FAMILY MINISTRY AND EVANGELISM:

AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF FAMILY MINISTRY ENGAGEMENT

AND BAPTISM RATIOS IN THE SOUTHERN

BAPTIST CONVENTION

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A Dissertation

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by

Kevin Bryce Saxton

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APPROVAL SHEET

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Kevin Bryce Saxton

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To Tracie,

Favor from the Lord

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PREFACE

The research contained in the pages that follow is the result of years of thinking, refining, clarifying, and reviewing. It represents many moments of struggle, as well as many refreshing moments of breakthrough. I never could have imagined that I would be able to undertake such a study as I set out on my goal of gaining a doctoral degree and furthering my ability to serve the church. Perhaps the most rewarding part is that I have been continually humbled and blessed by the relationships that I have had along this path.

One such source of both humbling and blessing has been the professors with whom I have been able to interact throughout the course of this program. I have been humbled by the extensive knowledge and ability I have seen in them. At the same time, I have been encouraged that these great men of God would take the time to invest in my and my family's lives. In particular, I am grateful to Dr. Brian Richardson for serving as my supervisor and to Dr. Timothy Paul Jones, and Dr. Shane Parker for agreeing to read and review my work. Likewise, I would have never gotten to this point without the encouragement and refining of Dr. Randy Stinson, Dr. Michael Wilder, and Dr. Hal Pettegrew. I will forever hold these men in a place of high esteem.

I am likewise encouraged by two great men of God who took time to speak into this work and provide resources to assist with its completion, both family ministry experts: Ron Hunter, Jr., and Mark DeVries. I considered it a longshot when I reached out to each of them, but they very graciously returned my e-mails and phone calls. This research would have been askew without their refining and redirecting, so I am incredibly grateful.

Finally, I am infinitely indebted to my sweet family for the support and love that they have provided to help me get to this point. God's Word says that finding a wife is indicative of finding the favor of God (Prov 18:22). The fact that my beautiful wife, Tracie, is such an inspiring and lovely woman of God would indicate that I have found far more favor than I could have ever imagined. Her display of patience and encouragement as I have fought through this academic program has been a humbling and an inspiring picture of God's grace. She is a true gem. Likewise, our precious children, Rubie, Charlotte, Annabelle, Micah, Josiah, and Adeline, have sacrificed more than they could ever know, but still greet me every day with a smile and a story. They are surely the blessing of God.

<div align="right">Kevin Saxton</div>

Greenacres, Florida

December 2017

CHAPTER 1

RESEARCH CONCERN

The concern which prompted this research was a desire to see the church operating at its full capacity in terms of the multi-faceted mission which Christ called her members to accomplish. It is articulated in Scripture both that Christ's church is to be concerned with the evangelization of the non-believer outside of the local church and that Christian parents are to disciple their children.[1] While these priorities are truly two aspects of the same mission—to make disciples of all nations—a distinction can be drawn between them. These extremes result in churches, and, subsequently, families, which are primarily focused outwardly on reaching the lost in a given community to the neglect of the family and churches which are primarily focused inwardly on discipling the members of the church for the distinct purpose of reaching the next generation of Christian family members for Christ to the detriment of the lost in the community. As Ron Hunter, Jr., indicates, "The debate about whether to emphasize evangelism or discipleship has raged for decades, if not centuries. You can look at many churches and pastors championing one side over the other, although they would never admit it."[2] As such, the issue addressed was the concern that one of these priorities is given greater attention and credence than another in various churches as evidenced by ministry emphasis and participation. The goal of this process was the identification of ministry philosophies which are effective both at reaching the lost for Christ and discipling the coming generation.

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[1]See Deut 6:4-7; Matt 28:18-20; and Eph 6:4 for initial treatments of these topics, respectively. These are not the only parts of the mission to which Christ called His church, yet they are prominent parts of that multi-faceted mission.

[2]Ron Hunter, Jr., *The DNA of D6: Building Blocks of Generational Discipleship* (Nashville: Randall House, 2015), 81.

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Introduction to the Research Problem

Certainly, the task of a pastor is complex and difficult. Pastors are faced with many decisions, not the least of which is the way in which ministry will be accomplished in the church they are called to lead. For this reason, churches across the world, as well as across individual communities, vary in ministry approach. This variance leaves many churches and ministry philosophies open to critique. One such critique is that churches which choose to employ a model of ministry that includes an emphasis on family discipleship are inherently inwardly focused and forsake any outward methods of accomplishing the Great Commission.

This critique of family ministry strategy includes both those who simply do not employ the ministry philosophy, as well as those who outwardly speak against it. Such is the case with Mark W. Cannister, who writes,

> While the desire to pass faith from one generation to the next is good and right, such "passing" language can create the idea of a static God as a commodity to be consumed. This places the teenager in the position of a consumer of the faith, and parents and youth ministers in the position of distribution managers.[3]

The static faith he describes is one that is not put into action and, thereby, effectively lived out in front of the lost, but is rather a self-serving faith. He confirms that notion later in the same text as he argues against a family ministry structure: "When student ministry comes under the umbrella of family ministry, it will only be good enough to serve the students of Christian families in the church and will never reach beyond its walls."[4] Similarly, Brandon Shields, in an argument for a specific family ministry strategy, also contends against the implementation of certain family ministry philosophies:

> The result of actively promoting the family as the centerpiece of the church's mission is a built-in neglect of the larger community and on non-intact families present in the church. It is difficult to reach out aggressively in one's own ZIP code when most

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[3]Mark W. Cannister, *Teenagers Matter: Making Student Ministry a Priority in the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 8.

[4]Ibid., 183.

of the church's resources, energies, strategies, and leadership efforts have been targeted at intact families inside the church walls.[5]

To take the argument one step further, Andreas J. Kostenberger and David W. Jones seem to believe that family ministry as an evangelistic strategy is not even a worthy goal. They explain,

> Unlike the church, which is composed only of the regenerate, marriage, while divinely instituted in the beginning, is entered by regenerate and unregenerate alike. For this reason marriage and family as such cannot serve as sufficient vehicles of God's truth. It is the church, not the family, that is therefore primarily charged with preaching the gospel to a lost world and to fulfill the great commission.[6]

As true as it is that the church is the body that has been tasked with the evangelization of the lost, this critique seems to dismiss the family as a part of that mission at all. A more likely scenario is that the family can be—and should be—seen as a means for the evangelization of the lost as an extension of the church. As a result, family ministry should be seen as evangelistic in that it is a process whereby parents and families are equipped to go forth from the church to accomplish evangelism.[7]

A Possible Cause for the Critique

A common theme in each of the previously outlined critiques seems to be a lack of understanding of what family ministry actually is, or is evidence of the observation of family ministry done incorrectly. As Jay Strother writes,

> Certainly, some churches *will* twist "family ministry" into a self-serving array of programs and inwardly focused opportunities. This is the fault of poor leadership in

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[5]Brandon Shields, "Responses to Jay Strother: Family-Integrated Ministry," in *Perspectives on Family Ministry: 3 Views*, ed. Timothy Paul Jones (Nashville: B & H, 2009), 177.

[6]Andreas J. Kostenberger and David W. Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 254.

[7]It should be noted that none of the authors mentioned in this section reject the notion that parents are called to lead their children spiritually and to evangelize them. The critique herein contained has to do with ministry philosophy and approach and not with the idea of evangelization of the children of Christian parents.

these congregations. Family-equipping churches understand that family ministry is an inherently missional endeavor.[8]

This missional or evangelistic sentiment is rehearsed by many family ministry practitioners and authors, such as Scott T. Brown, who states, "No church should be centered on the family. It is the work of Jesus Christ that matters most. Furthermore, a family that lives in seclusion and cares nothing about the lost community is a disobedient family."[9] Further, Timothy Paul Jones explains, "If the equipping of families becomes the identity that drives a ministry, the focus of the ministry will tend to begin and end with the development of healthy families. Yet earthly families are a means in God's plan, never a goal."[10] Family ministry done correctly should be understood to be outwardly focused.

One possible reason why family ministry may be misunderstood is that the way in which it is articulated frequently does not include any reference to the outwardly evangelistic nature of the philosophy. Such is the case with an early definition of the strategy from Henry F. Cope, who writes,

> A family is humanity's great opportunity to walk the way of the cross. . . . In homes where this is true, where all other aims are subordinated to this one of making the home count for high character, to training lives into right social adjustment and service, the primary emphasis is not on times and seasons for religion; religion is the life of that home, and in all its common living every child learns the way of the great Life of all.[11]

While this definition is compelling, there is no articulation of an evangelistic strategy, necessarily. Similarly, Brian Haynes articulates,

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[8]Jay Strother, "Responses to Jay Strother," in Jones, *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, 181, emphasis original.

[9]Scott T. Brown, *A Weed in the Church: How a Culture of Age Segregation Is Destroying the Younger Generation, Fragmenting the Family, and Dividing the Church* (Wake Forest, NC: The National Center for Family-Integrated Churches, 2011), 249.

[10]Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan, 2011), 143.

[11]Henry F. Cope, *Religious Education in the Family* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1915), 6.

We point adults to every ministry in our church for the opportunity to disciple others. Perhaps the youth ministry or children's ministry will provide this chance; maybe retired adults will help create disciples by serving as small group leaders for young married couples. The point is, everyone [who is] breathing and embraces the Great Commission as a mandate from Jesus has the opportunity to make disciples in the context of ministry at our church. When adults are also parents, we teach them that their first priority as disciple-makers is their children.[12]

This definition, too, is strongly worded in terms of discipling children within the church, but it fails to articulate a strategy for evangelism outside of the church. Another family ministry advocate, Pamela J. Erwin, follows the same lines when she writes, "Family ministry has a double focus: to care for, support, empower, and nurture families in the church; and to bring people together as a body in a way that enables authentic, biblical community to take place."[13] These articulations of family ministry, though helpful, when taken individually seem to support the critique that family ministry strategies fail to provide access to the gospel for those outside the church.

The Evangelistic Nature of Family Ministry

While the referenced articulations of family ministry strategy may cause some critics to question the way in which family ministry works together with Christ's command to evangelize the lost outside of the church, there is even more justification for family ministry as an evangelistic strategy, as was alluded in the previous discussion. For example, Paul Renfro writes, "Family-integrated churches are committed to evangelism and discipleship in and through the home."[14] According to Steve Wright and Chris Graves, "We must develop an intentional plan to reach out to teens with unchurched parents and

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[12]Brian Haynes, *Shift: What It Takes to Finally Reach Families Today* (Loveland, CO: Group, 2009), 105.

[13]Pamela J. Erwin, *The Family-Powered Church* (Loveland, CO: Group, 2000), 25.

[14]Paul Renfro, "Family-Integrated Ministry: Family-Driven Faith," in Jones, *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, 63.

show them love and care."[15] Michael S. Wilder indicates, "The family is a God-ordained launching pad for gospel ministry."[16] Further, Jones clarifies,

> God's calling does not end with the rehearsal of the gospel in our own households, though. The proclamation of the gospel that begins in our households should spill out beyond the confines of our homes, into our communities, and then to the uttermost parts of the earth (see Acts 1:8; 2:39; 26:20).[17]

Therefore, it can be concluded that, at some level, there should be an intentional outward focus within family ministry strategy.[18]

The Concern Summarized

Due to the confusion that may exist because of the referenced articulations of family ministry and the critiques thereof, there is a need for empirical research to discover what is happening in churches that choose to—or choose not to—employ a family ministry strategy. In general, family ministry is articulated as an evangelistic strategy both for those inside of the church and those outside of the congregation. What is lacking is knowledge of what is actually occurring in churches implementing these ministry strategies. This information is critical so that recommendations may be made and changes may be implemented.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this research was to address empirically the critique that churches employing a family discipleship model of ministry are, by design, internally focused—that is, they are either not focused on or not effective at reaching people outside

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[15]Steve Wright and Chris Graves, *reThink: Decide for Yourself, Is Student Ministry Working?* (Wake Forest, NC: InQuest, 2007), 207.

[16]Michael S. Wilder, "Building and Equipping Missional Families," in *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective,* ed. Randy Stinson and Timothy Paul Jones (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 245.

[17]Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 79.

[18]As noted, this may not always be the case within family ministry literature. This idea is further explored in chap. 2 of this research.

of the church and its families. This critique was addressed by using established survey methodology to place churches on a spectrum of family ministry engagement and by, subsequently, using baptism data to determine if a correlation existed between the level of family ministry engagement by individual churches and their effectiveness at reaching non-believers for Christ.

Delimitations of the Proposed Research

As in any research project, there are delimitations to this work. First, this research was delimited strictly to churches that choose voluntary affiliation with the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). This constraint was due to several factors, not the least of which is the presence of SBC churches in multiple states and geographical locations. Additionally, these churches had accessible data in the form of an Annual Church Profile (ACP), which is submitted to the SBC and used for record keeping. These profiles provide objective information, including church attendance and baptism data, which was crucial to this research.

A second delimitation to this research, which is like the first, is that the research was delimited to churches that operate primarily in the United States of America or one of its provinces or territories. This restriction did not mean that the churches used for this study were not active in missions or did not have partnerships that exist in other countries. This delimitation was one of practicality and accessibility. It was, however, assumed that the process conducted herein is replicable to churches outside of the geographical and territorial boundary here indicated.

Finally, this research was delimited to the perceptions of staff members and those in significant leadership positions of the responding churches rather than those of attending church members. In order to gather uniform responses, it was necessary to ask that the leadership—and particularly those on staff—of local churches respond to the survey with their perceptions of the ministry of that local church. The perceptions came from those tasked with employing a ministry philosophy rather than those of the members

who are, theoretically, operating within those ministry emphases. It is certainly possible that the congregants see the ministry differently, but for the purpose of uniformity and applicability, it was important that the survey associated with this research was completed by staff members or those in significant leadership positions within the church.

Research Questions

This research utilized four research questions to guide the collection and analyzation of data.

1. To what extent are the leaders of the responding churches emphasizing family ministry as a significant aspect of their ministry philosophy?

2. In the responding churches, what was the ratio of average weekly attendance to baptisms?

3. Is there a correlation between degree of emphasis on family ministry and either lower or higher baptism ratios?

4. Is there a recognizable pattern of family ministry emphasis and greater success in baptism ratios that can be instructive for churches and church leadership?

Terminology

Annual Church Profile. The Annual Church Profile is a document filed with the SBC on an annual basis which includes, but is not limited to, these data fields: total membership, annual baptisms, baptisms by age grouping, weekly Bible study or Sunday School attendance, and average weekly attendance. This information will be used in the proposed research to gain insight into individual churches' annual attendance and baptism figures.

Baptism. While *baptism* can mean different things in different religious traditions, for the purpose of this research it will be used to refer to the practice of believer's baptism by immersion, as articulated in the *2000 Baptist Faith and Message*. In that document, baptism is defined as

> the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour [*sic*], the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to

his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper.[19]

Church staff. For the purpose of this research, "church staff" will refer to those distinctly responsible for leading some aspect of ministry in an individual local church. This will include vocational ministry leaders, bi-vocational ministry leaders, part-time ministry leaders, and volunteer ministry leaders when that volunteerism is accomplished in a pastoral capacity. It will be limited to ministry leadership and will not include support staff, such as those in secretarial positions and facility operational positions.

Family ministry. For the purpose of this research, *family ministry* will refer to ministries that articulate a strategy for helping churches and families to see parents as the primary disciple-makers in the lives of their children. As such, the term will include ministries that operate under a particular definition of family ministry. Jones's definition of *family ministry* is "the process of intentionally and persistently realigning a congregation's proclamation and practices so that parents are acknowledged, trained, and held accountable as the persons primarily responsible for the discipleship of their children."[20] This definition includes the three categories of contemporary family ministry as defined by Jones: Family-integrated ministry, whereby all age-graded classes and events are eliminated in favor of a multi-generational approach to church; family-based ministry, in which no radical changes are made, but where each ministry leader focuses on designing ministry opportunities that will bring the generations together; and family-equipping ministry,

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[19]Southern Baptist Convention, "The Baptist Faith and Message," accessed July 29, 2016, http://www.sbc.net/bfm2000/bfm2000.asp.

[20]Timothy Paul Jones, "Foundations for Family Ministry," in Jones, *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, 40. It is important to note that Jones has provided an updated definition of family ministry: "Family ministry is the process of coordinating a church's practices so that all members develop diverse discipling relationships and so that parents are acknowledged, equipped, and held accountable as primary disciple-makers in their children's lives." Timothy Paul Jones, "Family Ministry: A New Definition for Family Ministry (Part 3)," accessed October 30, 2017, http://www.timothypauljones.com/family-ministry-a-new-definition-for-family-ministry-part-3/. While this nuanced definition is tremendously helpful for the future of family ministry, it does not, necessarily, affect the way in which the term is used in this study.

whereby ministry leaders plan every ministry opportunity to champion parents as the primary disciple-makers in the lives of their children.[21]

Procedural Overview

In order to accomplish the proposed research, it was first necessary to gain insights from the churches of the SBC as to the level of emphasis on family ministry in those individual churches. This was accomplished through the use of the DNA of D6 Church Health Assessment (CHA).[22] Specifically, three subsections of the assessment were used: "Use the Power of Parental Influence," "Family Equipping is a Biblical Priority," and "Not Silo Ministries in the Church." These subsections were placed into a Survey Money survey which was distributed via e-mail link throughout the networks of the SBC, with the goal of making the survey available to all of the over 46,000 churches associated with the SBC. This distribution was accomplished through contacting state and local associations of the SBC, as well as through my own professional contacts.

As responses to the survey were received and scored, the churches were assigned the number corresponding with their degree of emphasis on family ministry, placing them on a spectrum with other responding churches. This was done individually for each of the three subsections of the survey instrument, as well as for an aggregate of the three subsections. Each of these four scores was used in further sections of this dissertation.

As a result of the need to identify individual churches for the previously articulated task, the online survey also included a place for respondents to identify the church which they represent. This allowed for multiple responses from the same church—

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[21]Jones, "Foundations for Family Ministry," 42-45. Many other iterations of "family ministry" fall outside of this articulated definition of family ministry. These other ministry approaches are discussed further in chap. 2 of this study, but are best understood as ministry to families instead of a ministry meant to equip families.

[22]D6 Family, "DNA of D6," accessed July 28, 2016, http://d6family.com/dna/. Hereafter, this survey is referred to as CHA.

as is the case with multiple staff members—to be averaged together as well as to allow access to the individual ACP of each congregation. These profiles were mined for average weekly attendance as well as annual baptisms on record. Once that data was obtained, a ratio of the number of average weekly attendants to total annual baptisms was created for each church.

After churches were placed on the proposed spectrum of family ministry emphasis in each of the individual and the aggregate scales as indicated, and after a ratio of average weekly attendance to total baptisms was identified, the numbers were examined to determine if there is indeed a correlation between the emphasis on family ministry and the ratio of attendance to total baptisms. This task was accomplished through the assistance of a statistician for the sake of accuracy. Those numbers were reported in the most helpful manner so as to be the most useful for future research and ministry.

Research Assumptions

To accurately accomplish this research it is necessary to operate under several assumptions.

1. Churches involved in the SBC believe the Bible to be authoritative and apply it to ministry practice so as to seek to be obedient to Christ's commands.

2. Churches that believe the Bible to be authoritative apply it in its totality, but specifically, the churches included in the study are actively engaged in evangelism—at some level—as is instructed through Christ's Great Commission.

3. When individuals are baptized in the church, they are following an established procedure that ensures that they have been reached through evangelism and have experienced the salvation that is available through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

4. Baptism is a reliable method for tracking the fruits of evangelism since it is undertaken as a primary step in a discipleship process.

CHAPTER 2

PRECEDENT LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the pertinent literature for this study, including an examination of biblical and theological foundations, a brief historical exploration, and a review of contemporary practices. This process addresses two major areas of emphasis: family ministry and evangelism.

Biblical Foundations for Family Ministry

The most logical place for a Christian to first gain an understanding of what family ministry is practically is to understand what it is philosophically. For Christians, philosophy can only be understood in terms of theology. As a result, it is imperative to explore the biblical foundations of family ministry before moving to understanding it in practical or applicable terms. As Brian Haynes indicates, "In a world of relativism it is important for parents to know the unchanging truth of God and His plan to build faith into the next generation."[1] The same is true of the understanding of family ministry in this study.

In general, family ministry is God's idea. Dennis Rainey writes, "Families are of supreme importance to God; He created them."[2] Since God created families, He must have a plan for them. Ed Moll and Tim Chester articulate this plan in *Gospel-Centred Family*: "Parents are to model God's good, liberating, just rule in the way they bring up

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[1]Brian Haynes, *The Legacy Path: Discover Intentional Spiritual Parenting* (Nashville: Randall House, 2001), 1.

[2]Dennis Rainey, *Ministering to Twenty-First Century Families: Eight Big Ideas for Church Leaders* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 57.

their children."[3] Mark Holmen further articulates this concept of God's plan for families: "The home has always been intended by God to be the primary place where faith is lived, discussed and nurtured."[4] Similarly, Tad Thompson states, "The idea that fathers and mothers should be the primary agents of discipleship in the lives of their children is hardly a 'new and creative norm'. It is a [Scriptural] and historical norm."[5] This Scriptural norm is one worth exploring.

While several passages speak directly to the relationships in the home (such as Deut 5:16; Prov 13:24, 22:6; Col 3:18-21; Eph 5:22-6:4; and Titus 2:2-9), Michael and Michelle Anthony argue, "Throughout the Bible, parents are admonished to teach their children."[6] This is an important task because, as William P. Farley has written, "Christians parent with one eye on eternity. Their children will live *forever*."[7] This long-term view of parental ministry to children is an important perspective and supports the idea that "passing on a legacy of biblical faith to the next generation has always been a part of God's plan."[8] In order to see this pattern throughout Scripture, several passages with direct implication for family discipleship will be examined. These passages include the Creation Mandate, The *Shema*, Psalm 78:1-8, Ephesians 6:4, family accounts in the book of Acts, general New Testament family language, and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

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[3]Ed Moll and Tim Chester, *Gospel- Centred Family: Becoming the Parents God Wants You to Be* (New Malden, UK: Good Book, 2009), 13.

[4]Mark Holmen, *Church+Home: The Proven Formula for Building Lifelong Faith* (Ventura, CA: Gospel Light, 2010), 30.

[5]Tad Thompson, *Intentional Parenting: Family Discipleship by Design* (Adelphi, MD: Cruciform, 2011), 10.

[6]Michael Anthony and Michelle Anthony, *A Theology for Family Ministries* (Nashville: B & H, 2011), 25.

[7]William P. Farley, *Gospel-Powered Parenting: How the Gospel Shapes and Transform Parenting* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2009), 41, emphasis original.

[8]Haynes, *Legacy Path*, 1.

The Creation Mandate

Perhaps the most fundamental place in which to look for the role of the family is the very beginning of the family.[9] The first record of humans is found in Genesis 1:26 where God states, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." With that statement comes what Gordon J. Wenham refers to as the climax of the creation account.[10] This climactic proclamation is the foundation of who humans are—humans are more significant than the rest of creation and humans bear the image of God. The *imago Dei* articulated here is something that sets humans apart from animals, birds, plants, planets, and the rest of God's creation—humans are the crown of God's handiwork.[11] While this distinction is multifaceted, part of what sets humans apart is their capacity for relationship.[12] Henry M. Morris explains this distinction:

> There can be little doubt that the 'image of God' in which man was created must entail those aspects of human nature which are not shared by animals—attributes such as a moral consciousness, the ability to think abstractly, an understanding of beauty and emotion, and, above all, the capacity for worshipping and loving God. This eternal and divine dimension of man's being must be the essence of what is involved in the likeness of God.[13]

This image bearing responsibility is one that is articulated as having applicability for all human beings. Of this responsibility, Wayne Grudem writes,

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[9]Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Book of Beginnings* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976), 17, calls the book of Genesis "the most important book ever written" because of its foundational nature. His argument is that, apart from the book of Genesis, it is impossible to understand the rest of Scripture. It is his argument being here advanced as the basis for understanding the human family and God's relation to it.

[10]Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1 (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 27.

[11]Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, The New American Commentary, vol. 1a (Nashville: B & H, 1996), 160.

[12]See Boice's treatment of this topic in James Montgomery Boice, *Genesis: An Expositional Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 1:90-91. Boice points to three meanings of the image of God: man possesses attributes of the personality of God; that man possesses morality; and man possesses spirituality. It is this spirituality that allows man to have communion with God. Similarly, Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 29-32, provides many suggestions for what this idea means.

[13]Morris, *The Genesis Record*, 74.

Just as the members of the Trinity are equal in their importance and in their full existence as distinct persons . . . so men and women have been created by God to be equal in their importance and personhood. When God created man, [He] created both "male and female" in [His] image (Gen 1:27; 5:12). Men and women are made *equally in God's image*, and both men and women reflect God's character in their lives.[14]

Since all human beings have this capacity and responsibility, it is important to understand why it was given.

Immediately following God's assertion that mankind was made in His image is a command to be followed. While following the pattern of blessing that God pronounced over the animals, this command is different in form as indicated by the fact that God's command is not merely spoken over the humans, but is spoken to them.[15] God states, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (Gen 1:28). This command is immediately preceded by an introductory statement—"And God blessed them." His command to "be fruitful and multiply" is, indeed, a blessing. This blessing is not to be overlooked as it is an important part of the creation account. John H. Sailhamer asserts, "Throughout the remainder of the Book of Genesis and the Pentateuch, the 'blessing' remains a central theme."[16] This blessing can also be seen in later passages of Scripture, such as Psalm 127:3-5, where the psalmist asserts that children are a blessing, a reward from God. Therefore, it is important to note that, as Scottie May et al. indicate, "God's first recorded words to Adam and Eve are a blessing, a blessing involving children."[17]

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[14]Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 456, emphasis original.

[15]Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 33.

[16]John H. Sailhamer, *Genesis*, in vol. 2 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 38.

[17]Scottie May et al., *Children Matter: Celebrating Their Place in the Church, Family, and Community* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2005), 26.

It is no small issue, then, that the idea of bearing the image of God, the order to fill and subdue the earth, and the blessing of having children are all contained within the same text. John H. Walton states of this fact that it "indicates the functions that people will have as a result of the role to which they were created."[18] In other words, the blessing given to humans cannot be separated from the purpose for their creation. As a result, having children and functioning as families is part of God's created plan for people. This truth also means that, as Haynes writes, "from the very beginning God designed the family as the vehicle to pass on a heritage of faith, a godly legacy to the next generation."[19]

The Creation Mandate evidences the fact that God had a plan for families from the very beginning, but the record of the fall of man found in Genesis 3 seems to change everything for the first man and woman. James C. Perkins writes of this event and its effects on marriage and family:

> Enmity came into the garden, and the man and woman engage in lying, betrayal, and deceit. They would no longer know the same level of perfect intimacy. For the man, cultivating the soil would be hard toil. For the woman, the union with her husband would be rewarded with pain in childbirth. The lush garden would be only a memory, because they were banished from it forever.[20]

It would seem that everything changed with that simple action. As a result, it is important to continue the study of Scripture to see how God's mandate changed as a result of this tragic event (Gen 3:16-19).[21]

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[18]John H. Walton, *Genesis*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 132.

[19]Haynes, *Legacy Path*, 4.

[20]James C. Perkins, *Building Up Zion's Walls: Ministry for Empowering the African American Family*, ed. Jean Alicia Elster (Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 1999), 59.

[21]Further examination of the *imago Dei* is beyond the scope of this paper, but several resources should be consulted to further examine that idea. These resources include, but are not limited to, Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012); Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids:

The Shema

A crucial passage for understanding how God's mission continues in the story of the Old Testament is the *Shema*, found in Deuteronomy 6:4-9. In this portion of Scripture, God begins to outline His Ten Commandments. These commandments are instrumental to the success of God's people—they are meant to "ensure the nation's well-being and to increase in number and wealth."[22] As such, the first command is to love God above all else, to "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" (Deut 6:5).

What is important for the understanding of the continuation of God's plan for the family is how the importance of God's greatest command should be perpetuated. Haynes explains,

> The [*Shema*] begins with a reference point. An undeniable, non-negotiable understanding that there is one God and He alone is God. This is the beginning of spiritual formation. It's the first step of faith. It's the most foundational truth to pass to the next generation.[23]

This passing to the next generation is exactly what is articulated in this portion of Scripture. Earl S. Kalland articulates,

> The people were not to concern themselves only with their own attitudes toward the Lord. They were to concern themselves with impressing these attitudes on their children as well. The Israelites were to talk about God's commands always, whether at home or on the road.[24]

God is explicit when He says of His words, "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise" (Deut 6:7). This command was vital

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William B. Eerdmans, 1986); and Joel B. Green, *Body, Soul, and Human Life: The Nature of Humanity in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008).

[22]Earl S. Kalland, *Deuteronomy*, in vol. 2 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 63.

[23]Brian Haynes, *Shift: What It Takes to Finally Reach Families Today* (Loveland, CO: Group, 2009), 35.

[24]Kalland, *Deuteronomy*, 66.

since the remedy to human forgetfulness is recitation for memorization.[25] Eugene H. Merrill states that its importance is further implicated by the fact that "its promises and provisions were for generations yet unborn."[26] Anthony and Anthony summarize this command well:

> The focus of Moses' instruction is obedience to the words of God, and that obedience comes when one knows and understands God's Word. As a way of demonstrating their love for God, Moses challenges the people to hide God's words in their hearts so that the way they live their lives will match up with what they understand and confess with their mouths so they will be obedient. After parents have loved God with all their being and have hidden God's commands in their hearts, then they are ready to teach them diligently to their children.[27]

God still has a particular plan for the way in which He intends for the knowledge of Him to pass from generation to generation and person to person. Of this passing, Paul R. House writes,

> Each new member of the holy community must be taught God's ways. Faith does not occur automatically. It must be understood and owned, so each parent must teach his or her children, just as Moses has been teaching them. Instruction must be purposeful, even to the point of becoming public. The idea is to "impress, or inscribe" truth on the heart, not simply to suggest it.[28]

While it is clear from the biblical text that God intends for His commands to be passed from person to person and generation to generation, there are some differing views of who exactly is the intended audience of Moses' words in this passage. For example, James R. Hamilton, Jr., indicates that the command is to fathers and sons distinctly. His argument is that by giving the instruction to fathers and sons, the mothers and daughters

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[25]Telford Work, *Deuteronomy*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2009), 97.

[26]Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, The New American Commentary, vol. 4 (Nashville: B & H, 1994), 166.

[27]Anthony and Anthony, *A Theology for Family Ministry*, 121.

[28]Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1998), 178.

would also hear the words frequently repeated and discussed.[29] Perkins understands the

instruction to have been to all parents and writes of this passage: "The Lord's instructions

to parents are explicit."[30] While it is true that there is an explicit command contained in

the passage, it is also true that Moses was speaking to a community that would have

included people of varying ages and positions in life—not all would have been parents. So,

it could be said that the command was not explicitly given to parents, but rather to the

community as a whole. This position seems to be advocated by Terry McGonigal:

> The community of God's people is given special responsibility to care for the
> children. The parents and extended family, as well as the rest of the surrounding
> community, are expected to carry out their evangelistic responsibility of preparing
> the children and youth for the convergence of physical, spiritual, and social maturity
> in adulthood. They accomplish this task primarily through the daily living of the
> *Shema*.[31]

Anthony and Anthony refute this position while acknowledging that there is a

responsibility for the entire community: "Although it is true that the entire faith

community, as a family of God, has a responsibility to help nurture the growth and

development of all children, the Bible places the primary responsibility for this critical

task on parents."[32] This final position seems to find support in the remainder of Scripture,

including the afore discussed creation mandate.

      The *Shema* is practically applied as a matter of routine in family ministry

literature, but the application is slightly different depending upon the author. For example,

Haynes articulates a practical way of applying God's command through Moses' teaching:

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[29]James M. Hamilton, Jr., "That the Coming Generation Might Praise the Lord," *The Journal of Family Ministry* 1, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 2010): 12-13.

[30]Perkins, *Building Up Zion's Walls*, 12.

[31]Terry McGonigal, "Focusing Youth Ministry through Evangelism," in *Starting Right: Thinking Theologically about Youth Ministry*, ed. Kendra Creasy Dean, Chap Clark, and Dave Rahn (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 126.

[32]Anthony and Anthony, *A Theology for Family Ministry*, 25.

The plan is simple. A generation of adults loves God with every fiber of their being and demonstrates what that kind of life looks like by merely living in plain view of the younger generation. Part two of the plan is that a generation of parents intentionally teaches the Words of God diligently to their children in the normal aspects of life, like sitting at home or walking along the street or going to bed and getting up.[33]

In more forceful fashion, Voddie Baucham, Jr., writes of this plan:

Moses saw the home as the principal delivery system for the transmittal of God's truth from generation to generation. There is no hint here—or anywhere else in the Bible—of the multigenerational teaching of the truths of God being abdicated by parents in favor of 'trained professionals'.[34]

The differences in the application of the *Shema* as evidenced by ministry philosophy highlighted here is examined in detail in a later section of this paper.

Psalm 78:1-8

Another portion of Scripture that provides a helpful perspective on how families fit into God's story is Psalm 78:1-8. The beginning portion of the psalm indicates that God's people should tell of His deeds throughout the generations, which is followed by lessons from Israel's history that are meant to be taught to the coming generations.[35] As Willem A. VanGemeren indicates, the idea is that "the Israelites were expected to teach this revelation to their children from generation to generation so that each generation might 'put their trust in God' by remembering 'His deeds' and keeping 'His commands.'"[36] In this way, the psalmist seems to reference the *Shema* of Deuteronomy 6.[37] As a result, this psalm provides a helpful reference point for how God intended for

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[33]Haynes, *Legacy Path*, 2.

[34]Voddie Baucham, Jr., *Family Driven Faith: Doing What It Takes to Raise Sons and Daughters Who Walk with God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 89.

[35]Willem A. VanGemeren, *Psalms*, in vol. 5 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 591.

[36]Ibid., 593.

[37]John Goldingay, *Psalms 42-89*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Wisdom and Psalms, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 484.

the story of His people to be passed through families. That is, it is still a priority of God's to use the family structures He created to keep the focus of His people on Him.

Ephesians 6:4

In many cases, family ministry finds its strongest rooting in the Old Testament. Andy Stirrup addresses this fact when he writes,

> It is possible that advocates of family ministry leave themselves open to the charge that they are ignoring or misunderstanding significant developments that have taken place across Testaments. For example, it could be argued from Mark 3:31-35 that any focus on the family that was apparent from the Old Testament is now set aside. Perhaps in the kingdom of God, family boundaries become blurred or erased, like boundaries between ethnic groups (Eph 2:19) and social positions (Eph 6:8).[38]

Baucham addresses this lack of direct family discipleship discussion in the New Testament: "Admittedly, there aren't many passages in the New Testament devoted to family discipleship. However, one reason for this is that the New Testament writers already assumed the Old Testament in this regard."[39] In the New Testament, however, one passage stands apart as a strong justification for family discipleship. Ephesians 6:4 states, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." If there was any doubt that the family was still part of God's plan for the propagation of the gospel from generation to generation, it is all but disproved in this passage.[40]

Of course, this passage seems to neglect the mother in the role of family discipleship. According to Robert L. Plummer, the fact that Paul singles out fathers in this passage indicates that the father is primarily responsible for the child's moral and

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[38]Andy Stirrup, "From Whom Every Family in Heaven and on Earth Is Named," *The Journal of Family Ministry* 1, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 2010): 28.

[39]Voddie Baucham, *Family Shepherds: Calling and Equipping Men to Lead Their Homes* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 23.

[40]Other passages also emphasize the importance of the family in the New Testament. These passages are explored in a subsequent section in this chapter.

spiritual care. This does not exclude mothers, but it does highlight the father's biblical headship.[41] In fact, the letter to the Ephesians was likely to have been read aloud in the assembled congregation, which means that mothers would have heard the charge as well. Plummer continues,

> New Testament instructions to parents and children were first communicated orally to an assembled body of believers. The presence of direct commands to children in the texts (Eph 6:1; Col 3:20-21) suggests that children of various ages and varying commitments were present with their parents. Both parents and children received instructions in the presence of one another and in the presence of the faith community.[42]

This practice would seem to suggest a continued emphasis on family discipleship that would have been prevalent in the New Testament church.

Acts Accounts

Another New Testament resource for family ministry guidance is the Acts of the Apostles. While not the explicit point of the book of Acts, there are examples of the importance of family discipleship in the text. What can be seen in this descriptive book are examples of family discipleship in action, as opposed to direct commands.[43] This is primarily the case with the accounts of household conversions captured in Acts 10; 16:11-15; 16:25-34; and 18:8. Of these household conversions, Plummer writes, "In the narrative of Acts, the reports of household conversions highlight the importance of

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[41]Robert L. Plummer, "Bring Them Up in the Discipline and Instruction of the Lord," *The Journal of Family Ministry* 1, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 2010): 21.

[42]Ibid., 22.

[43]Certainly, the book of Acts is a descriptive book and not a prescriptive book. While it may be dangerous to attempt to identify direct commands from this text, it is included in Scripture for a reason. Part of that reason is to describe exactly what happened with the first church, but it also serves to communicate examples of faith and discipleship. For further discussion of this concept, see Alan J. Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord: Luke's Account of God's Unfolding Plan* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011), 22-27; and John B. Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary, vol. 26 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 55-57.

parents passing on the faith to their children."[44] These positive examples show how effective it can be when parents lead their families toward faith in Christ. Of the church in Acts, Jose de Mesa states,

> The church which grows through household conversions becomes at the same time a worldwide household of faith. It is noteworthy that the gospel spread through the institution of the family, which was politically powerless. It played no part in Palestine's power structure except as supplier of its economic resources and the object of its devouring policies. So, unlike the period beginning in the fourth century when Christianity became state religion and when the church had much political power, the gospel earlier spread through the institution of the family.[45]

As a result, the family conversion records found in the book of Acts provide an example of what family discipleship can do for the church at large.

<center>

New Testament Family Language

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In addition to the specific passages discussed, family language found in several other areas of the New Testament can be instructive for family discipleship. For example, as Carolyn Osiek and David L. Balch indicate, in the Gospel of John "familial relationships continue to be models for church relationships."[46] Similarly, Paul's letters use familial language 277 times.[47] In general, this language has to do with the way in which Christians interact with one another. As Dustin Willis and Aaron Coe indicate, "God has reconciled believers to Himself and adopted them as sons and daughters into His family. As God's children, the church is designed to function as a family, united in

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[44]Plummer, "Bring Them Up," 21.

[45]Jose M. de Mesa, "Re-Rooting Mission in the Family," *Mission Studies* 19, no. 1 (2002): 145.

[46]Carolyn Osiek and David L. Balch, *Families in the New Testament World: Households and House Churches* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 163.

[47]Joseph H. Hellerman, *When the Church Was a Family: Recapturing Jesus' Vision for Authentic Community* (Nashville: B & H, 2009), 77. Of the prolific way in which Paul used familial language, Hellerman states, "The frequency with which Paul used these terms is all the more striking when one considers that the great majority of these occurrences (particularly where 'brother' is concerned) reflect the surrogate (church) family model." Ibid., 78. Hellerman's argument throughout his text is that family language used to refer to the church serves to strengthen the biblical idea that church is meant to become family to its members.

heart and purpose."[48] This sentiment is echoed by Moll and Chester, who state, "We belong to one another just as biological families belong to one another." Similarly, Jack and Judith Balswick indicate, "In form the church should resemble a family; its members, after all, are described as the children of God and brothers and sisters of Christ."[49] The reason for this language is not directly family life, but the quality of life in the assembly of the church.[50] It is still applicable for understanding family discipleship, however, because, as Scott T. Brown indicates, "Social life in the early church was characterized by intergenerational relationships."[51] These are the types of relationship that exist within families.

If family relationships are used as the metaphor to describe the church, then it would seem that family relationships are of great importance. Randy Stinson writes, "The church is the family of God, and family relationships represent a divinely ordained paradigm for God's church, which is why it is so important for our relationships in the family and in the church to reflect God's ideal."[52] This same argument is made by Henry F. Cope:

> If we sum up all the teachings of Jesus and separate them from our preconceptions of their theological content, we cannot but be impressed with the fact that he seized upon the family life as the best expression of the highest relationships; that he pointed to a purified family life, in which spiritual aims would dominate, as the best expression of ideal relationships among his followers; and that he glorified marriage

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[48]Dustin Willis and Aaron Coe, *Life on Mission: Joining the Everyday Mission of God* (Chicago: Moody, 2014), 87.

[49]Jack O. Balswick and Judith K. Balswick, *The Family: A Christian Perspective on the Contemporary Home*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 364.

[50]Osiek and Balch, *Families in the New Testament World*, 216-17.

[51]Scott T. Brown, *A Weed in the Church: How a Culture of Age Segregation is Destroying the Younger Generation, Fragmenting the Family, and Dividing the Church* (Wake Forest, NC: The National Center for Family-Integrated Churches, 2011), 177.

[52]Randy Stinson, "Family Ministry and the Future of the Church," in *Perspectives on Family Ministry: 3 Views*, ed. Timothy Paul Jones (Nashville: B & H, 2009), 3.

and really made the family the great, divine, sacramental institution of human society.[53]

Carolyn Osiek and David Balch conclude their argument in this area in much the same way:

> The political philosophy that leadership and the ordering of the whole are only as good as the leadership and ordering of the parts, that as goes the family, so goes the state, meant in its Christian application that the family continued to be the important testing ground for the strength of the church—never, however, as an end in itself.[54]

There is caution to be used in this area, as was stated by Osiek and Balch—the family cannot be the end in itself. Andreas Kostenberger and David Jones give this pause in their treatment of this topic as well:

> It should be noted that the New Testament application of the 'household' metaphor to the church does not mean that it conceives of the church as a family of families with individual family units constituting the primary structural backbone of the church, but as the broader base of the family of God where the older, more mature believers train up and nurture the younger ones. . . . It is . . .better to understand the 'household' metaphor for the church as conveying the notion that analogous to the natural household, believers, by virtues of their common faith in Jesus Christ, are adopted into God's family the church, and thus becomes spiritual 'brothers' and 'sisters' in Christ.[55]

Baucham acknowledges the same conclusion, but also cautions against neglecting family relationships: "While the New Testament does acknowledge the church as a spiritual as opposed to a national people, there's no indication that this distinction overturns the clear pattern of family relationships, responsibility, and discipleship."[56] As a result, it is important to realize the stress placed in the New Testament both on the church reflecting the family and on parents accepting their God-given responsibility to disciple their children with children recognizing their duties toward their parents.

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[53]Henry F. Cope, *Religious Education in the Family* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1915), 42.

[54]Osiek and Balch, *Families in the New Testament World*, 222.

[55]Andreas J. Kostenberger and David W. Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 253.

[56]Baucham, *Family Shepherds*, 24.

The Gospel

One last, but crucial, portion of Scripture that informs the theological understanding of family discipleship is the gospel of Jesus Christ. This topic is of the utmost importance because it is the crux of Scripture. In fact, Paul calls it the item of greatest importance in his message in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. In that passage, Paul defines the gospel as the fact that "Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures." Jesse Johnson captures the essence of this fact when he writes, "The gospel is the news that Jesus is the Messiah who was crucified in the place of sinners, and then raised from the dead on the third day."[57] This truth changes the lives of those who believe and motivates a reordering of relationships. As a result, Timothy Paul Jones concludes,

> Jesus Christ has bonded believers together once and for all by breaking down the barriers between them on the basis of His own blood (Eph 2:14-15). Part of the scandal of the cross is the fact that those who rub shoulders in the shadow of the cross are precisely the people that would never naturally mingle with one another— brothers and sisters from different people groups and nations and generations. That's why the Holy Spirit of God, speaking through the words of Scripture, specifically calls for close intergenerational connections among God's people (Titus 2:1-5) as well as discipleship that flows from the fathers of one generation to the children of the next (Eph 6:4; Col 3:21; see also Mal 4:6; Luke 1:17). These are not issues of preference or convenience. They are issues of faithfulness to God's design for His church and they are rooted in the gospel itself.[58]

Eric Mason points out that the love of God caused Jesus to live differently: "Jesus' identity and mission as God the Son was understood and lived out in light of the Father's love for Him."[59] In the same way, the Christian church and family operate differently as a result of the love of God exhibited through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

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[57]Jesse Johnson, "God's Global Goal: The Power of the Great Commission," in *Evangelism: How to Share the Gospel Faithfully*, ed. John MacArthur (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2011), 27.

[58]Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan, 2011), 129.

[59]Eric Mason, *Manhood Restored: How the Gospel Makes Men Whole* (Nashville: B & H, 2013), 33.

One way in which the two God-ordained institutions of church and family are different as a result of the gospel is the way in which they relate to one another. Thompson indicates, "God intends for a beautiful partnership to exist between the home and the local church. As a matter of fact, God intends for the Christian home to be a body of Christ in microcosm."[60] This delicate balance can be difficult to achieve, however. Peter Schemm issues a caution about maintaining that balance in light of the gospel:

> The Christian household, while important, must never become *more* important to us than the church or the kingdom of Christ. Such a belief would undermine the primacy of the gospel of Christ and oppose the plain teaching of Jesus: 'whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me' (Matt 10:37).[61]

Nonetheless, it is a worthy and persuasive goal for every church and every family to relate properly because of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Practically, the gospel transforms the way in which both church and family relationships are undertaken. According to Merton P. Strommen and Richard A. Hardel, "The church follows Christ by ensuring that no one in the family of faith is familyless [*sic*]—everyone is adopted into the family of Christ."[62] Thereby, the church is family for those without family—something which would not naturally occur apart from the gospel. Similarly, the gospel informs the way Christian parents interact with their children. Farley stresses this when he writes, "In the final analysis, all [the] gospel truths culminate in the cross. Wise parents go there for direction, wisdom, and counsel."[63] This perspective exists because, as Tedd Tripp indicates, "The central focus of parenting is the

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[60]Thompson, *Intentional Parenting*, 6.

[61]Peter J. Schemm, Jr., "Habits of a Gospel-Centered Household," in *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective*, ed. Randy Stinson and Timothy Paul Jones (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 191-92, emphasis original.

[62]Merton P. Strommen and Richard A. Hardel, *Passing on the Faith: A Radical New Model for Youth and Family Ministry* (Winona, MN: Saint Mary's, 2000), 20.

[63]Farley, *Gospel-Powered Parenting*, 50.

gospel."[64] As a result, the gospel must be seen as foundational when it comes to the understanding of family discipleship and its scriptural and theological basis.

Family Ministry in Historical Context

The purpose of this section is to understand the evolution of family ministry to its contemporary form, including a brief historical overview as well as realizations that have brought about a modern day transition to a family discipleship emphasis.

Historical Overview

The process of family discipleship would have been considered by the early church as the normal process for the evangelism of the next generation, as was discussed in a previous section of this chapter regarding the church in the Book of Acts. This idea seems to have persisted since even the practice of infant baptism that arose in the church points toward parents' desire to pass-on their faith to their offspring.[65] It is a common understanding that prior to the Industrial Revolution, family discipleship was the standard and would have been expected in religious families.[66] Of this understanding, Mark Senter writes, "Before the Industrial Revolution in the nineteenth century the family was the center of Christian nurture."[67] Perhaps this was because of the agrarian nature of rural life, or because families had more access to extended family, but it was nonetheless the case.[68]

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[64]Tedd Tripp, *Shepherding a Child's Heart*, rev. ed. (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd, 2005), xxi.

[65]Plummer, "Bring Them Up," 24-25.

[66]See Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 125-27.

[67]Mark H. Senter III, "Emerging Models of Youth Ministry," in *Reaching a Generation for Christ: A Comprehensive Guide to Youth Ministry*, ed. Richard R. Dunn and Mark H. Senter III (Chicago: Moody, 1997), 195.

[68]This shift during the Industrial Revolution represented a significant change to family life. Merton P. Strommen, *Bridging the Gap* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1973), 15, notes, "You can imagine the changes in family life when the factories of the towns and cities opened their doors to child labor. Young people quickly took advantages of their opportunities to earn freedom. A 14 year-old could earn more money in a city factory than father could earn on the farm. This meant that youth of this age became free agents, living alone in the city and paying for their own food and clothing." This type of family life, in

The understanding that parents were responsible for discipling their children would have been the assumption when Cotton Mather wrote *A Family Well-Ordered* in 1699. In that text, he writes, "Our whole household, as well as the children who are our offspring, are to be taught the way of the Lord."[69] Similarly, writing during the Industrial Revolution, Charles H. Spurgeon explains,

> In this simple way, by God's grace, a living testimony for truth is always to be kept alive in the land: the beloved of the Lord are to hand down their witness for the gospel and the covenant to their heirs, and these again to their next descendants. This is our *first* duty; we are to begin at the family hearth: he is a bad preacher who does not commence his ministry at home. . . . To teach our children is a *personal* duty; we cannot delegate it to [Sunday School] teachers or other friendly helpers. These can assist us but cannot deliver us from the sacred obligation; substitutes and sponsors are wicked devices in this case: mothers and fathers must, like Abraham, command their households in the fear of God and talk with their offspring concerning the wondrous works of the Most High.[70]

Unfortunately, this thought did not maintain throughout that time, so it has been necessary to seek to regain an emphasis on family discipleship in the twenty-first century church.

While it would be a mistake to generalize a certain ministry model to all churches in a region or country, prevailing patterns seemed to exist prior to the Industrial Revolution and others that seemed to evolve after that time. Jones traces this evolution in *Family Ministry Field Guide*. In that text, he shows a progression from time of the Industrial Revolution forward in terms of the way in which young people were ministered to in the church. This progression began with societies, such as the Christian Endeavor Society, around the beginning of the twentieth century, progressed through a streamlined efficiency movement in the early-1900s, developed into a separation sponsored by parachurch organizations in the mid-1900s, and wound its way into a complete

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some ways, may explain why young people are contemporarily pursued outside of their families, with parents seen as a matter of function rather than a source of influence and discipleship.

[69]Cotton Mather, *A Family Well-Ordered*, ed. Don Kistler (1699; repr., Morgan PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 2001), 3.

[70]Charles H. Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening*, ed. Alistair Begg, rev. ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), July 11, evening, emphasis original.

segmentation by the late-1900s.[71] Of the arrival at this final step of family segmentation, Anthony and Anthony write,

> In a clear majority of twentieth-century congregations, ministry to families took the form of separate, age-organized programs. In keeping with the ideals of the efficiency movement, ministries were centralized in church buildings, segmented by age, and—if possible—staffed by professionals. In many churches ministry to youth already operated as a separate component.[72]

This progression is what made transitioning toward a family discipleship emphasis in the current generation difficult—it is a foreign movement to those raising families and leading churches in much of contemporary culture.

One early family ministry author was Henry F. Cope, whose 1915 book *Religious Education in the Family* provides insight into the push for more emphasis on family discipleship in that decade. Cope writes, "The family must be seen as making spiritual persons."[73] He adds, "No amount of [Sunday School] teaching on the Beatitudes or [weekday] teaching on civics is going to overcome the down-drag of envious, antisocial thought and feeling and conversation in the home. Home action and attitude count more than all besides."[74] Cope's work, however, may point to a potential problem with the movement—and a reason why family discipleship did not seem to be a point of emphasis until the end of the twenty-first century. Namely, the problem is that the aim was not necessarily discipleship or gospel transformation, but rather character development for the purpose of civic responsibility. This perspective can be seen in the above quote, but also in other places in Cope's work. For example, Cope writes, "The first great element to be preserved in all family life is that of the power of the small group for

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[71]Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 127.

[72]Anthony and Anthony, *A Theology for Family Ministry*, 170.

[73]Cope, *Religious Education*, 4.

[74]Ibid., 82.

purposes of character development."[75] While Cope recognized the power of the home, he stopped short of recognizing its true responsibility of discipleship for the kingdom of God. This emphasis is representative of other writings of the time and a possible reason why the movement stalled and staggered through the twenty-first century. Senter alludes to this phenomenon:

> It did not take long until publishers and church leaders, while giving lip service to the role of the family, appeared to place all of their emphasis on educational experiences that excluded parents. With the emergence of the youth pastor in the sixties and seventies, this trend spiraled, and soon well-meaning youth pastors even viewed parents as obstacles to the spiritual development of teenagers.[76]

It is this shift that has caused some contemporary church leaders to recognize the need for a different way of ministering to families.

Movement toward Contemporary Family Ministry

The contemporary movement toward a family discipleship strategy that includes educational degrees, ministry programs, academic journals, and theology books focused on bringing about a change in ministry philosophy and strategy began, in many ways, through the outcries and decries of pastors and ministry leaders who recognized God's imperative of family discipleship. Mason states, "The family must know where the family is going."[77] As such, it has taken ministry leaders helping to point out the lack of direction for families to move the ministry ideal in any significant way. Bauchaum decries the problem in *Family Driven Faith* when he writes,

> Just a few generations ago a man was considered spiritually responsible if he led his family before the throne of God in prayer, read and taught the Scriptures at home, and led family devotions (among other things). Today, parents are considered responsible if they find the church with the best-staffed nursery and the most up-to-date youth

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[75]Cope, *Religious Education*, 28.

[76]Senter, "Emerging Models of Youth Ministry," 197.

[77]Mason, *Manhood Restored*, 143.

ministry. In fact, there is a rule in church growth circles known as the 3 P's: if you want to grow your church, concentrate on parking, preaching, and preschool.[78]

Holmen makes a similar observation:

> Just as parents take their children to a soccer coach to learn soccer and to a piano teacher to learn piano, they bring their children to the local church to learn faith. This drop-off approach might, at best, keep kids busy in a church for a few years. But it usually doesn't lead to lasting faith that will stay with them through adolescence and into their adult years.[79]

Further, Steve Wright and Chris Graves write, "God created the family. God created the church. And in His wisdom, He created the two to function together. The biblical idea is one of the family supporting the church and the church supporting the family, but it's not happening today."[80]

Other reasons, however, may have contributed to the contemporary rise of family discipleship strategies. Bryan Nelson and Timothy Paul Jones point out, "In many cases, churches are focusing on family ministry as a reaction to dismal retention statistics."[81] That is, some churches have noticed that students who graduate from their programs do not continue to attend church or pursue a relationship with Christ. These authors also point to the ministry strategy itself as the problem:

> It would be a flagrant overgeneralization to blame parental abdication on segmented church programming. At the same time, the growth of professional, age-focused ministers may have made it easier for parents to perceive that the training of their children in the fear of God must be someone else's responsibility.[82]

Regardless of the motivation, there is in fact a movement toward family ministry strategies in contemporary churches. This effort can be seen in the writing of a

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[78]Baucham, *Family Driven Faith*, 95.

[79]Holmen, *Church+Home*, 34.

[80]Steve Wright and Chris Graves, *reThink: Decide for Yourself, Is Student Ministry Working?* (Wake Forest, NC: InQuest, 2007), 105.

[81]Bryan Nelson and Timothy Paul Jones, "The Problem and the Promise of Family Ministry," *The Journal of Family Ministry* 1, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 2010): 36.

[82]Ibid., 37-38.

varied group of authors. For example, Lawrence O. Richards states, "Participation by parents in faith community relationships is necessary for effective ministry to children in the family setting. It need not be considered sufficient."[83] Similarly, David W. Anderson writes, "Because the home is a place where God's people dwell and prepare to serve in the large world, it is a place worthy of the attention and support of local congregations as part of the renewal of the life of the larger church."[84] Further, Dean Borgman states, "Youth ministry must be youth *and* family ministry."[85] Finally, Roland D. Martinson writes,

> Families, no matter their form and quality, are crucibles shaping faith and values. Parents can rise to the awareness of the noble role they exercise in the lives of their children. Churches can inspire new visions of this noble calling and enrich the quality of the ethos and mythos that nurture faith, shape values, and make disciples of the next generation.[86]

In light of these perspectives, the move toward family ministry is a verified one and one that deserves attention.

Realization of the Problem

In order to better understand the factors involved with the movement toward family ministry, it is important to document the realization of the problem as it has been recorded in the precedent literature. One of these realizations is the understanding that parents rely heavily on the church. Linda Ranson Jacobs elaborates:

> Families want *and expect* a quality children's and youth ministry. . . . After wanting kids to have fun, most parents want a ministry that creates relationships and invests

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[83]Lawrence O. Richards, *Children's Ministry: Nurturing Faith within the Family of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 195.

[84]David W. Anderson, *From the Great Omission to Vibrant Faith: The Role of the Home in Renewing the Church* (Minneapolis: Vibrant Faith, 2009), 17.

[85]Dean Borgman, *Foundations for Youth Ministry: Theological Engagement with Teen Life and Culture*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 114, emphasis original.

[86]Roland D. Martinson, "The Role of Family in the Faith and Value Formation of Children," *Word & World* 17, no. 4 (Fall 1997): 404.

in the children's spiritual growth. Parents expect the church to do *all of the spiritual teaching* of their children.[87]

Holmen echoes this sentiment: "Unfortunately, many parents today have abdicated the faith formation responsibility to the church or a Christian school by enrolling their children in church programs in the hope that these things will lead them to be Christians."[88]

According to Jones, this is a true problem with a clear solution:

> From the perspective of too many parents, schoolteachers are responsible to grow their children's minds, coaches are employed to train their bodies, and specialized ministers at church ought to develop their souls. When it comes to schooling and coaching, these perspectives may or may not be particularly problematic. When it comes to Christian formation, however, this perspective faces a single critical snag: God specifically calls believing parents to the task of training their children in the Christian faith. This is one task that, from the perspective of Scripture, parents simply cannot hire someone else to do.[89]

This parental mindset has led not only to an abdication of the critical role of discipling children, but also, according to David W. Anderson and Paul Hill, it has also caused tension between parents and ministry leaders:

> Resentment has existed among church professional concerning the inactivity of parents in the life of faith. But this is not a fair accusation of parents and guardians. After decades of implicitly telling parents and guardians that they have nothing to offer (by implying that parents and guardians are not experts and lack the skills, training, and insight to form faith), what can the professionals expect? Parents and guardians need to be esteemed, encouraged, and trained for their vital role in nurturing faith, values, and character formation.[90]

This part of the realization of the problem and need for change points to another point of recognition. Anderson writes, "Recent generations have been doing what church leaders

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[87]Linda Ranson Jacobs, *Attract Families to Your Church and Keep Them Coming Back* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2014), 21, emphasis original.

[88]Mark Holmen, *Impress Faith on Your Kids* (Nashville: Randall House, 2011), 31.

[89]Timothy Paul Jones, "The Task Too Significant to Hire Some Else to Do," in Jones, *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, 23.

[90]David W. Anderson and Paul Hill, *Frogs without Legs Can't Hear: Nurturing Discipleship in Home and Congregation* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2003), 55.

have requested of them: 'Get your kids to us, and we will raise them for you in the Christian faith.' The problem is that it does not always work."[91]

Another part of the realization of the problem and need for change is that the church is having difficulty making disciples of the next generation. That is, the strategy of the twentieth century simply has not worked in making disciples and growing the church of Jesus Christ. Holmen has said of the current situation, "While the approach of 'dropping off the kids at church' might keep them busy at church for a few years, it often [does not] lead to faith that lasts into their adult years."[92] This sentiment is echoed by Ken Ham and Britt Beemer:

> Part of the concern is that the mere existence of youth ministry and [Sunday School] allows parents to shrug off their responsibilities as the primary teachers, mentors, and pastors to their family. The other part of the concern is that, again, what we are doing just [is not] working.[93]

Chap Clark also recognizes that the current ministry strategy simply is not doing what it is supposed to be doing:

> Students graduate from a youth program they found irrelevant and unchallenging into an adult church "family" they have never really known or learned to care for. The result is church kids who have grown up without a love for the church, kids whose generation's hard-won independence from the establishment has cost them a meaningful connection to the body of Christ.[94]

Along the same lines, Mark DeVries indicates,

> Increasingly, the message of adult culture has become "[You are] on your own." And this isolation (intentional or unintentional) has placed our culture squarely atop a demographic time bomb, and more and more voices are reporting that they can hear it ticking. I am convinced, therefore, that the most chronic problem our

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[91]Anderson, *From the Great Omission*, 18-19.

[92]Mark Holmen, *Faith Begins at Home* (Ventura, CA: Gospel Light, 2005), 46.

[93]Ken Ham and Britt Beemer, *Already Gone: Why Your Kids Will Quit Church and What You Can Do to Stop It* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2009), 47.

[94]Chap Clark, *The Youth Worker's Handbook to Family Ministry: Strategies and Practical Ideas for Reaching Your Students' Families* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 8.

church's youth ministries must address is the segregation of our teenagers into their own ghetto.[95]

The way in which these realizations are articulated are sharp and convicting, leaving the reader with little recourse other than to embrace the idea that a broken system in the church must be corrected.[96]

A third part of the realization of the need for family ministry strategy is that it is the right way to accomplish the task of discipling the next generation. As indicated, family discipleship is both a biblical imperative and a historical precedent, which is why Stinson's call for family ministry strategy is important. He writes,

> Family ministry is necessary and significant because families are under siege. They have been under siege since the beginning of time. When God declared in the third chapter of Genesis that the serpent would bruise the heel of the woman's offspring but that her offspring would crush the serpent's head, God invoked a declaration of war. From that point to this one it has been the enemy's hellish strategy to undermine families. There is a bull's eye on the back of every home, and the church must reorient itself to protect and to develop families.[97]

This strong problem requires decisive action.

Fourth, ministry leaders and practitioners are realizing the problem of what is being communicated about parents and families. According to Marcia J. Bunge,

> Despite the recognition of the powerful role of parents and other primary care-givers in the faith formation of children and young people, many congregations still fail to emphasize the importance of parents in their children, youth, and family ministry programs. Religious education programs often operate in isolation from the home, not as an extension of the home.[98]

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[95]Mark DeVries, "Focusing Youth Ministry through the Family," in *Starting Right*, 145.

[96]Another important part of this realization must be that there are and have always been churches faithfully ministering to families in such a way that parents recognize their role as primary disciple-makers in their children's lives and faithfully embrace that role. The realization herein contained is one that applies more to the church at large and is, in many ways, a healthy realization that has sparked a renewal of timeless principles.

[97]Stinson, "Family Ministry and the Future of the Church," 1.

[98]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 (Winter 2008): 349.

She continues in the same article to concede, "Although churches certainly honor the work of parents, language about parents and their role in the lives of a child's faith formation is sometimes weak."[99] At times, this language completely disregards the role of the parents. As Jolene and Eugene Roehlkepartain indicate, "Congregations typically tout a nursery, religious education for children, youth activities, and an occasional family activity as its family ministry. These are all essential, but many family ministries overlook members of the family: the parents."[100] Therefore, even churches that seek to engage in family ministry strategies fail by what they communicate about parents. Anderson and Hill state, "Church leaders need to know that at times, vast differences exist between what the church wants to communicate in its teaching and what it actually teaches by the way it operates as a programmatic institution."[101] Charles Sell provides a similar caution:

> Giving visibility and identity to families requires more than including the word *family* in the church announcements. Priorities and values are communicated not just in what an organization says, but in what it does. The nonverbal messages sent by the church's activities and administration will need to say, "Family matters."[102]

A caution given about the realization of the need to move toward family ministry strategies is that programs and structures may not be the answer. Church leaders may be tempted to simply adopt a program to fix the problem, but, according to Jones, this is not the answer:

> If the congregation's motive for forming a family ministry is to find a programmatic cure-all to solve a perceived problem of losing young adults, the strategy will have failed before family ministry even begins—even if every church member applauds the new program as a resounding success. Such a congregation has bought into the

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[99]Bunge, "Biblical and Theological Perspectives," 351.

[100]Jolene Roehlkepartain and Eugene Roehlkepartain, *Embracing Parents: How Your Congregation Can Strengthen Families* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2004), 5.

[101]Anderson and Hill, *Frogs without Legs*, 21.

[102]Charles M. Sell, *Family Ministry*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 149-50, emphasis original.

soul-draining delusion that growth depends not on the Word of God but on implementing the right programs to respond to each problem.[103]

As a result, the recognition of a problem is in itself not enough to bring about change. That recognition must also realize a path forward.

Realization of the Importance of Families

Another part of the contemporary movement toward family ministry is the realization of the importance of families. It is one thing to recognize a problem; it is quite another to recognize the answer to that problem. For contemporary family ministry practitioners, part of that process was realizing that families are meant to be a part of the plan for discipleship in the church and not simply an object of it. DeVries captures this sentiment: "Across the nation, churches are beginning to wake up to the fact that often the most faithful, long-term leaders of youth can actually be parents of youth themselves."[104] In another work he writes, "Our isolated youth programs simply cannot compete with the formative power of the family."[105] This formative power is alluded to by multiple writers in the field of family ministry. For example, Holmen writes, "No one has more potential than mom and dad to shape the spiritual life of a teenager."[106] Similarly, Anderson and Hill explain, "In whatever form, families are the backbone of healthy society, and responsible family life is a powerful force."[107] Further, Rainey states, "A good home cannot be equaled as a place for a child to learn about and experience God."[108] Strommen and Hardel summarize their entire text in the same vein:

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[103]Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 58-59.

[104]DeVries, "Focusing Youth Ministry," 146.

[105]Mark DeVries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry*, rev. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 103.

[106]Holmen, *Impress Faith*, 43.

[107]Anderson and Hill, *Frogs without Legs*, 24.

[108]Rainey, *Twenty-First Century Families*, 82-83.

We conclude by reiterating that the family is the most powerful institution in promoting faith in youth. The family atmosphere allows children to enter into a love relationship with God. We say this out of conviction that congregations have erred in allowing the focus of faith development to shift from the home to the congregation or parish. In doing so congregations have institutionalized faith.[109]

These writers have not only realized a problem with the way ministry has been accomplished in the most recent decades, but also recognize that the problem has to do with a marginalization of the family.

Interestingly, several secular researchers have also recognized this problem and conclude that the problem has to do with a lack of parental engagement or prioritization. In their sociological study of teenagers and religion based on a nation-wide study, Smith and Denton conclude,

Parents of teenagers appear to play an important role in the character of their children's religious lives. In the immediacy of parenting teens, parents may feel a loss of control and influence over their teens, but nationally representative statistics show that the religious practices and commitments of parents remain an important influence on the religious practices and commitments of their teenage children.[110]

Similarly, sociological researchers Vern L. Bengston, Norella M. Putney, and Susan Harris conducted a multi-decade, longitudinal study of the effectiveness of passing faith from one generation to the next. These researchers write, "Despite sociohistorical changes in recent decades suggesting the decreased role of family and religion in society, we find considerable religious continuity between parents and children generations in our study."[111] Further, they summarize their study by writing,

In short, our results indicate that the decline in parental influence assumed by many has not occurred in religious beliefs and practices. Rather than rebelling against or abandoning their parents' values and beliefs, a majority of younger-generation

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[109]Strommen and Hardel, *Passing on the Faith*, 304.

[110]Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 115-16. While the research conducted by Smith and Denton is secular, or pluralistic, in nature, it is apparent that the authors are not truly secular.

[111]Vern L. Bengston, Norella M. Putney, and Susan Harris, *Families and Faith: How Religion Is Passed Down across Generations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 66.

members today appear to have retained those values and beliefs—while also adapting them into a new historical context.[112]

Bengston, Putney, and Harris continue, "It's easy to get the message that youth today are unresponsive to their parents' religious training, but the results of this study show that, even years later, parental religious socialization has been effective."[113] While not overtly secular, Catholic writer Jose M. de Mesa explains, "When it comes to religious socialization, it can be said that the family is a more important institution than the church."[114] Similarly, an article based on a survey by Search Institute in *Word and World*, by Roland D. Martinson, states, "Whatever else families are doing, whether intentionally or not, whether constructively or not, families are passing on values and faith of one kind or another to their children."[115]

These compelling arguments from both family ministry practitioners as well as largely secular writings indicate that the family is an institution of great importance for the successful passing of faith to children and teenagers. As Crawford W. Loritts, Jr., asserts, "The pivotal issues in life and ministry ultimately have to do with the health and wholeness of the family."[116] That is, families are of great importance to battling the problem of a decline in discipleship among young people. However, this problem finds its head in the way in which the church interacts with parents. Smith and Denton illuminate,

> First, the best way to get most youth involved in and serious about their faith communities is to get their *parents* more involved in and serious about their faith communities. For decades in many religious traditions, the prevailing model of youth ministry has relied on pulling teens away from their parents. In some cases, youth ministries have come to see parents as adversaries. There is no doubt a time and place for unique teen settings and activities; still, our findings suggest that

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[112]Bengston, Putney, and Harris, *Families and Faith*, 185-86.

[113]Ibid., 195.

[114]de Mesa, "Re-Rooting Mission," 139.

[115]Martinson, "The Role of the Family," 397.

[116]Crawford W. Loritts, Jr., "Renewal in the Home," in *Building Strong Families*, ed. Dennis Rainey (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002), 217.

overall youth ministry would probably best be pursued in a larger context of family ministry, that parents should be viewed as indispensable partners in the religious formation of youth.[117]

It is this realization and emphasis that helps to support the foundation of contemporary family ministry.

Contemporary Family Ministry

The field of family ministry as it is contemporarily understood consists of multiple practical ways of accomplishing one stated objective—the emphasis of parents as the primary disciple-makers in the lives of their children. Jones defines family ministry as "the process of intentionally and persistently coordinating a ministry's proclamation and practices so that parents are acknowledged, trained, and held accountable as primary disciple-makers in their children's lives."[118] This ministry coordination, however, takes multiple forms and looks different depending on the perspective of the practitioner. Tripp states, "Biblically, the method is as important as the objectives. God speaks to both issues. He is concerned not only with what we do, but also with how we do it."[119] Therefore, it is important to understand how family ministry is accomplished in the church. For example, Martinson, Black, and Roberto seem to reverse the process:

> Young people in exemplary congregations explore understandings of God and matters of faith in their families. Faith instruction in these congregations does not all occur in their youth ministries; families reinforce what's learned at church through intentional faith practices and conversations at home.[120]

This definition seems to make the church the primary disciple-making institution for children and teenagers, and the family a secondary sort of back-up plan—it reverses the order. This articulation does not meet the above definition of family ministry since, as

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[117]Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*, 267, emphasis original.

[118]Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 33.

[119]Tripp, *Shepherding a Child's Heart*, 59.

[120]Roland D. Martinson, Wes Black, and John Roberto, *The Spirit and Culture of Youth Ministry: Leading Congregations toward Exemplary Youth Ministry* (St. Paul, MN: EYM, 2010), 177.

Nelson and Jones articulate, a "Comprehensive-Coordinate Family Ministry seeks to coordinate the church's ministries so that each ministry actively and comprehensively partners with parents in the Christian formation of their children."[121] That is, the parents and parental relationships are primary and the church seeks to support families in their endeavor to make disciples of their children. This process is intentional. Senter writes, "*Parents* must be active participants with an intense desire to disciple their own children. This is not the type of program that can be imposed on unsuspecting parents and run by surrogate parents in the form of youth sponsors."[122] Therefore, it is important to understand how parents are to interact with the church before exploring the individual models of family ministry.

Parents and the Church

As has been illuminated, the church cannot neglect the importance of parents. Thompson writes, "The spiritual futures of children must be placed as a matter of primary importance back into the hands of the people who have the greatest opportunity to influence them for the Kingdom of God—their parents."[123] Interestingly, this thought is counter intuitive since many parents seem to feel a sense of inadequacy or fear when it comes to discipling their children. These parents feel that perhaps their children are more influenced by their peer groups or other respected adults, but this simply is not the case when parents accept their God-given role as the primary influencer in the lives of their children.[124] As May et al., indicates, this fear presents a compelling reason for churches "not to do their work for them but to affirm their crucial role in nurturing the faith of their

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[121]Nelson and Jones, "The Problem and the Promise," 37.

[122]Senter, "Emerging Models of Youth Ministry," 198, emphasis original.

[123]Thompson, *Intentional Parenting*, 10.

[124]Strommen and Hardel, *Passing on the Faith*, 85.

children and partner with them in the task."[125] Roehlkepartain and Roehlkepartain explain,

> Parents often need to be reminded of how much influence they have, particularly when their children enter the teenage years and assert their independence. They need to see that small positive actions that [they are] doing actually help—even if they [cannot] see the difference right now.[126]

In the larger discipleship context, Reggie Joiner indicates, "It is important to help parents understand that their role is not to impress their children or anyone else with their ability to be parents. Their role is to impress on their children the love and character of God."[127] Cannister summarizes this idea: "Partnering with parents means helping them recognize, understand, and embrace the significant depth of their influence and the numerous modes in which they can contribute to their teenager's development of a sustainable faith."[128] It is apparent that parents matter. Therefore, the church must recognize parental value in the way in which families are ministered to in every local congregation. Parents must be encouraged and trained for the task of discipling their children. This emphasis is the essence of a family ministry strategy. As a result, as May et al., articulate, "Young adults will be encouraged to take up their task of spiritual nurture in the home when the church affirms and celebrates them as chosen by God for that role."[129]

At the same time, as parents are cared for, trained, and encouraged by the church to disciple their children, it is important for parents to remember that they need the church. While parents are called to be the primary disciple-makers in the lives of their children,

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[125]May et al., *Children Matter*, 166.

[126]Roehlkepartain and Roehlkepartain, *Embracing Parents*, 115.

[127]Reggie Joiner, *Think Orange: Imagine the Impact When Church and Family Collide* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2009), 48.

[128]Mark W. Cannister, *Teenagers Matter: Making Student Ministry a Priority in the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 180.

[129]May et al., *Children Matter*, 166.

they are also called to be a part of the local church. Parents need the church and cannot

neglect it. Balswick and Baslwick assert, "The church, then, is to be a family to families

and a source of identity and support for isolated nuclear families."[130] Even more than

being a community for the people of God, however, the church is also an additional source

of spiritual training. Because every man is called to shepherd his family, but not all men

are equally gifted, the gifting within the broader community of the church suggests that

children also benefit from gathering to receive instruction from people other than their

parents,[131] which means that children and families must have access to one another in the

church.

There is a caution, however, to the way in which parents and the church interact.

Bengston, Putney, and Harris write,

> If churches want to retain the next generation, they must not ignore families and
> strengthening connections across generations in their programming. Unfortunately,
> most churches ignore this, without realizing it. They may have programs they call
> "intergenerational," but these involve bringing together individuals of different
> ages—children, youth, adults, older adults—not parents and *their* grandchildren.[132]

This caution is instructive because churches that do not intentionally help parents maintain

their position as primary disciple-makers in the lives of their children may unintentionally

slide back into a position no different than that of the church of the last several decades,

which has been identified as neglecting the parental role of primary faith trainer. The

church must emphasize the role of parents all while parents recognize their need for the

church. Hans Wiersma summarizes this concept well:

> Teaching parents and other caring adults to proclaim Christ to the children charged
> to them is, in the end, vocational instruction. As vocational instruction, youth and
> family ministry assumes that Christian parents have something to do: namely,
> acquaint their children with the gospel and bring them up to worship and serve God.

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[130]Balswick and Balswick, *The Family*, 365.

[131]Plummer, "Bring Them Up," 23.

[132]Bengston, Putney, and Harris, *Families and Faith*, 202, emphasis original.

As vocational instruction, youth and family ministry assumes that Christian congregations have something to do, namely, "equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ."[133]

This idea is precisely the goal of family ministry—a proper interaction between parents and the church.

Models of Family Ministry

In light of the way in which parents and the church ought to interact with one another, three models of family ministry have been identified and adhered to by contemporary family ministry authors and practitioners: family-integrated ministry, family-based ministry, and family-equipping ministry.[134] In addition to these ideas are various other ways of accomplishing ministry, but these three have emerged as identifiable movements. All three of these models are consistent with the definition of family ministry provided. Anthony and Anthony indicate,

> What all three of these models recognize is that, because God designed families to serve as the foremost framework for a child's Christian formation, churches must equip parents to function as vital partners in this process. The family is the normative context for the discipleship of children. Every Christian parent is, therefore, responsible to engage personally in the formation of his or her child's faith.[135]

While these three models are consistent with the provided definition of family ministry, they are also distinct. However, this fact does not mean that a single model is the correct model. Rainey states, "There is no single, best way for the church to do family ministry."[136] Similarly, Borgman writes, "There will be many answers, but none final, to the balance of age-distinct and family-ministry approaches for a church—both are

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[133]Hans Wiersma, "Law and Gospel, and Youth and Family Ministry," *Dialog* 47, no. 4 (Winter 2008): 325.

[134]Nelson and Jones, "The Problem and the Promise," 38.

[135]Anthony and Anthony, *A Theology for Family Ministry*, 173.

[136]Rainey, *Twenty-First Century Families*, 5.

needed, with different emphases in various church situations."[137] In fact, according to Jones, there is significant overlap between the models.[138] This overlap is evident in his Venn diagram graphic as shown in figure 1.[139] The distinctions are seen in the discussion of the various models.
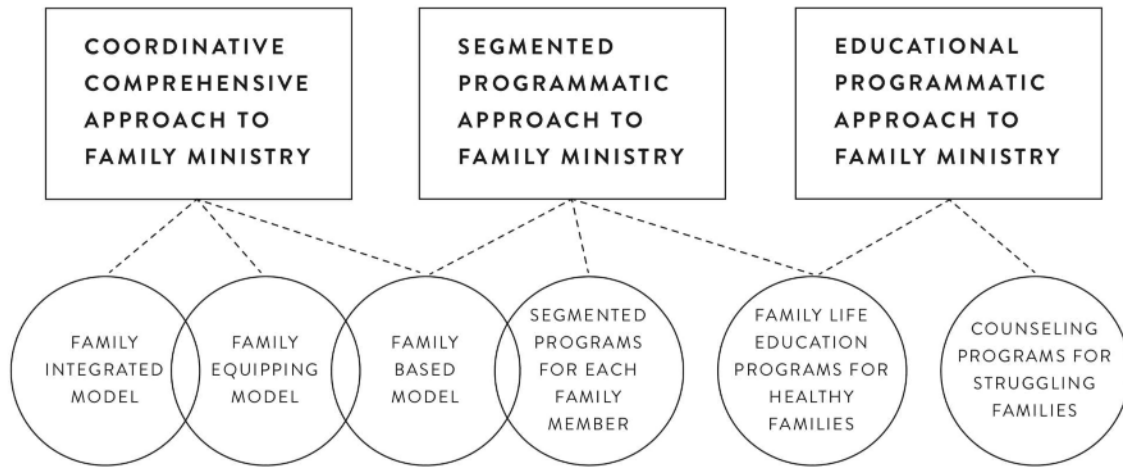

Figure 1. Modern and contemporary approaches to family ministry

Segmented-Programmatic Approach

Before exploring the three family ministry models, it is important to understand the current, most prevalent model of ministering to families in use in today's church: the segmented-programmatic approach. In this approach, family members are segmented into their own distinct programming. This method of ministering to the family seeks to reach each member of the family apart from the remaining members of it. According to Nelson and Jones, "In a segmented-programmatic congregation, every

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[137]Borgman, *Foundations for Youth Ministry*, 116.

[138]Jones, "Foundations for Family Ministry," 45.

[139]Nelson and Jones, "The Problem and the Promise," 38.

church ministry is segmented by age with little interaction or continuity between them. Ministry to families means having a separate ministry for each member of the family."[140]

An example of this type of ministry can be found in Arthur David Canales' article, "Models for Adolescent Ministry," where he writes,

> The youth ministry will be only as successful insofar as it is faithful: faithful to its youth, faithful to its mission, and faithful to [the gospel]. A comprehensive youth ministry must be firmly rooted in solid theology and ministerial praxis; if not, erosion may occur within the ministry.[141]

While this explanation seems compelling, what is solidly missing from this description— as well as all eight of the models included in the article—is any mention whatsoever of parents or families. While some may believe that ministering to members of the family is in itself family ministry, this is not what is intended by contemporary family ministry. As a result, there is debate as to "whether or not [the segmented-programmatic approach] ought to be called 'family ministry' at all."[142] According to Nelson and Jones, however, "What is beyond debate is the dominance of this ministry paradigm, particularly in American churches."[143] Anthony and Anthony point out that it takes something greater than just ministering to family members to be faithful to a family ministry strategy: "More contemporary family ministry models require far more than the addition of one more new program to the church's current roster of activities. These newer contemporary models require reorientation of every ministry in the church."[144] The newer contemporary models referred to by Anthony and Anthony are precisely those previously listed and examined next.

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[140]Nelson and Jones, "The Problem and the Promise," 37.

[141]Arthur David Canales, "Models for Adolescent Ministry: Exploring Eight Ecumenical Examples," *Religious Education* 101, no. 2 (Spring 2006): 230.

[142]Nelson and Jones, "The Problem and the Promise," 37.

[143]Ibid.

[144]Anthony and Anthony, *A Theology for Family Ministry*, 173.

The Family-Integrated Approach

The first and most dramatic of the three contemporary family ministry models is the family-integrated model.[145] This approach is the easiest to identify on the surface because it involves the abolition of all age-segmented ministries in the church. In this model, families are ministered to as a whole. According to Nelson and Jones,

> The family-integrated approach represented a complete break from 'neo-traditional' segmented programmatic church. Proponents of family integration contend that the modern American practice of age segregation goes beyond biblical mandate—and may even obstruct parents' obedience in discipling their children. As a result, in a family-integrated church, all or nearly all age-organized classes and events are eliminated, including youth group, children's church, and even age-graded Sunday School classes.[146]

Advocates of this ministry paradigm cite biblical passages such as Deuteronomy 12:6-12; 29:10-11; and 31:12 as the biblical bases for inter-generational worship and reject a break from this type of worship.[147] These passages contain accounts of entire families gathering before the Lord in worship. As a result of the conviction that this is the manner in which families should worship, the functional description of a "family of families" is a way of understanding the family-integrated process for evangelism and discipleship.[148] When juxtaposed with other family ministry models, these congregations are described by Jones as rejecting the addition of activities or combining events that are already happening, but instead, "family-integrated ministries remove every hint of generational segmentation. Finding insufficient biblical foundations for age-organized ministries, proponents of family integration make every activity and event intergenerational."[149]

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[145]The dramatic element of this ministry style is the sense that it is the most dramatically different than common ministry styles found in the American church.

[146]Nelson and Jones, "The Problem and the Promise," 39.

[147]Brown, *A Weed in the Church*, 168-69.

[148]Nelson and Jones, "The Problem and the Promise," 39.

[149]Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 131.

While family-integrated churches are easily identified, they also seem to be highly critiqued by those who practice different ministry models. This is, perhaps, due to the sharp, often blunt, way in which these congregations differ from other popular approaches to ministry. To compound the stark differences, it seems that those who argue for a family-integrated approach often do so by critiquing other ministry philosophies, which leads authors, such as Andreas J. Kostenberger and David W. Jones, to provide sharp evaluations. For example, Kostenberger and Jones write, "The true enemy is not the traditional church—it is Satan—and the church's central message is not family integration but the gospel of salvation by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ."[150] Of course, this critique seems to overemphasize the family-integrated approach as one that minimizes the gospel. This finding is not the case in the literature. Kostenberger and Jones do provide a pointed critique of the approach itself:

> The family of God is not a family of nuclear families but a gathering or body of true regenerate believers organized in a given locale as a local congregation under duly constituted leadership regardless of their family status. The family and the church each have distinct roles and serve distinct purposes in God's plan. They each have particular spheres of operation and powers and authorities. While there is a certain amount of overlap, these two entities should therefore not be confused or unduly collapsed.[151]

While the critique seems to find its root in the authors' theological position, other critiques come from methodological positions, such as those that can be found by proponents of youth and children's ministry. One such critique is that of Clark, who writes,

> Most parents feel inadequate to handle the task of leading their children closer to Jesus Christ in a meaningful way. Many parents feel guilty as it is when it comes to faith. Churches that place too great an emphasis on the responsibility of parents to disciple and nurture their kids can end up creating an even greater sense of parental frustration and guilt. If churches exert pressure on parents while offering no age-group targeted ministry help (such as a vibrant youth ministry program), people may be lost.[152]

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[150]Kostenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 261.

[151]Ibid., 256, emphasis original.

[152]Clark, *The Youth Worker's Handbook*, 17.

This critique is a weak justification since the problem of parental guilt is not a problem if it spurs parents to action, and for the fact that churches are called to equip their members for discipleship—including parents (Eph 4:11-14).

Each of these critiques can find its answer in the writing of advocates of the family-integrated approach. Of the charge that the aim in these churches is focused more on their structure than on their mission, much can be found. For example, Nelson and Jones indicate, "Families in family-integrated congregations view their households as contexts for mutual discipleship as well as evangelism of unbelievers."[153] The focus here seems to be God's mission more than the particular structure. This type of approach is common in this ministry model, as revealed next. To better understand the position as a whole, the writings of prominent authors in this field are examined.

Voddie Baucham, Jr.

Perhaps the most prominent proponent of family-integrated ministry is Voddie Baucham, Jr. He is the author of *Family Driven Faith: Doing What It Takes to Raise Sons and Daughters Who Walk with God*. Baucham argues for the importance of the home as the context for discipleship: "Contrary to popular belief, the home, not the church, has been entrusted with the primary responsibility of teaching children the Bible."[154] According to Baucham, the primacy of the home for discipleship does not relegate the church to a minor role. In terms of discipleship, Baucham writes, "We do not rely *either* on the pulpit *or* on the home. Both institutions are charged to play their role in this matter and neither is called to do so without the other."[155]

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[153]Nelson and Jones, "The Problem and the Promise," 39.

[154]Baucham, *Family Driven Faith*, 93.

[155]Baucham, *Family Shepherds,* 20, emphasis original.

Baucham seeks to draw a distinction between what happens in the family-integrated church as opposed to other churches—even other churches that employ a family ministry strategy. Of the differences between family-integrated strategy and family-based strategy, Baucham states, "There is a world of difference between the family-based youth ministry movement and the family-integrated church."[156] To his point, he emphasizes, "There is no systematic age segregation in the family-integrated church!"[157] For Baucham, this strategy is based on an insistence that integration is an ecclesiological principle found in Scripture.[158] He strongly states his conviction when he writes,

> While I believe the vast majority of those who shepherd segregated portions of congregations are well meaning and would never presume to replace parents in their biblical role, I believe the modern practice of systematic age segregation goes beyond the biblical mandate. I believe it is a product of the American educational system, and in some instances actually works against families as opposed to helping them pursue multigenerational faithfulness. I believe the church's emphasis ought to be on equipping parents to disciple their children instead of doing it on their behalf.[159]

In light of his observation that the American educational system contributes to parental abdication, it is interesting that Baucham calls the most prominent feature of the family-integrated church movement its attraction of a "disproportionate number of homeschool families."[160]

Scott T. Brown

Another prominent author in the family-integrated church movement is Scott T. Brown. Brown served as coeditor of *A Theology of the Family*[161] and penned the

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[156]Baucham, *Family Driven Faith*, 194.

[157]Ibid., 195.

[158]Ibid., 194.

[159]Ibid., 179.

[160]Ibid., 198.

[161]Pollard and Brown provide a compilation of historical writings (from the fifteenth century forward) on family issues, such as family worship, manhood and womanhood, marriage, parenting, and modesty. They argue that in past eras "a Christ centered view of the family was understood much better."

forceful text *A Weed in the Church: How a Culture of Age Segregation is Destroying the Younger Generation, Fragmenting the Family, and Dividing the Church*. As seen in the title of this book, Brown believes that the problem of age-segregation versus family-integration is significant, and warrants action. His contention is that the church seems to have followed the culture in its movement toward generational separation.[162] He writes of this system:

> Systematic, age-segregated youth ministry is undeniably non-Christian in its origin. . . . Modern youth ministry arose out of a soil composed of many different elements. For over two hundred years, the soil in which the weed of age segregation grew was incrementally prepared with the lofty deposits of platonic philosophy, the loamy organics of rationalism, the ethereal waters of evolutionism, and the breathable but allergenic air of pragmatism. These diverse elements, which created a context for this weed, took time to accumulate, but by the end of the twentieth century, that had produced a new plant that had never been seen before—systematic, age-segregated youth ministry.[163]

Brown believes that this youth ministry is something that can "negatively influence the lives of youth in the church and family and subvert biblical discipleship."[164]

As much as Brown advocates for family discipleship, he, like Baucham, indicates that the family is not self-sufficient for this task: "If the family is the only tool that we use for youth discipleship, it falls short of the whole counsel of God."[165] Instead, Brown articulates a vision for discipleship that involves every institution fulfilling its own role. In his advocacy for family-integrated ministry, he writes,

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Jeff Pollard and Scott T. Brown, eds., *A Theology of the Family* (Wake Forest, NC: The National Center for Family-Integrated Churches, 2014), 34. As a result, the articles in this text are arranged intentionally to make the editors' point that "we are in need of a family reformation, or, rather, a reformation of biblical family life." Ibid., 36.

[162]Brown, *A Weed in the Church*, 30.

[163]Ibid., 120. It must be noted that, while this is Brown's claim, it is a broad, sweeping statement and may not take all factors associated with the advent of any particular ministry style into account.

[164]Ibid., 65.

[165]Ibid., 189.

> The sword is given to the state, but not to the family or the church. Education of children is given to the family, but not to the state or the church. Church discipline is given to the church, but not to the family or the state. An otherwise legitimate action can be sinful when someone who has not been given the authority by God performs it.[166]

For Brown, the development of faith in young people is something done in the context of the family and not apart from it.

Paul Renfro

A final author of note in the field of family-integrated ministry is Paul Renfro. Renfro contributed to the book, *Perspectives on Family Ministry: 3 Views* on behalf of the family-integrated position.[167] Because this text is important to the field of contemporary family ministry, its contributors are highlighted in this study.

Renfro's argument is consistent with others who write in the field, but it is more practically developed. His position comes from his scriptural understanding. He argues, "Never in Scripture do we find an example of systematic age segregation in temple, synagogue, or church. In fact, we find the opposite. Children were integrated in the gathered assembly of God's people!"[168] Practically, in contemporary culture, for Renfro this means "there is no age-segregated Sunday School, youth group, or children's ministry. Different generations worship together, learn together, serve together, and fellowship together."[169] This age-integration "creates a network of meaningful multi-generational relationships."[170]

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[166]Brown, *A Weed in the Church*, 55.

[167]Paul Renfro, "Family-Integrated Ministry: Family-Driven Faith," in Jones, *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, 54-78.

[168]Ibid., 68. Renfro offers these examples that inform his scriptural understanding: Deut 31:12; Ezra 10:1; Eph 6:1-3; and Col 3:20.

[169]Ibid., 62.

[170]Ibid.

Like Baucham and Brown, Renfro believes that, while the family is primary in the discipleship of children and teenagers, there is a difference between the church and the family and each have a role to play: "*The family is not the church, and the church is not the family*. Both institutions work together within clearly defined jurisdictional lines to bless each other and to expand Christ's kingdom."[171] As a result, Renfro is not advocating for a diminishment of the church, or the abolishment of regular gatherings; rather, he is advocating for a change in the way in which they and the discipleship process occur.

The Family-Based Approach

The second, and perhaps the most contemporarily developed, of the three primary family ministry models, is the family-based approach to family ministry. This approach most closely resembles what was previously labeled the "neo-traditional" version of church discipleship, but with several important distinctions. According to Nelson and Jones, "the family-based model seeks to merge a comprehensive-coordinate vision for parents with the segmented-programmatic perspective that remains prevalent in many contemporary churches."[172] On the surface it may be difficult to distinguish family-based ministry from churches that do not employ a family ministry strategy, but there are differences for certain. Nelson and Jones continue,

> The difference between family-based models and typical segmented-programmatic models is that family-based churches intentionally include intergenerational activities in each ministry and consistently train parents to function as disciple-makers in their children's lives.[173]

One of the primary goals of those utilizing a family-based ministry strategy is the connection of generations. According to DeVries, "Family-based youth ministry accesses the incomparable power of the nuclear family and connects students to an

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[171]Renfro, "Family-Integrated Ministry," 72, emphasis original.

[172]Nelson and Jones, "The Problem and the Promise," 40.

[173]Ibid.

extended family of Christian adults to the end that those students grow toward maturity in Christ."[174] Jones echoes this idea when he writes,

> Family-based ministries support families by adding or expanding events to provide different age-groups with excuses to interact together. The result is a smorgasbord of activities to connect youth and children with their parents and other persons from a variety of generations.[175]

As a result, the addition of activities and opportunities for the generations to interact is a theme across the family-based literature. Practitioners of this ministry philosophy believe that these repeated opportunities to be both exposed to other generations, as well as for church leadership to call parents to engage in Christian formation in their homes causes the generations to grow together as well as spurs parents to disciple their children.[176] According to Smith and Denton's research, this inter-generational interaction is important for adolescent faith development:

> Religious congregations appear to be important sites for U.S. teenagers to make significant contact with adults other than family members. Most attending U.S. teens have adults in their congregation whom they enjoy talking to and who encourage them, and the majority who do not have such adults wish that they did.[177]

As a result, the family-based approach appears to provide a vital component to adolescent faith development.

One point of distinction emphasized in the family-based movement is that the paradigm is not a program to be added to the church calendar, but rather a reorientation of ministry philosophy. According to DeVries, "Family-based youth ministry is not a 'new wing' to be added to a church's youth ministry 'house.' It is not an optional enrichment program. Family-based youth ministry is a foundational model."[178] Similarly, he writes,

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[174]DeVries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry*, 176.

[175]Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 131.

[176]Nelson and Jones, "The Problem and the Promise," 40.

[177]Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*, 69.

[178]DeVries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry*, 115.

"What family-based youth ministry has to offer is less a blueprint than a vision for youth ministry that lasts for the long haul."[179] It is because of this fact that family-based ministry can resemble both the segmented-programmatic approach and the family-equipping approach, as indicated in figure 1. The context for each congregation determines how the philosophy is applied, but the vision remains the same—to connect the generations and teach parents to be the primary disciple-makers in the lives of their children.

Like the family-integrated approach, the family-based ministry approach is not free from critique; although, the critique generally comes from within the field of family ministry rather than from outside of it. One such critique comes from Renfro, who writes, "Family-based ministry, though not as extreme in its culture-rootedness as many age-segregated models, still derives heavily from culture. Therefore, it remains an insufficient tool for the development of mature disciples of Jesus Christ."[180] Because this ministry approach is difficult to distinguish from the segmented-programmatic approach, it is open to this type of critique. Certainly, it is distinct, but the nature of this ministry paradigm means that it will not meet the biblical or philosophical parameters of those in other family-ministry fields, such as the family-integrated approach or certain aspects of the family-equipping approach.[181] Of course, practitioners of the family-based approach do not seem to mind the critique since they are often willfully retaining age-segmented approaches to family ministry.

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[179]DeVries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry*, 116.

[180]Paul Renfro, "Responses to Brandon Shields: Family-Based Ministry," in Jones, *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, 124.

[181]The perceptions and convictions of those practicing family-integrated and family-equipping models of ministry are not shared by those practicing family-based ministry. As a result, practitioners of the various models may reject other models as not meeting their perceived biblical and philosophical standards.

Mark DeVries

Perhaps the most prominent family-based ministry practitioner is Mark DeVries. In many ways, the writing of DeVries sparked the contemporary family ministry emphasis.[182] His *Family-Based Youth Ministry* was one of the first books with any sort of prominence to have been written in the field in generations.[183] Since that time, he has updated his original writing and contributed to many other works that provide explanations of and guidance for family-based ministry.

For DeVries, a former youth pastor, the shift to the family-based approach seems to have come from a conviction that current strategies were unsuccessful at helping students follow Christ into adulthood. He articulates part of that realization when he writes,

> The students who most successfully become mature followers of Christ are those who either come from a home where Christian maturity is modeled by at least one parent or those who develop significant connections with an extended family of adults in the church.[184]

As seen in this statement, DeVries is concerned for the long-term Christian maturity of both those from Christian families and those from non-Christian and nontraditional families—hence his emphasis on connecting generations within the church. Of the need

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[182]While DeVries' writings seem to be the ones that kick-started a movement, another author, Merton P. Strommen, wrote about changing the culture in the church two decades earlier. Of parents' influence, he writes, "The majority of this country's youth are following the patterns established by their parents—whether good or bad. Most research studies deny that youth have a unique set of values and attitudes. Youth and adults of a given community reflect approximately the same array of values." Strommen, *Bridging the Gap*, 28. Similarly, he concludes that the gap between generations in the church is one that should be bridged, not perpetuated: "The last thing [youth] need are walls of condemnation that serve only to increase their aloneness. Adults need the mind of Christ who can look at each one of us and say that we are children of God. Effective youth work begins in the hearts and minds of the adult congregation." Ibid., 71. He also writes of the concept that youth are alienated most often by alienating actions of their parents. His conclusion is that this means that "a youth ministry does not consist only in what is done for youth. It means also work with adults to help them face feelings and attitudes that build barriers between themselves and young people." Ibid., 75. While not articulating any particular family ministry paradigm, the principles and conclusions in Strommen's text certainly point to the importance of familial discipleship.

[183]This text was originally published in 1994. While authors such as Charles Sell and Diana Garland were at that time writing about family ministry, their version was much different than an emphasis on parents discipling their children as a primary goal and would be better labeled as ministry to families, as explored later in this chapter.

[184]DeVries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry*, 102.

for all sorts of young people to connect with those of different generations, he writes, "More than anything else, what young people from nontraditional families need are roots into an extended Christian family that will 'be there' for them, not simply a team of zany youth workers who provide short-term intimacy with little long-term support."[185]

To reach his goal of supporting parents in the discipleship of their children and connecting generations within the church, DeVries seems to blend together distinct but separate ministry focuses. For example, he writes,

> In the family-ministry model, the parents are expected to take the responsibility; in the youth-ministry model, the church takes the responsibility. In the family-ministry model, the first focus is on supporting *parents and families* with classes, counseling, and support, while in the youth-ministry model, the focus is on moving *students* to maturity in Christ, accessing as much as possible the family and extended family of the church. Which of these approaches is really 'family-based youth ministry'? Both, of course.[186]

This perspective involves fundamentally changing the way in which youth and family ministry is accomplished. DeVries explains, "Beginning a family-based youth ministry involves a shift in perception. Our goal is no longer simply to have a 'strong youth program.'"[187] He continues, "There is no such thing as a successful youth ministry that isolates teenagers from the community of faith."[188] So, for DeVries, the goal is to accomplish the discipleship of students through both the influence of their families as well as a student ministry that recognizes the role of families and provides meaningful guidance and relationships in the discipleship process.

A final tenet of family-based youth ministry according to DeVries is the simplification of the ministry:

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[185]DeVries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry*, 127.

[186]Ibid., 175, emphasis original.

[187]Ibid., 102.

[188]Ibid., 103.

A central component of realizing the ministry potential of parents and families involves freeing up the youth ministry calendar, so that slowly the center of gravity for the youth of the church is no longer exclusively youth programs but the programs that intentionally connect youth and adults.[189]

This changing of priorities is part of what DeVries calls creating a "new normal" in youth ministry, which is less about specific programs and more about a different way of thinking about ministry.[190] This way of thinking has been a great source of influence and inspiration for generations of student ministry practitioners as well as a catalyst for the contemporary family ministry field.

Brandon Shields

Another practitioner of family-based ministry who has argued for the supremacy of this approach over other approaches to family and student ministry is Brandon Shields. Shields penned the section "Family-Based Ministry" in the text *Perspectives on Family Ministry*.[191] In that section he rejects other ways of doing family ministry and advocates strongly for the family-based approach, particularly because of the emphasis on inter-generational interaction which, he believes, helps to reach non-traditional and non-Christian families. He writes,

Family-based churches retain separate, age-segmented ministry structures. The difference between family-based models and typical programmatic models is that family-based churches intentionally include intergenerational and family-focused events in each ministry.[192]

That is, there is not simply one way of doing ministry, but both events and structures that involve students interacting with members of other generations who may not be their

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[189]Mark DeVries, "What Is Youth Ministry's Relationship to the Family?" in *Reaching a Generation for Christ*, 499.

[190]DeVries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry,* 176.

[191]Brandon Shields, "Family-Based Ministry: Separated Contexts, Shared Focus," in Jones, *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, 98-120.

[192]Ibid., 100.

parents and events and structures where entire families are together can be used within the same church. To this end, Shields writes,

> Family-based ministry [is not] so much a fixed model of ministry as it is a ministry philosophy. The two core values undergirding this philosophy are *flexibility* and *balance*. Proponents of family-based ministry value flexibility because they know that every church culture is different and that ministry models must adapt to be effective. Family-based ministers value balance because they recognize that, even though encouraging discipleship efforts of intact Christian families is important, most youth and children today do not enjoy the sociological luxury of an intact Christian family.[193]

As a result, Shields sees this form of family ministry to be one that is effective both for the discipleship of children and teenagers within the church and one which is effective for reaching those outside of the church.

The Family-Equipping Approach

The third and final of the three primary contemporary models of family ministry is the family-equipping approach. This model was built from a scriptural approach to family ministry—as was discussed—coupled with an understanding of how other family ministry models were doing ministry and a desire for something between the extreme of abolishing all age-segregated ministries and maintaining traditional structures with the addition of family ministry components. Nelson and Jones write, "In many ways, the family-equipping model represents a middle route between the family-integrated and family-based models."[194] This middle-ground approach involves components of both of the other models. For example, Nelson and Jones write,

> Semblances of age-organized ministry remain intact in family-equipping contexts. Many family-equipping churches even retain youth ministers and children's ministers. Yet every practice at every level of ministry is reworked to champion the place of parents as primary disciple makers in their children's lives.[195]

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[193]Shields, "Family-Based Ministry," 98, emphasis original.

[194]Nelson and Jones, "The Problem and the Promise," 40.

[195]Ibid.

While this may seem to resemble the family-based model, Nelson and Jones juxtapose the two and conclude,

> Whereas family-based churches develop intergenerational activities within existing segmented-programmatic structures and add family activities to current calendars, family-equipping churches redevelops [sic] the congregation's structure to cultivate a renewed culture wherein parents are acknowledged, trained, and held accountable as the primary faith-trainers in their children's lives.[196]

This notion represents a much more radical departure from traditional ministry structures and a heightened emphasis on the importance of parents in the discipleship process.

One point of emphasis for family-equipping churches is that there is not a formula or step-by-step instructions to follow to reach a point of success in equipping parents. Instead, the family-equipping model represents a change in approach. According to Jones, "In its simplest definition, family-equipping ministry simply means coordinating every aspect of your present ministry so that parents are acknowledged, equipped, and held accountable as primary disciple-makers in their children's lives."[197] He continues further, "Family-equipping is not a series of steps to success. It is not a programmatic cure-all for your church's problems. It is a process that works its way over time into every aspect of your ministry."[198] This rejection of repeated steps to success makes it so that every family-equipping church functions differently than any other; however, as Nelson and Jones indicate, what is certain is that "every level of the congregation's life is consciously recultured [sic] to 'co-champion the church's ministry *and* the parent's responsibility."[199]

The emphasis within the family-equipping model of partnering with and serving parents is one that seems to be of great importance. For example, Ham and Beemer have

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[196]Nelson and Jones, "The Problem and the Promise," 40-41.

[197]Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 132.

[198]Ibid., 191.

[199]Nelson and Jones, "The Problem and the Promise," 41, emphasis original.

concluded that the most important thing a youth pastor can do is to equip parents.[200]

Similarly, Roehlkepartain and Roehlkepartain write, "Congregations will be most effective in helping parents when they see themselves as true partners. A congregation will have an even greater impact when individuals do their part in creating a caring community that truly supports parents."[201] This support and training of parents is perhaps the greatest characteristic of the family-equipping model. For family-equipping practitioners, training and equipping is the essence of being the church. Lilly Park writes, "Family-equipping churches can and should develop attitudes within the congregation that enfold every church member into this local gathering of the family of God, a community that serves as a context for training us to live biblically as men and women."[202] As a result, family-equipping churches seek to equip parents for the crucial task of discipling their children to know and love God.

Timothy Paul Jones

Perhaps the most prominent proponent and prolific writer in favor of the family-equipping approach is Timothy Paul Jones. His writings provide the understanding of family ministry found throughout this work. In fact, Jones coined the phrase "family-equipping ministry."[203] He provides a succinct definition of his understanding of family ministry when he writes that family ministry is "the process of intentionally and persistently realigning a congregation's proclamation and practices so that parents are acknowledged, trained, and held accountable as the persons primarily responsible for the

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[200]Ham and Beemer, *Already Gone*, 154.

[201]Roehlkepartain and Roehlkepartain, *Embracing Parents*, 122.

[202]Lilly Park, "Family Ministry, *the* Priority or *a* Priority?" in Stinson and Jones, *Trained in the Fear of God*, 224-25.

[203]Nelson and Jones, "The Problem and the Promise," 40.

discipleship of their children."[204] While this definition encompasses all three primary family ministry models, it seems to find its center in the family-equipping model as championed by Jones.

Like advocates of other ministry approaches, Jones argues for a complete reorientation of a church's strategy for making disciples of the congregants: "Full-fledged family ministry entails more than the addition of one more purpose or program. It requires persistent and intentional reorientation of the entire church's perspective on the process of evangelism and discipleship."[205] That is, in order to properly accomplish family ministry, the entire congregation must be focused on that sort of ministry as a primary goal. This involves every member of the congregation. Jones writes,

> Such a perspective does *not* absolve the church of its responsibility to partner with persons from every age grouping and social background in the task of discipleship (including divorced persons, single mothers, never-married singles, children from single-parent households, and children of pre-Christian parents).[206]

The family-equipping approach to ministry is for everyone in the church and is the responsibility of everyone in the church at the same time.

Jay Strother

Another family-equipping advocate is Jay Strother. Strother wrote the family-equipping section of *Perspectives on Family Ministry*. His understanding of family-equipping ministry seems to follow the centralized definition previously articulated. For him, family-equipping ministry is done in order streamline the efforts of the church for the purpose of equipping parents while at the same time maintaining some aspects of age-organization: "Family-equipping churches retain some age-organized ministries but restructure the congregation to partner with parents at every level of ministry so that

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[204]Jones, "Foundations for Family Ministry," 40.

[205]Ibid., 41.

[206]Ibid., 40-41, emphasis original.

parents are acknowledged, equipped, and held accountable for the discipleship of their children."[207] This ministry style may resemble the segmented-programmatic approach, but it is distinct in its emphasis and orientation.

Steve Wright

A third prominent proponent of the family-equipping model for accomplishing family discipleship is Steve Wright. As a youth pastor, Wright reached the conclusion that the way in which youth ministry was typically accomplished was ineffective. He explains in his coauthored book *reThink*, "God assigns the primary responsibility for discipleship to parents, therefore our ministries should reflect that principle. Most do not. God's Word champions the family, therefore our ministries must do the same."[208] This conviction led Wright to articulate a vision for student ministry that is different from the traditional approach: "Teens need family and church working hand-in-hand surrounding them with truth and godly models to follow."[209] This vision for reaching students includes both a plan for discipling children of church members as well as those outside the church. Churches must equip parents to disciple their children, but they must also have a plan to reach out to other children and teenagers. Of this need, Wright states, "We must develop an intentional plan to reach out to teens with unchurched parents and show them love and care."[210] For him, the plan to accomplish this task is family-equipping ministry.

Brian Haynes

A fourth and final family-equipping ministry advocate is Brian Haynes. Like the other proponents of family-equipping ministry, Haynes is a pastor who realized that

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[207]Jay Strother, "Family-Equipping Ministry: Church and Home as Cochampions," in Jones, *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, 144.

[208]Wright and Graves, *reThink*, 86.

[209]Ibid., 75.

[210]Ibid., 207.

ministry must be accomplished differently than the established norms. He too found that Scripture outlined a different process for the discipleship of children than what is commonly practiced in the segmented-programmatic approach: "God knew that younger generations would need a model of what loving God looks like. So God placed the generations in families to learn from parents how to love God with all their hearts, all their souls, and all their strength" (Deut 6:4-9).[211] This view of families led Haynes to a highly practical version of family ministry. This practicality is found in simplicity. Haynes writes,

> Simplicity is freedom. Complexity clutters life with chaotic schedules, material possession to manage and maintain, and unnecessary financial responsibility. Complexity of life, even when filled with good things, monopolizes valuable time and energy necessary to disciple our children, following the model of Deuteronomy 6:7.[212]

As a result, Haynes developed a family-equipping strategy that is simple and easy to put into practice.

The way in which family-equipping ministry has been given life by Haynes is through a process of celebrating milestones. This process allows him to help reorient the people of his church to recognize the priority of equipping parents for the work of discipleship. These milestones are baby dedication, faith commitment, preparing for adolescence, commitment to purity, rite of passage, high school graduation, and life in Christ.[213] By celebrating each of these milestones with the church family, Haynes has created a way in which the entire church engages in the process of equipping parents.

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[211]Haynes, *Shift*, 35.

[212]Haynes, *Legacy Path*, 35.

[213]Ibid., 61-96.

Other Ideas

In addition to the described contemporary family ministry models, family

ministry has been articulated in some other ways. Anthony and Anthony summarize,

> In one church "family ministry" may simply refer to a counseling program for
> troubled families. Another congregation's family ministry might require a
> churchwide emphasis on parental involvement in their children's Christian
> formation. Some communities of faith perceive family ministry as a program that
> provides a full roster of intergenerational events.[214]

Some of these ideas might fit within the articulated definition of family ministry and some

may not. While not all of these ideas meet the definition of family ministry articulated in

this work, they are all worth exploring briefly in this section.

One example can be found in Pamela J. Erwin's *The Family-Powered Church*,

where she writes that family ministry

> is a comprehensive thinking process. It is not limited to a single department, staff
> member, or to the nuclear family. Rather, [it is] a unifying purpose that encompasses
> all areas of ministry. It is vital that churches understand this fundamental nature of
> family ministry.[215]

This idea seems to fit nicely with the definitions within the family-based or family-

equipping models. In another definition, Clark summarizes family ministry more broadly:

"Some family ministries emphasize church-wide relationships, while others focus on

programs and classes. Some care for hurting families and families in crisis, while others

set their sights on drawing young people into the church family."[216] Still another definition

of family ministry is provided by Penny Edgell, who indicates that "the practice of family

ministry may reinforce messages about the good family found in congregational rhetoric,

rework or reinterpret the ideas about family, or embody entirely different, alternate ways

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[214]Anthony and Anthony, *A Theology for Family Ministry*, 155.

[215]Pamela J. Erwin, *The Family-Powered Church* (Loveland, CO: Group, 2000), 15.

[216]Clark, *The Youth Worker's Handbook*, 9.

of conceptualizing family life."[217] While utilizing the same term, these definitions speak of family ministry in vastly different ways.

This phenomenon is catalogued in Clark's book *The Youth Worker's Handbook to Family Ministry*, where he writes of three family ministry models: the therapeutic-counseling perspective, the nuclear family perspective, and the church as a family perspective.[218] In the therapeutic-counseling perspective, family ministry is seen "as primarily addressing the specific emotional and relational needs of a congregation."[219] The nuclear family perspective believes that "the basic function of family ministry is to equip and strengthen individual families in the church.[220] Conversely, the church as a family perspective holds that "the church's primary function is to be such a close-knit faith community that individual nuclear families will be encouraged to draw together and not separate themselves."[221] While there may be aspects of each of these models within contemporary family ministry practice, contemporary family ministry models have moved beyond these basic definitions. However, some notable authors in the extended field of family ministry bear examination as part of a comprehensive overview of family ministry strategy.

Diana Garland

A notable author in the extended field of family ministry is Diana Garland. Garland's brand of family ministry falls somewhere between the call for parents to disciple their children and a ministry program for families. She writes, "One of the primary ways

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[217]Penny Edgell, *Religion and Family in a Changing Society* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 125.

[218]Clark, *The Youth Worker's Handbook*, 14-18.

[219]Ibid., 14.

[220]Ibid., 15.

[221]Ibid., 18.

God's purposes are achieved through family relationships is the discipling that takes place within them."[222] This emphasis on familial discipleship is diluted by a further explanation of the goal of family ministry articulated in the same text: "To complement the *methods* of family ministry, the *goals* of family ministry constitute a second dimension, ranging from the enhancement of strengths among diverse family structures and situations to helping families adapt to life stresses and challenges."[223] This pronunciation of family ministry seems to convey different ideas about what family ministry is and how it is accomplished. In fact, in another text, Garland provides a goal for family ministry that is vastly different: "The goal of family ministry is to empower families to live their faith with one another and in the communities and relationships in which they are embedded."[224] Together, these varied definitions seem to indicate that family ministry is simply any type of ministry to the family or its members. While some principles can certainly be learned about ministering to families within Garland's writings, they seem to stop short of following the biblical vision for family ministry as previously described.

Charles Sell

Another rather well-known author in the extended field of family ministry is Charles Sell. Sell's version of family ministry seems like an attempt to bring the family into the life of the church. While not quite abandoning the idea of family ministry as ministry to families, Sell concludes that parents should be involved in the discipleship of their children. He writes, "A major factor of family ministry is training parents to disciple

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[222]Diana R. Garland, *Family Ministry: A Comprehensive Guide* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 346.

[223]Ibid., 382-83, emphasis original.

[224]Diana R. Garland, *Inside Out Families: Living the Faith Together* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), 10.

their children in the Christian faith."[225] Further, he states, "The church needs to be careful not to leave the family out when treating individuals in the church, particularly youth and children. Besides weakening family influence, we can get into trouble if we bypass the family and always deal directly with the individual."[226]

While the acknowledgement of the place of parents and families in the discipleship process is helpful, Sell still seems to view his version of family ministry as a way for families to help the church—not a way of equipping parents to disciple their children as a matter of biblical imperative. Of familial involvement in the church, Sell explains, "Looking at its families as an arm of the church, church leaders should be concerned about training parents in child development, evangelism, counseling, teaching, personal relationships, and other parenting skills."[227] He seems to take a therapeutic view of the church and its responsibility to parents. He takes this argument further when he writes, "One of the most impressive reasons for getting families involved in the nurture of their children is the difficulty church programs have influencing children without the home's cooperation."[228] This type of pragmatism is not what seems to have been implied in the scriptural understanding of family ministry and is, thus, why this model of family ministry falls outside of the contemporarily understood definition of family ministry used in this work.

Reggie Joiner

Reggie Joiner is another author who has written in the extended field of family ministry. While his writing seems to coincide with the articulated definition of family

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[225]Sell, *Family Ministry*, 17.

[226]Ibid., 149.

[227]Ibid., 17.

[228]Ibid., 151.

ministry, it also seems relatively scattered. He does, however, affirm that "family ministry should not be another program you *add* to your list of programs. It should be the filter you use to create and evaluate what you do to influence children and teenagers."[229] Of this filter he writes, "A family ministry should develop the process that drives how both the church *and* the home combine their efforts to influence the next generation."[230] At the same time, Joiner seems to vie for a different version of family ministry when he writes, "Doing more for the family is the best way the church can have consistent influence in the heart of a child."[231] Certainly, there are some valid ideas for family ministry in Joiner's work, but a clear vision for family ministry does not seem to fall within the definition used in this work.

Mark Holman

A final author of note in the extended field of family ministry literature is Mark Holmen. In Holmen's book *Church+Home*, he articulates a vision for family ministry consistent with the previously provided definition of family ministry, but provides a plan for family ministry that lacks sufficient information for classification within the family ministry models as described in the prior paragraphs of this paper. Holmen does, however, contribute to the discussion of family ministry and its importance. For example, he places a significant weight on the power of the home and indicates that it is more influential than what can happen in the church for the formation of faith in children and teenagers.[232] His belief is that the ministries of the church need to be viewed through "a set of lenses that focus on equipping the home to be the primary place where faith is nurtured."[233]

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[229]Joiner, *Think Orange*, 83, emphasis original.

[230]Ibid., emphasis original.

[231]Ibid., 93.

[232]Holmen, *Church+Home*, 33.

[233]Ibid., 37.

Perhaps Holmen's greatest contribution to the family ministry discussion is his descriptions of what has happened that has led to the need to return to a biblical family ministry strategy:

> When we either [do not] have the time or forget altogether to fulfill a responsibility, our solution is to have someone else do it for us. If we [do not] have time to cook a family meal, we go to a restaurant and have someone else do the cooking for us. When we [do not] have time to change the oil in our car, we go to a drive-through oil-change service. When we [do not] have time to clean the house, we hire a cleaning person to come in once a week. And when we [do not] have time to teach our kids about God, we take them to church and expect the church to do it for us. And if our kids [do not] seem to be 'getting it,' we leave that church and go to another one with a bigger, better children's or youth ministry program.[234]

He continues in another section of the same text,

> Many parents today would rather pass instilling their children's faith on to the "professionals" at church instead of tackling this responsibility themselves. Because they often [did not] experience what it was like to have Christ as part of the home they grew up in, they [do not] have a model to follow. As each generation becomes less and less involved in the Christian Church—and, as a result, with faith at home—more and more parents are now two to three generations removed from the last generation that remembers having faith talks, Bible reading, devotions, and prayer in the home.[235]

While Holmen does not provide a unified strategy within one of the family ministry models articulated, he does provide a very helpful description of the problem leading to a need for family ministry and some practical strategies in which both churches and families can engage as part of a comprehensive family ministry strategy.

Ministry to Families

Many of the mentioned strategies and models for family ministry are not strategies for the comprehensive idea that parents are called to be the primary disciple-maker in their children's lives as much as they are strategies for ministering to families. That is, these versions of family ministry are not family ministry strategies as family ministry is previously defined, as much as they are strategies for meeting the needs of

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[234]Holmen, *Church+Home*, 33.

[235]Ibid., 43.

families in a more practical or economical way. This is what Nelson and Jones call educational-programmatic family ministry, which they define as being a ministry "focused primarily on developing healthy family relationships."[236] This sentiment can be found in several definitions of family ministry. For example, Erwin states, "Family ministry might be defined as follows: Family ministry is the church-supported effort to build a network of strong, healthy, and happy families. A church that practices family ministry based on this definition is a family-powered church."[237] Similarly, Karen Jones Bernstine writes, "The primary focus of family ministry is establishing and maintaining healthy families."[238] These definitions represent something other than family ministry as it is contemporarily understood and practiced in the previously described family ministry models.

At the same time, however, aspects of this type of ministry can be helpful additions to the ministry strategies of the family ministry models. Rainey advocates for this type of ministry when he writes, "Our churches must become local centers for marriage and family equipping because *the family represents the largest unmet felt need in all of Western civilization.*"[239] Similarly, Sell's advice can be helpful for meeting this need: "While the church is not a family, it can be like a family; or at least it can foster family-like experiences."[240] This type of environment can be helpful for bringing people into a church that is practicing one of the listed family ministry models. In fact, this type of ministry seems to be helpful in churches that engage in it, as is highlighted by secular researchers Bradford W. Wilcox, Mark Chaves, and David Franz:

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[236]Nelson and Jones, "The Problem and the Promise," 38.

[237]Erwin, *Family-Powered Church*, 12.

[238]Karen Jones Bernstine, ed., *Church and Family Together: A Congregational Manual for Black Family Ministry* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 1996), 7.

[239]Rainey, *Twenty-First Century Families*, 58, emphasis original.

[240]Sell, *Family Ministry*, 159.

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> In spite of their discursive support for the traditional family, conservative Protestant churches are *not* any more likely than most churches to offer traditional family programming and they are *more* likely than most churches to offer nontraditional family programming.[241]

This nontraditional family programming includes ministry to singles, ministry to single parents, and divorce ministries. Since these groups represent large portions of the North American population, these types of ministries can be a helpful part of ministering to families as part of an overarching family ministry strategy.

Biblical Foundations for Evangelism

To understand the interaction between family ministry and evangelism as it has been described in the precedent literature, it is necessary to understand both family ministry and evangelism in their biblical contexts. As was accomplished with the biblical foundations of family ministry, the task of this section is to explore evangelism in its biblical context. This is a valuable and necessary part of this study because evangelism is woven throughout Scripture beginning with Genesis, through the story of Israel, continuing in the writings of the prophets, and in the life of Jesus.[242] David Platt writes, "To be a disciple of Jesus is to make disciples of Jesus."[243] Platt continues, "The eternal purpose of God is to save people through Christ."[244] If this priority is indeed the case, then it is important to understand where this is indicated in Scripture. In order to accomplish this task, it is necessary to look at both Old Testament and New Testament portions of Scripture.

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[241]W. Bradford Wilcox, Mark Chaves, and David Franz, "Focused on the Family? Religious Traditions, Family Discourse, and Pastoral Practice," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 43, no. 4 (2004): 501, emphasis original.

[242]McGonigal, "Focusing Youth Ministry," 127-30.

[243]David Platt, *Follow Me: A Call to Die, A Call to Live* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2013), 207.

[244]Ibid., 219.

Evangelism is most notably found in the teachings of Jesus in portions of Scripture, such as the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20); however, God's evangelistic nature is not unique to the New Testament. Portions of Scripture in the Old Testament as well reflect God's concern for the people whom He created.[245] For example, the psalmists "called on the people of Israel to praise the Lord and declare his deeds to the nations so that they might worship the Lord God of Israel. The psalmists both invited and exhorted the nations of the earth to worship the Lord."[246] T. J. Betts also finds that God's desire to reach the nations was present in the way in which the people of Israel interacted:

> God's fundamental concern for Israel in the Old Testament is their covenant loyalty. This concern is not just a matter of obedience or disobedience; it has to do with God's redemptive plans for the nations through his covenant people, Israel. Israel's effectiveness as a kingdom of priests and a light to the nations is dependent upon the people's holiness and devotion to the Lord.[247]

In light of these truths, it is imperative to examine portions of the Old Testament where God's evangelistic nature and plan can be seen.

The Creation Mandate

The Creation Mandate as found in Genesis 1:26-30 is the foundation for man's purpose in the world based on who they are—God's image bearers.[248] The purpose God has given to the people whom He created is to glorify God and bring Him joy,[249] which can be seen in the fact that God's people were meant to represent Him as His vice-regents

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[245]Evangelism as the spread of the gospel is not specifically articulated in the Old Testament, but God's nature as a God who cares about the nations is. As a result, evangelism is used as a synonym for that process throughout this section.

[246]T. J. Betts, "The Great Commission in the Old Testament," in *The Challenge of the Great Commission: Essays on God's Mandate for the Local Church*, ed. Chuck Lawless and Thom S. Rainer (Crestwood, KY: Pinnacle, 2005), 30.

[247]Betts, "The Great Commission in the Old Testament," 32.

[248]Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 33.

[249]Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 441.

on earth.[250] Subsequently, this representation was meant to bring glory to God.[251] Mason writes, "Man represents God by virtue of being in His image. In representing God, man was to glorify the God who created him."[252]

The representative role that God has given to mankind was not given without purpose. There is something mankind should be doing; namely, man was meant to spread the glory of God throughout the face of the planet.[253] While this was originally intended to occur through the reproduction of people who perfectly represented their Creator, the entrance of sin into the world means it is now accomplished through evangelism. According to Betts,

> Because God is the creator, He is sovereign. Therefore, all of humanity should fear Him and give Him glory. In fact, the record of creation in Genesis forms the basis for the Great Commission throughout the rest of Scripture. God's purpose for human beings is to exercise 'image-bearing' functions since every individual has been created in the image of God.[254]

Since humans have this representative role, it is understood that generations will teach those who come after them.[255] The Creation Mandate, therefore, necessarily informs any proper understanding of evangelism and seems to indicate that the God who created people intends for each of them to know and glorify their Creator.

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[250]Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 31-32.

[251]Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 172.

[252]Mason, *Manhood Restored*, 7-8.

[253]See Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 33. Based on the presupposition that being in the image of God causes man to reflect God and His glory, it is, therefore, inferred that the reproduction of the human race necessarily causes the image of God and, thereby, the glory of God to spread throughout the face of the planet.

[254]Betts, "The Great Commission in the Old Testament," 19.

[255]Baucham, *Family Shepherds*, 21.

Noah's Commission

Certainly, the Creation Mandate portion of Scripture precedes the entrance of sin into the world. This could mean that God's purpose has changed; or, more likely, it could mean that the world now must recover and pursue the original mission for the spread of His glory throughout the planet.[256] One portion of Scripture which affirms that this is the case is Genesis 9:1-17. In this text, God pronounces a blessing upon Noah after he disembarked from the ark.[257] This blessing follows the same pattern as that of the Creation Mandate, thereby declaring that the Creation Mandate is still in force for the people whom God created.[258] As a result, it can be understood that the people who would follow Noah would also need to be made aware of the fact that there is a Creator who should be worshipped and feared.

Abraham's Blessing

Another portion of Scripture in the Old Testament that points to God's evangelistic nature is the blessing of Abraham as recorded in Genesis 12:1-3. The blessing of Abraham extended much farther than just the family of which he was promised—Kenneth A. Mathews calls it "worldwide blessing."[259] When God said, "In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed," He indicated that Abraham's blessing was meant to bring blessings to the rest of the people whom God had created.[260] J. D. Greear indicates that this type of blessing sets a pattern for the way in which God operates: "No blessing

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[256]Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 399.

[257]Walton, *Genesis*, 340.

[258]Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 399.

[259]Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, The New American Commentary, vol. 1b (Nashville: B & H, 2005), 117.

[260]J. D. Greear, *Gaining by Losing: Why the Future Belongs to Churches That Send* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 150. See also Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 9.

that God gives His people is separated from the responsibility to become a blessing to the nations."[261] This blessing, initiated through Abraham, led to Abraham's descendants being set apart for the same task. As a result, and as Betts asserts, "The election of Israel is central to God's redemptive work among the nations."[262] That is, God's pattern throughout Scripture is the salvation of people far from Him. This pattern can be seen in the blessing of Abraham, which is then traced through the Old Testament and into The New Testament; it is God's plan to reach the waiting world.[263] Most importantly, it must be noted that, as James Montgomery Boice writes, the blessing of Abraham is "the blessing of redemption through Jesus Christ."[264] The account of God's blessing of Abraham, therefore, seems to be a type of what would be to come in the promised Savior.[265]

"Then They Will Know That I am God"

Still another telling part of the Old Testament's evangelistic nature is the frequent use of the phrase, "Then they will know that I am God," or "Then they will know that I am the Lord." This phrase signifies that God's redemptive plan was at work throughout the story of the Old Testament. Betts indicates, "Even the Israelites understood that their election was not particular to themselves and no concern of others, but God was using them as a means of communicating Himself to the nations."[266] As a result, this phrase is found in one form or another in passages such as Exodus 7:5; 14:4; Psalm 46:10; Isaiah 49:26; Jeremiah 24:7; eighteen places in Ezekiel; and Joel 2:27. Lamar Eugene

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[261]Greear, *Gaining by Losing*, 154.

[262]Betts, "The Great Commission in the Old Testament," 22.

[263]Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 118.

[264]James Montgomery Boice, *Genesis: An Expositional Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 2:447.

[265]For further discussion of this concept, see Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament*, 12.

[266]Betts, "The Great Commission in the Old Testament," 24.

Cooper, Sr., indicates that the phrase was used to illustrate God's desire for "all people to 'know' the God of Israel as the one true God."[267] Therefore, God's evangelistic nature is on full display in the Old Testament and it prepares the way for the understanding of His desire to reach the nations as it is articulated in the New Testament.

New Testament

The New Testament is replete with examples of God's evangelistic nature. Robert Plummer writes, "Throughout the New Testament, the inspired authors consistently assumed that believers would be eager and able to spread the good news of Jesus."[268] This zeal starts with the life of Jesus Himself, is on prominent display in the passages of Scripture associated with His Great Commission, and flows into the life of the early church and writings of Paul, among other places.

The Life of Jesus

Jesus' desire to see the nations reached with the life-saving news of the gospel was not simply something He included in His farewell speech prior to ascending to Heaven—it was also part of His life on earth. According to Robert E. Coleman, "Practically everything that Jesus said and did had some relevance to [the disciples'] work of evangelism, either by explaining a spiritual truth or revealing to them how they should deal with people."[269] This point of emphasis can be seen in the fact that Jesus' expressed mission to His disciples as recorded in Matthew 4:19 and Mark 1:17 was that they would be "fishers of men." According to Craig L. Blomberg, when Jesus gave this mission to His new disciples, He was "pointing out that just as fisherman try to gather

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[267]Lamar Eugene Cooper, Sr., *Ezekiel*, The New American Commentary, vol. 17 (Nashville: B & H, 1994), 109.

[268]Plummer, "Bring Them Up," 21.

[269]Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 1993), 66.

fish from the sea, His disciples too will be trying to gather together other individuals who are willing to follow Jesus in radical obedience."[270] As a result, as Greear indicates, there is "no gap between the call to follow Jesus and the call to engage in mission."[271] The priority of Jesus' life was readily apparent in the way in which He found people and trained them to reach other people—this emphasis was a clear priority.[272]

The Great Commission

In light of Jesus' priority of training His followers to reach others for His kingdom, it is no surprise that His final recorded words to His followers before ascending to Heaven would be a mission statement for all who would follow Him in the future—to go and make disciples of all nations. Christ's Great Commission is seen in five distinct locations in Scripture: Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-47; John 20:21; and Acts 1:8.[273] These passages in the pages of the Gospels represent the climax and conclusion of the books.[274] As a result, the importance of this command cannot be ignored.[275]

Of great importance when understanding the Great Commission is that the command was not meant to be obeyed by only a select few, but was meant to be the pattern

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[270]Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 91.

[271]Greear, *Gaining by Losing*, 150.

[272]Coleman, *Master Plan of Evangelism*, 100.

[273]It must be noted that Mark 16:15 falls within a disputed portion of the Book of Mark (Mark 16:9-20). Counting this passage as a Great Commission passage assumes the longer ending of the book. However, it is also possible to understand Jesus' commissioning of His followers with a shorter ending as it can be implied from other parts of the text, such as Mark 14:9. For more discussion of this passage and idea, see Walter W. Wessel, *Mark*, in vol. 8 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 789-93; and William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Mark*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1975), 682-93.

[274]Blomberg, *Matthew*, 431.

[275]Johnson, "God's Global Goal," 27.

for all who would follow after Jesus. Greear emphasizes, "The Great Commission is not a calling for some; it is a mandate for all."[276] Likewise, Willis and Coe echo this sentiment when they write, "The Great Commission is not for a select few; it is for the entirety of the church."[277] If this passage stood alone in the pages of God's story, it may be less likely that it was meant for all of Christ's followers; however, it occurred at a turning point in redemptive history. Johnson articulates,

> Seeing that all of redemptive history built towards the Great Commission results in an understanding of the imperative of gospel proclamation and rightful passion for evangelism. Only when believers are obedient to the commands to evangelize will they truly be imitators of God's heart for the world.[278]

It is, therefore, a crucial part of understanding both the story of the Bible as well as the character of God to recognize that the Great Commission is the continued mission of God to spread His glory throughout the face of the planet.

The Apostolic Church

The command that Christ gave to reach the nations with the good news of His death, burial, and resurrection was articulated to a group of believers who would form the first church. The first church, or the apostolic church, is important because it can serve as a pattern for the contemporary church. This pattern is imperative when understanding evangelism as a biblical priority. The priority of evangelism can be seen in the fact that the apostolic church was concerned with the way in which it was perceived by outsiders.[279] The explanation for this concern could be a desire to live peacefully, which is articulated by Paul in his letter to Timothy in 1 Timothy 2:1-2: "First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings

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[276]Greear, *Gaining by Losing*, 80.

[277]Willis and Coe, *Life on Mission*, 25.

[278]Johnson, "God's Global Goal," 29.

[279]Garland, *Family Ministry*, 181.

and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a quiet life, godly and dignified in every way." While it is a biblical imperative that this prayer is the prayer of God's people, the behavior of Paul and Timothy—as well as the rest of the New Testament church—indicates that evangelism is the reason for wanting to live in such a desirable way. Coleman writes, "Jesus intended for the disciples to produce His likeness in and through the church being gathered out of the world."[280] The church is meant to represent Christ for the sake of revealing Him to the world. According to Plummer, "Paul and his co-workers carefully regulated their lives to avoid giving any offense to potential converts."[281] The apostolic church was meant to be inviting and desirable because it was meant to function evangelistically.

This evangelistic function has a practical application in the life of the church as it seeks to accomplish the Great Commission. Specifically, the application is that the people who are reached by the church are meant to be a part of the church. God's evangelistic plan seems to be for the church to reach people who then join the mission of the church and, thereby, cause the church to grow exponentially as the mission is accomplished. Herschel H. Hobbs writes of this process: "Since God's eternal purpose is to be realized 'through the church' (Eph 3:10-11), participation in this purpose should be the center of the Christian's labor and loyalty."[282] Similarly, Platt writes,

> According to Scripture, when people in the world see the life of Christ in the church, they will believe the love of God for the world. This is yet one more reason why every follower of Christ must be committed to the church: so that the glory of God might be made known to the world.[283]

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[280]Coleman, *Master Plan of Evangelism*, 89.

[281]Robert L. Plummer, *Paul's Understanding of the Church's Mission: Did the Apostle Paul Expect the Early Christian Communities to Evangelize?* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2006), 96.

[282]Herschel H. Hobbs, *The Baptist Faith and Message*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Convention, 1971), 70.

[283]Platt, *Follow Me*, 172.

This recognition is precisely what is seen of the New Testament church in the pages of Scripture—the church is seen making disciples as Christ instructed through the Great Commission.

Paul's Instruction

Not only can evidence of the evangelistic nature of God be found in the operation of the early church, but it can also be found in the way in which Paul instructed the churches to whom he wrote his letters. Paul emphasized this point because of the way in which he understood the mission that was given to him. According to Greear, this understanding began at the time of Paul's conversion: "God's promise to bless Abraham included the promise to make him a blessing to *all nations* on earth as well (Gen 12:1-3). When God called Paul, He commissioned him to be a messenger *to the nations* at the very moment He called him to faith (Acts 26:16)."[284] Plummer further illuminates this understanding:

> While Paul does not speak of the missionary task entrusted to him as an *obligation*, it is more comprehensively described as a natural overflow of the dynamic gospel's presence in his life. The church also, because it is created and characterized by that same gospel, must be an active missionary community.[285]

Paul understood both the evangelistic nature of the God who saved him and the way in which that nature was demonstrated in the Great Commission.

Evidence of Paul's understanding of the Great Commission is found in his letters. Plummer states,

> Arguably, the Great Commission is none other than Christ's verbal command sanctioning in human activity what is present in the self-diffusing world. Thus, scholars who have attempted to found the Pauline churches' mission upon the Great Commission have not been entirely wrong. A clear command to evangelize is part of the churches' heritage, and Paul likely was familiar with the Great Commission (at least in the form of oral tradition).[286]

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[284]Greear, *Gaining by Losing*, 150, emphasis original.

[285]Plummer, *The Church's Mission*, 145, emphasis original.

[286]Ibid., 66.

This understanding of the Great Commission is not specifically articulated in Paul's letters, but it is evident in the way in which he lived his life as well as in the justification for instructing the churches he had planted. As a result, even with the Great Commission not being overtly stated in Paul's letters, the need for evangelism is understood in many passages and stated prominently in at least two locations: 2 Corinthians 5:11-21 and 2 Timothy 4:5.

Second Corinthians 5:11-21:
God's Ambassadors

In 2 Corinthians 5:11-21, Paul provides clear statements of his understanding of his calling to reach people with the good news of the gospel. That portion of Scripture begins with the statement that "therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others." In other words, Paul understood that he was to be evangelistic in light of the fear of the Lord. That statement is followed by explanation of the message with which Paul was entrusted and concludes with a discussion about the ministry God has given to all who follow Him. In verses 17-20, Paul writes,

> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to Himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

Paul here indicates that all those in Christ have been given the ministry of reconciliation—that is, the ministry of reaching others with the same message which had reached Paul and the Corinthians. Of this progression, George H. Guthrie writes, "One must be reconciled to God before one can participate in the ministry of reconciliation. In Paul's case, the call to the latter followed immediately on the heels of the former."[287]

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[287]George H. Guthrie, *2 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), 309.

Paul then reiterates that Christians are ambassadors for Christ, meaning that they are meant to spread His good news throughout the world. Guthrie eloquently explains, "The all-powerful God sends His ambassadors, seeking reconciliation with those whom He has created but who lack a relationship with Him."[288] That Christians are ambassadors for Christ is something which is still true of God's people two millennia after it was written.[289] All Christians, then, are involved in the ministry of reconciliation through evangelism.

Second Timothy 4:5: Do the Work of an Evangelist

The second notably evangelistic instructional passage of Scripture in Paul's letters is 2 Timothy 4:5. In this portion of Scripture, Paul writes to Timothy, "As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry." If Paul was instructing Timothy to evangelize, then it must be understood that the Great Commission and its implementation was not something that ended with the apostles. Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, Jr., indicate, "Witnessing is not simply a responsibility for ordained leaders but [is] for all believers."[290] Instead, since Paul would instruct his charges to continue the same ministry in which he was engaged, it would indicate that Paul intended for the people whom he reached with the gospel to continue to reach others with the same good news. It was for this reason that he left Timothy at Ephesus.[291]

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[288]Guthrie, *2 Corinthians*, 311.

[289]David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, The New American Commentary, vol. 29 (Nashville: B & H, 1999), 298.

[290]Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, Jr., *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 245.

[291]Walter L. Liefeld, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 288.

Being instructed to "do the work of an evangelist" could indicate that evangelism may not have been a primary gifting of Timothy's or that Paul was afraid he would be otherwise distracted.[292] It remains true, however, that Paul instructed Timothy to undertake what should be understood as a privileged calling, which can be seen as instructive for the church at large.[293] As a result, this passage should be seen as one in which Paul highlights the importance of preaching the gospel for both Timothy and those who would later read his letter.[294]

Effective Evangelism

In order to understand how to measure the interaction between evangelism and family ministry, it is important to discover that which makes evangelism effective. To determine if certain ministry philosophies and individual churches are evangelistically effective, it is necessary to examine the literature surrounding that topic to determine what markers of effective evangelism exist. This exploration is imperative because, as previously expounded, churches are meant to be evangelistic in nature. As Russell Moore writes, "The watching world should identity [*sic*] local congregations as globally engaged in evangelism."[295] Similarly, Greear states, "Any ministry that is not formed in light of the Great Commission is erred from the start."[296] Further, Grudem writes, "If [a church] begins to neglect evangelism [it] will cease to grow and influence others; it will become ingrown and eventually begin to wither."[297] Something of this great of importance must

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[292]Liefeld, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, 288.

[293]John MacArthur, "Theology of Sleep: Evangelism According to Jesus," in *Evangelism*, 17.

[294]Risto Saarinen, *The Pastoral Epistles with Philemon and Jude* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2008), 160.

[295]Russell D. Moore, "A Theology of the Great Commission," in Lawless and Rainer, *The Challenge of the Great Commission*, 62.

[296]Greear, *Gaining by Losing*, 152.

[297]Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 868.

be measured for effectiveness. The question remains, however, regarding how to determine if a particular church or ministry philosophy is effective at this crucial endeavor. This section focuses on understanding markers of effective evangelism, the relationship between evangelism and the contemporary church, methods of evangelism, and a special note about baptism as a metric for comprehending effective evangelism.

Markers of Effective Evangelism

One idea perpetuated throughout the literature as a trait of an evangelistically effective church is the need for every member to be engaged in the task of evangelism. Moore indicates that every Christian must be engaged in evangelism because of the significant nature of the task:

> A non-evangelistic church is in the midst of an identity crisis. This is precisely because the Great Commission is not a 'program' of a voluntary association. Nor is the New Testament concept of the church that of a place simply to encourage one another in discipleship and to pool together missions offerings. Rather, the church is a declaration of war. In the church, the triumphant Warrior-King has established an outpost of the kingdom—a colony of the reign that will one day engulf the world (Eph 1:20-23).[298]

In light of this idea, every member of the church should be engaged in the mission at hand. Coleman indicates, "We must always remember, too, that the goal is world conquest. We dare not let a lesser concern capture our strategy of the moment."[299] As a result, as Timothy K. Beougher indicates, Christians must remember that "God calls every believer to be involved in spiritually rescuing persons."[300] This engagement can be a marker of effective evangelism. According to John Ewart, "An effective, strategic, outreach process should

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[298]Moore, "Theology of the Great Commission," 63.

[299]Coleman, *Master Plan of Evangelism*, 87.

[300]Timothy K. Beougher, "The Great Commission and Personal Evangelism," in Lawless and Rainer, *The Challenge of the Great Commission*, 121.

encourage the involvement of every active member of the church regardless of spiritual maturity or age."[301]

While it may seem that the task of sharing the good news of the gospel should be reserved for spiritually or physiologically mature individuals, that simply is not the case. MacArthur explains, "The power of the Spirit in the gospel is not found in the messenger, but in the message."[302] An effective marker of evangelism can be the extent to which every member of the church is engaged in the mission of reaching people with the gospel.

Another characteristic of effective evangelism, as suggested by Coleman, is the extent to which those who are reached with the gospel then train and reach other people with the gospel. Coleman's words are helpful:

> It is not enough to rescue the perishing, though this is imperative; nor is it sufficient to build up newborn babes in the faith of Christ, although this, too, is necessary if the firstfruit [sic] is to endure; in fact, it is not sufficient just to get them out winning souls, as commendable as this may be. What really counts in the ultimate perpetuation of our work is the faithfulness with which our converts go and make leaders out of their converts, not simply more followers.[303]

Additionally, he continues,

> The test of any work of evangelism is not what is seen at the moment, or in the conference report, but in the effectiveness with which the work continues in the next generation. Similarly, the criteria on which a church should measure its success is not how many new names are added to the role or how much the budget increased, but rather how many Christians are actively winning souls and training them to win the multitudes.[304]

Coleman is not alone in his belief that effective evangelism is measured by the continued effort in evangelism by the new Christian. Greear writes, "Any ministry's success should

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[301]John Ewart, "The Great Commission and Strategic Outreach," in Lawless and Rainer, *The Challenge of the Great Commission*, 207.

[302]MacArthur, "Theology of Sleep," 3.

[303]Coleman, *Master Plan of Evangelism*, 94.

[304]Ibid., 95.

be judged, not by its size, but by how well it raises up disciples who raise up more disciples."[305] Similarly, Thom Rainer indicates that effective evangelism "is not complete until a person becomes a fruit-bearing disciple in a local church."[306] Effective evangelism is measured by continued effective evangelism—it is a self-perpetuating cycle that is evident in the number of individuals who are continually engaged in it.

Still another marker of effective evangelism is engagement in the local church. As seen, this involvement is rarely a true metric in itself, but there is suggestion that a distinct membership process may be a way of understanding when evangelism is being accomplished effectively. Of this idea, Platt writes, "To come to Christ is to become part of His church. Followers of Jesus have the privilege of being identified with His family."[307] In the same vein, Chuck Lawless states,

> Only when a believer is fully integrated into the life of the church can he be genuinely considered a member of the church. How different that is from so many churches today that count heads while failing to produce disciples. And, how pitifully incomplete is our attention to the Great Commission if counting heads is all we do![308]

As a result, while simply quantifying attendance may be short-sighted in terms of measuring the effectiveness of evangelism in a congregation, a robust process for membership can be a helpful indicator of a successful evangelistic campaign.

Evangelism and the Contemporary Church

Four distinct ideas for the relationship between the church and evangelism are found in contemporary evangelism literature: those who know Christ must be a part of the church; the church has a responsibility to train its members to spread the gospel;

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[305]Greear, *Gaining by Losing*, 141.

[306]Thom S. Rainer, "The Great Commission and the Church Growth Movement," in Lawless and Rainer, *The Challenge of the Great Commission*, 14.

[307]Platt, *Follow Me*, 151.

[308]Chuck Lawless, "The Great Commission: The Next Steps," in Lawless and Rainer, *The Challenge of the Great Commission*, 262.

churches that fail to evangelize fail to be true to their purpose; and, subsequently, every

church must be missional. First, those who claim a relationship with Christ must be a part

of the local church. Platt writes, "[It is] biblically impossible to follow Christ apart from

joining His church. In fact, anyone who claims to be a Christian yet is not an active

member of a church may not actually be a follower of Christ at all."[309] He further explains,

> It is a privilege to be a part of the church. To come to Christ is to become a member
> of His community. It is biblically, spiritually, and practically impossible to be a
> disciple of Christ (much less *make* disciples of Christ) apart from total devotion to a
> family of Christians.[310]

This point is important because the mission of the church was given not to individuals,

necessarily, but to the church as a whole. Plummer writes, "The apostolic mission devolves

upon each church *as a whole*—not upon any particular member or group. Each individual

member within the church, then, will manifest missionary activity according to his or her

particular gifting and life situation."[311] Therefore, the relationship between Christ, His

church, the individual Christian, and evangelism are all inextricably intertwined.

Second, the church has a responsibility to train its members for the purpose of

evangelism. Platt indicates, "Disciple making involves far more than just leading people

to trust in Christ; disciple making involves teaching people to follow Christ."[312] As

individuals are taught within the church to be disciples of Christ, they are necessarily

taught the importance of the mission to which they are called. Hobbs calls this mission a

privilege and obligation: "Persons become Christians by receiving the gospel in the

fullest sense of the word. Those receiving it fulfill their roles as Christians by sharing the

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[309]Platt, *Follow Me*, 150.

[310]Ibid., 173, emphasis original.

[311]Plummer, *The Church's Mission*, 144, emphasis original.

[312]Platt, *Follow Me*, 191.

good news with others. So it is both a privilege and an obligation."[313] This mission is both a privilege and an obligation because the gospel is free to the believer. Because of the free offer of the gospel, Moore writes, "Great Commission Christians must crucify any hesitation to proclaim the gospel to any sinner in any place at any time."[314] It is, therefore, imperative that new Christians are trained not only in proper Christian followership, but also in the mission at hand. Coleman indicates,

> The only hope for the world is for laborers to go to them with the gospel of salvation, and having won them to the Savior, not to leave them, but to work with them faithfully, patiently, painstakingly, until they become fruitful Christians savoring the world about them with the redeemer's love.[315]

Of additional note in the training of individuals within the church is the fact that failing to train them for the mission at hand can actually work against progression in discipleship. Greear notes, "When we separate mission from discipleship, not only do we thwart the mission, but we keep some from faith altogether."[316] As a result, as Beougher writes, "We must keep before all Christians our responsibility (and privilege) to be communicators of the good news."[317] This sense of mission is not only helpful, but it resonates with what the Holy Spirit does within a regenerate person, as well as helps individuals embrace their true purpose of spreading the glory of God throughout the face of the planet. If potential converts are taught that following Christ is merely about eliminating bad behaviors and, subsequently, are not taught that a holy, missional life is the byproduct of regeneration in Chris (Titus 2:11-15), then they are merely reflective individuals who fail to live the God-intended Christian life of mission in line with the

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[313]Hobbs, *Baptist Faith and Message*, 94.

[314]Moore, "Theology of the Great Commission," 55.

[315]Coleman, *Master Plan of Evangelism*, 94.

[316]Greear, *Gaining by Losing*, 159.

[317]Beougher, "The Great Commission and Personal Evangelism," 133.

Great Commission. Coleman writes of this type of lifestyle: "Distinctively, the church proclaims the changed world as the consequence of changed men. Reflective man produces new philosophies; it is only regenerate man who holds the clue to a society that is really new."[318] Thereby, when the church fails to train new believers with a sense of mission, the church fails to accomplish its God-ordained mission to make disciples who make disciples.[319]

A third idea regarding the relationship between evangelism and the contemporary church is that churches which fail to evangelize fail to fulfill their true purpose. Multiple explanations are offered for why a church may fail to be evangelistic. One such explanation is that churches are relying on nonbelievers to come to a church gathering to hear the good news of the gospel. Ewart indicates that this is a poor strategy: "If the American church is content to minister to whoever happens to show up each week, she misses her missiological purpose."[320] Another explanation may be that churches and their members simply try to live Christian lives without an emphasis on active gospel outreach. Lawless concludes of this temptation that

> our general tendency is toward the 'easy fix,' rather than the hard work that Great Commission living requires. It is simply easier to live the routine Christian life without ever worrying about the lostness of our neighbors and world, without every [*sic*] considering our own call to be a genuine disciple of Jesus Christ.[321]

Similarly, it is a temptation to rely on traditions and practices that have been in place in particular churches for decades or centuries. Ewart writes, "The current practices of many established churches will not impact or keep pace with the growing unchurched population

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[318]Coleman, *Master Plan of Evangelism*, 11.

[319]While a discussion of training methods may be helpful and instructive, it is outside of the scope of this study.

[320]Ewart, "The Great Commission and Strategic Outreach," 208.

[321]Lawless, "The Great Commission," 259.

surrounding them."[322] Whatever the temptation that prevents a church from actively

pursuing its God-given mission, Moore strongly condemns it. He writes, "A non-

evangelistic church is more than just a disobedient body (although it is that). A non-

evangelistic church is denying before the nations that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes

away the sins of the world. And that is blasphemy."[323] In light of that idea, not only are

the current practices of many churches ineffective, they are wholly inappropriate for the

church of Jesus Christ.

Finally, and in light of the previous idea, the literature supports the idea that the

church must be missional—the church must be actively engaged in its God-given mission.

Plummer indicates, "If we understand the New Testament documents as presenting us

with the normative pattern for the church, then the modern church must be a missionary

church."[324] Likewise, Mark E. Dever writes that the church

> is to be the appearance of the gospel. It is what the gospel looks like when played
> out in the lives of people. Take away the church and you take away the visible
> manifestation of the gospel in the world. Christians in churches, then, are called to
> practice 'display evangelism,' and the world will witness the reign of God begun in
> a community of people made in His image and reborn by His Spirit. Christians, not
> just as individuals but as God's people bound together in churches, are the clearest
> picture that the world sees of the invisible God and what His will is for them.[325]

In order for this picture to be as clear as possible, people must understand the evangelistic

nature of the God of the Universe. As Hobbs indicates, "evangelism is the life of the

church."[326] Grudem writes that the "evangelistic work of declaring the gospel is the

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[322]Ewart, "The Great Commission and Strategic Outreach," 197.

[323]Moore, "Theology of the Great Commission," 61.

[324]Plummer, *The Church's Mission*, 144.

[325]Mark E. Dever, "The Church," in *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: B & H, 2007), 856.

[326]Hobbs, *Baptist Faith and Message*, 95.

primary ministry that the church has toward the world."[327] If this is the case, then it is imperative that the church sends its members into the mission field that is their daily lives. Greear indicates, "Being a disciple means being sent; so sending should pervade every aspect of discipleship development. Everything we do and learn in the Christian faith ought to be in the context of the Great Commission."[328] This idea of sending is also found in Coleman's extrapolation of Jesus' interaction with His disciples:

> Christian disciples are sent men and women—sent out in the same work of world evangelism to which the Lord was sent, and for which He gave His life. Evangelism is not an optional accessory to our life. It is the heartbeat of all that we are called to be and do. It is the commission of the church which gives meaning to all else that is undertaken in the name of Christ. With this purpose clearly in focus, everything which is done and said has glorious fulfillment of God's redemptive purpose—educational institutions, social programs, hospitals, church meetings of any kind—everything done in the name of Christ has its justification in fulfilling this mission.[329]

In summary, the relationship between the church and evangelism requires that individual believers are brought into the life of the church, trained to live a missional Christian life, and then sent out to accomplish the task Christ has given to His church.

Methods of Evangelism

Because evangelism is such a crucial topic for the church, it may seem that there is one correct way of accomplishing that important work. However, that is not the case. The literature seems to point toward varied approaches often tailored for the individual receiving the message of the gospel. Beougher indicates,

> Personal evangelism must always be personal, adapted to the person one is trying to reach and modeled by both walk and talk in the life of the witness. Great patience and perseverance will be required to travel with persons on what at times may be lengthy spiritual pilgrimages.[330]

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[327]Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 867-68.

[328]Greear, *Gaining by Losing*, 159.

[329]Coleman, *Master Plan of Evangelism*, 79.

[330]Beougher, "The Great Commission and Personal Evangelism," 131.

Likewise, Grudem writes,

> Sometimes evangelism is carried out by individuals, but at other times it is a corporate activity of the church (as in evangelistic campaigns). And even individual evangelism often involves other church members who will welcome an unbelieving visitor and give attention to his or her needs. So evangelism is rightly considered a means of grace in the church.[331]

As a result, evangelism should not be thought of as a single process used to reach unbelievers, but rather as a collection of methods and approaches tailored for the individual or situation aimed at penetrating the heart of the unbeliever with the good news of the gospel.[332]

However, suggestions for techniques can be employed. For example, Ewart recommends structuring the church in such a way that relationships can be leveraged for evangelism: "How can the church intentionally structure relationships and community? The corporate body must first be broken down into smaller units. Growth normally occurs on the cellular level."[333] In a similar way, Coleman advocates for training believers in smaller contexts: "Preaching to the masses, although necessary, will never suffice in the work of preparing leaders for evangelism."[334] Whatever the chosen method, however, it is helpful to know "how a course of action fits into the overall plan God has for our lives if it is to thrill our souls with a sense of destiny. This is true of any particular procedure or technique employed to propagate the gospel."[335]

One word of caution offered by MacArthur on the subject is that unbelievers still need to hear certain information in order to actually become believers in Christ:

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[331]Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 959.

[332]An in-depth exploration of evangelistic methods is outside of the scope of this work. As a result, this section only touches on common themes found within the precedent literature.

[333]Ewart, "The Great Commission and Strategic Outreach," 200.

[334]Coleman, *Master Plan of Evangelism*, 40.

[335]Ibid., 14.

It is normal for sinners to wish for better things for themselves—like health, wealth, success, and personal fulfillment. But the gospel never offers what the uncommitted, impure heart already wants. Only false teachers use pride and lusts of the flesh to coerce a positive response from people. By contrast, the true gospel offers what is incongruous to natural human desire.[336]

Further, he explains, "A sinner must hear that his sin indicts and condemns him because it offends God, and only the Spirit of God can take that truth from the sinner's ears to his heart."[337] Along the same lines, Blomberg writes, "If non-Christians are not hearing the gospel and not being challenged to make a decision for Christ, then the church has disobeyed one part of Jesus' commission."[338] While the method of evangelism may change, the message never will. As a result, it is important for Christians to be well versed in both the tenets of the gospel and in various techniques for its spread.

Baptism as a Metric for Effective Evangelism

While there are multiple methods for spreading the good news of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, it is difficult to quantify the effectiveness of that endeavor. The discussed markers of effective evangelism, while helpful, do not seem to create a quantifiable metric for the measurement of evangelistic effectiveness. What is countable, however, is whether or not a new convert has been baptized. This metric is useful because of the imperative that believers be baptized, as evidenced in the Great Commission as well as in the pattern found throughout the book of Acts when individuals became Christians (Acts 8:26-38; 9:1-18; 10:30-48; 16:13-15; 16:26-33; 18:8; and 19:1-6). MacArthur indicates,

The first command for every Christian is baptism. Baptism is not a condition of salvation but an initial step of obedience for the Christian. Conversion is complete

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[336]MacArthur, "Theology of Sleep," 13.

[337]Ibid., 15.

[338]Blomberg, *Matthew*, 433.

before baptism occurs; baptism is only an external sign that testifies to what has already occurred in the sinner's heart.[339]

Similarly, Anthony and Anthony write,

> As disciples are made, they are baptized. This second subordinate [of the Great Commission] is a public proclamation of breaking allegiance to the world to devotion to God for a lifetime. The public proclamation is to be shouted loudly as the baptismal candidate is an active participant in the symbolic act of the old self dying and being buried in the water and subsequently being raised to new life in Christ. Of course, this act is symbolic of what has already taken place in the life of this believer. This act of obedience becomes another significant moment in the disciple-making process.[340]

Because of the significance of this act of obedience in the life of the believer, baptism, then, becomes an important marker in the life of new Christians and, subsequently, can serve as a marker for the effectiveness of the evangelistic process.

The idea that baptism is a useful marker for effective evangelism is further supported by Scripture. It becomes apparent in the book of Acts that, as MacArthur writes, "Only those who were baptized were considered Christians" (see Acts 2:41).[341] Alluding to the act of obedience that is baptism, MacArthur concludes, "Nowhere in either the Old or New Testaments do we find an invitation for sinners to believe now, but obey later. The call to trust and obey is a single summons."[342] Similarly, Bobby Jamieson points out, "In the New Testament all Christians were baptized, and all the evidence we have points to people being baptized as soon as they embraced the gospel. After trusting Christ, baptism is the first thing a believer does."[343] As a result, it is feasible and likely that baptism numbers represent a quantifiable metric that can be used to reveal the evangelistic effectiveness of a particular congregation. Of course, there are always

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[339]John MacArthur, "Jesus as Lord: Essential Components of the Gospel Message," in MacArthur, *Evangelism*, 161.

[340]Anthony and Anthony, *A Theology for Family Ministry*, 124.

[341]MacArthur, "Jesus as Lord," 162.

[342]Ibid., 161. See Luke 6:46-49 and Acts 2:38.

[343]Bobby Jamieson, *Going Public: Why Baptism Is Required for Church Membership* (Nashville: B & H, 2015), 38.

outliers—congregations without a solid vetting process, for example—but the goal and hope is that baptism is a part of a discipleship process wherein the baptismal candidate is making an informed decision to follow Christ in a display of obedience before the congregation.

Evangelism and Family Ministry

The aim of this study to this point has been to explore the biblical and theoretical foundation for both family ministry and evangelism in their individual contexts. Next, however, it is important to expound upon the literature that reveals the intersection of the two ministry focuses. This task is important because both of these ministry emphases are biblically commanded. Churches have a responsibility, as Greear indicates, to grow both deep and wide:

> Faithful churches, in other words, seek to grow deep *and* wide. Pursuing width without depth creates audiences instead of churches; but pursuing depth without width fails to take the urgency of the Great Commission seriously. In fact, churches that only seek to grow wide, and not deep, are probably not nearly as wide as they think, because heaven counts disciples, not congregants or confessions of faith. And churches that attempt to grow deep with no concern for growing wide are probably not as deep as they think, either, because depth in the gospel always leads to a yearning for, and usually an effectiveness in, evangelism.[344]

The depth spoken of here can be representative of a church that focuses on building families without a concern for evangelism. Likewise, the width spoken of here can be representative of a church that focuses on evangelism, but neglects the role of building families. Instead, the duality of the biblical command indicates that churches must focus on both building families and pursuing those who are far from God.[345]

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[344]Greear, *Gaining by Losing*, 97, emphasis original.

[345]The command here referenced is none other than the Great Commission, which instructs believers to go and make disciples. This discipleship process includes both evangelism and "teaching them all that I have commanded you"; in other words, Christ's command indicates that believers are to both evangelize nonbelievers and to teach believers the ways of Christ.

This dual emphasis can be seen throughout Scripture. As Strother points out, this dual emphasis can be seen in the life of Abraham:

> When God called Abraham and his family to trust in Divine Providence, missional calling and family discipleship were inextricably intertwined together so that "all nations of the earth will be blessed through [Abraham]. For I have chosen him so that he will command his children and his house after him to keep the way of the Lord' (Gen 18:18-19).[346]

In the same manner, Coleman indicates that Jesus' ministry had a dual focus:

> One must not overlook that even while Jesus was ministering to others, the disciples were always with Him. Whether He addressed the multitudes that pressed on Him, conversed with the scribes and Pharisees which sought to ensnare Him, or spoke to some lonely beggar along the road, the disciples were close at hand to observe and to listen. In this manner, Jesus' time was paying double dividends. Without neglecting His regular ministry to those in need, He maintained a constant ministry to His disciples by having them with Him. They were thus getting the benefit of everything He said and did to others plus their own personal explanation and counsel.[347]

Of course, this is not written specifically to the idea of family discipleship, but the principle is the same.

The Great Commission of Jesus also has dual implications. Anthony and Anthony indicate,

> The Great Commission is God's call to the church to share His love with the World. Children play an important role in this call not only as those who need to hear the message of redemption but also as those who deliver it. Children in the church are to be evangelized, but they are also to evangelize others. Children are not only capable of a real, intimate relationship with God; they are also called and capable of sharing their love for God with others. Parents and the church are responsible not only to lead children into a personal relationship with God but also to challenge children to share that love with their friends.[348]

The challenge that seems to exist within the literature surrounding the subject, then, is the extent to which one of these ministry focuses is emphasized over the other. One example of an evangelism focus is found in Kostenberger and Jones' text. While

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[346]Jay Strother, "Responses to Jay Strother: Family-Equipping Ministry," in Jones, *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, 181.

[347]Coleman, *Master Plan of Evangelism*, 37-38.

[348]Anthony and Anthony, *A Theology for Family Ministry*, 132.

responding to a stream of family ministry that emphasizes reaching heads of households as a means for reaching the whole family, they write,

> [Addressing heads of households because of their influence] continues to be a very viable strategy today in many contexts, though it should be viewed primarily in terms of evangelistic method rather than as theologically normative or as the only biblical way to organize or evangelize. In terms of discipleship, too, it is the role of *the church* to disciple the nations (Matt 28:19). Believing parents have an important role to play, but this does not alter the fact that it is the *church* that was given the charge to disciple individuals and to teach them to obey all that the Lord Jesus Christ commanded them to do (Matt 28:20).[349]

While this position supports the idea of ministering to families, it seems to tilt toward a church-centric version of the two ministry emphases. To the contrary, Spurgeon seems to suggest the opposite: "The heathen are to be sought by all means, and the highways and hedges are to be searched, but home has a prior claim, and woe to those who reverse the order of the Lord's arrangements."[350] Of course, it is possible that Kostenberger and Jones would affirm Spurgeon's sentiment since it is a biblical command to church leaders (1 Tim 3:2-5). The contention comes in trying to understand the extent to which one ministry style should be emphasized over another.

Some authors seem to indicate that this dual emphasis is just that—a dual emphasis. That is, it requires balance. Anderson writes, "The church's ongoing reformation and renewal cannot be effective as long as the church pursues the Great Commission while at the same time committing the Great Omission, the neglect of the role of the home in making disciples."[351] Emphasizing the opposite extreme, Anthony and Anthony caution, "Families are not the goal or the center of family ministry. A biblical model for family ministry must mobilize families to be on mission together. The gospel of Jesus Christ must stand as the center and the goal, even of family ministry

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[349]Kostenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 255, emphasis original.

[350]Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening*, July 11, evening.

[351]Anderson, *Great Omission*, 19.

models."[352] These statements taken together suggest that there is to be an appropriate balance between evangelism and family ministry.

In general, this balance is readily apparent in various texts emphasizing family discipleship. For example, Cope writes, "The early Christians not only accepted Jesus as their teacher and savior; they took their family life as the opportunity to show what the Kingdom of God, the ideal society, was like."[353] Family ministry and the idea of reaching others are meant to be intertwined. Similarly, Moll and Chester state, "A family [that is] turned inwards is not a gospel-centred [sic] family. The gospel is good news. [It is] a message we share with others, beginning with our neighbours [sic] and extending to the end of the earth."[354] In the same vein, Thompson indicates, "The Church must again turn its attention to parents, equipping them to both disciple their children and to model for them how to reach other families with the gospel of Jesus Christ."[355] As a result, it can be understood that both evangelism and family ministry are to be emphasized within the congregation in a way that balances the two without overemphasizing or ignoring either emphasis. It is important, then, to see if and how this is done in contemporary family ministry literature.

Evangelism in the Contemporary Understanding of Family Ministry

While contemporary family ministry literature focuses on solving the problem of parental abdication of the discipleship process, it also attempts to maintain a healthy focus on evangelism as the mission of the church. For example, Strother writes,

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[352]Anthony and Anthony, *A Theology for Family Ministry*, 178.

[353]Cope, *Religious Education*, 42.

[354]Moll and Chester, *Gospel-Centred Family*, 89.

[355]Thompson, *Intentional Parenting*, 11.

Certainly, some churches *will* twist "family ministry" into a self-serving array of programs and inwardly focused opportunities. This is not the fault of any particular family ministry model, however; this is the fault of poor leadership in these congregations. Family-equipping churches understand that family ministry is an inherently missional endeavor.[356]

Similarly, Jones emphasizes that family ministry is not meant to be an inwardly focused endeavor in a congregation:

God's calling does not end with the rehearsal of the gospel in our own households, though. The proclamation of the gospel that begins in our households should spill out beyond the confines of our homes, into our communities, and then to the uttermost parts of the earth.[357]

This emphasis on the balance between evangelism and family ministry can be found in each of the three contemporary family ministry models as well as in other tertiary ideas associated with family discipleship.

The Family-Integrated Model

The family-integrated model of family ministry is one which can face significant scrutiny and labeling as an inwardly focused church and, thus, not evangelistically focused. In fact, it is the family-integrated church model that Kostenberger and Jones have in mind when they write, "We strongly urge the church to make families integral to the ministry of the church, supporting and strengthening them, but not in such a way that the New Testament teaching on the church is compromised or the family unduly elevated above the church."[358] Similarly, Shields critiques this model:

Practically speaking, family-integrated churches replace a primary emphasis on conversion and discipleship of lost persons with a primary focus on evangelism and training in the context of family. Such a strategy becomes problematic when it is elevated to a place of primacy in the church's economy.[359]

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[356]Strother, "Responses to Jay Strother," 181, emphasis original.

[357]Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 79.

[358]Kostenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 259.

[359]Brandon Shields, "Responses to Paul Renfro: Family-Integrated Ministry," in Jones, *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, 81.

What is remarkable about this critique, however, is that the literature expounding upon the family-integrated model of family ministry is actually intensely focused on the evangelization of the lost outside of the family. In fact, in Nelson and Jones' article, "The Problem and Promise of Family Ministry," the authors expound on the primary models of family ministry, and the family-integrated model is the only model for which evangelism as a priority is mentioned at all.[360]

In like manner, Bauchum writes extensively of the importance of evangelism in his books about family-integrated ministry. For example, he writes, "The family is the evangelism and discipleship arm of the family-integrated church."[361] In another text he states, "The family is not the gospel; nor is the family as important as the gospel. The family is a delivery method for the gospel."[362] For Baucham, it would appear that the family-integrated model of family ministry is not an inwardly focused endeavor as much as it is a structure that allows for the outward transmission of the gospel.

Similar to Baucham, Brown also indicates that the family-integrated model of ministry is an evangelistic strategy. Brown couches his understanding of the strategy in terms of reaching young people outside of the church:

> God has delivered to us a pattern for reaching youth who have no parents. It is to preach the gospel to them when we go about the community, fold them into individual families, connect them with diverse relationships in the body of Christ, and gather them into corporate meetings of the church. In order to effectively reach the lost, we must obey the scriptural commands for personal evangelism, church life, and family life.[363]

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[360]Nelson and Jones, "The Problem and the Promise," 39.

[361]Baucham, *Family Driven Faith*, 195.

[362]Baucham, *Family Shepherds*, 13.

[363]Brown, *A Weed in the Church*, 230-31.

While this strategy appears to be solely for the reaching of youth without parents—or without believing parents—it is still an intentionally evangelistic strategy within the family-integrated model.

Finally, Renfro writes extensively about the primacy of evangelism within the family-integrated model of family ministry. For him, this ministry happens in and through the home.[364] Renfro summarizes his position when he states,

> In the family-integrated church, it is not a question of either/or, but both/and—both family discipleship *and* world evangelism. The mandates of Scripture call believers to evangelize and disciple their children precisely so they can evangelize the world with the help and the testimony of their faithful children.[365]

Of people who visit his family-integrated church, he writes,

> [Some] are looking for an enclave where they can hide with other, similar families, focusing on their families and never seeking to reach beyond their homes. Such persons are quite surprised when they discover that our mission is to equip them to reach unbelievers with the truth of the gospel.[366]

In response to the critique often leveled against the family-integrated model, Renfro also posits,

> What the church needs to reach the lost is *not* the relatively new concept of age segregation. What the church needs is faithful proclamation of Scripture and an authentic faith-community that strives to obey the Lord's commands, including "making disciples of all nations."[367]

What can be gathered from these prominent family-integrated authors is that this model of family ministry is meant to be evangelistic in nature so that the point of family discipleship itself is that families would live in such a way that they reach those around them with the gospel.

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[364]Renfro, "Family-Integrated Ministry," 63.

[365]Renfro, "Responses to Paul Renfro," 90, emphasis original.

[366]Renfro, "Family-Integrated Ministry," 71.

[367]Renfro, "Responses to Paul Renfro," 92, emphasis original.

The Family-Based Model

Similar to proponents of the family-integrated model of family ministry, those who advocate for the family-based model of family ministry believe that evangelism ought to be a primary focus of the church. This conviction seems to rest in the idea that family-based ministry believes that the model is not new to the church. As DeVries writes, the model itself "is not a new model as much as it is a return to God's original design."[368] In his treatment of family-based ministry, Shields argues extensively for the evangelistic nature of the family-based model. This argument seems to center on the way in which the model asserts itself as an effective model for reaching young people. Shields writes,

> Family-based churches are acutely aware of the prevailing youth culture and of the breakdown of the nuclear family. Such churches see these trends as strategic opportunities for pursuing the Great Commission in the context of age-organized youth and children's ministries.[369]

For Shields, the idea of a family-ministry that is evangelistic is unique to the family-based model:

> Family-based churches agree with other family ministry models on a number of issues, such as biblical manhood and womanhood, the need for parents to disciple their children, and the responsibility of fathers to lead in their homes. Yet family-based churches take it a step further in that they recognize the evangelistic responsibility of the church extends beyond the doors of Christian homes.[370]

Notably, however, there is very little else written specifically in the literature surrounding the family-based model regarding evangelism.

The Family-Equipping Model

The priority of evangelism within the literature of the family-equipping model of family ministry is somewhat vague. For example, Haynes' discussion of evangelism

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[368]DeVries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry*, 163.

[369]Shields, "Family-Based Ministry," 116.

[370]Ibid. It must be noted that this claim is broad and may not accurately represent the position of other family ministry strategies and the understanding of evangelistic responsibility possessed by the practitioners of those approaches to ministry.

seems to center on the evangelization of children within their families and not move much farther beyond that. For example, he states,

> Jesus did not need to command parents to go and make disciples because that command was given in the context of a *Shema* driven culture. When He involves every Christ follower in the process of making disciples He is simply saying whether you are married, single, have kids, [do not] have kids, have grandchildren or [do not], you are to make disciples. This mandate creates an intricate tapestry of others who can and will invest in the lives of our children spiritually. You will most often find those like-minded other Christ-followers in your local church.[371]

While the priority of making disciples is present in both this text and throughout Haynes' books, there is little to no mention of reaching out beyond the church itself. While this omission does not mean that Haynes is not evangelistic in nature, the priority is simply not included in the text.

In the same manner, Wright and Graves seem to indicate that family ministry is not an evangelistic strategy in itself: "Families cannot duplicate a church's evangelistic and mission efforts."[372] While this is obviously clear, this sentiment suggests that the emphases of family ministry and evangelism are separate emphases without intersection. To the contrary, Strother asserts, "Thousands of years after God revealed His hidden counsels to Abraham, family-equipping churches recognize that the call for the church to evangelize the world and the call for parents to disciple their children still go hand in hand."[373]

Perhaps the most definitive statements about the evangelistic nature of the family-equipping model are found in Jones' *Family Ministry Field Guide*. In that text Jones indicates that a ministry strategy that fails to reach the people around the family is

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[371]Haynes, *Legacy Path*, 101.

[372]Wright and Graves, *reThink*, 100.

[373]Strother, "Responses to Jay Strother," 181.

not a family ministry strategy at all, but rather a form of idolatry of the family.[374] Instead, family-equipping churches are to be both evangelistic and missional. Jones stresses,

> Family-equipping ministry recognizes that the gospel compels God's people to view every person as a potential or actual brother or sister in Christ. This passion begins with those who are near and then moves to those who are far, but the ministry with those who are far remains possible only because we continue to equip those who are near. Family-equipping ministry is about near and far.[375]

He continues, "The essence of family-equipping ministry is the implementation of [a] gospel-centered identity first in our homes and reinforced in our churches so that it can be revealed with integrity to the world."[376] As a result, family-equipping ministry must be recognized as evangelistic in nature in order for it to be faithful to the gospel around which it is built.

Other Views

Evangelistic strategies can also be found in the literature of strategies that are better classified as ministry to families. For example, Sell states,

> There is no question that evangelism is one of the church's highest priorities. This fact, then makes family ministry essential because it, too, is evangelistic. Family ministry aims to train people how to fulfill parenthood as Christians, which includes nurturing their children in the faith, a task assigned to them in Ephesians 6:4. Parents who evangelize and disciple their own children are doing the work of the church.[377]

This type of evangelism is still inwardly focused, but Garland indicates that the point of this type of evangelism is for the purpose of reaching those on the outside:

> Family ministry aims at developing stronger relationships *so that* families will be more effective witnesses and messengers of the love of Christ. But this is not a linear process. Families do not first become 'strong' and then begin ministry. Instead it is transactional. Being in ministry together can strengthen families as they experience efficacy and take on significant work as partners.[378]

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[374]Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 169.

[375]Ibid., 141.

[376]Ibid., 144.

[377]Sell, *Family Ministry*, 17.

[378]Garland, *Family Ministry*, 387, emphasis original.

It can be asserted, therefore, that even the idea of ministering to families is an evangelistic endeavor meant to reach those far from God.

Two Parts of the Same Mission

In light of the way in which evangelism is said to be a priority in family ministry literature, it seems correct to position family ministry as an evangelistic strategy in and of itself. That is, evangelism and family ministry are two parts of the same mission—the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Greear asserts, "Making more and better disciples ought to be the goal of—and justification for the existence of—every ministry."[379] Making more and better disciples is exactly the emphasis which seems to exist within family ministry. It is that position to which Renfro refers when he explains, "The home is the best context for discipleship, and the family is also the best context for evangelism of persons outside of the church."[380]

What seems to prevent family ministry from being seen as an evangelistic strategy is a distinction between discipleship (growing in the faith) and evangelism (bringing people to the faith). Ron Hunter, Jr., writes of this distinction: "The debate about whether to emphasize evangelism or discipleship has raged for decades, if not centuries. You can look at many churches and find pastors championing one side over the other, although they would never admit it."[381] Hunter concludes that, in Scripture, evangelism and discipleship are not presented against one another, but are actually presented as two parts of the same mission.[382] This sentiment is echoed by Anderson: "Healthy churches understand the importance of both reaching out and caring for their own (discipleship). If

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[379]Greear, *Gaining by Losing*, 138.

[380]Renfro, "Family-Integrated Ministry," 63.

[381]Ron Hunter, Jr., *DNA of D6: Building Blocks of Generational Discipleship* (Nashville: Randall House, 2015), 81.

[382]Ibid., 84.

one or the other is out of line or nonexistent problems often occur."[383] Similarly,

Cannister concludes,

> Without evangelism, we can certainly mentor the disciples within our fellowship to grow in their faith—as we should, and as Christian parents desire—but we are unable to make new disciples as Jesus commanded. New disciples are found in the conversion process that results from evangelism.[384]

As a result, evangelism cannot be separated from the discipleship process, but must be seen as part of the same strategy; therefore, family ministry functions as an evangelistic strategy in itself. Family ministry seems to function as an evangelistic strategy in three primary ways: evangelization of the family, family ministry as an evangelistic tool, and evangelism as the fruit of family ministry.

Evangelization of the Family

First, family ministry strategies place an emphasis on the evangelization of the members of the family. Evangelism is not something simply done outside of the church; it is necessary for the children of believing parents—and parents of believing children— to also be evangelized. Alvin L. Reid summarizes this idea: "The first institution God created was not the church. It was not the government. It was the home. And the home lies at the very heart of the church's task today—helping parents to be leaders of their children, to raise their children to be champions for God."[385] Churches that employ this ministry philosophy are actively engaged in evangelism as they equip, encourage, and partner with

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[383]David Anderson, "Unleashing the Family: Safe Families for Vulnerable Children," in *A Heart for the Community: New Models for Urban and Suburban Ministry*, ed. John Fuder and Noel Castellanos (Chicago: Moody, 2009), 428-29.

[384]Cannister, *Teenagers Matter*, 39.

[385]Alvin L. Reid, *Raising the Bar: Ministry to Youth in the New Millennium* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2004), 170.

parents for the purpose of reaching their children with the good news that is the gospel.

Parents function as missionaries and ministers in their own households.[386]

The idea that family ministry is an evangelistic strategy for reaching the members of the family is found throughout the literature on the subject. For example, Anthony and Anthony write,

> Churches who covenant to create family ministries that equip, train, and support households to whom they minister will place themselves in a position where they and the families they support will collide with the love and grace of God and usher in a new day of blessing and flourishing.[387]

Similarly, Baucham asserts,

> Evangelism is not about getting young people to walk an aisle and sign a card, only to apostatize once they go to college. Evangelism is about making disciples (Matt 28:19-20). The most effective way to make disciples of teens is to make disciples of their parents and teach them so do what God commands, which includes evangelizing and discipling their children.[388]

This idea is also perpetuated by Kurt Gebhards: "Christian parenting really should be defined as parenting-evangelism, because a parent's primary responsibility is to disciple and evangelize the child. . . . Parents should see their children as their primary evangelistic field."[389] Finally, Roehlkepartain and Roehlkepartain insist,

> Parents are not primarily objects of a congregation's ministry. They are subjects—contributors to the mission of the church, not only through their involvement in congregational life but also as they nurture their children. By emphasizing and unleashing the strengths of parents, congregations not only help parents be better parents but also equip parents to live out their calling to help their children grow in body, mind, and spirit.[390]

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[386]Michael S. Wilder, "Building and Equipping Missional Families," in Stinson and Jones, *Trained in the Fear of God*, 247.

[387]Anthony and Anthony, *A Theology for Family Ministry*, 64.

[388]Baucham, *Family Driven Faith*, 186.

[389]Kurt Gebhards, "Acorns to Oaks: Farming the Field of Your Child's Heart," in MacArthur, *Evangelism*, 195.

[390]Roehlkepartain and Roehlkepartain, *Embracing Parents*, 10.

As a result, it seems fair to assert that a family ministry philosophy is an evangelistic strategy for those in the congregation.

Family Ministry as an Evangelistic Tool

A second way in which family ministry functions as an evangelistic strategy is by functioning as a tool for reaching those outside of the church. In a simplistic way, this can mean providing opportunities to minister to families, as Sell suggests, "Family ministry can extend evangelism beyond the church's own families. Because so many people struggle with family problems, sermons and classes that deal with the family attract the attention of non-Christians."[391] Similarly, Balswick and Balswick write,

> It has been pointed out that the family is the cornerstone of the moral order of society. Therefore, any crisis we are currently experiencing in the moral order of society may well be due to the breakdown of the family. It is hardly an overstatement, then, to argue that the hope of society must begin with a recapturing of the biblical concept of family life.[392]

As a result, providing opportunities to strengthen families of nonbelievers can be effective in evangelizing those families.

The idea that family ministry can be a tool for evangelism, however, is more forcefully conveyed by Anthony and Anthony:

> God cares about families. He cares about nuclear families, broken families, and households of all types. He wants His timeless principles to be applied to our lives so we can see the power of the living Christ break the cycles of bondage that affect moms, dads, sons, daughters, brothers, and sisters. Those of us who serve in ministry leadership positions in the church can no longer wait for those with broken families to come to church for healing. Many feel insecure or ashamed. As a result, it is our responsibility to take the initiative to go into their world and offer them the message of salvation, hope, and reconciliation—both in a relationship with God and in their familial relationships. The God of second chances calls us to bring His message to our lost and needy world.[393]

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[391]Sell, *Family Ministry*, 17.

[392]Balswick and Balswick, *The Family*, 368.

[393]Anthony and Anthony, *A Theology for Family Ministry*, 64.

Ministering to families as part of a family ministry focus can be an evangelistic tool to not only seek healing for familial relationships, but also to reach those far from God with the hope of the gospel.

Another way family ministry can function as an evangelistic tool is the way in which those who are far from God interact with families functioning biblically. This idea is found throughout the family ministry literature. For example, Strother writes specifically of the family-equipping approach that as churches employ that ministry focus it strengthens homes and "makes a difference not only in the lives of parents but also in the lasting life of the community."[394] Similarly, Michael S. Wilder writes, "As families participate in serving and making disciples, this participation can transform not only the persons who *hear* the gospel but also the families who *proclaim* the gospel."[395] As families are functioning biblically, they will also participate in evangelism of others. These families very easily influence those around them. Ken Hemphill and Richard Ross write that these types of parents "can make an eternal impact in the lives of children from other homes."[396] A strong tenet of family ministry philosophy, therefore, is that family ministry itself can be an evangelistic tool for reaching families which are not connected with the church.

**Evangelism as the Fruit
of Family Ministry**

The third and final way in which family ministry functions as an evangelistic strategy is that evangelism is the fruit of family ministry. That is, family ministry necessarily produces evangelism. Brown asserts, "Traditional families who are functioning with genuine love for Christ and are operating in biblical order are powerful

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[394]Strother, "Responses to Jay Strother," 181.

[395]Wilder, "Building and Equipping," 251, emphasis original.

[396]Ken Hemphill and Richard Ross, *Parenting with Kingdom Purpose* (Nashville: B & H, 2005), 79.

demonstrations of the gospel."[397] These families demonstrate the gospel because it is the

mission they have been given. This idea is consistent with what Rodney Clapp writes of

families: "To be healthy, the family needs a mission or purpose beyond itself."[398] For the

Christian family, this mission is to be "a God-ordained launching pad for gospel

ministry."[399] Rainey calls this function of discipleship the greatest opportunity to advance

the gospel. He writes,

> Equipping husbands and wives in marriage, as well as training parents to lead their
> children spiritually, are not 'just another part' of local church ministry; they
> represent the greatest opportunity for the local church to spread the gospel, build
> maturity, and advance the Kingdom of God in this generation![400]

The idea that evangelism is a product of family ministry is an important one in

the literature supporting family ministry. One way in which this is shown to happen is

through leading children to maturity in Christ. Of this marker, Anthony and Anthony

state, "One sure sign that children are growing in their journey with God is to observe

their desire and passion to share God's love with others."[401] They continue by asserting

that "involvement in evangelism is a sign that spiritual growth is taking place in the lives

of children."[402] Moll and Chester also emphasize this idea:

> We [cannot] convert our children. Only the Spirit of God can open blind eyes to the
> truth about Jesus (John 3:3-8). But we can ensure our children realise [sic] what
> matters to us. We can communicate the surpassing value of Christ. We can teach
> them the importance of serving others. We can model a life lived for the glory of
> God. And we can pray that God will work in their hearts so that, by His grace, they

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[397]Brown, *A Weed in the Church*, 250.

[398]Rodney Clapp, *Families at the Crossroads: Beyond Traditional and Modern Options* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 163.

[399]Wilder, "Building and Equipping," 245.

[400]Dennis Rainey, "Local Church Family Ministry in the New Millennium," in *Building Strong Families*, 20.

[401]Anthony and Anthony, *A Theology for Family Ministry*, 132.

[402]Ibid., 133.

see themselves first and foremost as church planters, missionaries, reformers, servants and/or evangelists.[403]

Additionally, Renfro writes, "Wherever you find a church that trains and expects parents to disciple their children, you will also find maturing believers who are passionate about taking the gospel to the darkest corners of the world."[404] Anthony and Anthony indicate that this is essential in a two-part process of discipleship: "First, children should be discipled so they can become more like Christ and live in a life-changing relationship with Him. Second, every child should be trained to disciple others."[405]

The idea that evangelism is the fruit of family ministry philosophy means that family ministry done correctly will result in a generation of individuals who are passionate about evangelism. Of course, this process ought to function no differently than any believer truly understanding the gospel and the necessity of its spread through the redeemed. When, however, it occurs as a matter of course that parents are equipped and then train their children, it becomes an important aspect of family ministry done correctly. As a result of the importance of this topic in the family ministry literature, two methods occur frequently for accomplishing this task: hospitality and missional living. These topics demand exploration.

Hospitality

Perhaps the most specific method for evangelism as a result of family ministry philosophy found in the literature is that families are evangelistic through hospitality. Renfro articulates this well:

How can a Christian household become a context for the evangelism of unbelievers? Through intentional hospitality, unbelieving visitors are able to observe the dynamics of a Christian family. When an unbelieving family eats with a family of

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[403]Moll and Chester, *Gospel-Centred Family*, 20.

[404]Renfro, "Responses to Brandon Shields," 124.

[405]Anthony and Anthony, *A Theology for Family Ministry*, 125.

believers and sees a loving family with respectful children, they glimpse a bright light in a dark culture.[406]

Similarly, Brown indicates,

> When a home is used for hospitality, ministry opportunities to a lost generation are increased. God, who designed the resources of a household for ministry, has called His people to use those resources for His glory, not only for the saints, but also for a lost generation.[407]

Using the home for hospitality and evangelism is Brown's conviction because, as he asserts, "in the early church, the work of evangelism and equipping regularly took place in the context of the home."[408]

Others have reached the same conclusion that hospitality is an important part of evangelism as a result of family ministry. Clapp determines, "The necessity of hospitality converts our homes from insulated havens into adventurous mission bases. Hospitality gives families a purpose beyond themselves. They exist to serve God and the world through the church."[409] In like manner, de Mesa asserts, "Being home for its members, the family is to become a home to others as well. Not only will it open its doors for sisters and brothers in need, but more so its heart."[410] Finally, Garland writes, "True hospitality means inviting people—strangers—into the heart of the family as a valued representative of Christ's presence."[411] It is important to note that as evangelism is produced through family ministry, there will likely be an aspect of hospitality in an effort to reach those around the family with the love and hope of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

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[406]Renfro, "Family-Integrated Ministry," 64.

[407]Brown, *A Weed in the Church*, 230.

[408]Ibid., 162.

[409]Clapp, *Families at the Crossroads*, 162.

[410]de Mesa, "Re-Rooting Mission," 143.

[411]Garland, *Inside Out Families*, 104.

Missional Living

The second method of evangelism identified as a result of the priority of evangelism flowing out of family ministry is the idea of missional living. The idea is that just as families had a mission in New Testament times, they have a mission today, as well.[412] This means that, as Rainey indicates, "Christian children are to be prepared with a sense of mission and direction to live for and serve the Lord."[413] Holmen illuminates the fact that this is how churches can accomplish the task of evangelism which they have been given: "If you have a missional vision, then you want to help your people live out their mission at home as well as in the community and world."[414] Of course, as was discussed, a missional vision is the biblical mandate for every church. In like manner, as Wilder indicates, "The desires of every gospel-centered family must be to participate in God's plan in real and mighty ways."[415]

The missional living advocated in the literature stands in contrast to the idea of sheltering families from the world, as seen in some churches and as the movement is accused of doing. Anderson writes of this idea: "The Christian family is one of the most powerful sources of change in our society. Our homes are a powerful change agent. Rather than sheltering our families, we need to unleash them for ministry."[416] If this power truly exists, then missional living within families is of the utmost importance. As a result, Anderson and Hill propose,

> Congregations that are doing meaningful ministry in local communities and beyond tend to be those that understand the balance between the ministry of the congregation and the ministry that extends from apartments, houses, duplexes, and anywhere else

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[412]Richard P. Olson and Joe H. Leonard, Jr., *A New Day for Family Ministry* (Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute, 1996), 77.

[413]Rainey, *Twenty-First Century Families*, 52.

[414]Holmen, *Church+Home*, 143.

[415]Wilder, "Building and Equipping," 249.

[416]Anderson, "Unleashing the Family," 428.

where Christians dwell. The front doors to the ministry of a local congregation are doors that are often located far away from the congregational facilities; they are doors that open to homes, coffee houses, grocery stores, and other places where people meet, greet, and invite one another to 'come and see' Jesus.[417]

Families engaged in a family ministry church must, therefore, seek not to insulate themselves in the community, but instead engage with those whom God has placed in their vicinity.

A final point that is made in the literature regarding missional living is that it is meant to be taught to children and constantly kept before them. This purposeful instruction is what Moll and Chester stress when they write, "If you want [your children] to serve Christ in a radical, whole-hearted way, then model that for them in the way you live. That [will not] necessarily mean moving to the inner city. But it does mean exposing them to costly ministry."[418] In the same way, Thompson emphasizes that Christian parents must model for their children "the tremendous joy and honor of helping to share Jesus with those who do not know Him, whether those unsaved live across the street of across the ocean."[419] Wilder explains that every church and Christian family should have this goal:

Developing globally minded missional families—[it is] a goal that every church and every Christian family should share. This will not happen by accident, and it is unlikely to happen unless churches and families work in partnership with one another. God designed families to be missional.[420]

Subsequently, while evangelism is the natural outflow of family ministry strategy, it is something which must be done with intentionality so that families will engage in missional living as they are intended to by their Creator and Savior.

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[417]Anderson and Hill, *Frogs without Legs*, 44-45.

[418]Moll and Chester, *Gospel-Centred Family*, 19.

[419]Thompson, *Intentional Parenting*, 44.

[420]Wilder, "Building and Equipping," 252.

Profile of the Current Study

As a result of the literature review of both family ministry and evangelism, there are certain imperatives for the church. First, it is clear that family ministry is a worthy and noble goal that follows the pattern set forth in Scripture. Second, Scripture is clear that evangelism is imperative for both churches and individual Christians. Third, in light of the biblical importance of both family ministry and evangelism, there must be some sort of intersection between the two endeavors. The literature surrounding this intersection suggests that evangelism is a natural outflow of family ministry done correctly. This idea informs this study in a significant way such that it can be hypothesized that churches which engage in a family ministry strategy ought to also be evangelistically effective.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

The focus of this chapter is to outline the methodological design used to empirically measure the evangelistic effectiveness of churches by ministry philosophy. The goal of this process was to determine if there is any correlation between engagement in family ministry philosophy and the ratio of individuals baptized to average weekly attendance in particular congregations. In order to accomplish this task it was necessary to examine the research questions used to gather the data, provide a research design overview, determine the population and samples to be used as the subjects of the study, understand the limitations of generalizing the data to a population at large, provide the research method and instrumentation, and outline the research procedures to be followed.

Research Question Synopsis

The following questions guided the process for completing this study.

1. To what extent are the leaders of the responding churches emphasizing family ministry as a significant aspect of their ministry philosophy?

2. In the responding churches, what was the ratio of average weekly attendance to baptisms?

3. Is there a correlation between degree of emphasis on family ministry and either lower or higher baptism ratios?

4. Is there a recognizable pattern of family ministry emphasis and greater success in baptism ratios that can be instructive for churches and church leadership?

Research Design Overview

This research was designed to be empirical in nature. In order to accomplish this task, it was important to gather and assess measurable data. The goal was to assign a number to each individual responding church which correlates with engagement in family

ministry philosophy. This number was compared with the baptism ratio for that church—or number of individuals baptized in relation to average weekly attendance in a given year—which determined the evangelistic effectiveness of that church in relation to its level of engagement in family ministry strategy.

For the first part of the equation, churches were presented with three portions of the Church Health Assessment (CHA) survey created by DNA of D6.[1] This assessment has been validated by its authors. The language contained within it states, "This assessment was prepared to help a church identify ten core areas of health and sustainability. Researchers from four universities and seminaries objectively evaluated the language, wording, and methodology of the assessment to ensure validity of results."[2] The specific portions of the CHA which were utilized are "Use the Power of Parental Influence," "Family Equipping is a Biblical Priority," and "Not Silo Ministries in the Church."

Each of these sections contain three questions that have been given a weight which, when totaled together, equals twelve, with the higher numbers indicating greater engagement in each of those areas. These numbers were compiled to gain both individual numbers for each section of the assessment as well as aggregated for an overall number on the entire survey. The numbers were then correlated with the church's baptism ratio as reported on the individual church's ACP.

In light of the need to correlate the survey data with the ACP information, it was necessary for churches to self-identify so that their individual ACPs could be accessed. This data was gathered as survey results were received. When multiple responses were received from an individual church, then an average number was used to correlate to the ACP data.

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[1]D6 Family, "DNA of D6," accessed July 28, 2016, http://d6family.com/dna/. See also Appendix 1.

[2]Ibid.

In order to disseminate the survey as widely as possible, it was placed into an online survey tool—Survey Monkey—whereby results were captured and extrapolated. The dissemination of the survey was done through individually contacting state and regional SBC offices in order to request that the survey be sent to the entire membership of SBC churches represented by that office. Since Survey Monkey allows for the use of a hyperlink, it was not be necessary for each church to receive a unique invitation—forwarded invitations were sufficient. It was requested that only church staff members complete the survey.

Once all of the data was gathered and each church was assigned a weighted number based upon its survey responses, the data was placed onto a continuum based upon that weighted number—a number between nine and thirty-six. These churches were then viewed in light of their baptism ratio data to determine if there was a correlation between a higher or lower CHA score and a higher or lower baptism ratio. This information is presented visually through the use of a scatterplot in the next chapter.

Population

The population for this study consists of SBC churches in the United States of America. Since information was requested through all of the state and regional conventions in the country, it is generally reliable in its application for the entire SBC. Surveys completed by churches outside of the SBC were discarded since there was no ACP on file to reference for baptism ratio data. This was also the case for churches that failed to self-identify.

Samples and Delimitations

In order for the sample to be generalized to the entire population, it was necessary to gather surveys from a minimum of 382 churches. As of the time of the

reports from the SBC in 2015, there were 46,793 SBC churches.[3] In order to generalize the results to that entire population at a 95 percent confidence level with a 5 percent margin of error, then 382 responses were required. At an estimated 15 percent response rate, the survey would have needed to reach at least 2,547 churches to gain enough responses. The actual number of usable responses was 695. As a result, the confidence level is actually higher than proposed. Increasing the confidence level to 99 percent results in a margin of error of 4.85 with this sample size. Alternately, keeping the confidence level at 95 percent results in a significantly decreased margin of error at 3.69 percent.

The particular sample was not predetermined, but is, rather, based on survey responses. That is, the target audience was the entire SBC in the United States of America. As a result, it was the goal for the survey to reach the entire American SBC. However, the sample self-identified through their responses to the survey. This grouping represents a random sample since the survey was presented broadly and the individual churches determined whether or not they responded; they were not specifically targeted for a response.

The only purposeful delimitation of the sample size is that the survey was targeted to SBC churches and not outside of that network. As was discussed, this delimitation exists because of the need to access data on each individual church's ACP. This particular medium is unique to the SBC. Although the information on the ACP is self-reported, it is reported in a standard format and reflects a general understanding of the requirements for baptism according to Baptist tradition. While it is possible for churches outside of the SBC to self-report their own data for the purposes of a survey such as this one, it could skew the data since churches outside of the SBC may follow other processes for baptism.

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[3]Southern Baptist Convention, "Fast Facts about the SBC," accessed November 17, 2016, http://www.sbc.net/BecomingSouthernBaptist/FastFacts.asp.

Limitations of Generalization

Like any research project, there are limitations to the way in which the data from this study may be generalized to the entire population. Since the goal was to reach a majority of the population, the limitations are reduced. There are, however, still limitations to this generalization. For example, since the survey was distributed digitally, any church that does not use a digital communication medium was not able to participate. This could mean that an entire group of churches may have been excluded from the opportunity to participate. This group could include churches that are either less endowed, which serve a largely elderly population, or which are adverse to digital communication.

A second limitation is that certain regions are not represented in the sample size, but are included in the population. This geographical delineation could be a result of the survey not reaching that particular region through a lapse in communication or because of difficulty ascertaining contact information. The lack of representation in survey results could also be the case for regions in which there are fewer SBC churches to respond. These regions are underrepresented in the sample, but, as participants in the SBC, could have the results of the project generalized to their region.

A final limitation might be that churches which do not have paid staff members may not have participated. It was communicated with the instructions for the survey that the desired respondents would be staff members or ministry leaders.[4] While not the desired consequence, this type of instruction could have caused a lay pastor or church without fulltime staff to refrain from participating in the survey. The result of this type of miscommunication could mean that some smaller churches may not have participated in the study and, thereby, are not represented in the sample.

Research Method

As was presented, the goal of this research was to empirically measure

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[4]See appendix 3.

evangelistic effectiveness as it relates to family ministry strategy. The survey used in this process has been designed under the assumption that family ministry is a necessary part of overall church health. As a result, the three sections of the CHA used for this study pertain directly to the way in which churches engage in family ministry. The survey was developed based on *The DNA of D6* by Ron Hunter, Jr.[5] As a result, each section of the survey references a chapter in that text.

The first section used in this project is "Use the Power of Parental Influence," which is based on chapter 2 of Hunter's text.[6] In that chapter, Hunter argues that parents represent the greatest influence in the lives of their children and that those who rely heavily on the church for the discipleship of their children are relying on an average amount of time that totals one out of 168 hours of a student's week. To the contrary, time for potential parental involvement represents a significantly greater portion of the entire week, depending on other activities in which students are involved.[7] The questions on this portion of the survey involve the church's perception of what influences students the most, the percentage of time that families spend in a given week focusing on spiritual things, and how often the church emphasizes discipleship at home.

The second portion of the survey, "Family-Equipping is a Biblical Priority," correlates to chapter 3 of Hunter's text.[8] The idea behind that chapter is that parents cannot simply be expected to disciple their children without any emphasis from the church. Instead, however, the church must equip parents for the task—it must always

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[5]Ron Hunter, Jr., *DNA of D6: Building Blocks of Generational Discipleship* (Nashville: Randall House, 2015).

[6]Ibid., 9-18.

[7]Ibid., 17.

[8]Ibid., 19-27.

keep it in the minds and hearts of the parents.[9] As a result, the questions in this section involve connecting generations, parental and grandparental instruction and information presented from the pulpit, and the extent to which families in the church make decisions based on biblical priorities.

Third, the final section of the survey used for this research centers on the idea that children and students should not be segregated from their families. This section, "Not Silo Ministries in Church," is based on chapter 5 of Hunter's text.[10] The idea here advocated is that churches must utilize a team approach in ministering to those in various age groups and not create ministry silos where those in particular age ranges or stages of life are separated from the life of the church. Hunter states of this involvement,

> The wise youth leader recognizes the value of providing leadership by helping the youth transition to adults who still love God and want to be a part of His church. Staff members and volunteers have up to six years to help the youth make this transition, and going it alone would not be wise.[11]

As a result of the desire for churches to be unified in their approach to discipleship, the questions on this portion of the assessment relate to relationships between volunteer leaders of young people and the young people's parents, parental involvement in ministries designed for young people, and the frequency of students dropping out of church activities.

In the original survey, the questions for each of these sections were spread throughout the survey itself and then placed into score cards in the end of the survey.[12] These score cards reveal the weight of each response, which then provides an aggregate score for each section. As a result of the use of only three sections of the survey, only those questions were provided on the online instrument used for this research. Additionally,

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[9]Hunter, *DNA of D6*, 21.

[10]Ibid., 35-42.

[11]Ibid., 39.

[12]See appendix 1.

because the questions are spread throughout the instrument, their order on the online assessment was not relevant; it only matters that they were scored correctly and that those scores were then captured based on the individual sections of the survey. The questions for each section of the survey were presented on the online assessment in the order they appear on the score cards included with the survey without providing the weight of the individual answers.

While this survey is provided for free download on the organization's website, it is meant for local church use only. Permission to use the survey for this project was sought from the author of the survey, Ron Hunter, Jr.[13] Permission was granted via e-mail, as evidenced in appendix 2. In addition to granting permission for the use of the survey instrument itself, Hunter also granted use of the three sections herein included independent of the other sections.

Research Procedures

In order to accomplish the research here outlined, there are steps which were accomplished. The first of these steps was to create the survey in the online survey platform, Survey Monkey. The nine questions from the assessment were entered into the online survey, each occupying a different section of the online survey. The results of the survey were exported into a spreadsheet for record keeping and compilation.

To accomplish the distribution of the survey, data was gathered for each state and regional convention of the SBC and the survey was sent via e-mail. A request was made for the survey to be shared widely within the SBC, including asking personal and professional contacts to extend the opportunity to their contacts as well as encouraging the spread of the survey link through social media. Response to the survey was incentivized

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[13]It should be noted that Hunter is both the author of the survey as well as representative for Randall House and D6, which collectively own the copyright for the survey in its prepared form.

through a drawing for two separate $50.00 Amazon gift cards.[14] The drawing utilized random church demographic data to identify winning churches. The cover letter and instructions for the survey contained the deadline for submission, which outlined the timeframe for the drawing.

In light of the need to gather church demographic data for both the survey drawing as well as—and more importantly—for the purpose of gathering data from the church's ACP, there was an additional question on the survey where respondents were required to enter the name of the church where they serve as well as the city and state where their church is located. This data is maintained in the spreadsheet which was exported from Survey Monkey. This spreadsheet is similar in form to that which is illustrated in table 1.

Table 1. Church health assessment results

#	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Total
1	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	21
2										
3										
4										
5										

The spreadsheet also contains the demographic information in table 2 to the right of the existing columns. The information in the "baptisms" and "attendance" columns was gathered from the church's ACP.

Table 2. Church health assessment demographic data

Church Demographics	Baptisms	Attendance	Ratio
Demo Church, Anytown, FL	25	400	16.000

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[14]See appendix 4 for the content of the e-mails making this request.

The data was stored in this manner with the "total" and "ratio" sections programmed within the spreadsheet to automatically calculate their respective values.

Any churches with multiple responses were placed in adjacent rows in the spreadsheet and the individual surveys were not counted toward the total number of responding churches. Instead, those responses were summed and averaged, thereby providing a different response and assigned weight for those churches. This averaging allowed that church to be counted only once.

Once the appropriate number of responses was received and the deadline for responding to the survey was reached, this information was presented to a paid statistician to test for correlation between an increased number on the CHA and an increased baptism ratio. The resulting information is presented in a manner such that it represents the results as clearly and accurately as possible. This information is presented forthright with significant analysis in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

The goal of this chapter is to outline the process used to analyze the results of the CHA scores and baptism data of the responding churches, as well as the presentation of those findings themselves. This analysis includes a discussion of the two-step compilation protocol, an explanation of the demographic represented by the sample, the process used to express findings related to each of the research questions, and an evaluation of the research design. Each of these concerns occupy a distinct section in this chapter.

Compilation Protocol

In order to compile the data necessary for this project, two steps were necessary: the first step was to gather data in order to distribute the survey and the second was to collect the results from both the survey and the associated ACPs of the responding churches. Additionally, research variables had to be identified and compiled so that statistical analysis could take place. This data was then used to apply a correlational study, as well as to determine if any other trends existed within it.

Survey Distribution

The first step in the compilation protocol was to gather the necessary data so that the survey could be distributed. Pertinent data for this project was gathered through an online survey hosted by Survey Monkey. In order to facilitate this data collection, a link to the survey was e-mailed to all of the SBC state and regional conventions and local associations that publish an e-mail address online through the State Convention search

function of the SBC website.[1] In addition, e-mail addresses were gathered directly from the websites of each of the state and multi-state regional conventions of the SBC. These addresses included those of any person with a title suggestive of influence with the churches of that association. All of the e-mail addresses were copied into a spreadsheet. In total, the spreadsheet contained 1,354 e-mail addresses. Many of the addresses were either expired or otherwise out-of-service, as evidenced by hundreds of returned e-mails; however, many individual responses were received from the recipients indicating that the e-mails had been received.[2]

The link to the survey was included in the body of text of the e-mail to the conventions and associations. This text included a request for the link to be sent to the churches included in that convention or association.[3] The e-mail was sent to all of the e-mail contacts in the spreadsheet through multiple mailings, since the e-mail address used—my student e-mail address—would not support an e-mail to all of the contacts at once. This process was followed on two separate occasions as evidenced by the letters themselves, which can be found in appendix 4.

Initial responses to the survey were received through Survey Monkey within minutes of the first e-mail, revealing that the link had begun to reach the target audience. There were, however, e-mail responses received by this researcher from conventions and associations indicating that those particular entities were unwilling to forward the survey. This response was primarily the case with state conventions, many of which referred me to the local associations, which had already been contacted as part of the original e-mail request.

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[1]Southern Baptist Convention, "State Convention Search," accessed April 11, 2017, http://www.sbc.net/stateconventionsearch/associations-near-me.asp?query=.

[2]The number of returned e-mails was 318 for the first mailing and 352 for the second. These numbers represent 23 percent and 26 percent of the entire list, respectively.

[3]See appendix 4 for the text of these e-mails.

Part of the original e-mail request was a chance to be entered into a drawing for a $50 Amazon gift card if the survey response was received by a date one week from the date of the original e-mail. As a result, a church was chosen at random from the survey responses following each of the deadlines. The gift cards were mailed in the week following those deadlines to each of the selected churches, respectively, and were accompanied by a personal note of gratitude. One of those churches was located in Alabama, the other in North Carolina.

Data Collection

Once it was determined that enough responses were received in order to proceed with the statistical analysis of the figures, the data was exported from Survey Monkey into a workable spreadsheet.[4] At that time, there were 1,035 individual responses. Once the responses were in the spreadsheet, a column was created and each of the responses was assigned a four-digit number, beginning with 0001 and concluding with 1035. These numbers were assigned based upon the order in which the response was received.

In order to eliminate unusable survey data, two steps were taken. First, responses to the primary question about involvement in the study, which were answered in the negative—those from respondents who did not wish to participate after reading the introductory statement—were removed from the spreadsheet. Eighteen respondents indicated that response. Second, incomplete responses were removed from the spreadsheet. These responses included both those who did not finish the survey and those who failed to provide the necessary church name, city, and state.

Once the remaining data represented complete responses, it was necessary to assign the proper weight to each of the individual survey responses.[5] Since the responses

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[4]That process was accomplished at 9:30 a.m. Eastern Standard Time on March 3, 2017.

[5]See appendix 1 for the way in which the responses are weighted.

were then numerical, it was possible to assign a score to each of the responding churches for each of the three sections of the survey, as well as the total score for each respondent. The totals were summed through formulas within the program for the sake of precision and accuracy.

The final step in preparing the data for the next portion of the collection process was to combine duplicate responses—that is, multiple responses from the same church staff. Since the survey was sent widely and to churches of different sizes, there was an opportunity for multiple staff members from any particular church to respond to the survey. This was the case with 67 individual responses representing 31 separate churches. These responses were combined into the row and four-digit number of the first response from each of the 31 churches. In order to combine the responses, the individual answers to each question were summed and averaged. This combining and averaging allowed for a new score on the three sections of the survey as well as a new total score. A new column was created to record the number of responses for each individual church so that this data would not be lost. After this process, it was found that 755 churches were represented in the survey responses.

The next step of data collection was to gather the baptism and average weekly attendance numbers from each of the responding churches' ACPs in order to create the churches' baptism to attendance ratios. I searched the ACP database of the SBC for each church in the spreadsheet using the data provided by the respondents. Care was taken to ensure that the correct church was located in the records. If there was any lack of confidence that the correct church was located, that church was removed from the spreadsheet. Additionally, churches that could not be located in the database were removed from the spreadsheet. In order to gather only current data, the most recent ACP was accessed. If a particular church did not record an ACP with the needed variables from either 2014, 2015, or 2016, that church was also removed from the spreadsheet. After this

process, 695 churches remained in the spreadsheet. This number represents the sample size for this study.

Research Variables

In order to apply the proposed statistical analysis—a correlational study of baptism ratios and family ministry engagement as evidenced by the total score from individual CHA survey results—it was necessary to identify and clarify the research variables of the study. These variables are the baptism to attendance ratios of the responding churches and those churches' individual scores on the CHA. Part of the latter variable is that the scores were recorded for both the individual sections of the CHA survey, as well as the total score for the survey overall.

To determine the baptism to attendance ratio of a responding church, it is necessary to simply divide the average weekly attendance by the number of baptisms in a given year, as discovered in the church's ACP. This reveals the number of weekly attenders in relation to one baptism. In other words, it reveals how many attenders it took to baptize one person in a given year. For example, a ratio of 30.176 would mean that a church was able to baptize one person for every 30.176 people in attendance. The ranges for this study were as low as 1.250 and as high as 284.000.[6] The mean for this study is 26.578, with a standard deviation of 25.980. These figures necessarily exclude 127 of the responding churches, which did not baptize anyone in the referenced year.

The other variable used in this correlational study was the total score from the CHA survey. Each question on the survey had a minimum of 1 point possible and a maximum of 4 points possible. There were 9 questions on the survey—3 in each of the individual sections—so each section had a minimum possible score of 3 and a maximum possible score of 12. This scale means that the minimum possible score on the overall

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[6]In this format, a church with a lower number met greater success in terms of baptizing more people per person than those with higher numbers.

survey was 9 and the maximum possible score on the survey as a whole was 36, with a lower score relating to less family ministry engagement and a higher score representing greater family ministry engagement. The actual results of the survey revealed a low score of 10 and a high score of 35, respectively. The summary of each of the sections and the total score of the CHA are presented in table 3.

Table 3. Summary of CHA responses

	Low	High	Mean	SD
Section 1	3	12	6.96	2.01
Section 2	4	12	8.22	1.90
Section 3	3	12	6.78	1.96
Total	10	35	22.56	4.45

Statistical Analysis

To achieve the primary statistical analysis of the data, a statistician was contracted to analyze and verify the information. The entire spreadsheet was presented to the statistician who tested it for correlation using Pearson's correlation of coefficients.[7] This process was undertaken for each of the three sections of the survey as well as for the total score. The results of this process are displayed in table 4. In summary, the overall Pearson correlation of the total score on the CHA survey and baptism ratio is 0.033933, meaning that there is likely no relationship between the two variables whatsoever. Similarly, there do not appear to be any correlations between the baptism ratios of the responding churches and the scores on any of the three subsections of the CHA survey.

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[7]Pearson's correlation of coefficients is the appropriate test because it is used to test for correlation between two variables that are continuous in nature. The closer the result is to the number 1, either positive or negative, the stronger the correlation. For further discussion of this test, see Neil J. Salkind, *Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2011), 77-80.

Instead, it is probable that confounding variables impact baptism ratios in the responding churches.[8]

Table 4. Pearson correlation by section

Section	Pearson Correlation
1	0.058400
2	-0.020652
3	0.037357
Total	0.033933

Confounding Variables

Because the primary statistical analysis for this research revealed that there is no relationship between engagement in family ministry strategy and effective evangelism as evidenced by baptism ratios, it is important to determine what other information can be gleaned from the data. As was previously asserted, the lack of a direct correlation within this data illuminates the presence of confounding variables. As such, an examination of other variables that may contribute to effectiveness in either family ministry engagement or evangelism is appropriate.

Church Size implications

One possible confounding variable in this study is the size of the responding churches and how the size of those churches affects the data. First, of the 695 churches in the study, 127 of the churches baptized no one in the reported year. These churches range in size from 8 average weekly attenders to 237 average weekly attenders. The average

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[8]W. Paul Vogt and R. Burke Johnson, *Dictionary of Statistics and Methodology: A Nontechnical Guide for the Social Sciences*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2011), 69, define a confounding variable as that which "obscures the effects of another [variable]." This is like their similar definition of variables that are said to be confounded: "Two or more variables whose separate effects cannot be isolated." Ibid., 68. See also David E. Bock, Paul F. Velleman, and Richard D. De Veaux, *Stats: Modeling the World*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Addison-Wesley, 2010), 306-7.

weekly attendance in these 127 churches is 52.5. These churches scored an average of 21.00 on the CHA. This average score is below the average score for the study at large, which was 22.56. As a result, it is fair to assert that these particular churches are effective at neither evangelism nor engagement in family ministry to the same extent as other churches within the SBC. While not representative of all small SBC churches, as will be seen in a subsequent paragraph, these particular smaller churches seem to be less effective in general.

A second consideration relating to the size of the churches in the study is the way in which both engagement in family ministry and evangelistic effectiveness change with the size of the church. When divided into quartiles, the data illuminates two separate phenomena.[9] First, when the size of the church increases, the level of engagement in family ministry increases as well. From the first quartile to the fourth quartile, the average score on the CHA increased from 20.78—which is below the average for the study overall—to 24.50, with the second and third quartiles averaging 21.30 and 22.50 respectively (see table 5). As a result of this data, it can be surmised that, on average, larger churches within the SBC are more engaged in family ministry than are smaller churches, with a drastic increase in engagement with churches in the fourth quartile of responding churches.

Table 5. Results by quartile

Quartile	CHA Total	Baptism Ratio
1 through 46	20.78	8.352
47 through 85	21.30	20.730
86 through 194	22.50	26.407
195 through 15,150	24.50	31.316

[9]See Gerald Keller, *Statistics for Management and Economics*, 9th ed. (Mason, OH: South-Western, 2012), 118, for discussion on the use of quartiles.

To the contrary, the data indicates that the larger the church is, the less evangelistically effective it is. The average baptism ratio for the first quartile is 8.352 and the average baptism ratio for the fourth quartile is 31.316, with the second and third quartiles averaging 20.730 and 26.407, respectively. This indicates that the smaller churches in the SBC are, on average, far more effective at reaching new believers than are the larger churches. At the same time, the larger churches accounted for far more baptisms than did the smaller churches, with churches in the first quartile reporting 317 total baptisms and those in the fourth quartile reporting 7,679 total baptisms, with the second and third quartiles reporting 807 and 1,382 total baptisms, respectively. In a way, this means that both smaller and larger churches are effective evangelistically in their own ways, with smaller churches proving to reach far more new believers per average weekly attender than larger churches and larger churches simply reaching more people.

Church Participant Makeup as a Variable

Another confounding variable is the generational makeup of the responding churches. Question 4 on the CHA asked, "What is the closest description of the ages/generations that represent your church?" The possible responses were, "Mostly grandparents," "Mostly grandparents and children," "Mostly grandparents, teens, and children," "Mostly parents, teens, and children," and "Balance of grandparents, parents, teens, and children." Each of the first two responses are given a weight of 1, with the next responses adding one point each to a total of 4 points for the final response.[10] Of the responding churches, 152 responded in such a way that they received a weight of 1, 49 received a weight of 2, 1 received a weight of 2.5, 70 received a weight of 3, 9 received a

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[10]These numbers are predetermined as part of the CHA itself, as presented in appendix 1.

weight of 3.5, 1 received a weight of 3.8, and 413 received a weight of 4.[11] This

information is presented in table 6.

Table 6. Weighted responses to question 4

Weighted Response	Number	CHA Total	Baptism Ratio
1	152	18.06	17.816
2	49	19.61	19.813
2.5	1	20.50	0.000
3	70	24.08	15.753
3.5	9	24.06	15.962
3.8	1	25.40	9.307
4	413	23.79	24.605

While the responses to this question do not provide a distinct pattern, some

elements are helpful. For example, responding churches that described their makeup as

being either, "Mostly grandparents," "Mostly grandparents and children," and "mostly

grandparents, teens, and children," scored noticeably lower on the CHA than any of the

possible responses that included parents.[12] Between all of the responses that included

parents, there is no significant difference in the range of scores. It can, therefore, be

inferred that churches which include a large number of parents are far more engaged in

family ministry than those that generally do not.

In terms of the way in which the generational makeup of the church affects

evangelism, the data is unclear. There is no recognizable pattern, but the ratio for churches

which responded that their makeup included a "balance of grandparents, parents, teens,

and children" is noticeably higher than the other categories. This fact means that it takes

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[11]Non-whole numbers are the result of averaged responses for the cases of multiple staff members responding from the same church.

[12]Responding differently to this question would add points to the answer—up to 3 additional points. Even figuring in the highest possible points on this question, however, the average CHA score for the responses, which include parents, would all be at least 2 whole points higher than those that do not.

more people to baptize one new believer in those congregations than the others. At the same time, the number of churches which provided that response is significantly higher than the other categories. In addition, the CHA score is slightly lower than the other categories that include parents, but negligibly so. This data, therefore, contains its own confounding variables that would require further research.

Outliers

Because the primary statistical analysis for this research revealed no significant correlations, it is worthwhile to examine some outliers which exist within the data.[13] The pertinent outliers fall within three categories: churches engaged in family ministry at a significant level, but not evangelism; churches evangelistically effective, but not engaged in family ministry at a significant level; and churches engaged in both family ministry and evangelism at a high level. A final category is less than pertinent but will be explored as well: churches engaged in neither family ministry nor evangelism.

***Churches Engaged in Family Ministry,
but Not Evangelism***

The first category of outlier which warrants exploration is that of churches that are engaged in family ministry at a significant level, but not in evangelism. The highest possible score on the CHA was 36. The average score was 22.56, with a standard deviation of 4.45. It is, therefore, appropriate to consider a high score on the CHA to be a score of 28 or higher.[14] Of the responding churches, 78 received such a score. This

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[13]For a discussion of the importance of examining outliers, see Keller, *Statistics for Management and Economics*, 121, and James Stevens, *Applied Multivariate Statistics for the Social Sciences*, 4th ed. (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2002), 17.

[14]See Keller, *Statistics for Management and Economics*, 113. In that text, Keller defines the Empirical Rule, which indicates that "approximately 68 percent of all observations fall within one standard deviation of the mean." It is this rule that was used to determine which CHA scores could be considered high. This rule was applied throughout this section to identify values outside of the average.

number is slightly over 11 percent of the total respondents. Of these 78 churches, 8 baptized no one in the reported year and 6 baptized what would be considered a less than ideal number.[15] As a result, it can be asserted that 18 percent of the churches which are most engaged in family ministry would not be considered to be evangelistically effective. This number represents 2 percent of the total respondents.

Table 7. Churches with high CHA totals and high baptism ratios

Church ID	CHA Total	Attendance	Baptism Ratio	State
0049	29	284	284.000	GA
0059	31	156	0.000	GA
0086	31	20	0.000	MS
0187	29	40	0.000	GA
0204	29	211	70.333	WI
0521	30	275	68.750	OK
0522	28	30	0.000	IL
0691	31	226	56.500	GA
0732	28	11	0.000	AR
0770	28	45	0.000	PA
0778	31	1900	172.727	OK
0839	30	185	0.000	GA
0872	30	70	70.000	IL
1009	28	25	0.000	AK

There are no discernable patterns within the data of these fourteen churches. The attendance ranges in size from 11 average weekly attenders to 1,900 average weekly attenders, making it so that the average weekly attendance is 248.43—a skewed number because of the 1,900 outlier. Further, as evidenced in table 7, 8 different states are represented by the churches. Many of those states are in different regions of the United

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[15]The average baptism ratio for the churches in the study was 26.578, with a standard deviation of 25.980. In light of the Empirical Rule, a high number would, generally, be a number of 53.000 or higher. That number was used for this measurement.

States. As a result, no geographical similarities could be used to determine a pattern.[16] It would, therefore, require much greater research to determine why these churches are succeeding in their engagement in family ministry, but failing to reach unbelievers outside of the church at a rate consistent with the other churches in the study.

Churches Engaged in Evangelism, but Not Family Ministry

A second category of outlier is that of churches which are evangelistically effective, but which are not engaged in family ministry at a significant level. Due to the previously stated average response on the CHA, a church would be considered to have received a low score on the CHA if they received a score of 18 or lower. There are 139 churches which received such a score—or 20 percent of the total respondents.

To make the top percentages of baptism ratios reflect the lower percentages, the top 11 percent was used. Churches that fall into the top 11 percent of baptism ratios are churches which had a ratio of 7.500 or lower. Of the 139 churches with the lowest CHA score, 17 fell into this range—they are evangelistically effective, but are less engaged in family ministry. This number represents just over 12 percent of the churches with the lowest CHA scores and 2.4 percent of the total responding churches. These churches and their relevant data are presented in table 8.

Twelve states are represented by these 17 churches. Notably, many of the states are located where SBC churches are less common. For example, there are churches in Alaska, California, Ohio, Nevada, and Wyoming on this list. Perhaps the most striking geographical information is that the most represented state is Oklahoma. Thirty-one churches from Oklahoma are represented in the 695 responding churches. That number is 4.5 percent of the total responding churches. The 3 churches from Oklahoma represented

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[16]Five of the churches are in the state of Georgia, but that state is the most represented in the data at large, so that finding is in itself benign.

in the category of churches which are evangelistically effective, but less engaged in family ministry, represent slightly less than 10 percent of the churches responding from Oklahoma. While this is roughly the same percentage of churches responding from Wyoming and falling into this category, it is notable that Oklahoma is represented in the way that it is.[17] This may speak to a movement worth exploring in terms of evangelistic effectiveness in that state.

Table 8. Churches with low CHA totals and low baptism ratios

Church ID	CHA Total	Attendance	Baptism Ratio	State
0021	13	80	7.273	GA
0099	17	61	6.778	CA
0152	18	37	6.167	TN
0314	17	70	7.000	MO
0316	18	60	6.000	OK
0412	17	18	6.000	WY
0443	17	10	1.250	NV
0566	15	70	5.833	LA
0588	18	364	6.741	OK
0681	13	66	6.000	LA
0714	18	35	5.833	NE
0833	12	14	4.667	MO
0844	14	25	6.250	AL
0902	16	40	3.636	OK
0932	12	84	7.000	OH
0941	16	150	5.556	OH
0990	15	18	6.000	AK

Perhaps the most important piece of information from this list of outliers is that of the 17 churches, only 2 have an average weekly attendance over 100—churches 0588 and 0941, respectively. The average weekly attendance for these 17 churches is 70.7. If

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[17]There is only one church from Wyoming in this category of outliers. There were ten total churches from Wyoming in the larger list of responding churches. As a result, the percentage is the same, but the frequency is far less. Neither of these findings is statistically significant; it is simply an anomaly that could bear further exploration.

the 2 churches with average weekly attendance over 100 are removed, then the average weekly attendance falls to 45.9.[18] This finding, then, is in line with the overall data previously presented, which indicates that smaller churches are, generally, more effective evangelically. Conversely, the two larger churches represent a break from the pattern previously identified. As a result of these findings, this entire group is a candidate for further research to determine why they fall into this category and what is happening to spur their success in evangelism and lack of engagement in family ministry.[19]

Churches Engaged in Both Family Ministry and Evangelism

The third category of outliers is that of churches positively engaged in both family ministry and evangelism. As previously outlined, this category includes churches that scored 28 or higher on the CHA and which have a baptism ratio less than or equal to 7.500. This category includes 10 churches. These churches are presented in table 9.

The 10 churches in this category exist in 10 separate states. While this does not create any geographical trends, it is worth noting that states which are generally less represented by SBC churches are included in this category. This list includes one church each in Alaska, California, Illinois, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Washington. As such, the majority of these churches are situated outside of the southeastern United States—the region where SBC churches are most common.

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[18]Dropping the numbers of the two larger churches is significant because their average weekly attendance is much higher than that of the churches with average weekly attendance under one hundred.

[19]The average response to question 4 on the CHA for this group was weighted at 2.18. This number means that the majority of these churches identify as those which are made up of mostly grandparents; mostly grandparents and children; or mostly grandparents, teens, and children. This is a notable phenomenon that would also bear further research in the form of case studies and deeper demographic exploration.

Table 9. Churches with high CHA scores and low baptism ratios

Church ID	CHA Total	Attendance	Baptism Ratio	State
0131	30	50	7.143	OK
0199	29	54	5.400	CA
0519	30	85	4.722	NC
0642	30	20	4.000	IL
0673	34	66	2.750	WA
0674	34	50	5.556	KS
0739	30	125	6.579	LA
0752	29	33	3.000	NE
0966	28	575	4.915	GA
0996	33	32	4.571	AK

One trend in this category of outliers is that 80 percent of the churches here represented have average weekly attendance less than 100. This is notable because 53 percent of the churches in the study at large have attendance under 100. It is also remarkable because the same trend existed within the category of churches which were less successful at family ministry. Because this is the case, and because the fourth quartile of churches by size—the largest churches in the study—are more effective at family ministry engagement, it is notable that this category includes so many churches which are smaller in size. This finding certainly bears further research.

Another trend in this category is that the generational structure of the churches in this list are drastically different than those of the previous list—churches which are evangelistically effective, but are less engaged in family ministry. While that category consists of churches that are made up of mostly grandparents, teens, and children, this category consists of churches which consist of mostly parents, teens, and children, or a balance of grandparents, parents, teens, and children.[20] This demographic makes sense for

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[20]This fact is based upon responses to survey question 4. The average response for these 10 churches was 3.5. The actual responses were 5 churches that indicated that their congregation is "mostly parents, teens, and children" and 5 churches which responded that their congregation is a "balance of grandparents, parents, teens, and children."

churches which are more engaged in family ministry and offers a possible explanation for that fact within the churches within this category.

Perhaps the most important item of note in this category of outliers is that only 10 of the 695 churches represented in the study would be considered effective at both evangelism and family ministry engagement. Certainly, this is a category of outliers, but it is a category that includes fewer churches than the previously explored categories of outliers. While it does not necessarily challenge the presupposition that family ministry is an evangelistic strategy, as articulated in previous chapters, it is a challenging fact in general. For this reason, further research should include studies of churches in this category that can be used to produce best practices for family ministry engagement that also produces evangelistic effectiveness.

Churches Engaged in Neither Family Ministry nor Evangelism

A final category of outliers is that of churches which are engaged in neither family ministry at a high level nor evangelism that is effective. This engagement is determined by a CHA score of 18 or less and a baptism ratio of 53.000 or greater. Forty-seven churches are in this category, 33 of which baptized no one in the reported year. These churches represent the saddest category in this study and provide little opportunity for determining a path forward in either area.

Demographic and Sample Data

Demographic data was gathered from the responding churches as part of the survey itself. This information was necessary for three reasons. First, it was needed in order to identify churches as the recipients of the previously mentioned Amazon gift cards, as promised. Second, and more critically, it was needed in order to access the individual ACPs of the responding churches. Without the data from the specific church of the respondent, it would be impossible to measure the results of the CHA against an exact

and uniformly reported baptism ratio. The third reason why demographic information was gathered was to determine what regions of the country were represented by the survey results. While the data would be generalizable to the entire population regardless of whether or not a particular region was represented, it is helpful to know what regions are included in the responses.

Because anonymity was promised to the respondents in the survey's opening statement, no individual church information is provided in this dissertation. There are some helpful demographic insights in the sample, however. For example, 40 states are represented in this data.[21] Additionally, as part of the descriptive statistics accomplished by the statistician, the sample has been placed onto a map of the United States in order to visually represent the geographical region of the respondents and, yet, retain anonymity of the churches. This map is presented in figure 2.

Figure 2. Map of responding churches

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[21]The only states not represented are Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Rhode Island, South Dakota, and Vermont. A possible reason for this lack of participation is the number of churches within each of these states; they are representative of states in which there are relatively few SBC churches.

Findings and Displays by Research Question

Four research questions were associated with this dissertation. These questions are as follows.

1. To what extent are the leaders of the responding churches emphasizing family ministry as a significant aspect of their ministry philosophy?

2. In the responding churches, what was the ratio of average weekly attendance to baptisms?

3. Is there a correlation between degree of emphasis on family ministry and either lower or higher baptism ratios?

4. Is there a recognizable pattern of family ministry emphasis and greater success in baptism ratios that can be instructive for churches and church leadership?

These research questions find their answers in the data collected and the analyzation thereof. That analyzation was presented in a prior section of this chapter, but is summarized for each of the research questions.

Question 1: Family Ministry Emphasis

The first research question pertains to the way in which family ministry is emphasized as a matter of priority in an overall ministry philosophy. The answer to this question is found in the response to two separate questions on the CHA. First, question 3 in the "Use the Power of Parental Influence" section, asks, "How often does the church provide parents with a tool (questions, activities, etc.) to continue discipleship at home?" The possible responses to this question were "Never," "Sometimes," "Often," and "Always." Each of these responses is weighted with a number between 1 and 4, with the response "Never" representing a weight of 1 and the response "Always" holding a weight of 4. The remaining responses represent a one-number weight increase from the first response. The responses to this question were tracked in the overall spreadsheet of survey responses and summed and averaged to determine how often these tools are presented in the churches at large. This question was assigned as survey question 3 and is visually

represented in table 10.[22] The average response to this survey question is 2.46, which falls nearly midway between the responses of "Sometimes" and "Often."

Table 10. Responses to survey question 3

Responses	Weight	Number	Total
Never	1	72	72
*Averaged Response	1.5	4	6
Sometimes	2	310	620
*Averaged Response	2.3	1	2.3
*Averaged Response	2.5	9	22.5
Often	3	209	627
*Averaged Response	3.5	1	3.5
Always	4	89	356

The second question that provides an answer to the research question regarding engagement in family ministry strategy is question 2 from the "Family Equipping is a Biblical Priority" section. This question asks, "How frequently do families in the church hear sermons about parents and grandparents actively developing their kids and grandkids spiritually?" The possible responses to this question are "Never," which is given a weight of 1; "Usually on Mother's Day, Father's Day, and Special Days," which is assigned a weight of 2; and "Regularly," which is given a weight of 4. This question was assigned as question 5 on the survey accomplished for this study. Like the previously addressed survey question, this question can be summed to determine an overall average response. Table 11 represents this information visually and assists with determining the prevalence of any particular response. The average response for this question was 2.85, falling closer to the response of "Usually on Mother's Day, Father's Day, and Special Days," than to the response of "Regularly." It should be noted that both table 10 and table 11 represent

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[22]The averaged responses within the spreadsheet represent responses from multiple staff members at the same church which were averaged, as was articulated previously within this chapter.

data which is available within the larger spreadsheet, but which was extracted and sorted to answer this research question.

Table 11. Responses to survey question 5

Responses	Weight	Number	Total
Never	1	53	53
*Averaged Response	1.5	1	1.5
Usually on Mother's Day, Father's Day, and Special Days	2	309	618
*Averaged Response	2.5	2	5
*Averaged Response	2.7	1	2.7
*Averaged Response	3	13	39
*Averaged Response	3.5	2	7
Regularly	4	314	1256

The answer to the research question of extent of emphasis on family ministry within the churches of the SBC, then, is that family ministry is emphasized to a moderate extent in the SBC. The scale of possible answers for the two questions which were above discussed is 1 to 4. The averages for those two questions, respectively, were 2.46 and 2.85. These numbers fall nearly in the middle of the range, which would be 2.5. This finding would indicate that family ministry neither seems to be emphasized at a high level, or completely disregarded. As a result, it seems fair to assert that family ministry strategy is emphasized at a moderate level within the churches of the SBC.

Question 2: Ratio of Attenders to New Believers

The second research question asks for data regarding the average weekly attendance of the responding churches in relation to the number of baptisms at those churches. Because of the format of the mechanism to be used to find this information—the ACP—these numbers are readily available. The gathered data was entered into the overall spreadsheet as it was collected. As was discussed, the ratios are presented as

whole numbers, many times with decimals, as a result of the fact that the average weekly

attendance for the year in question was divided by the number of baptisms for that

particular year. As a result, the ratios indicate how many average weekly attenders it took

in that particular church to baptize one new Christian. For 568 of the 695 churches in the

sample that had at least one baptism recorded in their most recent ACP, the range of

ratios stretched from 1.250 to 284.000, with the average ratio being 26.578 and the

median ratio being 20.000. This information is presented in table 12.

Table 12. Ratio of attenders to new believers

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median	SD
Baptism Ratio	1.250	284.000	26.578	20.000	25.980

On average, the baptism ratios represented by the churches participating in this

study indicate that one new believer is baptized for every 26.578 people in attendance in

those congregations. The numbers at the high and low end of the range represent

significant outliers, while most of the ratios fall closer to the mean. This data is

represented in figure 3, which reveals a normal, bell-shaped distribution of the ratios.[23]

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[23]This bell-shaped curve is sufficient to avoid a ceiling effect in the data since a ceiling effect, as defined by Vogt and Johnson, occurs when "many subjects in a study have scores on a variable that are at or near the possible upper limit ('ceiling')." Vogt and Johnson, *Dictionary of Statistics and Methodology*, 47. This phenomenon does not occur in the data for either CHA score or baptism ration.
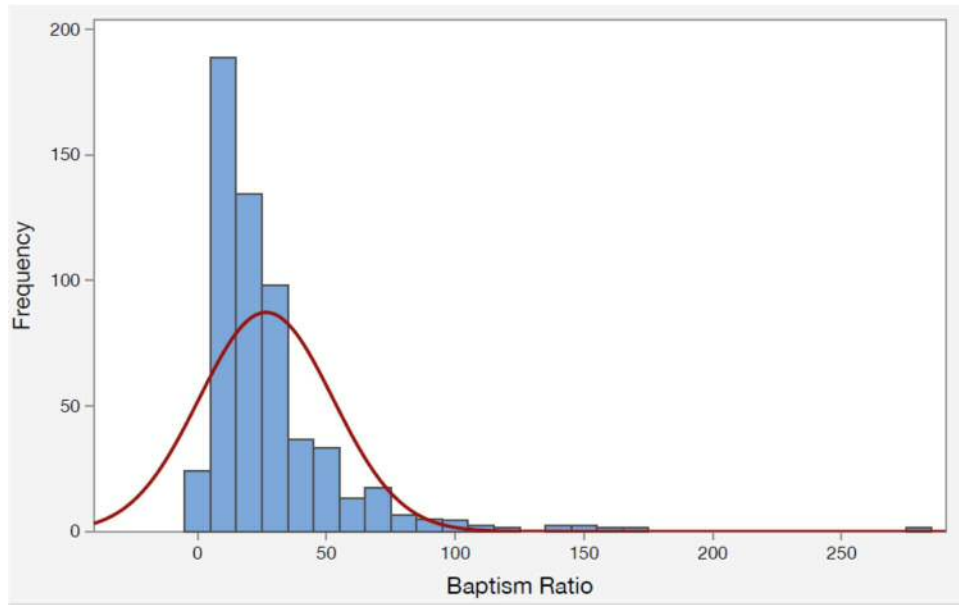
Figure 3. Histogram of baptism ratios with a normal distribution noted

Question 3: Correlation between Family
Ministry and Baptisms

Research question 3 pertained to the correlation, if any, between engaging in a

family ministry strategy and either increased or decreased baptism ratios. This question

represents the crux of this research. To answer this question, a statistician was contracted

to examine the data collected through the selected portions of the CHA and the baptism

ratios realized from the information available on the individual ACPs. This process was

repeated for each of the three sections of the survey as well as for the survey as a whole.

The Pearson correlation of coefficients method was employed to test for correlation with

the results being that there is little or no correlation between the two variables.[24] This

information is presented in the form of a scatterplot for each of the sections of the survey,

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[24]These correlations are presented in table 4.

as well as for the overall total in figures 4, 5, 6, and 7.[25] The actual data is included in spreadsheet form in appendix 5.
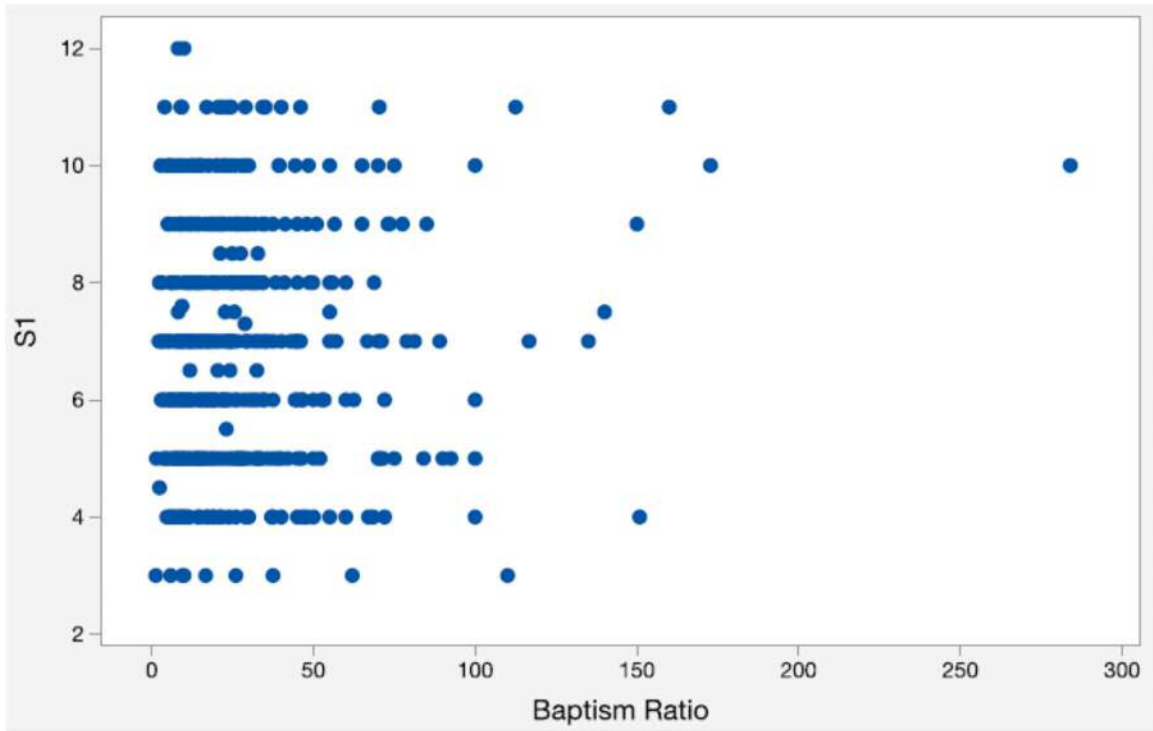
Figure 4. Section 1 and baptism ratio scatterplot

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[25]See Salkind, *Statistics*, 83-86, for discussion of the value of scatterplots.
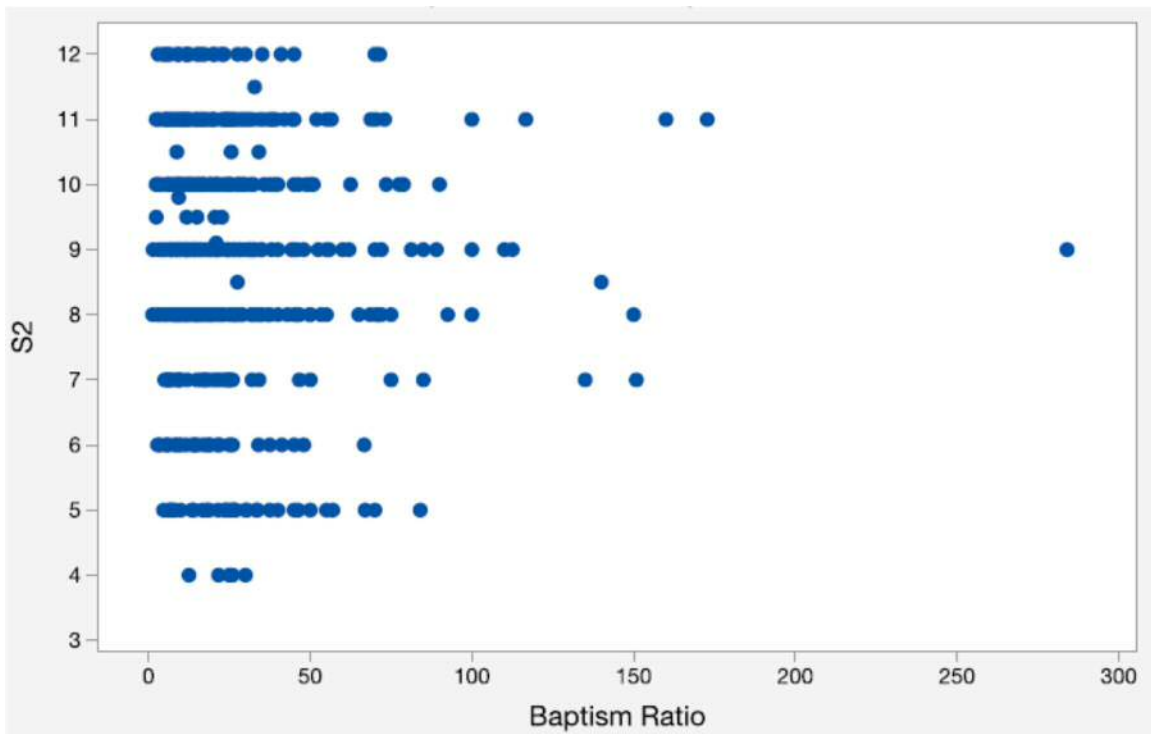
Figure 5. Section 2 and baptism ratio scatterplot
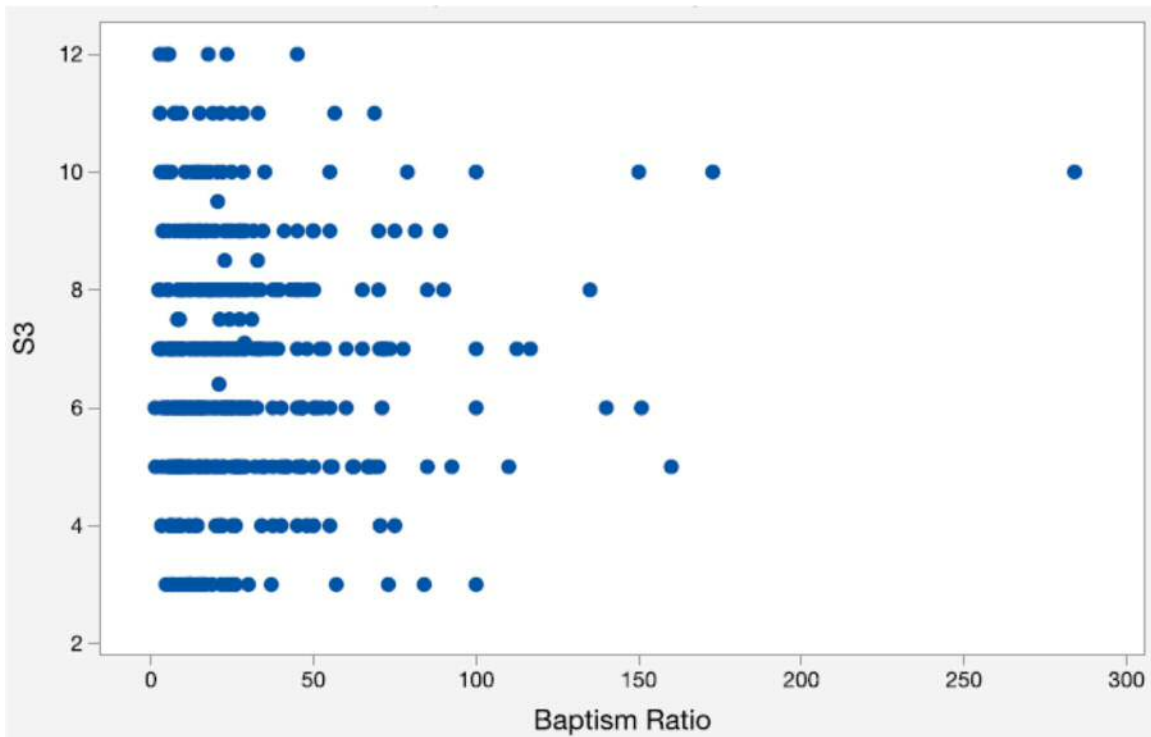
Figure 6. Section 3 and baptism ratio scatterplot

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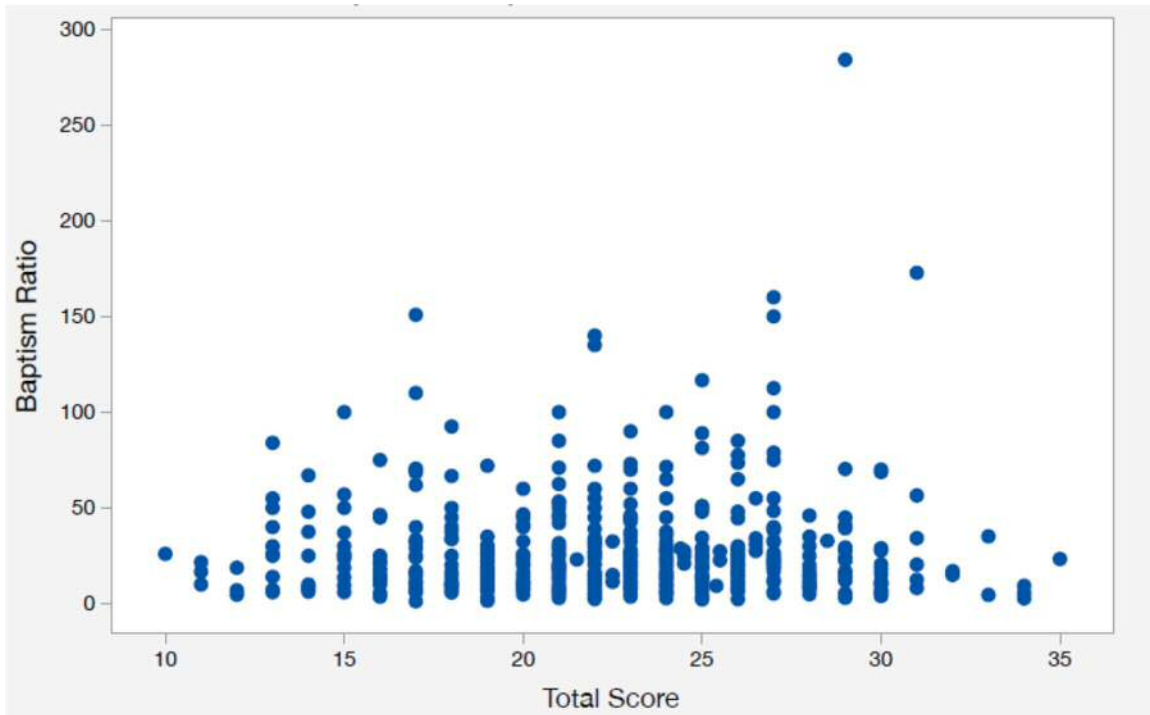
Figure 7. Total CHA score and baptism ratio scatterplot

Question 4: Recognizable Pattern of
Family Ministry and Baptism

The final research question pertained to a recognizable pattern between the level of family ministry engagement by churches and an increased baptism ratio. This question emphasized what—if anything—can be concluded from the data collected. While there are certainly conclusions to be drawn from the data, as discussed in the next chapter, the answer to the question of a recognizable pattern between family ministry and either an increased or decreased baptism ratio is that this simply is not the case—there is no recognizable pattern between the two variables.

While it may seem like the lack of a recognizable pattern is unhelpful, this information is actually very helpful since this research was born out of a critique that family ministry strategies are not as evangelistically effective as other, more common ministry practices. Conversely, the research indicates that churches which choose to engage in a family ministry strategy are just as effective at reaching people for Christ as

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are churches that choose not to engage in that particular ministry emphasis. More is discussed in relation to the conclusions which can be drawn from this data in the following chapter.

Evaluation of the Research Design

Like any research design, there is an inevitability of both strengths and weaknesses to the research design here presented. As a result, it is necessary to evaluate the research design to determine where these potential strengths and weaknesses lie. The task of this section is to examine these areas of strength and weakness for the purpose of legitimizing and strengthening the study.

Strengths of the Research Design

There are five distinct strengths to this research design. First, it is an empirical study, which is a strength because verifiable data was used to examine what is actually happening in the sample—and, thereby, the population. Anytime these types of numbers are gathered and analyzed is an opportunity for new insights and, potentially, helpful conclusions.

A second strength of the research design is that the study utilized existing, verified data. In particular, the ACPs used to determine baptism ratios for this study represent data that is collected and available for interpretations such as the ones here proposed in a uniform and consistent manner. This data is considered trustworthy and is used for other research projects to determine what is happening in the churches of the SBC. At the same time, that existing data also serves to contribute something new to the field when it is used to interpret the new data as has been here presented.

Similar to the previous strength, the third strength of this research method is that it utilized an existing instrument to gather data. The CHA is a verified survey that has been deemed reliable for data collection, as noted in the previous chapter. This means that the collected data is reliable and, therefore, helpful for the stated purpose. This

research can also be helpful for the instrument as it will be widely disseminated and utilized, which should serve to strengthen the reliability of the survey itself.

The fourth strength of this research design is that the sample size was large enough to increase the level of confidence in the results. With the population of SBC churches at 46,793, a sample size of 695 means that the margin of error at a 99 percent confidence level is 4.85 percent. As a result, the design itself was proven to be effective since the strategy of reaching out to as many conventions and associations as possible yielded a substantial number of responses.

A final strength of the proposed research design is that it utilized a professional statistician to analyze the data and provide the proper understanding of the relationship between the variables. Therefore, the conclusions drawn from the data can be developed more strongly and advanced more forcefully. While this does not contribute to the design itself, it serves to strengthen the design by providing an important professional insight into the data gathered.

Weaknesses of the Research Design

Just as there are strengths to the research design, there are very surely weaknesses. While none of these weaknesses are debilitating for the study, they can create difficulty for the research. For example, the research design served to capture very useful data that helped to determine what is happening in the churches of the SBC, but it did not serve to provide an explanation of the reason for any of the data—especially since there are no correlations between the two gathered variables. That is, while the research provides a "what," it does not provide a "why." Certainly, this can be discovered through further research, but the conclusions here drawn are based on the surface level understanding of the numbers themselves.

Related to the first weakness of the research design is the fact that the research illuminated the idea that there are likely confounding variables involved in an increased

or decreased baptism ratio, but had no way of determining what those variables are. While it is helpful to know that variables may either increase or decrease the baptism ratio of the churches in the SBC, it would be tremendously more helpful to know what those practices and beliefs are. This does, however, serve to illuminate the fact that these exist and provide opportunity for further research, as was discussed in the section addressing confounding variables.

The third identifiable weakness of the research design is that the survey asked for church demographic information. While it was necessary to gather this information for the purpose of accessing the churches' ACP data, it could have been a factor which caused some pastors and church leaders to abstain from participation. They may have been embarrassed by their church's performance, afraid of appearing haughty, or simply desired to maintain anonymity. While it was made clear that the information would not be used to single out any church, it still could have been a hurdle that prevented the participation of some churches.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the conclusions to be drawn from the study. Theoretically, this research has revealed something important for the church in terms of the way in which it accomplishes both family ministry and evangelism as dual priorities of the church. As a result, this chapter addresses matters such as a restatement of the research purpose, the implications of the research, the application of the research, some possible limitations of the study, and suggestions for further research within this area of emphasis.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this research was to address empirically the critique that churches employing a family discipleship model of ministry are, by design, internally focused—that is, they are either not focused on or not effective at reaching people outside of the church and its families. This critique was addressed by using established survey methodology to place churches on a spectrum of family ministry engagement and by, subsequently, using baptism data to determine if a correlation existed between the level of family ministry engagement by individual churches and their effectiveness at reaching non-believers for Christ.

Research Implications

As was seen in the literature review for this study, there is a biblical imperative for the local church to equip families for discipleship. Quite simply, God's design is for parents to train their children to know and love Christ. Mark Holmen makes this point when he writes, "It is the home that is to be the primary place where faith is lived,

expressed, and nurtured."[1] Simultaneously, God's plan for the church is that it might equip families for this endeavor. As Bryan Nelson and Timothy Paul Jones explain, "Because parents are primary disciple-makers and vital partners in family-equipping ministry, every activity for children or youth must resource, train, or directly involve parents."[2] In addition to this priority of family discipleship, it is also part of God's design for the people of God to reach those around them with the message of God's salvation through Christ. Concisely, as David Platt states, "To be a disciple of Jesus is to make disciples of Jesus."[3] It is, therefore, important to note that churches are meant to be both internally and externally focused—discipling those within and reaching those outside.

In light of the two biblical imperatives of family ministry and evangelism—which truly should not be separated—critiques are leveled from those who emphasize family ministry as a priority of the church from those who emphasize it to a different extent. Proponents of family ministry advocate for that strategy to be an overarching strategy of the church. Those who emphasize it to a lesser extent—or who outright reject it—critique a family ministry strategy as being internally focused and not effective for global outreach. For example, Mark W. Cannister explains, "When student ministry comes under the umbrella of family ministry, it will only be good enough to serve the students of Christian families in the church and will never reach beyond its walls."[4] Similarly, Brandon Shields, a family-based ministry proponent, critiques the family-equipping model by writing,

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[1]Mark Holmen, *Church+Home: The Proven Formula for Building Lifelong Faith* (Ventura, CA: Gospel Light, 2010), 33.

[2]Bryan Nelson and Timothy Paul Jones, "The Problem and the Promise of Family Ministry," *The Journal of Family Ministry* 1, no 1 (Fall/Winter 2010): 40.

[3]David Platt, *Follow Me: A Call to Die. A Call to Live* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2013), 207.

[4]Mark W. Cannister, *Teenagers Matter: Making Student Ministry a Priority in the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 183.

The result of actively promoting the family as the centerpiece of the church's mission is a built-in neglect of the larger community and on non-intact families present in the church. It is difficult to reach out aggressively in one's own ZIP code when most of the church's resources, energies, strategies, and leadership efforts have been targeted at intact families inside church walls.[5]

A balanced position, however, recognizes that both biblical priorities have a rightful place within the church of Jesus Christ. Jones articulates this balanced perspective in *Family Ministry Field Guide*:

Family-equipping begins with those that are near, our own families and the families in our churches, but then moves immediately to those who are far. A passion to reach those who are far is good, but that passion does not give us permission to abandon or ignore those who are near.[6]

The purpose of this research was to find out if that balanced approach does indeed exist in an effort to answer the critique that family ministry churches lag in evangelism.

The findings in this study support the idea that family ministry churches are evangelistic in nature. This position can be confidently asserted distinctly because there are no correlations between an increased or decreased level of family ministry engagement and an increased or decreased baptism ratio. While this may seem like a failure on the part of family ministry, it is not; family ministry churches are just as effective at reaching those far from Christ as other churches within the SBC.[7] That is, all of the churches within the study engaged in evangelism at roughly the same rate. Certainly, some churches are more effective at reaching new believers, as evidenced by their low baptism ratio, but since there are no correlations, it can be asserted that churches which are involved in family ministry at a high level engage in evangelism at roughly the same rate as those which do not emphasize family ministry to an equal extent.

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[5]Brandon Shields, "Responses to Jay Strother: Family-Equipping Ministry," in *Perspectives on Family Ministry: 3 Views*, ed. Timothy Paul Jones (Nashville: B & H, 2009), 177.

[6]Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2011), 140-41.

[7]While the fact that these churches engage in evangelism to the same extent as other churches in the SBC means that the critique of these family ministry strategies is inaccurate, it does not excuse family ministry completely. It was asserted that family ministry churches should be more effective at evangelism due to the equipping of families that takes place through it. More will be said of this idea in subsequent pages.

Concerns for the Church

While the research served to reveal what is happening in the churches of the SBC, it also illuminated some concerns for the church in light of both the levels of engagement in evangelism and family ministry in those churches. Of particular alarm is the fact that the levels to which those churches engage in both evangelism and family ministry are relatively weak. Clearly, outliers accomplish one, the other, or both very well, as was discussed in the previous chapter; however, the overall numbers are disappointing for several reasons. These reasons include the high number of church attenders it takes to reach one new believer, the fact that family ministry churches are not more evangelistic than those that are not, and the low levels at which the churches as a whole are engaged in family ministry.

First, the overall baptism ratios of the responding churches do not appear to be effective for church growth and gospel-centered world conquest, as Robert E. Coleman has asserted as the goal of the church: "We must always remember, too, that the goal is world conquest. We dare not let a lesser concern capture our strategy of the moment."[8] In fact, the composite numbers seem to indicate that evangelism may no longer hold its position of prominence as the mission of the church. The average number of people it takes to baptize one new believer in the SBC, as evidence by these survey results, is 26.578.[9] This means that, on average, the churches of the SBC are reaching one person for every 26 or 27 people in attendance. At this rate, assuming that all church members are active in evangelism at the same rate, church attenders will reach 1 person for every 26 or 27 years of their lives. In addition, that is how long it will take to replace those same people in the church body. The rate of growth in the church, then, for a church of 200 attenders,

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[8]Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 1993), 87.

[9]It must also be recalled that 127 churches which responded to the survey baptized no new believers in the referenced year. When applied broadly, this number means that over 18 percent of churches in the SBC effectively reached no one with the gospel in that given year. The churches in this study that baptized no one ranged in size from 8 to 237 average weekly attenders.

is about 8 people a year. Depending on the makeup of the church, it is possible that a church could lose 8 attenders a year strictly to death and relocation. This hardly seems like something which will cause the church of Jesus to grow in the United States of America.

Of course, this number does not reveal the entire state of evangelism in the church. While baptism rates are a helpful metric for determining the effective conversion of new believers, they do not reveal how often a Christian shares the gospel and is met with a response other than conversion. Additionally, the numbers used for this study were numbers of average weekly attendance. It is certainly possible that not all of those in attendance on a weekly basis are actually believers in Jesus or members of that particular congregation. As such, the ratios of active, converted church members to new believers may be lower. Finally, it would be a mistake not to recognize that the Holy Spirit is the source of salvation. It is, therefore, conceivable that active, converted church members are faithfully—perhaps even daily—sharing the gospel, but are seeing no results because God has not allowed for salvation to occur in those situations (See Gen 18:16-33; 19:27-28; Matt 7:6; 10:14-15; and Acts 16:6-7). Presumably, however, this likely is not the case in every part of the country as God has also declared that He desires that all should be saved (2 Pet 3:9). As a result, the formula should be that the more the people of God share the gospel, the more unbelievers repent and believe the gospel.

A second alarming trend within the data from this survey is that churches which engage in family ministry at a high level are not more evangelistically effective than churches that do not. Theoretically, churches which employ this strategy should be more effective at reaching people with the gospel because it is a way of mobilizing more people for gospel ministry. Paul Renfro asserts, "The home is the best context for discipleship, and the family is also the best context for evangelism of persons outside of the church."[10]

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[10]Paul Renfro, "Family-Integrated Ministry: Family-Driven Faith" in Jones, *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, 63.

Similarly, Jones writes, "The goal of family ministry is for parents to see themselves and their families in light of the gospel. Certain habits and practices will inevitably result from such a vision."[11] These habits and practices are necessary for the evangelization of the surrounding lost world. Under this assumption, there should have been a correlation in this study between increased emphasis on family ministry and increased effectiveness in baptizing new believers.

Finally, a third alarming trend in this data is the extent to which churches are actually engaged in family ministry. While it could be assumed that many churches do not engage in family ministry at a significant level, as evidenced by the literature surrounding this topic, it could also be assumed that churches engage in aspects of family ministry without a specific title or name for the ministry simply because it is a biblical imperative. As such, it would seem that there would be an element of family ministry found throughout the SBC. The numbers in this study, however, reveal a different picture, as evidenced by the scores on the selected portions of the CHA.

The highest possible score on the CHA for this study would have been 36. In actuality, the highest score received by any church was 35. Similarly, the lowest possible score would have been 9, but the actual lowest score was 10. Each of these extreme scores was received by only one church, respectively. The average score was 22.2738. Since there are nine questions on the survey, this indicates that the average score on each of the questions in a cumulative sense was 2.48.[12] Because the range of possible scores on any given question is 1 to 4, this represents a marginal involvement in family ministry strategy. When these numbers are examined against the survey itself to see what this average represents tangibly, it means that the staff of the churches of the SBC, on average, believe that more than half of the families in their church focus on spiritual development and

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[11]Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 97.

[12]Certainly, this number is not the true average for each question. While that number is knowable for each question, the cumulative average is what is needed here.

discipleship only at church (question 2); only sometimes provide resources for parents to disciple their children (question 3); usually only preach family-related sermons on Mother's Day, Father's Day, and other special days (question 5); believe that the families of their church make decisions based on biblical priorities only sometimes (question 6); and more than half the time the teens in their church drop out as they get older (question 9).

While the perspectives gained through this research are actually what would be statistically expected based on the possible outcomes, as evidenced in figure 8, they are nonetheless concerning. This means that there is significant room for improvement in the way in which family ministry is accomplished in the SBC. More will be said of this priority in a subsequent section.
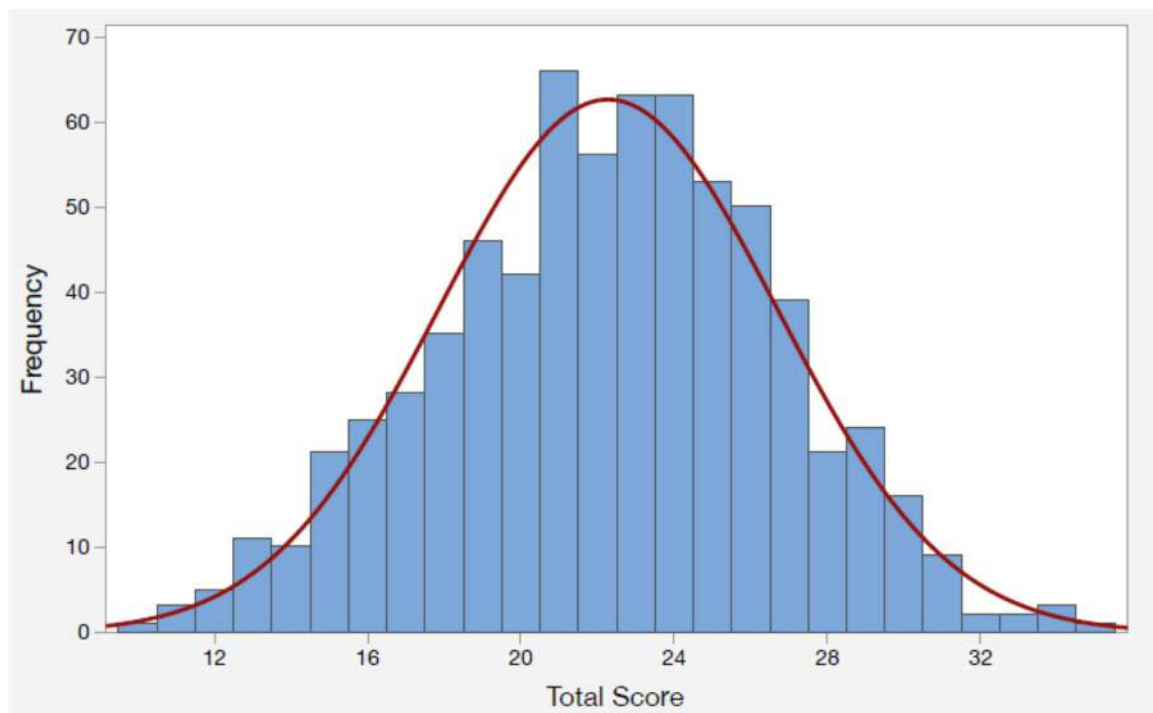
Figure 8. Normal distribution of total score on the CHA and score frequency

Evangelism without Family Ministry

One implication of this research that is benign but worth noting is that churches do not need to engage in family ministry to be evangelistically effective. Most of the

churches in the SBC evangelize at about the same rate, as evidenced by the results of this research. As a result, it should be noted that the evangelistic effectiveness of a church may not depend completely on the way in which ministry to families is accomplished within that congregation. While some family ministry emphases would increase evangelistic effectiveness, evangelistic effectiveness is statistically independent from that particular ministry philosophy. Evangelistic effectiveness can be increased without necessarily changing the level of family ministry engagement. Of course, that is not a desirable option in itself, but it does mean that evangelistic effectiveness can be increased without waiting for the full implementation of a family ministry strategy.

Research Applications

In light of the implications of this research, and in light of the survey results themselves, several practical applications ought to be incorporated into the life of SBC churches. My desire is that the application of this research results in dual-focused fruit. That is, the hope is that churches can strengthen both their ministry to families as well as their engagement in evangelism as a result of this study. In order for that to happen, there are several application points: evangelizing more, engaging in family ministry at a deeper level, and strengthening families for evangelism.

First, as was previously noted, the baptism ratios of the churches in the SBC, as evidenced by the responses here received, are less than ideal. As a result, the churches of the SBC must evangelize more. The pattern that seems to be illustrated in Scripture is that sharing the gospel more means reaching more people for Christ (See Acts 2:40-41; 4:1-4; Matt 28:18-20; and 2 Tim 4:1-2). As a result, to increase the effectiveness of the evangelistic efforts within the SBC, Christians must simply share the gospel more. This strategy necessarily involves every member of the congregation reaching out to those around them with the gospel. Dustin Willis and Aaron Coe call this process equipping people to be everyday missionaries:

Everyday missionaries are those who practice life on mission where God has placed them, whether that be at an office complex, a developing country, or a college campus. It is incumbent on every believer to have an "all hands on deck" mentality in order for the mission to reach its fullest potential.[13]

This type of strategy can be very effective precisely because it follows the patterns set forth in Scripture.

In order for this strategy to take place, however, it will be important for gospel sharing to be a point of distinction within SBC churches. Linda Ranson Jacobs explains how this emphasis must be implemented when she writes to church leaders:

The people in the pews are the ones who can do this. They need to reach out wherever they encounter these people—at the grocery store, the mall, the neighborhood get-together, school, and so on. We need to send someone to them instead of expecting people to show up at our churches asking to be included in ministry. Could you only imagine if each intact family in your church reached out and impacted one family in your community? Church people could change the world just like the disciples did in the New Testament.[14]

This emphasis will need to be one for which the people of the church are trained and resourced. Additionally, if it is going to occur with any regularity, it is something which must be practiced, rehearsed, recognized, and highlighted.

A second application of this data is that family ministry strategy must be proliferated throughout the SBC in an effort to encourage more churches to engage in this critical scriptural imperative. Quite simply, the level of engagement in family ministry must be increased. Helpful texts and curriculums have been developed, as explored in the literature review for this study, but if family ministry is something which is to gain traction and notoriety as an integral part of a holistic gospel ministry, then it must be written about more, spoken of more, and highlighted more often on national platforms throughout the SBC.

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[13]Dustin Willis and Aaron Coe, *Life on Mission: Joining the Everyday Mission of God* (Chicago: Moody, 2014), 26.

[14]Linda Ranson Jacobs, *Attract Families to Your Church and Keep Them Coming Back* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2014), 44.

A third application of this research is that families must be trained to engage in both family ministry and evangelism simultaneously. These two realities truly cannot be separated. Ken Hemphill and Richard Ross assert, "Parents who desire to rear kingdom children will lead them first to have a heart for lost people near at hand."[15] Along the same lines, Rodney Clapp writes, "In a real sense, and like the homes of the New Testament church, our homes must go public. Our call is to live not in private havens or retreats, but in mission bases."[16] That is, families must be seen as outposts of the local church in such a way that the family is seen as an irreplaceable mechanism in the evangelistic efforts of the church—that families would be seen as, as Voddie Baucham, Jr., calls them, "The evangelism and discipleship arm of the church."[17] Certainly, every individual within a church ought to be trained to share the gospel, and should be faithful in that endeavor; however, the family—whatever its makeup—is a natural outpost that God has placed within the community to reach others with the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. It is important to note, as Mark Dever writes, that

> opportunities for ministry to others naturally arise in the neighborhood and city where a congregation lives. The good news will spread most naturally not only where the congregation holds its assembly, but also where its members spend their days. Their lives are known to others. Their witness is improved by the constant observance of their conduct.[18]

In similar fashion, Platt explains,

> In the great commission, Jesus tells all of His disciples to go, baptize, and teach people to obey everything He has commanded them. This kind of teaching [does not] require a special gifting or a specific setting. This kind of teaching happens all over

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[15]Ken Hemphill and Richard Ross, *Parenting with Kingdom Purpose* (Nashville: B & H, 2005), 99.

[16]Rodney Clapp, *Families at the Crossroads: Beyond Traditional and Modern Options* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 156.

[17]Voddie Baucham, Jr., *Family Driven Faith: Doing What It Takes to Raise Sons and Daughters Who Walk with God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 195.

[18]Mark Dever, "The Church," in *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: B & H, 814.

the place—in homes, neighborhoods, workplaces, on car rides, in meetings, and over meals.[19]

Because this task is for everyday Christians, it is a task for the family, and it must be presented as such.

The understanding of this important point is integral to the task of family discipleship. Tad Thompson states, "God has given His people the great task of taking the gospel into the world. It is vital that our children see the missional heart of God for the world, while coming to understand how God is glorified through our faithful witness."[20] Unfortunately, this concept lacks prevalence within the SBC churches, as evidenced by this study. One possible reason for this is provided by David Kinnaman, who writes, "Sadly, many young people do not have a sense of [God's presence and mission] because millions of Christian parents have a vision of following Jesus that avoids anything more demanding than faithful church attendance."[21] As a remedy to this type of familial apathy, Andreas J. Kostenberger and David W. Jones provide a solution that begins with the way in which ministry is emphasized within the church:

> The leaders of the church should themselves model healthy family relationships (1 Tim 3:4-5) and seek to equip families in the church to be worshipping communities, embodying on the micro-level what the church ought to reflect on the macro-level as the "household of God" (1 Tim 3:15). This requires churches to be more intentional in their approach to *mentoring and discipleship*. It calls them to focus their efforts more overtly on equipping men to practice their Christian faith in their homes as spiritual leaders of worship, Scripture reading, etc., rather than conceiving of mentoring and discipleship primarily or exclusively on an individual level.[22]

This is the type of family discipleship and evangelism that must be emphasized, encouraged, and underscored within the congregations of the SBC if there is to be an

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[19]Platt, *Follow Me*, 192.

[20]Tad Thompson, *Intentional Parenting: Family Discipleship by Design* (Adelphi, MD: Cruciform, 2011), 42.

[21]David Kinnaman, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving the Church and Rethinking Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 209.

[22]Andreas J. Kostenberger and David W. Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 264-65, emphasis original. It must be noted that the "etc." included in this quote very necessarily must include evangelism.

increase in the prevalence of family ministry strategy that is naturally evangelistic in form.

Finally, the application of this research must be accompanied by a caution found prevalently in the literature surrounding family ministry strategy. The caution is that family ministry is a means to an end, and not the end in itself. According to Jones,

> If the equipping of families becomes the identity that drives a ministry, the focus of the ministry will tend to begin and end with the development of healthy families. Yet earthly families are a means in God's plan, never a goal. God's work of redemption does not begin or end with families, healthy or otherwise. God's plan finds its genesis and fulfillment in Jesus Christ (Rev 22:13; see also Col 1:16-20; Heb 12:2).[23]

This caution is further emphasized by Clapp when he writes,

> Recovering the purpose of the Christian family, on the distinctive terms of the Christian story, requires two declarations—one negative and one positive. The negative declaration: The family is not God's most important institution on earth. The family is not the social agent that most significantly shapes and forms the character of Christians. The family is not the primary vehicle of God's grace and salvation for a waiting, desperate world. And the positive declaration: The church is God's most important institution on earth. The church is the social agent that most significantly shapes and forms the character of Christians. And the church is the primary vehicle of God's grace and salvation for a waiting, desperate world.[24]

To this point, Nelson and Jones articulate, "Family ministry is *not* the answer. . . . The gospel is what changes people—not programs or practices; not models or methods; but solely and only the Gospel of Jesus Christ."[25] As a result, it is imperative that the application of this research be such that the gospel, the church, and the family are all assigned their correct, God-given weight.

Research Limitations

There are certainly limitations to the way in which the data here gathered can be used. For one, the data gleaned through this study serves to reveal what is happening,

[23]Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 143.

[24]Clapp, *Families at the Crossroads*, 67-68.

[25]Nelson and Jones, "The Problem and the Promise," 41, emphasis original.

but it does not illuminate how it is happening. That is, the data solidifies the level of engagement with family ministry and evangelism in the churches of the SBC, but it does not reveal what is taking place in those churches to cause the particular results. This limitation does not mean, however, that the information is not instructive for churches, as was noted—it is instructive since it reveals what is actually happening within the churches of the SBC. What it does not do, necessarily, is provide a roadmap or how-to list of steps to accomplish family ministry that is evangelistically effective.

Two distinct limitations which are related to the first are that the family ministry strategies utilized in the churches were not identified and specific evangelistic practices were not illuminated. First, the data in this study does not help to place the churches of the SBC into the categories of family ministry identified through the literature review, but rather places churches on a spectrum based upon their CHA survey score. While this ranking is helpful for this study, it does not provide specific data that could strengthen any of those ministry approaches individually.

Second, this research does not reveal how often church attenders are sharing the gospel. Assumptions could be made based upon the baptism ratios represented in the study, but those assumptions would be baseless and, therefore, useless. In order to gain this insight, additional research would be necessary in the form of case studies and further surveys.

Another limitation of this research is that it is not transferable outside of the SBC. While it may be true that what is happening inside the SBC is also happening in Christian churches outside of it, it would be a mistake to make that assumption based upon this research. Certainly, some practices within the SBC separate its churches from churches which affiliate differently; as such, the results gained from this study very well could be distinct to the SBC.

Similarly, this research is limited by the fact that the study itself may not be reproducible outside of the SBC. This study utilized ACPs which are maintained by the

SBC. If a different church affiliation does not keep such records, then it would be impossible to utilize this research design without first collecting that data. As a result, this study is limited in its ability to be accomplished in other contexts as it is here described.

Further Research

As a result of this study, there are significant opportunities for further research. The most prominent of these opportunities is the possibility of discovering why some churches may be more effective at accomplishing both evangelism and family ministry than others. This endeavor could involve multiple streams of research from this study, as well as those which would strengthen the current research design.

Specific Further Research

First, while the data produced no correlations between an increased emphasis on family ministry strategy and a decreased baptism ratio, it is still possible that the two data points are related. The critique of family ministry strategy addressed in this study is that churches which engage in family ministry strategy at a significant level fail to reach those outside of their congregation. Another way of addressing this critique through a similar study would be to determine the ages of those who have been baptized. This strategy could be helpful because it is possible that even though the baptism ratios are the same for churches which engage in family ministry strategy at a deep level and those that do not, it is also conceivable that the baptisms recorded in churches that emphasize family ministry to a greater extent are those of the children of church members, indicating that the church may not be effectively reaching those outside of the church at all.[26] Certainly, the converse may also be true. Accomplishing a study that captures age-related data may help to strengthen this research. Of course, age-related data alone would not be totally

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[26]Using this data independently would be difficult since it is likely that churches that do not emphasize family ministry strategy are also reaching the children of church members with the gospel and, therefore, baptizing them. More research would definitely be in order.

descriptive in itself, but it could be used to accomplish case studies to determine exactly what is happening in individual churches.

A second way of furthering this research would involve using this data to determine any other factors which contribute to the results. For example, since individual churches are identified by city and state through the survey, the data could be examined to determine if there are any regional considerations for either an increased or decreased emphasis on family ministry or an increase or decrease in baptism ratios. Similarly, the data could be used to determine if there is any correlation between the identified factors and the size of the church since this is an element which may impact the variables in a significant way, as was illuminated in a previous chapter. It is also possible that the year in which the church was founded could impact the variables since newer churches may be more dependent upon evangelism for growth than those which have been established for a longer period of time. In a related way, the number of staff members at a church could be a factor that influences the relationship between either an increased or decreased emphasis on family ministry or an increased or decreased baptism ratio; specifically, if a church employs a minister to children, student minister, or family minister, or someone assigned to the church's evangelism efforts, such as a missions pastor or evangelism coordinator, their employment may impact the variables in a significant way.

Another way in which this research could be used for an additional study would be to contact the positive outliers represented in the survey responses to determine what is happening in those churches that contributes to their effectiveness. This could be done for those which received high scores on the CHA, those which have a low baptism ratio, and those which seem to be successful at both—the churches found in the upper left corner of the scatterplot in figure 7 as it is depicted in the previous chapter. Contacting those churches and then accomplishing case studies could be helpful to develop best practices for emphasizing both family ministry strategy and evangelism at the same time.

Finally, a topic for further research may be the investigation of ways by which grandparents within a congregation can be trained for family ministry. The CHA contains a segment related to sermons and pulpit announcements regarding the involvement of grandparents, but there are very few other specific methods mentioned. A helpful study would include identifying other factors that can contribute to a healthy strategy for grandparent engagement within a family ministry strategy.

Strengthening the Research Design

One way in which this particular study could be strengthened is to alter the research design to use average Sunday School or Bible study attendance as a factor instead of average weekly worship attendance. It is possible that the results could change by including this element because it, in some cases, more accurately represents those who are engaged in the life of the church, as opposed to those who merely attend. This metric might more fairly represent the ratio of those who are evangelizing to those who have been effectively reached through that evangelism as evidenced by their baptism. A problem with this approach would be that these numbers are not reported with as high a frequency on the ACP as average weekly worship attendance, partially because not every church utilizes these elements. The research in this area would be helpful nonetheless.

APPENDIX 1

CHURCH HEALTH SURVEY

This appendix contains the selected portions of the Church Health Survey—each on a subsequent page—as they are represented in their printed format. The entire survey is available online for download through this URL: http://d6family.com/dna/.

goal - use the power of parental influence
1/168: Flawed Fraction or Ministry Multiplier

QUESTION 14

POINTS

1
1
1
1
2
4

What is the biggest influencer of your church's children age five to twelve years old?

- ☐ TV
- ☐ School
- ☐ Friends
- ☐ Online resources (social media, etc.)
- ☐ Church
- ☐ Parents

QUESTION 1

+

1
2
3
4

What percentage of your church families focus on spiritual development/discipleship only at church?

- ☐ Most everyone or everyone
- ☐ More than half
- ☐ Less than half
- ☐ Almost none or none

QUESTION 19

+

1
2
3
4

How often does the church provide parents with a tool (questions, activities, etc.) to continue discipleship at home?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Always

ADD ALL THREE - RESULTS GO HERE

=

Add all three questions points together and put in box to the left. Mark that number on scale below to see results.

scale of progress

dying	at risk	healthy
1 2 3 4	5 6 7 8	9 10 11 12

All the research points to the fact that the number one influencer (for good or bad) are the parents of the kids. If the church intends to change the culture, it will equip and train parents to coach their kids spiritually. Owning one's faith cannot happen one hour a week. Parents are your ministry multipliers to help during the other 167 hours.

– See chapter 2 of *The DNA of D6* for more insight

goal - family equipping is a biblical priority
D6 Goes Beyond Deuteronomy 6

QUESTION 13

POINTS

1
1
2
3
4

What is the closest description of the ages/generations that represent your church?

- ❑ Mostly grandparents
- ❑ Mostly grandparents and children
- ❑ Mostly grandparents, teens, and children
- ❑ Mostly parents, teens, and children
- ❑ Balance of grandparents, parents, teens, and children

QUESTION 29

+

1
2
4

How frequently do families in the church hear sermons about parents and grandparents actively developing their kids and grandkids spiritually?

- ❑ Never
- ❑ Usually on Mother's Day, Father's day & special days
- ❑ Regularly

QUESTION 20

+

1
2
3
4

To what extent would families in your church make life decisions based upon biblical principles?

- ❑ Never
- ❑ Sometimes
- ❑ Often
- ❑ Most of the time

ADD ALL THREE - RESULTS GO HERE

=

Add all three questions points together and put in box to the left. Mark that number on scale below to see results.

scale of progress

dying	at risk	healthy
1 2 3 4	5 6 7 8	9 10 11 12

Scripture teaches the power of generational discipleship and parental influence from Genesis to Revelation. Sermons and lessons help both parents and grandparents not only know they should connect but show them how. When needs are met families feel empowered and confident to connect and that helps churches become healthy.

– See chapter 3 of *The DNA of D6* for more insight

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goal - not silo ministries in church
The One-Eared Mickey Mouse

QUESTION 21

POINTS ↓ ↓

4
3
2
1

How frequently do the teachers of children or teens in your church spend time with the student's parent(s) to encourage them to discuss the lesson at home?

❑ Weekly
❑ Quarterly
❑ Once a year
❑ Not at all

QUESTION 28

+

4
2
1
1

How often do parents accompany students/ teens from your church on service projects or mission trips?

❑ Always
❑ Sometimes
❑ Never
❑ We do not do service projects or mission trips

QUESTION 3

+

1
2
3
4

How often do your students/teens drop out of church (not attend church anymore) as they grow older?

❑ Most of the time
❑ More than half the time
❑ Less than half the time
❑ Almost never

ADD ALL THREE - RESULTS GO HERE

=

Add all three questions points together and put in box to the left. Mark that number on scale below to see results.

scale of progress

dying	at risk	healthy
1 2 3 4	5 6 7 8	9 10 11 12

Family ministry is generational discipleship and values every generation and how they can teach each other. Healthy churches look for places for adults to help teach younger generations in more ways than in a teaching role. Healthy church see the generational gaps and are willing to change and work hard to fix it. Health is about selfless generations.
- See chapter 5 of *The DNA of D6* for more insight

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APPENDIX 2

INSTRUMENT PERMISSION

This appendix contains written permission for the use of the survey instrument around which this research is built. This includes permission to use only the selected portions of the survey, although that specific permission was granted via a telephone conversation with Ron Hunter, Jr. on August 17, 2016.

From: Ron Hunter [ron.hunter@randallhouse.com]
Sent: Thursday, July 28, 2016 7:50 PM
To: David Womack; Kevin Saxton
Subject: Re: D6 Family Contact Submission

Kevin,

Good to hear from you. It is an exiting stage that you are embarking upon and I know you feel a great sense of accomplishment.

I am speaking at a conference in Singapore this week and then traveling to do spend time training other family ministry leaders in four more surrounding countries afterward. I will not return until Aug 10. I will be teaching at Southern in the 13th for Dr. Jones 45240MD: Discipleship and Family Ministry class

Not sure if your schedule but maybe we could meet then. Regardless a phone call most anytime after I return would be great.

The answer is yes that you are welcome to use it. Dr. Jones and four other professors (various universities) actually help validate this instrument for me. It is not tied to a dissertation. It is tied to a book I wrote called *The DNA of D6: Building Blocks of Generational Discipleship*. You might want to grab a copy and read it if you have not already.

Give me your mailing address and I will have a person from our team send you three copies of the nicely printed assessment; one for you and two for your committee members. You can also find a free download at D6 Family.com/DNA

If you choose to use the download copies that will be absolutely free. If you'd like to use the printed copies we can provide them at a very inexpensive bulk price.

Sent from my iPhone,

Ron Hunter Jr.
Executive Director & CEO

Randall House

D6 Conference Director

If there are misspellings or ramblings when texting or emailing, it is because I am all thumbs.

On Jul 29, 2016, at 4:25 AM, David Womack <david.womack@randallhouse.com> wrote:

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---------- Forwarded message ----------
From: **WordPress** <contact@d6family.com>
Date: Thu, Jul 28, 2016 at 3:10 PM
Subject: D6 Family Contact Submission
To: david.womack@randallhouse.com

The following message was sent from the contact form on d6family.com

----

Name: Kevin Saxton
Email: ksaxton@gofamilychurch.org
Subject: Church Health Assessment Use in PhD Dissertation

Message:
Good afternoon! My name is Kevin Saxton and I am a PhD candidate at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. I was put on the trail of the Church Health Assessment by

one of my dissertation supervisors, Dr. Timothy Paul Jones. It seems to be the instrument that I have needed for quite some time as I am writing on the intersection of family ministry and evangelism and need a way to classify churches according to their degree of involvement in family ministry. Both of my supervisors agree that the Church Health Assessment is the tool that can do that. I was wondering about three things: (1) gaining permission to use the survey as part of my research--a topic for which I am willing to have as many conversations as necessary; (2) accessing documents that prove the statistic validity of the instrument, which I'm told are part of another dissertation which does not appear to be in online databases yet; and (3) having the opportunity to speak with Dr. Hunter about the tool as well as about my research and family ministry in general. Please let me know if these are possible. Thank you for what you are doing to help churches and families more effectively reach and teach God's people. Sincerely, Kevin Saxton

APPENDIX 3

SURVEY AS DISTRIBUTED

This appendix contains the survey as it was distributed to the associations of the SBC.

Agreement to Participate

Dear Ministry Leader,

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. The intent of this research is to empirically measure the interaction between ministry philosophy and evangelistic effectiveness as evidenced by baptism rates in relation to average weekly attendance. This research is intended to be informational only and not meant to elevate or demean any church in any way. Churches will be assigned an identifying number for this research and church names will not be used in the written work.

The survey will only take a few minutes to complete. It consists of selected sections of the Church Health Assessment, which is published by Randall House and is available at d6family.com/dna/. Any questions about this selected section of the survey may be e-mailed to me at ksaxton946@students.sbts.edu.

I sincerely appreciate you taking the time to complete this survey and, thereby, allowing me to contribute a work to the Church that can inform practice for the next generation. May God bless you.

Sincerely,

Kevin Bryce Saxton

1. Agreement to Participate: The research in which you are about to participate is designed to gather information about ministry philosophies implemented in the local church. This research is being conducted by Kevin Bryce Saxton for purposes of completing a dissertation for the Doctor of Philosophy degree. In this research, you will be asked to answer multiple choice questions about your church's ministry philosophy and to provide your church name, city, and state. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. By your completion of this survey, and checking the appropriate box below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

◯ I agree to participate

◯ I do not agree to participate

Section 1

2. What is the biggest influencer of your church's children age five to twelve years old?

◯ TV

◯ School

◯ Friends

◯ Online resources (social media, etc.)

◯ Church

◯ Parents

3. What percentage of your church families focus on spiritual development/discipleship only at church?

◯ Most everyone or everyone

◯ More than half

◯ Less than half

◯ Almost none or none

4. How often does the church provide parents with a tool (questions, activities, etc.) to continue discipleship at home?

◯ Never

◯ Sometimes

◯ Often

◯ Always

Section 2

5. What is the closest description of the ages/generations that represent your church?

◯ Mostly grandparents

◯ Mostly grandparents and children

◯ Mostly grandparents, teens, and children

◯ Mostly parents, teens, and children

◯ Balance of grandparents, parents, teens, and children

6. How frequently do families in the church hear sermons about parents and grandparents actively developing their kids and grandkids spiritually?

◯ Never

◯ Usually on Mother's Day, Father's day & special days

◯ Regularly

7. To what extent would families in your church make life decisions based upon biblical principles?

◯ Never

◯ Sometimes

◯ Often

◯ Most of the time

Section 3

8. How frequently do the teachers of children or teens in your church spend time with the student's parent(s) to encourage them to discuss the lesson at home?

○ Weekly

○ Quarterly

○ Once a Year

○ Not at all

9. How often do parents accompany students/teens from your church on service projects or mission trips?

○ Always

○ Sometimes

○ Never

○ We do not do service projects or mission trips

10. How often do your students/teens drop out of church (not attend church anymore) as they grow older?

○ Most of the time

○ More than half the time

○ Less than half the time

○ Almost never

Church Health Assessment

Demographic Information

Please provide information about your church which will be used to access the Annual Church Profile submitted to the Southern Baptist Convention.

11. Please provide the formal name, city, and state of your church.

Church Name	
City	
State	

APPENDIX 4

E-MAILS TO ASSOCIATIONAL LEADERS

This appendix contains the text of the two separate e-mails sent to the associations of the SBC. The first e-mail was sent on February 6, 2017. The second e-mail was sent on February 13, 2017. Both e-mails were sent to the same distribution list.

February 6, 2017 E-mail Content

Dear Associational Leader,

Greetings! My name is Kevin Bryce Saxton and I am a Doctor of Philosophy Candidate at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. As part of my dissertation in the area of leadership, I am conducting a survey to gauge ministry philosophy of the churches in the Southern Baptist Convention.

You are receiving this e-mail because your e-mail address is listed on either the SBC's website or your associational website as a person of influence in your association. I am requesting that you send the below e-mail text with the associated survey link to all of the churches in your association or with which you have influence. Also, if you serve in a staff position in your local church, then I ask that you take the survey, as well. It should take no longer than five minutes to complete.

I wholeheartedly believe that the data gleaned from this survey will serve to strengthen the churches of the SBC and, thereby, make us even more effective as we seek to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

Thank you for your help with getting this survey to as many SBC churches as possible. Your assistance is truly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Kevin Bryce Saxton, Ph.D. Candidate
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Dear Ministry Leader,

Greetings! My Name is Kevin Bryce Saxton and I am a Doctor of Philosophy Candidate at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. I also serve as a pastor in a local church in South Florida. As part of my dissertation in the area of leadership, I am conducting a survey to gauge ministry philosophy of the churches in the Southern Baptist Convention.

This survey will take less than five minutes to complete and is best undertaken by providing your first, instinctual reaction to the ten questions. Any member of your staff (whether vocational, bi-vocational, or volunteer) who is familiar with the ministry strategy of the church is eligible to participate.

As a token of appreciation for completing the survey, churches which complete the survey by Monday, February 13, 2017 will be entered into a drawing for a $50.00 Amazon gift card. The card will be mailed to the selected church later that week.
To access the survey, please utilize this link: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/KSaxton-ChurchHealthAssessment

I very much appreciate you taking the time to complete this survey. I truly believe that the data gleaned from this survey will serve to strengthen the effectiveness of the churches in the SBC.

May God bless you and the church which you serve.

Sincerely,

Kevin Bryce Saxton, Ph.D. Candidate
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

February 13, 2017 E-mail Content

Dear Associational Leader,

Greetings! My name is Kevin Bryce Saxton and I am a Doctor of Philosophy Candidate at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. As part of my dissertation in the area of leadership, I am conducting a survey to gauge ministry philosophy of the churches in the Southern Baptist Convention.

You are receiving this e-mail because your e-mail address is listed on either the SBC's website or your associational website as a person of influence in your association. I am requesting that you send the below e-mail text with the associated survey link to all of the churches in your association or with which you have influence. Also, if you serve in a staff position in your local church, then I ask that you take the survey, as well. It should take no longer than five minutes to complete.

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Kevin Bryce Saxton, Ph.D. Candidate
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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I very much appreciate you taking the time to complete this survey. I truly believe that the data gleaned from this survey will serve to strengthen the effectiveness of the churches in the SBC.

May God bless you and the church which you serve.

Sincerely,

Kevin Bryce Saxton, Ph.D. Candidate
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

APPENDIX 5

RELEVANT SURVEY DATA

This appendix contains the relevant data from the survey respondents. The raw data was also maintained and stored for future reference, if needed.

Church ID	S1	S2	S3	Total	Baptisms	Attendance	Ratio
0001	5	10	6	21	0	19	0.000
0002	9	8	6	23	3	58	19.333
0005	6	12	7	25	30	480	16.000
0006	7	8.5	5	20.5	0	48	0.000
0007	4	8	9	21	0	19	0.000
0010	8	12	9	29	1	45	45.000
0011	9	8.5	7	24.5	10	275	27.500
0012	8	11	9	28	6	90	15.000
0013	6	9	8	23	10	110	11.000
0015	4	11	6	21	0	63	0.000
0017	5	6	9	20	0	25	0.000
0018	6	6	3	15	0	19	0.000
0021	4	5	4	13	11	80	7.273
0025	4	4	3	11	3	65	21.667
0027	9	12	10	31	2	25	12.500
0028	8	6	5	19	0	49	0.000
0029	9	6	5	20	12	495	41.250
0031	5	8	7	20	2	50	25.000
0034	5	10	6	21	9	89	9.889
0037	7	11	10	28	77	1132	14.701
0039	8	10	8	26	8	390	48.750
0047	5	5	6	16	2	50	25.000
0049	10	9	10	29	1	284	284.000
0050	8	12	7	27	1	20	20.000
0051	6	10	6	22	10	125	12.500
0052	7	11	8	26	5	72	14.400
0053	8	10	6	24	16	470	29.375
0055	8	9	9	26	10	202	20.200
0057	5	10	4	19	15	175	11.667
0058	5	7	4	16	1	75	75.000
0059	9	10	12	31	0	156	0.000
0064	6	10	9	25	0	130	0.000

0065	8	6	8	22	0	40	0.000
0068	6	8	7	21	68	1090	16.029
0070	8	9	6	23	3	84	28.000
0071	6	10	5	21	6	36	6.000
0072	9	11	7	27	2	53	26.500
0075	8	6	7	21	1	45	45.000
0076	9	11	8	28	312	3350	10.737
0077	8	8	7	23	5	70	14.000
0078	6	8	5	19	6	92	15.333
0080	10	10	6	26	14	111	7.929
0081	9	11	6	26	20	480	24.000
0082	5.5	10	6	21.5	13	300	23.077
0084	6	9	6	21	4	38	9.500
0086	10	10	11	31	0	20	0.000
0087	10	8	8	26	0	26	0.000
0089	8	11	7	26	8	154	19.250
0090	6	11	5	22	36	202	5.611
0091	8	11	6	25	2	48	24.000
0094	4	10	5	19	23	400	17.391
0095	6.5	9	7	22.5	24	274	11.417
0096	4	5	4	13	2	52	26.000
0097	6	10	8	24	23	65	2.826
0098	5	10	7	22	3	75	25.000
0099	6	7	4	17	9	61	6.778
0100	7	5	6	18	0	65	0.000
0101	9	9	8	26	18	381	21.167
0102	9	9	8	26	1	48	48.000
0105	8	11	7.5	26.5	40	1240	31.000
0108	9	7	6	22	5	45	9.000
0110	3	8	6	17	0	20	0.000
0111	9	10	7	26	2	155	77.500
0112	8	10	8	26	9	233	25.889
0113	9	7	5	21	0	54	0.000
0115	8	10	9	27	4	45	11.250
0117	6.5	11	7.5	25	5	121	24.200
0118	4	5	4	13	13	182	14.000
0120	7.6	9.8	8	25.4	336	3127	9.307
0121	10	7	8	25	10	175	17.500
0122	7	6	6	19	0	57	0.000
0125	4	10	5	19	10	140	14.000
0127	5	5	7	17	6	200	33.333
0128	5	8	6	19	7	200	28.571
0131	10	9	11	30	7	50	7.143
0132	9	6	7	22	17	247	14.529
0133	5	9	6	20	24	174	7.250
0135	5	10	7	22	9	133	14.778

0136	6	10	8	24	8	112	14.000
0138	9	11	7	27	14	351	25.071
0139	11	9	8	28	9	221	24.556
0140	6	8	7	21	17	50	2.941
0142	5	10	8	23	1	90	90.000
0143	8	9	5	22	8	447	55.875
0144	8	8	4	20	7	55	7.857
0145	9	8	11	28	3	75	25.000
0148	10	11	6	27	2	200	100.000
0150	8	9	5	22	0	108	0.000
0151	6	8	6	20	5	106	21.200
0152	4	11	3	18	6	37	6.167
0154	7.5	8.5	6	22	1	140	140.000
0155	8	11	6	25	10	224	22.400
0157	7	11	8	26	10	245	24.500
0160	8	8	9	25	6	299	49.833
0162	7	8	9	24	44	1278	29.045
0163	5	5	7	17	0	40	0.000
0164	7	10	11	28	16	125	7.813
0166	10	10	9	29	4	96	24.000
0169	9	5	7	21	0	84	0.000
0171	11	9	7	27	2	225	112.500
0172	7	11	7	25	0	45	0.000
0173	9	8	8	25	5	92	18.400
0176	7	5	7	19	3	79	26.333
0177	5	11	6	22	8	40	5.000
0178	8.5	10	7.5	26	63	1336	21.206
0180	4	7	8	19	14	130	9.286
0181	6	11	7	24	7	52	7.429
0182	5	7	3	15	3	75	25.000
0183	11	12	10	33	16	562	35.125
0185	5	9	6	20	4	130	32.500
0186	7	8	4	19	10	141	14.100
0187	12	8	9	29	0	40	0.000
0188	5	11	5	21	14	94	6.714
0189	8	11	8	27	7	225	32.143
0191	5	11	6	22	3	90	30.000
0192	9	6	6	21	3	78	26.000
0195	7	8	7	22	17	60	3.529
0196	7	6	3	16	7	80	11.429
0197	3	8	4	15	0	40	0.000
0198	8	9	6	23	2	120	60.000
0199	9	11	9	29	10	54	5.400
0200	4	8	3	15	1	100	100.000
0201	11	10	8	29	11	186	16.909
0202	11	11	8	30	38	1100	28.947

0203	9	5	8	22	2	60	30.000
0204	11	11	7	29	3	211	70.333
0205	3	5	3	11	3	50	16.667
0206	7	11	9	27	11	188	17.091
0208	7	10	7	24	13	70	5.385
0209	10	11	9	30	11	305	27.727
0210	4	8	3	15	1	37	37.000
0212	7	10.5	7.5	25	41	359	8.756
0213	5	8	5	18	2	185	92.500
0215	9	9	8	26	10	300	30.000
0219	8	8	6	22	23	252	10.957
0220	9	9	9	27	1	25	25.000
0222	6	9	8	23	17	140	8.235
0223	9	10	5	24	11	310	28.182
0224	7	11	8	26	47	388	8.255
0225	7	6	3	16	3	45	15.000
0226	5	10	5	20	11	90	8.182
0228	5	8	9	22	1	50	50.000
0229	5	5	6	16	3	139	46.333
0230	10	9	9	28	4	57	14.250
0233	6	11	9	26	4	42	10.500
0235	7	10	7	24	17	608	35.765
0236	6	10	11	27	1	19	19.000
0240	9	11	10	30	16	200	12.500
0241	7	5	3	15	2	47	23.500
0242	5	11	8	24	8	210	26.250
0243	10	10	9	29	8	99	12.375
0244	4	5	4	13	1	40	40.000
0248	9	11	7	27	12	148	12.333
0249	5	9	9	23	0	15	0.000
0250	6	6	4	16	0	18	0.000
0252	5	9	10	24	6	26	4.333
0254	5	10	7	22	7	275	39.286
0256	5	9	10	24	4	58	14.500
0258	9	8	7	24	1	65	65.000
0259	7	5	4	16	3	40	13.333
0260	5	11	5	21	0	42	0.000
0261	7	9	9	25	14	485	34.643
0262	7	9	11	27	2	66	33.000
0263	7.5	9.5	8.5	25.5	15	340	22.667
0264	6	8	9	23	107	1298	12.131
0265	7	6	5	18	3	200	66.667
0266	6	8	10	24	12	200	16.667
0267	9	9	6	24	0	40	0.000
0268	6	9	5	20	7	185	26.429
0269	5	8	4	17	2	141	70.500

0270	9	8	10	27	2	300	150.000
0272	9	9	6	24	5	120	24.000
0273	6	10	7	23	24	282	11.750
0274	7	11	6	24	2	45	22.500
0276	8	11	9	28	2	40	20.000
0277	5	6	5	16	0	38	0.000
0278	5	5	3	13	1	84	84.000
0279	9	7	11	27	14	300	21.429
0280	8	8	8	24	3	97	32.333
0282	6	11	7	24	8	187	23.375
0283	6	10	12	28	17	300	17.647
0284	5	9	5	19	4	50	12.500
0285	8	10	6	24	6	35	5.833
0286	5	9	9	23	0	49	0.000
0287	6	10	6	22	6	34	5.667
0288	5	8	5	18	2	80	40.000
0289	5	8	9	22	10	266	26.600
0290	4	5	5	14	2	75	37.500
0292	10	11	8	29	8	355	44.375
0295	5	11	7	23	0	40	0.000
0296	6	6	7	19	3	55	18.333
0298	6	8	10	24	1	100	100.000
0300	7	8	8	23	15	80	5.333
0302	6	10	8	24	5	190	38.000
0303	4	6	4	14	8	70	8.750
0304	6	9	7	22	4	288	72.000
0305	8	10	8	26	10	119	11.900
0306	6	10	7	23	16	337	21.063
0308	4	8	4	16	4	57	14.250
0309	7	10	8	25	15	33	2.200
0310	6	9	6	21	5	63	12.600
0311	4	10	8	22	11	163	14.818
0313	8	11	5	24	25	250	10.000
0314	5	8	4	17	10	70	7.000
0316	8	6	4	18	10	60	6.000
0317	7	8	6	21	11	108	9.818
0318	6	8	5	19	2	70	35.000
0319	8	10	7	25	9	55	6.111
0320	7	5	3	15	1	57	57.000
0321	8	8	5	21	0	43	0.000
0324	8	8	7	23	0	91	0.000
0325	10	8	5	23	0	51	0.000
0326	6	10	6	22	2	100	50.000
0327	3	6	5	14	4	40	10.000
0328	9	10.5	7	26.5	8	273	34.125
0332	7	6	4	17	3	35	11.667

0333	5	10	6	21	5	70	14.000
0334	4	7	6.5	17.5	0	36	0.000
0335	5	8	9	22	3	33	11.000
0337	8	9	9	26	3	85	28.333
0340	5	8	4	17	1	40	40.000
0341	6	8	6	20	11	125	11.364
0342	6	9	6	21	2	105	52.500
0343	6	4	3	13	1	30	30.000
0344	5	12	9	26	5	45	9.000
0345	5	8	5	18	8	65	8.125
0346	7	8	6	21	0	12	0.000
0348	9	7	5	21	1	85	85.000
0349	6	7	7	20	5	24	4.800
0350	9	11	5	25	27	150	5.556
0352	4	7	5	16	3	140	46.667
0354	4	5	6	15	0	18	0.000
0355	8	8	3	19	4	50	12.500
0356	8	10	8	26	6	14	2.333
0357	6	11	10	27	0	23	0.000
0358	7	8	5	20	2	80	40.000
0359	7	10	10	27	13	1025	78.846
0361	8	11	6	25	12	40	3.333
0363	5	10	6	21	80	345	4.313
0364	8	12	9	29	18	496	27.556
0365	4	9	5	18	3	35	11.667
0366	5	9	7	21	6	600	100.000
0368	5	7	9	21	0	38	0.000
0369	5	5	8	18	7	236	33.714
0371	7	10	8	25	4	60	15.000
0372	9	6	6	21	4	85	21.250
0373	5	8	4	17	0	30	0.000
0374	11	12	8	31	12	245	20.417
0375	9	7	7	23	1	26	26.000
0376	4	11	7	22	0	65	0.000
0377	5	11	5	21	0	28	0.000
0378	8	7	10	25	9	223	24.778
0379	6	8	10	24	3	85	28.333
0382	8	11	6	25	15	220	14.667
0383	9	12	9	30	11	127	11.545
0384	11	11	5	27	1	160	160.000
0385	7	11	7	25	3	350	116.667
0386	6	9	8	23	10	443	44.300
0387	9	9.1	6.4	24.5	14	293	20.929
0388	8	10	8	26	8	200	25.000
0390	7	7	8	22	1	135	135.000
0394	6	9	5	20	0	24	0.000

0396	10	9	7	26	47	831	17.681
0397	9	10	6	25	3	153	51.000
0398	5	8	5	18	0	34	0.000
0402	6	8	5	19	6	65	10.833
0403	6	11	9	26	0	35	0.000
0404	4	11	5	20	33	180	5.455
0405	6	8	6	20	1	45	45.000
0407	7	5	4	16	1	45	45.000
0409	8	8	9	25	0	19	0.000
0410	7	10	8	25	105	2000	19.048
0411	5	11	9	25	0	50	0.000
0412	6	7	4	17	3	18	6.000
0413	5	11	10	26	3	50	16.667
0415	5	9	9	23	3	210	70.000
0417	6	11	3	20	4	56	14.000
0418	8	9	9	26	7	194	27.714
0419	6	10	5	21	2	93	46.500
0420	9	7	6	22	49	606	12.367
0424	10	7	8	25	0	108	0.000
0425	8	8	5	21	0	132	0.000
0426	10	10	10	30	3	46	15.333
0427	9	8	6	23	13	338	26.000
0428	9	10	6	25	15	200	13.333
0431	6.5	9	7	22.5	22	715	32.500
0432	9	11	10	30	27	285	10.556
0433	9	9	7	25	26	312	12.000
0434	7	9	6	22	0	10	0.000
0436	9	5	3	17	0	25	0.000
0437	8.5	10	6	24.5	55	1366	24.836
0438	6	10	8	24	6	94	15.667
0441	10	11	6	27	0	125	0.000
0442	9	6	5	20	3	75	25.000
0443	3	8	6	17	8	10	1.250
0447	4	10	8	22	8	190	23.750
0448	10	9	8	27	13	630	48.462
0449	5	9	5	19	123	180	1.463
0450	8	7	8	23	4	73	18.250
0451	4	7	5	16	0	106	0.000
0453	4	8	6	18	3	43	14.333
0454	6	8	9	23	11	40	3.636
0455	8	12	8	28	14	166	11.857
0457	6	8	7	21	24	177	7.375
0459	6	7	7	20	8	60	7.500
0463	9	11	9	29	6	72	12.000
0464	8	5	5	18	5	125	25.000
0466	4	9	5	18	2	80	40.000

0469	7	9	10	26	46	691	15.022
0470	5	5	4	14	2	50	25.000
0472	4	8	7	19	2	144	72.000
0475	8	10	7	25	20	575	28.750
0476	5	8	8	21	15	135	9.000
0478	6	6	5	17	3	44	14.667
0481	8	9	6	23	4	61	15.250
0483	7	9	3	19	2	50	25.000
0484	7	9	5	21	10	316	31.600
0487	4	6	4	14	5	240	48.000
0491	5	6	8	19	0	157	0.000
0492	6	8	6	20	6	101	16.833
0493	4	8	5	17	2	137	68.500
0494	7	10	7	24	4	84	21.000
0495	6	10	8	24	14	400	28.571
0496	5	9	7	21	18	146	8.111
0498	10	9	10	29	14	308	22.000
0499	7	9	9	25	1	89	89.000
0500	8	9	8	25	8	80	10.000
0501	6	9.5	7	22.5	9	135	15.000
0503	5	11	7	23	8	286	35.750
0505	4	5	6	15	2	60	30.000
0506	5	5	5	15	0	45	0.000
0508	5	9	5	19	0	30	0.000
0509	8	8	5	21	0	101	0.000
0510	11	12	11	34	15	140	9.333
0511	5	5	6	16	0	43	0.000
0512	10	9	10	29	10	143	14.300
0514	7	8	8	23	4	107	26.750
0515	10	12	7	29	4	90	22.500
0516	11	10	6	27	2	80	40.000
0518	8	8	8	24	10	150	15.000
0519	10	12	8	30	18	85	4.722
0521	8	11	11	30	4	275	68.750
0522	8	11	9	28	0	30	0.000
0523	8	9	9	26	0	30	0.000
0525	9	11	5	25	5	130	26.000
0527	8	6	4	18	0	17	0.000
0529	5	8	4	17	1	25	25.000
0530	10	10	3	23	6	154	25.667
0532	8	11	10	29	9	125	13.889
0533	5	7	5	17	5	160	32.000
0534	4	8	6	18	0	40	0.000
0535	4	6	6	16	2	20	10.000
0537	7	7	8	22	5	60	12.000
0538	6	10	6	22	22	225	10.227

0540	10	8	7	25	64	1857	29.016
0541	7	5	5	17	1	70	70.000
0542	7	8	6	21	11	164	14.909
0544	6	7	5	18	1	50	50.000
0545	11	9	8	28	1	46	46.000
0546	5	5	5	15	0	28	0.000
0547	5	10	9	24	33	500	15.152
0550	8	11	7	26	0	80	0.000
0552	5	12	9	26	4	90	22.500
0554	9	5	5	19	6	162	27.000
0555	7	9	5	21	3	47	15.667
0556	5	9	3	17	17	147	8.647
0558	6	11	8	25	6	85	14.167
0559	5	8	7	20	0	155	0.000
0561	6	7	6	19	7	150	21.429
0562	6	10	4	20	4	103	25.750
0563	9	9	5	23	5	110	22.000
0564	9	11	7	27	8	179	22.375
0566	4	7	4	15	12	70	5.833
0568	5	6	4	15	8	110	13.750
0569	9	10	8	27	3	75	25.000
0570	7.5	10.5	8	26	29	741	25.552
0571	8	9	8	25	5	120	24.000
0572	11	9.5	9.5	30	2	41	20.500
0573	9	11	3	23	1	73	73.000
0575	7	12	9	28	3	52	17.333
0576	10	9	7	26	22	380	17.273
0577	5	11	7	23	4	208	52.000
0578	7	9	9	25	4	325	81.250
0579	6	11	5	22	37	1265	34.189
0581	5	9	6	20	32	767	23.969
0582	5	10	5	20	6	46	7.667
0583	10	8	6	24	0	50	0.000
0585	6	10	5	21	2	125	62.500
0586	10	8	6	24	4	89	22.250
0587	7	11	6	24	151	1347	8.921
0588	5	7	6	18	54	364	6.741
0590	10	9	8	27	29	1143	39.414
0591	6	9	6	21	212	3891	18.354
0592	11	9	6	26	142	3108	21.887
0593	8	9	8	25	76	1186	15.605
0594	7	9	7	23	0	27	0.000
0596	6	6	5	17	1	17	17.000
0597	4	7	7	18	920	15150	16.467
0598	9	11	9	29	80	2350	29.375
0602	7	12	7	26	10	66	6.600

0603	9	7	5	21	3	60	20.000
0604	5	9	11	25	60	1690	28.167
0607	6	9	7	22	26	180	6.923
0608	7	5	7	19	0	30	0.000
0610	6	9	4	19	37	120	3.243
0611	12	11	8	31	141	1150	8.156
0612	5	6	7	18	10	80	8.000
0613	6	5	3	14	0	19	0.000
0615	7.5	9	10	26.5	2	110	55.000
0616	6	9	8	23	84	2175	25.893
0617	6	6	3	15	0	30	0.000
0618	9	6	6	21	0	27	0.000
0624	10	11	8	29	101	2275	22.525
0625	7	11	8	26	38	1125	29.605
0627	10	8	6	24	4	55	13.750
0628	5	5	6	16	1	18	18.000
0630	9	9	7	25	1	48	48.000
0631	7	8	5	20	7	50	7.143
0632	8	6	6	20	0	75	0.000
0633	7	9	7	23	0	237	0.000
0635	7	8	5	20	15	250	16.667
0636	10	6	9	25	2	30	15.000
0639	4	8	4	16	0	21	0.000
0640	9	10	8	27	4	150	37.500
0641	5	7	10	22	0	34	0.000
0642	11	10	9	30	5	20	4.000
0644	6	10	5	21	8	45	5.625
0645	5	8	6	19	17	250	14.706
0646	8	8	6	22	3	32	10.667
0647	5	5	5	15	0	50	0.000
0648	8	9	8	25	0	15	0.000
0649	9	5	7	21	3	25	8.333
0650	8	9	6	23	3	55	18.333
0652	11	12	12	35	3	70	23.333
0655	6	6	7	19	0	20	0.000
0656	4	5	4	13	1	50	50.000
0658	6	10	7	23	2	65	32.500
0659	5	8	8	21	3	150	50.000
0660	6	9	7	22	3	94	31.333
0662	8	7	4	19	0	36	0.000
0663	6	9	7	22	3	180	60.000
0664	4	9	7	20	1	45	45.000
0667	7	8	7	22	90	2100	23.333
0670	4.5	9.5	8	22	21	50	2.381
0671	5	5	3	13	0	30	0.000
0672	3	9	5	17	1	62	62.000

0673	10	12	12	34	24	66	2.750
0674	10	12	12	34	9	50	5.556
0675	5	9	5	19	0	54	0.000
0676	5	5	12	22	2	90	45.000
0677	7	7	6	20	0	16	0.000
0678	5	8	5	18	2	90	45.000
0681	4	5	4	13	11	66	6.000
0682	6	8	8	22	11	60	5.455
0683	6	8	4	18	2	75	37.500
0684	6	8	6	20	6	139	23.167
0688	9	9	5	23	18	120	6.667
0689	6	9	6	21	0	43	0.000
0690	7.5	9	7.5	24	21	172	8.190
0691	9	11	11	31	4	226	56.500
0692	7	8	7	22	27	900	33.333
0693	6	8	4	18	5	100	20.000
0695	9	8	6	23	10	250	25.000
0696	5	5	7	17	0	37	0.000
0697	5	7	6	18	12	103	8.583
0699	5	8	6	19	23	625	27.174
0702	4	9	8	21	46	880	19.130
0704	6	10	7	23	9	90	10.000
0705	4	7	4	15	1	50	50.000
0706	6	10	5	21	16	275	17.188
0707	10	8	8	26	2	130	65.000
0708	5	8	6	19	8	65	8.125
0709	9.5	8	7	24.5	0	58	0.000
0711	9	9	10	28	2	70	35.000
0712	4	7	4	15	2	52	26.000
0714	3	8	7	18	6	35	5.833
0716	6	5	5	16	0	20	0.000
0717	7	8	5	20	2	22	11.000
0718	8.5	10	8	26.5	2	55	27.500
0719	9	9	8	26	252	5314	21.087
0720	6	11	7	24	18	160	8.889
0723	4	5	4	13	2	110	55.000
0724	10	4	5	19	14	175	12.500
0725	8	11	8	27	95	502	5.284
0727	7	6	5	18	5	45	9.000
0729	5	5	4	14	11	85	7.727
0730	4	8	5	17	12	127	10.583
0731	8	10	7.5	25.5	6	164	27.333
0732	9	11	8	28	0	11	0.000
0733	10	10	8	28	14	128	9.143
0734	4	9	7	20	1	60	60.000
0736	6	8	7	21	20	164	8.200

0737	7	8	8	23	180	3230	17.944
0739	10	10	10	30	19	125	6.579
0740	10	8	9	27	4	300	75.000
0741	4	8	5	17	0	54	0.000
0742	7	8	8	23	3	138	46.000
0743	6	8	6	20	0	45	0.000
0744	6	7	5	18	5	171	34.200
0746	4	8	5	17	4	116	29.000
0747	9	7	6	22	0	98	0.000
0748	8	9	5	22	5	275	55.000
0749	9	12	5	26	11	76	6.909
0751	6	12	6	24	15	450	30.000
0752	7	12	10	29	11	33	3.000
0753	5	11	4	20	2	90	45.000
0755	10	11	8	29	519	6296	12.131
0757	6	11	7	24	92	1760	19.130
0758	8	6	10	24	10	65	6.500
0762	5	9	5	19	3	80	26.667
0764	4	5	3	12	4	75	18.750
0769	5	9	7	21	22	140	6.364
0770	9	11	8	28	0	45	0.000
0772	8	9	6	23	0	40	0.000
0774	7	6	11	24	25	70	2.800
0775	8.5	11.5	8.5	28.5	11	361	32.818
0776	9	11	6	26	25	458	18.320
0777	5	8	9	22	21	155	7.381
0778	10	11	10	31	11	1900	172.727
0779	7	10	7	24	3	20	6.667
0780	3	8	4	15	4	38	9.500
0781	9	9	7	25	4	105	26.250
0783	8	6	4	18	1	34	34.000
0784	5	12	7	24	2	143	71.500
0785	10	11	8	29	3	118	39.333
0786	7	6	6	19	0	25	0.000
0787	7	9	8	24	28	351	12.536
0789	3	9	5	17	1	110	110.000
0790	6	8	7	21	0	30	0.000
0791	10	11	10	31	40	817	20.425
0792	9	6	5	20	4	57	14.250
0793	7	10	8	25	3	60	20.000
0795	10	12	6	28	10	300	30.000
0796	5	10	6	21	12	243	20.250
0798	5	11	11	27	0	175	0.000
0802	6	9	9	24	5	224	44.800
0804	5	10	6	21	2	60	30.000
0805	6	11	7	24	3	67	22.333

0807	3	4	3	10	1	26	26.000
0808	6.5	9.5	7	23	11	130	11.818
0809	5	9	10	24	0	43	0.000
0811	10	10	6	26	6	64	10.667
0812	7	8	9	24	1	55	55.000
0813	8	7	9	24	4	66	16.500
0816	7	11	6	24	63	724	11.492
0817	6	11	7	24	14	135	9.643
0819	5	10	7	22	19	250	13.158
0820	7	11	9	27	6	140	23.333
0823	6	10	6	22	4	65	16.250
0824	6	9	8	23	10	380	38.000
0826	9	10	4	23	6	130	21.667
0828	5	7	4	16	0	45	0.000
0829	9	5	6	20	1	45	45.000
0830	4	10	5	19	7	117	16.714
0832	5	8	6	19	0	21	0.000
0833	4	5	3	12	3	14	4.667
0836	5	11	9	25	23	300	13.043
0837	5	7	4	16	4	85	21.250
0839	10	11	9	30	0	185	0.000
0840	10	11	6	27	1	55	55.000
0842	5	8	5	18	18	251	13.944
0843	5	11	6	22	13	200	15.385
0844	4	5	5	14	4	25	6.250
0845	8	10	6	24	17	240	14.118
0846	9	8	5	22	9	286	31.778
0847	8	9	6	23	0	100	0.000
0849	8	8	7	23	11	82	7.455
0850	4	7	6	17	6	905	150.833
0851	9	8	6	23	8	40	5.000
0852	8	6	7	21	0	165	0.000
0853	9	9	8	26	1	48	48.000
0855	5	10	7	22	0	68	0.000
0857	5	10	8	23	0	118	0.000
0858	7	11	6	24	39	220	5.641
0859	6.5	9.5	7	23	124	2534	20.435
0861	6	9	6	21	8	68	8.500
0862	9	7	8	24	2	10	5.000
0864	9	9	6	24	5	25	5.000
0866	8	11	8	27	3	115	38.333
0867	8	9	7	24	2	27	13.500
0868	8	6	6	20	0	105	0.000
0870	6	7	8	21	138	2328	16.870
0871	6	11	6	23	3	72	24.000
0872	10	12	8	30	1	70	70.000

0873	10	7	10	27	8	50	6.250
0874	7	12	8	27	0	14	0.000
0876	6	7	3	16	3	36	12.000
0877	9	9	8	26	1	85	85.000
0878	6	9	5	20	0	43	0.000
0880	7	10	8	25	15	225	15.000
0881	5	9	3	17	1	16	16.000
0883	6	8	4	18	0	25	0.000
0884	8	10	8	26	0	57	0.000
0888	7	10	7	24	0	44	0.000
0889	5	8	7	20	9	402	44.667
0892	10	12	10	32	5	75	15.000
0894	9	5	5	19	0	29	0.000
0895	5	8	5	18	18	190	10.556
0896	5	8	6	19	7	69	9.857
0897	4	10	4	18	4	37	9.250
0898	6	8	6	20	4	65	16.250
0900	10	8	11	29	10	150	15.000
0901	5	10	7	22	1	39	39.000
0902	5	6	5	16	11	40	3.636
0903	10	9	6	25	10	200	20.000
0904	9	11	10	30	16	288	18.000
0905	3	5	3	11	8	80	10.000
0906	3	6	5	14	2	75	37.500
0909	5	11	7	23	4	150	37.500
0910	6	6	6	18	5	52	10.400
0911	5	10	6	21	0	120	0.000
0913	10	7	6	23	7	167	23.857
0915	7	11	8	26	13	314	24.154
0918	10	8	5	23	3	25	8.333
0920	7	8	8	23	9	386	42.889
0921	8	9	5	22	23	470	20.435
0922	5	8	5	18	2	75	37.500
0923	6	6	4	16	1	22	22.000
0926	7	7	5	19	2	45	22.500
0927	9	8	6	23	11	198	18.000
0928	7	10	6	23	8	75	9.375
0929	9	9	3	21	0	30	0.000
0930	8	9	6	23	0	12	0.000
0931	9	11	9	29	12	290	24.167
0932	4	5	3	12	12	84	7.000
0934	5	5	7	17	2	48	24.000
0936	5	4	4	13	2	50	25.000
0940	8	10	6	24	3	135	45.000
0941	3	6	7	16	27	150	5.556
0942	10	7	4	21	5	30	6.000

0943	5	9	7	21	4	100	25.000
0944	12	9	9	30	4	40	10.000
0945	5	8	9	22	7	190	27.143
0946	6	8	5	19	47	375	7.979
0947	11	11	9	31	9	308	34.222
0949	5	5	6	16	0	50	0.000
0950	4	4	4	12	0	8	0.000
0952	8	9	4	21	0	32	0.000
0953	8	7	4	19	3	20	6.667
0955	8	10	6	24	3	83	27.667
0956	4	6	9	19	2	38	19.000
0957	5	6	8	19	0	95	0.000
0958	5	8	6	19	0	40	0.000
0960	7	11	8	26	2	89	44.500
0962	7	11	7	25	23	55	2.391
0963	8	10	9	27	20	631	31.550
0964	7	7	8	22	1	15	15.000
0965	9	10	7	26	2	147	73.500
0966	7	11	10	28	117	575	4.915
0968	11	7	9	27	0	10	0.000
0969	5	9	6	20	9	180	20.000
0970	4	5	5	14	1	67	67.000
0971	9	8	6	23	61	1576	25.836
0974	7	11	7	25	26	215	8.269
0975	6	9	8	23	5	224	44.800
0976	6	10	8	24	0	200	0.000
0977	7	11	6	24	2	75	37.500
0980	8	10	8	26	6	87	14.500
0981	6	8	6	20	3	140	46.667
0982	6	8	6	20	2	20	10.000
0986	11	11	6	28	281	2515	8.950
0987	9	8	6	23	8	132	16.500
0988	8	9	7	24	0	45	0.000
0989	8	12	9	29	1	41	41.000
0990	4	6	5	15	3	18	6.000
0991	9	8	10	27	4	50	12.500
0992	6	8	7	21	4	114	28.500
0994	8	8	9	25	5	172	34.400
0995	7	10	9	26	0	75	0.000
0996	11	10	12	33	7	32	4.571
0997	8	8	6	22	0	16	0.000
0998	7	7	7	21	1	10	10.000
0999	5	11	5	21	1	42	42.000
1001	6	5	8	19	4	86	21.500
1002	8	11	6	25	0	20	0.000
1003	4	9	8	21	10	210	21.000

1004	7	11	8	26	61	926	15.180
1005	7.3	10	7.1	24.4	20	576	28.800
1006	9	10	5	24	52	731	14.058
1009	8	10	10	28	0	25	0.000
1011	6	9	9	24	5	86	17.200
1013	6	10	8	24	5	85	17.000
1014	8	5	6	19	0	20	0.000
1015	3	6	3	12	0	35	0.000
1016	7	8	7	22	1	25	25.000
1017	3	9	4	16	0	35	0.000
1020	4	7	4	15	0	17	0.000
1021	11	11	10	32	5	85	17.000
1023	6	8	7	21	3	160	53.333
1024	9	9	5	23	11	104	9.455
1026	4	10	4	18	6	47	7.833
1029	7	8	6	21	1	71	71.000
1031	8	5	6	19	4	122	30.500
1032	5	5	5	15	4	75	18.750
1033	6	9	6	21	12	85	7.083

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ABSTRACT

FAMILY MINISTRY AND EVANGELISM:
AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF FAMILY MINISTRY ENGAGEMENT
AND BAPTISM RATIOS IN THE SOUTHERN
BAPTIST CONVENTION

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Proponents of a family ministry strategy believe that Christian parents are called to be the primary disciple-makers in their children's lives and that the church is called to equip parents for that important task. This type of strategy is commonly critiqued as an internally focused strategy that neglects another very important part of Christian discipleship, evangelism. This study empirically addresses that critique by examining baptism ratios in relation to family ministry emphasis within the Southern Baptist Convention.

Chapter 1 establishes the need for this study by outlining the critique. The critique is one which finds proponents outside of family ministry strategy, but also has support from within family ministry strategy as family ministry practitioners within various stream of family ministry philosophy offer critiques of other family ministry models. This chapter also outlines the procedure to be followed to accomplish the study.

Chapter 2 is an exploration of the precedent literature in the fields of both family ministry and evangelism. An emphasis on both of these fields is important as the two biblical priorities of family ministry and evangelism are meant to function in tandem and not in competition. When juxtaposed with the precedent literature in the field of evangelism in this chapter, the precedent literature in the field of family ministry indicates that family

ministry is not only an evangelistic endeavor in itself, but is part of an overall strategy to be evangelistically effective outside of the walls of the church.

The third chapter of this study outlines the methodological design of the study. There are two components to the way in which this study was accomplished. First, a survey was built directly from DNA of D6's Church Health Assessment. Applicable portions of this verified instrument were disseminated electronically throughout the Southern Baptist Church. Responding churches received scores based upon their responses that were used to rate the level of engagement in family ministry within those churches. Demographic information was also gathered from those churches and was used to access the individual Annual Church Profiles for the purpose of ascertaining the ratio of average weekly attenders to baptisms within those congregations. This data was then used to conduct the analysis portion of the study.

Chapter 4 contains the analysis of the information gathered through this empirical study. The variables of family ministry engagement and baptism ratio were measured for relationship to determine if there is any correlation between the two variables. This was also done with three individual sections of the Church Health Assessment used in the survey portion of the study. The data was also examined for any other trends that may illuminate a causal relationship.

Finally, chapter 5 addressed conclusions that could be drawn from this research. These conclusions are used to respond to the critique that family ministry philosophy is an inwardly focused strategy that is ineffective for reaching those who are far from God outside of the walls of the church. In addition, this chapter provides suggestions for future research in the area of study, as well as the individual disciplines of both family ministry and evangelism.

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