

WOMEN BY THE NUMBERS

Women, faith and spirituality

Do women of faith or women surveyed by a secular magazine express more fulfillment from spirituality?

By Julie Kathleen Schubring

A recent poll among the readers of the *Ladies' Home Journal* produced a report in the July 2011 issue titled: "What Does it Take for a Woman to Feel Happy & Fulfilled?" I found a few of the responses surprising, and it prompted me to conduct my own quick informal survey among fellow active women faith leaders via Survey Monkey and Facebook.

The *Ladies' Home Journal* survey was conducted among their target audience—women ages 18-65. I wanted to know if the magazine responses are similar among same-age women who are active participants in their faith tradition.

Two particular survey questions and answers stood out to me. The first question:

Q *How important is each of the below in making you feel fulfilled?*

- A** 74% "Being at peace with myself and my decisions"
72% "Having the freedom to make the choices I want"
71% "Leading a life that has meaning"
30% "Religion/spirituality"

This begs the question, what makes a life meaningful since it isn't religion or spirituality for the respondents?

The second question:

Q *How satisfied are you with these areas of your life?*

- A** 51% "very satisfied with their family life"
46% "very satisfied with their marriage or relationship"
45% "very satisfied with their spirituality"
25% "very satisfied with work life"

There seems to be a difference between being fulfilled in "religion/spirituality" and being satisfied with spirituality.

This prompted me to survey my family and friends. The demographics are similar to the *Ladies' Home Journal* online panel of women, however the people I polled are ALL women of faith.

The first question I asked was:

Q *How satisfied are you with these areas of your life?*

A 75% "religion/spirituality"

The second question:

Q *As a person of faith what fulfills you?*

A 45% "very satisfied with their spirituality"

Women of faith find more fulfillment in their "religion/spirituality" but the same percentage of all women are very satisfied with spirituality. I had originally thought that active women of faith would have had a higher percentage of satisfaction with their spirituality than the general population. Therefore what is the difference between fulfillment and satisfaction when asking about religion/spirituality? It is very unfortunate that we don't have the meaning to "fulfillment" and "satisfaction."

But I hope that this gives us something to ponder – Does our spirituality fulfill us in our daily lives? I hope that we all are able to be more than satisfied with our faith journey.

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