the dominion mandate. This dominion mandate, as it is commonly referred to, provided that man was to rule the earth and have authority over it and was a charge to procreate. The dominion mandate offers humanity the opportunity to experience community through their interaction with God’s creation and each other. The

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85Metzger, *Discovering the Mystery*, 42-43.
86Ibid.
full acknowledgement of all aspects of man being made in the image of God and displaying community helps to determine how community can be understood outside of an environment. When the conversation of community moves from face-to-face interaction to an internet-based community, with a technological screen to hide behind, is it still true community? While experts are divided in the debate over the ability of community to exist in an online environment, experts must ask if a physical presence is essential for community? Mary Hess argues against physical presence as a requirement for community.87 The principle of biblical community found in the concept of man being made in the image of God is essential to man’s inherently relational desire. Man behaves in a certain way, relationally, because he is made in the image of a relational and intimate God and humanity alone bears this mark of the creator (Gen 1:27; Jas 3:9).88 Humanity was made to stand out amongst God’s creation. Man was set apart as the unique. Pettit refers to this as “endowment of personality” and describes it as man’s emotional competence, freedom, ethical nature, and original righteousness.89

Theological conversations often tend to think of community as it relates to the church in the world. Ebersole and Woods write,

Called to be a community of believers, the Church is defined by its relationship first with God and then with one another. Christian theological studies have focused on koinonia or fellowship that results when believers, motivated by the agape love of God, join together in fellowship and unity. The term fellowship, partnership, communion, community, and sharing originate from a root that means to share in something with someone.90


88Pettit, Foundations of Spiritual Formation, 39.

89Ibid.

Man was also made in God’s image and likeness as a part of his creation. Graeme Goldsworthy states,

The image of God in man, then, shows that it belongs to the dignity of man to be next to God in the order of things (Ps 8:5). Although God commits himself to the whole of his creation for its good order and preservation, humanity is the special focus of this care. Creation is there for our benefit. Humanity is the representative of the whole creation so that God deals with creation on the basis of how he deals with humans. Only man is addressed as one who knows God and who is created to live purposefully for God. When man falls because of sin the creation is made to fall with him. In order to restore the whole of creation, God works through his Son who becomes a man to restore man. The whole creation waits eagerly for the redeemed people of God to be finally revealed as God’s perfected children, because at that point the creation will be released from its own bondage (Rom 8:19-23).91

Humans are distinct from all of creation, animals included, in the special gift of being the only image bearers of God (Gen 1:27; Jas 3:9).92

Sin and Biblical Community

When sin enters into the meta-narrative of Scripture, it brings with it many implications for community. Primarily, sin interrupted, marred, and destroyed community. Through the entrance of sin, community was broken by pride and there was a loss of community with God and man. This disruption of community, which separates man from the Triune God, happened directly after God created man in his own image (Gen 3:8). The payment for this sin would be death (Rom 3:23). This sequence of God creating man in his image and man sinning was the moment where biblical community and community in general became two separate concepts.

Sin still exists. Man, male and female, were created as God’s image bearers (Gen 1:26-27). Mankind was created to have a relationship with the Triune God and with each other. Sin broke this relationship; not only man with man, but also man with God (Gen 3:23). In his loving, just, and holy character, God not only had to establish death as


92Pettit, Foundations of Spiritual Formation, 39.
the penalty for sin, but he made a promise to one day make a way for mankind to be redeemed through Christ (Gen 3:19; Rom 3:23). This redemption would restore the fellowship of community between God and mankind (Gen 3:15). In order for man to enter into active spiritual formation, they must be redeemed and justified in Christ. Pettit recognizes this need, writing, “What has been deformed by the ugliness of sin must now be reformed according to the ideal image of perfect humanity found in Jesus Christ.” A principle of biblical community, gleaned from this brokenness of sin, recognizes that sin exists and does affect all types of communities. However, in biblical community, sin cannot be simply ignored or managed. Sin must be surrendered to Christ and union with Christ needs to be sought in order to partake of true biblical community. For believers, sin hinders them and affects their sanctification, but the effect of sin on individual believers does not determine the overall success or failure of a community in God. Regardless of the environment, sin is still problematic in the life of believers attempting to engage in biblical community. Digital media might have an added effect on the problem of sin. The private environment of digital media could draw a believer toward sin. The sins that take place in a believer’s life effect their sanctification and should be taken seriously. Believers should not seek to serve Christ out of an obligation to live righteously or to manage their sin; rather, life in biblical community recognizes that Christ’s work was completed on the cross and covered their sins. Dallas Willard explains that in biblical community “we must see the soul and the person in its ruined condition, with its malformed and dysfunctional mind, feelings, body, and social relations, before we can understand that it must be delivered and reformed and how that can be done.”

Sin must be understood. This understanding does not mean simply recognizing sin or managing sin, it goes beyond that. The non-believer blames digital media for the

93 Pettit, *Foundations of Spiritual Formation*, 42.

broken community, but this luxury does not apply to the believer. Sin will occur in the life of the Christian in the interactions of biblical community. The biblical community is there to hold one another accountable for this dethroning of the Lord (Rom 6:12). Biblical community recognizes that the believer’s sin is positionally forgiven in Christ, but this does not remove sin from the believer’s life or from the community of believers.

**Individualism and isolation.** Community was broken when individualism came into focus in the garden. God made man in his image (Gen 1:26-31), but man sinned in Genesis and isolated himself from God. Life became about man, what he could know and achieve, rather than about God. God’s working through redemptive covenants restored community between God and the believer.95 A covenant is a conditional or unconditional agreement made between a person and their subordinate. God used covenants to make agreements with numerous people throughout the Old Testament. In the life of Abram, God used a covenant to form a new community. Abram became the father of the nation of Israel (Gen 12:1; 15). In the Old Testament, God also pursues whole communities in unlikely places. The Israelite community lived in captivity at times, often ruled over or surrounded by those not in their community, e.g., Egyptians and Babylonians. Ruth Padilla DeBorst speaks about the situation:

> For all of their illusion of separateness, of uniqueness and privileged status as God’s special nation, the Israelites had to learn that they were inextricably bound not only to those within their inner circle and to the God they had so blatantly disobeyed, but also to others and to the land where God had put them.96

Biblical community does not center on a location or a certain group of people, but instead focuses on dwelling in the presence of God.

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95Pettit, *Foundations of Spiritual Formation*, 75.

Today, individualism runs rampant throughout western culture as a concept that stands in direct opposition to God’s plan of community. Biblical community brings man and God, man and man together into a social experience that benefits the community as a whole, not the man as an individual.

Isolation or individualism—specifically in the medium of digital media—is viewed negatively in secular writings as well. In a strict digital media sense, community is defined by Ebersole and Woods as “spatial relations that is now facilitated by a technology that demolishes space and alters time. CMC (computer mediated communities) is in essence socially produced or constructed space.”

These writings recognize that individualism causes a loss of value and purpose as they relate to community. Simply put, individualism and isolation are obstacles to community.

When dominantly present in a person’s life, isolation and individualism increase the burden of lacking true community. Digital media, having unique spatial relations, only serves to further this issue. God made all of mankind in his image, whether believer or non-believer. However, non-believers, because they are not in union with Christ and have not truly experienced the saving grace of the gospel, cannot engage with God properly, nor can they engage with others as God truly intended. While non-believers can blame digital media, believers cannot blame the issue on digital media, but must accept that it is an issue of misuse of biblical community. In Hebrews 10:25, believers are forsaking the biblical community fellowship among the body of Christ. These believers claimed to love Christ, but did not want anything to do with His church. The believers had a heart and a head issue. They misunderstood the principles and

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practices of biblical community and lost sight of the fellowship God had graciously given them to enjoy. The issues with misuse of biblical community were not related to the environment. This misuse can affect community regardless of the environment, in fact, the amplified isolation that exists in digital media makes a perfect breeding ground for misuse. Scripture commonly places high value on community and provides examples of how the sin of the individual harms the community as a whole (Lev 4:3; Jos 7:19-26). Willard writes that spiritual formation, “good or bad, is always profoundly social. You cannot keep it to yourself and anyone that thinks of it merely as a private matter has misunderstood it.” Pettit notes that for a person to know God “more fully cannot be accomplished without the larger community of believers.” Believers must engage with each other, as a part of one’s spiritual formation, to be conformed into the image of Christ. This engagement, which fosters spiritual formation, takes place in what is known as biblical community. Digital media heightens isolation—biblical community cannot thrive in isolation; therefore, digital media can create a hurdle to biblical community. However, digital media is only a hurdle and not an impasse. True biblical community finds no basis in the sin or the righteousness of the people in the community, but instead rests in the righteousness of Christ.

**Jesus Christ and Biblical Community**

Humanity cannot commune with God because their righteousness has been marred by sin and causes them to be separated from God. God’s wrath was revealed to man because of the man’s sinful desire to become like God, God could not look upon

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102 Pettit, *Foundations of Spiritual Formation*, 47.

103 Ibid., 46.
being present in man’s life. Sin causes man to be an enemy of God (Rom 1:18). The payment for this sin was death (Rom 3:23). God, being loving, just, and holy, desired to make a path for his creation to return to commune with him. In order to do this, God had to make a way to reestablish the community with humanity that man’s sin had ruined (Rom 1:16-17). God’s wrath was turned into grace toward humanity when he offered another opportunity for man to have community with Him (Eph 2:1-9). God’s wrath did not simply vanish, it was redirected to Jesus Christ, His Son (Isa 53:10). God’s newly established community opportunity is available to all who believe and receive Jesus as the expression of the Triune God in human form.  

From the work of Jesus Christ on the cross comes another principle of biblical community that exists irrespective of the environment; accepting the work of Jesus Christ as payment and provision for salvation and union with Christ. A person’s identity is first found in Christ, not in the environment or the community. Unity with Jesus Christ is the place where unity with others begins. Willard comments on people focusing inwardly toward themselves as the treasure, but this overlooks the true treasure, which is the life and power of Jesus Christ. Willard adds to this thought by correcting the notion that attending church is biblical community: “The Church of Jesus Christ is not necessarily present when there is a correct administration of the sacraments and faithful preaching of God’s Word. The church of God is present where people gather together in the power of the resurrected life of Christ.” Biblical community is not about the person being perfected; but rather, is about a group of people dwelling in the life and power of Jesus Christ.

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104 Pettit, *Foundations of Spiritual Formation*, 42.


106 Ibid., 51.
Paul writes often to local communities of believers to remind them of their identity “in Christ” and that all else originates from that truth. In writing to the church in Rome, Paul is extolling them. His praise is not based on the environment, but on the faith being proclaimed throughout the world in spite of the persecution faced in this world, specifically in Rome (Rom 8). He was praising them for exhibiting a faith community; an interconnected, socially connected, sharing, and fellowshipping community of faith.

Christians also share and are interconnected in the completed work of Jesus, which ultimately drives them to share God’s truth with each other and the world.

Then, what is the connection between the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and Christian formation? Norbert Cummins offers some thought in that direction:

The pure doctrine of the gospel, that is to say, it is “primarily a matter of being drawn into the Triune Life of Our Loving God” through the person and work of Jesus Christ. It is a process involving the “reordering of self . . . towards the eternal freedom and love that is life in peace with Christ.”

Christ is the new identity that the sinner is in desperate need to receive. The fall made it so that people must be drawn into a relationship with God. The Holy Spirit works to draw people into a relationship with God through salvation, which is found in Jesus Christ. This salvation is where man comes into union with Christ. Biblical community then comes in the form of a life that is lived in response to the completed work of Christ on the cross and in the heart of those united in this belief.

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107 Rom 3:24, 5:21, 6:11, 8:1, 2, 8:10, 9:1, 12:5; 1 Cor 1:2, 4, 30, 4:10; Gal 2:4, 16, 17; 3:22; Eph 12, etc.


109 Ibid., 42.


Within the context of biblical community, salvation is not dependent on an environment. Being in union with Christ through salvation allows believers to respond and live life together, in Christ, with one another.

The Holy Spirit and Biblical Community

The last place in the meta-narrative that needs to be examined comes in the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was left on earth to dwell in and amongst believers, as a helpmate (Eph 1:13). The Holy Spirit is a part of biblical community because man can only seek to have obedience to God’s Word through the power of the Spirit who helps them to understand the Word (Eph 1:18). Again, this component of biblical community is not dependent on an environment, but is solely dependent on the believer allowing the Holy Spirit to work in them. The evidence of this obedience in biblical community can be seen in the practicing of the fruits of the spirit (Gal 5:22-23). The environment plays no role in the believer’s responsibility to act in obedience, therefore the believer is commanded to act in obedience and display love for Jesus within all environments (John 14:15). Union with Jesus is made possible through the work of the Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. The Spirit brings believers into fellowship with God, then with others. Thus, the community has all things in common because of the Spirit’s work.

A repetitive series of instruction, obedience, disobedience, repentance, and forgiveness can be seen in the Old Testament. The cycle always operates with obedience as the key characteristic for the communities in which God’s people find themselves.\textsuperscript{113} In Genesis, obedience is defined as perfect submission to God, for God is the one thing that can truly fulfill the heart’s desires of all men. Through a life lived in submission, the believer brings God glory. Zac Niringiye writes,

The Garden of Eden was the space for the celebration for creation-community, where humankind exercised its freedom and, in obedience to God, “worked it” and “took care of it” (Gen 2:15). There can be no obedience where there is no freedom and there can be no freedom where there is no choice. . . . The human being that was defined by relationship of trust and obedience with the Creator is now defined by fear and shame (Gen 3:10). It is no wonder that the immediate result is brokenness in the human community of male and female.114

In the Old Testament, biblical community was not about similarities, but about what the people shared with respect to the obedience and worship of God.115

The New Testament reveals the Holy Spirit as working in the believer. The Holy Spirit is the means by which the believer receives Christ’s forgiveness of sin and his imputation of righteousness. Fruit produced in the life of the believer comes about through the work of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22-23). These fruits that are borne allow the believer to engage in biblical community with God and man. Jesus explains that He will have to return to his Father, but that the Father and the Son will send the Holy Spirit to the believer to teach them all things (John 14:26). The gospel of John tells that the Spirit will dwell in the believer (John 14:17). Though the world cannot experience the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit is sent to bear witness to the work of Jesus Christ (John 14:17, 15:26). The work of the Spirit brings the believer from isolation into community, in Christ. The Spirit brings glory to Christ, which is the Holy Spirit’s primary function (John 16:14).

Paul talks about the work of the Spirit in the life of the believer as it relates to community in Ephesians 4:

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. (vv. 1-6)


115 The Old Testament understanding was different from the New Testament because the work of Jesus on the cross had not taken place during the time of the Old Testament communities. In the New Testament, they had Jesus come and show himself as the Christ, ultimately being baptized and his apostles giving account of Jesus and his teachings.
In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul writes about the unity in the Spirit through an illustration. Paul explains how the gifts are given by the Spirit to each person. Different gifts are given to each member of the body, but each person has the same responsibility: “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (1 Cor 12:7). As the writing continues, Paul compares the community of the church to a body with all its many parts. For Paul, each part or member of the community has a function in the body (1 Cor 12:12). Christ serves as the head and the church members serve as the body within that biblical community. Each part of the body has to be attached and appropriately engaged, using the gifts the Spirit has given, for the community to function properly. The body needs all its parts and no part can function properly in isolation.

In Colossians 3, Paul says,

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (vv. 12-17)

These virtues of humility and meekness are only practices in community with one another, but it is important to note that there is no prescribed environment for the obedient practice of these behaviors. It is impossible to practice patience or gentleness to oneself. Rather, the community of believers is unique in that biblical community thrives as each person in the community practices these behaviors in regard to one another. This practice serves to spur others on toward the goal of union with Christ. A shared interest in the Spirit of God is the constraint in biblical community, not the environment or the mode.

**Biblical Principles**

After the review of the literature, eight principles emerge in conjunction with biblical community. The review steps through each principle individually in order to
provide supporting confirmation. Matthew Alan Vander Wiele originally compiled these eight principles, which were applied to the tool as used in the research. These general principles to define the essence of biblical community, regardless or apart from an environment, are listed below.¹¹⁶

The Trinity
1. The essence of biblical community finds its origin and model for practice in the Trinity. The origin of relationship is found in the Godhead of the Trinity and is able to be modeled by mankind.

2. The essence of biblical community functions within a hierarchy and a willing submission to authority that can be observed in the Trinity and then modeled among believers in any environment.

Mankind
3. The essence of biblical community recognizes that humans are relational and crave relationship because they are made in the image of a relational God.

4. The essence of biblical community submits the individual to the community, not the community to the individual.

Sin
5. The essence of biblical community acknowledges sin.

6. The essence of biblical community recognizes that although sin is forgiven, sin is still problematic in the life of the believer and biblical community.

Jesus Christ
7. The essence of biblical community involves union with Jesus Christ. Union with Jesus for the believer is found in the completed work of Jesus Christ as payment for sin and provision for salvation.

¹¹⁶ These principles make up the general essence of biblical community. As such, they are not intended to stand alone, nor are they meant to be all-inclusive. The list is general and certainly not exhaustive, which is outside the scope of this project. The list uses the biblical meta-narrative to show a theological progression from which principles could be gleaned. This progression is clearly identifiable in both the literature and in Scripture.
The Holy Spirit and the Church

8. The essence of biblical community includes corporate and personal obedience to God’s Word through the power of the Holy Spirit. Worship, obedience, and a demonstration of the Fruit of the Spirit are by-products of the Spirit in the life of the believer.117

Conclusion

The chapter briefly reviewed the literature surrounding digital media and biblical community. The review concluded that the physical environment of traditional community serves as a benchmark for community in other unique environments, such as digital media. The principles of biblical community regardless of environment, as originally determined by an expert panel in the instrument creation work of Matthew Alan Vander Wiele, were reviewed as determined in the literature.118 The meta-narrative of the gospel served as the guide for helping to work through these principles individually. It is important to note that the biblical community principles were not intended to be exhaustive, but were deliberate in helping to validate the principles, which were used in the research instrument. It is true that other principles must have been overlooked, but the point was to determine principles that made a community “biblical” regardless of environment. The list of principles outlined by Vander Wiele was turned over to an expert panel for review and validated by consensus of that panel. This chapter serves to acclimate the reader with the principles that will be explained in further detail in chapter 3, where the methodology will be dependent on understanding of the principles given here.


118 Ibid.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

Matthew Alan Vander Wiele did a scriptural review and examination of the general principles of biblical community found in current published materials and Scripture and had the final conclusions validated by an expert panel. Once this information was compiled an instrument was created that measured the perceptions of people as they engage in online community. First, the precedent literature was reviewed to determine if the survey covered key concepts of biblical community. I had to determine if the concepts identified by Vander Wiele were scripturally supported. The instrument was reviewed and found usable for the project at hand.

**Research Purpose**

This study addressed the biblical community behaviors of women when engaged through Facebook as well as perceived best practices for connecting women in the church. An explanatory mixed methods design was used, and involved collecting quantitative and qualitative data at the same time before compiling the results. The compiled data was analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Then both sets of data were reported to enhance the overall findings.

**Research Questions Synopsis**

1. Do Christian women involved in women’s ministry in the local church self-report practicing behaviors of biblical community in their personal interactions on Facebook?

2. What are the perceived best practices for connecting women in the church through Facebook according to current experience of women?

3. What are the habits of women as they operate on Facebook?
a. What is the average age range of women in churches that are regularly using Facebook?
b. How often do women report accessing Facebook within a given period of time?
c. What are the top five best practices, as perceived by women, for using Facebook in ministry?
d. What future training needs exist for women to practice biblical community behaviors when interacting on Facebook?

**Literature Review and Biblical Community Principles Summary**

The literature review revealed many writings on the essential principles of biblical community are provided in an environment specific context. The literature demonstrated that when Facebook or other forms of social media are placed alongside physical community, the communal relationships lack in similarity of connectedness. The literature found that these two communal environments differ in ways that makes the information non-transferable. The environment is intertwined in writing with the essentials of biblical community. However, to measure perceptions in the unique environment of Facebook the essentials of biblical community had to be obtained without regard for the environmental context.

The literature review was intended to discover the basic already agreed upon principles of biblical community that formed the consensus of scholarly, researched, support. The general biblical community principles in the writings that were agreed upon were found to be specific to an environment. This constraint would not allow for transfer of the principles to digital media, namely Facebook, therefore the principles needed to be extracted from the context of an environment.¹

After reviewing the literature, it was necessary to investigate Vander Wiele’s method of defining and finalizing essentials of biblical community that were not environment specific. Vander Wiele’s expert panel reached a 95 percent consensus

regarding 8 principles of biblical community. These principles were stated by Vander Wiele as follows:

**The Trinity**

1. The essence of biblical community finds its origin and model for practice in the Trinity. The origin of relationship is found in the Godhead of the Trinity, and is able to be modeled by mankind.

2. The essence of biblical community functions within a hierarchy and a willing submission to authority that can be observed in the Trinity and then modeled among believers in any environment.

**Mankind**

3. The essence of biblical community recognizes that humans are relational and crave relationship because they are made in the image of a relational God.

4. The essence of biblical community submits the individual to the community, not the community to the individual.

**Sin**

5. The essence of biblical community acknowledges sin.

6. The essence of biblical community recognizes that although sin is forgiven, sin is still problematic in the life of the believer and biblical community.

**Jesus Christ**

7. The essence of biblical community includes union with Jesus Christ. Union with Jesus for the believer is found in the completed work of Jesus Christ as payment for sin and provision for salvation.

**The Holy Spirit and the Church**

8. The essence of biblical community includes corporate and personal obedience to God’s Word through the power of the Holy Spirit. Worship, obedience, demonstration of the Fruit of the Spirit are by-products of the Spirit in the life of the believer.²

The principles outlined by Vander Wiele are supported by the agreement of the original expert panel from his project and by the literature review with the exception that these principles are stated outside of a specific environment. Therefore, Vander Wiele’s instrument was used as the foundation of the survey.3

Additionally, the literature review found that there was no consensus on the best practices for connecting women in biblical community. In order to fill the gap in the research and answer the questions; Do women self-report behaviors of biblical community, as outlined in Scripture, in their personal interactions on Facebook? It also asks, what are the perceived best practices for connecting women in the church through Facebook according to current experience of women? Research had to push further. The discussion of connecting women in biblical community has started and has been taken beyond a specific environment.

Research Design Overview

This project was a mixed-methods study. The design used surveys and open-ended questions to collect and analyze both qualitative and qualitative data.4 The goal was to use the survey to inform the discovery of perceived best practices for connecting women in the church through the assistance of Facebook.

After analyzing the results of the two methods of study, the results were explored for the positive uses of Facebook for helping women establish biblical community and whether community could create a perception of connection among the women. The results also yielded information on the five perceived best practices currently proving effective for connecting women involved in women’s ministry within a local church and the enhancement Facebook could provide to these practices. Creswell identified that

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3Written permission was obtained from Matthew Alan Vander Wiele via email.

using the exploratory design allowed for results obtained to be generalized to a sample or a population. This sampling allowed for exploration into women’s perceptions regarding their online communal relationships and whether women consider their online relationships to facilitate the principles of biblical community, engage women in the church with one another.

**Population**

The research question for this study sought to analyze the women’s perception of biblical community behaviors when interacting on Facebook, the population of this study was all women involved in a women’s ministry in the local church to whom the survey is disseminated through snowball sampling.

To create an appropriate purposive sample, various ministry leaders were asked to promote the survey on social media; including but not limited to Facebook and Twitter. The shared survey link took female participants to the survey’s demographic data page where they were asked to complete the survey after providing demographic information.

A formal request to use human subjects was submitted using the Assessment of Risk to Human Subjects in Research form to the Ethics Committee of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. After approval, the survey was created. Ministry leaders were asked to share the opportunity to participate with women on their personal social media platforms. Those that agreed to participate, meaning the leaders agreed, were to post a website link and information about the survey on their personal social media sites. The originally shared link and request on Facebook and the demographic section of the survey outlined the purpose of the research, the opportunity for participants to win a

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prize, and the rules of submission; including that by engaging in the survey each participant was providing consent for the results to be published.

**Sample**

The project involved a purposive sample, mediated by experts, who were asked to promote the survey link through social media so that a snowball sampling technique was commissioned. The sample was the women reached by the snowball sampling of purposive sampled women’s ministry leaders on their social media platforms. The original Facebook post was pre-written and all participants were directed there via the link shared through each ministry leader’s social media platform. Participants completed the surveys on a separate website where the data was compiled for the researcher to review.

**Delimitations**

Biblical community was defined in the same modus as in Vander Wiele’s thesis, where the survey originated. The survey was altered to state that the questions in reference to Facebook behaviors specifically rather than digital media in general. Questions were also updated to reflect the expert panel’s suggestions in regard to the survey being gender specific. The survey contained six open-ended questions added to the beginning, which were also determined by the expert panel. The population was delimited to women with a connection to the ministry leaders social media profiles. Each purposive leader was contacted and asked to share the survey with participants via social media. The women’s ministry leaders were responsible for disseminating the survey link on social media platforms. The survey was an online form, that when completed, was reviewed and manipulated to show the full breadth of the results.

**Limitation of Generalization**

The data and analysis of it from this research could not be generalized to the following areas. First, the research did not reach women who were not networked to ministry leaders that disseminated the survey on social media through the snowball
method of sampling. The study was not applicable to those who did not use social media at the time of the survey as they did not receive the link to the survey. The link was only advertised via social media by ministry leaders in contact with the researcher.

The survey was created to separate the essentials of biblical community from the environment which they were being employed to measure perception. The survey was written in eighth-grade language to ensure understanding of the questions that led to an effective outcome of answers. There was a possibility of participants answering dishonestly or misunderstanding the questions.

**Instrumentation**

The exploratory design was warranted, due to the nature of the study. The quantitative exploration took place through a survey that measured perceptions of behaviors and how well they matched the essentials of biblical community, which was validated by an expert panel. The instrument was a quantitative survey in the form of a weighted Likert scale that measured women’s self-reported perceptions. The goal of the instrument was to determine whether or not, based on the questions in the survey, women perceived their online communal experiences to facilitate the essentials of biblical community. The qualitative component made use of open-ended questions which were vetted through the same expert panel. This was done through a series of six open-ended questions added to the beginning of the survey. Each respondent was asked to answer the questions in a sentence or two. Responses to the open-ended questions were analyzed using conventional content analysis, which allowed the categories to emerge inductively from the data. The expert panel consisted of leaders in Women’s Ministry with

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publication and educational credentials. The panel was emailed and asked to evaluate the series of questions. Each member of the panel had the opportunity to critique and offer alterations to the survey, including the open-ended questions. These critiques were reviewed and necessary correction made before the expert panel was asked to assess the revised survey. The expert panel reviewed the edits to the original survey and provided any necessary feedback. At this time, the updated survey and open-ended questions were moved into a pilot testing stage. Once the pilot testing was completed and the survey could be disseminated, the purposive sample of women’s ministry leaders started the process of a snowball sampling.

Upon completion of the survey the open-ended questions were then analyzed for content. The answers were categorized based on the key phrases and concepts from the literature base and then those categories were ranked in order of importance as measured by the frequency of the response. The explanation of the procedures for the survey are explained below.

**Survey Administration Procedures**

The research consisted of a survey which was governed via a website. Participants were asked to take the online survey through social media posts made by ministry leaders, a snowball technique for gaining participation. The social media posts shared a link for the survey website. Participants visited the website and completed the steps of the survey. For the survey, Vander Wiele’s expert panel determined two scriptural examples through which each behavior was observed. The survey consisted of one question for every scriptural example of a behavior. The survey includes a Likert survey specifically designed for measuring perception. There were a total of 32 multiple choice questions in the survey.

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See appendix 4.
At the beginning of the survey, respondents answered six open-ended questions which were added to the survey. Each respondent was asked to answer the questions in a sentence or two. The open-ended questions were vetted by the same expert panel which consisted of leaders in Women’s Ministry with publication and educational credentials. The panel was emailed and asked to evaluate the series of questions. The expert panel was asked to establish if the questions evaluate current practices and potential methods for using Facebook to help connect women involved in women’s ministry and the effectiveness of each method. Each member of the panel had the opportunity to critique and offer alterations to the open-ended questions. The critiques were reviewed, and necessary correction made before the final open-ended questions were added to the survey.

Upon completion of the survey the open-ended questions were analyzed for content. The answers were categorized based on the key phrases and concepts from the literature base and then those categories were ranked in order of importance as measured by the frequency of the response.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter is to articulate the methodology that was employed to successfully address the research questions. The chapter explicated the design, the scriptural summary of factors of biblical community, population, sample, delimitations, limitations of generalizations, instrumentation, and procedures. The research provided contributions to the understanding of how women are engaged and connected both in the church and on Facebook.
CHAPTER 4
ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

The findings of this research were evaluated based on the current study that measured women’s perceptions regarding their online relationships and whether women considered these online relationships to include the principles of biblical community. This study sought to investigate the relationship between women’s habits in engaging on Facebook and the practice of biblical community. Additionally, the study yielded results on the perceived best practices for using Facebook to connect women in the church. This chapter explores the descriptive data and provides displays in the form of tables, appendices, and/or figures directly taken from the survey website. Assessments were made regarding how the data directly addresses the research questions.

Compilation Protocol

The research collected two types of data in a singular phase of testing. The first type of data was populated through a multiple-choice survey and the second type came from six open-ended questions with response room for a short answer per question. The research started with the formation of an expert panel in order to provide expert insight into the configuration of qualitative open-ended questions and to review the updated language used in the quantitative section. This panel consisted of scholars and practitioners who have exhibited expertise in the areas of women’s ministry, girl’s ministry, or training women for women’s ministry leadership.¹

¹See appendix 4.
Next, the survey instrument created by Matthew Alan Vander Wiele was adapted for use with women and Facebook specific questions and the demographic information updated for the purposes of this study. The instrument uses Scripture and current literature to create five categories and eight principles of biblical community observed that progressed theologically. The list is by no means exhaustive, but functions to report established principles from the current writings and seen clearly in Scripture. The principles merely serve as a basis for a definition of biblical community regardless of environment. Vander Wiele writes,

To effectively address the research question, the essentials of biblical community were observed regardless of environment. Principles revealed examples in Scripture and examples yielded behaviors. For each principle observed, two biblical examples were given that revealed a specific behavior. Overall, for each principle there were two biblical examples revealing two behaviors. For each behavior observed, a positive and negative question was created and used in the student survey to measure perception. A total of 32 questions specific to biblical community were used in the survey.\(^2\)

The instrument is a quantitative survey in the form of a weighted Likert scale that measures women’s self-reported perceptions. The goal of the instrument was to determine whether or not, based on the questions in the survey, women perceive their online communal experiences to facilitate the essentials of biblical community.

The survey aided in identifying whether or not women believe that they are actively participating in true biblical community when engaging on Facebook. A positive or negative weighting was assigned to each question based on whether it was asked positively or negatively. Questions exclusive to perception were not only weighted, but five choices were given: (1) Always, (2) Generally, (3) Frequently, (4) Occasionally, and (5) Never. Participants were limited to one choice per question.

The qualitative phase used open-ended questions which were vetted through an expert panel. The qualitative section consisted of a series of six open-ended questions added to the beginning of the survey. Each respondent was asked to answer the questions in short answer form. The same expert panel was used, which consisted of leaders in Women’s Ministry with publication and educational credentials. The panel was e-mailed and asked to evaluate the series of questions. Each member of the panel had the opportunity to critique and offer alterations to the questions. These critiques were reviewed and necessary correction made before the final open-ended questions are added to the survey.

Demographic question along with the qualitative and quantitative sections were then formed into a single survey so a pilot study could be executed. A pilot study was performed to test the content and functionality of the survey to the general public. Of the 14 respondents, 12 completed the survey and helped refine the wording and functionality of the final online survey.

Upon completion of the survey, the open-ended questions were analyzed for content. The answers were categorized based on the key phrases and concepts from the literature base. Then, those categories were ranked in order of importance as measured by the frequency of the response.

Once the survey questions were adapted to say “Facebook” or “on Facebook” instead of the general term “online,” and the language was updated for adult females, the survey was then organized into an online survey and the open-ended questions added to the beginning of the survey. At this time, I initiated contact with a group of women’s ministry directors and women affiliated with women’s ministry to request their help in promoting the study through social media. As incentive for assistance, respondents were

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3See appendix 7.
4See appendix 9.
offered an incentive in the form of eligibility to win one of two $100 Amazon gift cards if they completed the survey within the first ten days. A random drawing was done from the completed surveys and two women received e-gift cards from Amazon. The data collection commenced on October 9, 2017, and conclude on October 19, 2017.

**Scoring Protocols and Inclusion Criteria**

A total of 783 surveys were received. Of the 783 surveys, 512 were accurately completed in their entirety; 270 were incomplete, disqualifying them from the final data collection. Additionally, 98 of the completed surveys were done by women not involved in women’s ministry within a local church. Therefore, 414 surveys met the criteria, which was the final sample of completed surveys.

The survey instructed respondents to rank questions based on importance. Each respondent’s choice was based on personal perception of their online relationships’ inclusion or exclusion of each principle of biblical community. The open-ended questions were analyzed for content. The answers were categorized based on the key phrases and concepts from the literature base and those categories were ranked in order of importance as measured by the frequency of the response.

**Demographic and Sample Data**

The size of the population was estimated to be around 100,000, which yielded the need for a minimum of 383 participants for a 95 percent confidence level and a +/- 5 percent confidence interval. The total number of the population that participated in the survey and completed the survey, meeting all criteria, was 414, which provides a +/- 4.81 percent confidence interval and increases the level of accuracy.

The first nine questions of the survey were used to gather biographical information, such as age, marital status, frequency of Facebook logins, and participation
in a women’s ministry in their local community. Though this data does not relate directly to the stated research questions, the answers have a potential function as independent variables.

Quantitative methods (32 multiple choice questions) were used to determine a woman’s perception of her biblical community habits when engaging on Facebook. Qualitative methods (6 open-ended questions) were utilized to explore the perceived best practices for connecting women in community through the use of Facebook.

Next, the quantitative data are observed by category and principles; i.e. the five categories (Trinity, Mankind, Sin, Christ, Holy Spirit) of the eight principles of biblical community. Chapter 5 addresses some of the detailed findings, including the overall misunderstanding and lack of knowledge regarding the essentials of biblical community. Moreover, while women generally report a shared need for relationships while on Facebook, developing biblical community based relationships is not always a primary concern. The data also revealed misunderstandings and absence of knowledge of the core principles of biblical community (regardless of environment).

The qualitative data, the open-ended questions, were analyzed for content through review of each individual answer by the researcher. The answers were categorized based on the key phrases and concepts from the literature base and those categories were ranked in order of importance as measured by the frequency of the response.

A completed analysis of each set of results of the two methods of study are linked to help explore the positive use of Facebook for helping women establish biblical community and if community can create a perception of connection among the women. The results also yielded information on the five perceived best practices currently proving effective for connecting women in evangelical churches and the enhancement Facebook might provide to these practices. Creswell identifies that using the exploratory design

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5See tables 2 and 3.
allows for results obtained to be generalized to a sample or a population.\textsuperscript{6} This sampling allowed for exploration into women’s perceptions regarding their Facebook communal relationships and whether women consider their Facebook relationships to facilitate the principles of biblical community, engaging women in the church with one another.

Finding and Displays

Table 2 represents the respondents’ age data as reported (414 respondents).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Total Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-21</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-29</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80 and above</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>414</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 represents the demographic data as reported (414 respondents).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Variables</th>
<th>Survey Choices</th>
<th>RESULTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>Single, Never Married, Married, Divorced, Widowed</td>
<td>45 331 29 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of Facebook Logins</td>
<td>5 or more times per day, 2-5 times per day, Once daily, Once every other day, Once weekly, Once monthly, Less than once a month</td>
<td>200 173 23 14 3 0 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>In the United States, Outside of the United States</td>
<td>405 9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quantitative Results for Category 1

Trinity principle 1. The essence of biblical community finds its origin and model for practice in the Trinity. The origin of relationship is found in the Godhead of the Trinity, and is able to be modeled by mankind.

Trinity principle 1 was gauged positively through questions 17 and 19. Women’s perceptions reveal a common desire to respect others while on Facebook. The women expressed a value for making others feel good about themselves through Facebook relationships. High intentionality toward always showing respect to others can be seen in the scores listed. The positive questions associated with principle 1 divulge a perception that women value exhibiting respect in their relationships on Facebook.

Table 4. Trinity principle 1, positive questions 17 and 19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 17: I am intentional about respecting my friends within my Facebook relationships.</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always (1)</td>
<td>79.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally (2)</td>
<td>18.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently (3)</td>
<td>0.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally (4)</td>
<td>0.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never (5)</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Rating</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 19: I am purposeful about making others feel good about themselves in my Facebook relationships.</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always (1)</td>
<td>40.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally (2)</td>
<td>45.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently (3)</td>
<td>7.73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally (4)</td>
<td>5.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never (5)</td>
<td>0.72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Rating</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7See table 4.

8Average ratings are based on the following scale: Always-1, Generally-2, Frequently-3, Occasionally-4, Never-5. The confidence interval for the project is +/- .0481.
Trinity principle 1 was gauged negatively through questions 38 and 23. The negative presentation of principle 1 reveals a difference in the data. Women find it more important to respect others than to get their point across. However, the data is more evenly spread when it comes to women feeling good about themselves when posting. While still slanted slightly toward an awareness of others over self, question 23 did uncover a conflict with the women spreading from “generally” to “occasionally” wanting to feel good about themselves when posting on Facebook. Since the principle was designed to test from a positive and a negative angle, the research would be expected to show the exact opposite on the negative than it did on the positive. Question 23 does not hold to this expectation. The responses could prove a lack of clarity in the questions or reveal an underlying desire to protect their own right to express themselves above others respecting them.

Table 5. Trinity principle 1, negative questions 38 and 23

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 38: Respecting people on Facebook is not as important as getting my point across and being heard.</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always (1)</td>
<td>3.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally (2)</td>
<td>4.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently (3)</td>
<td>2.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally (4)</td>
<td>14.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never (5)</td>
<td>73.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Rating</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 23: Feeling good about myself is important to me when posting on Facebook.</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always (1)</td>
<td>5.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally (2)</td>
<td>26.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently (3)</td>
<td>18.84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally (4)</td>
<td>42.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never (5)</td>
<td>7.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Rating</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9See table 5.
**Trinity principle 2.** The essence of biblical community functions within a hierarchy and a submission to authority that can be observed in the Trinity and then modeled among believers in any environment.

Trinity principle 2 was gauged positively through questions 21 and 36.\(^\text{10}\) In question 21, the women perceived their overall average reaction to not getting their way or being misunderstood as responding with “frequently” giving in to others. When it came to taking responsibility for their actions even if it hurt their reputation, they average a general willingness. The results point to women ranging from “generally” to “frequently” in regard to practicing principle 2, which addresses submission and hierarchy.

Table 6. Trinity principle 2, positive questions 21 and 36

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 21: Even when I do not get my way and I am misunderstood, I am willing to give in to others in my Facebook relationships.</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always (1)</td>
<td>8.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally (2)</td>
<td>37.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently (3)</td>
<td>15.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally (4)</td>
<td>28.74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never (5)</td>
<td>9.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Rating</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 36: I will take responsibility for my actions in my Facebook relationships, even if it hurts my reputation.</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always (1)</td>
<td>37.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally (2)</td>
<td>46.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently (3)</td>
<td>8.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally (4)</td>
<td>5.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never (5)</td>
<td>1.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Rating</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^\text{10}\) See table 6.
Trinity principle 2 was gauged negatively through questions 24 and 44.\textsuperscript{11}

When the principle is reversed to be asked in the negative, one would expect the submission and hierarchy response to be “never” or “occasionally.” Both answers fall into that range. Women perceive almost “never” having to have the last word in a relationship on Facebook. They also perceive themselves as taking responsibility for actions rather than avoiding ownership.

Table 7. Trinity principle 2, negative questions 24 and 44

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 24: I have to have the last word in my Facebook relationships.</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always (1)</td>
<td>0.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally (2)</td>
<td>0.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently (3)</td>
<td>2.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally (4)</td>
<td>37.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never (5)</td>
<td>58.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Rating</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 44: I will blame or ignore others in order to avoid taking the responsibility for my actions Facebook.</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always (1)</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally (2)</td>
<td>0.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently (3)</td>
<td>0.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally (4)</td>
<td>9.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never (5)</td>
<td>90.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Rating</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Quantitative Results for Category 2**

**Mankind principle 3.** The essence of biblical community recognizes that man is relational and craves relationship because he is made in the image of a relational God.

\textsuperscript{11}See table 7.
Mankind principle 3 was gauged positively through questions 25 and 27.\textsuperscript{12} The responses to the positive questions associated with principle 3 produced slightly varied results. The women appear to have perceived the value of relationships on Facebook and the importance of being considered loyal and trustworthy as different aspects. The average rating on the importance of Facebook relationships to a woman was perceived to be approximately 2.79, which rounds to being “frequently” important. When questioned about the importance of being perceived as loyal and trustworthy, the average rating was consistent with a “generally” important response.

Table 8. Mankind principle 3, positive questions 25 and 27

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question 25: My Facebook relationships with people are very important to me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always (1)</td>
<td>12.80%</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally (2)</td>
<td>32.61%</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently (3)</td>
<td>21.01%</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally (4)</td>
<td>29.47%</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never (5)</td>
<td>4.11%</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Rating</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 27: Being loyal and trustworthy to my Facebook friends is very important to me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always (1)</td>
<td>44.93%</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally (2)</td>
<td>34.30%</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently (3)</td>
<td>8.45%</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally (4)</td>
<td>10.14%</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never (5)</td>
<td>2.17%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Rating</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1.90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mankind principle 3 was gauged negatively gauged through questions 45 and 43.\textsuperscript{13} The negative questions for the importance of relationships on Facebook were slanted

\textsuperscript{12}See table 8.

\textsuperscript{13}See table 9.
toward the “never” side of the scale pointing to a stronger desire to know others than to be known. Women perceive that they “never” place women knowing about them over the importance of knowing about others and they never desire to be disloyal for gain. Again, the women had a stronger inclination to report they would “never” seek information when it meant having to display disloyalty. When the question was asked with relation to others knowing about them as the priority, answers were more spread across “occasionally” and “never.”

Table 9. Mankind principle 3, negative questions 45 and 43

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 45: When engaging in Facebook relationships I am more interested in people knowing about me than I am interested in knowing about them.</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always (1)</td>
<td>0.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally (2)</td>
<td>0.72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently (3)</td>
<td>5.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally (4)</td>
<td>42.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never (5)</td>
<td>50.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Rating</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 43: I will be disloyal in Facebook relationships to find out information about others or myself.</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always (1)</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally (2)</td>
<td>0.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently (3)</td>
<td>0.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally (4)</td>
<td>5.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never (5)</td>
<td>92.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Rating</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mankind principle 4. The essence of biblical community submits the individual to the community, not the community to the individual.

Mankind principle 4 was gauged positively through questions 26 and 40.14 The positive questions on principle 4 show that women “generally” desire the good of the

---

14See table 10.
community over their individual best. This is shown in their response to “generally” practice proper etiquette and “always” seeking to honor and obey God. The women rated their community over their personal aspiration.

Mankind principle 4 was gauged negatively through questions 33 and 31. Question 33 yields the expected strongly mirrored response to question 26. Women are strongly against ever gossiping on Facebook. Reviewing principle 4 from the negative side reveals slightly less certainty when it comes to taking a stand for what is right. Based on the answers in the positive portion (question 40), the expectation would be a strong “never” response to question 31. Conversely, the answer was stronger in respect to “occasionally” taking a stand for what is right. While still on the appropriate end of the scale to counterbalance the positive questions, the responses to question 31 seem to suggest that women have slightly less resolve to stand for what is right then was displayed in question 40.

Table 10. Mankind principle 4, positive questions 26 and 40

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 26: I care about proper Facebook etiquette.</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always (1)</td>
<td>45.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally (2)</td>
<td>34.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently (3)</td>
<td>9.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally (4)</td>
<td>9.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never (5)</td>
<td>1.93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Rating</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 40: If I am pressured into doing something that disobeys and dishonors God on Facebook I will stand up for what is right.</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always (1)</td>
<td>58.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally (2)</td>
<td>33.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently (3)</td>
<td>3.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally (4)</td>
<td>1.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never (5)</td>
<td>2.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Rating</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15See table 11.
Table 11. Mankind principle 4, negative questions 33 and 31

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 33: I will gossip and do what it takes to get my way even if it hurts my Facebook relationships and/or community.</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Always (1)</strong></td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Generally (2)</strong></td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frequently (3)</strong></td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Occasionally (4)</strong></td>
<td>7.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Never (5)</strong></td>
<td>92.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average Rating</strong></td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 31: On Facebook, I am uncomfortable taking a stand for what is right.</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Always (1)</strong></td>
<td>2.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Generally (2)</strong></td>
<td>8.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frequently (3)</strong></td>
<td>8.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Occasionally (4)</strong></td>
<td>51.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Never (5)</strong></td>
<td>29.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average Rating</strong></td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quantitative Results for Category 3

**Sin principle 5.** The essence of biblical community acknowledges sin.

Sin principle 5 was gauged positively through questions 39 and 22.\(^{16}\) Principle 5 deals with the acknowledgement of sin. Women perceived a strong avoidance of participating in sinful actions toward others on Facebook. Nonetheless, women showed an adverse response to using Facebook as a tool for ownership or discussion of personal sins. The women expose a want to avoid sinning but a hesitancy to acknowledge one’s sins. The reaction of the women could acknowledge the lack of comfort with Facebook as a forum for community confession or it could reveal a general taboo attitude toward personal ownership of sin.

\(^{16}\text{See table 12.}\)
Table 12. Sin principle 5, positive questions 39 and 22

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 39: I avoid participating in hurtful or sinful actions towards others on Facebook.</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always (1)</td>
<td>73.19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally (2)</td>
<td>19.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently (3)</td>
<td>2.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally (4)</td>
<td>1.93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never (5)</td>
<td>3.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Rating</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 22: I use my Facebook relationships to talk about real life issues like my struggles with sin (The Bible defines sin as transgression of the law of God (1 John 3:4) and rebellion against God (Deuteronomy 9:7; Joshua 1:18).</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always (1)</td>
<td>4.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally (2)</td>
<td>17.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently (3)</td>
<td>13.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally (4)</td>
<td>41.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never (5)</td>
<td>22.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Rating</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sin principle 5 was gauged negatively through questions 32 and 35. The negative questions uncovered a perceived concern for others sinning on Facebook but, again, a slight hesitancy to expose one’s own sins. The women perceived a care for those around them and exhibited accountability toward other’s sins. On the other hand, women were very divided about sharing sins through Facebook. This answer, coupled with the response to the positive question under the same principle, might suggest that it is a combination of lack of personal comfort and the taboo nature of sharing sin that exists in regard to community on Facebook.

17See table 13.
Table 13. Sin principle 5, negative questions 32 and 35

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 32: I don’t care if others sin on Facebook.</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always (1)</td>
<td>3.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally (2)</td>
<td>8.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently (3)</td>
<td>6.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally (4)</td>
<td>32.37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never (5)</td>
<td>49.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Rating</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 35: I avoid talking about sin with my friends on Facebook.</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always (1)</td>
<td>6.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally (2)</td>
<td>24.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently (3)</td>
<td>11.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally (4)</td>
<td>36.47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never (5)</td>
<td>21.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Rating</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sin principle 6:** The essence of biblical community recognizes that sin is still problematic in the life of the believer and biblical community.

Sin principle 6 was gauged positively through questions 37 and 30. The answers to the positive questions related to principle 6 provide more insight into sin and virtual community. It seems that once again women perceive themselves as not comfortable with confessing sin when on Facebook in a private group. The average ratings on both positive questions place them in the “frequently” to “occasionally” category, which means the answers lean toward not confessing sin or seeking accountability on Facebook. This is interesting because if biblical community is to exist, confession and accountability must be part of that community to indicate the acceptance of sin as a current problem in the life of a believer.

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18See table 14.

19The private group caveat was noted in the instruction provided for the quantitative section of the project.
Sin principle 6 was gauged negatively through questions 42 and 34. The negative questions seem to perhaps lack some clarity. This is the problem when the question and the answer together create a double negative. In question 42, the answers were spread across the responses providing an average rating around 3, which indicates the women were split on the idea of confessing sin on Facebook or unclear of the question that was asked. In question 34, the women perceived a need to regularly seek victory over sin when posting on Facebook. The difference in the answers, again, points to either the taboo nature or the lack of comfort with the confession of sin in the virtual community of Facebook.

Table 14. Sin principle 6, positive questions 37 and 30

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 37: On Facebook, I confess my struggles to my close friends.</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always (1)</td>
<td>4.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally (2)</td>
<td>14.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently (3)</td>
<td>7.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally (4)</td>
<td>33.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never (5)</td>
<td>39.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Rating</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 30: I seek accountability from Facebook friends about sin struggles.</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always (1)</td>
<td>4.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally (2)</td>
<td>15.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently (3)</td>
<td>8.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally (4)</td>
<td>29.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never (5)</td>
<td>41.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Rating</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See table 15.
Table 15. Sin principle 6, negative questions 42 and 34

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 42: Confessing sin on Facebook to my friends is not important to me.</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always (1)</td>
<td>13.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally (2)</td>
<td>30.68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently (3)</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally (4)</td>
<td>22.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never (5)</td>
<td>22.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Rating</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 34: I avoid thinking about having victory over my sin when I post on Facebook.</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always (1)</td>
<td>1.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally (2)</td>
<td>6.28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently (3)</td>
<td>5.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally (4)</td>
<td>26.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never (5)</td>
<td>60.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Rating</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Quantitative Results for Category 4**

**Jesus Christ Principle 7.** The essence of biblical community includes union with Jesus Christ. Union with Jesus for the believer is found in the completed work of Jesus Christ as payment for sin and provision for salvation.

Jesus Christ 7 was gauged positively through questions 20 and 16.21 In connection with the positive questions concerning principle 7, the respondents revealed a “general” or “always” habit toward identifying with Jesus and exhibiting worship through their Facebook relationships. The “always response” was the most highly selected when asked about identifying with Jesus in their Facebook relationships. The other question, if they believed their Facebook relationships should be a form of wordship to God, averaged to being “generally” true of most women’s perception of themselves.

21See table 16.
Table 16. Jesus Christ principle 7, positive questions 20 and 16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 20: It is important for me to identify with Jesus in my Facebook relationships.</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always (1)</td>
<td>46.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally (2)</td>
<td>34.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently (3)</td>
<td>8.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally (4)</td>
<td>9.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never (5)</td>
<td>1.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Rating</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 16: I believe my Facebook relationships should be a form of worship to God.</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always (1)</td>
<td>38.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally (2)</td>
<td>31.64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently (3)</td>
<td>11.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally (4)</td>
<td>12.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never (5)</td>
<td>6.28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Rating</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Jesus Christ principle 7 was gauged negatively through questions 46 and 18.  

When viewing principle 7 through the use of negative perception questions, the women felt it was once again important to identify as a follower of Jesus when interacting on Facebook. In asking about the worship of God when interacting on Facebook, through a negative question the responses were not as slanted to one side of the scale as the other questions under this principle. Women’s responses settled mostly on either side on “frequently,” leaving it to a middle of the road reaction to worship as an aspect of Facebook experiences. The overall indication of the question is that women perceive union with Jesus Christ as a part of their Facebook practices.

22See table 17.
Table 17. Jesus Christ principle 7, negative questions 46 and 18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 46: It is not important to identify as a follower of Jesus when interacting or posting on Facebook.</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always (1)</td>
<td>3.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally (2)</td>
<td>4.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently (3)</td>
<td>4.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally (4)</td>
<td>16.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never (5)</td>
<td>71.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Rating</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 18: Worship and my Facebook experiences are two separate things.</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always (1)</td>
<td>7.49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally (2)</td>
<td>24.64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently (3)</td>
<td>14.49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally (4)</td>
<td>30.19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never (5)</td>
<td>23.19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Rating</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quantitative Results for Category 5

**Holy Spirit principle 8.** The essence of biblical community includes obedience to God’s Word through the power of the Spirit. Worship, obedience, demonstration of the Fruit of the Spirit, etc., must be evident in the life of the believer.

Holy Spirit principle 8 was gauged positively through questions 28 and 29.23 Women responded overwhelmingly that they “always” find it important to obey God and his Word when they interact on Facebook. Principle 8 also looked at the Fruit of the Spirit as it was displayed by women on Facebook. The women “generally” perceived themselves as practicing the Fruit of the Spirit in their Facebook relationship. The responses to the positive questions related to principle 8 show a perceived aware of the Holy Spirit and God’s Word when engaging with others on Facebook.

Holy Spirit principle 8 was gauged negatively through questions 47 and 41.24 The negative questions for principle 8 reveal a similar response to the Holy Spirit and God’s Word as the positive questions. Women acknowledge an awareness of God when

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23See table 18.
24See table 19.
they are posting on Facebook in question 47. The respondents answered question 41 by
indicting a reverence for their spiritual life when posting on Facebook. The two negative
questions affirm that women perceive themselves as wanting to be obedient to God’s
Word and the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Table 18. Holy Spirit principle 8, positive questions 28 and 29

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 28: It is important to me that I obey God and his Word while interacting in Facebook relationships.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 19. Holy Spirit principle 8, positive questions 47 and 41

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 47: I avoid thinking about God when I am posting on Facebook.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Quantitative Results Summary

The quantitative data divulged many positive perceptions regarding how women view Facebook relationship or connection. The data demonstrated that while women have a high value for relationships, and generally engage in the principles of biblical community, it also revealed misunderstanding, inconsistency, and lack of knowledge for major principles needed to judge a community biblical. The data denoted one key component—the confession of sin and accountability for sin—was not a common practice on Facebook even though it is an aspect of biblical community. Additionally, the data indicated that women were dedicated to interpersonally connecting with one another as is seen in the even distribution of the responses to the positive and negative questions. Conversely, there was an obvious difference between a sense of interpersonal connection and experiencing true biblical community through an understanding of the foundational principles.

Qualitative Results

The qualitative data’s first question disclosed five frequently noted categories of connection used in women’s ministry with positive results. Table 20 contains the five repeated categories from the data which are labeled as the top five methods for connecting women in biblical community via Facebook. Events were consistently listed in the responses. Local events being advertised or marketed via Facebook tended to connect women more often than national events (Women of Joy, Living Proof Live, Lifeway Events, etc.). The women indicated that Facebook acted as a calendar reminder leading them to be more connected because they were aware of what was happening locally and reminded to attend. This affirms the value of the local church using a Facebook marketing strategy to keep local events in front of women. The data confirmed personal connection through stories as a tool to attract women right behind events. Perhaps if the two concepts were combined, the local church could expand their reach by not only reminding women of events but also making the event relatable before a woman even attends.
Table 20. Analysis of open-ended questions results—top 5 methods of connection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Connection</th>
<th>Interview Comments in Category</th>
<th>Total Responses</th>
<th>Percentage of Total Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Local Church Events &amp; Bible Studies</td>
<td>Painting Party, Bible Study, Teas, Simulcasts, Training</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>39.37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. National Events</td>
<td>Conference, Known Speakers</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>29.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Personal Sharing of Information</td>
<td>Personal Stories, Scripture quotes</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>21.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Blogs and Online Devotionals</td>
<td>Blogs, Online Devotionals, Online Bible Study, Articles</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>18.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Private Facebook Groups</td>
<td>Facebook Moms Group, Facebook Singles Group, Prayer Groups, Church Groups</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>11.59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In table 21, the respondents were asked to offer examples or reasons why they perceived a Facebook post to be unsuccessful. As the table reveals, many of the reasons are common marketing issues, such as vague or wrong information, lack of visual appeal, and the length (being too long) of the posts. The top reason for an unsuccessful Facebook post was not anticipated. This question revealed that women often struggle with feeling judged or that a post is too emotional. This does not mean that either is true of the post, but it does imply that a woman has interpreted the post in this way. It was interesting because resolving this issue is not an element that a Facebook user is guaranteed to control but is based in individual perception.

Table 21. Analysis of open-ended questions results—top 6 hindrances to connections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hindrance to Connection</th>
<th>Interview Comments in Category</th>
<th>Total Responses</th>
<th>Percentage of Total Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Judgmental or Emotional</td>
<td>Divisive, Politically Charged, Judgmental, Overly Emotional</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>25.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Vague or Wrong Information</td>
<td>Missing Details, Incorrect Details</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>25.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Impersonal</td>
<td>Generic, Shared without Comment or Invitation</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>21.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Length</td>
<td>Long Writings or Articles</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>10.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Poor Visual Appeal</td>
<td>Appeal of Pictures and Words</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>10.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Product Sales</td>
<td>Sales Pitches, Required Purchases</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.86%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 22 lists the top 6 respondent answers when they were asked to consider Facebook advertisements that had piqued their interest so they inquired beyond the initial advertisement. This question was similar to the methods of connection but focused entirely on the advertisement’s ability to get a person to inquire, not on getting an individual connected. Events ranked at the top of the responses again, with Bible study coming in third. The presentation quality came in fourth in getting people to inquire more. Once again, the local church has a platform for using Facebook to get people to inquire and potentially connect.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advertising Method</th>
<th>Interview Comments in Category</th>
<th>Total Responses</th>
<th>Percentage of Total Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Local Events</td>
<td>Close to a person’s home, often at their local church, local conferences or other items</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>38.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Conferences or Concerts with National level oversight</td>
<td>Lifeway, IF: Gathering, Concerts</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>29.47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Bible Study</td>
<td>Either Physically or Virtually</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>24.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Quality Presentation</td>
<td>Visual Appeal, Complete Information</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>20.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Speakers</td>
<td>Beth Moore, Priscilla Shirers, Lysa Terkheurst</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>15.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Retreats</td>
<td>Local Church, State Convention, or other hosts</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>8.45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 23 displays whether the quality of visual appeal or information were more important. Respondents wrote in their answers, therefore there was no restriction against saying both or neither. Women perceived visual appeal as more important than the information, though information was a close second. Of the respondents, 27 percent held both to be equally important in connecting women. A small 4 percent professed neither to be important.
Table 23. Analysis of open-ended questions results—appeal type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appeal Type</th>
<th>Interview Comments in Category</th>
<th>Total Responses</th>
<th>Percentage of Total Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Visual</td>
<td>Appearance and Picture</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>35.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Information</td>
<td>Details included in Advertisement</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>29.47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Both</td>
<td>Visual and Information are equally important</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>27.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Neither</td>
<td>Neither Visual or the Information are important</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4.11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 24 reveals that most women have not experienced training with regard to practicing biblical community on Facebook. Beyond not receiving training, most women learn through the observation of others. Those that indicated formal training cited seminary, secular teacher training, or secular marketing training as the source of their formal training. A few of the respondents noted having some formal training from their local church but indicated this tended to come through mentor-type interactions and not church wide training. Even less indicated they had taken part in a church wide formal training.

Table 24. Analysis of open-ended questions results—training methods for practicing biblical community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training Methods for Practicing Biblical Community</th>
<th>Interview Comments in Category</th>
<th>Total Responses</th>
<th>Percentage of Total Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. None</td>
<td>No Training for Practicing Biblical Community on Facebook</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>70.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Observation of Others</td>
<td>Observation of Habits of Others and Application (Positive or Negative)</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>20.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Formal Training</td>
<td>Formal Training on How to Practice Biblical Community</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4.19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Bible Knowledge</td>
<td>Knowing what the Scripture Says Alone</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data in table 25 speaks strongly to the need for training of members. Of the respondents, 48 percent believed that training or their lack of training influences their habits on Facebook. Women noted that their lack of training led them to avoid posting all together at times. Additionally, respondents reported a perceived increase in confidence.
in posting on Facebook when formal training was present. Only 25 percent of the women believed that training or lack of training had an influence on their Facebook habits.

Table 25. Analysis of open-ended questions results—training influence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training Influence</th>
<th>Interview Comments in Category</th>
<th>Total Responses</th>
<th>Percentage of Total Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Influence</td>
<td>Training or Lack of Training has an Influence on Facebook Posting Habits</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>47.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. No Influence</td>
<td>Training or Lack of Training has No Influence on Facebook Posting Habits</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>25.85%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When the two results are combined there is a strong case for the use of Facebook to help women engage in biblical community, but that Facebook alone cannot be a place where every principle of biblical community is practice. The indication is Facebook is a tool to enhance a biblical community but is not able to function independently as a biblical community. Women want to connect in community on Facebook and Facebook could have the potential to serve as an enhancement to further the connection of women already in biblical community if women are taught to understand the principles of biblical community. Nevertheless, the results also show the lack of understanding of true biblical community. This lack means there is still room for education to change the ability of women to practice biblical community on Facebook.
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, the potential significance of the observations, as well as the implications and applications for the research are presented. The chapter proposes applications and potential limitations of the research based on the findings of this research project. The study yielded new insight into the self-perceived best practices for connecting women in the church. Furthermore, the research project exposed that the parameters for a definition of biblical community that exists outside of environment are not accurately defined at this time and need more clarity around what constitutes biblical community in an online environment.

Research Purpose

This study addresses the biblical community behaviors of women when engaging with Facebook as well as perceived best practices for connecting women in the church using Facebook. An explanatory mixed methods design was used, which involved collecting quantitative and qualitative data at the same time before compiling the results. The compiled data were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Then both sets of data were reported to enhance the overall findings.

Research Questions

1. Do Christian women involved in women’s ministry in the local church self-report practicing behaviors of biblical community in their personal interactions on Facebook?

2. What are the perceived best practices for connecting women in the church through Facebook according to current experience of women?
3. What are the habits of women as they operate on Facebook?
   a. What is the average age range of women in churches that are regularly using Facebook?
   b. How often do women report accessing Facebook within a given period of time?
   c. What are the top five best practices, as perceived by women, for using Facebook in ministry?
   d. What future training needs exist for women to practice biblical community behaviors when interacting on Facebook?

**Research Conclusions**

The research revealed that in its current form, biblical community cannot exist solely on Facebook. Biblical community principles were practiced with the exception of the practice of principles 5 and 6, which address the confession and accountability of sin.\(^1\) Though biblical community cannot be lived in full practice on Facebook, perhaps there is still a way for women’s ministry to use Facebook for biblical community. A possible hybrid concept will be presented through the integration of the eight principles associated with this research project.

**Research Implications**

The primary emphasis of this research project was to uncover if women adhere to biblical community habits when posting on Facebook and to explore perceived best practices for connecting women in the church through Facebook. The precedent literature revealed a gap in the understanding of true community as it relates to the environment of Facebook, and digital media in general. Additionally, eight principles of biblical community without regard to environment were gleaned from the scriptures and precedent literature.\(^2\) While community has been a consistent aspect in the church and within women’s ministry, it has failed to be translated into principles for interacting online through Facebook. It can be deduced from this consistent presence of community within

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\(^1\)See tables 12, 13, 14, and 15 for quantified data responses to each question related to principle 5 and 6.

\(^2\)See appendix 10.
the church that as the world moves toward engaging more through the use of virtual community the church will also begin to explore how to build community virtually.

The precedent literature revealed a need to understand what community is in an online environment. It revealed the lack of a literature base on the most effective ways to use this new tool for the purpose of ministry. The tool of virtual community is a strong and powerful resource that needs to be mined instead of feared or ignored. It is clear that the virtual world exists and is only growing with no plan of disbanding any time soon. It has become a prominent part of today’s world and has even brought people closer to those far away. The project revealed that women lack education to properly use this high-powered tool to build community in a consistently, uncompromisingly God-honoring way.³ This project, like many recent and current projects, show how important digital media is to the future of ministry and the need to understand how it can be used in every aspect of the Christian life.⁴ This research has far reaching implications, including a

³See table 24.

glance toward the future of virtual community as an effective tool for the spread and support of the gospel.

**Research Question 1 Implications**

Based on the data, women self-report practicing habits of biblical community on Facebook with a single exception. The data showed a hesitancy to use Facebook as a place to be vulnerable about sin issues and seeking accountability. Principle 6, which is focused on sin, consistently showed that respondents did not practice the biblical community habit of confession of sin and seeking accountability for sin issues. Respondent data averaged a high response number on the Likert scale for positive questions that should have averaged a low number. The negative questions should have average a high number and came in low with regard to some of the principle 6 questions. These averages suggest that principle 6 of living in biblical community, which is confession and accountability for sins, is not always or even frequently practiced on Facebook.

Acknowledging the data implies that women see themselves as practicing all the habits of biblical community except those related to sin issues. The implication is that women either do not believe that sharing sins on Facebook is appropriate or community online is a foreign concept, therefore respondents have not naturally practiced this biblical community habit in this new format of private online community.

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5See tables 12, 13, 14, and 15.

6See tables 12 and 14.

7See tables 13 and 15.

8The original instrument did not specify whether the community was open or closed. In using the instrument for this research project, a revision was made to the wording of the instructions for completing the survey. The instruction read, “Indicate how true the statement is for your PRIVATE FACEBOOK GROUP POSTINGS AND RELATIONSHIPS (this is not to be answered in regard to the general newsfeed). Be honest.” Therefore, this research project was focused on the private Facebook communities and not the open, public community.
If principle 6 is not practiced because the concept is foreign and therefore not naturally a practiced habit in this environment, then this implies either that biblical community cannot exist in an online format alone or that discipleship of women must take place to teach the practice confession of sin and the seeking of accountability online.

However, if principle 6 is not practiced due to the belief that sharing sins on Facebook is wrong, then this implies that biblical community cannot exist in an online format alone or that the definition used for biblical community is flawed and requires revision. The data, understood in this manner, would suggest that biblical community could be practiced in part, but not in full, online but creating a hybrid combination of physical and virtual biblical community is the only option to use online community effectively in ministry.9

This brings the research back to the original study by the University of Chicago that found those who wrestle with loneliness regularly are at a 14 percent higher risk of premature death than those who do not experience constant feelings of isolation. The study also revealed that loneliness alters the cardiac function of a person, which in turn disrupts sleep and can lead to premature death.10 The data showed some ability for community, though it was incomplete biblical community. The implications for ministries of the church are the need to create functional biblical communities to overcome loneliness but that those communities cannot exist strictly in a virtual environment. The ministries must have another way to connect people where the practice of confession and accountability is functioning within the community. Therefore, online biblical community

9The project revealed a weakness of principle 6 through this observation. The definition of biblical community provided by Matthew Alan Vander Wiele does not account for the confession of sin in both a corporate or personal environment. Instead, Vander Wiele’s thesis seems to overlook the two distinctive practices of biblical confession, combining sin confession into a general action. Vander Wiele, “An Analysis of Students’ Perception.”

requires either intensive discipleship to move to true biblical community or it cannot exist exclusively online.

Research Question 2 Implications

Women perceive that local church events and Bible studies are the primary Facebook communication where connection happens. Second is national events followed by personal sharing of information then blogs or online devotionals. Lastly, private Facebook groups serve as a perceived point of connection to women involved in women’s ministry in the local church. These were the top 5 perceived best practices for connecting women in the church using Facebook based on the respondents’ experiences. ¹¹

The implication from these findings is hopeful for the local church. It reveals that the local church can and does still reach women through Facebook advertising of events. Respondent 223 wrote, “Facebook invites to small group sessions or women's gatherings have been successful because they are a way to make sure people know the details of the event and serve as a reminder of the dates and times.” Additionally, respondent 160 commented,

The most successful FB posts were repeated reminders of upcoming events. Each post gave more information/background about the event. Also multiple people posted about the event. The repetitive nature, the variety of posters, and information all helped them be successful in gaining my attention.

The implication is that having a detailed and constant reminder creates success because it reminds women, gives them the necessary details, and the information comes at a point in time when a person can calendar the information. In a world where information is constantly being transferred among people, these event invitations provide repeated opportunities for people to choose when the information is received so that it might not be hindered by outside factors.

¹¹See table 20.
The respondents placed the use of private Facebook groups at the bottom of the list of five. While it is good that this method made the list, it implies that the use of private groups to draw women into connection with one another is not as effective as a simple event invite. Respondent 128 identified problems with private groups, saying, “Facebook groups where people ask for advice/support often turn ugly when people voice their own opinions.”

The implication is that private Facebook groups, which seem to simulate a private community, are not connecting women as naturally as a traditional community connection. The research revealed that private Facebook groups are not the most successful connection in the virtual world. Instead, simple information communicated through event invites, local church advertisements, the general sharing of personal information, and even online devotionals have had more notable success at connecting women to one another in the perception of the respondents. These methods often do not have the pressure that comes with a private Facebook group.

The low ranking of private Facebook groups as a formal way to connect women implies that churches and ministries which have placed much time and energy into developing groups could have benefited more by placing efforts in advertising events and communicating the details of opportunities already in existence. It implies that information that is repetitively in front of a person through a newsfeed (without the need to visit a specific group page) is more likely to be a method that will connect women into the local church community. Respondents have identified that repetition serves to remind them of opportunities available that would have otherwise been dismissed or forgotten.

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12See table 20.

13Ibid.

14Ibid.
The repetition of events through the Facebook newsfeed was also noted as a tool for sharing and inviting friends that would not otherwise attend church events. Respondent 143 stated, “I think invitations via FB to Women's Ministry events are helpful because it is an easy way of sharing information and allows women to invite others in a less-pressure way.” The respondents’ answers implicated Facebook events as a non-threatening, user-friendly, detailed method for inviting other women to attend church-related events.

**Research Question 3 Implications**

In this research project, the habits of women when operating on Facebook were investigated through demographic data and self-perception of practices. The habits of women as they operated on Facebook yielded interesting insight into research question 3 and thus provided some implications for ministry using a social media platform.

**Age.** The first demographic insight came from the age range of respondents. The dominant age range for respondents was between 30 and 39, which was 33 percent of the sample population. The women in this age range find themselves commonly in the stage of life where they are married and raising children. They spend a lot of time focused on transporting children, managing the household, working outside the home, and managing the calendar for the family as a whole. Their life has them on the move but also spending short intervals of time waiting, be it at a doctor’s office, a practice, the local mechanics, or one of the many other aspects of a family they must manage. In the waiting time, these women tend to sit with access to their phone. This access places Facebook in the hands of these women and gives them an opportunity to quickly review a newsfeed, being able to stop and return to the task at hand whenever needed. It helps women feel less isolated by providing a way to gather information on those they are connected to by

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15See table 2.
16See table 3.
social media. The next highest, approximately 17 percent of respondents in each category, ranged in age either in the 40s or in the 22 to 29-year-olds. Slightly less respondents were in their 50s and 60s. \(^{17}\) Around 15 percent of the respondents went into each of the 50s and 60s categories. The respondents’ ages implicate that the primary demographic for Facebook community is women either in the growing family stage of life, or the stage just prior to or after it. This implies a need to be highly family-focused when sharing information on Facebook as those are the details that will be of high importance to this demographic.

**Frequency of Facebook logins.** The demographics on Facebook logins was important to have quantified. Approximately 48 percent of the respondents reported accessing Facebook 5 or more times in a day. Closely behind that number, 42 percent of the respondents acknowledged accessing Facebook between 2 and 5 times daily. \(^{18}\) Those percentages place 90 percent of respondents accessing Facebook multiple times daily. The implications of this information are the importance of using Facebook. The high traffic and repetitive use make it a resource to quickly reach massive amounts of people. The church and women’s ministry equally need to not only recognize this tool but formulate ways to effectively refine its reach for the spread of the gospel. As Henry and Richard Blackaby and Claude King surmise in *Experiencing God* that Christians should seek to find out where God is at work and join him there. \(^{19}\) The data indicates Facebook as an existing platform where people are regularly engaging. God often works through people being connected in community and as society moves toward doing life in a digital community the church must join by shifting to include this in their ministries. Though the

\(^{17}\)See table 2.

\(^{18}\)See table 3.

other data implies an inability to use Facebook as a place of active biblical community, that does not rule out the use of Facebook for general ministry connection. It can be a tool to help further a person’s engagement with a local biblical community.

**Using Facebook in ministry.** The respondents provided personal insight into their perception of Facebook as a ministry tool. The women implied that the platform had potential when used appropriately. Events seemed to be the most repetitive answer. Both in advertising and connection methods, women noted a draw to local events with nationally publicized conferences and concerts also drawing attention on Facebook.\(^{20}\) Bible studies and retreats were another commonly mentioned ministry use of Facebook.\(^{21}\) The top methods both in advertising and connection repeatedly promoted Facebook as an advertising tool. The research implicates that in the current culture, Facebook functions best to help advertise ministry opportunities and provide information on how a person can connect to a specific event.\(^{22}\) Facebook additionally allows for people to share their own personal involvements in ministry and to invite others. Respondent 112 noted that seeing the involvement of others can drive her to choose to attend an event: “It's helpful for people to see it on social media, remember the event, see who else is going.” Respondent 131 says that she is attracted to inquire more about events if, “I see my friends going.” The respondents frequently noted that the sharing of information by a “friend” or “a friend they trust” was a driving point for them to become interested in women’s ministry opportunities advertised on Facebook. The best practices for using Facebook in women’s ministry are also connected to the appeal of the communication on Facebook. Respondents implicated both the importance of visual and informational

\(^{20}\)See tables 20 and 22.

\(^{21}\)See table 22.

\(^{22}\)See tables 20 and 22.
appeal.²³ The respondents needed to be drawn in by the visual relevance, but the details of the information shared were ranked as almost equal in importance. In reference to visual and information appeal, respondent 3 stated, “Both speak volumes—I think the visuals help me recognize a branded event and draw me to look at it for longer. However, it is meaningless to me without information. I don't really pay attention to posts with just a verse or saying.” The last component of the women’s perceptions for using Facebook in ministry comes from the understanding of what they perceive to be a hindrance or a help to connection. Respondents consistently noted being put off by judgmental or overly politically charged posts, with 26 percent of the sample population noting this hindrance. Respondents also found vague or wrong information, impersonal information, or unnecessarily lengthy posts to be a hindrance. From the data collected, the implication is that connections are best made when personalized and offered without judgement or overtly emotional divisiveness.²⁴ The information should include only information that is pertinent and should be communicated in a concise but detailed method that makes it personal. Respondents want Facebook to feel personal, be detailed, and only seem to find it culturally effective for sharing ministry opportunities where they can attend an event or read article on a topic.

**Training.** The data disclosed that only 4 percent of the respondents had any method of formal training in the use of social media for modeling biblical community.²⁵ The lack of training exposes a palpable privation in the ministry of the church. The church is not equipping the body for the spread of the gospel in this new platform. The church has not been proactive in exploring this method of connection and how it should be used in light of the gospel. Ministries of all types need to be trained in the uses, pitfalls, ²³See table 23.
²⁴See table 21.
²⁵See table 24.
hindrances, value, and possibilities of a social media driven world. The exploration of ministry in a virtual world has been slow to begin. Research needs to dive deep into the world of social media and come out with a plan for the church. In this research project, 48 percent of the respondents believed that training or lack of training had an effect on their Facebook habits. This large identification of the effect of training on a person’s ability to be a Christ-following, gospel-displaying witness for God in the social media world is an acknowledgement of ministries’ failure to influence the culture before it informs humanity. The data implies that the church ministries and its members have been placed in a position to be reactive and not pro-active to the movement toward online community. It is important to react now, but shift to operating proactively to equip Christians for the digital future.

Research Applications

Research Question 1 Applications

Application for women. The research implications provided by this project demonstrate that women’s natural desire to engage in community is present, but they seem to lack an understanding of how to behave biblically in a virtual environment. The project revealed a need to train and educate women on the definition of biblical community and how the habits can be practiced in an online environment. In today’s world the options for virtual community interactions are numerous and vary in platform. Through God’s grace, women need to see how God designed community to be lived out and gain an understanding of how such behaviors are taken into any environment.

Facebook or other social media platform interactions will only continue to increase and become a regular part of everyday life. These interactions work best as a

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26 See table 25.
27 See tables 21, 24 and 25.
supplement to physical community interactions. Women can be helped in their relational skills, development of meaningful and lasting relationships, and consistent battle with insecurities, such as loneliness, by the healthy use of digital media. Women must be taught that most of the Facebook posts viewed on other’s accounts are commonly intended to be a celebration of personal highlights and do not reveal the everyday encounters. Women using Facebook also need to be taught about personal responsibility for their words. The Bible says all people are accountable in Matthew 12:36. Words, whether spoken or written, are to be guarded. Words should be used to encourage and build others up (Eph 4:29). Women need to be taught and held to this standard of encouraging words in the online communities where they choose to engage. Living as Christ in a virtual community, in the digital world, is a must and is not a behavior or attitude that can be sacrificed. Through this research project, a distinctive need for equipping women to live as Christ in the digital world was demonstrated.

**Applications for women’s ministry leaders.** The research project was intended to provide insight to women’s ministry leaders on the way they approach online community. Online community can be a beneficial tool for women’s ministry leaders to take connections started within the ministry and grow them naturally throughout time outside the structured ministry setting. Facebook can be used to connect women for prayer, allow them to hold one another accountable, or even teach and encourage women through a difficult season of life. Through Facebook, women can get basic day-to-day information about the occurrences in another woman’s life. A women’s ministry leader can foster this interaction to help network women through natural life connection with one another and develop mentoring relationships or small groups for discipleship. The women’s ministry leader can also use the Facebook world to identify the spiritual needs and to some degree grasp each woman’s spiritual health and maturity. As a leader, the information on the increasing usage over the past 13 years.
women’s director can provide reading materials, daily devotionals, event reminders, and personal testimonies in an online format, introducing the author or speaker behind the writings, to help women connect with one another. The women’s ministry leader can also point women to helpful resources already available online that speak to immediate needs. The research project discovered how a virtual community is an appropriate place for such practices to take place. One of the other benefits brought to light by the research is the women’s ministry leaders’ ability to network women. If a woman has a need, women’s ministry leaders are often the person to identify and connect them with another woman that has a similar story and is further along in it. The women’s ministry leader also tends to network women with others to support learning and development in daily habits, such as parenting. Creating a Facebook group and establishing biblical community habits within the group would allow for networking needs to be quickly discovered and addressed. In some cases, it would even remove the need for the women’s ministry leader to identify and connect each individual woman because they could find one another through sharing in this safe and secure biblical community. The research implied the value of using Facebook for event invites and reminders. In a busy world, where women can often be isolated by their season in life, Facebook can help remind them of connection in local opportunities in an effort to make connection a priority.

**Research applications for the church.** The research project provides implication for the church as it moves forward in an increasingly digital society. There is some overlap in the research implications for the church and the ones specifically for the women’s ministry leaders and the women in the church. Facebook and other digital media platforms are tools that can be used effectively for the purposes of the gospel or used badly, perhaps ignored. Church leaders and the church at large need to see the value

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29See table 20.
added by the online world. Through the use of online media, one can see into a person’s hurt and brokenness. A person’s sin and battle are often displayed in this environment.\textsuperscript{30} As in face-to-face community, signs can be seen of a person in need of help and guidance from the church. The difference with online community seems to be that people often fail to use normal societal filters when speaking on social media. Though often a bad habit, it can be used of the Holy Spirit to identify those needing help within the church. As with all promptings of the Holy Spirit, it is up to the person whether they will be sensitive to the moving of the Spirit and act on the Spirit drawing of them. However, based on the project responses, there is potential for the Spirit to use virtual community in this manner because it is an aspect of community where the environment is not a necessary factor.

The research also uncovered a need for the church to train and equip the body for using Facebook and other virtual communities.\textsuperscript{31} The church needs to provide warnings, offer guidance, and support the various members of the body as they learn to use this new tool effectively for the spread of the gospel and the support of the church community. The church also has a responsibility to investigate how virtual communities can serve to support the missionaries sent by the local church body. The church could be taught to encourage, be educated about new situations, and recognize and respond to missionary needs with urgency. It could even reduce the need for organized mission’s events that collect items in support of a mission. These needs could be shared through the virtual community, eliminating the need for a physical campaign. Virtual communities could become a place to help missions grow healthier through the habit of supporting the missionary’s local economy instead of strictly bringing in outside goods, which only

\textsuperscript{30}A person displaying sinful behavior on Facebook is different from a respondent perceiving they confess sin on Facebook. The display of a sinful behavior is often an unintended consequence. It is the same as someone saying too much or giving away information without being aware he or she shared it.

\textsuperscript{31}See table 24.
continues to depress the economy.

Additionally, the research revealed that the local church can be effective through marketing events on Facebook. The church should embrace Facebook as a marketing strategy and leverage this tool for connecting church members and the community. Quality graphics, accurate communication of detailed information, and professional oversight are needed for a church using Facebook as a marketing tool. Overall, research has implications for helping the church become a better steward of virtual community as a tool for the furthering of God’s kingdom.

**Research Question 2 Applications**

In evaluating research question 2, respondents uncovered several specific ways Facebook is currently advantageous in connecting women. The top five best practices for connecting women through Facebook based on the respondents’ experiences have three components in common: events, personal, and low-pressure.

Approximately 39 percent of respondents noted that local church events or Bible studies advertised on Facebook prompted them to get connected. Event invites coming from known sources, being local, with clearly communicated event details, recurring on their newsfeed, and a low-pressure feeling because the invite was not in person, were the reasons cited for the effectiveness of Facebook events. Since local church events and Bible studies rated highest in connection and were closely followed in rank by national events happening in their area, some application for ministry can be drawn from this information.

Local church or national events occurring locally tend to interest people. It

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32See tables 20 and 22.  
33See tables 21 and 23.  
34See table 20.  
35Ibid.  
36Ibid.
also helps if the inviter is a friend or a trusted source. Ministries need to take note of the idea that invites are important and enlist a team of women to share the invitations in a personal way with those in their Facebook community. Invites can be shared generally as well, but the most effective ones come from direct and personal invitations. The ministries need to use leadership teams, women that are regular Facebook users, and anyone connected to the event, to share through personal Facebook invite. The information should also inform how events are planned. The more hands involved in the event, the more people excited about the event, the more people that will want to personally share the invitation. When planning a Bible study, a local girls’ night, or some other local event the planning team needs to be wide reaching. It needs to include people from a variety of socio-economic stations.

Along with the socio-economic stations being varied, there needs to be a way for others to see who is attending. Respondent 218 says, “I think Facebook events are helpful because they show you who else you know who will be attending.” The fact a person someone knows is attending an event was a driving detail to help connect some women. Women are designed by God to be interpersonal. If a woman knows she will see a certain person at the event or Bible study, then a level of comfort and control over the situation promotes a desire to engage. Facebook invites not only lower the pressure on the side of those being invited, but reduces the pressure for those sharing the invitation. Facebook allows for invites to be generally posted and shared widely with friends, yet the invitations do not require the sender to know who has seen the invite or responded to it. This pressure-free sharing, perhaps because they are behind a computer screen or perhaps because they do not have to follow the path of the invitation, drives more people to willingly and boldly share. There is no sense of personal rejection if someone in their Facebook community does not attend a shared event.

Sharing an event on Facebook also has the benefit of not being responsible for the details. An event invite can be created by a ministry or a person, but anyone can share
the event with their Facebook community. The graphics, details, and all reminders are not
the responsibility of each individual sharing the invite. Churches can create a visually
appealing and detailed invite that gets circulated far beyond their normal reach.37
Additionally, if the details of the event are not communicated well or something has been
left out, the sharing of the invite on Facebook will often bring this to light quickly because
people can interact with an invite through commenting and the invite can be updated.
Facebook offers free or paid advertising for events and can make the information
retraceable at any time. The benefit of being able to review event details or be reminded
about an event is that it is at almost every person’s fingertips with Facebook being on
every mobile device. People can share it at a moment’s notice and get their questions
answered easily. In ministry, this has powerful application to connect people, without
pressure, but in a way that the details are strongly communicated, which allows people to
feel in control of the situation.

While events have a strong application in the church, personal sharing of
information can also help the church use Facebook successfully. When a ministry has
repeated events, Bible study opportunities, or other opportunities for church members to
share, the church should apply the methods 3 and 4: sharing of personal information or
Scripture, and sharing through blogs or online devotionals.38 The church needs to celebrate
what has happened and let people share the testimony of God’s work in their lives. While
Facebook might be unsuitable for sharing some private details, it would not be hard to
share information at a high level. Women’s ministries in the local church need to apply
these methods by having women write blogs, make videos, share testimonial statements,
and unpack Scripture through a devotional. These items can be shared as a part of event
invites or used as separate methods. Again, using these methods will take planning and

37See table 23.
38See table 20.
time. It means finding people with the right skill sets and the seeking out the personal stories of others. It cannot be forced or manipulated, but ministries leaders can and should be regularly hearing about the lives of those in their ministry. If this method becomes a habit of the planning teams for events or specific ministries, then it could change the entire culture of the church. The body would see others celebrating and speaking boldly about God’s work in their lives. This boldness would likely foster a similar boldness through the church body. One concern of this application is the tendency to repeatedly look to the same people for help. Ministries need to be careful to diversify both in story and in socio-economic station. Everyone has an experience of the Lord’s work in their lives. Though at times a person does not recognize God’s work, it is the role of the minister to help guide people to see God’s movement and share it in truth. Facebook is a promising outlet for teaching people how to share of the Lord in a healthy and Christ honoring way. Obviously, such sharing will require training, which is discussed in the next section.

Research Question 3 Applications

Research question 3 was divided into four questions regarding the habits of Christian women as they operate on Facebook. These questions looked at demographic data and respondents’ short answers. To discuss the applications, it is best to divide the answers by sub-questions.

Age. The age demographics of the respondents returned a high percentage of Facebook users in their 30s. Women in this age range are predominately married and tend to have younger children. Women in this season of life are balancing schedules for each family member and often have little time for personal interests. Their attention is divided and their time on Facebook comes in short intervals. In order to use Facebook

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39See table 2.
40See table 3.
effectively for women’s ministry, leaders need to recognize that thirty-year-olds in the season of life where they are actively balancing a family schedule and have short interactions with Facebook are the people reached by Facebook events or posts. The information about the primary demographic using Facebook should inform how leaders communicate through Facebook posts and events. Acknowledging that most women using Facebook fall into this age category, or the age ranges directly around it, produces a need for certain details to be communicated. Will an event have child care? Does the event take place at a time when their spouse is free from work and will watch the children? If the event has child care, then a few other questions come to mind. Is the event on a school night? Does the event last past bedtime for young children? Applying this information means assessing the socio-economic status of the women that the leader wants to attend an event. Do those in the target audience for this event have the financial means to hire child care? How often is the women’s ministry or the church asking women to financially cover event costs along with child care? Are the women’s ministry leaders asking women to be away from their home? How often are women being asked to step away from their home? Is it acceptable to give them a break for a retreat but how long can they be away from the family? This demographic could participate in sports and dance and other activities that require outside practices and rehearsals for the children. One might consider if there a big tournament or competition on the weekend of a ministry event.

The age range of women on Facebook also gives hints to information that would interest them. Helping moms connect with other women that either have children the same age as them, or women who are a few steps ahead in life and can offer advice, is important for this demographic. It is important to note that women’s ministry leaders can also connect the primary demographics through Facebook. Leaders can teach twenty-year-olds to invest in the moms and their families. The women’s ministry is also the place to

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41See table 2.
encourage young single, or married without children, ladies to do life with a women who is a mom and fit into her schedule so that a friendship naturally forms. For those in their 40s and 50s, the teaching needs to be how to encourage or guide those in their 20s and 30s. The generation that has teenagers can help those with young kids and those with an empty nest can support all life stages of those behind them. Facebook becomes a method where people share their age and family demographics. Wise ministry leaders collect Facebook data to learn about the women involved in the ministry and use the information to connect them with other women that will encourage, support, and engage.

**Frequency of Facebook logins.** The data revealed that most people log in to Facebook two or more times a day. The respondents indicated that Facebook is a constantly checked and used tool in their daily lives. With access on a cellphone, and a cellphone in the hands of almost every adult, it seems that Facebook has become a way to fill time during short breaks. The constant contact with Facebook makes it a ministry tool if used properly. Applying the information around the frequency of Facebook logins should drive ministries to employ this free advertising and communication resource to its full potential.

Facebook has many options, from private groups to event invitations, along with the ability to post directly to a friend. Facebook has an individualized landing page or newsfeed. The newsfeed is unique for each individual and is created by algorithms that determine the information to share. These algorithms are created based on a user’s comments, like, shares, and profile information. The newsfeed is constantly produced by the algorithms to share posts from people in their virtual community and information on local events that might interest the user. The frequent review of Facebook by women often has them reviewing this newsfeed. It was noted in the respondents’ comments that Facebook often functions as a calendar reminder to tell of upcoming events or remind

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42See table 3.
people of the opportunity to attend something local. If the local churches women’s ministry applied this knowledge, then events would be created and repetitively shared or recirculated to act as a reminder for the women frequently checking the Facebook newsfeed. If women’s ministry leadership teams would get women in the habit of sharing invites for Bible studies and events daily, the reach of the information would quickly spread to women frequently reviewing the newsfeed. Through sharing invitations daily, the women will manufacture reminders of the upcoming opportunities for others in their Facebook community. The frequent use of Facebook will become a tool for getting information to the public and advertising the many ways a person can be connected to the women’s ministry community.

**Using Facebook in ministry.** When respondents concluded their top five perceived best practices for connecting women in ministry through Facebook, they also provided answers regarding behaviors that were important for posting and behaviors that were discouraging. The answers reveal the strong value of graphic and informational appeal. Invitations or posts need to appeal to the person in a way that makes them stand out from the regular newsfeed posts. The graphics and colors help support this along with the concise sharing of pertinent details. In the development of women’s ministry events, the advertising element is of high importance.

Women’s ministries need to find skilled graphic designers to build dynamic advertisements to be shared on Facebook. The ministry needs to use the various women in leadership to review that advertisement to confirm pertinent information is being communicated and other unnecessary details are not included. Part of communicating information is the ability to say the details in an engaging and approachable way. The

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43See tables 20 and 21.
data revealed six hindrances to connection when used in Facebook posts.44

Product sales have taken over the internet and social media.45 Women in all walks of life have decided to make extra money personally selling products. Women’s ministries need to carefully keep the sales opportunities separated from the women’s ministry. While there is a time and a place for women to share their personal interests, the ministry should not become a forum for personal business. It takes the focus from glorifying God to the sales of a glorious product.

As noted, visual appeal matters, so ministries should invest in quality advertisements.46 With advertisements comes the need to keep important concise. An advertisement is for quickly communicating key details, not a fully developed manual on an event. The top three hindrances were mentioned by 21-26 percent of respondents.47 All three hindrances deal with the presentation or communication of information. Women wanted a post to feel personal. Generic posts that are shared without comment do not entice a woman toward connection. Ministries need to share with friends in their virtual community through personal tagging of friends or through sharing a post with added personal comments. The hindrance mentioned 25 percent of the time was the use of vague or wrong information.48 The details of an event or Bible study matter. Women want to have the correct dates and times. People want to accurately know what to expect before getting involved. Women’s ministries need to be strong communicators that double check details and put the information out in a timely manner. The judgmental or emotionally

44See table 21.


46See table 23.

47See table 21

48Ibid.
divisive hindrance was noted by approximately 26 percent of respondents.\textsuperscript{49} Divisive, politically charged, judgmental, and overly emotional posts drive women away. Women do not want to be a part of a women’s ministry where they feel unwelcomed by judgmental actions and attitudes before even meeting the women in person. Women’s ministry leaders must work to redirect those involved and help women understand how a post can appear harsh, even when well intended. Within the virtual world, the ability to read someone’s body language is not present. Information shared that commonly depends on vocal tone or serene body language to identify as friendly will not be easily understood that way in a virtual world. Women’s ministry leaders and participants must be taught to think about their words before posting. Women need to investigate if changing words in a post would help to more clearly communicate the author’s demeanor. Seeking accountability on posts and having trusted mentors that will hold a woman accountable is a need this project has exposed. Accountability needs to be present both for the woman creating a post and for the woman receiving it. Mentors can help redirect an offended woman by communicating another possible viewpoint on a post. Seeing the best intention in everyone is a hard task, and the internet makes it even more complicated. The results of this portion of the project shed light of the new way a Titus 2 mentorship should have influence in the lives of women.

\textbf{Training}. The responses to the questions about training were disproportionate. The overwhelming majority has not experienced any type of formal training in using Facebook as a place to practice biblical community.\textsuperscript{50} The lack of training is a church-wide problem. The church needs to evaluate and create methods for equipping the body to live biblically online. The application for women’s ministry is simply to be a part of this church-wide equipping. Training materials need to be written and circulated about the

\textsuperscript{49}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{50}See table 24.
churches. The materials will have to be constantly updated to stay relevant, but some key biblical principles could always guide the equipping. The equipping could come through free webinars, life group studies, Bible studies, small group settings, and other forums. Church ministry staff members need to be equipped to become guides to the church body. A staff equipping the body with a unified voice and vision on the topic of social media will change the way the church does ministry by strengthening the churches reach on social media. Church leaders need to begin with the staff to create this unified ministry plan so that it will be spread across all ministry platforms. It will take a heart change in the people of the church, which will ultimately shift the culture of the church in a direction to use social media for the spreading of the gospel.

Training resources need to be biblical researched and the principles practically applied to living life on social media. If the main point of interaction with people is moving toward a virtual world, then it is Christians’ responsibility to understand how the Bible teaches them to live in that environment. One’s witness has gone digital but the mindset has missed this critical fact. The same biblical community principles still apply, but now the material must be written to practically outline how these principles are displayed on Facebook and other social media platforms.

Integration of Principles

The project data has proven that it is currently not possible for complete biblical community, as defined in this project, to exist among women online. While Facebook is undoubtedly a tool that must be used for ministry, it simply cannot replace the connection made in-person between women. The data confirmed that women perceive themselves as practicing the principles of biblical community on Facebook with the exception of the principles of sin. If these two principles cannot be practiced in an online community, then what if the answer is a hybrid model of community balanced between women’s ministry community built in the local church and furthered through Facebook connections? In the hybrid model, women live out biblical community with the same people across both
platforms; in-person and on Facebook. This section will walk through each principle of biblical community and explain how it could be integrated into a hybrid model for women’s ministry in the future.

**Trinity principle 1.** The essence of biblical community finds its origin and model for practice in the Trinity. The origin of relationship is found in the Godhead of the Trinity, and can be modeled by mankind. Respondents reported a strong agreement and practice of this principle and therefore in a hybrid model it can be lived out on Facebook. The relationship between the members of the Trinity is lived out through the respect of friends on Facebook. When a person shows respect, and is truthfully affirming of others, as posts are shared on Facebook it points to mankind living in unity as the Trinity. These relational interactions display the love of Christ among believers.

The results reveal either a lack of clarity in question 23 or exposed an underlying desire to protect their own right to express themselves above others respecting them. The question read, “Feeling good about myself is important to me when posting on Facebook.” The spread in the respondents’ answers implies a need to practically look at how this principle would be integrated regarding this question. There is a possibility that the question was misunderstood. However, women tend to be conflicted about their personal right to feel good in relation to others. This principle could only be integrated if women were taught what God’s Word says about how they are to relate to one another. The teaching would have to explain that one member of the Trinity being made to feel good does not in turn imply that the other members must feel bad or less good. The only implication is that the question looks at the person and asks if feeling good is “important” to them. It is not wrong to feel good, but it is not reflective of the Trinitarian relationship when feeling good about themselves becomes the top priority in a post. If the questions

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51See tables 4, 5, and appendix 10.

52See table 5 and appendix 10.
related to this principle were answered in such a way to be reflective of how this principle of biblical community was practiced consistently on Facebook, a person would only occasionally or never find it “important” to feel good about themselves when posting on Facebook.

**Trinity principle 2.** The essence of biblical community functions within a hierarchy and a submission to authority that can be observed in the Trinity and then modeled among believers in any environment.53 While the respondents did essentially live this practice out in a hybrid model, it would take some teaching to translate this relationally onto Facebook. This principle is difficult for women in a world where feminism is constantly telling them to not be submissive and assume people will try to take advantage of them therefore they must stand up for themselves. The truth of how submission is displayed within the Trinity is quite the opposite of the current world where submission is often represented as a harsh and negative concept.

In the hybrid model, this principle functions both in person and online when people show value and respect to one another. To integrate principle 2 into the lives of believers as they interact on Facebook, they would need to be taught how to respect others. When this principle was investigated through the survey respondents, failed to show a strong practice of biblical community in respect to question 21, which read, “Even when I do not get my way and I am misunderstood, I am willing to give in to other in my Facebook relationships.” Approximately 37 percent of respondents felt that they were “generally” willing to give into others if they were not getting their way or had been misunderstood.54 Women need to be equipped to see submission through the eyes of Jesus. The word submission must be restored to its God-given meaning before women will see the glorious freedom that comes in Christ-honoring submission. The relationships

53See tables 6, 7 and appendix 10.

54See table 6 and appendix 10.
of believers in a Facebook community also need to be built in-person. This would help them to learn to believe the best about others and to gain respect by seeing the heart behind a women’s decisions, words, and thoughts. For biblical community to be strong among women in the local church it will take a change in attitude and heart that only the Holy Spirit can bring about as women are taught the truth of submission as bounded in God’s Word.

**Mankind principle 3.** The essence of biblical community recognizes that man is relational and craves relationship because he is made in the image of a relational God.55 This concept of being relational as human beings is well understood by women. They are drawn to relationships and desire to connect with others on an emotional, spiritual, physical, and mental level. This innate relational design was a gift from God and is the reason it is important to learn how to live with others in healthy biblical community. With the arrival of social media, specifically Facebook, another challenge has come into the way the Christian practice biblical community. Biblical community is to be lived out in one’s daily life, but one’s daily life is no longer only lived in the physical world, it is now almost equally lived in a virtual world.56 The virtual world is where the principle of mankind’s desire to live in relationship needs to be rightly taught to women in the local church through a practical application method of training.

The virtual world of Facebook is a hard place to have relationships that feel

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55See tables 8, 9, and appendix 10.

56“Smartphone usage is up 394 percent, and tablet usage is up a whopping 1,721 percent as these platforms now combine to account for 60 percent of digital media time spent.” Facebook currently reports 1.15 billion mobile active users daily as of December 2016. It is apparent that a large part of the population is regularly accessing this social media platform via mobile device. Kate Dreyer, “Mobile Internet Usage Skyrockets in Past 4 Years to Overtake Desktop as Most Used Digital Platform,” April 13, 2015, accessed April 17, 2017, https://www.comscore.com/Insights/Blog/Mobile-Internet-Usage-Skyrockets-in-Past-4-Years-to-Overtake-Desktop-as-Most-Used-Digital-Platform; Facebook, “Company Info.”
intimate. A sense of false intimacy comes from sharing details of one’s life online. The intimacy is false because the information given may be personal, but it does not have to be guarded as such. The lack of guarding is because the loyalty of knowing specifically who they have shared with is not present. It feels private to share but it is truly a public act. Facebook has changed the conversations from small to wide-reaching, but because women cannot see how far the reach is, it becomes impossible for them to comprehend. While there have been many attempts to teach people the breadth of sharing information on Facebook, these attempts still have not been fully successful. Women’s ministry leaders need to train women in a way that the ramifications of Facebook posting can become personal. Women desire relationship because they were designed by God in that way. Leaders need to celebrate this design while teaching stewardship of their relationships. Through Bible study, prayer, and accountability this principle will be lived out as God designed even in a Facebook setting.

**Mankind principle 4.** The essence of biblical community submits the individual to the community, not the community to the individual. Respondents’ results indicated that they understood this principle and were able to apply it on Facebook. While most of the questions dealt with gossip and taking a stand for what is right, this principle is more than those ideas. This biblical community concept has the individual looking to the good of the overall community above self. This is a hard idea to test in a large forum such as Facebook. The questions ask them to understand their personal behaviors but did not truly test if the community was regarded about their individual best.

For this principle of biblical community to find its place in the hybrid model where the women lived out biblical community with the same people cross both platforms, in-person and on Facebook, would take learning their individual response to hypothetical situations. However, this information is not required to set out a plan for incorporating

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57See tables 10, 11, and appendix 10.
principle 4 into a hybrid model. Equipping women to actively display this principle in the Facebook community would best be done by giving them a series of questions to ask before posting. These questions could be derived from the interactions of Jesus and Paul with people. The questions would have them consider their motives and heart behind each post. Does the post encourage the body or tear it apart? If the information is shared, is it done without intention to hurt someone? Is it meant to teach right behavior and yet protect those who have sin in a Christ-honoring way? Does this stir bitterness in the community or in your heart toward the community? These questions along with others could become a guide to check for this principle of biblical community being practiced on Facebook. It would also take an accountability partner for each woman. The partners would have to confront each other to ask about heart motives or share a point of view of a given Facebook post. Accountability is essential in protecting the good of the community because this world is sinful and flawed, meaning at times a person fails to see how their posts could be perceived by others and needs outside wisdom to help them grow and be sanctified. Accountability questions and an accountability partner would serve to allow this principle to be lived out in a hybrid model.

Sin principle 5. The essence of biblical community acknowledges sin.58 This is the first of two principles related to sin that respondents’ results indicated were not able to be practiced on Facebook. The first of the two sin principles refers to the acknowledgement of sin. Respondents did not want to actively seek to sin against others on Facebook. In fact, the results indicated that 73 percent of women always sought to avoid participating in hurtful or sinful actions toward others on Facebook.59 The second in the positive series of questions related to principle 5 provided mixed results. When

58See tables 12, 13, and appendix 10.
59See table 12.
asked if they used Facebook to talk about real life issues, like their struggles with sin, 41 percent said only occasionally, while the next highest group was at 23 percent, which was the “never” respondents.\(^{60}\) When the question was asked from the negative side, the response was 36 percent occasionally and 25 percent generally.\(^{61}\) The results are somewhat in conflict but seem to indicate that women do not feel comfortable sharing about their sin struggles on Facebook. It would seem logical since there is a lack of control over where the information is shared when disseminated into the Facebook environment. Sin is hard to own, and it is even harder to trust it to a place where anyone could use it against a person. This seems to be the principle where women become aware of how public and exactly how little control they have when posting on Facebook. It is great to see that they can understand the seriousness of information being posted on Facebook. However, it is interesting that women do not associate this healthy fear of sharing in other areas of their lives where it could be dangerous. Considering guilt, shame, and pride are the tools Satan loves to use to hold people in sin, it becomes more understandable why sin is more protected than other information. While this realization still does not make it right or wrong to share sin issues on Facebook, it does provide insight into why this aspect of biblical community is nearly impossible to take onto Facebook.

If the acknowledgement of sin will not work solely in a Facebook environment, then how does this aspect of biblical community look in a hybrid model? In the hybrid model, sin is still acknowledged, but not in a public, Facebook approach. Mentors and accountability partners function to help one another acknowledge sins. The biblical model of approaching someone individually about a sin may be done in a private Facebook message if the sin took place on Facebook. However, whenever possible, people should seek to confront others about sin in person with loving acknowledgement (Matt 18:15).

\(^{60}\)See table 12.

\(^{61}\)See table 13.
These concepts are what might be called etiquette for practicing biblical community on Facebook. As mentioned, materials need to be written to help people learn both the etiquette and the reason behind this proper way of behaving. This etiquette information should be based in Scripture and acknowledge the public nature of Facebook. Though the biblical times did not have a Facebook and therefore does not speak directly of Facebook that does not mean God’s Word is not sufficient to help Christians live biblically on Facebook. The truths of God’s plan for man can be applied to the different inventions throughout time. His foundational truth is applicable to all lives. God’s Word should and does inform how to live in a sinful, fallen world that is constantly changing yet never new.

**Sin principle 6.** The essence of biblical community recognizes that sin is still problematic in the life of the believer and biblical community. This is the second of the two principles that the survey results indicated were not able to be practiced by women on Facebook. The respondents indicated a discomfort with the confession of sin on Facebook. This same discomfort came across when respondents were asked about seeking accountability for sins from Facebook friends. The confession and accountability of sin is difficult in any circumstance as it exposes believers to their guilt and shame. It humbles any pride as it brings out the imperfection of a person. The transparency required to confess sin and seek accountability is abundant. While it is a difficult principle, it must be practiced in true biblical community. Without the ability to practice this principle on Facebook, one must dismiss the notion of Facebook as an encapsulated environment that can completely meet the needs of people to live in biblical community. However, this does not eliminate the idea of a hybrid model of community balanced between women’s ministry community built in the local church and furthered through Facebook connections.

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62 See tables 14, 15, and appendix 10.

63 See tables 14 and 15.
This principle requires the partnering of women with mentors or accountability partners. Partnerships of this nature are difficult because of the need for transparency. Women need to be transparent and receive tough truths without taking offense. Making an accountability relationship takes time and patience. Women must spend time getting to know one another and build a genuine relationship of respect and value. They also must have an understanding and contentment with each other’s perspective and temperament. These relationships would allow women to identify the areas of struggle are with sin, behaviors both on Facebook and in person. Together they could create questions to help evaluate behaviors before performing them to work toward preventing sin. The women would also be called to pray together regularly and for one another. This intimacy between accountability partners needs to be available in order to lead them to go before the throne of God on behalf of one another. These partners should encourage one another through words and Scripture because an accountability relationship should ultimately serve to sanctify each person. Women should be honest both in confession and accountability for their sins, but in this hybrid model it is acknowledged that this practice does not operate on Facebook but is primarily practice outside of that environment.

**Jesus Christ principle 7.** The essence of biblical community includes union with Jesus Christ. Union with Jesus for the believer is found in the completed work of Jesus Christ as payment for sin and provision for salvation. The results for the four questions associated with this principle were fairly strong in that most people practiced this principle of biblical community on Facebook. One question was not as certain as the others. This question asked if the respondents saw their Facebook experience as an act of worship. The result produced that 25 percent generally felt the two were separate things while 30 percent occasionally found them to be separate, and only 23 percent never saw

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64See tables 16, 17, and appendix 10.
them as separate acts. The respondents did not understand that every act can be taken into the glorious. The glorification and honor of Christ through a person’s posting behaviors on Facebook can be an act of worship. The Bible says,

A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned. (Matt 12:35-37)

What is in the heart of a woman is what will come out in her words or Facebook engagements. This means that the hearts of women need to have the truth sown deep inside. For her behavior to be a Christ-honoring act of worship, both on Facebook and in life, a woman’s heart must know Christ and his Word. The hybrid model would be possible if women were encouraged to memorize Scripture. The truth needs to be in their heart and on their mind for them to reflect that in biblical community. Another way for this principle to show in the lives of women is to shift their thinking to see others as Christ sees them. Recognizing that Christ died for all and that all were created in his image brings a sense of respect for others. Women will act respectfully toward others when they see that those women have been called to have union with Christ just like them. It will drive them to display their union with Christ out of a desire for others to know and experience this same provision for sin and gift of salvation. This principle is possible to practice on Facebook, but could be refined across both platforms through the helpful practices of memorizing Scripture and seeing the union with Christ.

**Holy Spirit principle 8.** The essence of biblical community includes obedience to God’s Word through the power of the Spirit. Worship, obedience, demonstration of the

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65 See table 17.

66 The concept of a good man producing good out of the good stored up in his heart can also be found echoed in the parable of Luke 6:45.
Fruit of the Spirit, etc., must be evident in the life of the believer. 67 The results for these questions revealed respondents feel strongly that they practice this principle of biblical community well on Facebook. 68 While the respondents’ strong perception of practicing principle 8 well on Facebook is great, there is room for strengthening this principle in the life of a believer. As noted in principle 7, the respondents were slightly uncertain about using Facebook as an act of worship. In this principle, that understanding can be strengthened as women learn about the role of the Holy Spirit in their lives. A Bible study on the Holy Spirit would be the best place to start in developing this biblical community practice. The Bible study could even be held online, through Facebook or a blog. In the study, the women would be immersed in Scripture to discover what can be known about the Holy Spirit. Through the inductive study, women would learn about the role of the Holy Spirit in the Trinity, how he was sent to indwell in the believer when Christ was taken to Heaven, his active engagement in their lives when one is saved, and learn to pray to him for his help in living out the Fruit of the Spirit. Women would learn that the Holy Spirit is there to help them live in obedience to Christ. Through the study of the Holy Spirit, the women could then be moved into a practical application of this principle of biblical community. A discussion could be facilitated on how the Holy Spirit should inform their behaviors and posts on Facebook, but also how the Holy Spirit could use the knowledge they gain about others on Facebook to make them better ministers of the gospel. The Holy Spirit could reveal that a woman is hurting and prompt people to reach out to her or the show the needs of a mother and provide the person to help meet those needs. The principle of the Holy Spirit in living in biblical community is a powerful tool if women can learn to be sensitive to his promptings. The sensitivity to the Holy Spirit should be taught. The prayerful seeking of a women’s heart and mind remaining sensitive to this

67 See tables 18, 19, and appendix 10.

68 See tables 18 and 19.
prompting through items seen either on Facebook or in real life should be an admired desire. The Holy Spirit should be able to prompt a person to action either in-person or on Facebook and the actions should be able to move seamlessly across the environments. This seamless crossing is why a hybrid model might be even stronger than biblical community lived solely in either environment.

**Conclusion of the integration of principles.** Acknowledging that not every principle of biblical community used in the project can be met solely through a Facebook community has led to the consideration of the possible use of a hybrid model. The hybrid model of biblical community is where community is balanced between the women’s ministry community built in the local church and furthered through Facebook connections. In the hybrid model, women live out biblical community with the same people across both platforms: in-person and on Facebook. This section explored each principle of biblical community and explain how it could be integrated into a hybrid model for women’s ministry in the future. While six out of the eight principles were able to be practiced across both platforms, two of the principles mainly needed to be isolated to in-person practice. To engage in the hybrid model of biblical community, materials would need to be written so training and equipping could take place within the church, specifically in the women’s ministry. Training could be a combination of online and in-person resources to mimic how the hybrid model of biblical community takes place. Further research would help to confirm if a hybrid model would function as a healthy biblical community model.

**Research Limitations**

The quantitative phase of the study was limited by the reach of snowball sampling, restricted to women on social media, and reduced to a sampling time of ten days. The women’s ability to accurately recount their habits and behaviors when posting on Facebook limited the research.
The qualitative phase of the study was limited primarily by the respondents’ time and length of response. Respondents were asked to report in short answer without the possibility of detailed clarification. I had a similar limitation as it was impossible for me to seek further clarification or information beyond the short answers provided by the respondents. This study was limited to observing momentary understanding as opposed to a time series behavior study.

**Evaluation of the Research Design**

This final section denotes the strengths and weaknesses discovered in the research design. The methodology is reviewed in an effort to allow future researchers to improve on the research either by refining the existing methodology or adding to the knowledge base. The comprehension into Facebook as a means of community has only begun and has many more areas to be mined. The intention was to push the research closer to creating a solid definition of true community, a definition that would span across all environments. Additionally, the research provided insight and direction for using Facebook as a means of increasing community among women involved in a women’s ministry.

The purpose of this single-phase sequential mixed methods study was to explore the relationship between a woman’s engagement habits on Facebook and habits of biblical community. This research project surveyed and synthesized the most recent literature related to biblical community within the environment of Facebook. Before perception of habits of biblical community within Facebook could be researched, however, the principles of biblical community were demarcated with recourse to significant literature in affirmation of the survey instrumentation being used. The qualitative phase made use of open-ended questions which were vetted through an expert panel. This was done through a series of six open-ended questions added to beginning of the survey. Each respondent was asked to answer the questions in short answer form. The expert panel consisted of leaders in women’s ministry with publication and educational credentials. The panel was e-mailed and asked to evaluate the series of questions. Each member of the panel had the
opportunity to critique and offer alterations to the open-ended questions. These critiques were reviewed and necessary correction made before the questions were added to the survey. Upon completion of the survey, the open-ended questions were analyzed for content. The answers were then categorized based on the key phrases and concepts from the literature base. Those categories were ranked in order of importance as measured by the frequency of the response.

The design used a survey instrument and open-ended questions to collect and analyze both qualitative and qualitative data. The goal was to use the survey to inform the discovery of perceived best practices for connecting women in the church through the assistance of Facebook. Some significant entries were expected to emerge concerning women’s perceptions, including a desire for interpersonal relationships while online and a lack of understanding of how to practice the principles of biblical community in an online environment.

**Strengths of the Research Design**

The population sampling represented women from various backgrounds and stages of life due in large part to the snowball method of sampling being employed in this research project. The sampling method was used intentionally as a means of reaching a variety of women with varying levels of connection to women’s ministries.

The sample size proved successful with a 95 percent confidence level, as anticipated. In addition, the sample yielded a low confidence interval of +/- 4.81 percent, which would have negligible change if the population size was increased. The confidences produced by the research were well within the acceptable guidelines and assist in the validity of the study.

Triangulation was effectively utilized in support of the findings of the qualitative data specifically. The triangulation process included (1) current writing and scriptural support found in the literature review, (2) validation by consensus from an expert panel for the creation of the open-ended questions which were based on the findings within
current writing and Scripture, and (3) the enhancement of an existing quantitative instrument to include a qualitative section created from the literature review and expert validation. Before the best practices perception was measured, the six open-ended questions, which drove at obtaining this perception, were validated by an expert panel of women’s ministry experts. The expert panel validated, with comments and concerns, the open-ended questions that used the literature review and Scripture to create astute questions for obtaining perceptions of best practices for connecting women using Facebook.

The internet-based survey was created using SurveyMonkey.com, allowing for accurate and easy to follow charts and graphs. Through the use of this website, responses were manipulated yielding survey results through a variety of filters and comparisons in an effort to copiously mine the data. Only completed surveys of women involved in women’s ministry were utilized in the data analysis. The website software allowed for omission of incomplete surveys, making the assessment easier. It also allowed for the exclusion of women not involved in women’s ministry in the local church. The website assisted in the production of accurate and easily downloadable tables, which provided for proper descriptive statistical view of the data. The website also allowed for the establishment of categories and the inserting of responses into those categories, which aided in the analysis of the open-ended questions.

One potential improvement noted by Matthew Alan Vander Wiele was the removal of the option to skip a question in the survey. This improvement was noted, and strength was brought to my research by designing the survey so that questions could not be forgone. The web-based survey was created on a platform that allows management over the requirement of answering questions. I employed the use of permissions to eliminate the ability to move forward in the survey without answering the previous question.

69The need for exclusion was determined by a response given in the demographic data.
A strength of this research over research done with the original instrument designed by Matthew Alan Vander Wiele was the limiting of the confession of sin into a private Facebook group. Vander Wiele failed to account for the different types of biblical community sin confession; e.g., corporate confession versus personal, one-on-one confession of sins. This project revealed how the definition of biblical community provided by Vander Wiele is still incomplete. The research therefore showed the importance of defining biblical community carefully and fully before one can determine whether it is applicable to social media interactions.

**Weaknesses of the Research Design**

A weakness of the research design was found in the reach of the surveys. Using the snowball method limits my ability to strategically promote the survey outside of a certain region. While in some form this was attempted to be overcome by the intentional selection of leaders with varying influences to initially share the survey, it was impossible to monitor that it occurred. One potential improvement might be to work specifically with the conventions of each individual state, having those in charge of women’s ministry at the state level assist in creating the snowball sampling method.

The original survey was based on five categories (Trinity, Mankind, Sin, Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit), which progressed theologically through the gospel story and generated eight principles. Of these five categories, all but two categories had two principles. Category 4 (Jesus Christ) and category 5 (Holy Spirit) had only one principle each. The reduced number of principles left categories 4 and 5 with only four questions each (two positive and two negative). It is possible that the research could be strengthened by providing an equivalent number of principles per category (two principles per category for a total of ten principles rather than eight).\(^{70}\)

\(^{70}\)This weakness in design was also noted by Matthew Alan Vander Wiele in his original thesis. Vander Wiele, “An Analysis of Students’ Perception,” 95.
The research survey would benefit from additional clarity and succinct writing of the questions. The multiple-choice question incorporated negative questions, which created confusion due to double negatives changing the statement. Also, research has shown that learners have trouble understanding negative questions. Presenting all the questions in a positive phrasing would provide precision. Furthermore, the original research that produced the quantitative analysis was designed without consideration to how the participants defined biblical community and the public or private nature of the community experiences respondents used for evaluation. The survey questions were not asked in a manner to expose the response that would have been best for the display of biblical community. One example would be question 21 which read, “Even when I do not get my way and I am misunderstood, I am willing to give in to others in my Facebook relationships.” It is not immediately clear what aspect of biblical community is being considered in this response. Perhaps sharing with participants either a brief understanding of the components of biblical community or a more detailed context for certain question would strengthen the results of the survey.

Further Research

As researchers look to the future to help further the research in this project, many avenues can be explored. A central component to this study is creating a widely accepted definition of community that spans across all environments, including virtual communities. While definitions have been offered, researchers could benefit from the creation and validation of an expert definition. Along with the definition, further research could explore why community is of such high value among people and if people seek community in every area of life. It would be interesting to know how important or

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72See appendix 10.
significant community is to a person’s happiness and satisfaction. Does a person’s level of community engagement in the work place, at a ministry event, or within a Facebook group determine their satisfaction in those areas of life?

Future research would benefit from exploring if virtual communities can function independently or if face-to-face engagement must be coupled with virtual community to develop a true perception that they are engaged in community. Additionally, the implications of how virtual community and face-to-face community work together or independently might help to determine how the church should educate the body of believers regarding virtual community. How should people be educated about the use and boundaries of communities in a mixed environment, or in a strictly virtual environment? Future research might produce evangelism and discipleship materials that function at a high rate of success within the virtual world. The tools for evangelism and discipleship within this modern world would also require an exploration of pertinent methods for training the church body to use these tools. The higher education community could benefit from a study combining this thesis with the work of Linda Reed to help further the training and equipping of women for ministry.73

For the researcher, learning methods of researching, such as snowball sampling and how to couple it with questionnaires, is part of the future. This research project sets a groundwork for using snowball sampling in an explanatory, single phased, mixed methods study, but it can be refined by other researchers. The use of social media to get useful data is an effective process but must be done with care. In the future, researchers need to learn how to provide clarity in online communication without hindering a project because they have removed a respondent’s ability to interpret words. As the research in this

project revealed, clarity is important but can become a hindrance if the respondents are told how to think and respond.

The road of future research brings many possibilities. With the rise in social media and virtual communities, a great deal of information is yet to be investigated. It is fair to say that virtual communities and digital media are likely to be a permanent fixture in the continued future. Therefore, research surrounding how the church and theological education embrace these topics has only begun.
APPENDIX 1

MATTHEW ALAN VANDER WIELE’S
PERCEPTION SURVEY

Quantitative Questionnaire:
Please complete the following survey. Please indicate how true the statement is
for your online relationships, not what you would really want the answer to be. Be
honest.

1. I will take responsibility for my actions in my online relationships, even if it hurts
   my reputation.  
   (Always          Generally        Frequently         Occasionally            Never)

2. I often seek accountability from friends while online about sin struggles.  
   (Always          Generally        Frequently         Occasionally            Never)

3. I am uncomfortable taking a stand for what is right online.  
   (Always          Generally        Frequently         Occasionally            Never)

4. I don’t really care if others are sinning on line.  
   (Always          Generally        Frequently         Occasionally            Never)

5. I will gossip and do what it takes to get my way even if it hurts the online
   community.  
   (Always          Generally        Frequently         Occasionally            Never)

6. I use my online relationships to talk about real life issues like struggles with sin
   (Always          Generally        Frequently         Occasionally            Never)

7. I do not really think about having victory over sin when I am online.  
   (Always          Generally        Frequently         Occasionally            Never)

8. Feeling good about myself is important to me when I am online with friends.  
   (Always          Generally        Frequently         Occasionally            Never)

9. Talking about sin is not something I do online with my friends.  
   (Always          Generally        Frequently         Occasionally            Never)

10. I am intentional about respecting my friends within my online relationships. 
    (Always          Generally        Frequently         Occasionally            Never)

11. I confess my struggles with sin online to my close friends.  
    (Always          Generally        Frequently         Occasionally            Never)

12. I do not really think about God that much when I am online.  
    (Always          Generally        Frequently         Occasionally            Never)
13. Respecting people online is not as important as getting my point across and being heard. (Always      Generally     Frequently     Occasionally     Never)
14. I do not participate in hurtful or sinful actions toward others online. (Always      Generally     Frequently     Occasionally     Never)
15. My spiritual life is not really important to me when I am online. (Always      Generally     Frequently     Occasionally     Never)
16. Confessing sin online to my friends is not very important to me. (Always      Generally     Frequently     Occasionally     Never)
17. I am purposeful about making others feel good about themselves in my online relationships. (Always      Generally     Frequently     Occasionally     Never)
18. It is important for me to identify with Jesus in my online relationships. (Always      Generally     Frequently     Occasionally     Never)
19. Even when I do not get my way and I am misunderstood, I am willing to give in to others in my online relationships. (Always      Generally     Frequently     Occasionally     Never)
20. I will be disloyal online to find out information about others or myself. (Always      Generally     Frequently     Occasionally     Never)
21. I will blame or ignore others in order to avoid taking the blame for my actions online. (Always      Generally     Frequently     Occasionally     Never)
22. I have to always have the last word in my online relationships. (Always      Generally     Frequently     Occasionally     Never)
23. If I am pressured into doing something that disobeys and dishonors God online I will stand up for what is right. (Always      Generally     Frequently     Occasionally     Never)
24. My online relationships with people are very important to me. (Always      Generally     Frequently     Occasionally     Never)
25. I care about proper online etiquette. (Always      Generally     Frequently     Occasionally     Never)
26. It is important to me that I obey God and his Word while interacting in online relationships. (Always      Generally     Frequently     Occasionally     Never)
27. I am more interested in people knowing about me, then I am interested in knowing about them. (Always      Generally     Frequently     Occasionally     Never)
28. Being loyal and trustworthy to my friends online is very important to me. (Always      Generally     Frequently     Occasionally     Never)
29. I do not think it is important to identify with Jesus when I am online.
   (Always    Generally    Frequently    Occasionally    Never)

30. Worship and my online experiences are two separate things.
    (Always    Generally    Frequently    Occasionally    Never)

31. I believe my online relationships should be a form of worship to God.
    (Always    Generally    Frequently    Occasionally    Never)

32. I willingly practice the Fruit of the Spirit in my online relationships (The Fruit of the Spirit are: Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness and Self-Control).
    (Always    Generally    Frequently    Occasionally    Never)
APPENDIX 2

PERMISSION TO USE MATTHEW ALAN VANDER WIELE’S PERCEPTION SURVEY

Instrument Permission
2 messages

Micah Nave <mnave255@students.sbts.edu>
To: mavanderwiele@liberty.edu

Sat, Dec 12, 2015 at 8:29 PM

Greetings,

My name is Micah Nave and I am a PhD student at Southern Seminary. I found your instrument/survey for testing perceptions of social media behavior in your thesis. I am writing something similar for women’s perceptions with regards to posting on Facebook. I would like to get your permission to use this instrument with the minor adaptations that need to be made to use it with a different population focused on Facebook behaviors.

May I have permission to use your instrument with minor adaptations?

Blessings,
Micah Nave

Vander Wiele, Matthew Alan (School of Divinity Instruction) <mavanderwiele@liberty.edu>
Mon, Dec 14, 2015 at 8:14 AM
To: Micah Nave <mnave255@students.sbts.edu>

Micah, I remember right where you are at. I cannot say I miss it, but it is such an exciting and scary time. Please use the instrument. If you notice in my thesis I reference a man by the name of Dr. Dan Shively - He helped me understand the significance of how to properly measure perception (it seems like that is what you are doing) - moving from principles (abstract) to examples (still abstract but a little more tangible) to behaviors we can model (tangible) to then asking questions (positive and negative). The instrument is original and can be used with any environment - that is the beauty of it - essentials of biblical community applied to any environment.

If you have any questions feel free to call me 317-614-5763 sometimes this is good to talk through as well. No obligation. Just let me know how I can help.

Blessings, Matt

Dr. Matthew A. Vander Wiele, ’98
Adjunct Instructor

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
Training Champions for Christ since 1971
Dear XXXX,

My name is Micah Nave. I am a doctoral student at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. I am currently pursuing research that focuses on women’s ministry and the use of Facebook as a tool to advance connections among women. You have been identified as an individual with expertise in the area of women’s ministry. I am writing to request your participation as a member of my expert panel.

If you accept this invitation, you will be asked to review statements/questions via email and respond with suggestions or affirmations. Once all panel member responses have been taken under advisement, the final questions will be compiled and distributed to the expert panel members for a final confirmation. Your validation that the questions are presented clearly and will provide the intended insight lend credibility to the research project.

The time commitment will be minimal as I know you have limited availability. Please send any questions you may have to this email address and I will answer them to the best of my ability.

Thank you for considering this opportunity to continue investing in the future of women’s ministry. Please reply to this invitation with acceptance or decline by December 16, 2016.

Blessings,

Micah Nave
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary
Selma Wilson
• Vice President of Organizational Development at Lifeway Christian Resources; 2015-Present
• Over 40 published articles
• Previously the Vice President of B&H Publishing Group; 1989-2015
• Selma led the launch of women’s ministry resourcing for Lifeway in 1993 and was the editor-in-chief of the first women’s product, Journey, a devotional magazine for women.

Dr. Terri Stovall
• Dean of Women’s Programs SWBTS
• Associate professor of Women’s Ministry in the Jack D. Terry School of Church and Family Ministry SWTBS
• Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and Marketing from Texas A&M
• Master of Arts in Religious Education SWBTS
• Master of Divinity SWBTS
• PhD in Administration SWBTS
• Co-authored Women Leading Women

Chris Adams
• Senior Lead Women's Ministry Specialist at LifeWay Christian Resources (Retired in 2017)
• Prior to 1994: Special Ministries Coordinator at Green Acres Baptist Church in Tyler, Texas, coordinating women's ministry and missions education.
• Guest teacher at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary's Women's Certificate Program
• Bachelor's degree in Christian Ministry from the New Orleans seminary's Leavell College.
• Contributor and guest editor of Journey,

Dr. Denise O'Donoghue
• Bachelor of Arts, North Carolina Wesleyan College (1987)
• Master of Arts, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (2008)
• Doctor of Education, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (2013)
• Assistant Professor of Ministry to Women SEBTS
• Director of Women’s Life SEBTS
Pam Gibbs Speaker

- Senior Writer for Ramsey Solutions, May 2015-Present
- Worked at Lifeway Christian Resources; Editor in Chief 1999-2012, Girls’ Ministry Specialist 2009-2013
- Published Books: Esther: The Role of a Lifetime, James: Faith Under Pressure, Designed by God: Answers to Students Questions about Homosexuality
- Master of Divinity at SWBTS
- Numerous published articles
APPENDIX 5
EXPERT PANEL INSTRUCTIONS

Greetings Expert Panel,

It is time for your expertise. Attached you will find a survey. Please view the information below and then reply to this email with appropriate critiques.

The aim of the research is to answer the following questions

1. Do Christian women involved in women’s ministry in the local church self-report practicing behaviors of biblical community in their personal interactions on Facebook?
2. What are the perceived best practices for connecting women in the church through Facebook according to current experience of women?
3. What are the habits of women as they operate on Facebook?
   a. What is the average age range of women in churches that are regularly using Facebook?
   b. How often do women report accessing Facebook within a given period of time?
   c. What are the top five best practices, as perceived by women, for using Facebook in ministry?
   d. What future training needs exist for women to practice biblical community behaviors when interacting on Facebook?

You will find two parts to the survey: Part 1: Quantitative Questionnaire is a series of multiple choice questions aimed at assessing the self-perceived biblical community behaviors of women when engaging with Facebook (looking at this from both positive and negative perspectives). Part 2: Qualitative Questionnaire is a set of 5 open-ended questions to determine the perceived best practices for connecting women in the church using Facebook.

Your role, as an expert, is to help assess if the wording of the questions in each section are useful for accomplishing the above. If you feel the a question needs revision or want to offer a wording suggestion please share them with me so this survey can be done with useful precision.

Once I have all the suggestions returned I will make edits and resend a finalized survey for you to review for agreement.

I ask that all the responses be returned to me by September 21, 2017. Thank you for your participation.

Blessings,
Micah Nave
APPENDIX 6
EXPERT PANEL UPDATE

Expert Panel,

Thank you for your time and participation in this process. A couple of items were identified as needing to be addressed:

1. It was felt that the quantitative questions needed to be more directed in nature. The quantitative questions need to specify if they were in regards to public Facebook posting or posting within a private group on Facebook. This has been updated to reflect the focus on posting in a private Facebook group setting.
2. Secondly, concerns about the personal and negative nature of the wording of certain questions within the quantitative section. Due to the fact that the quantitative instrument was already created, tested, and now was simply being modified I could not alter the questions to all be positive. The instrument depends on asking these questions multiple times from a positive and a negative perspective therefore it would not be true to the instrument if changed. In order to address this concern I first place the qualitative section at the beginning of the survey to help acclimate respondents so they will be open and honest. Secondly, I reordered the quantitative questions to start with more general and positive questions with a progression towards more personal and negative questions.
3. A definition of "sin" is now included in the first question which references the word (question 7). The definition is straight from scripture to help bring clarity.
4. I added some clarity to the work "training" in the qualitative section. Additionally, I broke that question into two separate questions to assist in the categorization during my compilation and analysis process.
5. The grammatical edits were made (thank you for seeing what my eyes missed in looking at this information for far too long).

With these changes the study is ready to move into the pilot phase unless you have any major concerns that have not been addressed. Thank you again for your help and support! You have each brought so much knowledge and wisdom to this study as well as to me personally.

Blessings,
Micah Nave
APPENDIX 7

FINAL SURVEY
Women Connecting through Facebook

Consent and Demographic Information

(You cannot start the survey and return later. It has to be completed in one sitting.)

By your completion of this online survey and entering your e-mail address, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research. Personal information will not be shared. Individuals will remain anonymous in research reporting.

1. What is your first name?

* 2. What is your gender?
   ○ Female
   ○ Male

* 3. What is your age?

* 4. Marital Status?
   ○ Single (never married)
   ○ Married
   ○ Divorced
   ○ Widowed

* 5. Current Location (City/State/Country):

* 6. Frequency of Facebook Logins (choose only one of the 7 options below):
   ○ 5 or more times per day
   ○ 2-5 times per day
   ○ Once daily
   ○ Once every other day
   ○ Once weekly
   ○ Once monthly
   ○ Less than once a month
* 7. Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ?
   ○ Yes
   ○ No

8. Are you or have you been involved in Women's Ministry within the local church?
   ○ Yes
   ○ No

* 9. Email Address (this is not shared and you will not be added to any email list, it serves as a form of consent for your answers to be incorporated into the group data and as a way to notify you if you win a $100 Amazon gift card).
Women Connecting through Facebook

Part 1: Qualitative Questionnaire

Please answer the following short-answer questions based on your experiences.

* 10. What are examples of successful Facebook postings that were intended for engaging women in women's ministry? Why do you consider these successful?

* 11. What are examples of unsuccessful Facebook postings that were intended for engaging women in women's ministry? Why do you consider these unsuccessful?

* 12. What type of women's ministry events, advertised on Facebook, have attracted you enough to inquire beyond the initial advertisement?

* 13. In your experience with Facebook, is the information communicated or the visual appeal of a post more important for engaging you with women's ministry?

* 14. How have you been trained to practice biblical community habits on Facebook (generally through observations of others, formal training, no training, etc.)?

* 15. How does your training (or lack of training) foster or hinder your engagement with women's ministry in the local church community?
Women Connecting through Facebook

Part 2: Quantitative Questionnaire: FACEBOOK GROUP POSTING (Private Groups)

Indicate how true the statement is for your PRIVATE FACEBOOK GROUP POSTINGS AND RELATIONSHIPS (this is not to be answered in regard to the general newsfeed). Be honest.

* 16. I believe my Facebook relationships should be a form of worship to God.
   - Always
   - Generally
   - Frequently
   - Occasionally
   - Never

* 17. I am intentional about respecting my friends within my Facebook relationships.
   - Always
   - Generally
   - Frequently
   - Occasionally
   - Never

* 18. Worship and my Facebook experiences are two separate things.
   - Always
   - Generally
   - Frequently
   - Occasionally
   - Never

* 19. I am purposeful about making others feel good about themselves in my Facebook relationships.
   - Always
   - Generally
   - Frequently
   - Occasionally
   - Never

* 20. It is important for me to identify with Jesus in my Facebook relationships.
   - Always
   - Generally
   - Frequently
   - Occasionally
   - Never
* 21. Even when I do not get my way and I am misunderstood, I am willing to give in to others in my Facebook relationships.
   ○ Always  ○ Occasionally
   ○ Generally  ○ Never
   ○ Frequently

* 22. I use my Facebook relationships to talk about real life issues like struggles with sin (The bible defines sin as transgression of the law of God (1 John 3:4) and rebellion against God (Deuteronomy 9:7; Joshua 1:18)).
   ○ Always  ○ Occasionally
   ○ Generally  ○ Never
   ○ Frequently

* 23. Feeling good about myself is important to me when posting on Facebook.
   ○ Always  ○ Occasionally
   ○ Generally  ○ Never
   ○ Frequently

* 24. I have to have the last word in my Facebook relationships.
   ○ Always  ○ Occasionally
   ○ Generally  ○ Never
   ○ Frequently

* 25. My Facebook relationships with people are very important to me.
   ○ Always  ○ Occasionally
   ○ Generally  ○ Never
   ○ Frequently

* 26. I care about proper Facebook etiquette.
   ○ Always  ○ Occasionally
   ○ Generally  ○ Never
   ○ Frequently
* 27. Being loyal and trustworthy to my Facebook friends is very important to me.
   ○ Always  ○ Occasionally  ○ Never
   ○ Generally  ○ Never
   ○ Frequently

* 28. It is important to me that I obey God and his Word while interacting in Facebook relationships.
   ○ Always  ○ Occasionally  ○ Never
   ○ Generally  ○ Never
   ○ Frequently

* 29. I willingly practice the Fruit of the Spirit in my Facebook relationships (The Fruit of the Spirit are: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control).
   ○ Always  ○ Occasionally  ○ Never
   ○ Generally  ○ Never
   ○ Frequently

* 30. I seek accountability from Facebook friends about sin struggles.
   ○ Always  ○ Occasionally  ○ Never
   ○ Generally  ○ Never
   ○ Frequently

* 31. On Facebook, I am uncomfortable taking a stand for what is right.
   ○ Always  ○ Occasionally  ○ Never
   ○ Generally  ○ Never
   ○ Frequently

* 32. I don't care if others are sinning on Facebook.
   ○ Always  ○ Occasionally  ○ Never
   ○ Generally  ○ Never
   ○ Frequently
* 33. I will gossip and do what it takes to get my way even if it hurts my Facebook relationships and/or community.
   - Always
   - Occasionally
   - Generally
   - Never
   - Frequently

* 34. I avoid thinking about having victory over sin when I post on Facebook.
   - Always
   - Occasionally
   - Generally
   - Never
   - Frequently

* 35. I avoid talking about sin with my friends on Facebook.
   - Always
   - Occasionally
   - Generally
   - Never
   - Frequently

* 36. I take responsibility for my actions in my Facebook relationships, even if it hurts my reputation.
   - Always
   - Occasionally
   - Generally
   - Never
   - Frequently

* 37. On Facebook, I confess my struggles to my close friends.
   - Always
   - Occasionally
   - Generally
   - Never
   - Frequently

* 38. Respecting people on Facebook is not as important as getting my point across and being heard.
   - Always
   - Occasionally
   - Generally
   - Never
   - Frequently
* 39. I avoid participating in hurtful or sinful actions toward others on Facebook.
   - Always
   - Generally
   - Frequently
   - Occasionally
   - Never

* 40. If I am pressured into doing something that disobeys and dishonors God on Facebook I will stand up for what is right.
   - Always
   - Generally
   - Frequently
   - Occasionally
   - Never

* 41. My spiritual life is not important to me when I am Facebook.
   - Always
   - Generally
   - Frequently
   - Occasionally
   - Never

* 42. Confessing sin on Facebook to my friends is not important to me.
   - Always
   - Generally
   - Frequently
   - Occasionally
   - Never

* 43. I will be disloyal in Facebook relationships to find out information about others or myself.
   - Always
   - Generally
   - Frequently
   - Occasionally
   - Never

* 44. I will blame or ignore others in order to avoid taking the responsibility for my actions Facebook.
   - Always
   - Generally
   - Frequently
   - Occasionally
   - Never
* 45. When engaging in Facebook relationships I am more interested in people knowing about me than I am interested in knowing about them.
   - Always
   - Occasionally
   - Generally
   - Never
   - Frequently

* 46. It is not important to identify as a follower of Jesus when interacting or posting on Facebook.
   - Always
   - Occasionally
   - Generally
   - Never
   - Frequently

* 47. I avoid thinking about God when I am posting on Facebook.
   - Always
   - Occasionally
   - Generally
   - Never
   - Frequently
APPENDIX 8
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Figure A1. Responses to question 4, marital status

Figure A2. Responses to question 6, frequency of Facebook logins
APPENDIX 9

KEY WORDS AND PHRASES FROM OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Question 10:
1. Blogs, Articles, Devotionals, Topics
2. Women’s bible study, bible study at church, church bible study, church events, women’s events
3. Beth Moore, Conferences
4. Stories, Scripture, personal stories
5. Facebook group

Question 11
1. Judgmental, political, opinion, divisive
2. Vague, Wrong Information
3. Impersonal, share
4. Length, wordy
5. Poor Visual Appeal, pictures
6. Products, selling

Question 12
1. Local Events, Close to home, event at church, local conferences
2. Conferences, Concerts
3. Bible Study, online bible study
4. Quality Presentation, Visual Appeal, Complete Information
5. Speakers, Beth Moore
6. Retreats, seminar

Question 13
1. Visual appeal, look, attention, visual first, pretty picture
2. Information Communicated, info communicated, say
3. Combination, visual and information, both
4. Neither

Question 14
1. None, No Training, never been trained
2. Observation, practice or practicing, experience
3. Formal Training, training specific, church
4. Bible Knowledge, knowing what the Scripture says, biblical principles, Christ

Question 15
1. Foster, hinder, affect, impact, share, social media
2. I do not feel, does not, no difference
## APPENDIX 10

### CATEGORIES WITH PRINCIPLES AND QUESTIONS

Table A1. Categories with principles and questions (+/-)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Question (+/-)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trinity</strong></td>
<td>1. The essence of biblical community finds its origin and model for practice in the Trinity. The origin of relationship is found in the Godhead of the Trinity, and is able to be modeled by mankind.</td>
<td>17. I am intentional about respecting my friends within my Facebook relationships. (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. The essence of biblical community functions within a hierarchy and a submission to authority that can be observed in the Trinity and then modeled among believers in any environment.</td>
<td>38. Respecting people on Facebook is not as important as getting my point across and being heard. (-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. The essence of biblical community recognizes that man is relational and craves relationship because he is made in the image of a relational God.</td>
<td>19. I am purposeful about making others feel good about themselves in my Facebook relationships. (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. The essence of biblical community submits the individual to the community, not the community to the individual</td>
<td>23. Feeling good about myself is important to me when posting on Facebook. (-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. The essence of biblical community is found in the Godhead of the Trinity, and is able to be modeled by mankind.</td>
<td>21. Even when I do not get my way and I am misunderstood, I am willing to give in to others in my Facebook relationships. (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. The essence of biblical community functions within a hierarchy and a submission to authority that can be observed in the Trinity and then modeled among believers in any environment.</td>
<td>24. I have to have the last word in my Facebook relationships. (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. The essence of biblical community recognizes that man is relational and craves relationship because he is made in the image of a relational God.</td>
<td>36. I will take responsibility for my actions in my Facebook relationships, even if it hurts my reputation. (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. The essence of biblical community submits the individual to the community, not the community to the individual</td>
<td>44. I will blame or ignore others in order to avoid taking the responsibility for my actions Facebook. (-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. The essence of biblical community is found in the Godhead of the Trinity, and is able to be modeled by mankind.</td>
<td>25. My Facebook relationships with people are very important to me. (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. The essence of biblical community functions within a hierarchy and a submission to authority that can be observed in the Trinity and then modeled among believers in any environment.</td>
<td>45. When engaging in Facebook relationships I am more interested in people knowing about me than I am interested in knowing about them. (-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. The essence of biblical community recognizes that man is relational and craves relationship because he is made in the image of a relational God.</td>
<td>27. Being loyal and trustworthy to my Facebook friends is very important to me. (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12. The essence of biblical community submits the individual to the community, not the community to the individual</td>
<td>43. I will be disloyal in Facebook relationships to find out information about others or myself. (-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13. The essence of biblical community is found in the Godhead of the Trinity, and is able to be modeled by mankind.</td>
<td>26. I care about proper Facebook etiquette. (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14. The essence of biblical community functions within a hierarchy and a submission to authority that can be observed in the Trinity and then modeled among believers in any environment.</td>
<td>33. I will gossip and do what it takes to get my way even if it hurts my Facebook relationships and/or community. (-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15. The essence of biblical community recognizes that man is relational and craves relationship because he is made in the image of a relational God.</td>
<td>40. If I am pressured into doing something that disobeys and dishonors God on Facebook I will stand up for what is right. (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16. The essence of biblical community submits the individual to the community, not the community to the individual</td>
<td>31. On Facebook, I am uncomfortable taking a stand for what is right. (-)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Sin | 5. The essence of biblical community acknowledges sin. | 39. I avoid participating in hurtful or sinful actions towards others on Facebook. (+)  
32. I don’t care if others sin on Facebook. (-)  
22. I use my Facebook relationships to talk about real life issues like my struggles with sin (The Bible defines sin as transgression of the law of God (1 John 3:4) and rebellion against God (Deuteronomy 9:7; Joshua 1:18). (+)  
35. I avoid talking about sin with my friends on Facebook. (-) |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 6. The essence of biblical community recognizes that sin is still problematic in the life of the believer and biblical community. | 37. On Facebook, I confess my struggles to my close friends. (+)  
42. Confessing sin on Facebook to my friends is not important to me. (-)  
30. I seek accountability from Facebook friends about sin struggles. (+)  
34. I avoid thinking about having victory over my sin when I post on Facebook. (-) |
| Jesus Christ | 7. The essence of biblical community includes union with Jesus Christ. Union with Jesus for the believer is found in the completed work of Jesus Christ as payment for sin and provision for salvation. | 20. It is important for me to identify with Jesus in my Facebook relationships. (+)  
46. It is not important to identify as a follower of Jesus when interacting or posting on Facebook. (-)  
16. I believe my Facebook relationships should be a form of worship to God. (+)  
18. Worship and my Facebook experiences are two separate things. (-) |
| Holy Spirit | 8. The essence of biblical community includes obedience to God’s Word through the power of the Spirit. Worship, obedience, demonstration of the Fruit of the Spirit, etc., must be evident in the life of the believer. | 28. It is important to me that I obey God and his Word while interacting in Facebook relationships. (+)  
47. I avoid thinking about God when I am posting on Facebook. (-)  
29. I willingly practice the Fruit of the Spirit in my Facebook relationships (The Fruit of the Spirit are: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control). (+)  
41. My spiritual life is not important to me when I am on Facebook. (-) |
BIBLIOGRAPHY


ABSTRACT

AN ANALYSIS OF WOMEN’S PERCEPTION OF BIBLICAL COMMUNITY WITHIN THE ENVIRONMENT OF FACEBOOK: A MIXED METHOD STUDY

Micah Noelle Nave, Ph.D.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018
Chair: Dr. Brian C. Richardson

This purpose of this study was to explore the biblical community behaviors of women when engaging with Facebook as well as perceived best practices for connecting women in the church. An explanatory sequential mixed methods design was used, involving the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative survey, using snowball sampling, researched the biblical community habits of women when posting on Facebook. Open-ended questions allowed a qualitatively exploration of the perceived best practices among women when using Facebook as a tool for biblical community connection.

Chapter 2 reviews the pertinent literature to this study, which covers issues of virtual community, Christians and digital media, and the principles of biblical community. The principles of biblical community were developed to exist outside of a physical or virtual environment.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology and process by which the data was collected for this study. Women, ages 18 and above, engaged to some degree with someone in women’s ministry leadership, were invited via social media to participate in the adapted survey developed by Matthew Alan Vander Wiele. The participants also responded to six open-ended questions that revealed perceived best practices for connecting women using Facebook.

Chapter 4 reports the analysis of the completed survey data. An analysis of the
quantitative data was then completed using the principles of biblical community assembled in the literature review. The research demonstrated the failure of women to understand what makes a community biblical. An expert panel was used to add a qualitative component to the instrument by helping to sculpt open-ended questions for the survey. Respondents answer the following questions: Do women self-report behaviors of biblical community, as outlined in Scripture, in their personal interactions on Facebook? What are the perceived best practices for connecting women in the church through Facebook according to current experience of women? The study provided insights into the community habits of women as they interact on Facebook.

The final chapter gives conclusions based on the study’s findings. Variances in the data and conceivable reasons for their presence are also surveyed. Based on the results of the research, applications are made for women, women’s ministry leaders, and women’s ministry within the local church, as well as other practitioners interested in virtual community, engaging the church through social media, and biblical community connections within a virtual setting.
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