

Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

Relational Evangelism: Family-to-Family through Recreational Activities

A Thesis Project Report Submitted to

The Faculty of Liberty University School of Divinity

In Candidacy for the Degree of

Doctor of Ministry

By

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**Thesis Project Approval Form**

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## ABSTRACT

### THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT

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The goals of this Doctor of Ministry thesis project are to explore and implement an approach to evangelism that has the potential of family connection through relational evangelism. The approach delivers the gospel message through family to family encounters in recreational activities. The church, Idlewild Baptist Church (IBC) has a unique communal opportunity to enhance ministry efforts through relational evangelism.

The church leaders at IBC realize that they can do more with their recreation center on their campus by using it as a resource for outreach connecting with unchurched families and families without a church affiliation. An identifiable dilemma in IBC's recreation ministry is the scarcity of connection with IBC families and with those families who do not attend church or have a viable relationship with Christ.

The thesis project researcher collaborated with IBC leaders in recruiting and equipping IBC families who participate in seasonal recreation activities to practice relational evangelism approach family to family. The outcome produces that the approach is a vital link to resolve the dilemma of connecting IBC families with unchurched families or families without a church affiliation who participate in IBC recreation center activities seasonally.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

This writing discovers identifying factors from within Idlewild Baptist Church (IBC) where the relational evangelism approach is implemented through its campus recreation ministry facility.<sup>1</sup> The researcher describes the family and household footprint in the county and city limits of IBC using the United States Census 2020. In this research, facilitating relational evangelism is conducted within the church association and recreation center efforts of sharing the gospel message and established fellowship with the local church. However, the research focuses on participation, formed exchange by family dynamics, and connection with community families participating in the recreation activities. More specifically within baseball and softball season. Detailed discussion on the topic of the ministry context that asserts the supportive stakeholder, IBC, and the ministry dilemma addressed in the family ministry and recreation activities is later addressed.

The objective of relating family purpose, function, and dynamics is to help distinguish diverse family connections. It is essential to recognizing the IBC recreation ministry model, share the gospel message, foster spiritual formation, and pursue duplication in their ministry efforts and critical elements to the thesis project approach and outcomes. Connecting through the ministry model in a community engagement effort, especially through recreation activities, and benefits the stakeholders. Acknowledging the stakeholder's dilemma fuels the researcher's purpose statement of demonstrating and delivering the relational evangelism approach through IBC participating families in a one to one manner concentrates the elements of relational

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<sup>1</sup> Will McRaney, *The Art of Personal Evangelism* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing, 2003), 35-41.

evangelism. No project is without limitations and delimitations, and these are acknowledged in this first chapter.

The desired and finished report describes the implementation of the approach of relational evangelism family to family. The research provided an account of substantial results from IBC family connections made during a season of recreation activity and acknowledgment of those family members' acceptance or denial of a personal relationship with Christ and committed church participation.

### **Ministry Context**

Florida is well known for attractions, vacations, sporting, and amusement activities. According to the US Census 2020, the population is 8,565,329 households.<sup>2</sup> To connect with the church's purpose, Idlewild Baptist Church (IBC) has a reputation because of its community initiatives and efforts throughout Hillsborough County, especially in Lutz and Tampa, Florida.<sup>3</sup> IBC's ministry can reach every age group from the various ministry initiatives that are currently in place. IBC's motivations are services and resources for diverse cultures and support for a multi-generational congregation. In the surrounding community, IBC is evolving; in 2020, the community had a 3.8% poverty rate.<sup>4</sup> IBC's efforts are towards meeting the essential needs of

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<sup>2</sup> United States Census Bureau, "S1101: Household and Families - Census Bureau Table, 2020" Accessed October 22, 2022, <https://data.census.gov>.

<sup>3</sup> Idlewild Baptist Church, "*About Purpose*" Accessed September 14, 2019, <https://www.idlewild.org/what-we-believe/>, "Giving ourselves daily to help each one live in the rescuing power of the gospel of Jesus Christ". Providing a church where each one can connect, serve, and grow to live out the gospel through ministry inside the church and through missions outside of the church.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., United States Census Bureau, S1101, Table 2020.

children and families: presenting vitality, growth, and sustenance during life's challenges with provisions from collective resources. IBC has three different locations in Hillsborough County, with a total of 15,332 members, a small sum from the 578,259 total households in the residing county.<sup>5</sup>

IBC continues to set higher goals for results that have positive effects on the various family dynamics while reaching to meet essential and spiritual needs in their nearby county communities. In Hillsborough County, according to the 2020 census, there are over 578,259 families, and in the city of Lutz, there are 8,584, giving an average of 2.64 members per household where IBC created its Lutz, campus.<sup>6</sup> According to the Family Ministry leaders, IBC's Lutz campus consists of 15,332 members and an estimated 10,639 households.<sup>7</sup> IBC houses 116 ministry areas. Each campus has biblical studies and serving opportunities to deepen personal relations with Christ, missional preparation for every age, and the family dynamic. On the IBC campus is a seasonal community recreation center that houses sports activities (baseball, softball, soccer, golf, flag football, and tennis) for adults and elementary to high school aged children.<sup>8</sup> Idlewild realizes more service is needed for its recreation center to be a resource for reaching and connecting with unchurched families and families without a church affiliation.<sup>9</sup> Idlewild's goal and sole purpose as a recreation ministry is the souls of their participants. The

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., United States Census Bureau, "S1101, Table 2020".

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., Idlewild Baptist Church, "Join the Movement-Serving Opportunities", Accessed September 14, 2019, <https://www.idlewild.org>.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., Idlewild Baptist Church

<sup>9</sup> Idlewild Baptist Church, "Inside-Idlewild Recreation Center, and Outreach Ministry". Accessed October 14, 2019, <https://www.idlewild.org/inside-idlewild/>.

unique position provides IBC with opportunities to encounter personal needs and assist families that participate in the various sports activities. According to Matthew 28:18 -20, a Christian has the unique privilege of being a messenger of the gospel locally and internationally. IBC, within its 440,000 square feet, recognizes that each member putting forth collective efforts and commitment welcomes the occasion of disseminating God’s love in their nearby communities, neighborhoods, workplaces, and schools.<sup>10</sup> An additional note to keep in mind is from recent work by Markus Colbert on the topic of multiculturalism. Most churches would benefit from discovery of their cultural status, what is changing and how those changes affect church ministry activities; in other words, its internal politics on the matter of “showcasing nationhood”.<sup>11</sup>

For eighty-nine years, Idlewild Baptist Church (IBC), like most churches, has been a multi-generational and culturally diverse church under the Holy Spirit’s guidance providing ministry to the total person through its family ministry efforts.<sup>12</sup> IBC has the privilege of serving over 7,000 active members in 147-acre worship and ministry facilities and 22-acre recreation facilities.<sup>13</sup> IBC’s baptism record in 2020 was 156 and in 2021, 197. In 2022, they conducted 182 baptisms.<sup>14</sup> IBC ministry efforts have the primary component of faith in Christ, church stability, and mission growth. IBC recognizes and supports the multi-generational congregation that helps members identify and value God’s humbling purpose for all followers of Christ.

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<sup>10</sup> Idlewild Baptist Church, “Family Ministry”.

<sup>11</sup> Markus David Colbert, "Theological Education and Spiritual Formation in the Lives of Engaged, Emerging Adults" (DMIN Thesis, Liberty University, 2022), 23-26, Scholars Crossing: Doctrinal Dissertations and Projects.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., Idlewild Baptist Church.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

IBC's inclusive campus and membership houses a Hispanic cultural worship center with complete ministry services, staff, and leaders.

By observation and experience, the culturally diverse church has the multifaceted advantage of reaching diverse people groups with viable relations. IBC delivers the gospel as a message that rescues and allows others to see God. It teaches them to treasure God, undertake misconceptions, share life resources and experience, and support with open sentiments. Idlewild assuredly models, measures, and maintains mission efforts locally and internationally regarding these attributes. According to Philippa Strong, who states a relative fact that those whose focus on encourage ministry efforts that embrace families meaningfully in ministry efforts make a significant charge.<sup>15</sup>

Idlewild has initiated several ministry opportunities that centered around sharing the gospel message, stewardship, and spiritual formation. However, the thesis project's area of inspiration lies in Idlewild's recreation activities and ministry efforts, how it is open to the community and providing connection through relational evangelism by demonstrating relational evangelism through the display of a community of care and inclusivity through participants from Idlewild's staff and members.<sup>16</sup>

According to researcher Linda Jacobs various attractions are needed to create interest in church activity for families.<sup>17</sup> Idlewild remarkably engages the total family through its various

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<sup>15</sup> Philippa Strong, "Effective Youth Ministry: Embracing a Family-Oriented Approach," *In die Skriflig* 48, no. 1 (September 2014): 1-3.

<sup>16</sup> Charles Tidwell, *Church Administration: Effective Leadership for Ministry* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 1985), 203-220.

<sup>17</sup> Linda Ranson Jacobs, *Attract Families to Your Church and Keep Them Coming Back* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2014), 89.

ministry efforts, especially in baseball, soccer, and golf recreation activities. Like most churches, Idlewild looks to its church community to identify and provide spiritual and physical essentials for those who attend and participate in a worship experience, biblical studies, and ministry activities to exercise for spiritual growth and formation.

The relational evangelism approach strengthened the establishing of community relationships with IBC members' donations and local organizations to ensure essentials for those who attend or participate at Idlewild. According to Jacobs, the idea for family ministry is to determine the attractions for families and highlight community efforts. Essentially, "keep it simple...make it a family,"<sup>18</sup> is the planning motto to attract families and create activities in ministry that are warranted.

### Family

The family may be defined by those who have them, who say it is those that they love and for whom they willfully provide. Assorted family dynamics and the viable element include structure, hierarchy, roles, values, and behaviors. The community of IBC is central in the Lutz city limit; according to US Census, 8,584 family households have 23.1% under the age of eighteen, 4.7% under the age of five, and 18.7% are sixty-five and over.<sup>19</sup> The structures and hierarchies vary from the divorced parents, single parents who never married, blended families, and transcultural families, to name a few. The commonality is that there is a leader of the family with children. There is a sense of belonging, both individually and as a family member. The

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<sup>18</sup> Jacobs, *Attract Families to your Church and Keep Them Coming Back*, 89.

<sup>19</sup> United States Census Bureau, "S1011 Table 2020".

parent leader family goal may be to teach children to identify their faith beliefs, cultural practices, creativity, and being productive in their school and community for a successful life span. Most people agree that a parent expects to achieve these with their children. In a recent study by Mehret Kahsai, the research found a vital need for biblical parenting and that parents are a primary source for sharing the gospel message and teachings from God's word to sustain the family collectively and individually.<sup>20</sup> However, what should parents expect from their community, local church, and civic organizations for their diverse family dynamic?<sup>21</sup> Additional consideration identifies and includes differences between traditional and modern-day family dynamics with complementing connections.<sup>22</sup>

The project's ministry context is piloted by Idlewild's distinguishing the various family dynamics needs while offering biblical studies and service opportunities for all its members and surrounding community. The diverse family dynamics known in this congregation consist of couples, single parents, families with special needs children, foster care parenting families, and grandparents raising grandchildren. Family dynamics and their functionalities are captured and supported inside and outside the church. The church may often collaborate with other organizations to help meet those demands and needs for families and others in their community such as Café on the Go which provides ministry opportunity to public school teachers<sup>23</sup>. The

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<sup>20</sup> Mehret Kahsai, "Biblical Parenting," (DMIN Thesis, Liberty University, 2021, 2-4, Scholars Crossing Doctoral Dissertations and Projects.

<sup>21</sup> Jacobs, *Attract Families to your Church and Keep them Coming Back*, 17.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Idlewild Baptist Church, "Café on the Go", <https://www.idlewild.org/cafeonthego/>.

orphans and foster ministry efforts visit homes and assist with resources.<sup>24</sup> The ministry to family and members with special needs have biblical services catered to their needs.<sup>25</sup> Advocating for these family dynamics is an ethical challenge and does not overlook the Great Commission in services provided. Families are nurtured in the gospel message, saving knowledge, and personal acceptance. Family is acknowledged individually and in biblical studies in each ministry to develop healthy faith habits.

The biblical courses offered in the training and equipping of IBC participants helps them to evolve around the growing need to fulfill the church mission and purpose.<sup>26</sup> The routine activities of the family ministry are inclusive of the surrounding communities. The unique concern for so many different people align with the mandate to love one another, as Jesus loves (John 15:12).

### Ministry Model

Most ministry models differ in the mindset of growth and the need for more focus on spiritual formation. The term growth and scarceness are thought of around the lens of ministry models rather than the natural sources, according to David Simpson, Michael Toman, and Robert Ayres, who think of natural resources as a brake on economic growth or how the global society

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<sup>24</sup> Idlewild Baptist Church, "Mission Outside of the Church", <https://www.idlewild.org/serve/>.

<sup>25</sup> Idlewild Baptist Church, "Serve", <https://www.idlewild.org/serve/>.

<sup>26</sup> Malan Nel, "Discipleship: Seeking the 'Kingdom and His Righteousness,'" *Hervormde Theologies Studies* 73, no. 4 (2017): 1-10.



responds.<sup>27</sup> According to David Heywood, reflects on the ministry model of the New Testament church, the ministry model was found to have begun in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and had ups and downs, misunderstanding the functionality of ministry in retrospect of the theology of the Great Commission and mission models compared today.<sup>28</sup> In discussion of the ministry model, several terms are foundational to the identity and functionality of the model, IBC asserts.<sup>29</sup>

According to Ryan Brandt and John Frederick's work titled *Spiritual Formation for the Global Church*, spiritual formation is defined as "a matter of the person or community abiding in God, and vice versa; we see the word *abide* used in our 1 John passage six times (vv. 13-16), plus the synonym *live* (v. 12)" from the New Testament theology.<sup>30</sup> These two scholars have also found that the relationship with God is inseparable from the relationship with others, exemplified by Jesus' summarization of the first and second commandments recorded in Mark 12:29-31 (cf. Matt. 22:37; Luke 10:27-28).<sup>31</sup> In the recent work of Jack Wingard, who asserts in a collection of scholars concepts of, spiritual formation is,

The goal for all believers conforming to the image of Christ... is essential... includes reconciliation through redemption and forgiveness... a strong connection drawing the world to Christ salvation... invaluable in measuring Church growth, change, and

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<sup>27</sup> David R. Simpson, Michael A. Toman, and Robert U. Ayres, eds., *Scarcity and Growth Revisited: Natural Resources and the Environment in the New Millennium* (Washington, DC: Taylor & Francis Group, 2005), 172.

<sup>28</sup> David Heywood, *Reimagining Ministry* (London, UK: Hymns Ancient & Modern Ltd, 2013), 1-14.

<sup>29</sup> Webster Dictionary, *The Lexicon: Encyclopedia* ed. (New York, NY: Lexicon Publications, Inc., 1989).

<sup>30</sup> Ryan A. Brandt and John Frederick, *Spiritual Formation for the Global Church: A Multi-Denominational, Multi-Ethnic Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021), 3-5.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, Brandt, 4-5.

fulfilment of the great commission... is the grounds of the believer becoming a new first spiritually, intellectually, emotionally, and socially..."<sup>32</sup>

Considering several widely accepted theories of spiritual formation as a purposefully committed relationship with God and others personally and privately. The commitment includes the heart, mind, body, and soul being formed upon reading and living by biblical principles. Additional consideration of explanation from Rodney Dempsey and Dave Earley considers spiritual formation as being a result of growing in relation, knowledge, and service.<sup>33</sup> A summation from Dempsey and Early explains spiritual formation with solid historical roots and describes its development in three stages. The first phase is love for God, love for one another, and love for one's neighbor (multiplying Church). The second phase examines how the massive church buildings, clergy being elevated, and laity being demoted resemble the dark ages whereas the third phase examines reformation of beliefs and practices as the revived church.<sup>34</sup> Jane Lu brings the definition closer to clarity from a theological education introspective of spiritual formation. Lu states spiritual education, ideally taught in seminary and ministry education forms, allows participants self-awareness in the pursuit of growth, cultural core values, biblical perspective, and modeling by Christian leaders.<sup>35</sup> Paul Carlson's examination of the state of the church in the US currently, how families live, work and play together brings a relevant

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<sup>32</sup> Jack Andrew Wingard II, "The Relationship Between Multicultural Christianity and Spiritual Formation: Quantitative Correlational Study" (Ed.D. Dissertations, Liberty University, 2022), 21-24, Scholars Crossing: Doctoral Dissertations and Projects.

<sup>33</sup> Rod Dempsey and Dave Earley, *Spiritual Formation Is: How to Grow in Jesus with Passion and Confidence* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group 2018), 3-60; chap. 2.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, Dempsey.

<sup>35</sup> Jane Lu, "Educational Models of Spiritual Formation in Theological Education: Introspection-Based Spiritual Formation". *Teach Theology Religion*, 24. (2021): 28– 41, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1111/teth.12560>.

perspective to Lu's statement that although the aspects of family life although vary, they evolve with education on the matters of church status, and modeled behaviors.<sup>36</sup>

Most ministry models have attractive attributes for their communities and/or attempts to partner with other organizations to meet their participants' needs.<sup>37</sup> There are unique viewpoints. For instance, Everett Ferguson states, "from the perspective that church history is the story of the greatest community the world has known and the greatest movement in world history. It is a human story of a divinely called people who wanted to live by a divine revelation".<sup>38</sup> Ferguson described ideal attempts to maintain the idea of a Christian ministry model that constructs to follow the Great Commission.

The consideration in this project regards the diverse and influential role in a church's chosen ministry model.<sup>39</sup> Perhaps a leader may model from the components found in Acts 2, the original church's movement from the disciple's first message after the ascension of Christ to the empowerment of His Spirit. The chosen and inspired ministry model, or approach, ultimately glorifies God upon implementation for the kingdom of God. Some may argue that there is only one ministry model, which the original disciples and apostles, followers of Jesus, demonstrated. However, ministry efforts are looked at when presenting the gospel message. Seeing servant leaders in a transformational state of a ministry modeling is reassuring. The ministry model is

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<sup>36</sup> Paul R. Carlson, *God's Church, Not Ours: An Examination of the State of the Churches in the United States as they Live and Work Together* (Cincinnati, OH: Forward Movement Publications, 1965), 1-20.

<sup>37</sup> David Arthur DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods, and Ministry Formation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), chap 8.

<sup>38</sup> Everett Ferguson, *Church History*, vol. 1, *From Christ to Pre-Reformation: the Rise and Growth of the Church in Its Cultural Intellectual, and Political Context* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 27.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, chap 8.

the fellowship of the Spirit. According to Roy Kearsley, this model can reach every area or form of ministry and should not be a backdrop or loss of focus.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, Strong somewhat supports a ministry model that incorporates the family in ministry efforts to other families versus individuals.<sup>41</sup> Favorably, the concept of family in ministry that supports other families is highlighted in this thesis report. How to measure the effectiveness of a ministry model can be determined by the connections made throughout a selected ministry model. Considerations of spiritual formation components may be identified through duplication of connection, mission efforts, and maintained church relations.

IBC has authentic connections worldwide, as one of its mission efforts is to advance church planting and use the family dynamic ecologically. Families whom God calls to the mission and service of others are equipped and commissioned together (father, mother, children) for their call to service. The family mission structure excels with families involved in local or international missions, and IBC favors church planting. Annual campaigns arise to restore participants into mission efforts and development of new ministry areas of missions that promote constant spiritual formation both individually and corporately.<sup>42</sup> In IBC's local mission efforts, there is evidence of collaboration with other churches, county schools, colleges, orphanages, shelters, and non-profit organizations that provide resources to those who need or seek a spiritual

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<sup>40</sup> Roy Kearsley, "Church, Community, and Power" *Farnham England* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub. Ltd., 2016), 2, Doi:10.4324/9781315572048.

<sup>41</sup> Strong, "Effective Youth Ministry: Embracing a Family-Oriented Approach," 1-8.

<sup>42</sup> Idlewild Baptist Church, Missionary Ministry- Missionaries have been planted in East Asia for college ministry, several in Mexico, Brazil Amazon planting small churches, Ministry for starving people North, Central, and South America as pioneers, medical mission in Kenya, in the US church planning marginalized communities- Operation mobilize, Athletics, Youth for Christ, and Word of life are just to name a few IBC families devoted to missions. Accessed October 14, 2022, <https://www.idlewild.org/missionaries/>.

relationship with Christ.<sup>43</sup> IBC ministry is expansive in its approach to fulfilling the essential needs and interests of Christ's current and future followers. There is the perspective foundation of relational evangelism in these efforts. IBC's pastor and leaders continue to pray for divine strategies for leading others to live, love, and serve God wholeheartedly. The intentional plans are purpose-driven to engage people with God, and not just the church experience.<sup>44</sup>

### Purpose and Community Engagement

In this era and economic state, the church has global and local community connections that can perpetuate a holistic affect. Ideally, strengthening Christianity and the church's position intentionally in their approach to the community will display reliability, authenticity, and passion. An ample purpose develops around reclaiming, regaining, and maintaining families in surrounding communities, which are motivating factors that streamline resources of nurturing, supporting, and growing biblical character and establish a foundation in the current socioeconomic era.

The Christian community can confirm and reflect a truthful reality by delivering the gospel message. It can also reflect church and world undercurrents by demonstrating biblical principles and engrafting the all-important intimate relationship with God. However, the possible challenge of many modern theories and concerns about God and His relationship with

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<sup>43</sup> Idlewild Baptist Church, "Local Missions", Accessed October 14, 2022, "Our mission work begins right here in the Tampa Bay area with many different partnerships and projects". <https://www.idlewild.org/missions/local/>.

<sup>44</sup> Bruce L. Shelley, *The Church, God's People* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1978) chaps. 2, 9. Accessed December 1, 2021, <https://archive.org/details/churchgodspeople0000shel/page/96/mode/2up>.

humanity is questionable in most families and communities. The arguments are various; the most likely is regarding the physical absences of the presence of this great God of the cosmos, His intentional care not being evident, and questions of every horrific encounter or display at His hand. According to David Baggett and Jerry Walls’s observations of individuals in various communities, “some downright celebrate leaving morality, and its judgments, condemnations, inconvenient behavioral structures, suffocating sanctimony, and dire warnings about brimstone and hellfire altogether behind.”<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, Baggett and Walls provide a substantial argument providing insight from the concept of “naturalism and materialism.”<sup>46</sup> The argument is exhaustive of the world’s reality. Despite its minority standing, “relative scarcity is throughout history.”<sup>47</sup> In the current era of naturalism, what is seemingly a reality from biblical concepts may not be a desired view for some. No matter the view, the purpose of church activities with community objectives provides biblical principles in a society that looks to materialism or naturalism for a sustainable way of life.

As part of the purposed objective, a sense of intentional engagement has the quality of being a cornerstone in the church’s community. It is not to raise a moral flag or banner but to deliver a shared moral knowledge, obligation, and transformation.<sup>48</sup> The intentionality of the local church demonstrates and engages the community by drawing families into the light of God’s reality and loving care for the church and its followers. Despite opposition to the

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<sup>45</sup> David Baggett and Jerry L. Walls, *God & Cosmos: Moral Truth and Human Meaning* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016), 1-21.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, Baggett, 22-26

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

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 115-120

Christian community, there is the commissioned purpose with the power to convince non-believers that there is a loving God.

An additional and critical component to the relational evangelism approach is addressing the development of engaging connections between participating congregation members and the community that may mimic family dynamics. There are many strategic evangelism models of an approach; however, the project focus is on the relational evangelism that approaches people family to family and considers scholarly sources that closely align and reflect on ministry focused efforts.

The thesis project considers Idlewild's mission to enhance the Christian experience that explores and exemplifies biblical practices in community engaging activities. The probabilities of sharing wisdom from the inspiration of God's teachings experienced in daily living presents a place to disconnect doubters and non-believers from practiced materialism and naturalism to obtain the intellectual and emotional embrace of His truthful being.

### **Problem Presented**

Idlewild's recreation ministry has seasonal activities that draw children and families to their recreation center year-round. The recreation center offers three youth and five adult programs. Bible devotion is presented at each practice session, and at the end of the program year, youth are acknowledged for demonstrating biblical behaviors. The problem that exists is that in the recreation ministry, there is a lack of significant outreach to connect with families who do not attend church or have a viable relationship with Christ. Idlewild's ministry leaders describe a realization that the church is experiencing the fading of a commonplace Christian worldview, a repression of older practices, and a perception of the traditional church being

restricted. Idlewild's goal is not to be a church that entertains, but a church that sends messengers of Christ 's love and gospel message, both locally and internationally.

In a preparation session with the family and connections minister, the idea of IBC families being involved with the proposed thesis project is one ministry effort delivers expectations of the leaders' heart for ministry. IBC families offer potential connections with community families through the recreation center on Idlewild's campus. Idlewild's recreation center hosts sports teams including tennis, soccer, baseball, and flag football, which are open to family members of Idlewild as well as families who do not attend church. This ministry's intentional plan provides Bible-based training to ready Idlewild members to be coaches, helpers, and ministry workers, and it has the potential to train participating IBC families with the relational evangelism approach. The goal is to equip participating Idlewild members and families with the essentials of the approach, which leads to sharing the gospel message of salvation to families who do not attend a church or have a viable relationship with Christ. The project has the potential to significantly impact families with new connections, which can increase the longevity of this ministry effort and addresses the problem of a lack of significant outreach to connect families who do not attend church or have a viable relationship with Christ.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this DMIN action research project is to apply the relational evangelism approach as a solution to the lack of connection with families that participate in recreation activities on the campus of IBC. The solution consists of equipping IBC family participants and staff with the essentials of the approach to link families in a one to one manner leading to viable family to family connections.



There are a diverse number of evangelism approaches and techniques to assist in establishing a viable demonstration of God's love towards others relationally, spiritually, and genuine connection for the opportunity to discuss similarity of family dynamics and experiences, identify possible needed resources, and share God's plan of salvation.<sup>49</sup> The hopeful outcomes of long-term family to family connections are spiritual formation, and the duplication with other families to make disciples. Idlewild's leaders acknowledge the church is diminishing to a ubiquitous and weakening Christian worldview, an uncommitted approach to biblical perspectives, and the older traditional church practices restricting spiritual growth.<sup>50</sup> The goal of connecting Idlewild families to families who do not attend a church or have a viable relationship with Christ provides IBC the opportunity of ministry growth and being a vital mission driven church. The consideration that without any ministry efforts put into family recreation opportunities, IBC would blend in with community centers that provide little to no moral compass for families.

### **Basic Assumptions**

Relational evangelism uniquely develops relationships that foster trust, giving, practicing biblical principles, and moral standards. There is also an element of hospitality and care upon demonstrating Christ's love for humanity's eternal relation being restored to God the creator. The assumption is that parents share their role in training and discipling their children with the

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<sup>49</sup> McRaney, *The Art of Personal Evangelism*, 35-41.

<sup>50</sup> Bob Whitesel, *Cure for the Common Church: God's Plan to Restore Church Health* (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Pub. House, 2012) 17-25.

instructions according to Ephesians 6:4 and Proverbs 22:6. These passages assert parents' responsibility of guiding spiritual character in their children at an early age. However, on the other hand of probability, there are the adverse assumptions of the approach to evangelism, case in point, if the suggested approach is maintainable within the design of the current recreation activities as outlined. Additional probabilities are that IBC families may focus only on their own children or that a family does not have resources to offer or have yet to hear the call into ministry to reach others.<sup>51</sup> According to Scott Dawson, these concerns are eternal and temporal, where experiencing God works in both cases.<sup>52</sup> Perhaps ministry leaders' interest in increasing participants has more relevance to financially maintaining the center's self-sufficiency. In Kathleen Tangenberg's findings on congregational mentoring and discipleship in ministry efforts of evangelism, it was discovered that the approach in most "Evangelical churches were more intentional and expansive than nonevangelical Protestant and Catholic congregations in community outreach efforts, and more likely to have multiple mentoring options based on differing youth faith commitments."<sup>53</sup> In recent work of Stanley James' recent work, which regarded evangelism in communities, James acknowledges how small group training motivational benefits fill the need for equipping youth and families.<sup>54</sup> IBC has multiple ministry efforts to make significant connections in its Lutz community of its largest church campus.

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<sup>51</sup> Malan Nel and Kenneth A. Moser, "The Connection between Youth Ministry's Division of Evangelism and Discipleship, and the Lack of Retention of Youth in North American Churches," *Verbum Et Ecclesia* 40, no. 1 (2019): 1-8.

<sup>52</sup> Scott Dawson, *The Complete Evangelism Guidebook: Expert Advice on Reaching Others for Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerBooks Publishing Group, 2008), 15-16.

<sup>53</sup> Kathleen Tangenberg, "Congregational Mentoring and Discipleship: Implications for Social Work Practice," *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work* 31, no. 3 (2012): 295-300.

<sup>54</sup> Stanley Vincent James, "A Training Manual for Small-Group Evangelization of Youth Unbelievers," (DMIN Thesis, Liberty University, 2022), 25-27, Scholars Crossing: Doctoral Dissertation and Projects.

## Limitations

The researcher recognizes several pre-limitations in the early planning of the thesis project followed by post-limitations experienced upon initiating the thesis project. IBC being a multi-generational and culturally diverse church has the humbling challenges of various limitations probable of opposing family to family connection through relational evangelism.

Those limitations identified ranged from discovering needs, collaborating for solutions, and the dimension of church life of family connections. Additionally, there were problems with ministry efforts of equipping to educate, provide guidance through biblical principles, and encouraging individuals to accept support from church resources. Supporting resources expose the capability to address complexities upon establishing a family foundation, such as mental and physical health challenges, educational needs, stewardship, and a lack of God's active presence, and careful consideration for depleted or dysfunctional family leadership.

There is also the probability of culturally having diverse faith systems within the families participating and connecting. The diverse faith system would affect how family's bond over concepts such as eternal concern that is defined as "deriving a basic belief that, apart from Christ, all men and women are eternally separated from God and temporal concerns... The wrath of God is twofold eternal and temporal... is experiencing Gods wrath right now!"<sup>55</sup> Family matters positively and negatively affect demonstrating Christian faith and observing disciplines' observances to maintain and grow in faith.<sup>56</sup> The factors also connect sensitive family dynamics,

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<sup>55</sup> Dawson, *The Complete Evangelism Guidebook*, 14-16.

<sup>56</sup> Board of Discipleship, *Guidelines Family Ministries: Support Families for Faith and Service*. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press. 2016), 22-32, ProQuest eBook Central.

such as chemically dependence or inadequacy. Being able to see these various aspects in the dynamics of other families within their community, families have potential challenges connecting resources and support within daily life activities.

The post limitations experienced upon the onset of the research were during the efforts of establishing and maintaining connection with recreation staff and changes in leadership impeding the retrieval and dissemination of informative notices, the recruiting potential of IBC participating families and communicating project timeline and process delays. The project heavily contended with the world dilemma of the COVID-19 pandemic mandate for social distancing and no group gatherings.<sup>57</sup> The pandemic caused extra caution and restrictions with the recreation schedule and coaching staff for IBC recreation ministry. Similarly, in recent work, the outcome on projects completed during the pandemic underwent adaptations to accomplish goals, such as group training sessions.<sup>58</sup> The relational evangelism approach equipping session adjusted from face to face to conducting virtual and limited equipping through instructional presentation, video demonstration, and group role-play as an interactive activity. Zoom conferencing offered the decided presentation style of the relational evangelism concept and interaction. The presentation's preferred style needed to be adapted. The results yielded low attendance; however, the session was recorded, and made available as a requirement of newly recruited IBC family participants. Limitations of the actual start date of the recreation activity posed timely constraints and the ability to streamline recruiting advertisements and

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<sup>57</sup> Rochelle P. Walensky, "Public Notification: COVID-19 Guidelines," CDC Director of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <https://www.cdc.gov>.  
<https://search.cdc.gov/search/?query=covid%2019%20quarantine%20guidelines&dpage=1>

<sup>58</sup>Stephen Austin Mansfield, "The Impact of Virtual Technology on Discipleship Training in Small Group Context" (DMIN Thesis, Liberty University, 2022), Scholar Crossing: Doctoral Dissertation and Projects. 99-102.

communication with coaches. The time constraint depended on a cohesive recruit plan of obtaining IBC families in a ratio that identifies with the number of non-affiliates or families without a relationship with Christ upon the lifting of some restrictions due to the pandemic.

### **Delimitations**

The thesis project considers several delimitations throughout the researcher's interaction with IBC staff and participants' while equipping with the relational evangelism approach for seasonal recreation activities, where families would interact, and the ease of accessible connections are made. Seasonal data from registration is used for assessment, comparison, and outcome analysis. The data presented did not provide a baseline of IBC families that connected with families. The researcher determined that the result from the report would be a new baseline for future assessments for IBC. The researcher obtained a limited number of IBC families with no experience outside supporting and assisting with snacks for the team. On the other hand, several IBC families participated with coaching, devotion, and encouraging children to have confidence and to be kind to one another. Those who did not participate varied in age groups and faith experiences. Other matters arose with obtaining deliverables and developing a study method to equip IBC family participants with busy family schedules. Considering how multiple training schedule options would affect participants, allowed for more attendance to the virtual training session. The researcher did not question the commitment of participants of those whom the recreation ministry leaders recruited. By doing so, the researcher could have stipulated the time needed to incorporate the approach in the functionality of recreation activities. Only participating IBC families could identify their connections with other families while reporting those family connections anonymously. Family connections and actual dynamics of parent

commitment and interest in children, foundations of the home, support concepts of nurturing the family, and whether parents truly partnered in raising their children versus roommates raising their children. Additionally, the type of family dynamic when there is no dominate parenting that affects a predominate relationship with Christ or the family's spiritual formation. There needed to be more capturing of a matching number of families to make connections with those not affiliated with IBC. Most families quickly identify with only one introduction and no assistance from ministry leaders. The researcher only identified the functionality of the relational evangelism approach during communication with IBC participating families during field visits and at the end by questionnaire.

### **Thesis Statement**

This writing aims to establish that there are opportunities in recreational activities that God may use to draw people to Himself through the demonstrating family dynamics with a viable relation in Christ.<sup>59</sup> There will be measurable results when connections are made by IBC families using the relational evangelism approach. The display of commitment in demonstrating the nature and message of Christ's love, forgiveness, and salvation accomplishes connections from family to family, leading to acceptance of a relationship with Christ, the church, and spiritual formation and duplication of the relational evangelism approach.

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<sup>59</sup> Strong, "Effective Youth Ministry," 2

## **Chapter 2**

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework of the thesis project provides related literature through, but not limited to, substantive and analytical reviews. The researcher has included a variety of subject matter experts driven by ministry need and provides scholarly sources to support the thesis project fully. The framework of supporting authors provides specific and relevant references to emphasize an authentic project. The critical work selected from peer-reviewed scholars helps adequately respond to the thesis project problem. The research acknowledges the work previously completed to answer the need for this ministry work, acknowledges the need for interest, and identifies ministry limitations and relative delimitations.

The organized literature reviews are according to elements of the thesis project. Within each segment, sources help to acknowledge presuppositions, highlight similarities, and embrace differences in concepts, progressive and aggressive approaches, and creativity, developing the family to family ministry approach. The literature review also provides a rational analysis of reasonable family ministry efforts that offer equitable justification.

### **Literature Review**

The beginning of the project acknowledging family dynamics from a biblical, historical, and theological perspective was conducted to assert amiable principles. The literature review presents the thesis project's themes and subthemes derived from scholarly sources. The themes identify descriptions and vital elements of the relational evangelism approach and explore the perspective of humanity. Reviewing sources provides substantive assessment of God's divine appointment made for the Church.

Essential elements for building the undercurrents of ministry efforts to families participating in local recreation activities identify within a relational evangelism approach. Sources provided examples of ministry efforts to family's success and challenges others have found or faced. Upon review of those various scholars' themes, provide a working knowledge of the subject matter was provided with considerations of contrast, presuppositions, and opposes. The resources are vital and supportive collections for a commensurable sense of family relation to family ministry theory. These literary sources give the thesis project a continued consultation on the subject matter, provide reference points and supports, and clarify practical application.

The selected sources support and range from ministry perspectives: from identifying similar ministry patterns and problem areas to recruiting families within church ministry to ministry through recreational activities. Additionally, sources provided the researcher with a view of leadership challenges in family ministry, inevitable outcomes, and good sources of the thesis report's outcomes.

The sources regarding the methodology segment provided enough opposition to consider how to address the ministry problem of the thesis and identify sustainable benefits from its findings and results.

### Relational Evangelism Descriptions

The defining theme clarifies the direction of the discussion about relational evangelism and approach usage. As part of the function of evangelism, according to Scott Dawson "evangelism in perspective is one of the essential elements of being faithful and obedient to



God... and is critically important elements of balance, opportunity, ability to communicate, mature, spiritual gifts and talents God provides."<sup>60</sup>

Additional descriptions of evangelism support the form of relational evangelism, as according to John McArthur; he defines the "early church pattern of evangelism of Acts 5:12-42 as rapid, real, and regular. They were committed not only to evangelism but also to each other Acts 4:32-37 stresses that there was unity and sharing" a component Christ church displayed.<sup>61</sup>

When considering a main character of this thesis project, it is the non-believer, who is included in the equation of describing relational evangelism. Peter Effa makes a good point that the non-believer needs demonstration for the approach described for this project in recreational activities.<sup>62</sup>

Thus, the question remains: what is relational evangelism in the context of ministry? Ron Bowen states that as believers get closer to someone, the opportunities for effective spiritual conversations increase in number and depth.<sup>63</sup> The key, according to Bowen, is that relationships are progressive and can represent levels of interpersonal relationships between a believer and non-believer.<sup>64</sup> Upon reviewing Bowen's diagram, the concept of relational

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<sup>60</sup> Dawson, *The Complete Evangelism Guidebook*, 52-53.

<sup>61</sup> John McArthur, *Keys to Effective Evangelism: Acts 5:12-6:7* (Panorama City, CA: Word of Grace Communications, 1988), 8.

<sup>62</sup> Peter Kofi Effa, "Training Members of Family Life Center Church (FLC) in Relational Evangelism." (DMIN Thesis, Biola University, 2019). Section: Needs and Relational Evangelism.

<sup>63</sup> Ron Bowen, *Relational Evangelism for Today* (Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, 2013), 47-48

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

evangelism progression is described by his idea of a *Target Diagram*<sup>65</sup> as it represents the levels of interpersonal relationship between the believer and unbeliever:

1. Casual Acquaintance
2. Causal Relationship
3. Close Relationship
4. Casual Spiritual Relationship
5. Close Spiritual Relationship
6. Deep Spiritual Relationship

According to Ron Bowen's target diagram levels, one through three represents the secular relationship levels where general information is obtained and discovered as a precursor to a person's spiritual condition.<sup>66</sup> It is at this level in recreational activities that relationships between families emerge. As well, families can identify similarities in their family dynamics. The inner circle of Bowen's target represents a connection in the casual spiritual relationship level. The experiences lead to a relationship that is closer in fellowship and results in the sharing of resources and family meetings outside of the original meeting place, a case in point at the recreation center.<sup>67</sup> The goal described by Bowen's approach is that the conversations in each level lead the non-believer closer to God and His family circle.

The determining factor is the Christian family, which establishes and welcomes a connection and a relationship in a way that a non-believing family or family with no church

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<sup>65</sup> Bowen, *Relational Evangelism for Today*, 47.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, Bowen, 48.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 48-49.

affiliation can. The main application for this concept of relational evangelism provides participating IBC families with the same connection opportunities during recreational and other secular activities family to family. Families spending a season of twelve weeks together are inevitable to have conversations that span through the interpersonal diagram described by Bowen. However, only some connection will replicate the levels of the diagram.

There are contingents on how well relationships develop, including the intentionality of IBC families from initial and continuous contact of proactive connections that cultivate the family's relationship.<sup>68</sup> More commonalities and attractive family dynamics' draw close and open to extraordinary heart matters. The idea of close relationships in level five is based on one on one or two on two encounters.<sup>69</sup> Participants are encouraged to be mindful of how God will work to get involved as they demonstrate His character. The focus on relational evangelism is vital to describe how effective it will be for outreach efforts toward families with similar recreational activities in their community. According to Joseph Aldrich, there are two divisions, "inductive," where evangelism is based upon personal knowledge, and the "deductive," conducted in three stages of an evangelistic approach.<sup>70</sup> Therefore, relational evangelism can be considered more than just sharing and defending faith; it makes personal connections through personal faith experiences. Dawson describes vital elements of sharing faith personally:

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<sup>68</sup> Bowen, *Relational Evangelism for Today*, 53.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 70-75

<sup>70</sup> Joseph C. Aldrich, *Life-Style Evangelism: Crossing Traditional Boundaries to Reach the Unbelieving World* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1981), 87-89.

“balance, opportunity, through the ability to communicate maturely, and utilizing spiritual gifts and talents God has given.”<sup>71</sup>

There is also consideration of the description and significant components of conversational evangelism. Keith Fordham and Tom Johnston outline several crucial aspects of conversations, including hearing, illuminating, and uncovering a conversation in the scriptural references of Jesus’ conversations as recorded in Matthew 7:11, 12:9-14, 22:41-46; John 7:21-24, and 10:22-41.<sup>72</sup>

Aldrich, Dawson, Fordham, and Johnson have assessed narratives and determined vital elements of the gospel: with the objectives of apprehending the essentials of sharing the gospel message and developing superlative techniques that will allow committed, resourceful, and receptive declaration of God’s plan of salvation.<sup>73</sup> The family connections could draw on shared techniques and ministry leaders’ resources to make meaningful connections using the relational evangelism approach.

### A Secular Perspective of the Family

The goals set for this thesis project without the understanding of the divine purpose may not result in favor of reaching the intended dimensions of family recreation and church life. The scholars in this project agree that family is a foundational principle according to supporting

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<sup>71</sup> Dawson, *The Complete Evangelism Guidebook*, 52-53.

<sup>72</sup> Keith Fordham and Tom Johnston, *Worth and Work of the Evangelist: For Christ’s Great Commission Church* (Liberty, VA: Evangelism Unlimited, 2013), 32-33.

<sup>73</sup> Aldrich, *Life-Style Evangelism*, 87-89.

scriptures as found in the Old and the New Testaments.<sup>74</sup> In the discussion of family, the biblical and theological perspectives are considered as early as Adam and Eve, Noah's family voyage, and Abraham and Sarah, who all experienced being estranged from comforts to being part of new covenants with God. In Deuteronomy 6:4-9 the family describes God's intentions that they live and demonstrate their relationship with Him and each other according to His word where the true love for God is obedience.<sup>75</sup>

The family's dynamic includes various backgrounds, culture, and socioeconomic structures. According to John Huffman, "a family can be thought of as a living mobile made up of human personalities. It is a work of art that takes many years to produce but it is never finished. The framework a family gives it form."<sup>76</sup> Huffman's statement provides clear reasoning and a supportive foundation that describes the foundation of a family dynamic perspective by implicating that each family member is developing socially, intellectually, physically, and spiritually.<sup>77</sup> The establishments of family history today do not necessarily follow the biblical perspective as intended.

Although there are individual personalities within the framework of a family, their movement together influences socially, intellectually, physically, and spiritually unified in the family dynamic. Reflecting on Ephesians 4:12-14, as the form of family working together by

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<sup>74</sup> Michael Gorman, *The Gospel and Our Culture Series: Becoming the Gospel, Paul, Participation, and Mission*. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2018), 24.

<sup>75</sup> The Book of Deuteronomy, H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., *Deuteronomy, The Pulpit Commentary* (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 119-125.

<sup>76</sup> John A. Huffman, Jr., *The Family You Want: How to Build an Authentic, Loving Home* (Fearn, UK: Christian Focus Publications, 2001), 13-14.

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

faith in spiritual unity, highlights the roles mandated reviewed for the family. Considering how family design looks in today's era, there is a shortage of families working together by faith, and thus struggles to be a family. When looking at the family within the church or community, one should consider how to identify familial needs for building and developing their faith.

According to Marcia Bunge, the church their preferably demonstrates compassion with family ministry efforts.<sup>78</sup> Jeremy Anderson found that by reversing the trends in family ministry by not beginning to isolate or be unorganized with curriculum for young couples and families but rather equipping, strengthening, and forming spiritual growth around the concept of family unit helps to ensure church vitality.<sup>79</sup>

Several scholar's substantiate points of view of what God is up to in the world. Will McRaney describes God's desire for families distinctively designed for His purpose.<sup>80</sup> Those families experience their individuality first; after that marriage, they unify and align with God's predestination of people reaching people. Larry Moyer states, "neglecting the God-given responsibility of evangelism is neglecting one's responsibility as Christian."<sup>81</sup> Several other scholars have expressed their views and describe family's spiritual formation. According to Hans Schildermans' research, he perceives humanity through three approaches: "dependencies

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<sup>78</sup> Marcia J. Bunge, "Biblical and Theological Perspectives on Children, Parents, and 'Best Practices' for Faith Formation: Resources for Child, Youth, and Family Ministry Today," *Dialog* 47, no. 4, (2008): 348.

<sup>79</sup> Jeremy G. Anderson, "Developing a Strategic Plan to Strengthen the Ministry to Young Families at Waypoint Baptist Church, Memphis, Tennessee" (DMIN Diss., Union University, 2016), 13-20, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

<sup>80</sup> McRaney, *The Art of Personal Evangelism*, 15.

<sup>81</sup> Larry R. Moyer, *21 Things God Never Said: Correcting Our Misconceptions About Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2004), 134.

tributary to meaning, subject to the power of formation, the issues of practical reason.”<sup>82</sup> Ferguson views the world as a colossal community God created and as the most significant community movement in church history.<sup>83</sup> Bruce Ashford delivers from a theological framework that recognizes that “God’s creation is marred by the ugliness of sin and rebellion,” and by a “broad impact in the world where redemption is not typical.”<sup>84</sup> To further this thought, the foundation from the scholars, as mentioned earlier, provides a diverse lens highlighting neutral directions to God’s movement in the world and directs attention to what God is doing through families and individuals in the church.

### Divine Appointment of the Church

The theme of God’s movement in the church connects purpose and responsibility for the church as established in the Great Commission of the New Testament to share the gospel message. Several authors’ research has indicated God’s desire and predestination for people to reach people. Aldrich feels there is no different plan for the church other than what God intended.<sup>85</sup> Aldrich sees evangelism is high on the ‘TO DO list’ for Christians. Scott Dawson agrees there is no new plan, and the Church will align with God better by ensuring there is no misconception that “evangelism does not happen at Sunday morning worship services.”<sup>86</sup> God’s

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<sup>82</sup> Hans Schilderman, "Defining Religion: A Humanities Perspective," *Journal of Empirical Theology* 27, no. 1 (2014): 176-198.

<sup>83</sup> Ferguson, *Church History*, 27.

<sup>84</sup> Bruce R. Ashford, *Theology and Practice of Mission: God, the Church, and the Nations* (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2011), 23-24.

<sup>85</sup> Aldrich, *Life-Style Evangelism*, 16.

<sup>86</sup> Dawson, *The Complete Evangelism Guidebook*, 48.

love exemplifies and intentionally appears in today's culture through the church and points towards empathic ministry efforts. Ruth Barton sees the appointment of the church as a vehicle to introducing Christ, creating spiritual formation, and the continued desire that Christ would abide (Luke 24:29-32).<sup>87</sup> James Samra presents, what he considers to be, the best argument for the church: "God designed and created the church for our benefit and for His glory (Matt. 16:18)."<sup>88</sup>

Alexia Salvatierra and Peter Heltzel perceive the church as dreaming together what God dreams of bringing humanity to Him. Faith-based organizations' only benchmark and goal amid traditional struggles is God's idea for society.<sup>89</sup> Upon further review of these authors, there are suggestions that the church's responsibility is to establish intentional evangelism moments to reach their community with God's loving truth, communicate in a way that influences circumstances, and turns hearts to God for reconciliation.

Both small and large, individual and collective, encounters may demonstrate intentional evangelism efforts. Dallas Willard's stance is a practical challenge. Willard states that when "living in the vision of God", the basis of the great great omission of evangelizing "is a transgressional case before God."<sup>90</sup> From the views presented by various scholars, the challenge

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<sup>87</sup> Ruth R. Barton, *Life Together in Christ: Experiencing Transformation in Community* (Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 175-178.

<sup>88</sup> James G. Samra, *The Gift of Church: How God Designed the Local Church to Meet our Needs as Christians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 9-12.

<sup>89</sup> Alexia Salvatierra and Peter Heltzel, *Faith-Rooted Organizing: Mobilizing the Church in Service to the World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 27-37.

<sup>90</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus's Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publisher, 2006), 91, 98-99.



is posing a mind of obedience to God's desire and design.<sup>91</sup> To the final point, churches can form viable and sustainable family ministry efforts for the essentials in their community.

### Principles Found of Unity, Community, and Fellowship

Building unity within families' communities takes more than one discussion or fellowship encounter. The literary and practical application sources from Alan Roxburgh have given rise to the importance of unity and fellowship.<sup>92</sup> The idea of unification occurs in various forms of a connection based on commonality in community events, specific needs in the community to build unity of purpose, and sincere fellowship in the public interest. Aldrich makes an excellent point about "discovering needs and sharing solutions" through ministry. Efforts in the community are outstanding ministry efforts.<sup>93</sup> However, communal needs may vary upon a purposeful approach through a relational evangelism fellowship is the establishment's predisposition.

Further contemplation considered from accompanying scholars includes Scott Nelson from a series of texts. However, Nelson sees the church in the community as the elect, as God's living instruments to draw those around them to God, contextually according to Exodus 19:4-6.<sup>94</sup> Christopher Smith and John Pattison perceive unity, community, and fellowship ideologies

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<sup>91</sup> John MacArthur, *Different by Design*, MacArthur Study Series (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 107.

<sup>92</sup> Alan J. Roxburgh, *Joining God, Remaking Church, Changing the World: The New Shape of the Church in our Time* (New York, NY: Morehouse Publishing, 2015), 37-38.

<sup>93</sup> Aldrich, *Life-Style Evangelism*, 88-96.

<sup>94</sup> Scott Nelson, *Community: Living as the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 25-36.

concerning ethics, ecology, and economy. The unique idea from Smith and Pattison is that of “generously sharing God’s abundance” and “dinner table conversations as a way of being church.”<sup>95</sup> Boyung Lee has a unique perspective of community and the biblical call for communal faith. He places his stance on understanding the meaning and actions of being a community considering God’s principal call for trust and ministry sustainably<sup>96</sup>. The basis of the individual church’s comprehensive views determines life dimensions and experiences, self-realization of a personal relationship with Christ, and understanding God’s solution for humanity. A reality to consider is that individual families have the most significant opportunity to connect on shared interests and activities. Phillipa Strong believes that “ministry does not mean to happen without the context of the family” because “God himself is family-oriented” and His ministry is “relational, unitive, creative, redemptive, curative, and characterized by love.”<sup>97</sup> Thus far, the research makes a great point to build on for purposeful and intentional actions for relational evangelism outreach efforts where families connect with families in need of God, who is family oriented. The evident characteristic of a family that lives in obedience to the principle of exhibiting love towards one another and others demonstrates God’s love toward humanity.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Christopher C. Smith, *Slow Church: Cultivating Community in the Patient Way of Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 192-208.

<sup>96</sup> Boyung Lee, *Transforming Congregations through Community: Faith Formation from the Seminary to the Church*, 1st ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013), 5-10.

<sup>97</sup> Strong, “Effective Youth Ministry,” 3.

<sup>98</sup> Roxburgh, *Joining God*, 41-42.

## Theological Foundations

Contemplating the theological foundation for this project reflects on God as the creator of all life, an added foundation to this research. The objective relates to Christian views of humanity and how the concept of family to family dynamics originated in familial experiences of the Old and New Testaments eras.<sup>99</sup> The narratives and concepts of humanity will establish a supportive analogy of humanity, God's only creation in His image. To this day, He pursues an intimate relationship. The doctrinal view optimistically assists in aligning God's precept found to enrich this era, that the family to family dynamic could repose. The scholarly sources for this section provide vivid descriptions of humanity. The few that best connect are from Millard Erickson, who states there are at least five reasons for the Christian view of humanity: first because of "its relationship to Christian doctrine"; the second is where "biblical revelation and human concern converge"; third, to consider in this era, "particular significance is given to humanity by various intellectual disciplines"; fourth, because of the "present crisis in human self-understanding."<sup>100</sup> The fifth reason is an understanding of humanity as it "affects how to minister."<sup>101</sup> Reflecting on the stated descriptions by Erickson, it is ideal to consider an approach in ministry that intellectually connects humanity to God, as humans are the only creation in His image. The concept of humanity in a group dynamic, like a family, creates another dynamic of fundamental humanity, which views them as members of a people group or

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<sup>99</sup> William Raccah, "Sociology and the Old Testament," ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016) eBook, <https://ref.ly/res/LLS:LBD/2021-11-19T17:00:03Z/23812926?len=49>

<sup>100</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2013), 425-429.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 428-429.

society. Marcia Bunge's biblical and theological perspectives on best practices for the faith's formation of children and parents mentions that the apparent struggle church leaders have to maintain strong and meaningful confirmation programs.<sup>102</sup> Upon reviewing scriptures regarding family, the findings in the Old and New Testament, clearly identify and describe various family dynamics that represent family relationships, demonstrates life according to biblical precepts, and showcases how families thrive in spiritual formation. The research provides the concepts of the ancient Israelian family as they experienced and lived out God's depicted purpose and directives for the family. The descriptions found allowed for connection between the family of the early church in the New Testament and onto the modern-day family.

### Family Dynamics

In this segment, the research reviews the Old and New Testament for the various family dynamics that may be identified and utilized as a wisdom track for trainings viewpoints. Three terms describe the family dynamics of ancient Israel. One of the family dynamic descriptions found is Šēbet/Matṭeh ("Tribe"), which represents a more social and territorial family form according to the tribes from the sons of Jacob (Israel).<sup>103</sup> The second family dynamic description recognized is the Mišpāḥâ ("Clan") which can be comprised of many families and can be considered a subunit of a tribe of kinship and has the primary nature acknowledging ancestors (Numbers 1, 26).<sup>104</sup> A third family dynamic description is Bêt-'āb ("Father's House"), a kinship

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<sup>102</sup> Bunge, "Biblical and Theological Perspectives," 348.

<sup>103</sup> C. J. H. Wright, "Family," ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 761.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

structure of Israel and thought to be the strongest to identify Israel's sense of inclusion, identity, protection, and responsibility. Also, they identified as extended family, descendants of a single ancestor.<sup>105</sup>

## Old Testament

In several scriptural references, there are descriptive experiences of family-to-family dynamics. The Torah provides protective, regulatory, directives for family heritage and relation with God (Lev. 18:6-17). Biblically, the word "house" reflects family and, in a broader sense, could represent a nation (2 Sam. 7:1-20).<sup>106</sup> The course of a family, as found in the era of Noah, is surprisingly descriptive of being very close, dependent upon one another, with shared skill sets and goal-oriented behaviors, according to the instructions of the Lord (Gen. 6-7). Their loving obedience towards one another and God allowed them to achieve a remarkable and historical adventure for God's glory (Gen. 7-8). Historically, the family dynamic consisted of the father, mother, children, and children's spouses, the grandchildren, and perhaps relatives and workers/servants. The vitality in Noah's family dynamic, in loving obedience to the word of God, created an intimate relationship with God and each other.

Following the lineage, Abraham left the security of his family to follow God's mission to become a nation of people where others (humanity) could reciprocate a relationship with God as His creation (Gen. 12). Abraham left with his family dynamic, and a relative pursuit of God's

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<sup>105</sup> Wright, "Family," 761.

<sup>106</sup> Victor P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Historical Books* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2001), 316-317.

mission, resulted in the fact that many experienced the relationship of God and Abraham. Those who followed Abraham served God out of a demonstrated loving obedience.<sup>107</sup>

Continuing the lineal view of Joshua, he made a declaration for the family dynamic that established an intimate relationship with God. By doing so would receive blessings and protection (Deut. 6). As a point of contrast to Erickson's second point of how biblical revelation and human concerns converge, it acknowledges that humanity exists because of God. God called Israel and later rescues them from the chastening of Egypt to become a people or society reflecting their family dynamic of faith to others (Exod. 19:4-6).<sup>108</sup>

Household leaders (father and mother) taught and demonstrated family values: in this case, God's precepts, which are considered the ideal family to family dynamic (Josh. 24, Prov. 22:6, 13-15). An even more vibrant picture of the family dynamic is Jacob's family, which housed three or more generations. According to God's precepts, Jacob and his house, servants included, lived in loving obedience (Gen. 46:8-26). Another aspect of family dynamics found in the Old Testament is the family of King David. King David's family is an exciting and dramatic family, consisting of children from several wives, which would be identified today as a blended family. Although King David lived a loving and obedient life ruled by the precepts of God, and he served the mission of God, his family dynamic was prophetic and precisely aligned to represent what can go well and wrong in the family dynamic (2 Sam. 15-18, 20, 23; 1 Kings 1, 2).<sup>109</sup> The family is resilient when in one accord; however, considering the family dynamics of

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<sup>107</sup> Gerhard Lohfink, *Does God Need the Church? Toward a Theology of the People of God* (Collegeville, IN: Liturgical Press, 1999), 51-52.

<sup>108</sup> Roxburgh, *Joining God*, 43-45.

<sup>109</sup> Hamilton, *Handbook on the Historical Books*, 353-368, 379-385.

King David, other similar forms of family demonstrates resilience. In review of the Old Testament teachings and experiences, there are relatable family dynamics found in the New Testament, and worth the review to bring more substance to the topic of family dynamics.

### New Testament

Specific passages of the New Testament Scriptures provide a lens through which to view families and their dynamics. Remembering that the term ‘house’ represents family, the research reveals how troublesome it may have been for Mary and Joseph as they began their family with a child in tow. This divine family dynamic is still lived out and resembles more of a practical lifestyle than the principles carried down from God’s historical law. Mary, humbled by her appointment to carry the savior, Mary endured slander for being with child just before she fulfilled vows to Joseph, which is reminiscent of the single parent of this modern era.<sup>110</sup> However, the family dynamic after Christ’s birth, marital union, and family increase are identical to this current era of blended family dynamics (Matt. 2; Luke 1-2).<sup>111</sup>

In comparing these two gospel writers’ stories of the conception and birth of Jesus, Matthew, in chapter 1, adds the lineage of Jesus so no one would doubt the family dynamic of God, Mary, Jesus, and Joseph. Remarkably, Jesus is taken through the customs of life and taken to the temple for circumcision (Luke 2:21-40), and in the adolescent stage, He identifies with His

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<sup>110</sup> Barry J. Beitzel and Kristopher A. Lyle, eds., *Lexham Geographic Commentary on the Gospels* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016) Chaps. 2 Luke’s Narrative and 3 Matthew’s Narrative, eBook, Logos.com

<sup>111</sup> Thomas D. Lea and David Alan Black, *The New Testament: Its Background and Message* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing, 2003), 132-140.

life's purpose during a census, while His earthly parents (Luke 2:41-52).<sup>112</sup> As it was customary for families to travel together for this great event, it was natural to think Jesus was with another family traveling back home. Families caring for one another is prevalent today, as anticipated. However, the standpoint is that the perspective of the church ministry efforts is essential to this project. The anticipation of the biblical principles gained from this review will fuel a trajectory for relational evangelism, family to family.

In response to the marriage question, Jesus teaches the first step to creating a family dynamic. In Matthew 19:4-6, the message is encouraged for the biblical family of men, women, and God, and that nothing can separate the union. Jesus provides another lesson for the family in the sense of following the message of that the kingdom of God is at hand (Mark 3:32-35).<sup>113</sup> The family union Jesus teaches in the spiritual family is formed through obedience by following God.

The gospel, according to Luke, highlights another moment for spiritual formation in that Jesus raises awareness for sharing the Word of God with children. Children may have the same opportunity to learn, live, love the precepts of God, and follow by obedience (Luke 20:33-36).<sup>114</sup> Although all the family members are not listed together as a family dynamic, the scene provides a profound family lesson in union with God.

After Christ, another family dynamic believers see in Scripture is the church being conducted in homes (Acts 2:46). Still, pictorial formation from the Old Testament family

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<sup>112</sup> Thomas, *The New Testament: Its Background and Message*, 146-153.

<sup>113</sup> Robert James Utley, *The First Christian Primer: Matthew*, vol. Volume 9, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 2000), 991-993

<sup>114</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), chp. 19, eBook, Logos.com



dynamic is one in the decision and service of living in loving obedience to God's precepts. Later in the gospel's history, the shared experience of crossing over culturally when God inspires Peter to go to the house of Cornelius, a Centurion, to share the gospel and baptize him and his household, leading his family and servants to Christ's baptism is seen. Peter crossed over cultural limitations to reach this family, and everyone in the household also receive the blessing of salvation (Acts 10).

A last look in the New Testament is the Epistles, in the Apostle Paul's reflections and applicable teachings about brother and sisterhood, family, relationships, and most importantly, the intimate relations these relationships reflect with God. From unity in the church reflecting a family dynamic in Ephesians 4 to living as a child of God in the light of His love in Ephesians 5, Paul provides the spiritual formation in developing individuals to share and live out the gospel message. The family to family relationship reflects the biblical principal Paul describes in Ephesians 6; the defined roles and responsibilities of family ensure each live out loving relations that demonstrate God's love for humanity through Jesus Christ.

### Evangelism Perspectives

In this segment, the research reviews the New Testament accounts for the various evangelism movements identified and utilized as a wisdom track for trainings and vital viewpoints to the thesis report. The sole purpose of reaching participants at a recreation center during activities that include every family member, especially those with no Christian experience or no church affiliation, is the pathway the research seeks to obtain. Scott Dawson states, "evangelism in perspective is one of the most important elements of being faithful and obedient to God... and critically important elements of balance, opportunity, ability to communicate,

mature, spiritual gifts and talents God provides."<sup>115</sup> Dawson makes an agreeable concern, regarding the implementation of evangelism. When implemented successfully, it is a vital to apply the evangelism approach practically. Rick Richardson points out that “people today will come to faith in the context of a community... Belonging comes before believing... Evangelism today is about helping people belong so that they can come to believe.”<sup>116</sup> Richardson’s point enhances relational evangelism’s approach to a community involved with a local church recreation ministry. Participants want their children and themselves to belong to a healthy community concerned about their spiritual and social well-being.

### Exemplary Church Ministry

A probable opposition to being an authentic and exemplary church, according to David Zac Niringiye in his book *The Church: God's Pilgrim People*, most churches set sights on denomination specifics rather than on the model church Jesus appoints the Apostles to build in near and far communities and countries.<sup>117</sup> He further encourages churches to be authentic and sincere about the community it is located in and truly identify as Christ’s church. In the biblical example in Acts 9:15, 22, Paul was corrected and empowered to deliver the gospel and established many churches for the Christian movement. Paul taught biblical principles for

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<sup>115</sup> Scott Dawson, *The Complete Evangelism Guidebook: Expert Advice on Reaching Others for Christ* (Grand Rapids: BakerBooks Publishing Group, 2008), 52-53.

<sup>116</sup> Rick Richardson, *Reimagining Evangelism: Linking Friends on a Spiritual Journey* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 50.

<sup>117</sup> David Zac Niringiye, *The Church: God's Pilgrim People* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 19-23. eBook, Logos.com.

relations with God and others. The empowerment was given to him to stand for God's glory by believing Jesus Christ is God's Son and promised Messiah.

David Niringiye establishes a foundation for the project by exploring the Apostle Paul's spiritual formation concept. In Paul's formation, his qualities as a ministry leader arise at the forefront as he journeys to establish churches and communities for God's kingdom. In showing these locations in diverse cultural settings, the people he meets on his journey include Jews, Gentiles, and other people groups. At every point, Paul experienced endangerment for presenting the message, love, and character of Christ. Paul encourages the established churches and communities to hold fast to the truth shared, to the power of God's Word, to the strength of being empowered by God's Holy Spirit, and to exemplify God's depth of love for one another. The lessons of the Epistle passages provide a proper foundation for developing a lasting Christian community relationship and demonstrate the overreaching goal of the project.

IBC's ministry efforts outside the church simulate Paul's mission and teachings of sharing the gospel by approaching relational evangelism, family to family. The effort provides the opportunity to lead, embrace, and equip families to reach other families. IBC Families are encouraged to live out the gospel message, and those participating in the church's recreational activities share in those activities with church and unchurched family dynamics. The concept opens an opportunity for expressing the components of the approach of relational evangelism, with the component of most concern recognizing the need for salvation through the loving nature of God.<sup>118</sup> According to Randy Newman, the opportunity to have dialogue with someone should

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<sup>118</sup> McRaney, Jr., *The Art of Personal*, 102-103.

not be lost but should be expressed to stimulate life's despair without Christ.<sup>119</sup> Similarly, Linda Jacobs acknowledges outstanding efforts to attract families, support, and demonstrate acts of listening, praying, and encouraging.<sup>120</sup> IBC seeks to encourage the people to give daily to help each one live in the rescuing power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. IBC's ministry efforts, as a church to its community, are noticeable in the recreation center activities.

### Care for the Community

In 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28, Paul encourages a community of believers to care for one another as they care for their own lives. It is the anticipation that this project will reflect intentional relations being established family to family with the careful appointment of families in a developed spiritual formation progression. Stephen Um and Justin Buzzard speak to the matter of the growth of the urban city and how it is shaping the new world, especially why cities and communities are so important as they speak to art, business, universities, and urban development.<sup>121</sup> The authors see community as the "natural and intended outgrowth of the flourishing community that our triune God has always enjoyed" and further state that it makes good representation of the holy city where God and man may dwell in the new city.<sup>122</sup> The Bible clearly explains how God cares about community and the people that dwell in them. In the

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<sup>119</sup> Randy Newman, *Questioning Evangelism: Engaging People's Hearts the Way Jesus Did* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2004), 87.

<sup>120</sup> Linda Ranson Jacobs, *Attract Families to Your Church and Keep Them Coming Back* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2014), 89-90, eBook. Logos.com

<sup>121</sup> Stephen T. Um and Justin Buzzard, *Why Cities Matter: To God, the Culture, and the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 16-19.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

Epistles by the Apostle Paul are incredible storylines that exemplify God's intended care and desire to dwell with a holy people of His design.

According to Michael Martin, one of the six noticeable exhortations in Paul's letter provides proactive steps for church leaders to follow.<sup>123</sup> If the church unites with leadership's proactive steps, ministry results would be repressive. Aside from textual criticism, Paul's urging letter to the Thessalonians provides the Christians of this era with the assurances of working humbly together, confidence in sharing the good news, and lasting results by faith.

The expectation from IBC's ministry effort is that families in the local community would be touched. The activities bring families together and, through these relations, offer endless opportunities for unity. Families learn from the Word of God together, pray together, teach their children together, and work through life's challenges by applying the Word of God daily. According to Colleen Derr, the family's sources of Christian education within the home and their communities refer to the Israelites instruction in Deuteronomy 6.<sup>124</sup> In support of families' connection to the church, which raises awareness in communities and for the possibility of purposefully demonstrating God's idea of ministry and His love experienced family to family, a family theory, according to Philippa Strong writes,

"Ministry was never meant to happen without the context of family. Each time a ministry is formed, and it is not operating from a family framework with the mission to empower and enrich family life, it will not be successful as God himself is family- 'orientated' (cf. Anderson 2007:188). God is ministry, and his ministry is relational, unitive, creative,

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<sup>123</sup> Michael D. Martin, 1, 2 Thessalonians. Vol. 33. *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 38.

<sup>124</sup> Colleen R. Derr, Guest Editorial "Ministry with Today's Diverse Families," *Christian Education Journal*, 14, no. 1 (2017): 82.

redemptive, and curative – and characterized by love (Stevens 1999:141; cf. Olthuis 2012:7)."<sup>125</sup>

When considering the adversity families endures, the local ministry can be a resource to assist in combating those various deficiencies. Those adversities can either arise from substance, physical, or mental abuse. The struggle with a troubled child, terminal illnesses, or addictions could exist. These matters can be unimaginable in a loving family, and not easy to connect with other families to develop beneficial relationships. Both of these difficulties with resources can be fatal to family growth, social connection, or family relations success. A critical factor in relational evangelism is out of concern that connections can be established.<sup>126</sup>

The idea of this approach opens the heart's door to struggling families that do not have a relationship with God. However, families sharing their family statement of faith experience and gospel message can help guide families through spiritual formation. John MacArthur stated,

“Simple math states the obvious: if 26 percent of all households in the United States are made up of married couples, that means 74 percent must incorporate those who are divorced, widowed, and single. Certainly, those percentages would change when applied to the church, which upholds the sanctity of marriage to a far greater degree than secular society.”<sup>127</sup>

### **Theoretical Foundation**

There are three theoretical perspectives to consider when describing relational evangelism approach family to family. One thought is that families that work from a

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<sup>125</sup> Strong, “Effective Youth Ministry”, 3.

<sup>126</sup> Jacobs, *Attract Families to Your Church and Keep Them Coming Back*, 89.

<sup>127</sup> MacArthur, *Keys to Effective Evangelism*, 83.

functionalism perspective look to achieve goals unique to their family situation<sup>128</sup>. From the structuralism perspective, families generally examine their relationships and acknowledges different status and roles. A third thought of families, from an interactionism perspective, moves the focus to variations in the function and structure of the family as evident in social classes and cultural groups<sup>129</sup>. The section presents the views on evangelism approaches as historical and current movements based on the Great Commission. Further discussion supporting the solution to the problem stated to ensure the approach is lasting in ministry efforts is spiritual formation and duplication practices. The theoretical lens researched provides an additional model, ministry practices in family ministry efforts, and the positive and negative outcomes from ministry efforts as it relates to the family to family relational evangelism approach in recreation activities. In these areas, the research provides supportive validation for the results of the project report.

### Family Dynamics

John Huffman clarifies the probable components for family dynamics from the point of view of a pastor's family that may be struggling due to ministry constraints, and a family's dynamic that centers around substance abuse or mental illness.<sup>130</sup> Perhaps a family dynamic is consistent with economic struggles (housing, high impact careers, or inconsistent work) due to gambling additions or other types of compulsive behaviors. These options only name a few. In the following paragraphs, three identifiers researched family dynamics are discussed.

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<sup>128</sup> Raccah, "Sociology and the Old Testament, <https://ref.ly/res/LLS:LBD/2021-11-19T17:00:03Z/23812926?len=49>

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> John A Huffman, *The Family You Want: How to Build an Authentic, Loving Home* (Fearn, UK: Christian Focus Publications, 2001), 13–14, 20-30.

As introduced, the three areas, or lenses to identify with family dynamics is from the functionalism perspective, which depicts how the family dynamic looks to achieve goals unique to their family situation. The implications range from views of matured families to young adult families. Huffman adds to this list in discussing when the marriage begins with set goals, and family leaders are not going in different directions with those goals. Another family dynamic is structuralism, where the family dynamic is examined based on their relationships, status, and roles of the family; believers know the scriptures declare that Christ is head of the church and in a reflective way, so is the husband, the head of his household. However, the discussion is on the various status and roles family dynamics determine for growth. A component of the equipping families, Tom Nelson's *The Economics of Neighborly Love*, makes a point in regarding individuals and family's role in the community or neighborhood as a family dynamic that displays neighborly love both inside the home, as well as outside, is vital to the display of Christ-like attributes.<sup>131</sup> On the opposite spectrum, according to Jonathan Brooks, there are family dynamics that have neglected and forsaken functionalities.<sup>132</sup> Third and last the lens to identify family dynamics is through an interactionism perspective where the family is more identifiable in secular family dynamics, and according to Noel Castellanos, John Perkins, and Wayne Gordon, this is where the cross meet the various families. The authors' principle that families with a tendency to follow secular trends and make a predominate source in developing rhythms and foundational teachings is applicable because it showcases how those families are misleading

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<sup>131</sup> Tom Nelson, *The Economics of Neighborly Love: Investing in Your Community's Compassion and Capacity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2017), 8-12.

<sup>132</sup> Jonathan Brooks, *Church Forsaken: Practicing Presence in Neglected Neighborhoods* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2018), 128-130.



the biblically based family dynamic.<sup>133</sup> A favorable family dynamic using Castellanos, Perkins, and Gordon’s perspectives would encounter “holistic development with the basis of reconciliation, inspiration, and cultivating meaningful relations that allows cultural barriers to be dismantled through interactions.”<sup>134</sup> In other words, the family dynamic would be more capable to taking the gospel message to the streets vs. the streets taking its message to the family dynamic of interactionism. Looking back at Huffman’s writing, thirteen points ranging in effect from parenthood to grandparenthood are discussed to build an effective family dynamic. These points would encourage a family to assess what, how, and why to build with biblical principles as a primary source.<sup>135</sup>

### Evangelism Approaches

Over the years, the evangelism movement and its approaches have morphed based on communities where ministry effort is carried out or where the approach is applicable to various cultures and age groups, to name a few. Evangelism approaches have been created from church reforms, radical movements, and some from inhuman outcomes. Most constructive views expose viable foundations for the selected approach of relational evangelism and give insight into different approaches from sensitive, valuable, and assorted outcomes. Markus Schafer provides a sociological perspective about religion and a conversation through an evangelism

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<sup>133</sup> Noel Castellanos, John M Perkins, and Wayne Gordon, *Where the Cross Meets the Street: What Happens to the Neighborhood when God is at the Center* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2015), 32-35.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 40-57.

<sup>135</sup> John A Huffman, *The Family You Want: How to Build an Authentic, Loving Home* (Fearn, UK: Christian Focus Publications, 2001), 105-116.

approach rather than a personal, constructive, servant leader, or relational one.<sup>136</sup> Initially, the conversation would be a sensitive discussion for most and may be somewhat controversial.<sup>137</sup> In Thomas Roatch's practical personal evangelism approach, he defines this by his source Ho Kim: when a person in Christ shares their personal experience with the lost or unsaved, the Great Commission is the foundation of the approach, the outcome resting on the Spirit of God, and after that the church.<sup>138</sup> Who would think that evangelism would be harmful? Ravi Gokani and Lea Caragata's collections provides insight to a non-violent approach where some have experienced contingency against religious traditions to make an approach or to share their knowledge if not a clergy person.<sup>139</sup> Ending on the research and thoughts of Richard Howitt, et al., designating the relational approach with efforts in community development, also known as suburbia of most neighborhoods, is viable and connects clearly with Great Commission and commandment of Christ.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Markus H. Schafer, "Who Talks Religion and What are the Consequences for Social Ties? Unpacking a Sensitive Discussion Topic in Close Networks," *Sociology of Religion* 79, no. 4 (2018): 395-424.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Thomas M. Roatch, "Effective Personal Evangelism for Today's Church" (DMIN diss., Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011), 8-13, *Scholars Crossing: Doctoral Dissertations and Projects*.

<sup>139</sup> Ravi Gokani and Lea Caragata, "'Non-Violent Evangelism': A Look at How Members of Evangelical Faith-Based Organizations Share Faith with Service Recipients in Southern, Ontario, Canada," *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work* 40, no. 3 (2021): 263-285.

<sup>140</sup> Richard Howitt, Kath McLachlan, Matalena Tofa, Iqbal Barkat, Garima Misra, Nathan Moulds, Johana Susanto, et al., "Witnessing, Saving, Serving? A Relational Approach to Community Development in the Suburbs of a Global City," *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work* 39, no. 1 (2020): 90-110.

## Spiritual Formation

There are several explorations on the topic of spiritual formation. The direction, in this case, is the various theories and methods found that provide the project's primary approach to the evidence and answer to the question of similarity. A bonus to expose is what causes a fluid approach and what causes a stagnate approach. Savannah Kroff, et al.'s research from the lens of marriage and families has the initial connection to a spiritual formation from a personal relationship with God that requires acceptance of the redeemer, the Christ.<sup>141</sup> In the collection of authors' findings, husbands and wives that practice (give and receive) concepts of reconciliation, forgiveness, and marital unity establish a foundation of spiritual formation. They yield favorable outcomes with ease in marital conflict resolutions, adherence to distinct beliefs, claim of biblical practices, and being associated with the church body.<sup>142</sup> In an article by Jane I Lu, there different perspectives of spiritual formation views from an educational model, which seeks the influences from theological training on how one experiences and models spiritual formation.<sup>143</sup> Lu includes higher education's context on "knowledge base cognitive dimension of formation" and findings that go "across seminaries and institutions, that spiritual formation is the same with differences in ethics and cultural distinctions" resulting in an introspective base of spiritual formation.<sup>144</sup> Robert O'Gorman's theological effects of education in spiritual formation somewhat piggyback Lu.

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<sup>141</sup> Savannah L. Kroff, et al., "Relationship with God and the Word: Faith among American Evangelical Christian Families," *Marriage & Family Review* 54, no. 7 (2018): 693-705.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 693-696.

<sup>143</sup> Jane I. Lu, "Educational Models of Spiritual Formation in Theological Education: Introspection-Based Spiritual Formation," *Teach Theology Religion* 24. (2021): 28– 41.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

Both authors, Lu and O’Gorman, conduct rigorous research on spiritual formation. However, O’Gorman sides on spirituality, the defining of formation with the origin of relationships (God the Father, Son, Holy Spirit and others), educating biblically, and understanding those principles gleaned within oneself (body, mind, soul) allows for strength in societal and relationship encounters.<sup>145</sup> In the heart of spiritual formation, the growth residue, according to W. J. Schoeman, is rediscovering faith sharing – a duplication method.<sup>146</sup> The approach of Schoeman includes the proclamation of evangelism where when one grows in personal relationship with God through Christ, the audible call to share the spiritual experience grows intensely, and Schoeman sees this as a part of the repentance and conversion process.<sup>147</sup> An additional spiritual formation perspective from Jim Wilhoit lands on growing in Christ through community and where spiritual formation comes into play.<sup>148</sup> According to Wilhoit, it is pathways to flourishing spiritual formation that can be outside of the box and in the community.<sup>149</sup> His claim, this is where one experiences the heart break of Christ.<sup>150</sup> The direction of the thesis report likens to Wilhoit’s description and model because the project centers around church families in the community of families that are involved with seasonal recreation activities and have no church affiliation or Christ experience. Lastly, Everett

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<sup>145</sup> Robert T. O’Gorman, “Effect of Theological Orientation on Christian Education in Spiritual Formation: Toward a Postmodern Model of Spirituality,” *Review and Expositor*. 98, no. 3 (2001): 351–353.

<sup>146</sup> W. J. Schoeman (Kobus) and Malan Nel, "Rediscovering ‘Disciplemaking’ and the Role of Faith-Sharing," *Hervormde Theologies Studies* 75, no. 4 (2019): 1-8.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Jim Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered: Growing in Christ through Community* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 1-20.

<sup>149</sup> Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered*, 25-63.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

Ferguson's study of church history views, reveals at the beginning of the established church, was in the array of political and social unjust, not just the government but also the church under the Laws of Moses.<sup>151</sup> A visual spiritual formation is fuel for pre- and post-modern day principles. To accompany these authors discussed in this segment, the question of what happens after spiritual formation is asked. A possible answer, found in Chip Sweney and Kitti Murray's topic of the church transforming communities and addresses the questions. Such as sentiments in the first steps of sharing Christ message, the church influencing communities amid disparity, recreational loss (as due to COVID-19), and deprived biblical knowledge are to name a few.<sup>152</sup> The thesis project reports encountered the process of equipping families to reach families in the community. When they embarked on their spiritual formation journey, they practice daily living out their family life with biblical principles and being in tune with their heart towards families not affiliated with a church or a Christ experience.

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<sup>151</sup> Ferguson, *Church History*, 32-44.

<sup>152</sup> Chip Sweney and Kitti Murray, *A New Kind of Big: How Churches of any Size can Partner to Transform Communities* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 21- 27.

### Chapter 3

The chapter reflects on the methods, purpose, and objectives determined for the research methodology selected for the project. The epitome begins with the endorsement from Idlewild Baptist Church Family Ministry leaders to address a lack of family connection to a critical mission in the family ministry area. This method report outlines the intervention steps taken to obtain historical data to compare outcomes from IBC family participants. The chapter describes comparable data as a basis for the recreational ministry, a selected method for collaborating with stakeholders, and an appropriate tool for assessing qualitative results. The recruiting efforts outline the steps taken to obtain family participants to apply the relational evangelism approach in recreation activities to minister family to family.

Additionally, this chapter outlines the equipping session and presentation conducted to prepare IBC family participants for intentional family connections using the relational evangelism approach. To inform participants, several communication mediums were used to arrange virtual meetings, send emails, and create a baseline for the intervention of the project report. The data received is presented in comparison of the past year's recreation activity, including the number of families participating and the number of families with no church affiliation. There needed to be a record of pervious family connections from an evangelism approach to create a baseline of comparison.

The method evolves around the recruiting process of IBC family participants active in the baseball season's recreation activity. Additional efforts came with incorporating field visits to attain the participants needed and a collaboration with IBC recreation administration to implement methods of maintaining autonomous records of informed consents and training completions.

Equipping participants presented a challenge due to the COVID-19 mandates; however, the method used to conduct trainings was Zoom conferencing. Supporting method of housing a recording of the equipping session for access to additional recruited participants was archived in IBC Ministry training system. The finishing method of implementation captured data from IBC family participants using a post season questionnaire to present the proposed project's affects and resolutions.

### **Methodology**

The potential for IBC staff to maintain records presents a promising data collection. The project received the IRB approval, and IBC's recreation administration provided data information needed to assess adequately, from maintained records of all participants, and was available to mediate correspondences between the researcher and IBC family participants. The researcher obtained from IBC recreation leaders family participation data to assess the previous year of the current recreation activity offered in the summer, which is baseball and girls' softball.

The anonymous data includes the number of all participants, including adults, children, and youth. The data provides:

- the number of families who are members of IBC,
- participants with no church affiliations, and
- participants with no known relationship or experience with Christ.

From the participants' information findings, the total number of families and those who were members of IBC was identifiable.

The total number of participants for the calendar season provided a quantitative report and review of the number of participants, families identified, those with no local church, those

with none or little Christ knowledge and experience, and those who were current members of IBC. There was a significant amount for analysis that compares further data, should it be needed; however, the ministry area predominately used during the season of recreation activity provides a promising longevity of data to potentially consider a random sampling potentially. Additionally, the problem was studied to obtain outcomes from IBC family participants.

Recruiting method for participants consisted of emailing IBC families that signed up to participate in the recreation activity, leaders identifying families that had some evangelism experience, and families with interest in learning and applying a new evangelism approach. The methods of communication consisted of emailing, field visits, and phone calls by the recreation leader and ministry leader.

The method to capture participants experiences by a post-season questionnaire of twenty one questions. Composed to provide insight of family to family connections, application of the relational evangelism approach, and outcome of family connections. The expected questionnaire was scheduled to be presented to participants two weeks before the end of the of baseball and softball recreation season. The questionnaire was emailed to IBC participating families. The questionnaire allowed participating IBC families to rate the equipping session, indicate family connections made, indicate types of family dynamics connected with, and areas shared during the approach.

The post-season questionnaire addressed the main areas of the evangelism approach presented in the equipping of IBC family participants. Allowing the researcher to learn how IBC family participants utilized and experienced the content of the equipping session in their family connections. Provided the researcher with IBC family participants views and effectiveness of the approach, indication of participants opportunity to deliver the gospel message, and share the



acceptance of the connection and establishment of a closer relation. Those equipping areas the questionnaire addressed:

- Family Express Grace and Forgiveness
- Empowerment to Serve - Relational Evangelism
- Deeper Covenant - Unconditional Love
- Spiritual Formation - Duplication

The method used in the equipping session zoom conference arranged in a one hour session, power point presentation, incorporated video presentations for application, and interaction in break out rooms.

### Triangular Connections

The intervention design took on a triangular approach between IBC family participants, recreation leaders, and the researcher. The main stakeholders consisted of IBC and the recreation leaders assisting to identifying IBC families, delivering all correspondence for recruiting and training, and housed the recorded equipping session in IBC's Ministry Grid. Recreation ministry staff assisted in obtaining and recording the required informed consent forms, provided participants access to the equipping session, reported completion of the equipping session, and emailed and called participants regarding completing the post season questionnaire to and from participating families. Ministry leaders and recreation staff assisted during all field visits for assistance in recruiting IBC family's participants, encouraging completion of the quipping session, maintain receipt of the completed inform and consent form, and ensuring IBC families had no need of assistance with connections with other family participants in the recreation activities.

## Quantitative Method

The collective data presented was assessed for information that would yield results to allow a deeper analysis and an evolving narrative of the compared data of the seasonal recreation activities. There was no withholding of stakeholders' inquiries, suggestions, or wise guidance. The information obtained from all participants who completed the questionnaire provide exclusive connection between families, participants information gained for positive and negative potential of the approach.

Through a general comparison and review of Tom Sensing, David Tod, and Claudine Sherrill, all three authors have unique studies and uses of the quantitative methodology for data retrieval throughout the project. Opposite of this project's quantitative method, Tod and Shirrell apply qualitative methodology in sports activities while considering philosophy and life span.<sup>153</sup> Tod and Sherrill may oppose the method and assessments that contrast the intervention yielding the implementation design of this project. When comparing findings from Tod and Sherrill with Stephen Bird, the research frames the essential concepts of physical activity.<sup>154</sup> The interactive recruitment of IBC families procured a triangular approach involving the participating IBC families, recreation leaders, and the researcher. The subsequent actions present certain connections: the intervention design, developed examinations of data, and adaption according to stakeholders' feedback. More so, the relational connection for the research with stakeholders became highly needed to maintain connections, ensure communication of each phase in the

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<sup>153</sup> David Tod, *Conducting Systematic Reviews in Sport, Exercise, and Physical Activity* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 152-153; Claudine Sherrill, *Adapted Physical Activity, Recreation, and Sport: Crossdisciplinary and Lifespan*, 6th ed. (Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, 2004), 22-25.

<sup>154</sup> Stephen R. Bird, *Research Methods in Physical Activity and Health*, 1st ed. (Boca Raton, FL: Routledge, 2019), 109.

process, maintain the status of each of the participants, and keep record of all participants demographic information.

## **Intervention Design**

### Endorsement

From the instructions and template of the IRB, the researcher obtained support and permission from Idlewild Baptist Church to conduct the project addressing the need of an enhanced method of connecting with families that are not affiliated with the church and have no relationship with Christ. The endorsement allowed the researcher to obtain adequate historical data from supporting stakeholders, the recreation center leadership, and staff forming a triangular connection with all participants. The researcher applied for the thesis project approval with Liberty University's IRB department for the study that was classified and approved as a non-human subject's research and to begin the research with the data safeguarded methods as mentioned in the IRB application.<sup>155</sup>

### Project Formation

The objective of assessing the total number of families distinguished how many were members of IBC and how many members were from the local community that was unchurched or without previous knowledge or experience of Christ. At Idlewild Baptist Church Recreation Outreach Center, the entire staff ministry consists of a ministry leader, a director, a manger, volunteers, and coaches who carry out biblical devotions and biblical principle interactions.

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<sup>155</sup> Appendix C: IRB Letter of Approval.

The time frame for the project consisted of five to six months of collaboration on implementing the collective recruiting, equipping, and evaluating methods.

To obtain registration data, the administration staff performed seasonal registration to gather demographic information on participating families. The registration form identifies those families recruited for participation in the family to family relational evangelism approach. Recreation staff provided the total number of families participating in IBC recreation activities previous two years.

The triangular connection, recruiting efforts, and primary stakeholders were critical components in the triangular formation. IBC recreation leaders identified families with the most potential to succeed in the project and demonstrated interest and participation in other evangelism events. IBC recreation leaders provided a communication stream while sustaining anonymity with all family participants. During the baseball and softball seasons, there were 89 families identified out of 497 families with the potential of recruitment for the project.<sup>156</sup>

The researching prepared materials, scheduling, practical application exercise for face to face equipping session that would take two days in two-hour sessions. However, IBC recreation leaders suggested several objective modifications due to COVID-19 precautions. IBC recreation leaders decided that two, two-hour sessions would be too much for busy families under COVID-19 restrictions, so the adjustments made were one, one-hour session on a Saturday afternoon prior to the baseball and softball recreation season. Adapting to the ministry leaders scheduling and familiarity with family dynamics and schedules were considered and adapted to only a one-hour equipping session held via Zoom conferencing. The research condensed the design and

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<sup>156</sup> Idlewild Baptist Church, Recreation Outreach Ministry. Data provided to the researcher by ministry staff.

delivery format of the equipping session to four sections, with video clips for practical application, and prepared 10-15-minute break out room activities for participants to practice each phase of the relational evangelism approach. Upon conducting the initial equipping session, recording the session allowed IBC participants who could not attend to access and complete prior to implementing the approach. The project sustained changes due to IBC adhering to the COVID-19 pandemic precautions and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) mandates of no large gatherings, social distance, and wearing face masks.<sup>157</sup> The recreation leaders sent invitations for the live on-line equipping session to the IBC family participants by mass email for autonomy precautions. Later, the Zoom recorded equipping session had a slot in IBC training material in a system called Ministry Grid. The Ministry Grid provided a checkpoint, date and time stamp for when the IBC family participants completed the training. The recreation staff communicated who completed the trainings and additional recruits emailed, email of reminders for completion and receipt of inform and consent forms. The adaptation fulfilled the original plan of providing informative concepts and examples of the relational evangelism approach as an innovative resource.

The overarching goal of equipping families with the relational evangelism approach was for those participating skills to reach families with no church affiliation or Christ experience. Recording the equipping session made it advantageous for those who did not attend the initial session. Participants received a follow-up communication enclosing an instructional invitation to the session made conventionally available for equipping families in a one-hour session for this project.

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<sup>157</sup> United States Department of Health & Human Services, Center for Disease Control and Prevention <https://www.cdc.gov/> <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

Field visits, another adaptation to the equipping process, where determining factors of developing the family to family relational evangelism approach are projected, were utilized. Family connections were captured in a three to four month period according to the season of recreation activity. The researcher's method measured family to family relational evangelism approaches by recruited IBC families for leadership and volunteerism, the informative equipping session, additional recruiting by field visits by the researcher and ministry leadership, and weekly communication with recreation leaders. The researcher made additional bi-weekly recreation field follow-up visits to support and encourage IBC participants with connections and application of the approach. The assessment of the number of IBC families gave rise to introducing and sharing with those families the gospel message and personal relationship with Christ and His church.

### Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation method utilized the recreation center's history, complimenting information collected from previous registration and electronic record of all participants. The complimenting information yielded data that benefits the number of participating IBC families, similar family dynamics, identified unchurched participants, and those who have not experienced the gospel message.

A formatted post season questionnaire assist in determining the spiritual formation and growth of the family connections made through the relational evangelism approach.<sup>158</sup> Data

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<sup>158</sup> Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, OR: WIPF and Stock Publishing, 2011), p. xxiii.

gathered provided a guiding cross-reference and explicitly identified the recreation activity group with a high concentration of participating adults, children, and youth groups.<sup>159</sup> The IBC recreation staff, and ministry leaders' input was ideal support in search of IBC families' who had interest and fortitude to carry out the relational evangelism approach.

The post season questionnaire gathered information to determine those participating IBC families' spiritual formation and family leadership, which are vital criteria to recruiting and connecting to families, both those with non-church affiliation or who have no Christ experience, for the relational evangelism approach. The post season questionnaire identified areas of follow-up, interest in returning to recreation activities, IBC family participation in the ministry effort of relational evangelism, and the family to family connection experience.<sup>160</sup>

#### Tool of Assessment

Zoho tool of assessment used to create a post-questionnaire that would provide outcomes from participants<sup>161</sup>. Assessing the gravity of the activity of practical application of the offered relational evangelism training encounters the methodology of "community paradigm nature or nurture."<sup>162</sup> Determining achievable expectations in the season's recreation activities of baseball and softball is revealed in post-questionnaire outcomes, which are discussed in the next chapter. The IBC families who participated and IBC families made an actual connection through the

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<sup>159</sup> Tod, *Conducting Systematic Reviews in Sport, Exercise, and Physical Activity*, 83-98.

<sup>160</sup> Sherrill, *Adapted Physical Activity, Recreation, and Sport*, 3-6.

<sup>161</sup> Zoho Corporation Pvt. Ltd. All Rights Reserved, 2021. Created May 15, 2021.  
[https://accounts.zoho.com/signin?servicename+AaaServer&serviceurl=https%3A%](https://accounts.zoho.com/signin?servicename+AaaServer&serviceurl=https%3A%3A)

<sup>162</sup> Bird, *Research Methods in Physical Activity and Health*, 25.

relational evangelism approach. The interface of these connecting families uniquely set the goal of the assessment tool. The data highlights the seasonal recreation activities, concentration on the gathered family dynamics that provide unique pairing for expansion.

Additional aspects were found to have a vital essence to support the assessment throughout were able to

- a. Identify if IBC families made early connections or had previous connections.
- b. Identify the number of registered families represented in the season of recreational activity.
- c. Identify the number of registered families with no church affiliation in the season of recreational activities.

The season yields 497 families; of those families, 196 were from IBC families, 225 identified as having other church affiliation, and 76 families stated no church affiliation.<sup>163</sup> The amount of registration data adds to the potential of a quantitative result. The data scale provides a visual percentage of families from the total number of families that participated in IBC recreation activities and those that identified as IBC families, with other church affiliation, and with no church affiliation.

Additional assessment elements bring a more conclusive data range for appropriating the family to family connections needed for the purpose of the relational evangelism approach. Stakeholders who relish the idea of recreation activities include school demographics, play dates, or other family activities. In this case, the questionnaire did not allow for these considerations to

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<sup>163</sup> Idlewild Baptist Church, Recreation Outreach Ministry. Data provided to the researcher by recreation ministry staff.



capture for future connections or reassigning connections in the community. The method deems adaptability to additional considerations of community service needs or other organizations that will strengthen the relational aspect of the approach. To reiterate the method for implementation purposes, the researcher obtained historical data of participants of the IBC recreation center to develop possible connections family to family through a relational evangelism approach. Data assessment supports stakeholders' efforts of making intentional connections and enhance efforts in the community through IBC recreation center's seasonal activities.<sup>164</sup>

### **Implementation of the Intervention Design**

The expectations of the method incorporated data from the previous season registrations, IBC member participants, and community participants. The information obtained from the recreation ministry staff (the activity that had a higher volume of participants i.e., soccer and baseball) guided areas for intentional connections for families. The presented relational evangelism approach is an opportunity to relate and perchance amplify the ministry of evangelism in those recreation activities. The 2019 year data showed 1,200 youth participants in soccer, 750 youth participants in baseball and softball, and 500 youth participants in flag football.<sup>165</sup> Each of their five adult programs, has an average of 50 -100 participants.<sup>166</sup>

Year-end acknowledgment events and other recreation and church community activities occur during the season. Consideration of possible duplications of family information were

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<sup>164</sup> Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 102-103.

<sup>165</sup> IBC, Recreation Outreach Ministry. Data provided to the researcher by recreation ministry staff.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

addressed for the actual number of families and those that represent as IBC families and families from other church affiliations or neighboring communities. The ministry's efforts over the past year did not yield outcomes, whereas the research seeks to indicate outcomes for spiritual formation through family connects made.

### Comparable Data

The comparison of data gathered for this season of baseball and softball yielded 497 numbers of families that participated.<sup>167</sup> In the past year of baseball and softball, there were a total of 750 participating families.<sup>168</sup> There would need to be a record number of IBC members previously noted that yields and identifies as making relational evangelism connections to compare in this report. In 2021, the baseball and softball season yielded 196 of those families that were identified as IBC families.<sup>169</sup> The recruiting results yielded 13 families to participate in the training and applying the relational evangelism approach with family connections.<sup>170</sup> The more families identified allow for the opportunity to initiate participation in these opportunities that produce intentionality of connecting family to family. The data, in comparison to each season shows inclusive record of possible connections made with non-affiliates but does provide a high marker of neighboring communities participation and increased opportunity for intentional family connections. There was no known collection of data on additional recreation

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<sup>167</sup> IBC, Recreation Outreach Ministry, Data provided to the researcher by recreation ministry staff.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

centers in proximity to the IBC recreation center. There was no known collection of data for the number of families that had a connection prior to the implementation of the project. IBC did not provide a previous record, or assessments, or required training for participants to make family connections prior to this project.

#### Data Method Outline

The data obtained for comparison from the previous season year of registered adult, children, and youth groups consisted of

- a. Adult and children's activities.
- b. The number of participants in each activity.
- c. Each school age group for children and youth activities.
- d. Those participants identified as a member of IBC and those who are not:
  1. Adults
  2. Children
  3. Youth
  4. Number of families represented
- e. Those participants identified as a community participant were the:
  1. Adults
  2. Children
  3. Youth
  4. Number of families represented
- f. Post Questionnaire completed by IBC families who participated in the relational evangelism approach and families connected through the relational evangelism approach.

The data obtained from IBC recreation staff was arranged to obtain the maximum number of participants from each recreational activity, that included both IBC family members and community family members.

## Equipping Families

Family to family relational evangelism is being taught from a *Covenant of Love* perspective.<sup>171</sup> IBC families initially planned to have a face to face experience in an informative one-hour virtual equipping session. The following equipping session format brought recreation leaders suggestions for the best time to attract busy parents. The scheduled equipping session was conducted on a Saturday during the late afternoon. The equipping session consisted of the following four lessons that include practical application:

### **Lesson One:**

Family Express Grace and Forgiveness: Participants learned to identify with their ability to demonstrate sharing the attribute in the manner of courtesy, hospitality, or general encounters. Jesus established a biblical base from the study that is topically related scripture that encourages believers to consider that their actions toward others reflects upon their relationship with Him and with others (Matt. 25:34-40). The lesson brought awareness to be encouraged during the demonstration of what will bring others closer to God and not to offend or cause them to turn away (Mark 9:41). The lesson from Paul encourages participants to act in a way that pleases and demonstrates Christ's love and what it does concerning others (1 Cor. 13, Rom. 12). From Galatians 5:13-26, believers are encouraged by Paul's personal approach and liberty within Christ and demonstration.

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<sup>171</sup> Jack O. Balswick and Judith K. Balswick, *The Family: A Christian Perspective on the Contemporary Home* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2014), Chaps. 1 -2.

For practical application, a video clip was shared from Jen Wilkins<sup>172</sup> on the “Difference Between Hospitality and Entertaining” as a visual aid to help participants apply and talk through the approach. The takeaway was that participants’ initial connection could be taken to a more familiar and personal setting so that the families relate and establish a more natural connection and conversations.

### **Lesson Two:**

Empowerment to Serve - Relational Evangelism: Participants learned how to identify and develop a relationship to present the gospel message of salvation. The biblical base was established from topically related Scripture stating the Great Commission and the church’s commitment (Matt. 28:18-20). The Apostles’ mission of preaching from city to city, there in each relationship, established the church and carried out established relational evangelism throughout the cities visited. Paul assures the called/inspired to share the gospel message (Acts 14:7, 21, 16:10). Paul encourages Peter to carry it out, which was demonstrated and taught by inspiration of God’s Holy Spirit (1 Pet. 1:12). Scholarly sources shared brought a substantial understanding for the relational evangelism approach. According to *Splash*, by Ken and Paula Hemphill, relationships help identify interests-discerning inclusivity, identify needs discerning disparity, and develop an open to discernment community bringing families together to demonstrate and increase a thirst for Christ in other families.<sup>173</sup> The Hemphill’s describe *Splash*

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<sup>172</sup> The Gospel Coalition, “Jen Wilkin on the Difference Between Hospitality and Entertaining,” November 23, 2016, video, 2:13, <https://youtu.be/UdNwHEHAivA>.

<sup>173</sup> Ken and Paula Hemphill, *Splash: Showing People Love and Share Him* (Tigerville, SC: Auxano Publishing Group, 2007), 30-36, 74-81.

as an effective way to share the gospel message through God’s Word and undergirding of His Spirit.<sup>174</sup>

The process described includes prayer and a personal Christian experience of acceptance of Christ as Savior.<sup>175</sup> Jimmy Scroggins and Steve Wright, from their perspective, focus on prayer and how relations from everyday conversations (sowing seeds of Christ’s love) and interactions (demonstrating Christ’s love) can lead to a gospel conversation (spiritual formation and duplication).<sup>176</sup> According to Ron Bowen, communities are very active places to develop relational evangelism.<sup>177</sup> As Christ demonstrates temporal relations, His conversations lead those encountered to the truth of the good news.

Even though families are the most challenging mission field, interest, activities, and similar family dynamics allow for straightforward relational evangelism approaches. The *Three Circle* approach shows everyday conversations as an easy way to share the gospel message. In a comfortable setting, the families would encounter and demonstrate evangelism in action within various demographics of people.<sup>178</sup> The practical application provides a relatable perspective that God’s forgiveness is continual and attainable.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Hemphill, *Splash*, 98

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 99-101

<sup>176</sup> Jimmy Scroggins and Steve Wright, *Turning Everyday Conversations into Gospel Conversations*. (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2016). 9-14

<sup>177</sup> Bowen, *Relational Evangelism for Today*, 48-53

<sup>178</sup> The Normal Christian Life, “Three Circles in Three Minutes that Could Change Your Life,” August 25, 2018, video, 3:25 [https://youtu.be/lcj5G\\_4dwrI](https://youtu.be/lcj5G_4dwrI).

<sup>179</sup> Bethlehem Youth Ministries, “Matt and Chad’s Adventures, God’s Unconditional Love, February 3, 2021, video, 7:31, <https://youtu.be/AB0aMgc9xR8>.

### **Lesson Three**

Deeper Covenant – Unconditional Love: Participants identified their capability of demonstrating unconditional love towards others. The biblical base was established from the study of topically related scripture from Leviticus 19:18 “...Love thy neighbor as thyself: I’m the LORD” (KJV). In Deuteronomy 6:5, one reads to “...love God with all thine heart, and with thy soul, and with all thine might”. From a question to pose confusion in Matthew 22:34-40, “What is the greatest commandment?”, Jesus’ response it is “to love thy God with all one’s heart, soul, and mind” (NKJV). The gospel writer John in chapter 4, recalls how Jesus demonstrates this for believers in His encounter with the Samaritan woman. Despite differences, He gained her interest, identified her need, found the point of inclusivity, and created a thirst for Christ. Because of redemption offered through Christ, the promise of the Spirit is received. Through faith and speaking to all in this covenant manner brings light to the purpose of the gospel message (Gal. 3:15-18). When this love is accepted and established, nothing can separate that love (Rom. 8:38-39). The reflections in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, a list of attainable traits and characteristics of the type of love believers are encouraged when presenting the gospel message and encounters with those who do not share the same beliefs.

### **Lesson Four:**

Spiritual Formation – Duplication: Family ministry participants learn how to deliver the gospel message of salvation, introduce church experience, and duplicate family connections when living out biblical principles in the Spirit of Christ’s love. The encouragement demonstrates concern and interest in those around believers who are without Christ, walk in His Spirit bearing the fruit of His Spirit (the greatest of these is love). Participants think this is all

biblical talk; however, the Bible visualizes how the relational evangelism approach appears to a believer or a non-believer who has not had an encounter with Christ message. What does it look like to one who has had the encounter and walked away (perhaps due to life matters or just no belief there is a God or there is a need of salvation or no eternal resting place)?

Participants were encouraged to know the ability of empowered love to develop and build relations that can lead others to Christ, including those who participate in the recreation activities in all areas of life. The biblical base for the study sought to establish topically related scriptures that participants can use in their conversations and connections. Participants were explained the concept that Paul encourages in the process of planting and watering; how God gives the increase of the service of sacrifice and labor to share the gospel message and demonstrate Christ's love and care (1 Cor. 3:6). Christians are the witnesses of the gospel that God provided to demonstrate His love toward humanity. A witness should be holy and justly, unblameable, and behave in a manner that others may believe in the gospel message shared (1 Thess. 2:9-12). For practical application additional biblical studies shared by Noreen Jacks *Hospitality in the Bible*, were utilized and provided participants with an additional guide and use of biblical principles.<sup>180</sup>

### Family Connections

There are additional components to factor in upon review of the previous registration forms. However, what is ideal for the relational evangelism approach is the information that reveals the participants' church and Christian experience. The number of families could pose an

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<sup>180</sup> Noreen Jacks, "Hospitality in the Bible" Bible Interact, Inc., January 30, 2014, video, 5:11, <https://youtu.be/3kms1HFCl4w?t=26>.



issue if there are not enough families to connect. In this case, there were enough families to connect; however, there needed to be an abundant number of IBC families recruited to make those possible connections. The family connections support the approach, reflections, and sustainable potential. An additional probability is consistency in the various seasons of recreational activity. According to Tod's mindset on systematic reviews of sports activities, corrective methods for collecting data consist of four components: "conceptualize, construct, communicate, and conduct."<sup>181</sup> Based on these findings, the rationale of assessing previous registrations will draw a depiction of involvement that can be a better charter for implementing the future approach.

An earlier record of family to family evangelism connections captured, according to the number of families represented, is vital to ongoing connection of these families and is not limited to the discussion of how pairing by natural encounters establishes relations organically. While the research was in the field, natural connections are noted and encouraged. The potential of multiple connections benefits IBC by determining need for additional families from IBC to participate in the ministry approach. The goal and solution to the problem is spiritual formation, which allows for duplicating the relational approach. The possibility of new ministry efforts based on recognized needs from contributors will change the trajectory of the proposed intervention method and modes of capturing data.

The researcher uses the linear method on the data obtained from previous years of the recreation activity registration used for comparing the probability of family to family connection and for the opportunity of initiating the relational evangelism approach. The process addresses

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<sup>181</sup> Tod, *Conducting Systematic Reviews in Sport, Exercise, and Physical Activity*, 17-30.

the problem of ministering to identifiable families to share the gospel message, introduce participants to Christ and church experiences, and strengthen family dynamics. A goal of enhancing family leadership comes through spiritual formation in families. The process is implemented by applying the triangular method to support the principle. The consistency of following the stakeholders, identified as IBC participants, church leaders, and the researcher. The stakeholders were inclined to experience the process, and linear methodology results shape new parameters in the previous year's data and have no implications for the current year. The result of this project provides IBC participants with a more intentional approach and documented outcomes.

## **Chapter 4**

Addressing this ministry contextual problem came with a substantial project and a clear plan by the researcher. Various projects come with challenges, and this one is no different. Despite those challenges, the researcher made adaptations within the approved criteria to obtain the outcomes that underpin the problem with the solution that would enhance the ministry efforts of IBC Recreation center.

This chapter will describe the results of the project's design and methodology of the project, how it addresses the problem, efforts obtaining and equipping participants, post questionnaire results, and family connections through the relational evangelism approach.

### **Results**

#### **Project Design**

Idlewild's Recreation Ministry has seasonal activities that draw children and families to their recreation center year-round. The recreation center offers three youth and five adult programs to church participants and local communities. The classifiable problem in the recreation ministry is the lack of significant outreach to connect with families who have no known church affiliation or have a viable relationship with Christ. Idlewild's mission stretches from a category of being just a church that others may only visit to determine the churches creative way of presenting biblical messages to being a church with intentionally and established ministry efforts that encourages members to tell others the gospel message both locally and internationally. The ministry effort that comes close to heart and need of the thesis project of relational evangelism approach, is applied through the Family and Connections ministry to participating IBC families. The specific area of concern is building connections with community

families while participating in activities in the recreation center on Idlewild's campus. In this project design section, the researcher addresses intervention results applied to the identified problem to coincide with the church mission of enhancing Idlewild's recreation center ministry effort with participating families in their recreation activities. The researcher used the intervention of the relational evangelism approach through the equipping session and demonstrations. The method consisted of recruiting IBC families to become equipped with the relational evangelism approach and make family connections during a season of recreation activities based on family dynamics and the commonality of children in the same recreation activity. The researcher found the relational evangelism approach ideal because the IBC recreation center is open to the community, and due to its volume of family participants and length of the probability of relationships, and pre-concepts of evangelism.<sup>182</sup> IBC recreation ministry has several seasonal activities that allow families to participate according to the age of their children. The activities allow a longer relationship with the recreation center for ages as young as four years old and up into adulthood. The undertakings based on assigned coaches would carry out the actions of coaching team skills, present biblical disciplines and devotionals, and involve parents with the beverage and snack cycle responsibility throughout the season of weekly practices and team activities. Upon the researchers' consultation with church leaders, communications were maintained by the center's leaders. Recruiting interested IBC families, the researcher established and collaborated with church leaders on training. Church leaders were provided all correspondences for a mass email to maintain anonymity of participating families, and timelines for the project were discussed and delivered.

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<sup>182</sup> Mike Kahn, "All for One: Evangelism Training" Tampa Bay Baptist Association, November 20, 2020, video, 12:18, <https://tbba.org/evangelism/all-for-one/>.

## Addressing the Problem

The problem identified is the lack of significant outreach to connect with families who do not attend church (non-affiliated) or do not have a viable relationship with Christ (no Christ experience). The probable outreach source came from a comparable search of evangelism approaches and the favorable is relational evangelism that is identified to best address the problem. James states comparable studies reveal that best practice is in accordance with the directions Christ provided.<sup>183</sup> Sensing implies identifying how the result of the method addressed the problem.<sup>184</sup> The questions posed by Sensing are an added resource to help address the elements of the problem. The researcher, advised by IBC church leaders, provides the area with the most potential to implement the relational evangelism approach and equip families to connect with those who participated in the recreational activities and identified they are without a church affiliation or Christ experience. The intervention ideally addresses and enhances evangelism efforts of reaching families, which is the mission of the recreation center of IBC. The thesis project utilized the triangular approach in communication, equipping, recruiting families, field visits, and reminders to complete the post-questionnaire.

Those IBC families selected to participate received timelines, a purpose for the project, information via correspondence, and instructions to complete and return the informed consent form. The researcher provided the recreation leaders with a detailed recruiting letter, the required informed and consent forms, and a training schedule for submission to families identified in their registration database of IBC families participating in the seasons' recreation activities,

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<sup>183</sup> James, "A Training Manual for Small-Group Evangelization of Youth Unbelievers", 91-92.

<sup>184</sup> Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 109-110.

specifically baseball, and softball. The variability of the recruiting basis is on IBC ministry leaders' referrals of IBC families, participating team coaches, and recruiting during field visits.

Like many organizations, during the COVID-19 pandemic, IBC made changes for community safety and adherence to county health and safety protection agencies and Center of Disease Control guidelines distributed county and statewide<sup>185</sup>. The equipping of IBC participating families adapted to those guidelines by not hosting face to face training and adhering to no large gatherings. IBC recreation leaders were very helpful stakeholders and prepared to host the equipping session for IBC participants through their Zoom webinar account.

The researcher composed, recorded, and delivered the relational evangelism approach one hour equipping session recorded as part of the criteria when recruiting additional IBC families during the project, sending an instructional invitation with a link to participants not attending the scheduled equipping session to complete the training and submitting the required informed consent form electronically. IBC Ministry Grid is software that archives IBC volunteer trainings and other ministry biblical studies. When participants access the training system, their entry is dated, and time stamped. Based on the researcher's actions and review with the project mentor, the intervention yield was significant to determine ministry enhancement needs, preparation to fortify the relational evangelism approach, and limitations.

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<sup>185</sup> United States Department of Health & Human Services, Center for Disease Control and Prevention <https://www.cdc.gov/>

## Questionnaire Outcomes

Sensing highlights that the question of the evaluation's benefit produced the expected outcomes.<sup>186</sup> In this segment, the discussion regarding the post-questionnaire captures participants' experience with the process and implementation of the approach. The researcher designed the post-questionnaire utilizing the Zoho tool for the IBC families who completed the questionnaire, capturing no demographics due to its anonymity of information<sup>187</sup>. The researcher submitted through IBC recreation leaders to participants by email of a second reminder via their communications system to present the post season questionnaire. The goal of obtaining determining factors of IBC family's experience with the equipping video session, implementing the approach, and making connections family to family. The post season questionnaire gives a glimpse into the family connects that were made and viability of those connections.

The post season questionnaire submission went successfully to 89 of the 196 families identified in the last two weeks of the baseball and softball season with completion deadline. The researcher provided two formats to the post-questionnaire, one by electronic link and the other by QR code to scan to access the post season questionnaire. The researcher utilized the maintained communications and support of recreation leader to submit and informative email to participating families. The researcher made field visits the week after the post-questionnaire information was emailed to encourage participants to complete it by the initial deadline. The researcher communicated with the IBC recreation leaders for support and follow-up emails one week after the initial deadline did not yield the number of actual participants. The deadline was

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<sup>186</sup> Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 109-110.

<sup>187</sup> Zoho Corporation Pvt. Ltd. 2021 Created May 15, 2021.

extended for another two weeks to allow time for families to complete the post season questionnaire. Communication delays experienced as follow: there was no opportunity for further field visits and there was a week the researcher was not able to connect with ministry leaders. The research contacted Family ministry leader for additional support on how to obtain completion and receipt of completed questionnaires by participants. Once communications reestablished, the extended deadline went well after the baseball and softball season's closing events. The research made two more due date extensions to allow IBC leaders support provided was calling the thirteen participants who completed the training to encourage completion of the post- questionnaire and share their experiences and connections made. The researcher found that after the third deadline and contact efforts, the mission yielded nine of the thirteen who participated and completed the post-questionnaire. There was one family duplication because the husband coached and the wife participated with the approach, but each completed the post-questionnaire based on their individual experience and one was from the recreation leader's perspective that assisted throughout the thesis project.

The post-questionnaire consisted of twenty one questions (see Appendix A) to provide relative information about the participating families' experience and family connections made during the baseball and softball season. The intention for the post season questionnaire is that the response will provide a benchmark for ministry leaders to utilize for ministry enhancements and determine whether the approach is viable for this type of ministry program. The results are detailed and arranged for discussion and presentation to IBC leaders and to obtain feedback that would shape or easily adapt the use of the relational evangelism approach in all recreation activities.



## Method Results

### Data Outcomes

Implementation of the initial gathering of previous and forthcoming data is another means considered.

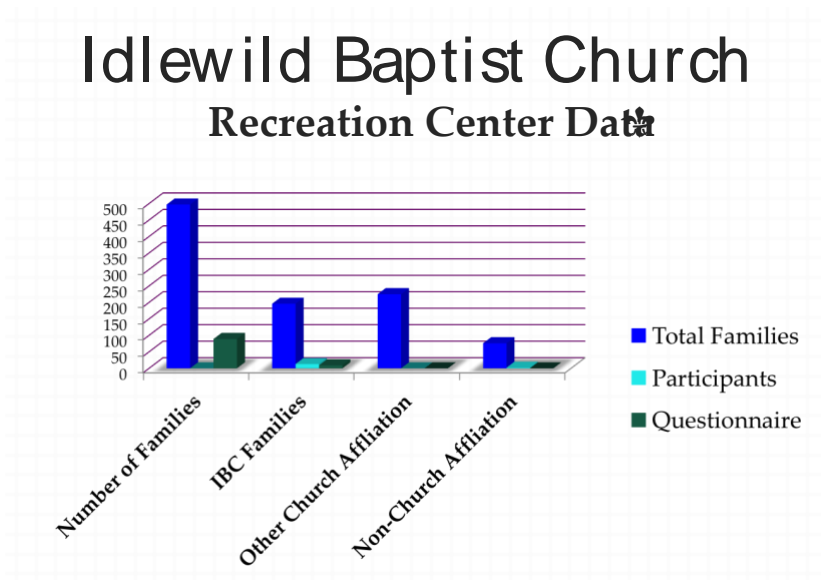


Table 1.1 Idlewild Baptist Church data of participants in the recreation center

Table 1.1 provides data from the recreation ministry, which consist of the total number of families participating in the season of baseball and softball, the number of IBC families' participating and could potentially be participants, and families identified as other or no church affiliations in comparison to the post-season questionnaire completions.<sup>188</sup>

Sensing suggests describing any collected data that determines measurable outcomes.<sup>189</sup>

In this segment, the researcher will explain the results of the data collected. The IBC recreation

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<sup>188</sup> Idlewild Baptist Church (IBC), "Recreation Center Outreach Ministry," Data provide to the research by recreation administrative staff. August 25, 2021.

<sup>189</sup> Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 102.

center leaders report 497 families registered for the baseball and softball season, in which the thesis project was conducted.<sup>190</sup> According to this total, there were 196 Idlewild Baptist Church families, 225 families with other church affiliations, and 76 families with no church affiliation and church experience (Table 1.2).<sup>191</sup>

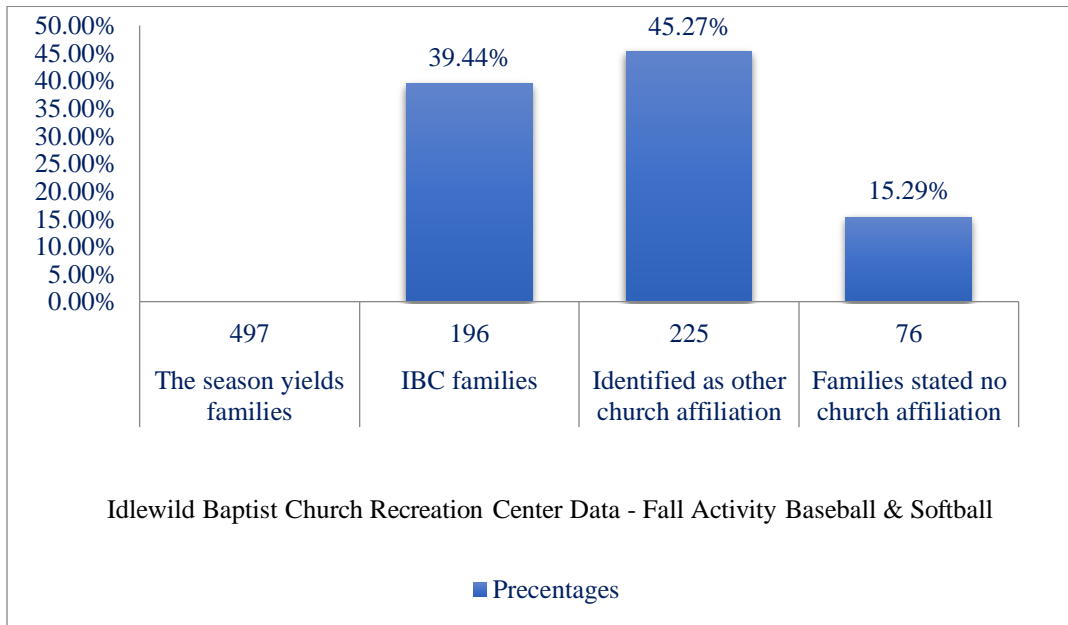


Table 1.2. Breakdown of Families Registered for Baseball and Softball Season<sup>192</sup>

The IBC recreation leader emailed a total of eighty-nine families to receive the introduction letter and the inform and consent form for the opportunity to participate in the project.<sup>193</sup> A week later the research submitted a request to submit a follow-up email by the recreation leader, two weeks after the initial introduction to recruit IBC families. Eight families

<sup>190</sup> IBC, Recreation Outreach Ministry. Data provide to the research by recreation administrative staff. August 25, 2021.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

responded and submitting their interest with completion of the inform and consent forms. Those families received by email informative email with link to attend and complete the equipping video session. The researcher and ministry leaders met participation during the first two weeks of the season during the researchers' field visits.

In summary of the post season questionnaire the participants experiences are captured and reported. The first set of questions captured the family dynamics, the season of recreation activity, the actual recreation activity, and the school age group the child (ren) represents. The next set of questions creates data on the relational evangelism approach, completion of training, if they felt the training equipped them for making family connections, and if they had previous evangelism experience. The questions in the training address the family connections made based on the three topics of the training Family Grace and Forgiveness, Express Empowerment to Serve, and Spiritual Formation and Duplication. The additional questions captured their family connections using the relational evangelism approach, referencing comparable family dynamics, religious experience, and leadership roles. The last question captures the participants' interest in continuing to carry out the ministry effort through the recreation center outreach of connecting with families that are not affiliated with a church or have not received the gospel message.

Here are some of the significant data results from the questionnaire the participating IBC families completed. In table 1.3 are the results of the number of school age children of IBC's participating families based on the questionnaire where they identified the age range of their child(ren): kindergarten, elementary, middle school, and high school aged children, which demonstrates the variety within each family dynamic. Teams were created and assigned to coaches based on school age for best interaction of participants in the season's baseball and softball recreation activities.

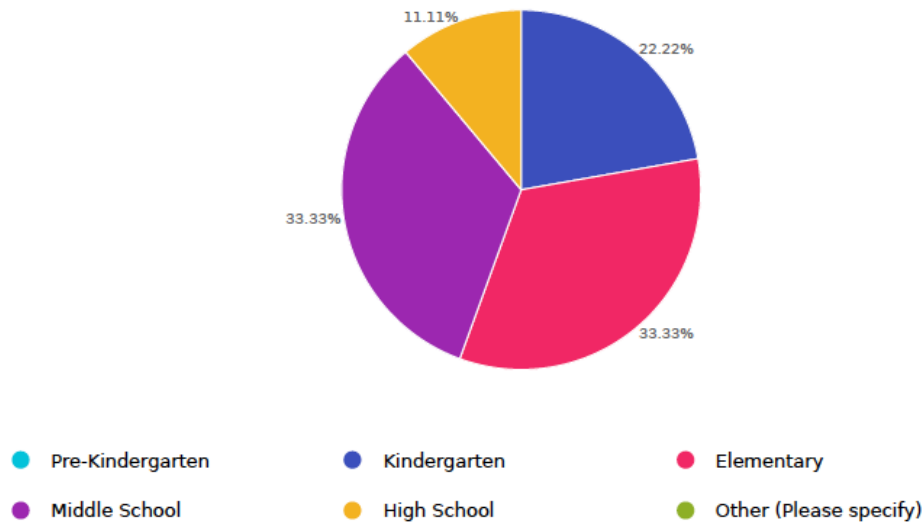


Table 1.3. Results of question 3 of the post season questionnaire<sup>194</sup>

### Evaluation Outcomes

The post season questionnaire provides the necessary details to evaluate the viability of the relational evangelism approach. By specifying information about the participants and their experience the factor from each question allows the approach to be determined for ministry sustainability.

Initial foundation to determine if the IBC participating families were of a two parent home, and there was found that no participating IBC single parent families participated or responded in the project. The IBC families participating indicated in the questionnaire they had

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<sup>194</sup> Zoho Corporation Pvt. Ltd. 2021 Created May 15, 2021.

evangelism experience before training and participating in the project. Table 1.4 Indicates that 88.98% of the IBC family participants had prior evangelism experience<sup>195</sup>.

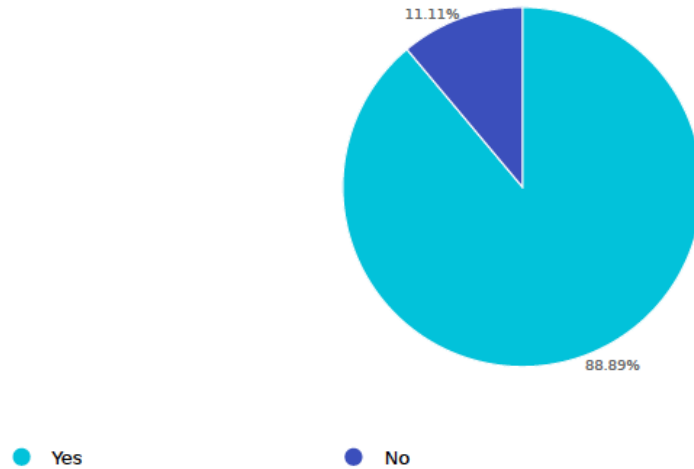


Table 1.4. Results of question 6 of the post questionnaire<sup>196</sup>

The results also indicated that only one family did not have previous evangelism training and experience. In responding to the training materials and experience provided by the researcher, 57.28% of the participating IBC families selected that they strongly agreed, 42.86% agreed, and non disagreed.

There was 71.43% displayed in table 1.5 of IBC families who responded to the post season questionnaire regarding if they learned to identify and demonstrate the attributes of the relational evangelism approach equipping area of grace and forgiveness in the manner of courtesy and hospitality displayed in their connections with families.

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<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> Zoho Corporation Pvt. Ltd. 2021 Created May 15, 2021.

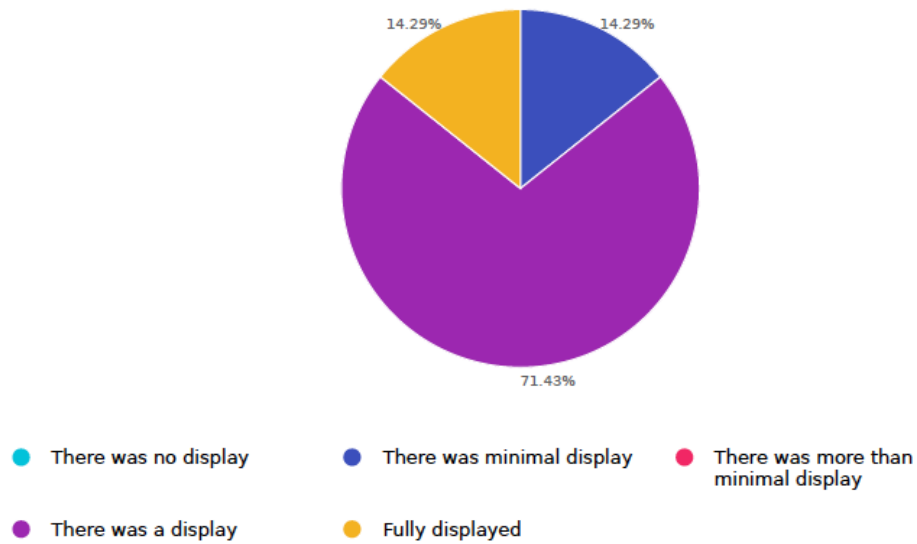


Table 1.5. Results of question 9 of the post season questionnaire<sup>197</sup>

The results based on the equipping session regarding spiritual formation and duplication, 42.86% of the IBC participating families thought there was a display after sharing in the family connection. There were no indications of no display after sharing in the family connection. All IBC family participants who completed the equipping session indicated it was helpful and meaningful. Most participants, 85.71% of them, felt no additional information to the training was needed to enhance the project and 100% of the participants felt there was enough time in the training to learn the relational evangelism approach. The participants’ experience is the basis for the outcomes.

The questionnaire given to participants provided an additional opportunity to obtain feedback and gain specific steps taken to establish a family to family connection. The participants could express effects of their specific relational evangelism approach and describe

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<sup>197</sup> Zoho Corporation Pvt. Ltd. 2021 Created May 15, 2021.

any benefits gained or if they determined family connections had significant spiritual formation. However, none indicated duplication in the span of the connection made.

When it came to IBC family connects the post season questionnaire captured as seen in table 1.6, if those connects were made with a family that was not affiliated with a church, and if they perhaps connected through their children on the same team, or recreation activity, child(ren) of same age or grade, or by request of more in-depth discussion over devotions their child(ren) received.

### **Relational Evangelism Approach**

#### Family Connections

The goal of the approach is the idea of families connecting, developing a relationship that warrants the opportunity of sharing the gospel message, and walking through the journey of spiritual formation and further duplication of the approach. The emailed recruitment letter, follow-up, and the turnaround took place when the season began due to the researcher and church leaders' field visits. Upon these visits, IBC families were met and spoken with by about the project and inquired of whether they were interested in participating. Church leaders recruited and introduced eight additional families during the first field visit. The second field visit, about two weeks after first visit by the researcher, was made with the intention of following up after the equipping session. The field visit was the best way to determine if IBC families were able to utilize the relational evangelism in their connects, if any questions, or concerns with the approach or initial connections.

The total number of families recruited was thirteen, and families made connections in the baseball and softball recreation season. The questionnaire demonstrated that 42.85% of the

participating IBC families indicated their connection was made in the same recreation activity as seen in table 1.6.

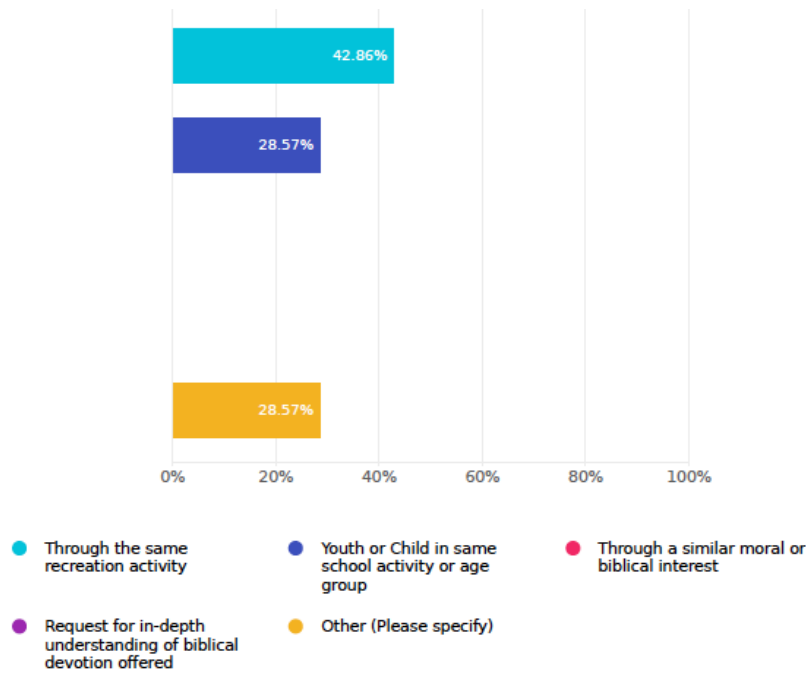


Table 1.6. Results of question 15 of the post season questionnaire<sup>198</sup>

Almost three quarters of the participants, 71.43% specifically, felt the family connection were received well. Regarding the family connection to an unchurched family, 57.14% found this encounter, while 42.86% of the connection was to families with no church affiliations.

One of the most viable of the questions is rather the IBC family participants had the successful opportunity of sharing the gospel message and if the connection allowed spiritual formation and duplication to develop at the end of the recreation season of baseball and softball. In table 1.7 the results are slim; however, there is a report of the experience and outcome captured that is hoped to add viability to the ministry effort of relational evangelism.

<sup>198</sup> Zoho Corporation Pvt. Ltd. 2021 Created May 15, 2021.



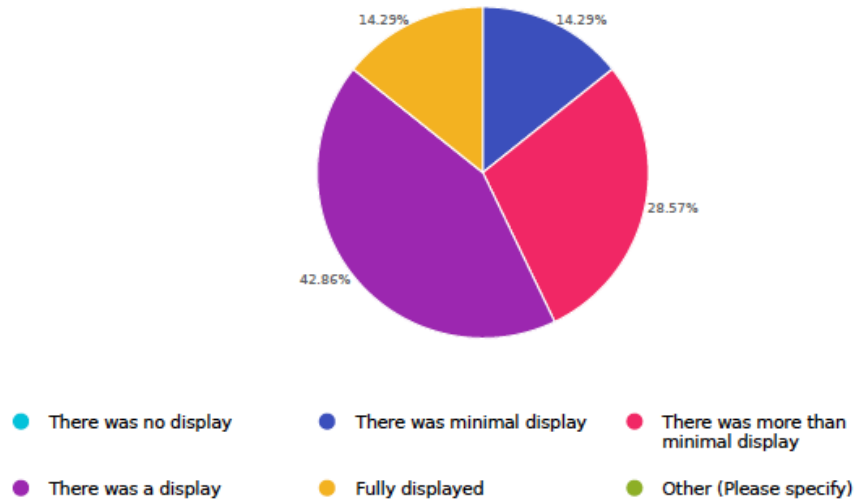


Table 1.7. Results of question 11 of the post season questionnaire<sup>199</sup>

In table 1.8, the family dynamics and family leadership roles, indicate 42.86% of those have children or youth lead the family church experience and biblical study. In comparison, 42.86% state they found in their family connection that no one in the family leads the church experience and biblical study. The remaining 14.29% state that the mother leads the family church experience and biblical study. In regard to compatible family dynamics, 71.43% of the family participants found family behaviors and interest were comparable, 42.86% felt they shared the same family role and values, and the remaining 14.29% felt they had shared beliefs.

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<sup>199</sup> Zoho Corporation Pvt. Ltd. 2021 Created May 15, 2021.

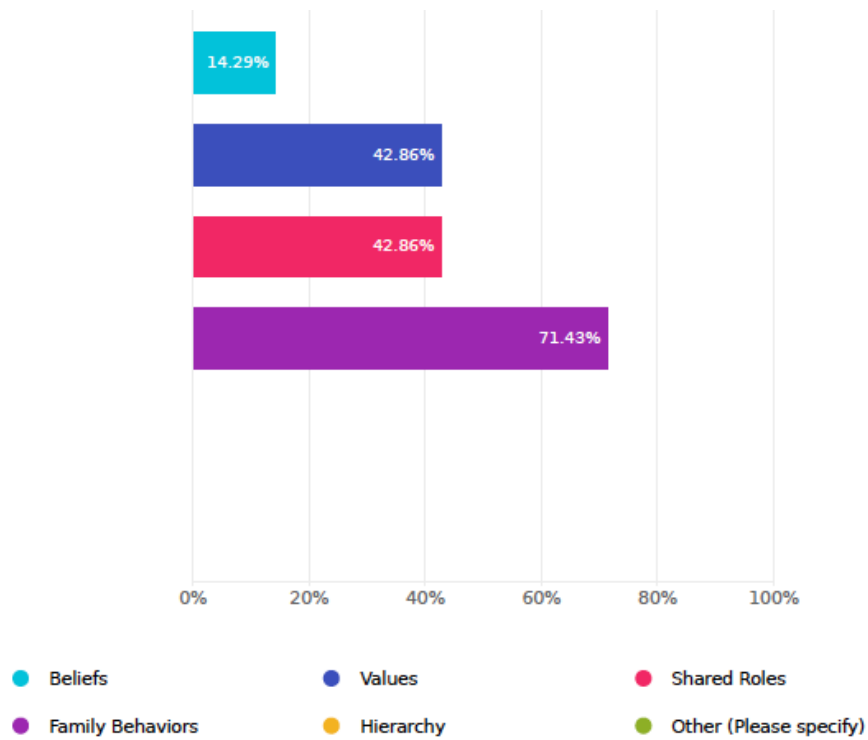


Table 1.8. Results of questions 17-19 of the post season questionnaire<sup>200</sup>

The post season questionnaire also captured IBC family connections and religious interest 42.86% indicated there was a church experience of Catholic, Non-Denominational, or Baptist, 42.86% found there was no church experience with their family connection, and 28.75% felt their family connection was interested and welcomed a church experience and the gospel message of salvation. The family connections led to committed service in this ministry area and inspired duplicable approaches of relational evangelism family to family.

Table 1.9, represents whether the outcomes increased participants' knowledge and familiarity with initiating a relationship, sharing the gospel message of Christ, the reception to salvation, and involvement in His church. At the end of the season, there were substantial

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<sup>200</sup> Zoho Corporation Pvt. Ltd. 2021 Created May 15, 2021.

spiritual formations and duplications of the relational evangelism approach to extend the practice of the approach into the next season of recreation activities for IBC participating families, reflecting that 71.23% shared the gospel. Most interestingly, 57.14% of IBC families continued with their connection after the recreation activity of baseball and softball season, and the project, ended. Maintaining family connections outside of the initial recreation activity is an ideal goal of the relation evangelism approach. Relations are established to encourage those families in the Christian experiences, spiritual formation, and duplication of sharing the gospel message.

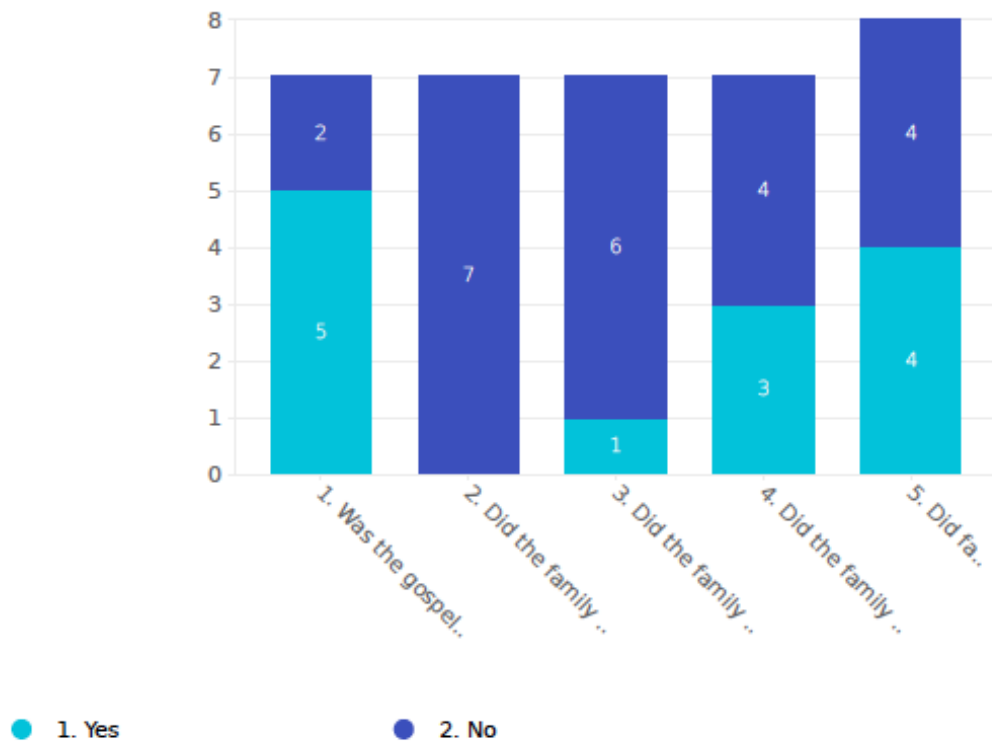


Table 1.9. Results of question 20 of the post season questionnaire<sup>201</sup>

<sup>201</sup> Zoho Corporation Pvt. Ltd. 2021 Created May 15, 2021.

## Triangular Implementation

Sensing provides a clear description of the triangular method in the projects production and the insight to establishing communication with all stakeholders throughout the process, consideration of accommodations with plans, encouraged consideration of the stakeholder's preferences, and how the relationship benefits all participants.<sup>202</sup> The three parts to the triangular method consisted of the first element, established relation with IBC ministry and recreation leaders who identified the need of reaching families participating in the baseball and softball recreation season.

Recreation leaders maintained the registration data of participating families. Recreation leaders were the first line of communication to IBC family participants. Recreation leaders emailed all pre-composed communication by the researcher that initiated recruiting of IBC families to participate in the project, emailed and maintained record of completed inform and consent forms, and provided their training archive system to house the recorded equipping session of the relational evangelism approach, presented by the researcher. The recreation leaders made calls at the ninth hour for receipt of IBC family participants responses for completion of the post season questionnaire.

The second element in the triangular method is IBC families interested in participating in the relational evangelism approach family to family. As stated, there were 196 families identified as IBC family members. The researcher made bi-weekly field visits to connect with and observe families that completed training, demonstrate the relational evangelism approach, and ensured no addition resources were needed. As the third element of the triangular method, the researcher

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<sup>202</sup> Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 79.

was able to keep communication with stakeholders that consisted of IBC family ministry and recreation leaders and field visits that allowed connection with IBC families participating in the project. Additionally, those families connected during the exercise of the relational evangelism approach are considered in the triangular method.

Although, the project being reported with consideration of the guideline for the project not being based upon human subjects, participants response is vital to convey the results of all participants. The interactions with the third part of the triangular method, played a major role in the outcomes of the project. Interactions were on as needed basis to ensure the IBC family participants were utilizing foundations to establish viable connections and anonymity was maintained.

The researcher realized that without some interaction and regular field visits the approach was not being monitored or possibly implemented. It was the best interest to make regular field visit to ensure the process of completion and sustainable outcomes would be obtained. When communication broke down, field visits were conducted to ensure the stakeholders were still committed to the outcome of the project.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Conclusion**

The goal has been to present the project's outcomes, and to depict and illustrate the results. In this chapter, the researcher discusses the final thoughts regarding the plan and significant implications of the project, the triangulation experienced, the evaluation inferences absorbed, the researchers' journey, and the future hopes of the project. The hope for the project was to share an ideal approach of evangelism and while doing so being encouraged to "conduct ourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity" (Col. 4:5, NJKV) that would allow lasting relations upon initial connections with families that identified as having no church affiliation or Christ experience.

The researcher matched the inspiration towards family ministry efforts to enhance spiritual formation and duplication through a designed evangelism approach with anticipations of amplifying outreach to families in the local community of IBC. When approached to understand what ministry area, outreach program, or study would benefit from the thesis project, Family Ministry leader at Idlewild Baptist Church had a specific ministry area in mind. The researcher received IBC ministry leaders' support to engage families who participated in recreation activities and who identified as not having a church affiliation or Christian experience. IBC owns the recreation center and designed ministry efforts on the grounds of being open to the community. In the IBC recreation registration process, information is gained that identifies IBC families who are ideal to participate and eligible to be recruited for implementation of the relational evangelism approach. Those IBC families who participated came with some knowledge and biblical undergirding and were additionally equipped with the critical lessons to create intentional relation encounters with families during baseball and softball season. There is

a need to address in this section, the comparative studies that address the application of relational evangelism as a strategic ministry plan with a probable trajectory that provides beneficial experiences and outcomes and emerges from the project to merit ministry enhancements.

### **Plans, Strategies, Implications**

The plan to reach unchurched families is the sentiment of this thesis project. This project segment also addresses whether the results may apply to other settings. There were considerations of the various approaches to evangelism. One consideration that motivated the project is the notion of C.S. Lewis, who states, “I have said that we should never get a Christian society unless most of us become Christian individuals. That does not mean, of course, that we can put off doing anything about society.”<sup>203</sup> One cannot turn away from a family in need. The family ministry inspiration was a challenging concept to accept until the opportunity of seeing the multitude of participants that come through IBC’s recreation ministry and seeing how long those families are active, no matter the different cultural traditions, denominations, or ethics, the families genuinely are engaged with their children in these seasonal activities. Observing participants walking away and possibly not having a church affiliation to grow into the knowledge of Christ or being introduced to Christ season after season really pulls the heart towards God’s excellent command and commission of Christians. The researcher expected were to meet the need to reach those families with the gospel message of Christ and connect with IBC families for spiritual formation and duplication. Family or persons participating in IBC’s recreation ministry seasonal activities should be different. The imparted values through

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<sup>203</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*. (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1980), 88.

coaching and team character building are just the foundation for sharing the good news with children and their families.

The ideal approach thought to preserve the mission of IBC is relational evangelism. The approach connects the church experience with long-term committed relations in the community and partnering organizations they serve an additional consideration for the pre-evangelism work the church has done through its recreation ministry. According to Normand and David Geisler, a new approach enhances the simple concept of a church mission, identifiable characteristics identified in the IBC mission statement as giving daily to reach one with the gospel message.<sup>204</sup> The approach was adapted and implemented with ministry leaders as key stakeholders and not quietly behind a door. Ministry leaders guided, provided input, and supported the researchers and participants. Bringing to discuss another critical strategy is communication and finding resolutions to challenges.

Diligent communications were made with IBC ministry leaders from the proposal, planning and implementation process, and project timeline. The challenge amid accepting of the proposed project leadership changed to interim leadership. Later towards the end of the project, another leader came on board. The resolution maintains communications through the interim leader for participants' questionnaire and feedback. In the recruiting stage of the project, documents that maintained the anonymity participants were emailed from the recreation department to all participating families in the season of baseball and softball. In the registration data, a list of participating IBC members is found and families without church affiliation and no Christian experience are identified. The researcher relied on the leaders heavily to identify IBC

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<sup>204</sup> Norman Geisler and David Geisler, *Conversational Evangelism: How to Listen and Speak So You Can Be Heard* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2009), 22-24.



families willing to participate for the project. Being unable to introduce the project in a face to face format made it difficult for families to know who they were partnering with. Thus, having leaders speak on the researcher's behalf was ideal. Later during field visits, introductions to the researcher, participating families, and recruits were made. Idlewild encourages others in their spiritual formation and personal relations with Christ; therefore, members have confidence in God's direction. The hope is for a significant number of IBC families from the seasonal recreation activity to be matched with the potential number of families that participate and identify as having no church affiliation or spiritual formation. Those families who identify as not accepting the gospel message or having had a Christian experience were viable to the project. During the planning of equipping families with the relational evangelism approach to reach families, a resolution of accommodating family schedules was successfully addressed. The training would not consist of more than one hour. Therefore, components of the outlined training had to adapt to the new time frame. There was careful consideration of which lessons to interconnect in order to give interest and viable knowledge of the relational evangelism approach and the project goals. Leaders helped identify the presentation method from those who had a foundational knowledge of evangelism and sharing the gospel message. The component that stood out is family grace and forgiveness which had lessons of hospitality and fruit of the spirit in the session, to help convey the relational aspect of the evangelism approach. Those sections of equipping were rated if the IBC family participants strongly agreed or strongly disagreed with the principal being taught. The two other sessions were where families expressed empowerment to serve, and spiritual formation and duplication were introduced to some for the long term of relational evangelism. The original outline equipping session would have allowed time for each concept to be well informed and for the participants to have time to practice hands on. The

hands on are viable in any evangelism approach for participants to gain confidence in moments of their relationship to build to the presentation of the gospel message. The adaptation allowed for research of viable videos used in ministry to be incorporated and demonstrate the lesson topic specifically. The additional challenge and resolution were delivery and making the training available in a non-face to face setting due to COVID-19 restrictions for gathering. Ideally, the approach needed more time to grasp and learn to implement with previously known evangelism methods, survey of participants availability for in-person equipping session, and an informative session for staff and volunteers that participate in the recreation center.

In equipping IBC families, the researcher's challenge was waiting for responses from leaders and participants and for the registration data, and for IBC families after the initial equipping session completed through IBC Ministry Grid access point. The biblical information and group discussion, and practical application was condensed; however, that would allow during a face to face session the opportunity to develop enhancement of the evangelism approach along the way. The researcher, for much of the project was unaware of where those IBC family participants were with their experience or knowledge base and confidence making connections to share the gospel message and if participants possessed supportive passages that would help deliver the gospel message or encourage through crisis. The researcher trusted the leaders who identified those IBC families to participate in the project and provide input from their experience and family connections. The questions regarding the development of the thesis project were how these families were reached with the gospel message, how to encourage in their spiritual formation, and how to maintain effectiveness or duplicate viable outcomes from the approach. In the mission efforts of the IBC recreation center, outcomes were surfaced but obtained for gainful perception from those families that participated and completed the questionnaire. The

researcher provided the questionnaire to eighty-nine family participants with hopes of more than 8% would return a response; however, of the thirteen actual family participants, 69% roughly completed and shared their experiences. Obtaining more completed questionnaires would have affected the results and provided the ministry effort with a more critical guideline for enhancements in continued relational evangelism approaches. What more to accomplish? The time frame to receive more input from the families was extended, multiple emails and field visits were made, and the yield was not as expected. Without the COVID-19 restrictions, family participants would have been more interested. Perhaps families were still concerned about COVID-19 and wanted to avoid extending themselves or include others in additional activities. Another format to obtain those family experiences from the relational evangelism approach may have benefited. Ideally, participants having more time to implement the approach and display efforts of developing the approach in their minds and hearts, and with anticipation of connecting with other families. The researcher hoped that the post season questionnaire of twenty-one viable questions would provide a substantial view from those experiences and if participants had considerations to extend the relational evangelism approach at IBC into the future of recreation seasons. The questions addressed either the participating IBC family or the family that is non-affiliated with a church or Christian experience. The first set of questions in the questionnaire provides information about family dynamics and all recreational activities during the current season. The family dynamics included questions about the children's age group and grade, whether they were a single-family household, and the representation of both parents. This set of questions could have been more direct in getting to know the family participants. The next set of questions verified if they chose to participate. Response to whether they completed and turned in the informed consent forms and completed the equipping video were part of this set of questions.

If the selection was “no,” auto direction to the following questions regarding relational evangelism and whether they are interested in participating in the future were included. Adding this question gave the recreation ministry a glimpse into the interest of family representatives and perhaps an emerging leader of the relational evangelism approach. Several questions asked those who participated and completed the informed consent if they completed the equipping session. In doing so, the following questions asked would allow them to rate their experience with the shared equipping material. After the equipping video for the project, the questionnaire asked if IBC family participants had an evangelism experience while participating in the recreation activity and how they rated that experience. Overall, the equipping session was helpful and enhanced their preparation to participate in the project. As reported in the early chapter, the timing was the issue for those who completed the questionnaire. It would have been good to have a method for IBC family participants to give earlier feedback and address early concerns they may have had after the equipping video was completed. Making calls was not the absolute method; however, made a difference when utilized. A post-season questionnaire would have captured those concerns and better prepared IBC family participants and even encouraged other participants for the future implantation of the relational evangelism approach family to family.

The researcher identified challenges in accommodating the time frames of equipping and approach exercises, untimely receipt of completed forms and questionnaire responses, and follow-up measures to keep the momentum. Aldrich mentions that there are challenges upon discovering the need to initiate evangelism ministry, and it is ideal to stay open to discovering, advocating, and supporting as needs arrive.<sup>205</sup> If there was another way to implement equipping,

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<sup>205</sup> Aldrich, *Life-Style Evangelism*, 90-96.

get responses, and not offend stakeholders of the project, it was addressed and discussed with the project mentor and leaders before implementation. The best way was to allow the recreation ministry leader to submit gentle reminders of their input to assist the researcher in the project report of the family participants' experience. IBC families having an assigned ministry leader designated specifically to be hands with participating families would make the relational evangelism approach and efforts more viable in the future. The idea of this being a project versus a genuine ministry effort would also allow more participants to provide timely input, dedication, commitment, and ongoing interest in reaching non-church affiliated families and families with no Christ experience.

After gradually responding to the initial recruiting efforts, sending additional notices to gain participants was an ideal solution. The recreation leaders and researcher took to the fields to speak with IBC families who did not respond to the initial email for participation. The effort yielded an additional eight families. The consideration for divergence that would affect the project's implementation resulted from poor design or faulty implementation; however, adaptations to approaching stakeholders, identifying optimal time frames, and multiple communicative efforts were made and kept the project going.<sup>206</sup>

The practical efforts of initializing the relational evangelism approach, according to Geisler and Geisler, is that of "pre-evangelism, which is tilling the soil of people's minds and hearts to help them be more willing to listen to the truth (1 Corinthians 3:6)." <sup>207</sup> Ideas come to mind from this statement, perhaps having more than one session to equip IBC families by

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<sup>206</sup> Geisler and Geisler, *Conversational Evangelism*, 22-24

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

meeting them where they are. When coming to practices, have the training video ready on iPads or a video streaming area in the recreation facility for them to watch or partake in an evangelism planned activity they can implement while their children practice. Have open discussion time for participating IBC families, so if they have questions or need guidance applying the approach to a specific family dynamic, they are interested in reaching and can receive assistance for.

In the planning implementation stage, the time constraints and recreation schedule allowed for outcomes that would lead to the idea of administrative pre-evangelism work. With the fieldwork done by the researcher, some efforts may have failed or may not have allowed family participants to fully engage with the training offered to help reach families they would encounter over the three-month season period. The Zoho questionnaire provided a quantitative result of nine out of thirteen IBC family participants' responses, and three stated the training was new to them and beneficial. The other six felt it was a not their first evangelism course and that the training was revived and helpful. Evangelism is "every day and in every way helping your non-believing friends to take in step closer to Jesus Christ."<sup>208</sup>

### **Triangular Method**

The triangular approach taken for this thesis project worked very well. Upon considering the Scriptures about the relationship among fellow Christians, Gorman explains that Paul's example of brotherhood, fellowship, and partnership in ministry requires deep participation with Christ demonstrated in the lives of believers upon his research of 2 Corinthians 8, Galatians 2, and Philemon 17.<sup>209</sup> The relationships grew throughout the process of the project. However,

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<sup>208</sup> Geisler and Geisler, *Conversational Evangelism*, 24-26.

<sup>209</sup> Gorman, *The Gospel and Our Culture Series*, 31-32.

there were areas with stakeholders where communication needed to develop. Those areas were email responses from IBC family participants, checking on the completion of training, and determining several families to connect with. Field visits enhanced IBC family connections and provided support when the researcher demonstrated the relational evangelism approach. According to Moyer, there are misconceptions to evangelism for instance, knowing how to respond to objections, not reducing salvation to a formula, and not creating individualism in delivering the gospel message or providing godly counsel.<sup>210</sup> All connections occurred organically to families based on natural connections with participating families in the baseball and softball recreational activities.

Time constraints did not reflect the original plan to have IBC recreation coaches equipped prior to the recreation season beginning or with IBC participating families with the project process to enhance relational evangelism efforts with children and parents assigned to teams. The probability of enhanced devotions with biblical principles potentially introducing the gospel message was not collected. In thought of equipping IBC participants, the consideration of Newman comes to mind, especially considering biblical principles that provide a response to questions of hypocrisy and skepticisms.<sup>211</sup> Rather, those families who decided not to participate in the thesis project may have had questions or not enough time to participate instead.

The recreation centers' leaders provided the researcher with registration data that helped identify 497 families, including 196 IBC families, and maintained communications with 89

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<sup>210</sup> Moyer, 21 *Things God Never Said*, 53, 76.

<sup>211</sup> Newman, *Questioning Evangelism*, 190-191.

members to yield significant results.<sup>212</sup> The ministry leaders assisted in coordinating the Zoom one hour equipping session, and provided the recording to be available to participating IBC families. The method allowed the researcher access to supporting elements that were needed to address challenges experienced. The method guided in moments of additional resources and troubleshooting found to be needed to stabilize communication with participating IBC families and completion of the end of season questionnaire from participating IBC families. The ministry leaders assisted with field visits, encouraged IBC family recruiting and participation, and observed interactions between families.

On a helpful note of the collaboration, participating IBC families were encouraged by leaders' participation, the researcher's demonstration of the approach during field visits, posture for guiding questions, an exemplar of hospitality, and direction of families to IBC resources. The collaborative advantage with the recreation leaders, coaches, and the researcher forged the way for possible connection with IBC family participants, success of the relational evangelism approach, and the potential of enhancing ministry efforts for IBC's recreation outreach ministry. The potential of the triangulation addresses the communication element of the project, recruiting, equipping IBC family participants and the probability of reaching families that do not have a church affiliation or those who have not received the gospel message to gainful relations through Christ and spiritual formation.

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<sup>212</sup> Sensing, *Quantitative Research*, 73.



## Evaluation Outcomes

Upon reviewing the questionnaire, the researcher notes that those outcomes provided information that the IBC recreation center and family ministry could use to continue to grow in reaching those families that participate and have no church affiliation.<sup>213</sup>

The Zoho survey-building tool provided IBC families with a secure way to evaluate their experiences with the training and relational evangelism approach. Results revealed how the equipping, embedded knowledge, and aptitude facilitated the relational evangelism efforts for exercise in the next season of recreation activities. According to Aldrich, in initiating an evangelism approach, experienced by participants the requisite of discerning the person's needs before sharing the gospel message, relating relevance, and the basics of advocacy should be pursued.<sup>214</sup> Aldrich's needs list consists of "Need types: Self Actualization, Esteem, Love and Affection, Safety and Security, and Physiological."<sup>215</sup> These need types, as described are essential to the relational evangelism approach and can enhance future training of IBC family participants as more of an inductive model tailored to those families' needs.<sup>216</sup>

The researcher notes that the approach introduced new actions and made leaders aware of how to implement those intricate measures compared to the current initiatives of a devotional session for the participating children and actual demonstration of biblical principles for sportsmanship.<sup>217</sup> McRaney makes a relative statement when he writes, "*His Body the Church:*

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<sup>213</sup> Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 63.

<sup>214</sup> Aldrich, *Life-Style Evangelism*, 87-89.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid., Sensing, 64.

the testimony of one radically changed life is powerful; however, the testimony of a group of people who embody Christ and live out the message is even more powerful."<sup>218</sup> The researcher realized efforts to crosscheck the training information with efforts already in place were needed, so there was no contrast but enhancements. IBC families could carry the information into those encounters.<sup>219</sup>

In each recreation team family to family relationships would affect the families as their children experience the devotional principles described by their coach while encountering relations with their teammates. Families had the opportunity to discuss and embrace those principles to make an ongoing impact. When comparing IBC's current recreation and evangelism style, ethical apologetics comes to mind. It means that IBC ministry efforts are "good appurtenance, fulfilling normal life-responsibilities," and portray similar practice in the design and desire of relational evangelism in outreach efforts.<sup>220</sup>

### **Research Benefits**

In this project segment, the presentation of what emerged and merits to consider further use of the relational evangelism approach in IBC strategic and prayerful plans of recreation outreach ministry and for equipping participants is discussed. A key factor that emerged is the benefit of equipping IBC family participants. Finding the ideal time was challenging; however, the format that allowed IBC family participants to access the recorded equipping session at a

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<sup>218</sup> McRaney, *The Art of Personal Evangelism*, 41.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, 42-43.

<sup>220</sup> Gorman, *The Gospel and Our Culture Series*, 46.

meaningful time, in which they obtained the most from the session, was beneficial. Another critical factor that emerged demonstrated the approach during field visits allowed the researcher a walk-through with participating IBC families. Through the process and identify those non-affiliate families around them and reviewing any area of the training, the IBC family participant understands how to apply. During those connecting conversations, IBC families can also determine if the family has a personal relationship with Christ or another church. According to Hemphill and Hemphill, sharing the gospel begins with prayer for the encounter, a willingness to demonstrate love, and the ability to listen with empathy. At the same time, the goal is the desire to see families live out the day to day call of Christianity of being salt and light in this world, and to advance God's Kingdom on earth.<sup>221</sup>

The conversations with families demonstrated by the researcher with non-affiliate families served as a visual example of establishing connection. The encounter did provide several of IBC participating families the confidence and ease of initiating conversations with families they would see weekly. When conducting field visits, upon observing three of the nine families that participated, one felt they experienced convictions and a change of mindset that allowed them to build a more intentional effort at making initial connections with families whose children participated on the same team as their children. Making heartfelt connections created a lasting impression of care and a sense of belonging for most families while developing a relationship with those families that participate in the recreation activities at the IBC recreation center.

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<sup>221</sup> Hemphill and Hemphill, *Splash*, 71-79.

A second family of the nine families saw the purpose of connecting with those families who had not heard the gospel message or had no church affiliation. Having confidence in the conversations in a non-threatening manner was fine for those participating. Most felt the recreational interaction made initiating conversations and developing lasting, ongoing relations through the season more comfortable. It would be beneficial to have had the time to circle back into the next recreation activity, verify if those same IBC families and the family they connected with are participating, and maintain their connection. A huge benefit to the recreation ministry is due to the all-season activities that families can participate in and make consistent connections. The ongoing development of relationships allows for deeper biblical sharing and application in family life matters and possibly changing dynamics in the family. For instance, children at end of school year changing grades, work balance changes, family increase, or family moving and looking to maintain children involvement with the center. The approach's benefits are endless and will require adaptation as families grow and duplicate the process. Considering the possible number of families that can be reached and encouraged toward participation in Lutz, FL area could see the church reaching estimated 10,639 households is astronomical.<sup>222</sup>

Fordham and Johnson identify this step of building for the opportunity to share the gospel as they describe “by asking questions in a nonthreatening way; surfaces uncertainty about their perspective, minimize their defensiveness, and create in them a curiosity to want to know more.”<sup>223</sup> A non-affiliated church family found that due to COVID-19, most families were displaced from church affiliations and experienced a loss of belonging. Upon reading William

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<sup>222</sup> United States Census Bureau, S1101, Table 2020.

<sup>223</sup> Keith Fordham and Tom Johnston, *Worth and Work of the Evangelist: For Christ's Great Commission Church* (Liberty, MO: Evangelism Unlimited, 2013), 35-37.

Peel, William Carr, and Walt Larimore, whose collaborative writing gives insight about becoming a spiritual influence when going public with one's faith, these elements should be considered: that "man values relationship, is a social being, and looks for meaning."<sup>224</sup>

In a review of final field visits and observations, several IBC participating families added additional time to connect after their games through picnics on the baseball and softball grounds. The actions recalled some of McRaney's content which states that the art of personal evangelism is communicating God's way, allowing a personal approach that demonstrates the loving nature of God, and revealing His character by interacting with those who are most vulnerable to experience His message.<sup>225</sup> Families without church affiliation found have appreciated the format of biblical principles from the coach's devotional provided at the end of practice and games. Several participating non-affiliated parents discovered during their observation the biblical principles shared with their children during the recreation activity align with their family dynamics and practices. Several other non-affiliated parents thought they would visit the leading service and youth events to connect with IBC members for additional faith-based activities for their families. Those families with interest were connecting with a participating IBC family that can assist in establishing and maintaining church relations and other connections for spiritual formation and duplication.

In conferring with ministry and recreation leaders' assessments, the outcome was that the approach allowed families to be more involved with outreach to other families. There were more intentional connections between IBC families to identify non-affiliated families. The coaches

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<sup>224</sup> William Peel, William Carr, and Walt Larimore, *Going Public with Your Faith: Becoming a Spiritual Influence at Work* (Grand Rapids, IL: Zondervan Publications, 2003), 54.

<sup>225</sup> McRaney, *The Art of Personal Evangelism*, 102-103.

where mainly shaping the children with biblical principles of sportsmanship, relationship, and respect of persons. Most coaches did not partake in the relational evangelism approach. Most families that were observed found the recreation activities helped develop their children's character, and aided children and their family to identify with the concept of a relationship with Christ. The IBC families that participated established long term relations with families and increased their participation in more than just one of the recreation activities at IBC's recreation center.

## Conclusion

In conclusion of this report, the researchers' thesis project identified a problem within the local church, Idlewild Baptist Church (IBC), of reaching families that participate in their recreation activities. Identified are families from registration data with no church affiliation, experience, or Christ encounter.

The researcher introduced and implemented the relation evangelism approach to enhance recreation leaders' efforts to reach families and go beyond the children of those families who experience introductions to a devotion period before and after practice and games. Coaches provide life lessons during weekly practices and team games, and participating children and parents could fellowship after weekly practices and team games over picnics or snacks. The environment was favorable to family connections. Most families local to the recreation center are interested in the recreational activities because of the biblical principles gladly shared with their children. Participating families were not church affiliated, with some similarities to family practices and directions, while other families connected to IBC families adhered to suggested observances and principles. An essential encounter would occur at home or when parents desire their children's social behavior to experience development.<sup>226</sup>

The research methodology utilized for this project through a triangular approach and linear lens provided a close view of the data and the number of families determined. The factors that changed formed the project and the values realized the role of the family in spiritual formation and time constraining influences families face daily. Some families have limited or no

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<sup>226</sup> Bunge, "Biblical and Theological," 348-350.

time outside church ministry to prepare themselves for consistent ministry efforts.<sup>227</sup> Some families overextended themselves in their attempt to maintain inclusivity for their children in church activities. The family dynamics as part of the spiritual formation process, shows through physical and intellectual activities where biblical principles are exercised in a viable way and assist families in their Christian experiences.

The thesis project's goals were sharing the relational evangelism approach with IBC families, equipping to reach families participating in the recreation center activities with the gospel message, connecting to IBC for spiritual formation and duplication, and identifying any specific needs a family may have. However, gains consist of more time to equip families, provide sessions for feedback after learning exercises, and practice the approach among each other although one can be confident in the outcomes. It is evident that there are improvements that can enhance the approach process. Learning from each turn of applying the relational evangelism approach will soon diminish any lack when placing those enhanced specifics to connecting families with no church affiliation and no acceptance of Christ.

The future of relational evangelism in the ministry of recreation centers near or part of a local church ministry is opportune for family ministry efforts and church growth. The outcomes may increase with consistent biblically based preparation of families desiring to participate. Developing participants in a formative theological mindset brings awareness and does not distort or manipulate family order.<sup>228</sup> To expound on this possibility of a gainful relational evangelism approach, one should establish a more intentional option of identifying church families that will

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<sup>227</sup> Derr, Guest Editorial "Ministry with Today's Diverse Families," 82-83.

<sup>228</sup> Brandt and Frederick, *Spiritual Formation for the Global Church*, 91,



embrace participating families in each recreation season of activity. Some families only participate in softball or soccer; therefore, determining and organizing each season with a list of families to reach those identified by registration as not having a church affiliation or acceptance of Christ is the marker to set. IBC ministry efforts benefit from a consistent list of IBC families that are called to evangelism, equipped for evangelism, and willing to be part of the recreation activities exclusively for relational evangelism, spiritual formation, and duplication. These efforts align with the mission and purpose of the recreation ministry of embracing every soul that partakes in the activity, ensuring they have heard and felt the gospel message. In words from Willis Duston and Coe Aaron, the ease of communicating the gospel is like a life on mission, daily conversations, in common places, in the most simply way will reach most.<sup>229</sup>

The recruiting mechanism, yearly Bible studies, testimonials from participating families, and ongoing small group sessions enhance spiritual formation from the experiences of being connected to Christ and the church community.<sup>230</sup> These are all additional components to benefit future ministry efforts that connect and reach families. The intentionality of church leaders identifying clarion calls or willful obedience to the Great Commission are both needed to move the voices and pull of society, politics and economic dilemmas that draw a family's focus from being a light to the world and the lives of hurting and misdirected families.

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<sup>229</sup> Willis Dustin and Coe Aaron, *Life on Mission: A Simple Way to Share the Gospel* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 107-141.

<sup>230</sup> Kyongsu John Min, "'Light of the World' Evangelism through Church Community: Its Design with Biblical, Theological, and Contextual Foundation," (DMIN Thesis, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, 2014), 65-67, *ProQuest Dissertations Publishing*,

Determining objectives that embrace non-affiliates for an experience of the attributes of Christ with local church families is an ideal function of family ministry efforts. These families act as guides in the various processes of recreation activities and establish meaningful connections and establishment into the body of believers.<sup>231</sup> A thoughtful note from Brandt and Frederick regarding spiritual formation is from a multi-denominational and multi-ethnic approach developed on a theological praxis of spiritual formation.<sup>232</sup> The information and status from a simple spiritual gift assessment, including all parameters to help determine participants' status for exercising evangelism, precisely the aptitude to utilize the relation evangelism approach. An enhanced registration card provides the opportunity to identify with either of the two or three categories. The more information obtained from those families participating and identified as non-affiliated with a church imparts, the better the connection with an IBC family with similar dynamics and family experiences. There are many in the field of ministry. With some evaluation, IBC can have a list of families ready to serve families participating in the recreation activities and in need of ministry resources. The connection made through relational evangelism allows for a warm embrace and a growing heart that is attentive to the infallible Word of God. With those factors, the aspired spiritual formation will occur, and duplication of the process and connection will happen family to family.

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<sup>231</sup> Yat Lau, "The Church is Familial, and is Built on Spiritually Strong Families" (DMIN Thesis, Liberty University, 1347, 2017), 45-47, Scholars crossing: Doctoral Dissertations and Projects.

<sup>232</sup> Brandt and Frederick, *Spiritual Formation for the Global Church*, 91, pt-3, "The church is one in Christ. Yet too often, it is divided by national, denominational, theological, and racial or ethnic boundaries." "The church is a global body of believers. Yet too often, it privileges a few voices and fails to recognize its diversity."

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## Appendix A: Endorsement and Permission Letter

January 13, 2021

Min. Wade Griffin  
Pastor of Families Ministry  
Idlewild Baptist Church  
18333 Exciting Idlewild Blvd  
Lutz, FL 33548

Dear Min. Griffin,

As a graduate student in the John W. Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University I am conducting a research project as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry degree, and by conducting the research, I may acquire better understanding of Idlewild's Recreational Ministry. The title of my research project is Relational Evangelism: Family-to-Family through Recreational Activities and the purpose of my research is delivering relational evangelism through connective outreach to families in a 'one to one' approach with the objective of connecting Idlewild families to participating 'families' that do not attend a church or have a viable relationship with Christ.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research from the registration of families who participates in Idlewild's Recreational Ministry. I would also like to ask permission to connect with leaders and volunteers of the Idlewild Recreational Ministry to invite them to participate in my research project. I would also like to request permission to access and utilize registration data of participation in the recreational activities Idlewild provides.

Participants will be presented with informed consent information before participating. Taking part in this project is voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time. The data will be used to share anonymously outcomes of connected families through relational evangelism efforts.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please provide by email your signed statement on official letterhead indicating your approval.

Sincerely,

Kimberly R. Williams  
IBC Small Group Leader: Daughters of the King  
cc: Jacob Martin, Director of IBC Recreation Department and Ministry

## Appendix B: Post Season Questionnaire

### Thesis Project Relational Evangelism Family to Family through Recreation Activities

1. Family, in what season was the recreational activity that your family participated in?
  - A. Summer
  - B. Fall
  - C. Spring
  
2. Family, what types of recreation activity did your family participate in?
  - A. Soccer
  - B. Baseball/Softball
  - C. Tennis
  - D. Golfing
  - E. Flag-Football
  
3. Family, what is the school age range of your children(s) who participated in the recreation activity?
  - A. Pre-Kindergarten
  - B. Kindergarten
  - C. Elementary
  - D. Middle School
  - E. High School
  - F. Other
  
4. Family, is this a Single or Both parent family?
  - A. Single parent family
  - B. Both parent family
  - C. Other
  
5. Did your family have evangelism experience prior to participating in this project?  
Yes or No
  
6. If you chose to participate did you complete the training and complete/turn in the inform and consent from, both of which are vital to the project?  
Yes or No (if no, family participant encouraged to contact recreation leaders to complete)
  
7. Please rate the training material and experience provided by the researcher according to the following scale: 1-Strongly disagrees to 5-strongly agree
  
8. Based on the training session “Family, Grace and Forgiveness”:  
Did your family learn how to identify and were able to demonstrate sharing grace and forgiveness attributes in the manner of courtesy and hospitality in our general encounters with other participating families that were not affiliated with Idlewild?
  - A. There was no display
  - B. There was minimal display
  - C. There was more than minimal display

- D. There was a display
- E. Fully displayed

9. Based on the training session “Family Express Empowerment to serve Relational Evangelism”: Did your family learn how to identify and develop a relationship for the opportunity of presenting the gospel message of salvation?

- A. There was no display
- B. There was minimal display
- C. There was more than minimal display
- D. There was a display
- E. Fully displayed

10. Based on the training session “Spiritual Formation and Duplication”: Did your family learn how to deliver the gospel message of salvation, introduce church experience, and family connection duplication?

- A. There was no display
- B. There was minimal display
- C. There was more than minimal display
- D. There was a display
- E. Fully displayed

11. Was training helpful?

Yes or No

12. Was there a need for additional information that would enhance preparation for the project?

Yes or No

13. Was there enough time to learn the Relational Evangelism approach?

Yes or No

14. Family, if you made a connection with a family not affiliated with IBC, please answer the following:  
How did you, as an IBC family connect with the participating family?

- A. Through the same recreation activity
- B. Youth or child in same school activity or age group
- C. Request for in-depth understanding of biblical devotion offered
- D. Through a similar moral or biblical interest
- E. Other

15. Family, how well was the family connection received?

- A. Well
- B. Fair
- C. Unacceptable
- D. Other

16. Family, would you say the family connection was to an unchurched family?

Yes or No

17. Family, was there a compatible family dynamic with the family you were able to connect with (i.e. beliefs or values, shared roles, family behaviors, hierarchy)?

Yes or No

18. Family, which best describes the religious interest of the family you connected?

- A. Church experience
- B. No church experience
- C. Interested/Welcomes a church experience and the gospel message of salvation
- D. Interested/welcomed knowing about Jesus
- E. Other

19. Family, which best identifies the leadership roles of the family you connected with?

- A. Father leads family church experience/biblical study
- B. Mother leads family church experience/biblical study
- C. Children or youth lead the family church experience/biblical study
- D. No one in the family leads church experience/biblical study

20. Family, upon connecting and utilizing the Relational Evangelism approach with a participating family in the recreation activities, please answer the following questions:

Yes or No

1. Did you share the gospel message shared?
2. Did the family accept Christ?
3. Did the family connect in the church experience at IBC?
4. Did the family show interest in continued biblical studies at IBC?
5. Did families continue connection after the project/recreation activities?

21. Family, would you be interested in participating in the evangelism/outreach ministry of Idlewild's Recreation center as a ministry effort carrying out the mission of Idlewild?

Yes or No

## Appendix C: Liberty University Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

November 24, 2020

Kimberly R. Williams  
Howard Tryon

Re: IRB Application - IRB-FY20-21-199 Relational Evangelism: Family-to-Family through Recreational Activities

Dear Kimberly R. Williams and Howard Tryon,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study does not classify as human subjects research. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your IRB application.

Decision: No Human Subjects Research

Explanation: Your study is not considered human subjects research for the following reason:

(2) Your project will consist of quality improvement activities, which are not "designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge" according to 45 CFR 46.102(l).

Please note that this decision only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued non-human subjects research status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

Also, although you are welcome to use our recruitment and consent templates, you are not required to do so. If you choose to use our documents, please replace the word research with the word project throughout both documents.

If you have any questions about this determination or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your application's status, please email us at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

Sincerely,

**G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP**  
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research  
**Research Ethics Office**

