

ABSTRACT

SPORTS MINISTRY IN AMERICA'S ONE HUNDRED LARGEST CHURCHES

by

Matthew Brian White

The purpose of this research project was to determine how megachurches are utilizing sports evangelism as a dynamic strategy of ministry. The review of literature focuses on the cultural relevance of sports and the natural bridge that sports can often be for evangelistic ministry. The theological framework of sports evangelism includes a look at how this ministry provides incarnational ministry to people.

The study provides an overview of what is being done currently by megachurches in the area of sports ministry. A detailed list of recommendations helps churches consider what is already being done in this vital area of ministry.

The findings of this study demonstrate that sports ministry is being utilized by many of the largest churches in the United States. Leaders from these churches have consistently testified of the evangelistic impact and relationship building of various sports ministries. Many of the church leaders in this study reported reaching unchurched people through the various sports activities offered in their churches.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled
SPORTS MINISTRY IN AMERICA'S
ONE HUNDRED LARGEST CHURCHES

presented by

Matthew Brian White

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for the
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY degree at
Asbury Theological Seminary

Mentor

September 14, 2005

Date

Internal Reader

September 14, 2005

Date

Dean, Doctor of Ministry Program

September 14, 2005

Date

SPORTS MINISTRY IN AMERICA'S
ONE HUNDRED LARGEST CHURCHES

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of
Asbury Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by

Matthew Brian White

May 2006

© 2006

Matthew Brian White

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled
SPORTS MINISTRY IN AMERICA'S
ONE HUNDRED LARGEST CHURCHES

presented by

Matthew Brian White

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for the
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY degree at
Asbury Theological Seminary

Mentor

September 14, 2005
Date

Internal Reader

September 14, 2005
Date

Dean, Doctor of Ministry Program

September 14, 2005
Date

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled
SPORTS MINISTRY IN AMERICA'S
ONE HUNDRED LARGEST CHURCHES

presented by

Matthew Brian White

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for the
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY degree at
Asbury Theological Seminary

Mentor

September 14, 2005
Date

Internal Reader

September 14, 2005
Date

Dean, Doctor of Ministry Program

September 14, 2005
Date

SPORTS MINISTRY IN AMERICA'S
ONE HUNDRED LARGEST CHURCHES

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of
Asbury Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by

Matthew Brian White

May 2006

© 2006

Matthew Brian White

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
List of Tables	viii
Acknowledgments.....	ix
Chapter	
1. Understanding the Problem.....	1
The Problem.....	1
The Purpose	5
Research Questions.....	5
Research Question 1	6
Research Question 2	6
Research Question 3	6
Research Question 4	6
Definition of Terms.....	6
Sports Evangelism	6
Servant Evangelism	6
Friendship Evangelism.....	7
Cultural Relevance.....	7
Megachurch.....	7
Methodology	7
Population and Subjects	7
Variables	8
Instrumentation	8

Data Collection Procedure	9
Delimitations and Generalizability	9
Overview of Summary	9
2. Review of Selected Literature.....	11
Lack of Evangelism	11
Need for Evangelism.....	11
Cultural Relevance in Ministry	14
Sports Culture	20
Ministry Strategies of Growing Churches	23
Forms of Evangelism	29
Servant Evangelism	30
Friendship or Personal Evangelism	32
Worship Evangelism.....	34
Power Evangelism	35
Sports Evangelism	36
Sports Evangelism at Megachurches	38
Sports Listed in Church Bulletins or on Web Sites	42
Other Sports to Consider.....	43
The Influence of an Athlete	44
Personality-Centered Sports Evangelism.....	45
Parachurch Organizations Specializing in Sports Ministry	46
Theological Reflection.....	50
Evangelism/Preaching.....	50

Specific Ministry.....	57
Athletic Pictures from Scripture	58
Incarnational Ministry.....	60
Body, Soul, and Spirit.....	61
Self-Control.....	63
Agony: Physical, Mental, and Spiritual	64
The Temple	65
The Prize	66
Historical Overview of Sports	66
3. Design of the Study.....	69
Methodology	70
The Purpose	71
Research Questions.....	71
Research Question 1	71
Research Question 2	71
Research Question 3	72
Research Question 4	72
Population and Sample	72
Megachurches	72
Instrumentation	73
Delimitations and Generalizability	73
Data Collection Procedures.....	74
Variables	75

4. Findings of the Study	76
Profile of the Megachurches	76
Sports Ministry Offered at Megachurches	79
Strategies for Evangelism	87
Equipping for Sports Ministry	89
Transferable Principles from the Megachurches	92
Summary of Major Findings	93
5. Discussion	95
Theological Reflection of Findings	100
Research Reflection Team	102
Implications of the Study	105
Limitations and Weaknesses	106
Suggestions for Further Studies	107
Personal Reflections.....	108
Postscript.....	112
Appendixes	
A: Changed Lives through Sports Ministry	114
B: Sports Evangelism Web Sites	115
C: Recreation Facility Checklist for Churches	116
D: The Evangelistic Mandate of the Wesleyan Church.....	118
E: Characteristics of Younger Evangelicals	119
F: Ten Insights Supporting Culturally Relevant Christianity	121
G: Too Much Evangelistic Passion?.....	122

H: Article Demonstrating How Our Society Values Athletes	124
I: Upward Basketball	125
J: Sports Ministry Survey.....	127
K: Sports Listed in Church Bulletins or Web Sites	129
L: Long-Range Sports Ministry Goals for Lafayette First Church of the Nazarene.....	130
Works Cited	132

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1: The Denominational Composition of the One Hundred Largest Megachurches in the United States	78
Table 4.2: The Majority Ethnic Composition of the One Hundred Largest Megachurches in the United States	79
Table 4.3: The Number of Sports Programs Offered by Responding Churches	81
Table 4.4: The Different Sports Being Offer in Order of Most Common to Least Common	83
Table 4.5: The Age Groups Reached through Sports Ministry	85
Table 4.6: Numbers of People Participating in Sports Ministry in Each Megachurch on a Weekly Basis.....	86
Table 4.7: Types of Evangelism Utilized by Megachurches	88
Table 4.8: Ministry Strategies for Sports Ministry	89
Table 4.9: Annual Church Budget for Sports Ministry.....	90
Table 4.10: Type of Facility Utilized for Sports Ministry	91

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to take this time to thank my mentor, Dr. David Rambo, for his constant encouragement throughout this entire research project. Thanks for being such a great inspiration!

I would also like to thank Dr. Leslie Andrews, Dr. Milton Lowe, and Dr. Martin Seitz for diligently helping to steer me in the right direction through this study. God bless you for your faithfulness!

Special thanks also to the Beeson Pastors of 2003-2004. What an incredible year! Thanks for being so supportive!

I also would like to thank the sports ministry team of Lafayette First Church of the Nazarene. May this research further the ministry of our local church and beyond!

Finally, I would like to thank my beautiful wife, Teressa, for patiently waiting for me to complete this study. You have been amazing. I praise God for you!

To God be the glory! May this research help to reach people for Jesus!

CHAPTER 1

UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

The Problem

Many churches throughout the United States are in a state of decline. “Church attendance is heading in a downward spiral at an accelerating pace, while personal interest in spirituality is growing” (Slaughter 17). A need exists to equip the people of these churches with tools to reach out effectively to the unchurched. In addition, a necessity exists for the church to find ministry strategies for reaching the non-Christians. According to the research of the American Growth Institute, people who come to church come because they have been influenced to do so by “a friend or relative 79 percent of the time, a pastor (6 percent), Sunday school (5 percent), walk-in (3 percent), program (3 percent), special need (3 percent), visitation (1 percent), and an evangelism crusade (.5 percent)” (Oswald and Leas 28). The fact that people are most likely to be influenced to attend a church when invited by a friend indicates the need to equip churchgoers with the means to reach out to their friends and family.

Statistics indicate that the way church is being done in North America is not bringing the Good News to the majority of the people in an effective manner (Slaughter 16). Findings by George Gallup demonstrate a drop in the percentage of the U.S. population that attends church on a regular basis (at least once monthly) from 43 percent for the past forty years to 38 percent in 1997 (16). The Barna research group reports a drop in church attendance from 49 percent in 1991 to 43 percent in 2002. A 1997 study found that “each year approximately 9,000 Protestant churches will close across the United States. Most will close because they couldn’t compete; closing was a more

attractive alternative than thinking” (Slaughter 114).

The American culture is one that is “leisure oriented, unfamiliar with the Bible and Christianity, and sports crazy” (Garner, “Relevance of Recreation”). The contemporary church can use sports and recreation as an alternative means of potentially captivating the attention of millions of people. Instead of viewing the general direction of the American culture as a negative, the church must recognize the tremendous opportunity for specialized ministry:

Leisure hours have become the most important time in a person’s life. When people leave work, they expect time for leisure. And sports accounts for a large part of that leisure time. A recent survey indicated that 90 percent of Americans watch, read about, or participate in sports once a month and 70 percent do so once a week.

With so many people involved in recreation and sports, the church can use sporting events as unique opportunities. They are “gathering places for people, bridges for cultural and racial barriers, an area of ministry where people can use their gifts, talents and abilities for the kingdom’s sake, and they offer an avenue to gain visibility in the community.” The ministry of the local church can discover many opportunities for reaching people and making relational connections through sports ministry.

In a day and age when many American people, four out of ten, according to a 1997 Gallup poll, admit to feelings of intense loneliness (Slaughter 93), the Church needs to find a way to become more culturally relevant, welcoming, and engaging. Slaughter notes that the church can only become more relevant if church leaders take the time to (1) listen, (2) identify felt needs and relevant life issues, (3) develop strategies to bridge God’s solution to felt needs, and (4) communicate the solution effectively (37). One particular work in this area analyzes the role of culturally relevant communication in the

area of sports evangelism. Chester Harris' dissertation was designed to determine discipleship aids that would help Christians learn how to communicate with unchurched people through the vehicle of sports evangelism.

Churches must discover ways to reach people with the good news of Jesus Christ. According to Roger Werking, 57 percent of Americans do not attend a local church; therefore, churches must proactively deliver the gospel to the people (Werking and Werking 1). Roger and his wife, Lynn, have formed an evangelistic, parachurch organization named Kwest in order to take the Christian message outside the four walls of the church. This ministry reaches people at parks, fairs, beaches, colleges, universities, business districts, street corners, and neighborhoods. Converts are referred to local churches. This form of direct, personal evangelism is designed to reach people that are not connected with a local church.

Like servant evangelism, which is defined by Steve Sjogren in Perfectly Imperfect Church, as “doing acts of kindness and generosity to show people the love of Christ” (59) sports evangelism has the potential to provide an avenue for ministry that all Christians could embrace. Due to the fact that many people in this culture are interested in sports, this type of ministry seems to be a natural bridge between Christians and non-Christians. The Baptist Press estimates that “96 percent of the people in the world either: participate in sports, are sports fans, or have a close family member or friend who participates in sports or are sports fans” (Dotson). These findings relate the opportunity that exists through the utilization of sports in Christian ministry. Sports evangelism can be a wonderful vehicle for sharing the gospel. This comprehensive demographic is one that is virtually untapped for ministry. Ultimately, in response to the Great Commission, all

Christians need to be sharing their faith in a way that will help unbelievers discover the tremendous blessing of life in Christ. Sports evangelism could be implemented by many churches in a way that will help bring people into a loving relationship with Jesus Christ.

The church must reach people outside of its walls. Sjogren identifies a group that he refers to as the “dechurched”:

The “dechurched” are those people who have given up on organized religion because it’s too complicated, too irrelevant, and not worth the time and effort of getting involved. What they are looking for is what is understandable, simple, and straightforward in the language of the common person. (Perfectly Imperfect Church 33)

The Church must begin to view society as an enormous mission field. “We don’t have to go to a foreign land to find people who are without Christ. We need only to go across the aisle at work, at school, at the office, or across the driveway to the house next door. All around us, people need the Lord” (Terry 125). Servant evangelism is a concept that church leaders need to stress in churches throughout the country. The early Church grew because its adherents were not silent. “They said, we cannot but speak the things we have seen and heard” (Minnery 51). The present day church needs to have a similar, missional mind-set.

When considering the ministry direction of the local church, a vital need exists to “remember that the first and most important matter to be made right is an individual’s relationship with Him. This is the need for salvation” (Minnery 131). Evangelism needs to be the central purpose that leads the ministry of the local church. Pastors Andy Stanley and Ed Young say that evangelism is a nonnegotiable in the local church. In addition, Stanley and Young stress the importance of a church including evangelism as part of the purpose statement. Finally, the two pastors share that a primary responsibility of both the

senior pastor and staff is to keep evangelism as a church's main focus (6).

Since becoming a Christian in 1983 through the influence of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, I have become more personally aware of the tremendous impact that sports evangelism can have upon a person's life. I have been involved in a vast array of sports ministries from leading groups such as Champions for Christ (a Bible study for varsity athletes) at the University of Virginia, to coaching high school track and cross country, to leading and developing evangelistic, basketball outreaches and Christian running clubs. Each of these ministry areas have effectively reached out to unchurched people through the avenue of sports. Many people have come to Christ as a result of these various ministry strategies. From the time of my conversion, which largely took place due to the influence of a dynamic, Christian coach who shared the gospel with me, I have been transformed by the influence of sports ministry. It has become a great passion in my life because I have experienced firsthand its ministerial and evangelistic effectiveness at transforming lives.

The Purpose

The purpose of this research is to examine how megachurches are effectively utilizing sports evangelism in order to reach unchurched people and to describe a set of transferable strategies for sports evangelism that can be used in a variety of ministry contexts.

Research Questions

The following research questions have been developed to determine some of the ways that sports ministry is being utilized by the one hundred largest churches in America.

Research Question 1

What are the one hundred largest megachurches in America doing in the area of sports ministry?

Research Question 2

What are the ways in which evangelism occurs through sports ministry in the one hundred largest megachurches in America?

Research Question 3

How are people equipped to serve in the area of sports ministry in the one hundred largest megachurches in America?

Research Question 4

What patterns or principles can be gleaned from the existing sports ministry programs in the one hundred largest megachurches in America?

Definition of Terms

Several of the most common terms in the areas of sports ministry and evangelism are listed below.

Sports Evangelism

Sports evangelism involves sharing the good news of Jesus Christ in the area of sports and using sports as a connection point for relational evangelism.

Servant Evangelism

Servant evangelism involves performing acts of kindness and generosity to show people the love of Christ (Sjogren, Perfectly Imperfect Church 59). Some churches have coupled this form of evangelism with sports evangelism.

Friendship Evangelism

Friendship evangelism takes place through developing close, personal relationships and sharing Christ in a natural, unforced manner. This form of evangelism is often utilized in conjunction with sports evangelism.

Cultural Relevance

Cultural relevance refers to ministry that is done in a manner that can be understood and received in the language of the particular culture.

Megachurch

Megachurch is used to define Protestant churches in the United States that are over two thousand people in total attendance.

Methodology

The research method for this particular study was to design a survey to determine what leading megachurches throughout the United States are doing in sports ministry. A structured telephone interview was conducted with leaders from each of the megachurches listed on the 2004 Church Growth Today/Outreach Magazine's one hundred largest churches in America list. The responses to the questions enabled me to determine what the largest Protestant churches in the United States are doing to reach people through different types of sports evangelism.

Population and Sample

The population for this study included the megachurches in the United States that are listed on the 2004 Church Growth Today/Outreach Magazine's one hundred largest churches in America list. These churches have an average attendance of 5,800 or above. The goal was to have all of these megachurches participate in the study by completing the

survey. This study deals specifically with these one hundred churches and does not pertain to all churches.

Variables

The variables used in this study included the following:

1. the types of evangelism being utilized,
2. the sports programs offered,
3. the days per week of sports evangelism,
4. the age groups that have been reached through sports evangelism,
5. the staffing for sports evangelism,
6. the number of people involved in sports evangelism,
7. the annual church budget for sports evangelism,
8. the support and involvement of the senior pastor in sports evangelism,
9. the facility space utilized for sports evangelism,
10. the number of conversions, and
11. the number of new people integrated into the life of the church last year as a result of the sports ministry program.

Instrumentation

A twenty-one question structured interview was conducted with leaders from each of the one hundred largest megachurches in America. Four of the questions related to demographics, and seventeen of the questions related to the specific ministry being done in the area of sports evangelism. The demographic information was used to determine if churches of different sizes and locations use sports evangelism in dissimilar ways.

Data Collection Procedure

I utilized the database of megachurches that is currently in the 2004 Church Growth Today/Outreach Magazine study of the one hundred largest churches in America. All of the churches were invited to participate in a twenty-one question structured interview. The structured interview lasted between ten and thirty minutes. Ministry leaders were invited to answer the questions and to provide any additional information regarding their church's specific sports ministry. The survey was filled out by the interviewer with the information shared by the ministry leader. This study was limited to all of the megachurches that have telephone numbers and sports ministries.

Delimitations and Generalizability

The study measured the conversion growth and the integration of new people through the utilization of sports evangelism. Churches were measured to determine how well they have integrated sports evangelism into the evangelistic efforts of the church. I hoped to discover some readily transferable sports evangelism strategies that can be utilized by churches of all sizes. The findings of this study helped to inform church leaders of the opportunities that exist by coupling sports and evangelism. The data was used to encourage churches of various denominational affiliation, size, and location through the discovery of generally adaptable principles of evangelism that should be useful in most areas.

Overview of Summary

Chapter 2 includes the review of literature. This section demonstrates relevant material in the following areas: the lack of, and need for, evangelism, the cultural relevance of sports ministry, the ministry strategies of growing churches and

megachurches, the various forms of evangelism, influence of athletes, and parachurch organizations specializing in sports evangelism. The theological reflection section includes information in the following areas: evangelism; preaching; specific ministry; athletic pictures from Scripture; incarnational ministry; the body, soul, and spirit; self-control; agony: physical, mental, and spiritual; the temple; the prize; and, a historical overview of sports culture. This section is followed by a brief listing of resources and ministry aids in the area of sports evangelism.

Chapter 3 includes the research design as well as the specific methodology for the study. The procedures of data collection and evaluation are detailed in this section.

Chapter 4 describes the survey findings for each question. An analysis of information to determine various sports ministry strategies is also included. A summary of major findings concludes this chapter.

Chapter 5 details the practical application of this study. A discussion of the findings is a part of this chapter. This section includes the conclusions of the study and ideas for further research. Finally, I provide a postscript that details some of the benefits of sports ministry in my local church setting.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE

Lack of Evangelism

Christian people have many reasons for not sharing their faith with others.

Through extensive personal conversation and class discussion, Professor Marva J. Dawn has discovered several common responses and rationalizations that people have for not talking with their neighbors about the Christian way of life. The following is a list of the most common hindrances to witnessing: (1) "I don't know enough; my neighbors ask tough questions that I can't answer"; (2) "I'm not skilled enough; evangelism should be done by a professional"; (3) "I don't have enough time; it takes all my efforts just to get by"; (4) "I'm not brave enough; I'm afraid of rejection"; (5) "I'm not bold enough; I am a very timid and shy person"; (6) "I'm not sure enough; it is very difficult for me to share my faith"; (7) "I'm not strong enough; I'm afraid of how people might respond"; (8) "I don't have any non-Christian friends or neighbors"; (9) "I don't have a friendly church; where would I take guests to worship?"; (10) "TV preachers have given evangelism a bad name"; and, (11) "We can't talk about faith anymore in our culture;. this is a pluralistic society" (128-29).

Need for Evangelism

When considering the need for evangelism, one must understand that evangelism can often take different forms. Some evangelism is like a pre-echo or "first hearing or sounding in the ear of the mind and heart" (Benedict and Miller 43). The pre-echo is what often happens when the gospel is shared in conjunction with a sporting event. Frequently, people in these situations hear the gospel story for the very first time in their lives. Daniel

T. Benedict and Craig Kennet Miller suggest that the next part of hearing the gospel is like an echo, a “deeper hearing and response to Jesus Christ in word and sacrament” (43).

Some people do not believe in planning for evangelism; however, churches must be intentional about evangelism in order to draw in as many new Christians as possible. Just as churches plan for times of prayer, worship, and other facets of the Christian life, they should also make specific plans for outreach. Dale E. Galloway shares these same feelings saying that cutting-edge churches do evangelism intentionally. Willing to try new things, they strive to meet people at “their point of need by providing ministries that minister to needs” (“Church for the Unchurched”). His slogan, “Find a need and meet it. Find a hurt and heal it. You’ll have no shortage of people,” rings true to those people desiring to evangelize in an intentional manner.

From a different perspective, Dawn’s opinion is that evangelism is not planned or a part of a strategy. Nevertheless, Dawn says that it is helpful to study evangelism. Dawn’s belief is that a Christian lives out the gospel through her or his daily life (346). Dawn’s position is understandable but does not seem to be aggressive enough in light of the Great Commission.

One of the most profound aspects of evangelism is the fact that “God has become not only the Sender but simultaneously the One who is sent” (R. Stevens 194). When Christians understand this component of evangelism, then their efforts can increase. R. Paul Stevens also reminds the reader that the Church is “called and sent to be apostolic, catholic, holy and one, to be proclaiming, reconciling, sanctifying, and unifying” (255).

When considering how churches can effectively share their faith with others, David W. Henderson notes that by “asking probing questions we can help spark deeper

thinking” in the lives of unbelievers (143). Henderson speaks of the seven dimensions of the human dilemma and how these dimensions can actually prepare people to hear the gospel. These seven dimensions are (1) alienation from others, (2) bad experiences, (3) conflict between intentions and actions, (4) direction lacking in life, (5) esteem in crisis, (6) uncertain future, and (7) absence of God (224-25). Each of these seven dimensions provides a great place for God’s grace to work. Evangelism that is able to recognize the areas of great need in the lives of people is often extremely effective.

Something to consider when wanting to evangelize effectively is the fact that so many American people embrace a consumer mentality. Due to this fact, churches must creatively address the central needs that are so obvious in society. “Consumption has come to be a central organizing principle of the American economy, and therefore for most individuals in America” (Dyrness 53). Another detail to consider when sharing the gospel is “that when God is successful in one heart He has greater access to another. There is a cumulative effect when people obey God” (Kinlaw, Preaching in the Spirit 112).

Successful evangelism can be found in two of the fastest growing churches in the United States, Willow Creek Community Church and Saddleback Church; they have been steadily increasing their evangelistic efforts over the last several years. Recently, both churches have developed conferences that are geared toward training others in the area of evangelism. Willow Creek’s “Contagious Christian Evangelism Conference” was advertised with the following promises: (1) to discover a renewed passion for lost people, (2) be inspired to develop that same kind of burning passion for lost people, (3) learn the proven six-stage process that can help a church no matter its size, style, or location to

make the changes needed to become even more evangelistic, and (4) at this conference, a team will do more than talk about outreach strategy; it will seek God and his power together for the work he has given you (Willow Creek Association 1).

Saddleback Church's Purpose Driven Life, 40 Days of Purpose Conference has the following evangelistic viewpoint:

End result: Communicate God's love to others and develop a heart for the world, because we were made for a mission. This includes learning to share your faith and participating in some kind of mission activity. What on earth am I here for? During 40 days, your members will rediscover God's five eternal purposes for our lives: number 5 is evangelism; we were made for a mission! (Warren 1)

This conference helps pastors and church leaders to identify ways to help churches become more intentional in the area of evangelism.

Cultural Relevance in Ministry

In an effort to be relevant, churches must truly understand the culture in which they live and serve. They must make Jesus real to this generation by being culturally relevant, according to Sjogren's book Seeing beyond Church Walls (156). Culture is defined by Robert N. Bellah et al. as those patterns of meaning that any group or society uses to interpret and evaluate itself and its situation (333). Churches must be willing to ask some pointed questions in order to understand the culture effectively. The nine questions that Henderson suggests are as follows:

1. What drives the world around you?
2. What makes it different from other places and times?
3. How do people spend their time and money?
4. What is most on the hearts of people who share the freeway and the supermarket with you?
5. What are people thinking about, dreaming about, and longing for?
6. How do people make sense of life?
7. What worldviews are you most likely to encounter among your acquaintances?

8. Who or what has the ear of the people around you?
9. How does sin most often express itself? (38-39)

Effective Christian ministers throughout the ages have probably considered questions similar to these when striving to make Jesus Christ relevant to those in their communities.

According to Richard John Neuhaus, Christians throughout the life of the Church have “envisioned Jesus through their own cultural perspectives” (29). In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul directs the early Church in ministry and communication and demonstrates that “we adapt to the language and culture of the people we are called to reach” (Hunter, Radical Outreach 33). Preaching and communicating the central tenets of the Christian faith “grows out of a concrete situation and possesses meaning in relation to its setting” (Long 35). Dr. J. Ellsworth Kalas urges modern-day preachers to “adapt to audiences in different parts of the country or in different types of circumstances” (37). In 1 Corinthians 9:22 the apostle Paul states, “I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some” (NIV). Jesus was always culturally relevant because he demonstrated tremendous compassion by accepting people even though he did not necessarily approve of everyone’s behavior. The Church must do no less.

Dr. Eugene A. Nida notes that the “task of Christian missions is essentially one of communication, making known in human language the nature of that life which comes from God” (23). When analyzing the patterns of behavior in a culture, the science of cultural anthropology is concerned primarily with the following three issues: (1) the things that make a culture click, (2) the things that make a particular member of a society act in a particular manner and (3) the factors involved in the culture’s stability or change (27). Another issue that must be addressed when engaging people evangelistically is how to “offer God’s grace found in Jesus Christ to individuals who are isolated and insulated

from their geographic community” (Benedict and Miller 5). In order to be truly effective, churches must minister to a broad range of individuals such as “churched believers, churched seekers, unconnected believers, seekers on the journey, latent seekers, churched dropouts, and unbelievers” (29).

When considering ministerial effectiveness, communicating with people is one of the greatest roles pastors have. Dr. Rick Warren says that pastors must adapt their style to their audience (The Purpose Driven Church 294). In addition, they also need to “make the Bible accessible to unbelievers” (296). Essentially two ways exist to reach lost people, according to Lee Strobel. He says that “the illegitimate way is to transform the message, and the biblical way is to translate the message” (1). Since “language is at the heart of culture” (Bateman 295), pastors must communicate in the language of today. If churches are going to effectively evangelistically, then their message needs to be understandable by the masses. The need for an understandable message is one of the reasons that churches are experimenting with different kinds of worship services. Barry Liesch shares that “pastors report that different-style services appeal to the divergent cultures represented in their congregations and reach out to a wider variety of nonchurched individuals” (27). The need for various styles within the church setting requires churches to be creative in their efforts. “If the message of Christ was intended for a culturally diverse group the first day it was preached, and if those cultural distinctions are maintained at the end then we can expect cultural diversity today and must show the same respect for it” (Bateman 295). This statement places a high degree of importance upon being culturally relevant in ministry. Evangelism must be molded in a way to fit the needs and areas of interest represented in the specific culture.

Dr. George G. Hunter, III states that “in a mission field, how we do church affects who we can reach (and keep), and who we cannot, and even whether we reach hardly anyone” (“Doing Church”). Hunter went on to say specifically, that most traditional churches today have lost their effectiveness:

The churches do not reach out, cannot reach and retain secular people, are, often, so isolated from pre-Christian people, they do not know many well enough to invite them, cannot retain a bare majority of their own young people, and now fit the surrounding culture so badly, you cannot graft a good evangelism program onto the church, and expect anything to happen for more than a season.

These findings suggest that the local churches needs to revamp and redirect evangelistic ministry in order to have effective ministry.

Within the Wesleyan Church, a growing perception exists that Christian people must practice cultural engagement and transformation. The Wesleyan denomination has been fairly dormant in this pattern of ministry for quite some time now. Dr. David W. Holdren, General Superintendent of the Wesleyan Church, states that “there are again stirrings among us that God is calling us to take our place, more visibly and viably in our cultures” (2). In order to become more visible within the culture, the Wesleyan Church must become more attuned to the following three areas of development:

1. entrepreneurial: the adherents and leaders in the thick of the emerging Church are creative and free spirited. They are willing to carve out pathways, rather than get caught in ruts, at least not ones that someone else made,
2. empowering: there is a much greater tendency these days for team ministry and lay involvement which includes cell groups, mission outreach, musicals, the arts, sports, children’s ministry, politics, Christian schooling and camping ministries are several examples of things that are largely lay-led, and
3. engaging: probably the most challenging of the wonderful characteristics of the emerging Church is its courage and passion to engage culture and invade its communities, to make a difference for Christ (2).

The attributes are important for all churches that are serious about reaching unchurched people.

Many younger evangelicals are focusing on the process of transformation as they strive to see others develop a relationship with Christ. The leadership of the younger evangelicals stresses the following four areas: “(1) a missiological understanding of the Church, (2) theological reflection, (3) spiritual formation, and (4) cultural awareness” (Webber, Younger Evangelicals 240). Robert E. Webber points out that the younger evangelicals have a unique style of evangelism that is referred to as process evangelism. They emphasize personal commitment, which takes place in the context of community with the help of a friend or mentor. Converts often pass through rites of passage. The Church serves as a caring community, which receives people who eventually come to the faith through a process. “The process involves a converting person going through stages of growth and turning points accompanied by passage rites that express the renunciation of evil and a commitment to Jesus Christ” (225-26). Baptism is a major part of the process and is considered a vital passage rite. The people of the church provide follow-up through mentors and small group involvement.

A church needs to reach out initially to secular people before they can even concentrate on the process of being Christians. Christian leaders must think strategically. In order for the ministry to thrive in the contemporary culture, a church must plan and raise money in line with the overall ministry objectives which includes planning and funding for substantial, evangelistic outreach. Dr. Galloway notes that “strategic planning is the process by which you set objectives, implement vision, assess the future, and develop action plans to accomplish your purposes” (Making Church Relevant 70).

Evangelistic planning is imperative for effective evangelistic ministry.

Dr. Galloway has found that, in reality, most churches have “no plans to reach secular people even though the culture around our churches has changed enormously since the 1950’s” (Making Church Relevant 146). Galloway offers some strategic advice for reaching and engaging unchurched people. The pastor’s role in evangelism is one of “informing ignorance, emphasizing meaning, dialoguing about doubt, offering an alternative church, engaging the alienation, protecting anonymity, encouraging self-worth, proclaiming the Kingdom, offering freedom from addictions, and seeking lost people” (19). When communicating with secular people, some critical principles that can be helpful to remember are as follows:

Begin with active listening, begin where they are, explain basic Christianity, begin with the Gospels, practice the miracle of dialogue, count on cumulative effect, use creative redundancy, assimilate before commitment, Christianity is more caught than taught, and clarify facets of the gospel. (19-22)

Effective communication is a vital part of relevant ministry in the local church setting.

The fact that so many are raised outside of the Church only strengthens the critical importance of churches successfully reaching out to those in the secular world. When analyzing the present-day need for evangelism, Hunter offers some helpful insights that will enable the local church to be truly missional. “With society becoming more urban, multicultural, multireligious, and competitive, God is calling churches to reach the people” (“Doing Church”). Some of the ways that churches are establishing culturally relevant ministry is through small groups where people are trained for ministry and witness, lay-led ministries including pastoral care by laypeople, and worship services that are understandable to the unchurched. Four other features that, increasingly, amplify the

apostolic congregation's outreach include the following: "ministry, witness, invitation to pre-Christian people, and involvement in cross-cultural mission, globally and locally" ("Doing Church").

Churches must provide ministry in the language of the culture. The culture is intensely interested in sports, recreation, and leisure activities. Offering ministry in these areas could provide excellent connecting points with people. When discussing ways to reach a sports saturated culture, John Garner says the following:

We can offer activities in skateboarding to win the skateboarder; we can offer aerobics and nutrition classes to reach the fitness minded; and we can offer basketball in a participatory way to reach every basketball player, young and old. Recreation events are not religious events. Some members have a hard time seeing how these unorthodox tools can be used for the gospel's sake. We have to love them and help them see that the culture they live in is not what it once was. If we are to reach this type of world, we must use every tool at our disposal to capture the imagination of this leisure-oriented, unseeded and sports crazy culture. ("Reaching Our Sports-Crazy Culture")

When churches use every tool at their disposal, including sports evangelism, a whole new, diverse group of people enter through the church doors. A church must understand the sports culture before it delves into this particular type of ministry.

Sports Culture

According to Bob Welch, the sports culture can be divided into several categories. The categories include the athlete, the coach, the armchair quarterback, the sportswriter, the fan, and the father. A summary of each of these categories is as follows:

The athlete, "On the athletic stage, they are the ones in the spotlight. They train, practice, polish, and perform. They win a few and lose a few. They huff and puff and sweat and struggle. They dream of greatness and yet settle for something less. Usually. Every now and then, it all comes together and they live those dreams. They are the athletes." (Welch 13)

The coach, "Coaches are the first to arrive. They make sure the

equipment is there. They choose the team, run the drills, and fire up the players. They encourage, remind, instruct, and, sometimes, explode. They're the last to leave. And the first to arrive again, as the cycle begins anew." (63)

The armchair quarterback, "They watch from afar. The thinkers. Those who would try to make sense of this thing called sports. Those who would try to examine beyond two teams, two scores, one field. They hypothesize. They scrutinize. They philosophize. All in an effort to understand the game beyond the game. They are the armchair quarterbacks." (89)

The sportswriter, "They are the scribes. They tell us what happened and why. They score the plays. Interview the players. Describe the action for those who couldn't see it and those who saw it but want the details. They are both insiders, those who get close to the action, and outsiders, those relegated to experiencing the game vicariously, not firsthand. They are the sportswriters." (121)

The fan, "Fans are the cheers in the stadium, the percussion to the symphony. They tell you that they bleed their school's colors. They live and die with their heroes. They care too much, of course; it's just a game. To some, perhaps more. They memorize the statistics. Anticipate Saturday's game. Analyze it for days after it's over. They are sometimes fickle, sometimes loyal beyond belief. They are the fans." (151)

The fathers, "They are the guys sitting in the stands, quietly going crazy. They wonder if the coach is doing the job, if the ump is doing the job, if their son or daughter is doing the job. They're the guys out back, playing catch, remembering what it once was like when they played catch with their father. Or why their father never took the time. They revel in the successes, try to be philosophical about the failures. They are the fathers." (181)

This extensive list indicates just how many groups of people are actually involved in the sports culture. A large number of these people are not being targeted by churches but could become highly involved if offered particular ministries.

Many people view sports as a distinct cultural language. Unlimited outlets for sports exist, including sports radio, sports magazines, sports newspaper sections, sports news segment, ESPN, along with many sporting venues such as little league, middle school, high school, college, professional, and amateur athletics. Everywhere a person

looks, sports are dominant in American culture. Coaches and athletes have tremendous influence in society:

Think back to your own experience in school. If you played sports, how much influence did your coaches have on you? For many people, their coaches are memorable, positive role models. Coaching, like few other opportunities of influences, presents a powerful way to get involved in the lives of children. (Sjogren and Sjogren 48)

Culture has a great interest in the area of sports. Moore shares how prevalent golf is becoming in today's culture. Currently, at least fourteen hundred college students are majoring in golf at eight universities. More schools are in the process of starting such programs. A million-dollar "learning laboratory" (golf clubhouse) was recently completed at one school. Golf courses are opening at a rate of approximately one a day across the country (Moore 14). Apparently, the importance of sports continues to grow within this culture.

A strong connection often exists between a person's spirituality and his or hers involvement in sports. The former college football coach from Nebraska, Tom Osborne, says the following:

The biggest way in which my style of leadership has changed over the years, and I am talking about 41 years of coaching, is that I live my life more Christian-patterned than it was when I got started in this. At least I hope I have grown in my Christian life through the years. I have tried to be a better example to my players." (22)

Osborne also notes that "many coaches have enjoyed short-term success while ignoring spiritual commitment. However, a high percentage of coaches who had lengthy careers have been people of faith. Faith has provided them with a compass to find their way through the pitfalls of coaching" (22). If coaches can use their faith to impact players, certainly Christian sports enthusiasts can use their faith to impact those around them.

Churches ought to harness the potential that sports evangelism holds for church growth.

Ministry Strategies of Growing Churches

According to Christian A. Schwarz, the eight quality characteristics of growing churches are (1) empowering leadership, (2) gift-oriented ministry, (3) passionate spirituality, (4) functional structures, (5) inspiring worship service, (6) holistic small groups, (7) need-oriented evangelism, and (8) loving relationships (9). In this study, I considered the qualities of growing churches related to evangelism, particularly in the area of sports.

Although sports evangelism may seem rather extreme to some, it has great potential to reach huge numbers of people who would normally not enter a church. According to Hunter, congregations must consider five questions pertaining to radical outreach:

1. Do we want to know them?
2. Are we willing to go where they are?
3. Are we willing to spend time with them?
4. Do we want secular and outside-the-establishment people in our churches?
5. Are we willing for our church to become their church too? (Radical Outreach 187)

Churches certainly ought to consider these questions before they implement new types of evangelism, especially because they will be drawing a new group of people into their congregations.

Simply starting a new evangelism program does not guarantee success. One must consider that cutting-edge churches often grow in the area of evangelism due to extensive training programs that are in place. Galloway states that all pastors should act like coaches; therefore, pastors must “train, train, train. Do not expect people to know how to

do any phase of ministry without training” (Making Church Relevant 73). His words point to the importance of the pastor in creating a vision, not only for the church as a whole, but for each member.

Steve Sjogren, founding pastor of the Cincinnati Vineyard Church, challenges pastors that would demonstrate the courage to lead an outward-focused church. Sjogren, who has written numerous evangelistic books, calls for pastors to develop people who will be aggressive evangelistically. Early in his ministry, Sjogren wanted to pastor a church that would make a difference in the community by building disciples who would be spiritually deep in an environment that was fun. Over the years the fruit of their outward-focused church consists of (1) people who are hungry for community, (2) people who are hungry to make a difference in the world, (3) people who will give money in large amounts to the causes of the church, (4) people who will seek to follow the Lord, and (5) people who will seek the disciplines of the Holy Spirit because they seek to grow spiritually.

Much of Sjogren’s design for an outward-focused church comes from a realization that God wants “go and do” churches rather than “come and see” churches. With Matthew 28 as the basis for this design, these churches are essentially “launching-pad churches” that help to send out people for ministry through church planting and evangelistic service. They frequently have unusual beginnings because they are called together in divine ways by the Holy Spirit. Their leadership is often interested in seeking God for strategies to reach their city for him. Outward-focused churches are “highly motivated to care for people, highly motivated to evangelize, highly motivated to do discipleship well, highly motivated to care for the lost, and highly motivated to invest in

the community” (Sjogren, Seeing beyond Church Walls 12). Sports evangelism can be very successful in an outward-focused church since so many people in the community are involved in this particular arena.

Sjogren shares several tips for building an outward-focused church. First, he says to pray a dangerous prayer. He prayed, “God, I’ll take the next open door that comes my way.” That prayer is not the type of prayer a reasonable person prays. In order to reach a community effectively, the local church must step out and take a risk.

His second tip is to “give outreach enough time for the process of change to begin in your heart” (Sjogren, Seeing beyond Church Walls 103). According to Sjogren, many people miss the blessing that comes to those who do outreach because they give up too quickly trying to minister to the needy. His encouragement is to keep resolve in order to reap a fruitful outcome (103).

Thirdly, he says to pray that things will get out of control, in the best sense of the word. As God opens the doors, he wants people to walk through them. Sjogren adds that Christians should take the risks as they become available. Not all details must be given in advance (Seeing beyond Church Walls 103). Finally, Sjogren believes that God is in the business of spreading fire. When the kingdom of God shows up in its fullness, fires are kindled and hearts are set ablaze (103). People are attracted to fire, anytime, any place, he declares (110).

Rick Warren of Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California, has helped many church leaders discover how to lead and develop a purpose-driven church. Warren’s church has attracted large numbers of unchurched people because of the changed lives of the people in their church family. Warren continuously shares that “a church’s health is

measured by its sending capacity, not its seating capacity” (Purpose Driven Church 32).

The five dimensions of church growth, are evident when “(1) churches grow warmer through fellowship, (2) churches grow deeper through discipleship, (3) churches grow stronger through worship (which includes preaching and prayer), (4) churches grow broader through ministry, and (5) churches grow larger through evangelism” (49).

Warren shares several specific strategies for church growth. Churches should start ministering to people at their point of spiritual need (Purpose Driven Church 56). They should remember that the message can never change but the methods must change with each new generation (61). Learning from other churches without becoming a clone is important (68). Focus on growing a church with programs is not as effective as focusing on growing people with a process (108). Warren points out that the community is where evangelism must begin (131). Growing the church should start from the outside in, rather than from the inside out (138). The ministry programming should be around a church’s purposes (141). He maintains that a wide variety of ways can be used to target an audience, based upon geographical, demographical, cultural, and spiritual information. “The best way to find out the culture, mind-set, and lifestyle of people is to talk to them” (166). Talking with the people will enable a church to understand and adapt to the culture. In addition, understanding the culture will allow a local church to determine the approach that will most effectively reach the people of the surrounding culture. Warren urges church leaders to “use more than one hook” (200), even though this practice can be quite costly. Using multiple ministry outreaches and options can potentially reach more people; however, as mentioned, it may not always be 100 percent successful.

Nonetheless, churches must be willing to try new things in order to reach people for Christ.

Churches that are growing often do experiment with many different strategies for ministry. Pastor Jeff Spiller of Christ Church in Mobile, Alabama, recently shared with the Beeson pastors about his church's 76,000 square foot addition that would be used for recreational ministry space. Spiller reported that they currently have over one thousand kids in Upward Basketball. Dr. Robert Schuller demonstrated a new and innovative strategy for reaching people through developing a church that met at a drive-in theater back in 1955. The Crystal Cathedral has continued to develop in new and exciting ways. The church has developed a solid sports program for reaching the unchurched. They have also built a lay-led twenty-four hour a day prayer and counseling center that serves the hurting people of Garden Grove, California, and beyond.

A fruitful way to describe the reasons for church growth, according to Pastor John Ed Mathison, is to identify three sets of factors. First are the factors that attract persons to the gospel and the church. Next, are the factors that influence persons to make a commitment to Christ and membership in a congregation. Finally, certain factors bond persons in their relationship with Christ and the church (v).

Mathison reports that pastors of growing churches often rank the factors that contribute to membership growth. His research shows that the top ten factors are

1. vital worship services,
2. fellowship and relational settings,
3. pastor and pastoral functions,
4. sharply targeted ministries,

5. community and world outreach,
6. Christian education,
7. growth posture and planning,
8. physical facilities and location,
9. lay leadership and involvement, and
10. evangelism activities (vi).

Much of the ministry growth and success that Mathison has experienced is due to the involvement of laity in meaningful ministry. The involvement of laity has helped to create an atmosphere of spiritual excitement and momentum. Mathison is convinced that truly meaningful ministry takes place when the ministry needs and the spiritual gifts of the laity are matched together. He shares that the most effective and exciting ministries are those that are designed to meet a specific need that laity perceive (8).

Erwin McManus of the Mosaic Church shares their philosophy for ministry by highlighting his church's core values. He shares about how these core values shape ministry. The Mosaic Church's core values are as follows: "(1) Mission is why the Church exists (Acts 2:2-4); (2) Love is the context for all mission (Isa. 43:20-21); (3) Structure must always submit to Spirit (John 15:5); (4) Relevance to culture is not optional (Exod. 3:2-5); and, (5) Creativity is the natural result of spirituality (Luke 8:15)". Mosaic's mission statement is "to Live by Faith, to be Known by Love and to be a Voice of Hope!" Their core convictions are also stated in the following way:

The Bible is God's authoritative word to us, Jesus is the only hope for a lost and broken world, the local church is God's agent for redemptive change, every Christian is called and gifted by God to serve the Body and seek the Lost, and the Church is called to "whole earth evangelism."

Clearly, cutting-edge churches have well-defined ministry objectives that are highly

evangelistic in nature. Mosaic Church demonstrates a ministry that has a missionary mentality woven into the fabric of the ministry of the people. Other churches can apply some of the factors of growth and core values to their own ministries in order to see dynamic growth.

Forms of Evangelism

Given the evangelistic mandate of the Wesleyan Church and other evangelical churches, a need to develop different types of evangelism exists. Appendix D delineates the role that evangelism has in the Wesleyan Church as an example of its importance in ministry. This denomination, along with others, stresses the primary importance of seeing people converted. Next, they desire to get people involved in the work of God's kingdom; therefore, many forms of evangelism are necessary to reach people of all ages.

Since 1844, with the formation of the YMCA, an increasing awareness that evangelistic ministry needs to be directed at reaching young people during their formative years has been established. The idea of youth ministry is a trend of the last century, and, in particular, of the last fifty years. G. Stanley Hall, the so-called "Father of Adolescence," actually first coined the word "adolescent" around the turn of the century (Webber, Journey to Jesus 155). In order to impact society profoundly, churches must practice evangelistic ministry that leans strongly toward children and youth. Churches need to find models of evangelism that are effective in the postmodern world. Webber states, "The church must learn to live and breathe in the postmodern world, and find ways to be the agent of change that Christ called her to be" (219). If a church wants to survive and thrive, then it needs to be willing to follow God's calling.

Young people can often lead the way in helping the church find innovative and

creative ways to share the gospel with the unchurched. One of the seemingly natural habitats for the young people of today is the mall. Youth groups have done activities for many years at these fully enclosed, climate-controlled, shopping centers. These locations are often highly populated with people during many hours of the day and night. The constant flow of people makes the malls excellent locations for ministry. Many church plants are doing whole-church outreach at local malls or on the local main street because people are often gathered in these areas (“Outreach: In the Marketplace” 30). Outreach at the mall is simply one way that churches can creatively reach the lost for Christ.

Servant Evangelism

Christian leadership is always servant leadership. Jesus was a servant leader who set the perfect example for his followers as he spread the good news. This form of evangelism is very dear to my heart because I have been actively involved in servant evangelism for many years now. Servant evangelism involves doing acts of kindness and generosity to show people the love of Christ, according to Sjogren who has seen his church, Cincinnati Vineyard, experience tremendous growth due to the fact that they “exist to love this city into relationship with Christ” (Seeing beyond Church Walls 27). He challenges churches to “let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds” (19; Heb. 10:24).

Outreach that focuses on serving the lowest, the lost, and the least of society is exceedingly powerful. Mother Teresa, who had a powerful ministry for these people, said she did small things with great love. Sjogren says, “I’ve come to believe that is the best we can do. Small things done with great love will change the world” (Perfectly Imperfect Church 73). This kind of ministry is done with no strings attached. Those serving expect

nothing in return because the service is all done for the glory of God as an act of worship. Sjogren shares that his church is “moving from complexity to simplicity” in its approach to evangelism. He goes on to say that “God’s message is simple, and the people of God are hungry for that simple message” (Seeing beyond Church Walls 18). I have certainly learned to apply that simplicity to various ways I have used evangelism in my ministry.

While serving as the youth pastor of Christian Community Church in Westerville, Ohio, from 1992 to 1998, I was involved in a wide variety of servant evangelism outreaches. Some of our favorite ministries included the following: an all-night study break at the local college during final exams week featuring cartoons, free pizza for college students, free car washes, free yard work, and mailbox painting. Servant evangelism made me aware of the fact that “outreach is like a tool belt full of tools” (Sjogren, Perfectly Imperfect Church 59). When discussing evangelism, Galloway says to “take up the towel. Pick up a trowel. Grab a hammer. Wash the dishes. Dial the phone. Pull the weeds. Or donate blood” (Leading with Vision 50). Truly, unlimited tools are available to those churches wanting to share the love of Christ with others by serving them.

Through my involvement, I also recognized that “mission flows out of our participation in the love of God” (Seamands, “As the Father” 9). In the process of experimenting with different forms of evangelism, Sjogren discovered that “all evangelism is good evangelism as long as it’s respectful of the individual. Any sort of evangelism can abuse people and therefore be less than positive” (Perfectly Imperfect Church 60). When sharing with non-Christians, some distinctive guidelines can help Christians to minister in a way that will protect individuals from being treated just as

converts. Chris Fabry points out that it should not be done out of a works righteousness mentality or to make someone feel better or because it is one's duty (39). Fabry discourages Christians from evangelizing only those who may be perceived as "stellar candidates for Christianity" (39). Finally, he shares that "committed Christians know the value of a good church. They desire worship, see needs, plug in, help out, get involved. However, ineffective Christians do not look for ways to serve, but for ways to change things for their own good" (88). Churches can use these guidelines when training their leaders and laypeople on how to reach out to people with the love of Christ.

When considering the far-reaching impact of God's love, Pastor Church Smith, Jr. reminds Christian leaders that "there are classes of people that the Bible commands believers to protect and nurture. These are people who are constantly in danger of being overlooked, exploited, or oppressed, including widows, orphans, the poor, foreigners, the disabled, prisoners of war, and slaves" (70). This comment certainly touches on Fabry's point and reminds the Church that all people, not just a select few, are potential converts to Christianity.

Friendship or Personal Evangelism

Dr. Bob Tuttle shares about the importance of personal contact within the realm of the church experience. He says that about twenty-five touches must be made from God, spiritual encounters, or witnesses before actual conversion takes place. Many of these personal touches can be made through friendship evangelism.

Churches must create opportunities to build relationships. Saddleback Church has a wide variety of events that build relationships within its family. Events include supper clubs, sports, game nights, and picnics; however, Warren shares that their weekend

retreats are, by far, the most effective events that plant and nurture new friendships (Purpose Driven Church 325). The weekend retreats enable people to build lasting friendships. When discussing this special sense of community, Warren says, “The church must always be growing larger and smaller at the same time” (326). As a church grows larger, small groups of friendships must develop so that people feel a part of the community. Friendship evangelism is definitely an integral part of Saddleback Church.

Brett and Dee Eastman, Todd and Denise Wendorff, and Karen Lee-Thorp discuss friendship evangelism and how to share a person’s life mission every day. They direct the reader to reflect on the following ideas, which center around evangelism:

I am cultivating relationships with non-Christians and praying for God to give me natural opportunities to share his love. I am investing my time in another person or group who needs to know Christ personally. I am regularly inviting unchurched or unconnected friends to my church or small group. I am praying and learning about where God can use me and our group cross-culturally for missions. (73)

A church that is focusing on friendship evangelism can encourage its members to ask themselves if they are doing these things on a daily basis. Eastman, Eastman, Wendorff, Wendorff, and Lee-Thorp give specific suggestions on how believers can share their faith every day. They recommend meeting for lunch with a seeker friend or inviting a non-Christian relative to church. They stress the importance of praying for and supporting an overseas missionary (75). These suggestions are all simple ways that can help even new Christians to share their faith with others.

Small group ministry is another way for people to participate in friendship evangelism. Galloway asserts that as churches grow they lose the personal touch and cannot provide effective genuine pastoral care. Many times, they can no longer provide ways for people to develop new friendships in the church setting; however, properly

designed and implemented small groups provide members with a way to develop strong, personal ties within the church (Making Church Relevant 86).

In The Small Group Book, Galloway states, “When you really begin to release lay people in small-group ministry, healing happens, and it multiplies to touch countless others” (51). He stresses the importance of keeping small groups open to new people in order to reach out continually to develop new relationships (60). An open-group system is a key component of friendship evangelism: when people witness an open-group system of small group ministry that welcomes new people on a regular basis, they are more likely to feel welcomed in a church.

Worship Evangelism

Sally Morgenthaler believes that evangelism’s ultimate goal should be to produce more and better worshippers (39). Worship evangelism often includes dance, drama, multisensory messages, music, ritual, symbols, and video:

Worship evangelism is simply letting God do with us and through us what God intends. It happens when we allow ourselves to be the passionate, adoring people of God we were created to be, when we allow seekers to experience the wonder of true worship and, most importantly, when we allow God to be God. (280)

A wide variety of worship styles are found today. For instance, books of common denominationally based worship and books of common denominationally based song are used. In addition, churches hold various types of worship services, including, but not limited to, the seeker service, the blended worship service, the visitor friendly worship, and the seeker sensitive worship service. Emily R. Brink calls worship “front door evangelism” because public worship is now considered a primary vehicle for evangelism (17). Evangelism ought to be a basic part of the lifeblood of the Christian community and

worship (69).

When discussing the importance of worship in Christian ministry, Warren states the following: “In genuine worship God’s presence is felt, God’s pardon is offered, God’s purposes are revealed, and God’s power is displayed” (Purpose Driven Church 242).

Dawn provides a contrary point of view when she suggests that worship and evangelism have two completely separate roles in the ministry of the church:

Worship is the language of love and growth between believers and God; evangelism is the language of introduction between those who believe and those who don’t. To confuse the two and put on worship the burden robs the people of God of their responsibility to care about their neighbor, defrauds believers of transforming depth, and steals from God the profound praise of which he is worthy. (124)

I believe that all aspects of Christian lives should be worship unto God. All that they do should be expressed as an act of worship to the Lord, including giving, serving others, preaching, praying, spending time with family, and sharing faith with others.

Power Evangelism

Another form of evangelism that has been used to reach many people for Christ is power evangelism. The recent Alpha movement has placed a tremendous emphasis upon this experiential form of ministry. During the 2003 Alpha conference at Asbury Theological Seminary, pastors were reminded of the following six New Testament principles that help to define the basis for power evangelism:

1. Evangelism is most effective through the local church.
2. Evangelism is a process;
3. Evangelism involves the whole person;
4. Models of evangelism in the New Testament include classical, holistic; and power evangelism.

5. Evangelism in the power of the Holy Spirit is both dynamic; and, effective.
6. Effective evangelism requires the filling and refilling of the Holy Spirit (Alpha 5-7).

Sports Evangelism

Since an estimated 96 percent of the population is linked to sports, forward-thinking churches should develop a deep interest in sports evangelism (Dotson). This form of ministry can be a marvelous way to develop strong, evangelical outreach within the community. Victor Lee, a pastor in Knoxville, Tennessee, shares that sports evangelism is actually being used around the world to reach people for Christ. He says that the “rationale for sports evangelism is simple: every ethnic and socioeconomic barrier can be broken with a soccer ball, a basketball or the athletic tool of choice where you are ministering” (1). That is something that I found to be true during my years of high school and collegiate athletics.

Lee discusses six main reasons that sports evangelism works so well. First, it can draw in the largest cross section of people. Second, sports appeal to the secularized, unchurched, and nonbelievers. Third, men and teenagers, two of the often overlooked groups, are reached. Fourth, this type of evangelism fulfills church growth principles. A fifth reason is that people are most easily influenced when having fun. The sixth and final reason he gives is that people are typically attracted to athletic facilities (1).

If a church intends to draw in new people through a sports evangelism program, it must target lost people. Otherwise, the intended audience will not be reached (Dotson). Simply providing sports programs for people currently within the church does not pull in

the unchurched people. Evangelism possibilities are numerous when using sports as the ministry tool.

Lee says many forms of sports evangelism exist, most of which can be mixed. Generally, however, three types are used: event centered, competition centered, and personality centered. Event-centered sports evangelism can be done without even attending the big event. Volunteers can hand out gospel tracts or magazines at the Super Bowl. Churches can send volunteers to help with the organizing committees of local events. The volunteers must have servants' hearts and should be sensitive to opportunities that may arise to share the gospel message. Churches can sponsor block parties during large sporting events where the gospel message is presented. They can have gatherings during events such as the Olympics, the Final Four, or even local events. Numerous media resources are available for these types of get-togethers. Resources include tracts, books, pamphlets, and videos. During the 1998 Men's World Cup of soccer, over 500,000 fans attended evangelistic World Cup watch parties (1). For this particular event, sixteen media resources were available in one hundred languages and were distributed to twenty-two countries, along with 113,000 special editions of "The Jesus Film" (1). A World Cup outreach is a wonderful and practical way to reach out to people during a fun and relaxing event that they would naturally enjoy.

Competition-centered evangelism is the second form discussed by Lee. In this type, the game itself is the connecting point to the message. Perhaps a church offers a softball league or has basketball or volleyball games. Some communities desire to have more leagues. The need for more leagues presents churches with an opportunity to offer a youth sports league that will regularly share the message of salvation. In 1994, Upward

Unlimited was created and helped Upward Basketball become one of the most impressive sports evangelism models in the world. “In a gym full of parents, uncles, aunts and grandparents, while the kids are off talking strategy, the adults are hearing about how to know Jesus” (1). The Upward Basketball outreach is so exciting because both children and their relatives are coming to Christ. The third form of sports evangelism, personality-centered evangelism, is discussed later in this study.

Sports Evangelism at Megachurches

This section highlights some of the exciting things that are being done in the area of sports evangelism at a few leading megachurches in the United States. The focus is primarily on what Pastor Ed Young is doing at Fellowship Church in Dallas, Texas. According to Young, Fellowship’s athletic ministry began in 1994. The ministry started when the singles pastor began using sports as a means of building relationships among the people involved in the weekend Bible study classes. FC Sports, as the ministry is now called, quickly became a large part of the church (Stanley and Young 95).

Now Fellowship Church offers a year-round athletics calendar that includes a wide variety of sports such as hockey, soccer, volleyball, flag football, softball, tennis, 5k “fun runs,” rock-climbing, golf, and basketball in addition to a variety of tournaments. The church has over three thousand adults involved in sports ministry. They utilize off-site facilities for 90 percent of their activities. City or school-owned facilities are often rented for a fee, which is offset by registration costs. Young sees sports evangelism as a natural inlet into the church. This ministry helps them to meet people from many different levels of spiritual interest. Young describes the way sports evangelism can help to attract many people to the local church:

One of the best things the athletics ministry provides is a comfortable inlet to the life of Fellowship Church. People of all walks of life have found a church home at Fellowship Church simply through the relationship they've built while participating in the various sports we offer. (Stanley and Young 97)

The key to the spiritual connection made through sports is the pregame or postgame devotional and sharing time incorporated into the sports program. These times are usually led by a sports ministry staff member. They typically have a team leader or captain share a personal testimony, which points to the need to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The pastoral heart of this ministry is conveyed in these words of Young: "One of the key things to understand about a ministry like athletics is that you need to reach people where they are, develop relationships with them, and then get them involved in the life and ministry of the local church. (Stanley and Young 97).

Several reasons exist for having a sports ministry. First, it helps to meet a basic need that people have for social interaction and entertainment. Next, sports ministry enables people of all ages to be introduced to the life of the church. In addition, it helps people connect to the church and build relationships. Finally, sports ministry often leads to spiritual transformation.

Many people have come to Fellowship Church and, eventually, to a relationship with Christ through the athletic ministry. Pastor Young says that the number of people affected through the ministry is too high to list (Stanley and Young 99). Appendix A highlights the story of a person who was greatly impacted through sports evangelism.

The captains of their sports teams are required to attend a mandatory leadership meeting before all sports seasons begin. At this meeting they are told what the church expects of them as the leader of the team and how they are to approach this leadership

role. The captains are trained in relationship building and evangelism and challenged to get involved in the lives of their team members. They are encouraged to be aware of and concerned about each player's spiritual growth.

Fellowship Church has recently renovated an office building that is used to house a state-of-the-art youth facility with basketball cages, a rock-climbing wall, video and table games, a café, and a meeting room for up to one thousand youth. Much of what happens in this building is fun and recreational. A basic need for social interaction and entertainment is met as young people are introduced to the youth ministry of the church. A year-round sports ministry for adults serves this same purpose (Stanley and Young 95-98).

Stanley and Young relate the following in regard to meeting people's needs through sports evangelism:

We shouldn't be ashamed to meet people's recreational and social needs before meeting their spiritual needs. Christ often met a variety of other needs, physical, emotional, social, before he was able to impact people spiritually. At the wedding at Cana, he turned water into wine to make sure the guests had a good time; and in the process, he authenticated his identity and power as the Christ. (99)

When designing ministry plans, many things can be learned from large churches. The following is a list of what a large church can do in ministry:

(1) They reach people other churches can't reach, (2) They reach people at different stages of need, (3) They offer multiple points of entry, (4) They multiply the touches people receive, (5) They provide stability when a family splits up, (6) They tend to develop high-impact worship and marketplace preaching that hits people where they are and motivates them toward God, (7) They present a place of service for staff not particularly gifted to lead a single-pastorate church, (8) They provide a broad range of opportunities for people to discover and use their spiritual gifts in ministry, (9) They can sponsor ministry seven days a week, (10) They have the ability to spend more resources on attracting and reaching lost people, (11) They can make a noticeable contribution to world

evangelization, (12) They have the potential for becoming teaching centers, (13) They can make an impact on an entire section of a city, and (14) They provide a lift to all other churches on the surrounding ecclesiastical landscape. (Galloway, On Purpose Leadership 26-29)

Large churches like The Church of the Resurrection in Kansas City tend to have well-defined and well-planned ideas for evangelistic ministry. The pastor of The Church of the Resurrection, Adam Hamilton, shares their core values with the following formula:

“Purpose + Values + Prayer = Vision.” Hamilton defines their values with ten key ideas or practices. They include

1. evangelism,
2. relevance,
3. excellence in everything they do,
4. continuous learning and benchmarking,
5. excellent follow-up,
6. a mentality of doing everything necessary,
7. a commitment to the Church,
8. humility toward each other,
9. the power of the Holy Spirit, and
10. effective lay ministry.

Their mission statement is “to build a Christian community where non-religious and nominally religious people are becoming deeply committed Christians.” As an example of creative and innovative evangelistic ministry, The Church of the Resurrection in Kansas City has an ongoing outreach campaign that is entitled “Mug Thy Neighbor,” which entails visiting new and perspective members and giving them coffee beans and mugs. Visiting new churchgoers is a wonderful strategy for involving laypeople in

reaching out to others. Volunteers sign up to invest one hour per month to welcome new visitors. A new visitor is called on within twenty-four hours of the new visitor's first exposure to the church.

Today's effective churches are those who think in terms of multiplication. Every church today has limited resources, even those we might look up to as the biggest, fastest-growing, wealthiest, or most evangelistically fruitful. Wise leaders learn how to multiply the resources that God has already entrusted to them. Some of the ways that churches can apply the principle of multiplication, according to Galloway, are as follows:

1. Multiplying themselves through developing others as leaders
2. Multiplying the workers in the great harvest
3. Multiplying small groups by raising up apprentices
4. Multiplying the number of worship services to reach more people
5. Multiplying the use of buildings
6. Multiplying the ways resources are used
7. Multiplying the church through church planting." (Making Church Relevant 32-33)

Churches that have sports fields and gymnasiums need to practice good stewardship by utilizing the facilities on a regular basis. Many churches that have these kinds of facilities often only use them one or two days per week.

Sports Listed in Church Bulletins or on Web Sites

An extensive review of church bulletins and Web sites helped to discover many different avenues for sports ministry. The following sports and activities were being utilized to reach people for God: aerobics, baseball, basketball, basketball clinics, body balance, chess, cycling, darts, equestrian, exercise class, fishing (bass tournaments and deep sea fishing), flag football, floor hockey, foosball, golfing, gymnastics, hiking, hunting (safety and certification courses), in-line skating, jet skiing, judo, paintball, Pilates, ping pong, pool, prison sports outreach, rock climbing wall, rodeos, roller

skating, running (5k up to the marathon and helping at water stations), snow skiing, soccer, softball, stretching, surfing, taekwondo, video games, volleyball, walking, weight lifting, and whitewater river rafting.

Other Sports to Consider

Many different sports options are available for churches to consider utilizing. The most unusual found in this study was paintball. Considered an “extreme sport,” paintball is not normally an area where people would consider evangelism. Nevertheless, the Christian Paintball Players Association (CPPA) has had an impact on non-Christians as they have received ministry on the paintball field. Started in 1996, the CPPA now has over 1,850 members in every state and several countries, including Canada, Brazil, and Korea (Yonke B3). The fact that evangelism can be done through paintball simply shows how unlimited the options are in the area of sports ministry. In addition, the usage of paintball as an evangelism tool shows that sports ministry is not bound by one particular culture.

Another highly unusual form of sports evangelism is the Christian Wrestling Federation’s (CWF) sanitized version of professional wrestling. Selwyn Crawford of Dallas, Texas, reports on these dozen or so wrestlers, including characters such as Apocalypse, Angel, the Beast, and Jesus Freak who tour the state. A program of matches precedes a presentation of the gospel message. According to a Federation founder, the group’s main priority is ministry. The sport of wrestling is used as a vehicle to reach teenagers with the gospel message (18). Although some sports, such as wrestling, have a rough image, the work of CWF shows how particular outreaches can be used to target specific groups of people with the good news of Christ.

Another unusual form of sports evangelism is actually a hybrid between sports evangelism and servant evangelism. TeamVineyard-Bicyclists4Christ is a Christian cycling group of various riding styles that teams together to provide outreach in the name of Jesus Christ. The members of the group are passionate about cycling and service to others:

We each knew that we had a passion for cycling and we also knew that we wanted to do something for God. The Scripture that says, “Do all things as unto the Lord,” gave us the idea that as we ride, we can do small things in love by leading water bottle outreaches, prayer services and by fixing up old bicycles for kids. (K. Stevens)

This kind of ministry demonstrates how specialized sports ministry can become in the local church.

The Influence of an Athlete

Mathison discusses how effective the use of athlete testimonies at sporting events can be at reaching the masses. Over the years, leading sportsmen and sportswomen have had tremendous influence upon others. They serve as role models in today’s society. Olympic distance runner Jim Ryan tells of the great influence of an English athlete named C. T. Studd. He was considered by many to be the greatest cricketer in England (284). Studd used his influence for the glory of God by traveling throughout England, speaking at YMCAs, Police Institutes, and Wesleyan Central Halls. Tens of thousands of men, many of whom had never stepped inside a church, came to hear Studd speak (292). Revivalist Billy Sunday was first known as a baseball center fielder. He was popular among the men and sports fans wherever he went to minister. At his first public appearance in the late 1880s, “his audience was made up of about 500 men who didn’t know much about his talents as a preacher but could remember his galloping to second

base with his cap in hand” (Galli and Olsen 73). Sunday grew up in an orphanage with the support of his brother and the love of sports, especially baseball (74). Early in his ministry, he determined to preach the gospel plainly so “that men can come from the factories and not have to bring a dictionary” (74).

Personality-Centered Sports Evangelism

According to Garner, author of “Reaching Our Sports Crazy Culture,” personality-centered sports evangelism is effective because “people love and admire athletes, and many athletes love and follow Jesus.” Garner finds the following:

More and more athletes believe that their purpose for being famous is to share the love of Jesus Christ with their fans. Basketball player David Robinson helped lead the San Antonio Spurs to the NBA title. He has endorsements, fame and glory, but he says, “Every time I step onto the court, I think about glorifying God. I just want to make sure people don’t think I’m great, but that they think about how great God is. I play so that people can see Christ in me.”

The Lord is able to use athletes as role models and influencers for his ongoing ministry in the world.

Many athletes can be moved to pursue evangelistic ministry through sports. The testimony of Chad Varga is a great example of how a successful athlete can use his or her influence to touch the lives of others:

“Listen, let me tell you what is going on in my life,” I would tell any pastor who would listen. “Just three days ago, I gave up a lucrative career in professional basketball. God has put a passion in my heart to reach the lost. God has done some incredible things in my life. Can you give me just ten minutes to share a little of it with you?” (Varga and Yoder 94)

Church leaders can have a profound impact in sports evangelism by helping athletes to develop spiritually. This form of discipleship can produce great results evangelistically.

The following excerpt demonstrates this point:

After my first week of traveling, I realized I had much to learn about being more effective. Although I had a passion to challenge the churches, I also had a burning passion deep inside me to reach a generation of kids searching for something real, searching for a God who cares about them personally. (Varga and Yoder 96)

Many athletes have discovered that sports can provide a wonderful platform of sharing the Gospel.

Parachurch Organizations Specializing in Sports Ministry

Several different parachurch organizations specialize in sports, including The Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA), Athletes in Action (a ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ), Young Life (sports and outdoor camps), and Champions for Christ (a Bible study for varsity athletes on many college campuses). Material has been included in the appendixes that provide an overview of some of the exciting things that are happening through sports ministry.

Appendix A describes how lives can be transformed through sports ministry. A personal story highlights the spiritual impact that sports ministry can have in a person's life. Appendix B provides an overview of some of the leading sports evangelism Web sites. These sources can help church leaders to discover new ways to utilize sports ministry in the overall ministry of the local church. Appendix C includes a recreation facility checklist for churches that are contemplating building a sports complex. This resource can help raise the right questions for the building process. Appendix D relates the evangelistic mandate of the Wesleyan Church. Evangelism should be at the core of the ministry of the present-day Church. Appendix E describes the characteristics of the younger evangelicals. This resource enables church leaders to understand how young evangelicals think and what they value most. Appendix F relates the top ten insights that

Hunter has for supporting culturally relevant Christianity. Sports evangelism is a ministry strategy that seeks to be culturally relevant. Appendix G raises questions about church leaders evangelistic passion. Appendix H is an article that describes how society values athletes by paying them millions of dollars to endorse various products. Appendix I provides a summary of Upward Basketball and some of the details pertaining to its utilization in the ministry of the local church. Appendix J includes the twenty-one question survey for this study. Finally, Appendix K is a detailed listing of the sports ministries found in church bulletins and Web sites. This listing demonstrates the variety of options for sports ministry.

One ministry that is having a profound impact upon communities throughout the country is Upward Basketball. According to the Upward Basketball Web site, the purpose of Upward Basketball is to help participants and parents or guardians look “upward” beyond basketball to understand the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. This ministry accomplishes its mission through the use of basketball by “capturing the imagination of boys and girls, moms and dads in a way that is fun for the kids, appreciated by the parents and able to be used as an evangelism tool by a church of any size.” This ministry was started by Caz McCaslin at First Baptist Church of Spartanburg, South Carolina, in 1986. With two hundred children the first year, Upward has grown into a ministry that enjoyed eighty thousand participants in 2000 and over 100,000 participants in the 2001 season. Six thousand first-time decisions were recorded in 2000, many of these coming from the parents of children who participated.

Upward Basketball works because of the following eight reasons listed on their Web site:

1. Every child plays the same amount of time in every game. Kids want to play. In this organization, participation is the key.

2. Parents want their kids to play and learn the fundamentals of the sport. Upward is designed to accommodate these twin desires of parents.

3. A prayer team is set up that prays for specific people and league items before the league begins and while the league is under way.

4. Coaches and referees are trained in the unique Upward Basketball philosophy of being intentional using sports as a ministry tool.

5. Five thousand custom printed four-color brochures are distributed by the church into the community.

6. With the help of a computer program, a “draft” is held by testing skills and assigning children to teams to even out skills levels.

7. Practices are scheduled for a maximum of one time a week.

8. The gospel is shared at each practice with children and at halftime of each game for spectators.

One of the greatest blessings of sports ministry has to do with its influence in countries that are ordinarily closed to the gospel. One such ministry is Infinity Sports. This ministry operates in a covenant relationship with Great Commission Christian organizations to mobilize Christian sports resources into closed and restricted access locations for the purpose of evangelism and church planting among unreached people groups and major gateway cities. “This is a wide geographic swath (called the 10/40 Window) encompassing North Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia, the Indian sub-continent, China, and Southeast Asia” (Infinity Sports Web Page). These areas are often

closed to traditional evangelism methods. They typically do not allow residential missionaries and are often hostile to the gospel. Sport evangelists are able to assist missionary field personnel in utilizing sports to penetrate their target areas for evangelism and church planting.

Another parachurch ministry that has been quite innovative in its approaches to evangelism is called Kwest ministries. This evangelical, nondenominational, faith-based ministry is committed to taking the gospel message of Christ outside the church walls to the streets, campuses, and neighborhoods of America. This approach is not very common for many churches and church leaders. The vision for this ministry involves working with fellow believers to minister in the following ways:

1. Open air evangelism: with a particular focus on open-air preaching using a visual sketch board and one-on-one discussions;
2. Open forums: providing a comfortable armchair environment where seeking skeptics can explore the claims of Christ in a facilitated dialogue question and answer format;
3. Evangelism training: with a focus on helping Christians learn how to share the plan of salvation effectively with their pre-believing friends; and,
4. Apologetics training: teaching fellow believers how to answer the skeptic's questions and address the current issues of our society. (Werking and Werking)

Reaching the unchurched is a critical aspect of effective ministry.

As an example of diverse evangelistic ministry, Team Racers for Christ (RFC) is a unique fellowship for Christians involved in motor racing. Team RFC is an international organization devoted to ministering to the emotional and spiritual needs of

both professional and amateur racers. In addition, Team RFC provides inspiration and encouragement to anyone in the racing community.

Another unique sports ministry is The Goal, a Christian, sports-related Web site, features “life stories,” testimonies of athletes in all sports, ranging from aerobatics, baseball, and cricket to soccer, volleyball, and weight lifting. The Sports Channel, in partnership with Sports Spectrum magazine and radio, sponsored by RBC Ministries, offers daily features such as sports news, and analysis, a free daily sports newsletter, and “The Insider,” a sports-related daily devotional (World Christian Resource Directory).

Recently while visiting Grand Rapids, Michigan, I had the opportunity to visit a community center that had been used for reaching young people with the Good News of Christ. Every evening this center had a schedule consisting of a wide variety of activities. The participants were able to choose between gymnastics, basketball, arts and crafts, concerts, choir, drama, and various other activities (J.O.Y. 1).

Theological Reflection

The following section details some of the sports ministry concepts that are found in the Bible. These different areas are key components of sports ministry.

Evangelism/Preaching

When considering the theological basis for sports evangelism, one must recognize the central place of the Great Commission in the ministry of the Church. Jesus Christ commanded his followers to “go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation” (Mark 16:15). Christians have a mission to “go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full” (Luke 14:23). Jesus tells his followers to “come follow me and I will make you fishers of men” (Matt. 4:19).

Christians are urged throughout God's word to proclaim the gospel. In Ephesians 3:8, the apostle Paul states, "Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." Paul's words demonstrate the far-reaching impact of the good news of God. The gospel is for all people, both Jews and Gentiles. He urges Timothy to "preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season" (2 Tim. 4:2a). Peter discusses the importance of personal evangelism when he says, "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect" (1 Pet. 3:15).

According to Donald Whitney, "evangelism is a natural overflow of the Christian life" (29). Whitney describes sharing one's faith as a spiritual discipline that all Christians should be able to do on a regular basis. He says, "Evangelism is a discipline in that we must discipline ourselves to get into the context of evangelism, that is, we must not just wait for witnessing opportunities to happen" (29). Another Christian leader, Lesslie Newbigin, states "Evangelism, the direct preaching of the gospel, it is often said, must be the first priority. Everything else is secondary or-at best-auxiliary" (131). These authors are stressing the importance for all Christians to be willing to share their faith and to become purposeful evangelists.

As a leading proponent for holy living, Dr. Dennis F. Kinlaw contrasts the previous ideas slightly:

The greatest need in the world today is not for evangelism. From my perspective, the greatest need is for Christians like you and me to be spiritually cleansed so that the Spirit of God can work through us. Only when God got 120 Christians filled with the Holy Spirit could 3,000 people be converted (Acts 1:15; 2:41). Evangelism must grow out of the holiness experience. That is what happened to General William Booth and

so many others who have won the lost to Christ. (Preaching in the Spirit 75-76)

Some people view holy living as a more important component for reaching people for Christ, as is evident above. While holiness is important, intentional evangelism is extremely important. Intentional evangelism is certainly nothing new; it has been used since the inception of the Church. Church leaders need to plan events (such as free car washes) and activities (servant evangelism) that serve people and demonstrate the love of Christ.

According to Webber, five distinct insights in the area of evangelism can be learned from the early Church. The early Church had “(1) a missional self-understanding, (2) recognized that evangelism requires a renewed congregation, (3) called individuals to commit to their social networks, (4) established a reputation for servanthood, and (5) established the process for the formation of new Christians” (Journey to Jesus 67).

Although the early Church was young, its members had solid ideas regarding evangelism.

In addition, they were highly devoted to carrying out the call of evangelism. Loren B.

Mead describes the early Christians the following way:

The early church was conscious of itself as a faithful people surrounded by a hostile environment to which each member was called to witness to God’s love in Christ. They were called to be evangelists, in the biblical sense of the word, those who bear good news. Their task was to carry into a hostile world the good news of healing, love, and salvation. (10)

If more of today’s churches would call their people to witness with this same devotion, much greater church growth could be possible.

Past church fathers have been challenged to develop a devotion to sharing the good news of Christ. For example, early on in John Wesley’s ministry, he was impacted by the words of Peter Bohler to preach faith till you have it; and then, because you have

it, you will preach faith. This statement relates to sharing the Christian faith with others. Christians often just need to take an initial step and then God gives empowerment to move ahead in ministry.

Many different ways can be used to introduce people to Christ. The study of God's word often opens the door for salvation in people's lives and serves as a means of grace. William J. Abraham touches on this idea when he writes, "An ecclesial canon is essentially a means of grace: that is, materials, persons, and practices intended to initiate one into the divine life" (27). Pastors must remember that the Word of God should not be separated from the action of evangelism; they can be intertwined.

As for the actual ministry of the Church, the Bible says that it exists, not for itself, but rather to save the world by announcing the advent of a new world, to "proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Pet. 2:9). William H. Willimon shares that the process of coming out of darkness can be instantaneous and dramatic, as well as gradual and growing (234). As churches strive to see people saved, Willimon reminds them to be outward focused. He says that the Church does not have a mission; rather, the Church is mission. The Church does not exist for itself; rather, the Church exists to show and carry out God's plans for the people of the world (240).

Churches are mandated by God to reach out as he makes his appeal through the Church to the world. Preaching has a central goal of doing something in and for people. John Goldingay suggests that the purpose of preaching is to engender or to deepen the response of faith, questioning, hope, anger, love, reflection, repentance, obedience, and worship. Preaching is also involved in dispensing information (7).

Healthy churches have answers for the problems of people by presenting the full gospel. Stephen Seamands shares this concept by stating “the bad news is that we are both sinners and sufferers, villains and victims; the good news is that the cross addresses both conditions” (Wounds That Heal 17). The message of salvation is one that demonstrates the faithfulness of Christ. Biblically understood, conversion has to do with making disciples of former pagans like ourselves (even if we were born into Christian homes, we need to be “converted” in this sense). “The Lord did not say, ‘Go and make converts,’ but ‘Go and make disciples,’ in the long run, only disciples are converts” (Fee 75).

John Wesley, who strived to see converts made into disciples, was eventually banned from Anglican pulpits. He developed a far-reaching, radical, evangelistic strategy known as revivalism. Doug Banister reveals the following:

He was the first to take the gospel to the masses, preaching sermons three times a day anywhere he could draw a crowd. His followers brought this method to America, and the Methodist camp meeting brought thousands to Christ on the American frontier. (50)

Following Wesley’s evangelistic fervor was Charles Finney who placed a high degree of emphasis upon altar calls. Forward-thinking preachers, such as these men, studied the word of God as they set the course for preachers of today.

Many different words are used for preachers throughout Scripture. One reference, *the herald* (1 Cor. 9:27; 1 Tim. 2:7) has the task of announcing the name and country of the competitors in sports competition. The herald would also announce the name of the father for the champion in a competition (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia 2: 684); thus, preachers may be encouraged by these words as they announce the word of God to the people.

One of the primary roles of evangelism in any form is to persuade or convince others of the hope found in Jesus Christ. Acts 26:28 demonstrates this sort of idea. When analyzing the role of the evangelist, it often is designated as a ministry that announces good news to others. An evangelist is literally a bringer of good tidings. Jesus set an example as he demonstrated the ministry of evangelism (Luke 20:1). Then the disciples went out from Jerusalem everywhere preaching the word, according to Acts 8:4. In fact, the writers of the four Gospels were given the name of “evangelist” (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia 3: 943). Finally, all believers are called to do the work of an evangelist in response to the Great Commission. Some believers are especially gifted to be evangelists in the church. Evangelism is one of God’s specific ministry offices that he empowers.

One of the references in Scripture to preaching says that the evangelist brings glad tidings and tells good news to all who have ears to hear (Luke 1:19). Preaching the gospel involves telling the story concerning God which is good news. The preacher has the responsibility to proclaim (Jon. 3:2), bring a message (1 Tim. 2:7), and announce good news (Matt. 11:5). The preacher’s job is to use Scripture to address the popular mind and heart on religious truth. Luther says, “The Devil does not mind the written word but he is put to flight whenever it is preached aloud” (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia 3: 943). This quote reminds one of the importance of being true to God and his word when speaking.

In regard to delivering God’s word verbally, “Every living preacher must receive his communication direct from God, and the constant purpose of his life must be to receive it uncorrupted and to deliver it without addition or subtraction” (International

Standard Bible Encyclopedia 3: 943). Preaching is the method of propagating the Christian faith. That faith is disseminated by teaching through argument, explanation, motive, and exhortation. The agency for the spread of a religion of persuasion must be preaching.

Preaching means the “proclamation of religious truth.” Various Bible translations include “to call,” “proclaim,” and “cry aloud” (Ps. 68:11; Isa. 61:1). Yet another word for *preaching* means “to declare good news.” In the case of Jonah’s preaching at Nineveh, the word used means strictly “proclamation” and corresponds to the New Testament word used to define our Lord’s “proclamation” as a herald of the advent of the kingdom of God (Matt. 4:17).

The words meaning “to proclaim as a herald” and “preaching” are frequent in the New Testament. One apostle who proclaimed God’s truth to multitudes of people in the New Testament was the apostle Paul. He spent much of his time preaching and reaching out to people that were spiritually ruined. His preaching in Corinth in AD 55 demonstrates the need for the ministry to touch a wide assortment of people. The following is a snapshot of what his culturally relevant ministry in Corinth was like:

At night it was made hideous by the brawls and lewd songs of drunken revelry. In the daytime its markets and squares swarmed with Jewish peddlers, foreign traders, sailors, soldiers, athletes in training, boxers, wrestlers, charioteers, racing-men, betting-men, courtesans, slaves, idlers and parasites of every description. The corrupting worship of Aphrodite, with its hordes of hierodouloi, was dominant, and all over the Greek-Roman world, “to behave as a Corinthian” was a proverbial synonym for leading a low, shameless and immoral life. Very naturally such a polluted and idolatrous environment accounts for much that has to be recorded of the semi-pagan and imperfect life of many of the early converts. (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia 1: 773)

Obviously, Paul was dealing with a culture of sin and immorality. He preached in a

manner that was culturally relevant for the people of his day. Ministers today must be willing to do the same in order to reach the masses.

Specific Ministry

God's word reminds the reader of the specific ministries to which he calls people.

Paul relates this idea in Ephesians 4:11-13:

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Virtually all of the megachurches I have visited (Willow Creek, Mariner's Church, Mosaic Church, Saddleback Church and others) have taken the idea of assessing and using spiritual gifts very seriously. In Purpose Driven Church, Warren relates Saddleback Church's philosophy of spiritual gifts and ministry. He says their goal involves "turning members into ministers" (368). Due to the fact that he says every believer is a minister, church members are encouraged to use their spiritual gifts in order to serve God and the church in some manner. He also says that every church ministry is important. Warren notes that ministry is the expression of a person: it pulls together their spiritual gifts, heart, abilities, personality, and experience. Each member and ministry of Saddleback Church is dependent upon one another, so the development of all people's spiritual gifts is highly emphasized (368-70).

Webber describes a similar process in transforming people into wholehearted followers of Jesus Christ. He calls it the Journey to Jesus. The four distinct levels in this discipleship process include the seekers, hearers, kneelers, and faithfuls. Webber describes these groups in the following way:

1. The seeker's spiritual goal is conversion,
2. The hearer's spiritual goal is discipleship,
3. The kneeler's spiritual goal is spiritual formation,
4. The faithful's spiritual goal is incorporation. (225)

Without doubt, the goal of churches should be to help their seekers eventually reach the level of the faithful in order to be successful in serving Christ.

Pastor Wayne Cordeiro from New Hope Christian Fellowship in Honolulu, Hawaii, describes how God does an empowering work for everyone entering into his church family:

He gives each new member a divine endowment known as a spiritual gift. This gift is a God-given capacity to fulfill what He has asked us to accomplish. This gift helps us to locate our niche, our place and our role in the life of the church. Coming to grips with this fact may be one of the most wonderful discoveries of your life. (44)

When church members discover their spiritual gifts and put them to use, they feel that they are truly a part of a church. They will be more willing to get involved in furthering the kingdom of God.

Laypeople are a key part of evangelism within the Church. Effective sports evangelism can only occur as a result of lay involvement. Calvin Miller says that great leadership can never be achieved “without effective delegation which increases the job commitment of others by spreading your task effectively over a broader base” (160). Church leaders must be willing to involve their members when reaching out in sports evangelism.

Athletic Pictures from Scripture

When considering the verses in Scripture that relate to athletics, one discovers that they fall into three, key categories. The first is that of a general reference to an *athlete*. The apostle Paul states, “If anyone competes as an *athlete* [emphasis mine], he

does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules" (2 Tim. 2:5).

The second type of reference refers to a *runner* that is "running the race" such as the following:

Those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will *run* [emphasis mine] and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. (Isa. 40:31)

Do you not know that in a race all the *runners run* [emphasis mine], but only one gets the prize? *Run* [emphasis mine] in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man *running* [emphasis mine] aimlessly; I do not *fight* [emphasis mine] like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize. (1 Cor. 9:24-27)

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us *run* [emphasis mine] with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. (Heb 12:1-3)

As you hold out the word of life—in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not *run* [emphasis mine] or labor for nothing. (Phil 2:16)

I went in response to a revelation and set before them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. But I did this privately to those who seemed to be leaders, for fear that I was *running* [emphasis mine] or had *run* [emphasis mine] my race in vain. (Gal. 2:2)

You were *running* [emphasis mine] a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth? (Gal. 5:7)

The third kind of reference relates to "fighting the good fight":

Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may *fight the good fight* [emphasis mine], holding on to faith and a good conscience.

Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith. (1 Tim. 1:18-19)

Fight the good fight [emphasis mine] of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. (1 Tim. 6:12)

Each of these references provides vivid pictures of sports culture.

Incarnational Ministry

One of the primary roles of contemporary sports evangelism is to focus on incarnational ministry. Professor Tory Baucum relates that “the incarnation is an appropriate (almost inevitable) communicational method of an inherently and supremely personal message” (17). Essentially, “churches that incarnate themselves into the culture fish with the proper bait and tackle. Incarnation happens when a church adapts itself in appropriate ways to its culture, so that it receives a hearing for the gospel” (McIntosh 1). These churches that practice incarnational ministry do not sacrifice the gospel on the altar of trends. Rather, they creatively adapt, integrate, and communicate the Word of God to a changing culture. They select a disciple-making method that culturally fits their target audience.

John tells that Jesus Christ was the word who became flesh (John 1:14). He came as God, eternal in his subsistence and united with the Father and the Holy Spirit. In this passage the reader is confronted with “The Word,” which is a personal name of the eternal God as well as “the flesh,” which is an “appropriate designation of humanity in its entirety, with the implications of dependence and weakness” (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia 3: 781). The meaning of this passage clarifies the fact that the God of the universe voluntarily lowered himself to become a man. He willingly entered a way of life that enabled him to experience what human beings experience. He allowed himself to

be exposed to hunger, thirst, suffering, struggle, dependence upon others as a baby and also throughout his earthly ministry. God's experience as a human all takes place in stark contrast to his omnipotent characteristics. John seems to use the word *flesh* to highlight the fact that Jesus become a man. The term flesh enables the mind to picture quickly the end result of this lowering of himself. John reminds the reader that Jesus "came as a man" (1:30), was thoroughly known in his human origin (7:27), confessed himself man (8:40), and died as a man dies (19:5) (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia 3: 782).

Jesus' ministry has consistently been portrayed as one of incredible humility. He willingly came down from heaven, all the while remembering from where he came. In John 8:23 Jesus says, "I am from above: you are of this world; I am not of this world." He had a human soul (John 11:27), was made of flesh and blood (John 6:53), and endured physical difficulties such as suffering and death, tiredness (4:6), and thirst (19:28). He experienced human emotions including love, compassion, friendship, indignation, joy, thankfulness, excitement, and sympathy. In the midst of all that he experienced only one human characteristic was alien to him: he was without sin (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia 3: 789). He was clearly both God and man.

Incarnational ministry is concerned with ministering to people at each level of human need (physical, psychological, and spiritual). Sports ministry has the potential to help people to grow stronger in each of these areas. Athletics help to build a sense of team or community which is at the heart of incarnational ministry.

Body, Soul, and Spirit

The creation account shows that God designs people in his image (Gen. 1:26). A person becomes a living being through the inbreathing of God. A person has a body, soul,

and spirit. Two texts that help to explain the threefold nature of a person are the following: 1 Thessalonians 5: 23, “May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” and Hebrews 4:12, “For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.” Here the heart seems to represent the “center of the personality” (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia 4: 914).

When the apostle Paul speaks of the servanthood of Jesus, he brings out the point that he was obedient to God. Paul also accentuates that Jesus was man and God simultaneously. This idea relates a critical aspect of the nature of man. People are not just physical; people are also spiritual. Man’s physical and spiritual beings present the need for training in both arenas of life. In 1 Timothy 4:8 Paul says, “For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.”

This idea of training relates directly to sports evangelism. Sports evangelism needs to stress training that builds up a person in each area of life. Training is summarized in the words of former University of Nebraska football coach, Osborne:

Training only the mind and muscles for an athletic contest without preparing emotionally and spiritually is often not very effective. The heart sustains the mind and the muscles. Those who attempt to achieve challenging goals operating solely on a physical and mental plane, with no spiritual depth, are analogous to a body functioning without a heart. Faith appears to correlate with physical health. (22)

Ministering to people on multiple levels is something that sports ministry is designed to accomplish.

Jesus Christ demonstrated compassion to human beings as total persons:

He did all He could to help them, but He never forgot the main purpose of His earthly mission: to reconcile men to God, to die for sinners and redeem their souls from hell. Jesus cared for the spiritual side of man first, then the body. (Yohannan 123)

Current ministry can also stress holistic ministry.

Self-Control

Balance in life is something that sports evangelism can strongly advocate.

Self-control is one virtue that is often listed in Scripture with a distinct relationship to athletics. Paul refers to the athlete exercising self-control in 1 Corinthians 9:25. Self-control is also listed as a fruit of the Holy Spirit. Self-control is certainly a quality that God wants his followers to see cultivated in their lives. This idea of being temperate portrays a picture of an athlete who “during the period of training abstains from all indulgence in food, drink, and sexual passion” (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia 4: 386).

The text of 1 Corinthians 9:25 is about an athlete contending for a prize and someone competing in public games. This text also brings to mind someone who is diligently striving for mastery or perfection in the sport. In 2 Timothy 2:5, Paul also conveys a similar meaning by describing athletes as striving and contending for improvement. The principle described here involves concentrating all of one’s powers and capabilities upon doing God’s will and following his calling in life. Placing the focus upon God involves eliminating and renouncing all distractions that interfere with spiritual training. Abstaining from some things while putting into practice spiritual disciplines seems to be what Paul is advocating as a way of getting the outer life and the inner life in agreement.

Agony: Physical, Mental, and Spiritual

An interesting word that occurs only once in the New Testament is the word *agony*. This word is found in Luke 22: 42-44 when Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane:

“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.” An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. And being in *agony* [emphasis mine], he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.

The word *agony* describes “the climax of the mysterious soul-conflict and unspeakable suffering of our Lord in the garden at Gethsemane” (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia 1: 68). This word comes from the Greek word *agon*, meaning “a contest,” and is often used to describe driving or taking the lead in a chariot race. The root meaning of this form of agony relates to the struggle and pain of the severest athletic contest or conflict (68). Just as Jesus wrestled internally in the garden of Gethsemane, an athlete also struggles deep within (but, of course, not to the same degree). Jesus experienced struggle that allowed his soul to be sorrowful even unto death (68). During this same time period, the struggles of runners, wrestlers, and gladiators in Grecian and Roman amphitheaters is summed up in the pain and death-struggle of this solitary word *agony* (68).

Matthew 26:36-46, Mark 14:32-42, Luke 22:39-46, and also Hebrews 5:7, 8 indicate that Jesus’ suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane was threefold. First, the suffering was physical because Jesus experienced intense physical pain and internal turmoil to the point of having his sweat become great drops of blood falling to the ground (Luke 22:44). Second, his suffering was mental because Jesus felt alone while feeling the weight of the world’s pain, sorrow, and sin. The shame of criminal arrest in the garden and of subsequent condemnation and death as a malefactor had to his innocent soul the

horror of humanity's entire and ageless guilt (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia 1: 68) Third, the suffering was spiritual because Jesus experienced the impact of the separation of sin from God and all of the sorrow that comes with sin. Many theologians believe that the agony of spiritual separation was even more torturous to Jesus than the physical torture that he experienced.

Another word very similar to agony is anguish. This word is used to describe "extreme distress of body, mind or spirit; excruciating pain or suffering of soul" (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia 1: 69). Jesus experienced the most intense form of both anguish and agony. As both agony and anguish convey the idea of a heavy weight upon a person's life, the word *burden* is also used in Scripture to relate a similar idea. Hebrews 12:1 describes the need for Christians to throw off all of the extra weight of sin that entangles people and slows people down spiritually. Struggling against the weight impedes one's progress. When the weight is set aside, one can then make tremendous progress. This portrait from the sports world enables one to recognize the negative effects of sin while at the same time recognizing the strength that comes from constant, steady resistance.

One of the fundamental theological doctrines is that of the Trinity. Gordon D. Fee notes that "Paul was Trinitarian at the core of his experience and theology" (38). When examining the ministry of sports evangelism it is important to view the Trinity and the human design at the same time.

The Temple

Another reference in Scripture that relates to sports ministry is the concept of the temple. The temple of God is where the Lord dwelled in Old Testament times. In the

New Testament, the reader is reminded of how the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. The temple is referred to as the holy place of God. The inner courts, outer courts, and Holy of Holies divide the temple into different parts (1 Kings 7:12). In the same way, the body, soul, and spirit divide a person into different parts. The temple of the Holy Spirit (a person's life) needs to be renovated and prepared for God's indwelling. This preparation is an ongoing work that requires the discipline involved in training and preparing for athletic competition. Sports evangelism can stress this theological concept in a way that is understandable for both Christians and non-Christians.

The Prize

Another reference from the sporting world that is used in Scripture is that of the prize. In the days of the early Church, wreaths were commonly given to sports champions. Paul speaks of receiving the prize in Philippians 3:14 and in 1 Corinthians 9:24. The corruptible crown is contrasted with eternal life (1 Cor. 9:25). Revelation 7:9 refers to carrying palm branches, which is a practice for victors in the Olympic Games. In 2 Timothy 4:8, Paul speaks about the crown that God will give his followers one day. Sports evangelism can demonstrate this powerful metaphor when being shared with the unchurched.

Historical Overview of Sports

Just as sports have played a prominent role in American culture, the Greeks, Romans, and Egyptians during the time of Christ's earthly ministry placed a high degree of emphasis on sports and recreation. Hebrew life also had a moderate emphasis on sports and recreation. Numerous passages exist that speak of running (2 Sam. 1:23), track foot racing (1 Cor. 9:24), and racing to the goal (Phil. 3:14). Other passages tell of archery (1

Sam. 20:20), beast fighting (1 Cor. 15:32), boxing (1 Cor. 9:26), stone lifting, an early form of weight lifting involving heavy round stones (Zech. 12:3), wrestling (Eph. 6:12), and high jumping (Ps. 18:29).

Various structures were constructed in order for people to participate in athletics. According to 1 Maccabees 1:14, a gymnasium was built in Jerusalem. Priests were frequent visitors to this place of exercise (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia 2: 582). Herod the Great built a theater and amphitheater in the neighborhood of the city and instituted it in the name of Caesar games, which included Roman as well as Hellenic sports, celebrated every five years. A hippodrome, or racecourse for horses and chariots, bearing considerable resemblance to the Roman circus was also in existence.

In reality, the Greek games were a place of disrepute according to Josephus; however, the disrepute of the games did not keep certain Christian leaders from using sports and games in their messages. While in Corinth, which hosted the Isthmian Games biennially, Paul was exposed to a wide variety of sports. The early Christians, therefore, whether of Jewish or Gentile origin, were able to understand and appreciate references to the games and their celebration.

In 2 Timothy 2:5, Paul refers to the Olympic Games and to the self-control developed in an athlete through long training. The training itself came to be recognized in the exhortation, "Train yourself to be godly" (1 Tim. 4:7), and in the remark that follows, "For physical training is of some value." Paul states in 2 Timothy 2:5, "If anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules." In all of these passages, the Olympic Games were in the apostle's thoughts.

This chapter has described the lack of evangelism that exists in the ministry of many local churches today. The need for evangelism in many different forms has been addressed. In order for churches to reach the unchurched people of the world effectively, ministry needs to have a high level of cultural relevance. One area of society that has been growing over the years is that of the sports culture. Many megachurches in America have identified this sector of the general public and have designed sports ministry programs. Evangelism in its many forms has the potential to utilize sports as an avenue for ministry. Servant evangelism and friendship evangelism appear to work well when coupled with sports evangelism. A vast array of sports is currently being utilized by growing churches throughout the country. Christian coaches and athletes are often involved in the evangelistic ministry of the local church. Another aspect of this chapter has been the area of theological reflection in relationship to sports ministry. This section related what Scripture says about the importance of evangelism and preaching. A few word studies were reported that relate to athletic metaphors used in the Bible. The next section of this study provides an overview of the methodology utilized in this research project.

CHAPTER 3

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Throughout the United States, many churches have been experiencing a steady decline in growth. New ministry strategies are needed to help reach people for Christ. Growing churches often resort to unconventional means in order to minister consistently to those in their communities. The churches that are able to address the interests and needs of the people living in the surrounding area appear to be healthy and expanding in ministry impact. Servant evangelism has recently become an area of evangelism that has helped to minister to many people. Relational evangelism also has the potential to help many struggling churches to experience growth, due to the fact that “seventy-nine percent of people come to church because they have been invited by a friend or relative” (Oswald and Leas 28).

Sports evangelism is another way that churches can reach people for the Lord. This area of ministry offers tremendous opportunities for the Church. The American culture has a strong interest in many different sports and leisure activities. Culturally relevant ministry is imperative for churches that desire to grow. Since “90 percent of Americans watch, read about, or participate in sports once a month and 70 percent do so once a week” (Garner, “Relevance of Recreation”), sports evangelism could potentially help many churches to establish meaningful connections with the people of the nearby area. When churches are welcoming, engaging, and relevant, they tend to experience healthy growth.

I have become more and more personally aware of the tremendous impact that sports evangelism can have upon a person’s life since becoming a Christian in 1983

through the influence of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. The various sports ministries of which I have been a part have proven to be highly effective in reaching the unchurched for God. I have witnessed the tremendous relationships that can be built through sports ministry during my time leading groups such as Champions for Christ at the University of Virginia, coaching high school track and cross country, leading and developing evangelistic basketball outreaches, and Christian running clubs. Each of these ministry areas have effectively reached out to non-Christian people through the avenue of sports. Many people have come to Christ as a result of these various ministry strategies. From the time of my conversion, which largely took place due to the influence of a dynamic, Christian coach who shared the gospel with me, I have been transformed by the influence of sports ministry. Sports ministry has become a tremendous passion in my life because I have experienced firsthand its ministerial and evangelistic effectiveness at transforming lives.

Methodology

The descriptive research method for this particular exploratory study was a researcher-designed, structured interview protocol to determine what leading megachurches throughout the United States are doing in sports ministry. A structured interview was conducted with leaders from each of the megachurches listed in the 2004 Church Growth Today/Outreach Magazine list of the one hundred largest churches in America. The responses to the twenty-one questions enabled me to determine what the largest churches in the United States are doing to minister to people through different types of sports ministry. The data analysis consisted of content analysis for qualitative research and frequency distribution for various responses.

The Purpose

The purpose of this research was to examine how megachurches are effectively utilizing sports evangelism in order to reach unchurched people and to describe a set of transferable strategies for sports ministry that can be used in a variety of ministry contexts.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study enabled several questions to be raised. Research information was gathered to answer the four research questions. The answers to these questions determined how megachurches have effectively utilized sports evangelism to reach unchurched people. Transferable strategies for sports ministry that can be used in a variety of ministry contexts were reported.

Research Question 1

What are the one hundred largest megachurches in America doing in the area of sports ministry?

The answers provided for this question have helped to develop a comprehensive list of all of the possibilities that a local church could offer in the area of sports ministry. The hope is to use this list to inspire local church leaders to dream about the many ways to implement sports ministry into the life of the local church. The different forms of sports evangelism can serve as entrance points into the ministry of the church in the local community.

Research Question 2

What are the ways in which evangelism occurs through sports ministry in the one hundred largest megachurches in America?

By determining what the leading churches in the United States are doing in the area of sports evangelism, other churches can begin to broaden their ministry in this area, which can help them to reach even more people for the Lord.

Research Question 3

How are people equipped to serve in the area of sports ministry in the one hundred largest megachurches in America?

The answers stated for this question have the potential to help church leaders discover how people can be trained and equipped to serve in the area of sports ministry.

Research Question 4

What patterns or principles can be gleaned from the existing sports ministry programs in the one hundred largest megachurches in America?

By understanding what growing churches have done in sports ministry, churches of all sizes can begin to develop a strategy of sports ministry for their own locale. Patterns and principles that have been discovered can be shared with church leaders interested in considering sports ministry.

Population and Sample

The population for this study included the megachurches in the United States that are listed in the 2004 Church Growth Today/Outreach Magazine list of the one hundred largest churches in America. These churches have an average attendance of 5,800 or above. The goal was to have all of these megachurches participate in the study by participating in a structured interview.

Megachurches

The term megachurch is the name given to a group of large, Protestant

congregations that share several distinctive characteristics. These churches generally have the following characteristics, according to the researchers at Hartford Institute:

1. massive numbers of persons in attendance,
2. a charismatic, authoritative senior minister,
3. a very active seven day a week congregational community,
4. a multitude of social and outreach ministries, and
5. a complex, differentiated organizational structure (1).

Megachurches are not identical but their very large numbers of attendees shape their functioning in unique and often uniform ways, according to the findings of the researchers at Hartford Seminary.

Instrumentation

A twenty-one question survey (see Appendix J) was given to the leaders of all the megachurches listed in the 2004 Church Growth Today/Outreach Magazine list of the one hundred largest churches in America via a telephone structured interview. Four of the questions related to demographics, and seventeen of the questions related to the specific ministry being done in the area of sports evangelism. The demographic information was used to determine if churches of different sizes and locations use sports evangelism in dissimilar ways. The instrument was designed to provide descriptive research data related to sports evangelism and ministry. The instrument is reliable assuming that respondents answer the questions truthfully.

Delimitations and Generalizability

The focus of this study was based upon the sports ministry of the one hundred largest churches in America. Churches were measured to determine how well integrated

sports evangelism is into the evangelistic efforts of the church. I hoped to discover some readily transferable sports evangelism and ministry principles that can be utilized by churches of all sizes. The findings of this study helped to inform church leaders of the opportunities that exist by coupling sports and evangelism. The data was used to encourage churches of various denominational affiliation, size, and location through the discovery of generally adaptable principles of evangelism that should be useful in most areas.

The sports ministry survey was researcher designed. The instrument was pretested by a few church leaders in order to refine the overall design and clarity of the questions. The twenty-one questions were developed in order to gather information related to the demographics and sports ministry strategies of the megachurches. The demographic information related to congregation age, average weekly attendance of the church, denominational affiliation, and the ethnic composition of the church. The evangelism questions had to do with the types of evangelism being utilized, the sports and athletic programs being sponsored, the age groups of those being reached, staffing for sports ministry, number of people involved in sports ministry, the church's budget for sports evangelism, facility space for sports ministry, and the number of people converted through sports evangelism.

Data Collection Procedure

I used the database of megachurches that is currently in the 2004 Church Growth Today/Outreach Magazine list of the one hundred largest churches in America. All of the churches were invited to participate in a twenty-one question structured interview. Each telephone interview began with an explanation of the purpose of the sports ministry

research. The twenty-one question survey was filled out during the telephone interview. This study was limited to all of the megachurches that have telephone numbers. Follow-up telephone calls were made to churches that did not respond to the first telephone call.

Variables

The variables used in this study included the following:

1. the types of evangelism being utilized,
2. the sports programs offered,
3. the number of days per week of sports evangelism,
4. the age groups that have been reached,
5. the staffing for sports evangelism,
6. the number of people involved in sports evangelism,
7. the annual church budget for sports evangelism,
8. the support and involvement of the senior pastor,
9. the facility space utilized for sports evangelism, and

10. the number of conversions and the number of new people integrated into the life of the church last year as a result of the sports evangelism program.

The variables were designed to provide qualitative research in the area of sports evangelism.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Profile of the Megachurches

This study was conducted to determine what the one hundred largest megachurches in the United States have been doing in the area of sports ministry. The one hundred largest megachurches studied were listed in the May/June 2004 issue of Outreach Magazine. These churches have an average weekly attendance of 9,324 people. The largest church in this group was Lakewood Church of Houston, Texas, with an average weekly attendance of 25,060 people. The one hundredth largest church in this group was Salem Baptist Church of Chicago, Illinois, with an average weekly attendance of 5,800 people. Each of the one hundred largest churches were surveyed with the helpful participation of a variety of leaders such as sports ministry leaders, associate pastors, senior pastors, youth pastors, executive pastors, administrative pastors or lay volunteers. Two hundred and forty-five calls and approximately eighty-eight hours were spent surveying these leaders. The churches in this study demonstrated an openness to try new and creative methods of ministry. Ninety-one of the churches offered specific sports ministries to their communities.

During the survey, church leaders were asked to share about the age of their local church. Ninety-seven of the one hundred churches responded to this question, with 26.16 years being the average age of the churches. The oldest church was First Baptist Church of Woodstock, Georgia, (the seventy-third largest with 6,045 people in average attendance) with 167 years of ministry. The newest church was Mars Hill Bible Church of Grandview, Michigan (the twenty-fifth largest with ten thousand people in average

attendance), with five years of ministry. Ten of the one hundred churches were ten years old or less. These newer churches were the following:

1. 4th (18,500) The Potter's House of Dallas, Texas, 8 years old,
2. 13th (16,700) North Point Community Church of Alpharetta, Georgia, 9 years old,
3. 23rd (10,133) Life Church of Edmond, Oklahoma, 9 years old,
4. 25th (10,000) Mars Hill Bible Church of Grandview, Michigan, 5 years old,
5. 37th (9,000) New Hope Christian Fellowship Church of Honolulu, Hawaii, 9 years old,
6. 38th (8,840) Fellowship of the Woodland of Woodland, Texas, 10 years old,
7. 39th (8,389) McLean Bible Church of McLean, Virginia, 10 years old,
8. 62nd (7,000) The Dream Center of Los Angeles, California, 10 years old,
9. 78th (6,000) Victory Christian Center of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 10 years old, and
10. 84th (6,000) Faith World of Orlando, Florida, 10 years old.

The megachurches in this study represented seventeen different denominational groups. Forty-four of the churches were considered nondenominational. The largest denomination represented was the Baptist church. Six of the churches were Calvary Chapel congregations, which demonstrates that relatively new denominations can have rapid growth and strong representation among the megachurches of the United States. The denominational composition of the one hundred largest megachurches in the United States is reported in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1. The Denominational Composition of the One Hundred Largest Megachurches in the United States (N = 100)

Denomination	n	%
Nondenominational	44	44
Baptist	24	24
Calvary Chapel	6	6
AME	4	4
Christian	3	3
Church of Christ	3	3
United Methodist	3	3
Assemblies of God	2	2
Church of God	2	2
Foursquare	2	2
Bible Church	1	1
Evangelical Covenant	1	1
Evangelical Free	1	1
Lutheran	1	1
Presbyterian	1	1
United Church of Christ	1	1
Vineyard	1	1

The majority ethnic composition of the one hundred largest churches in the United States is reported in Table 4.2. The majority (60 percent) of the megachurches in

the United States are primarily Caucasian. Eight churches reported having an even blend of ethnic groups. One church reported having an Asian American majority (King's Cathedral of Kahului, Hawaii), and one church reported having a Hawaiian ethnic majority (New Hope Christian Fellowship of Honolulu, Hawaii).

Table 4.2. The Majority Ethnic Composition of the One Hundred Largest Megachurches in the United States (N = 100)

Ethnic Composition	n	%
Caucasian	60	60
African American	30	30
Blended	8	8
Asian American	1	1
Hawaiian	1	1

Sports Ministry Offered at Megachurches

This study found that of the ninety-four churches that responded to survey question six (which was related to the number of sports programs currently offered) the churches ranged from offering as few as zero sports to as many as twenty-four different sports. Saddleback Church of Lake Forest, California, offered the most sports (twenty-four) of the churches surveyed. At the time of the study, they offered the following sports and recreation areas: (1) basketball, (2) bowling, (3) bridge, (4) camping, (5) fishing, (6) golfing, (7) hiking, (8) horseback riding, (9) motorcycling, (10) mountain biking, (11) racquetball, (12) road cycling, (13) roller hockey, (14) sailing, (15) running, (16) snow

skiing, (17) soccer, (18) softball, (19) surfing, (20) tennis, (21) volleyball, (22) walking, (23) waterskiing, and (24) winter sports. The average number of sports being offered by responding churches was 6.4. Table 4.3 provides an overview of the findings in this area. The churches offering over a dozen different sports were the following: World Changers of College Park, Georgia; Saddleback Church of Lake Forest, California; Second Baptist Church of Houston, Texas; Southeast Christian Church of Louisville, Kentucky; Prestonwood Baptist Church of Plano, Texas; New Hope Christian Fellowship of Honolulu, Hawaii; McLean Bible Church of McLean, Virginia; Christ Fellowship of Palm Beach Gardens, Florida; Hope Presbyterian Church of Cordova, Tennessee; and, Champion Forest Baptist Church of Houston, Texas. Each of these churches seemed to place a great deal of emphasis upon offering excellent sports ministry opportunities. Many of the leaders indicated that by offering a diversity of sports, more people could be ministered to and reached for Christ. I would recommend each of these leading churches for further study and review.

Table 4.3. The Number of Sports Programs Offered by Responding Churches (N = 94)

Number of Sports Offered	n	%
0	9	9.6
1	9	9.6
2	4	4.3
3	8	8.5
4	7	7.4
5	10	10.6
6	9	9.6
7	5	5.3
8	5	5.3
9	6	6.4
10	6	6.4
11	5	5.3
13	2	2.1
14	1	1.1
16	2	2.1
17	3	3.2
18	1	1.1
20	1	1.1
24	1	1.1

Seventy-eight different sports were reported by the leaders of the one hundred largest churches in the United States. Basketball was the most popular of all the sports with seventy of the churches stating that they utilize it as part of their sports ministry. The top ten sports in order of popularity are the following: (1) basketball, (2) softball, (3) volleyball (4) golf, (5) soccer, (6) football (including flag football), (7) cycling (road and mountain), (8) running, (9) aerobics, and (10) tennis. Table 4.4 provides a detailed listing of all the sports being offered in order from most popular to least popular. Some of the least common sports being offered include scuba diving (Christ Fellowship of Palm Beach Gardens, Florida), Kung Fu San Soo (Calvary Chapel Golden Springs of Diamond Bar, California), rock climbing and ballet (Prestonwood Baptist Church of Plano, Texas), pro wrestling (Detroit World Outreach of Redford, Michigan), free diving and outrigger canoe club (New Hope Christian Fellowship of Honolulu, Hawaii), boot hockey (Living Word Christian Center of Brooklyn Park, Minnesota), archery (Church on the Move of Tulsa, Oklahoma) and wallyball (Second Baptist Church of Houston, Texas, and McLean Bible Church of McLean, Virginia). The church leaders from the churches offering some of the least common sports indicated that they were trying to reach a certain ministry niche. This willingness to offer unique sports is an exciting thing to witness, according to many of the church leaders interviewed.

Table 4.4. The Different Sports Being Offered in Order of Most Common to Least**Common (N=601)**

Sport	n	%	Sport	n	%
Basketball	70	70	Gymnastics	2	2
Softball	49	49	Hockey	2	2
Volleyball	44	44	Hunting	2	2
Golf	35	35	Ice hockey	2	2
Soccer	34	34	In-line skating	2	2
Football (flag football)	29	29	Roller hockey	2	2
Cycling (road & mountain)	22	22	Sailing	2	2
Running	22	22	Self-defense (Aikido)	2	2
Aerobics	20	20	Skateboarding	2	2
Tennis	17	17	Taekwondo	2	2
Baseball	15	15	Video games	2	2
Cheerleading	15	15	Wallyball	2	2
Bowling	14	14	Waterskiing	2	2
Dance	12	12	Wrestling	2	2
Weight lifting	12	12	Archery	1	1
Fitness	11	11	Ballet	1	1
Motorcycling	11	11	Boothockey	1	1
T-Ball	11	11	Bridge	1	1
Fishing	10	10	Broomball	1	1
Walking	10	10	Camping	1	1
Karate	9	9	Canoe Club	1	1
Hiking	7	7	Drill Team	1	1
Snow skiing	7	7	Duathlon Training	1	1
Track and field	6	6	Exercise Class	1	1
Kickboxing	5	5	Floorhockey	1	1
Surfing	5	5	Freediving	1	1
Swimming	5	5	Kidsgames	1	1
Whitewater river rafting	5	5	Kung Fu San Soo	1	1
Equestrian	4	4	Ping Pong	1	1
Paintball	4	4	Powerlegs	1	1
Pilates	4	4	Pro wrestling	1	1
Racquetball	4	4	Rock climbing	1	1
Roller skating	4	4	Referee class	1	1
Ultimate frisbee	4	4	Rollerblading	1	1
Boot camp	3	3	Scuba diving	1	1
Yoga	3	3	Stretching	1	1
Billiards	2	2	Triathlon training	1	1
Chess	2	2	Winter sports	1	1
Foosball	2	2	Youth Olympics	1	1

The churches in this study were asked to provide information related to the different age groups and genders that the sports were being offered. This study found that

98.85 percent of the sports were available for male participants and 91.26 percent were available for female participants. Most of the sports were offered on a co-ed basis or separately to male and female participants (e.g., men's softball and women's softball). Most of the church leaders surveyed indicated a great desire to reach as many people as possible through sports ministry. A strong emphasis was placed upon offering activities for people of all age groups and both genders. Some of the churches only had adult sports ministries. These churches were as follows: Fellowship Church of Grapevine, Texas; Victory Christian Center of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; and, Church of the Open Door of Crystal, Minnesota. Several of the churches offered sports only for those under the age of nineteen. These churches included the following: Apostolic Church of God of Chicago, Illinois; Victory Christian Center of Tulsa, Oklahoma; First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Florida; Crenshaw Christian Center of Los Angeles, California; Thomas Road Baptist Church of Lynchburg, Virginia; Greater Allen Cathedral of Jamaica, New York; Calvary Revival Church of Norfolk, Virginia; New Psalmist Church of Baltimore, Maryland; The Church on the Way of Van Nuys, California; Maranatha Chapel of Rancho Bernardo, California; Fellowship Bible Church of Lowell, Arkansas; Christian Faith Center of Seattle, Washington; and, Mount Olivet Lutheran Church of Minneapolis, Minnesota. One church, Bethany World Prayer Center of Baker, Louisiana, offered sports just for men. These unique aspects of the churches' programming has to do with their specific ministry market. Church leaders often related that their ministry was designed to reach specific types of people in their area. The majority of the churches and leaders had a broad ministry focus that enabled them to reach a wide spectrum of people.

The age group reached most through the sports ministry of the megachurches in this study was the twelve to eighteen year old group with 79 percent of the churches reporting specific ministry. The second most reached age group was the zero to eleven year old group with seventy of the churches reaching them. Sports ministry was often reported to be linked with youth ministry, children's ministry, college ministry, men's ministry, and women's ministry. Youth ministry is often saturated with a great deal of sports ministry. Table 4.5 provides a detailed overview of the age groups presently reached through sports ministry by the megachurches.

Table 4.5. The Age Groups Reached through Sports Ministry (N = 90)

Age Group	n	%
0 – 11	70	77.8
12 – 18	79	87.8
19 - 29	69	76.7
30 – 39	67	74.4
40 – 49	66	73.3
50 and over	66	73.3

Twenty-seven churches indicated that each week over one thousand people participate in their sports ministry. This group accounted for the largest single group among the churches reporting weekly attendance in sports ministry. The ten churches with the highest weekly sports ministry attendance were as follows: Second Baptist Church of Houston, Texas--6,056; World Changers of College Park, Georgia--5,000; The

Potter's House of Dallas Texas--5,000; Hebron Baptist Church of Dacula, Georgia--4,000; Hope Presbyterian Church of Cordova, Tennessee--3,000; Fellowship Church of Grapevine, Texas--2,700; Prestonwood Baptist Church of Plano, Texas--2,500; Highland Park Baptist Church of Chattanooga, Tennessee--2,200; Southland Christian Church of Lexington, Kentucky--1,600; and, Willow Creek Community Church of South Barrington, Illinois--1,400. These leading churches would be worthwhile to visit and observe. Table 4.6 provides a concise summary of the numbers of people participating in sports ministry on a weekly basis in each megachurch. Eleven of the twelve largest churches in the United States reported having more than one thousand people involved in sports ministry each week.

Table 4.6. Number of People Participating in Sports Ministry in Each Megachurch on a Weekly Basis (N = 76)

Number of People	n	%
0	10	13.2
50 or less	1	1.3
51-200	11	14.5
201-500	18	23.7
501-1000	9	11.8
1001 or more	27	35.5

The seventy-nine churches in this study that responded to the question related to the number of days per week of sports ministry offered activities an average of 3.87 days

per week. Ten of the churches indicated that they offer some type of sports ministry seven days a week. These churches are as follows: World Changers of College Park, Georgia; Saddleback Church of Lake Forest, California; The Potter's House of Dallas, Texas; Second Baptist Church of Houston, Texas; Prestonwood Baptist Church of Plano, Texas; Christ's Church of the Valley of Peoria, Arizona; Faithful Central Bible Church of Englewood, California; Hope Presbyterian Church of Cordova, Tennessee; Elmbrook Church of Brookfield, Wisconsin; and, Kensington Community Church of Troy, Michigan. These churches have a wide variety of ministries offered seven days a week. Some of them have placed sports ministry at the forefront of all their ministry offerings.

Strategies for Evangelism

The church leaders that were surveyed in this study indicated that their churches utilized a variety of evangelism approaches. Friendship and worship evangelism were the most common approaches with 97 percent of the churches stating that these were their most common approaches to evangelism. Sports evangelism was utilized by 75 percent of the churches. Table 4.7 details the specific findings in this area. Other types of evangelism included the following: small group Bible studies, crusades, concerts, door to door, televangelism, discipling, mobile soup kitchen, prison outreach, street ministry, festivals, special events, and fine arts.

Table 4.7. Types of Evangelism Utilized by Megachurches (N=100)

Type of Evangelism	n	%
Friendship	97	97
Worship	97	97
Servant	92	92
Sports	75	75
Other	12	12

Several different ministry strategies exist that have been employed through the various sports ministry programs. Many church leaders view sports ministry primarily as a vehicle for fellowship (77 percent), while other church leaders (65 percent) see the evangelistic opportunity intrinsically linked to each sports activity. Most of the church leaders surveyed viewed sports ministry as a mosaic of many different ministry strategies. Table 4.8 provides an overview of the specific strategies utilized, from most to least common. Seven of the church leaders indicated that they had no specific strategy for sports ministry. These leaders seemed to indicate that they had these activities due to the size of their congregations and also were concerned with offering ministry with no strings attached by utilizing a low pressure evangelistic approach.

Table 4.8. Ministry Strategies for Sports Ministry (N=92)

Ministry Strategy	n	%
Fellowship	77	83.7
Evangelism	65	70.7
Discipleship	58	63
Service	25	27.2
Worship	20	21.8
Others	11	12
No strategy	7	7.6

Equipping for Sports Ministry

The church leaders surveyed in this study indicated that many laypeople are involved in helping provide leadership to their sports ministry. The churches also employed an average of 2.74 staff members in the sports ministry to help provide additional leadership in this vital area of ministry.

Fifty-eight of the one hundred megachurches surveyed indicated that they had training programs in place for laypeople serving in the area of sports ministry. The forty-nine churches that kept records related to their ministry leadership teams had an average of 73.92 volunteers serving in the sports ministry area of their churches. The church leaders placed a great amount of emphasis on leadership training and development as part of expanding this area of ministry in their local church setting.

When asked about their overall budget for sports ministry, many leaders were not comfortable talking in specific terms. Several leaders openly shared about current

facilities and upcoming plans for expansion. They indicated that most of their funds are spent building areas for multiple church uses. Table 4.9 provides a range of funds spent each year for sports ministry among the churches in this study. One church indicated that their annual budget for sports ministry was between 200,000 and 300,000 dollars.

Numerous churches had sports ministries that were fully funded by the participant fees.

These findings demonstrate that sports ministry can be done by churches of all sizes and levels of resources.

Table 4.9 Annual Church Budget for Sports Ministry (N=72)

Dollars Spent Each Year for Sports Ministry	n	%
\$0	31	43.1
\$1,000 or less	6	8.3
\$1,001-\$5,000	8	11.1
\$5,001-\$10,000	7	9.7
\$10,001-\$20,000	2	2.8
Over \$20,000	18	25

Seventy-nine of the church leaders surveyed reported that they felt strongly supported by their senior pastors in the area of sports ministry. Of the leaders surveyed, 5 percent felt somewhat supported and 9 percent did not feel supported by the senior pastors in the area of sports ministry. Ninety-three of the churches provided responses and seven provided no response or no sports ministry for this survey question.

These findings indicate that very large churches often have a multitude of specialized ministries that are designed to further the overall ministry of the church. Some of the church leaders indicated that their churches were doing so much that the senior pastors often were unable to keep up with all of the activity. These findings also demonstrate the need for team-oriented ministry.

The church leaders were asked to describe their present sports facilities. Sixty-two of the churches indicated that they had some kind of facilities. The churches that had both indoor and outdoor sports facilities accounted for 37 percent of the churches in this study. Seven of the churches indicated that they rented all of the sports ministry space. Table 4.10 provides an overview of the type of facilities utilized by the churches in this study.

Table 4.10. Type of Facility Utilized for Sports Ministry (N=82)

Type of Facility	n	%
Indoor and outdoor facilities	37	45.1
Indoor or outdoor facilities	25	30.5
No facilities	13	15.9
Rented facilities	7	8.5

The churches in this study were asked if they allowed parachurch sports ministries like the Fellowship of Christian Athletes to utilize their facilities. Thirty-nine of the churches indicated that they did on a regular basis. Thirty-five stated that they did not allow outside ministries to use their facilities due to liabilities, limited outdoor space, or lack of facilities. Many of the church leaders had a gracious attitude related to providing

sports ministry facilities to outside groups. Some of the churches had a very strong link to the sports community within their overall community.

Transferable Principles from the Megachurches

Transferable principles can be learned from the megachurches in this study. One of those principles is the need to keep good records of those participating in the sports ministry of the church. Thirty-four of the churches in this study kept up-to-date records related to the number of people converted in their various sports ministry activities. These records showed an average of 240 new converts to Christ last year. The thirty-four churches reporting these findings indicated that there were 8,159 new converts in the previous year through the sports ministry of their churches. These figures demonstrate the evangelistic effectiveness and potential of excellent sports ministry. The five churches reporting the highest numbers were the following: The Potter's House of Dallas, Texas (2,000); First Assembly of God of Phoenix, Arizona (1,000); Hope Presbyterian Church of Cordova, Tennessee (600); First Baptist Church of Woodstock, Georgia (450); and, Heritage Christian Center of Denver, Colorado (400). Each church leader stressed the importance of good record keeping in this area of sports ministry. Many churches admitted that tracking the number of conversions, participants, and those assimilated into the life of the church was very difficult.

Thirty-one of the church leaders indicated that they are able to track those assimilated into their churches through the sports ministry. Those churches had an average of 276 people integrated through the sports ministry. The total number of people integrated into the local churches was reported as 8,585 people. Assimilation is another vital area that church leaders among many of the megachurches track and try to improve.

One-half (n=50) of the churches surveyed indicated that they offered sports camps as a method of reaching out to their communities. Thirty-one churches related that they offered no sports camps, and nineteen churches had either no response or no sports. The following is a listing of some of the sports camps currently offered by churches specializing in this ministry niche: football, cheerleading, tennis, basketball, soccer, baseball, golf, wrestling, volleyball, softball, and fishing. The church offering the most sports camps was Prestonwood Baptist Church (26). Much of their sports ministry was offered through evangelistic sports camps for young people.

When asked to respond to the survey question related to church-sponsored sports evangelists, forty-seven church leaders stated that their churches did not sponsor any sports evangelists. Twenty-four churches indicated that they currently support sports evangelists. Twenty-nine church leaders said that they were not sure or that they could not respond at the time of the survey. Many of the churches had professional athletes that were being disciplined by church leaders. These athletes were encouraged to share their testimonies on a regular basis at church-sponsored sporting events.

Summary of Major Findings

This study has found that the largest churches in the United States utilize a variety of types of evangelism to reach people for God. Sports evangelism was the fourth most common mode of evangelism that the churches employed in their ministry settings. Eighty-five of the ninety-four responding churches indicated that they offered sports ministry as part of their overall ministry plan. The churches in this study offered an average of 6.4 different sports ministry areas.

One of the most interesting findings of this study is the fact that seventy-eight different sports are currently being used to reach out to others. This amazing diversity demonstrates the importance of connecting with people according to their areas of interest. The most prevalent sport being offered in sports ministry was basketball with 70 percent of the churches indicating that they offer ministry gatherings around this activity. The churches offer sports nearly four days (3.87) per week on average, which supports the idea of maximizing ministry effectiveness by providing ministry throughout the week. The church leaders also indicated that sports ministry can be used to reach people of all ages. The age group reached most through sports ministry was the 12 to 18-year-olds. This finding was somewhat expected due to the prevalence of sports within many youth ministry settings.

Most of the staffing for the various sports ministries in this study came from volunteers. The churches averaged about seventy-four volunteers each for the leadership of their sports ministry. A tremendous amount of money and facility space was often dedicated to this ministry area. The churches that kept records of those converted to Christ in their sports ministry averaged 240 new believers during 2004. These findings demonstrate how sports ministry can often aid churches in fulfilling the Great Commission. Chapter 5 provides a more in-depth overview of the major findings from this study.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Sports ministry is a common area of ministry among the one hundred largest megachurches in the United States, according to the findings of this research. The churches actively involved in sports ministry report reaching people for Christ while utilizing a variety of patterns for ministry. This finding confirms the importance of culturally relevant ministry, which was discussed in the review of literature. Ninety-one of the churches offered specific sports ministries to their communities, indicating that sports ministry is one of a multitude of ways to reach people for Christ. Once again, this ministry practice supports the literature that encourages reaching people with a variety of methods. The literature also confirms that society is absorbed in leisure and sports activities according to Garner. One of our local sports ministry events attracted approximately five hundred people. This figure is nearly double that of our weekly worship attendance. The attendance at this event illustrates the passion that is linked to the American sports culture. The importance of being culturally relevant in planning and programming church activities is demonstrated in these kinds of events.

Seventy-eight different sports are currently being used by the churches in this study. These sports range from basketball to ballet and from softball to scuba diving. Some of the churches have seven days a week of sports ministry offered to their communities. These findings demonstrate that sports ministry is an area of ministry that has great potential to add to the overall ministry and effectiveness of the local church. The church leaders that were interviewed in this study described specific ways to utilize sports ministry in the overall ministry of the church. Several different purposes for sports

ministry was cited by the ministry leaders including fellowship, evangelism, discipleship, and assimilation.

The megachurches in this study represented seventeen different denominational groups that demonstrate the fact that sports ministry is being integrated into churches of different backgrounds. This study found that the churches that responded to the survey questions offered as few as zero sports to as many as twenty-four different sports. The average number of sports being offered by responding churches was 6.4 sports. The top ten sports in order of popularity are the following: (1) basketball, (2) softball, (3) volleyball, (4) golf, (5) soccer, (6) football, including flag football, (7) cycling (road and mountain), (8) running, (9) aerobics, and (10) tennis. The diversity of sports confirms that sports ministry is related to people's areas of interest. The different sports also related to each particular region in the country. For example, scuba diving was a sport offered in Florida and outrigger canoeing was offered in Hawaii. Each geographical area had higher concentrations of regional sports.

The churches in this study offered sports activities an average of 3.87 days per week. Ten of the churches indicated that they offer some type of sports ministry seven days a week. This saturation of ministry is similar to churches that offer multiple services. When ministry is expanded, the church leaders are potentially able to reach more people for Christ. The age group reached most through the sports ministry of the megachurches in this study was the twelve to eighteen year old group with 79 percent of the churches reporting specific ministry. Some of the churches had sports ministry available only for adults while focusing on primarily adult assimilation into the local church. Several of the church leaders indicated that their sports ministry was offered

through the various ministry departments of their churches such as youth, children's, men's and women's ministry areas. Twenty-seven churches indicated that each week over one thousand people participate in their sports ministry. Eleven of the twelve largest churches in the United States reported having more than one thousand people involved in sports ministry each week. These extremely large churches literally offered dozens of weekly ministry opportunities for church members as well as non-church members.

The church leaders surveyed in this study indicated their churches utilized a variety of evangelism approaches. Several different ministry strategies were employed through the various sports ministry programs. The majority (77 percent) of church leaders interviewed viewed sports ministry primarily as a vehicle for fellowship. These leaders described how sports were being used as a way of gathering people together for a time of fun with no strings attached. An example of fellowship focused ministry is when church leaders schedule activities without any expectation from those in attendance. One church leader noted that they scheduled scuba diving outings that were simply fellowship times. This fellowship approach often is linked with other small groups within the church. Other church leaders (65 percent) saw the evangelistic opportunity intrinsically linked to each sports activity. As mentioned earlier, according to Oswald and Leas, 79 percent of people who come to church do so because they have been influenced and invited by a friend or a relative (28). Sports ministry is often utilized as an opportunity for fellowship along with a friend or family member. The sports ministry of Lafayette First Church of the Nazarene has grown as a result of this kind of interaction.

Some of the evangelistic strategies included the following: (1) linking the sports ministries with short-term mission trips as a way of reaching people in other nations (one

church reported sending approximately twelve sports ministry teams each year for soccer camps), (2) providing outdoor martial arts demonstrations at local parks as a way of gathering a crowd for a local crusade (one church reported offering pro-style wrestling demonstrations as an evangelistic outreach), (3) offering basketball tournaments and camps for inner-city kids living in the projects (one church reported busing kids in from the Watts area of Los Angeles), (4) mentoring young people by offering sports for men and boys and women and girls in which personal evangelism can be practiced, and (5) serving the local prison population by offering basketball and softball in the prisons.

Another ministry strategy was one of service. One church reported having a cycling ministry that served local children and youth by repairing bicycles before scheduled rides. This integration of servant ministry and sports ministry has proven to be a positive ministry. Other churches described offering referee, coaching, CPR, and first aid classes as a service to the surrounding communities. One leader talked about teaching the participants a code of ethics that would help people in all areas of life. Most of the church leaders surveyed viewed sports ministry as a mosaic of several different ministry strategies. Similarly, FCA demonstrates a conglomeration of different ministry strategies from fellowship to discipleship to testimony-based personal evangelism.

Although the churches employed staff members (an average of 2.7 per church) in the sports ministry area, most of the service came from laypeople who help provide leadership in this area of ministry. The churches keeping record of volunteers reported nearly seventy-four sports ministry volunteers. The high rate of volunteerism demonstrates that sports ministry cannot just be done by church staff if churches want to

be effective. The churches of this study demonstrate that large teams of volunteers can be trained and released into ministry.

The majority of the churches in this study had facilities that were used for both indoor and outdoor sports. Many of the leaders reported having extensive community fitness centers that were used. One church in Chicago reported having a ten thousand seat basketball stadium and an ice skating rink. These facilities were designed for reaching people through specific sports activities.

The churches keeping records had an average of 240 new converts to Christ each year. Thirty-one of the church leaders indicated that they are able to track those assimilated into their churches through the sports ministry. One of the churches in this study described developing e-mail lists of participants based upon interest areas and specific sports. Evite lists often would have three hundred to four hundred e-mail addresses per sport. These lists enable participants to be informed of upcoming events. Due to the fact that the discipleship and assimilation process becomes more and more difficult as churches grow larger, the utilization of this technology is a helpful tool for church leaders to consider. Churches that kept records had an average of 276 people integrated through the sports ministry. One-half (n=50) of the churches surveyed indicated that they offered sports camps as a method of reaching out to their communities. Twenty-four churches indicated that they currently support sports evangelists. Our recent skateboarding event and many of the special sports ministry events offered by the churches in this study have been effective at reaching unchurched people for Christ. These ministry results confirm the research of Lindsay Terry who says that “we don’t have to go to a foreign land to find people who are without Christ” (125).

The church leaders in this study reported seeing large numbers of people attend sports ministry activities without any prior church involvement. Hunter states that “we adapt to the language and culture of the people we are able to reach (Radical Outreach 33).

The church leaders in this study confirm this finding by offering numerous examples of reaching people, according to their specific interests, such as ballet, archery, and basketball. Nida discusses the importance of communication in Christian missions. Sports ministry is essentially a language or way of communicating to a specific culture. Athletes are often at an advantage for sharing their faith in a sports setting. Most of the churches in this study confirm the findings of Nida related to communicating the gospel message. Dr. Rick Warren in The Purpose Driven Church mentions the need to “make the Bible accessible to unbelievers” (296). One way that the churches in this study are communicating the message of God is through the distribution of Bibles to participants at sports ministry events. My local church, Lafayette First Church of the Nazarene, offers sports Bibles to our sports ministry participants. Pastor Victor Lee shares about how sports evangelism can break down barriers when ministering to people (1). The churches in this study confirm that by reaching a diverse group of people through sports.

Theological Reflection of Findings

The strongest theological commonality among the one hundred largest megachurches in the United States was the desire to fulfill the mandate of the Great Commission:

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matt. 28:18-20)

Most of the church leaders had an overwhelming passion for reaching the unchurched. Sports ministry was viewed as one platform or method for reaching lost people. Most of the churches in this study had a wide variety of methods for helping to fulfill the Great Commission in their local church.

Cultural relevance was at the heart of what each church was doing in the area of sports ministry. A prevalent desire to offer sports that were of a high interest level for the specific communities was a common trait among most of the churches in this study. Discipleship was also stressed among the sports ministries reviewed in this study. One of the churches had a ministry for men called “Ironman Ministry” using Proverbs 27:17: “As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.” Another church used 1 Timothy 4:8 as one of their predominant themes for sports ministry, which says, “For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.” This passage is linked to the church’s purpose statement for their community center, which is as follows: “The family life center strives to encourage our church family to take care of their temples through exercise and group sports. At family life center our members can honor God by honoring their bodies.” A holistic approach to spiritual development is acknowledged in this statement.

The findings of this study are quite practical because they indicate that churches can connect with people in a variety of ways using different sports. Various strategies can be employed to reach people for Christ and help them get integrated into the life of the local church.

Research Reflection Team

The research reflection team of Lafayette First Church of the Nazarene spent twelve sessions going through the material of this study. We decided to integrate the major findings in this study into the actual sports ministry of our church. Our team was able to determine what sports could be added to the sports ministry of our local church. Currently, we offer basketball, softball, kickboxing, walking, volleyball, and dodgeball. After several meetings spent looking over the list of sports being offered by the megachurches, we decided to offer the following sports in the next few years: soccer, T-ball, running, aerobics, fishing, billiards, canoeing, hiking, ultimate Frisbee, flag football, skateboarding and referee class.

Some of the key decisions made by the sports ministry team of Lafayette First Church of the Nazarene as a result of our research reflection meetings were as follows:

1. No one person should be leading more than two sports at one time.
2. A code of conduct for all leaders and sporting events held at the church needs to be created. We must demonstrate good sportsmanship.
3. Cards should be made that have schedules of the sporting events to be passed out as invitations. These cards should also have the church's web address so that people can check for updates.
4. Sports could be available several days a week.
5. We made a list of specific contact people for each sport that we are presently offering or will be offering in the near future.
6. The church has stocked sports devotional Bibles to hand out to visitors as an outreach at our sports events.

7. All sports participants fill out waivers. This process enabled us to gather telephone numbers, addresses, and e-mail addresses so we can expand our level of communication.

8. We are in the process of developing attendance tracking and assimilation software. We are also designing e-lists in order to stay connected with the sports ministry participants. The software utilization will help the other areas of ministry in the church, also.

In the short time that we have implemented some of the changes and additions to our sports ministry, our church in Lafayette, Indiana, has had cause for celebration with the results thus far. A greater interest in sports ministry exists from members that would not normally be here during the week. People attending basketball and other sports are now more willing to help in other areas of our church. Our church body is eager to accept using a variety of sports as outreach tools. Participants are discovering that sports can be a huge mission field, as new people are coming that have not even come to church before. Sports Bibles have been distributed to many newcomers and relationships are being built through various sports activities. It has been exciting to see how sports are breaking down barriers of the world's opinion of the church.

Another celebration related to the sports ministry is how it has impacted our church leaders. As senior pastor, I am becoming more of an evangelist. This ministry helps me to make life more of a witness and to feel more accountability. Participation in it makes me and other leaders become more involved in the church. This involvement has a snowball effect with our various leaders. More connections are being made as people are meeting more people and encouraging one another.

In the short time that we have been developing our sports ministry, we have already learned several important lessons that we could share with other churches starting their own sports ministries. A few things that we learned include using creative ways to advertise, offering sports for women and children, not just men. Also, we learned the importance of being consistent and of having the leadership team meeting frequently to keep the ministry on track.

Many discoveries in the key areas of our sports ministry helped to provide big lessons for us as a team. First, we would tell them to not be surprised if people come that really need relationships, not just a time to participate in a sport. The church needs to be prepared to meet that need, whether it is for a deeper relationship with God or other people. We learned that many people did not have Bibles they feel comfortable reading. In addition, try not to underestimate how God can use a one hour period to make connections between people.

Next, the sports leaders must be intentional about prayer and sharing Christ. They need to be willing to invite those who attend sports ministries to other events at the church. Follow up is also imperative to connect with those who come. A system should be put in place.

Finally, keeping an open mind through the development process is quite important. For instance, some people thought that it was crazy to have dodgeball at the church; however, almost two dozen people showed up on a Saturday morning to participate. This event points out the importance of trying different things. One must be flexible as the sports ministry develops, and should not have expectations. Start small, but leave room for expansion. If a church has the facility space and land it should use them

and not just reserve them for buildings down the road. The sky is the limit; therefore, a church can dream big, and not settle for mediocrity.

As a sports ministry team, we have several short-range and long-range dreams. First, we want to use our existing facility, the gym, as a platform to reach the lost. Next, our church is finishing plans for completing the back field of the property (twelve acres) so that more space is available for a larger number of sporting events. In order to experience growth in ministry we will keep adding a sport a year. We desire to be culturally relevant through our sports ministries offerings. Our hope is to be a church full of leagues, along with open activities. Offering these activities will help us to grow in relationships, spiritually and in numbers. Our dream is to see a direct relationship between the growth in sports ministry and the growth in church attendance. Some more defined goals that resulted from our ongoing research reflection team meetings are included in Appendix L.

Implications of the Study

This study has provided a great deal of practical information in the field of sports ministry. I am not aware of another study of this kind. This research helps to provide a detailed overview of what the one hundred largest megachurches in 2004 are doing in the area of sports ministry. This information can provide numerous lessons for local church leaders to consider. Sports ministry has tremendous potential to help churches reach people in a culturally relevant manner. Sports also offer opportunities to gather large crowds of people. Some of the churches utilized sports ministry in public settings in order to set up evangelistic gatherings with athletes sharing their testimonies.

This research also demonstrates that after making hundreds of telephone calls, it is possible to interview leaders from the one hundred largest churches in the United States. Persistence was tested in this study to pursue the information. This study has helped to broaden research methodology in the area of telephone surveying among megachurches and sports ministry research in general.

Some of the other implications of this research include the possibility of developing a sports ministry program at Asbury Theological Seminary. My dissertation committee recommended this possibility due to the prevalence of sports ministry in many churches across America. Helping to develop such a program would be a wonderful blessing for the Church and an exciting endeavor in which to participate. Providing information for Christian colleges and seminaries could potentially help to create more and more avenues for sports ministry training and equipping.

Limitations and Weaknesses

This research is limited to the one hundred largest megachurches in the United States. Most of these churches have structures in place that allow for rapidly expanding ministry. The results of this research are limited to the churches in the United States. Churches outside of the United States most likely would offer different sports while utilizing different ministry strategies. One specific weakness of this study was that some of the church leaders were not willing to go into detail in a telephone survey. Some leaders also were unavailable. Only a few of the church sites were visited. This study primarily reviewed churches from a distance.

Suggestions for Further Studies

As a follow-up to this study, I would like to visit ten of the leading churches from the list of megachurches. I would photograph their facilities and sports activities, observe their leadership teams, and shadow the pastors overseeing these ministry areas.

Eventually providing an actual sports ministry manual from those churches is another follow-up. I would also like to create a pictorial directory of the leading megachurches in the area of sports ministry. Another exciting endeavor would be to visit and study the top ten megachurches in sports ministry outside of the United States. An area of further study is to discover how FCA and other parachurch organizations are utilizing sports ministry. Churches that host FCA sports camps could be studied as dynamic ministry sites. FCA's prevalence at high school and college campuses could be studied to determine the role that sports ministry can play in the lives of young people. The philosophy and strategy of FCA could be compared and contrasted to the sports ministries of the churches in this study.

Other researchers could study the actual development of a sports ministry program in a church that does not have any sports ministry. Another area of further study would be to have a new church plant that is launched primarily with an emphasis in sports ministry. This kind of church planting could be an interesting topic to study. Site visits and internships of the leading churches in this study would be an interesting addition to this research. The impact of title nine in the planning and programming of sports ministry in churches would also be another excellent area of study. Developing a "how to" handbook for sports ministry with relevant forms, attendance sheets, and waivers would also be a practical research area. The impact of sports chaplaincy in

collegiate and professional sports is finally another issue that needs closer attention.

Personal Reflections

The key strategies for sports ministry that have been discovered in this study are as follows: (1) serving communities, (2) equipping and developing laypeople, (3) winning people to Christ, and (4) showing off all ministries of the church. At the heart of each sports ministry program was a desire to serve the people in the local community. Some churches have developed extensive facilities that are available for people to use for no charge. The facilities often included basketball courts, swimming pools, softball diamonds, and soccer fields. One church even offered a mobile skateboarding park for the young people of their area. Church leaders related that they were providing a safe, drug-free environment for others to enjoy while playing their favorite sport. The second strategy was one of discipleship. Many church leaders described the tremendous opportunities for service within the sports ministry of their churches. I have seen dozens of people grow spiritually through serving in the area of sports ministry. The next strategy of winning people to Christ was quite common among the majority of the churches in this study. The church leaders had a great deal to say about this strategy. The following are some of the concepts and statements demonstrating this philosophy for sports ministry: (1) they are reaching the non-churched in a nontraditional way, (2) they practice a low-profile way of getting people involved in church, and (3) their goal is one of getting people in front of the Lord. The final strategy for sports ministry was one of drawing people to the church in order to show off other areas of ministry within the church. By offering a multitude of ministries, some people participate in a walking group

while their kids go to youth group. This final strategy demonstrates how ministry options help to integrate more people into the life of the local church.

Five of the leading churches in the area of sports ministry based upon my research and interviews with church leaders are as follows: (1) Saddleback Church of Lake Forest, California; (2) The Potter's House of Dallas, Texas, (3) Second Baptist Church of Houston, Texas, (4) Prestonwood Baptist Church of Plano, Texas, and (5) McLean Bible Church of McLean, Virginia. Each of these churches demonstrated a high level of commitment to sports ministry. These churches are effectively reaching people for Christ through a variety of sports. They are offering a diversity of sports several days a week. They are providing additional follow-up for those participating in their sports ministry areas, and they are also continually developing new areas of sports ministry.

The following is a listing of the unexpected findings and general observations gleaned from this study:

- Relatively young churches,
- Rapid growth,
- Culturally relevant ministry,
- Many denominations not represented,
- Calvary Chapel's representation,
- Variety of sports,
- Several strategies,
- Useful/practical facilities,
- Innovative rental/usage of non-church facilities,
- Triad or tripod leadership,

- Leadership development,
- Small group model married to sports ministry,
- Engaging people in interest areas,
- Holistic approach,
- Exciting, cutting-edge ministry,
- Family oriented ministry,
- Conversion growth, and
- Integration into church life.

Many of the one hundred largest megachurches in the United States are relatively young. Their youth demonstrates the amazing growth potential when innovative methods of ministry are utilized. The churches engaged in sports ministry have experienced rapid growth (numerical and spiritual), both through new conversions and through discipleship of volunteers (depth). Sports ministry is a culturally relevant form of ministry that has tremendous potential for helping churches to reach people.

I was surprised by the number of mainline denominations that were not a part of the one hundred largest megachurches in the United States. The Wesleyan Church, the Church of the Nazarene, the Free Methodist, along with numerous other denominations, were not represented in this list. Nevertheless, the Calvary Chapel denomination has an amazing level of representation (six churches) among the one hundred largest churches in the United States which was surprising, considering the age of the denomination and the number of churches in that group of churches.

The fact that so many (seventy-eight) different sports were being offered was unexpected. A staggering number, it demonstrates the creative nature of ministry. In

addition, I was impressed with how ministry can connect to both interest areas and need areas (physical fitness/rehabilitation), especially due to the things available. The churches in this study employed different strategies to reach people and disciple them to maturity in Christ. Once again, a high degree of creativity was demonstrated.

In regard to facilities, the churches designed practical church facilities that could be used several days a week for a variety of purposes. Several churches had dynamic sports ministry without any facilities. Church leaders lacking facilities can be encouraged to explore other avenues. For example, they can rent parks, fields, gymnasiums, and use public facilities to reach more people.

The area of leadership was an interesting one. Triad or tripod leadership was used at one of the churches. They would only start a new sports ministry when three people were trained and prepared to lead that ministry area. Also, the churches in this study are intentional about developing leaders from within their churches. The sports ministries need many volunteers. These volunteers are raised up from within the specific sports areas.

The small group model was married to sports ministry. Numerous churches in this study linked sports ministry with the churches' small group ministries. The two ministries were linked in an intentional manner from the initiation of the sports groups. The churches in this study had an expectation for people to be involved and engaged in ministry linked to spiritual gifts, interest areas, and passions. A holistic approach was displayed. The church leaders often related a desire to minister to people in this way. The ministry was a form of discipleship that was designed to renovate the temple in all three areas--body, soul and spirit.

The churches promoted sports ministry as something exciting and on the cutting edge. Some of the megachurches had leaders that sensed they were doing things (offering sports) that would not be welcome in churches stuck in an old paradigm of ministry. In addition, most of the megachurches were family oriented and offered sports for people of all age groups.

The church leaders were very interested in seeing people reached for Christ. A strong desire existed to try different methods to reach the most people possible and to see growth in the church through conversion. Sports ministry serves as a natural inlet or on ramp into churches. The church leaders in this study shared this idea of integration consistently throughout the interview process.

Postscript

Probably the most wonderful blessing to come from this research has been the transformation that God has accomplished in the lives of people through sports ministry. I have seen the Lord do remarkable things for both believers and unbelievers as a result of the sports ministry in our church. First of all, we have had several people in our church become highly involved in ministry due to the opportunities that have come through sports. Our sports ministry team has been developed from our initial research reflection team. We have seen one person come forward to help develop an excellent golf scramble event. We also had a member come forward to develop a dodgeball ministry. Our basketball ministry has expanded to five days a week. A ladies walking group has been developed. The volunteers and members of the sports ministry team are becoming more and more involved in the church.

Recently we hosted a skateboarding event entitled Extremefest 2005. This event was created based upon a great dream that God gave a young lady in our church. Six weeks prior to the event she made a suggestion that we host a skateboarding competition and demonstration. We prayerfully considered the opportunity. For six weeks we prayed, prepared, and planned. On the day of the event, we had 400-500 people fill our church parking lot. We had approximately 125 skateboard participants. A professional skateboarding team from Missouri named the Untitled Skateboard team ministered to the young people alongside our sports ministry team. Approximately fifty young people accepted the Lord when the invitation was given at the conclusion of the skateboarding event. The young people were given sports Bibles and also filled out information cards so that our church could follow up with them at a later time. This event was featured several times in the local newspaper. The day before my dissertation defense, two pages of the newspaper were dedicated to follow up coverage of this event. We praise God for blessing this event in such an amazing way. Our church has been abundantly blessed by the Lord in each of the areas of sports ministry within our church! Church members have been empowered, encouraged, and entrusted with great ministry opportunities! May this ministry continue to bear great fruit for the glory of God!

APPENDIX A

CHANGED LIVES THROUGH SPORTS MINISTRY

The sports ministry is a fun and non-threatening way to get people plugged into the life of the church. Once they've developed relationships with members and regular attenders at Fellowship through recreation, a natural next step is for them to want to know more about Christ. Success stories of people who have come to the church and to a saving knowledge of Christ through athletics are, honestly, too numerous to list. But I want to share one example of how this ministry can truly impact people's lives.

April was a young business executive who played volleyball with her work friends at a local volleyball club. One night, being short of players for her team, she invited several players from the Fellowship Church league (also playing at the same club) to stand in for the missing team members. By the end of the night, April had been invited and convinced to visit Fellowship Church.

The first Sunday she visited, April ended up following her new church friends to the annual Fall Golf Tourney, where she volunteered her time and energy to make this event happen. By the end of her first eight-hour day with Fellowship people, she knew that she had found a new church home. She immediately became a regular and active participant in the church and in the athletics ministry in particular.

Over time April's life began to change and grow as she found spiritual peace and contentment through Christ, along with quality Christian relationships. Now April has stepped into leadership at Fellowship, leading a crew of twelve sports volunteers. She is a living testament to God's ability to change lives through a church athletic program.

Source: Stanley and Young 98-99.

APPENDIX B

SPORTS EVANGELISM WEB SITES

Action Ministries International: www.actionministries.org/sports-faq.html

Athletes in Action: www.athletesinaction.org

Canadian Convention of Southern Baptists: www.ccsb.ca/home/evangelism/sports.htm

Church Sports and Recreation Minister Resources: www.csrn.org

CT Sports Channel: www.christianitytoday.com/sports

Good News Sports: www.goodnewssports.com

Gospelcom.net: www.gospelcom.net/audience/coachesathletes

Infinity Sports: www.infinitysports.com/infinity.php3

LifeWay. Sports Ministry: www.lifeway.com/staff_r0003.asp

OnMission.com: www.onmission.com/webzine/sept_oct00/sports_clinics.htm

Racers for Christ: www.missionresources.com/sportsoutreach.html

RBC Ministries: www.gospelcom.net/rbc

Sports Ambassadors: www.gospelcom.net/oci/sa/sports.htm

Sports Evangelism: www.amazingangels.com/releases/ibs_57.html

Sports Evangelism International: www.sportsevangelism.org

Sports Outreach: www.sportsoutreach.org

The Fellowship of Christian Athletes: www.fca.org

The Goal.com: www.thegoal.com

Upward Basketball: www.upward.com

APPENDIX C

RECREATION FACILITY CHECKLIST FOR CHURCHES

The following is a checklist to determine readiness to build a recreation facility:

1. Does the church have an existing recreation program that involves children, youth, adults and senior adults?
2. Does the church have a full-time staff person other than the pastor with recreation programming responsibility?
3. Does the church understand the additional help, both volunteer and paid, required for proper operation of a facility?
4. Does the church have adequate financial resources to budget each year for the ongoing expenses of church recreation, programming, staffing, maintenance, equipment, utilities, insurance, etc.?
5. Does the church have a plan for controlling, staffing, and operating of the building?
6. Can the current need for a facility be met by rented or borrowed recreation space from community groups (schools, community center, YMCA, etc.)? If so, has the use of these been maximized?
7. Is there an ample amount of space given to education, worship, and parking space needs for at least the next five years?
8. Does the church own adequate property for expansion of worship, education, recreation, and parking facilities for the foreseeable future?
9. Does the church have a long-range master plan for the stewardship of all property owned?

10. Can the church afford to build commercial quality, durable construction that fits with other buildings onsite and purchase heavy-duty commercial quality equipment that will withstand the recreational use and potential abuse of such a facility?
11. Does the church recognize that a recreation building alone will not make it grow or become more evangelistic?

If the answer to these is yes, full speed ahead! You are a good candidate for a church recreation facility or multipurpose facility. If the answer to one or more of these questions is no, the church should

1. Reconsider building until these issues have been addressed, or
2. Plan to address them in the early planning stages of the project.

APPENDIX D**THE EVANGELISTIC MANDATE OF THE WESLEYAN CHURCH**

The ultimate objective of The Wesleyan Church is to fulfill the Great Commission of the Lord Jesus Christ by sharing with all mankind the good news and glorious experience of full salvation. To this end, The Wesleyan Church, through its General Department of Evangelism and Church Growth and General Department of World Missions, shall endeavor:

1. To evangelize the nations of earth, seeking the salvation of the individual and the entire sanctification of believers as the primary responsibility of all missionary work.
2. To gather the converts into churches and enlist them in the work of God's kingdom.
3. To place well-qualified and Spirit-filled pastors over the churches, giving special emphasis to the training of workers and leaders for the church.
4. To share the benefits of the gospel, and to facilitate evangelistic work through specialized ministries such as medical, educational, literary and benevolent work.
5. To promote, in accordance with scriptural and indigenous principles, the growth and development of the churches in each field or area to a church body that is spiritually mature, well organized, financially responsible, and missionary minded, and that can assume its place in The Wesleyan Church (Wesleyan Church, 214).

APPENDIX E

CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUNGER EVANGELICALS

1. Grew up in a postmodern world
2. Marked by a post-9/11 era
3. Have recovered the biblical understanding of human nature
4. Are aware of a new context for ministry
5. Differ with the pragmatist approach to ministry
6. Minister in a new paradigm of thought
7. Stand for the absolutes of the Christian faith in a new way
8. Recognize the road to the future runs through the past
9. Committed to the plight of the poor, especially in urban centers
10. Willing to live by the rules
11. Facility with technology
12. Highly visual
13. Communicate through stories
14. Grasp the power of imagination
15. Advocate the resurgence of the arts
16. Appreciate the power of performative symbol
17. Long for community
18. Committed to multicultural communities of faith
19. Committed to intergenerational ministry
20. Attracted to absolutes
21. Ready to commit

22. Search for shared wisdom
23. Demand authenticity
24. Realize the unity between thought and action

APPENDIX F

TEN INSIGHTS SUPPORTING CULTURALLY RELEVANT CHRISTIANITY

1. Most traditional, “culturally irrelevant” churches cannot reach, and retain, pre-Christian people in significant numbers.
2. Since most church leaders do not yet know that culture is “the silent language” and “the software of the mind,” they usually resist making the changes needed to “do church” in ways that fit the culture of an unchurched population.
3. Traditional churches do not yet perceive how deeply culture shapes personality and worldview, that culture is no less than “the software of the mind.”
4. Traditional churches have not yet discovered that culture is “the silent language.”
5. Most traditional churches in the U.S.A. have already come a very long way, in agreeing that ministry in the people’s language is necessary to reach them.
6. When the missionary congregation expresses the gospel in the cultural forms of the receptor population, they are much more likely to perceive that Christianity is for “people like us.”
7. Employing culturally relevant forms is desirable because God’s revelation usually, and best, breaks through to people through their own language and the other forms of their culture.
8. Cultural relevance is one way we extend incarnational Christianity.
9. Contrary to what most church leaders have heard, all worship services are “contemporary!”
10. Cultural relevance is the rationale for “contemporary worship.”

Source: Hunter, Radical Outreach 91-93.

APPENDIX G

TOO MUCH EVANGELISTIC PASSION?

Do churches like Grove City put too much energy into evangelism? I don't think so, because lost people matter to God. But the more important question is: What do you think? How important is this core value to you? How important is it to your church? The more I read the Bible, the more I see this value at the core of Scripture, running from Genesis to Revelation.

1. The mission of Jesus was to live and die on a cross so that sinners could be put in right relationship with God, "while we were still sinners, Christ dies for us" (Rom. 5:8).
2. The central message of the Cross teaches that lost people matter to God. Jesus said he came "to seek and to save what was lost" (Luke 19:10).
3. The most important decision of eternity underscores this value: "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?" (Mark 8:36).
4. The central mission of the church, found in the Great Commission and the Great Commandment, involves reaching out to lost people whom God loves.
5. The most central teaching of the church, reflected in John 3:16, perhaps the most, quoted verse in the entire New Testament-involves reaching lost people.
6. Taken as a whole, the entire Bible is the history of God's salvation of lost people.
7. Perhaps the three greatest parables ever taught, presented in Luke 15, all underscore the same idea. It was the religious crowd, the Pharisees, the keepers of the traditions, who were most disturbed at Jesus because he reached out to sinners. Jesus seized the opportunity to teach three parables in which the key word is lost: lost sheep, lost coin,

- lost son. In the third parable, which also goes by the name prodigal son, something takes place that never happened in the Jewish family: the father went out seeking, looking, searching for the lost son.
8. This core value is one that can be directly applied to every culture, every generation, and every country.
 9. All ministry that has high impact in changing lives is relational. Few core values are more relational than a compelling sense that lost people matter to God.
 10. This core value seems to be the heartbeat of God and the heartbeat of churches that are making a difference in impacting people. It is built into the soul of thousands of churches of every shape and size. It needs to be built into my soul as well.

APPENDIX H**ARTICLE DEMONSTRATING HOW OUR SOCIETY VALUES ATHLETES**

CLEVELAND LeBron James has snapped up another big endorsement deal. The Cleveland Cavaliers' rookie star signed a four-year, \$5 million contract with Bubblicious bubble gum, popping his sponsorship deals to nearly \$135 million. Like his idol, Michael Jordan, the 19-year-old James chews gum during games and occasionally blows a bubble or two, making him a natural fit for London-based Cadbury Schweppes PLC. "He appeals to a large audience and he loves the brand," marketing director Sydney Taylor said Monday. "He's been chewing our gum for quite a while." James will appear in television and print advertisements for the gum, the first time a pro athlete has endorsed the product, Taylor said. Cadbury is exploring having James promote other products, she said. James' agent, Aaron Goodwin, said Bubblicious will have a LeBron James-inspired flavor. Goodwin had been in negotiations for three months on the deal and said he's talking with four or five companies, including McDonald's and Kraft, about future projects. James has been racking up big-money endorsement contracts with sponsors since May, when he signed a seven-year, \$90 million deal with Nike, the richest initial shoe contract ever offered an athlete. He has deals with Coca Cola/Sprite (\$16 million), Juice Batteries (\$8 million) and Upper Deck (\$5 million). He also signed a guaranteed three-year, \$13 million deal with the Cavaliers in July.

Source: Associated Press News Service.

APPENDIX I

UPWARD BASKETBALL

Upward Basketball accomplishes what every church strives to do, bring unsaved people under the influence of the gospel so that they have the opportunity to respond to the message of salvation through Jesus Christ.

Upward host training events around the country each summer and fall.

Upward has a plan in place that will let any church of any size use this tool effectively.

Upward Basketball is self-supporting and should not require money from the church budget. Upward charges a flat fee of \$38 a player. Churches usually charge \$45-\$55 per player, although a church may charge more if it wishes (most community youth basketball leagues average much more than this) . . . which includes a reversible mesh jersey, basketball, individual award for use after each game, player/parent devotional handbook, end-of-the-year award and a gospel tract in the shape of a basketball.

A church does not have to have a gym to sponsor an Upward Basketball league. Perhaps a smaller church or group of churches can rent the local school gym. Or several churches that do not have gyms can initiate an Upward Basketball ministry in the community and use a church gym that is not being used. Some have found that the city/county will allow use of their facilities.

The experience and outreach possibilities can be enhanced if a church or churches elect to host an Upward Basketball camp in the summer.

Growing churches are not doing “SOS” (same old stuff). They are using every tool at their disposal to bring people under the influence of the gospel. Upward Basketball is an intentionally evangelistic way to reach out into the community. Kids want to play.

Parents want their children to have quality learning experiences and churches want to reach the community with relevant tools. Upward Basketball is one way to accomplish these things for the growth of the Kingdom.

Upward is an evangelistic sports ministry dedicated to promoting community outreach, developing volunteer leadership in your church, and sharing the love of Christ with children and their families. Specifically designed for kindergarten-sixth grade boys and girls, Upward sports ministries seek to develop the self-esteem of each participant, while teaching sportsmanship, character, athletic skills, and respect for authority in every situation. Upward Basketball is being played in over 930 churches in the United States.

Guiding Principles

To achieve our mission with a Christ-like attitude, we are committed to:

1. Using ever-changing ways to share a never changing message.
2. Promoting and protecting the mission of Upward Unlimited.
3. Working together as a unified team to be a first-class, organized, and detailed evangelistic ministry. Always viewing conflicts as ministry opportunities.
4. Reaching beyond denominational and cultural boundaries to encourage Kingdom Growth.
5. Developing participants to share the love of Christ in and beyond Upward.

Source: Upward Basketball. "2002-2003: Upward Unlimited."

APPENDIX J

SPORTS MINISTRY SURVEY

Church Name and Location: _____

1. How many years has your church been in existence? _____

2. What is the average weekly attendance of your church? _____

3. What is your denominational affiliation? _____

4. What is the majority ethnic composition of your church? (place an x beside)

White African American Hispanic Asian American Other _____

5. What types of evangelism are used at the church?

Worship Servant Friendship Sports Other _____

6. What are the different sports and athletic programs that are sponsored through the ministry of your church? (Using Appendix K)

7. What percentage of the sports ministry is open for the following groups?

Female _____ Male _____

8. How many days a week does your church sponsor sports ministry activities?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

9. What age group(s) have been reached through the sports ministry program?

0-11 12-18 19-29 30-39 40-49 50 and over

All of the above age groups

10. How many paid church staff members serve in the area of sports ministry?

0 1 2 3 4 5 other _____

11. How many people within your church participate in the sports ministries?

0 50 or less 51-200 201-500 501-1000 1001 or more

12. What is your church's budget for sports ministry?

\$0 \$1000 or less \$1001-\$5000 \$5001-\$10,000 \$10,001-\$20,000 over \$20,000

13. How much support is provided by your senior pastor for the sports ministry program?

Does not support supports somewhat supports strongly

14. What type of facility space is used for sports ministry?

15. How many people were converted last year through the sports ministry of the church?

16. How many new people were integrated into the life of your church last year as a result of the sports ministry of your church? _____

17. How are lay people trained to serve in the leadership of the sports ministry program of your church? How many? _____

18. Does your church sponsor sports camps? If yes, what kind(s) of sports?

19. Does your church sponsor sports evangelists? If so, how many? _____

20. Does your church allow parachurch sports ministries to utilize your facilities? Yes No

21. What strategies does your church use in sports ministry?

Discipleship Fellowship Evangelism Worship Service

Others: _____

APPENDIX K

SPORTS LISTED IN CHURCH BULLETINS OR WEB SITES

Aerobics
Baseball
Basketball
Basketball Clinics
Body Balance
Chess
Cycling clubs
Darts
Equestrian
Exercise Class
Fishing (Bass Tournament and Deep Sea Fishing)
Flag Football
Floor Hockey
Foosball
Golfing
Gymnastics
Hiking
Hunting (Safety and Certification Courses)
In-Line Skating
Jet Skiing
Judo
Paintball
Pilates
Ping Pong
Pool
Prison Sports Outreach
Rock Climbing Wall
Rodeos
Roller Skating
Running (5k up to the Marathon and Helping at Water Stations)
Snow Skiing
Soccer
Softball (One-Pitch Softball)
Stretching
Surfing
Taekwondo
Video Games
Volleyball (Six-person Sand Volleyball)
Walking
Weight-lifting
Whitewater River Rafting

APPENDIX L

LONG-RANGE SPORTS MINISTRY GOALS FOR LAFAYETTE FIRST

CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

- Immediate Goals
 - Ladies' Exercise Activities to begin immediately
 - Walking group
 - "Bring a Workout" group
 - Get digital pictures of different sports and activities to put on the webpage
 - Have one by each sport, and link that picture to a page with more pictures, also include testimonies on the linked page.
 - Seed the back field
 - Start planning tournaments for Basketball and/or Dodgeball to create some revenue – then we can consider getting t-shirts for sports ministry.
- 1 Year Goals
 - Add one new sport every year.
 - Have softball and soccer fields completed, including backstop and bases for softball diamond.
 - Each year add a basketball hoop in the parking lot (the first one or two will be adjustable height so that little kids can use it, too).
 - Look for donations at Dick's and MC Sports for basketball hoops & hardware!
- 5 Year Goals
 - Add one new sport every year up until this point.

- Build:
 - Concession stand with bathrooms
 - Bleachers
 - Minimal lighting for outdoor fields (not so much to disturb neighbors, enough that people can walk around the back field and still feel safe)
 - Lighting for parking lot basketball
 - Scoreboard
 - Fence for softball field
 - Hopefully have soccer goals a few years before this point

Some sports-related events to take advantage of crowd gathering opportunities include the following:

- Purdue football games
- Super Bowl
- Final Four games
- NCAA Basketball Championship
- NBA Finals
- NASCAR events like the Daytona 500
- The World Series (This may be treated as a “progressive” event, with smaller get-togethers for the first few games).

WORKS CITED

- Abraham, William J. Canon and Criterion in Christian Theology. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998.
- Alpha International. The Alpha Conference Alpha Delegate Notes. Alpha Conference 2003. New York: Alpha North America, 2001.
- Associated Press News Service. "LeBron James Pops Another Big Ad Deal." 23 Feb. 2004 <<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?=/news/archive/2004>>.
- Banister, Doug. The Word and Power Church: What Happens When a Church Seeks All God Has to Offer? Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999.
- The Barna Research Group. "Church Attendance." 14 Apr. 2004 <<http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=Topic&TopicID=10>>.
- Bateman, Herbert W., IV, ed. Authentic Worship: Hearing Scripture's Voice, Applying Its Truths. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002.
- Baucum, Tory. "Communio: the Trinity and Mission." Manuscript. Asbury Theological Seminary, 1999.
- Bellah, Robert N., et. al. Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life. Berkeley: U of California, 1996.
- Benedict, Daniel T., and Craig Kennet Miller. Contemporary Worship for the 21st Century: Worship or Evangelism? Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1994.
- Brink, Emily R. Authentic Worship in a Changing Culture. Grand Rapids: CRC, 1997.
- Cordeiro, Wayne. Doing Church as a Team. Ventura, CA: Regal, 2001.
- Crawford, Selwyn. "The Bible Belts: Christian Wrestling Makes a Clean Break." The Dallas Morning News [Texas] 12 May 2000, sec. B: 6.

Dawn, Marva J. A Royal "Waste" of Time: The Splendor of Worshiping God and Being Church for the World. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.

Dotson, James. "Sports Evangelism Called Bridge to Reaching 96% of Population." BP News 2001-2003. 5 Aug. 2003 <<http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?ID=14393>>.

Dyrness, William A. How Does America Hear the Gospel? Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989.

Eastman, Brett, Dee Eastman, Todd Wendorff, Denise Wendorff, and Karen Lee-Thorp. Connecting with God's Family. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002.

Fabry, Chris. The 77 Habits of Highly Ineffective Christians. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997.

Fee, Gordon D. Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996.

Galli, Mark, and Ted Olsen. Christian History. 131 Christians Everyone Should Know. Nashville: Broadman, 2000.

Galloway, Dale E. The Awesome Power of Your Attitude: It Can Make or Break You. Portland, OR: Scott, 1992.

---. "Church for the Unchurched: Dream a New Dream." Beeson Institute for Advanced Church Leadership Lecture. Kansas City, MO. Oct. 2003.

---. The Fine Art of Getting Along with Others. Portland, OR: Scott, 1984.

---. Leading with Vision. Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 1999.

---. Making Church Relevant. Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 1999.

---. On-Purpose Leadership: Multiplying Your Ministry by Becoming a Leader of

Leaders. Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 2001.

---. The Small Group Book: The Practical Guide for Nurturing Christians and Building Churches. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995.

Garner, John. "Is Your Church Ready to Build a Recreation Facility?" 5 Aug. 2003

<http://www.lifeway.com/lwc/article_main_page>.

---. "Reaching Our Sports-Crazy Culture." 5 Aug. 2003

<http://www.lifeway.com/staff_r020124.asp>.

---. "The Relevance of Recreation and Sports Ministry." 5 Aug. 2003

<http://www.lifeway.com/staff_r0003.asp>.

Goldingay, John. Models for Interpretation of Scripture. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.

Hamilton, Adam. "Evangelism and Church Growth." Church of the Resurrection 2003

Leadership Institute. Chicago, IL. 15 Oct. 2003.

Harris, Chester. "Breaking Down Cultural Barriers to Personal Evangelism." Diss.

Asbury Theological Seminary, 1996.

Hartford Institute for Religion Research. Hartford Seminary. 6 Aug. 2003

<http://hrr.hartsem.edu/org/faith_megachurches_database_states.html>.

Henderson, David W. Culture Shift: Communicating God's Truth to Our Changing

World. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998.

Holdren, David W. "The Emerging Church." The Wesleyan Advocate Jan. 2004: 5.

Hughes, Kent, Brian Larson, and Lyle Schaller. "Pastoring with Integrity in a Market-

Driven Age." Leadership Journal July 1997: 114.

Hunter, George G., III. "Doing Church in a Western Missionary Context." Beeson

Institute for Advanced Church Leadership. Chicago, IL. 21 Oct. 2003.

---. Radical Outreach: The Recovery of Apostolic Ministry & Evangelism. Nashville: Abingdon, 2003.

Infinity Sports Web Page. 5 Aug. 2003 <<http://www.infinitysports.com/infinity.php3>>.

International Standard Bible Encyclopedia. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1939. 4 vols.

J.O.Y. Faces of Joy. Brochure. Grand Rapids: 2002.

Kalas, J. Ellsworth. Preaching from the Soul: Insistent Observations on the Sacred Art. Nashville: Abingdon, 2003.

Kinlaw, Dennis F. Preaching in the Spirit. Nappanee, IN: Francis Asbury, 1985.

Lee, Victor. "Evangelism Is Not a Spectator Sport." LifeWay. 5 Aug. 2003
<http://www.lifeway.com/staff_r0007.asp>.

Liesch, Barry. The New Worship: Straight Talk on Music and the Church. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001.

Long, Thomas G. Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989.

Mathison, John Ed. Every Member in Ministry: Involving Laity and Inactives. Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1988.

McIntosh, Gary L. "The McIntosh Church Growth Network." Volume 14.10 (Oct. 2002): 1-4.

McManus, Erwin. "Unstoppable Force." Beeson Institute of Advanced Church Leadership. Los Angeles, CA. 25 May 2003.

Mead, Loren B. The Once and Future Church: Reinventing the Congregation for a New Mission Frontier. Minneapolis: Alban Institute, 1992.

Miller, Calvin. The Empowered Leader: 10 Keys to Servant Leadership. Nashville:

Broadman, 1995.

Minnery, Tom. Why You Can't Stay Silent: A Biblical Mandate to Shape Our Culture.

Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 2001.

Moore, Toby. "This is America." Golf Express Newspapers. 13 April 2001, 14.

Morgenthaler, Sally. Worship Evangelism. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999.

Neuhaus, Richard John. "Freedom for Ministry." Manuscript.

Newbigin, Lesslie. The Gospel in a Pluralist Society. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989.

Nida, Eugene A. Customs and Cultures: Anthropology for Christian Missions. Eugene,

OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001.

Osborne, Tom. Faith in the Game: Lessons on Football, Work, and Life. Colorado

Springs, CO: WaterBrook, 1999.

Oswald, Roy M., and Speed B. Leas. The Inviting Church. Bethesda, MD: Alban

Institute, 1987.

"Outreach: In the Marketplace." Rev. Magazine Sept. and Oct. 2003: 30.

Racers for Christ. "Christian Ministry to Motor Racing Community." 5 Aug. 2003

<<http://www.missionresources.com/sportsoutreach.html>>.

Ryan, Jim. Heroes among Us. Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image, 2002.

Schuller, Robert H. My Journey: From an Iowa Farm to a Cathedral of Dreams. San

Francisco: Harper, 2001.

Schwarz, Christian A. The ABC's of Natural Church Development. London: Church

Smart Resources, 1998.

Seamands, Stephen. "As the Father Has Sent Me: Trinitarian Foundations for the Family

in Mission." Manuscript. Asbury Theological Seminary, 2001.

- . Wounds That Heal: Bringing Our Hurts to the Cross. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003.
- Sjogren, Steve. "The Perfectly Imperfect Church: Redefining the 'Ideal' Church." Beeson Pastor lecture. Chicago, IL. Fall 2003.
- . "The Perfectly Imperfect Church: Redefining the 'Ideal' Church." Loveland, CO: Group, 2002.
- ,ed. Seeing beyond Church Walls: Action Plans for Touching Your Community. Loveland, CO: Group, 2002.
- Sjogren, Steve, and Janie Sjogren. 101 Ways to Reinvest Your Life. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2003.
- Slaughter, Michael. Out on the Edge. Nashville: Abingdon, 1998.
- Smith, Church, Jr. Epiphany: Discover the Delight of God's Word. Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook, 2003.
- Spiller, Jeff. Clergy Council Beeson Pastor Lecture. City, ST. Winter. 2004.
- Stanley, Andy, and Ed Young. Can We Do That? 24 Innovative Practices That Will Change the Way You Do Church. West Monroe, LA: Howard, 2002.
- Stevens, Kristi. "Hope Peddlers." Vineyard Magazine Spring 2003: 1.
- Stevens, R. Paul. The Other Six Days: Vocation, Work, and Ministry in Biblical Perspectives. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.
- Strobel, Lee. "Evangelism on Purpose." Beeson Institute of Advanced Church Leadership. Chicago, IL. 22 Oct. 2003.
- Terry, Lindsay. The Sacrifice of Praise: Stories behind the Greatest Praise and Worship Songs of All Time. Nashville: Integrity, 2002.

- Tompkins, Stephen. John Wesley: A Biography. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.
- Tuttle, Bob. "Overcoming Barriers to Spirit Assisted Evangelism." Lecture. 3 Feb. 2004.
- Upward Basketball. "2002-2003: Upward Unlimited." 5 Aug. 2003
<<http://www.upward.com>>.
- Varga, Chad, and Lisa Yoder. If You Only Knew: A Story of Destiny and Purpose. Fort Worth, TX: Inspire Communications, 2002.
- Warren, Rick. The Purpose Driven Church: Growth without Compromising Your Message & Mission. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995.
- . Purpose Driven Life, 40 Days of Purpose. Brochure. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003.
- Webber, Robert E. Journey to Jesus: The Worship, Evangelism, and Nurture Mission of the Church. Nashville: Abingdon, 2001.
- . The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002.
- Welch, Bob. Stories from the Game of Life. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2000.
- Werking, Roger, and Lynn Werking. Evangelism. Brochure. Columbus, OH: Kwest Ministries, 2003.
- The Wesleyan Church. The Discipline of The Wesleyan Church 2000. Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2001.
- Whitney, Donald. Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1997.
- Willimon, William H. Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry. Nashville: Abingdon, 2002.
- Willow Creek Association. The Contagious Christian Evangelism Conference. Brochure.

Chicago: Willow Creek Church, 2003.

World Christian Resource Directory. "The Goal, Christianity Today Online and Sports

Spectrum: Where Faith and Sports Come Together in Worldwide Ministry."

5 Aug. 2003 <<http://www.missionresources.com/sportsoutreach.html>>.

Yohannan, K.P. Revolution in World Missions. Carrollton, TX: GFA, 2003.

Yonke, David. "Area Paintball Ministry Makes Evangelical Mark." The Toledo Blade

[Ohio] 27 Dec. 2003, sec. B: 3.