

**A strategy for the development of a sustainable sports ministry using
mission outreach through soccer in selected churches in Tshwane**

by

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It only seems appropriate to write my acknowledgement utilising sporting metaphors:

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SUMMARY

The main aim of this study is to develop a strategy that can equip pastors and churches to develop a sustainable sports ministry using mission outreach through soccer in selected Tshwane churches.

Firstly, the study provides a historical survey of the relationship between church and sport with special reference to the theological framework that underpins the engagement of churches with sport.

Secondly, the study provides a theological foundation for sports ministry with a particular examination of sport as a field for evangelism.

Thirdly, the study examines the Biblical foundation for sports ministry, including a Biblical survey of sport in Scripture and a Biblical exposition of selected passages relevant to sport ministry.

Fourthly, through the means of empirical research, the study investigates the perceptions amongst church leaders in selected churches in Tshwane in order to determine which theological factors are driving the engagement or disengagement of churches with sport.

Finally, the study proposes a practical strategy that will equip Tshwane church leaders to develop a sustainable sports ministry using mission outreach through soccer, based on the *theological traditions* of sport, its historical, theological and Biblical foundations (Chapters 2, 3 and 4) and a *situational analysis* of the Tshwane churches (Chapters 5). A theological framework for sports ministry is proposed in terms of the PRIOR model, together with an eight-step training process for the development of a sustainable church-based sports ministry.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 General introduction

Sports ministry is a growing movement around the world (Connor 2003: 33), yet very few academic papers have been written which seek to give a biblical and theological framework for the usage of sport as ministry. Those books and dissertations that have been written focus upon how sports ministry has grown and developed in the West, with very little literature available on sports ministry in the developing world. In this research document it is my intention to address this imbalance, particularly as it appears that church-based sports ministry is beginning to experience rapid growth in the developing world. It is my objective to propose a specific strategy for the development of sustainable sports ministry, based on a sound theological framework, and pertinent to a particular church context in the developing world. This will be achieved through drawing upon research undertaken in the West, while also giving due consideration to the specific challenges facing Christian leaders in South Africa regarding sports ministry.

1.2 Statement of the problem

1.2.1 Background to the problem

1.2.1.1 Historical overview from a Western perspective

In their comprehensive study of the Muscular Christianity movement, Ladd and Mathisen (1999:20) have demonstrated that, in the West, trends fluctuating between engagement and disengagement can be detected in the relationship between the church and sports. Ladd and Mathisen (1999:78) argue that during periods of disengagement the church viewed sports with suspicion and, on the whole, did not maintain any influence within the sporting arena. In the view of Putney (2001:1-10), during periods of engagement, the value of sport was recognised and utilised to promote Christian ideals and doctrine. The different

periods of the relationship between sport and Christianity in the West can be represented as follows (see Figure 1)

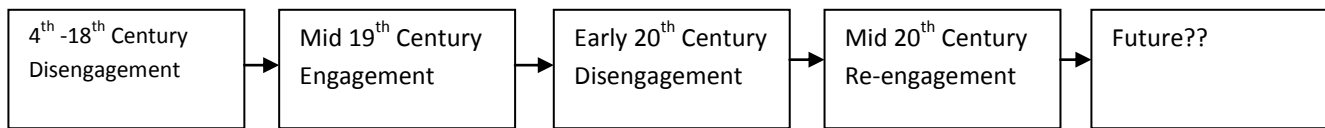


Figure 1: historical flow of the relationship between Christianity and sport in the West¹

1.2.1.2 Theological factors that underpin periods of engagement and disengagement

In each period of engagement or disengagement different theological emphases can be discerned that influenced the churches interaction with sport. Doctrines such as dualism have been documented as being an underlying influence during periods of disengagement. This doctrine, influenced by Greek philosophy such as Platonism, made a distinction between spirit and matter (Putney 2001:51). Activities that were thought to benefit the spirit were considered of higher value than physical activities. Hence during these periods physical activities were given a lower priority and not encouraged by the church at large. This is contrasted to the periods of engagement when more holistic doctrines emerged such as the “body theology” of the Muscular Christianity movement in the 19th Century (Putney 2001:56-57). Hence during these periods physical activities were given a higher priority and actively promoted by church leaders.

It is clear that the theological framework from which churches operated significantly influenced the churches’ attitudes towards, and involvement in, the world of sport.

¹ I am indebted to Dr Greg Linville who first sketched this diagram for me

1.2.2 The problem observed

1.2.2.1 South African churches remain largely disengaged from sport

The author has been involved in sports ministry in South Africa since 1998 and in a full time capacity since 2001. During this period my observation is that the majority of churches in South Africa remain disengaged from the world of sport, and particularly the game of soccer. Historically it can be demonstrated that missionaries were among the first to bring organised competitive sport to Africa (Connor 2003:30), supplanting many traditional African games (Armstrong and Giulianotti 2004:8). Many sports clubs still exist that can trace their origins to church groups and missionaries (Alegi 2004:23). However, Christian influence in sport did not last more than a generation, as through the “Africanisation” of western sports, traditional religious practices and the usage of “umuthi” (African traditional magic) became widespread (Alegi 2004:49-51). This was particularly true of the sport of soccer, which, in turn, was one factor that caused the backlash of churches abandoning involvement in sport. The prevailing opinion of sport became that the sports fields were the “devil’s playing fields.” Given that many of those who need the Gospel can be found week by week on the sports fields, it would appear that this view has been detrimental towards the church fulfilling Christ’s mandate to be “salt and light” (Matthew 5:13-15).

However, in the past thirty years there has been a gradual re-engagement between Christians and sport in South Africa, but this has been largely led by para-church and mission organisations, such as Sport for Christ Action South Africa (SCAS) and Athletes in Action (AIA). Both of these organisations (formed in the 1980’s), and others like them, largely worked within the world of student and professional sports, rather than with local churches. Some churches have formed sports teams and play within so-called, “Christian Leagues,” while other churches provide opportunity for recreational sport. Yet it is still rare to find a

church with a dedicated sports ministry department. One reason for this is that many pastors and church leaders still seem wary of their members having ongoing commitments to sport and view sports involvement as being in competition to church involvement. Perhaps one reason for this is that sports ministry is not a subject offered at any residential Bible College or Seminary in South Africa. There appears to be a need for a theological or missiological framework for sports ministry in the church. Such a framework would enable pastors to view the world of sports as a mission field, which their church members should be seeking to infiltrate with the salt and light of the Gospel (see Matthew 5:13-16).

1.2.2.2 The 2010 FIFA World Cup™² in South Africa

The FIFA World Cup™ boasts of being the largest sporting event on the planet. In 2004 FIFA awarded the 2010 event to South Africa. As a result, the attention of the world will, in the months leading up to the event, and specifically for the four weeks of the tournament, be on the nation of South Africa. As 2010 approaches, churches across South Africa are also beginning to consider what role they can play in this phenomenon, particularly in developing strategies for evangelism and community outreach that will coincide with the event. It appears that the 2010 FIFA World Cup™ is providing a unique window of opportunity during which acceleration of the re-engagement between the church in South Africa and the world of sport might occur.

1.2.2.3 A transitional period for South African churches between disengagement and reengagement from the world of sport.

Due to the focus on the FIFA World Cup™ in 2010, a reengagement between church and sport is occurring as more and more churches are developing sports outreach programmes. For this reason it is vital that a theological framework for

² Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) is the governing body of world football.

the engagement of the church with sport should be developed in order to ensure that there is a lasting Christian presence and influence within the world of sport in South Africa.

The author's motivation for this study is to provide sports ministry with a theological framework, so that (1) churches will be enabled to engage in effective outreach through sport, and (2) the sports ministry will be sustained into the future, and will not just be a passing trend. The development of a practical strategy demands that church leaders give serious consideration to the theological framework of sports ministry, which governs their planning for evangelism. Having such a framework would ensure that their church outreach is underpinned by Biblical principles rather than by mere pragmatic opportunism. Furthermore, it can be argued that having a well developed theological framework for sports ministry would help to ensure that one's ministry is more fruitful.

1.2.3 Summary of the main problem and the hypothesis

The following question summarises the main research problem:

- *What strategy should be used to equip pastors and church leaders to develop a sustainable sports ministry in Tshwane churches?*
- The Hypothesis

Many of the churches currently beginning to engage in sports ministry appear to be approaching sports ministry from a pragmatic framework driven by the opportunity afforded through South Africa hosting the 2010 FIFA World Cup™. Churches are therefore displaying pragmatic opportunism (utilising sports ministry because it appears to work), rather than being biblically missiological (considering how sports can help fulfil the mission of God) in their approach to sports. The movement towards sports outreach is therefore event driven rather than having a focus on long-term ministry development. The danger with this pragmatic approach is that, just as in previous generations, there could be a swift transition back from engagement to disengagement once the "big event" has passed.

It is envisaged that this paper will develop an effective strategy – a sustainable sports ministry model - based on a sound theological framework and relevant Biblical principles, which will equip church leaders in Tshwane to fully incorporate mission outreach through sport into the life of their church.

1.3 Aims of the Study

1.3.1 Historical and theological basis for sports ministry (Chapter 2)

The first aim is to provide a historical survey of the relationship between church and sport with special reference to the theological framework that underpins the engagement of churches with sport. Particular attention will be given to the Muscular Christianity movement

1.3.2 The theological foundations for sports ministry (Chapter 3)

The second aim is to provide a theological foundation for sports ministry. This will involve an examination of sport as a field for evangelism.

1.3.3 The Biblical foundations for sports ministry (Chapter 4)

The third aim is to examine the Biblical foundation for sports ministry, including a Biblical survey of sport in Scripture and a Biblical exposition of selected passages relevant to sport ministry.

1.3.4 Empirical survey of selected churches in Tshwane (Chapter 5)

The fourth aim is to investigate the perceptions amongst church leaders in selected churches in Tshwane in order to determine which theological factors are driving the engagement or disengagement of churches with sport. Although the city of Tshwane has been chosen as the delimitation for empirical research, it is believed that the same trend of re-engagement between church and sport can be discerned across the country. Therefore, the lessons learned in Tshwane apply to other cities across South Africa.

1.3.5 A practical strategy for sports ministry (Chapter 6)

The fifth aim is to propose a practical strategy that will enable Tshwane church leaders to develop a sustainable sports ministry for mission outreach, based on the *theological traditions* of sport – its historical, theological and Biblical foundations (Chapters 2, 3 and 4) and a *situational analysis* of the Tshwane churches (Chapters 5).

1.4 Definitions of relevant concepts and contextualisation

1.4.1 Definitions

1.4.1.1 Sports Ministry

A number of attempts have been made to define sports ministry. The following is a summary:

Steve Connor (2003: 9) defines sports ministry as, “a vehicle for someone who is in the world of sport (at varied levels) to tell another athlete about their greater love.”

This definition demonstrates a primary focus upon the proclamation (not necessarily just through words) of the Gospel from a believing sportsperson to a peer within their sport. A focus on evangelism is certainly a major thrust of sports ministry, particularly if it is to fulfil Christ’s commission to “make disciples” (Mt 28:19) rather than just converts.

Lowrie McCown and Valerie Gin (2003:30) expand this definition through placing a stronger emphasis upon the sporting experience itself. They argue that God has ordained sport, and that through participation in sport, God can be glorified. Therefore they have coined the phrase “*sport in ministry*” to emphasise that as the Christian seeks to glorify God through sporting competition this, in and of itself, is ministry. Their definition is therefore:

When ... sport in ministry is used it refers to a sport valued approach to ministry. Sport in ministry is integrated in the activity of sport itself. It is the perspective that the

demonstration of the gospel in the activity of sport is as valuable as what you say about the gospel.

The following two definitions bring out these themes in slightly different ways.

Mason (2003:17) defines sports ministry in terms of witnessing in the sports arena:

Sports ministry ... seeks to serve the purposes of God as he builds his church through the redeeming death of his Son. It provides stimulation to those wishing to use their physical talent for God's glory and the extension of his Kingdom, as well as a motivation towards personal witnessing in the sports arena.

Garner defines sports ministry in terms of leisure time and a relationship with God. According to Garner (2003:10), sports ministry is an:

... activity that takes place during leisure time with the stated purpose or intention of helping people become aware of their need for a relationship with God, his daily role in their lives, and their place in his kingdom work.

For the purposes of this paper, the researcher has combined these two key emphases of glorifying God and evangelism into the following working definition: ***sports ministry seeks to glorify God in sports, thereby extending His Kingdom through sports.***

1.4.1.2 Muscular Christianity

"Muscular Christianity can be defined simply as a Christian commitment to health and manliness" (Putney 2001:11). Muscular Christianity as a movement grew and flourished in the United Kingdom and United States between 1860 and 1920. The influence of this doctrine not only impacted the church's response to sport in those countries, but also influenced world missions. The

legacy of Muscular Christianity is a continued emphasis in the Christian faith on manliness, morality, health and patriotism (Ladd and Mathisen 1999:16).

1.4.1.3 Engagement

According to Ladd and Mathisen (1999:20) engagement is a term used to define a period in history when the church, in a particular country or culture, was actively supportive of Christian involvement in, and interaction with, the world of sport.

1.4.1.4 Disengagement

Ladd and Mathisen (1999:Page:20) use the term *disengagement* to define a period in history, when the church, in a particular country or culture, was not supportive of Christian involvement in, and interaction with, the world of sport.

1.4.1.5 Symbiotic relationship

The term *symbiotic relationship* is used by Drs Tony Ladd and Jim Mathisen (1999:234) and Robert Higgs (1995:21) to define the mutual benefits that both the world of sport, and the church, experienced during times of engagement.

1.4.1.6 Mission outreach

The term *Missio Dei* is used to define God's mission to restore the broken relationship between himself and fallen humanity (Gregory 2003:17). Those who have come to salvation faith in Christ are called to this responsibility of mission. Trev Gregory (2003:18) therefore defines mission as, "summoning the disobedient to turn to God. It is done from the context of a life where God is truly worshipped, the faithful built up and compassion demonstrated."

The term *mission outreach* will be used in this paper to emphasise the churches responsibility to intentionally reach out to their communities through sport. “All... sports programmes/ministries of the church must have the ultimate goal of outreach. We must not settle anymore for activity for activity’s sake” (Garner 2003:146).

1.4.1.7 Church leaders and pastors

It is recognised that different denominations have different titles for their full-time workers. For the purposes of this paper, the titles of *leaders and pastors* will be used as an inclusive phrase for all persons working in a full time capacity in a leadership position with special responsibility for a local church congregation.

1.4.1.8 Pragmatism

According to Viola and Barna (2008:67), *pragmatism* is a philosophy that embraces something based upon it being successful, regardless of ethical considerations. For the purposes of this paper, pragmatism is the practice of churches that embrace a sports ministry programme regardless of theological considerations.

1.4.1.9 Dualism

Dualistic philosophy (*dualism*) sees a dichotomy between things material and things spiritual.

Greek thinking led to dualism, a separation between the material and spiritual aspects of life. The material world - the realm of the senses and action - declined in value. The spiritual world - the realm of the mind and emotions - represented a higher plane of existence (McElrath , McNichol and Thrall 1999:101).

Dualistic thinking can greatly influence a church's approach to mission if they view some activities of the church as being more "spiritual", and therefore of higher value, than others that seem "secular".

1.4.2 Contextualisation

1.4.2.1 The sport of soccer

Due to the global phenomenon of soccer, this research paper will have an emphasis upon the relationship between churches and the sport of soccer. The words soccer and football will be used interchangeably.

1.4.2.2 An international perspective (FIFA)

About FIFA: Who we are (2006), provides the following overview of the history and function of FIFA:

- The Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) was founded in the rear of the headquarters of the Union Française de Sports Athlétiques at the rue Saint Honoré 229 in Paris on 21 May 1904.
- FIFA has grown from 8 member nations to 204 in under 100 years. This gives FIFA a global mandate to promote and oversee the development of football. 204 countries are united by FIFA and subscribe to it's statutes that govern the global football culture. In particular note that in 1950 there was only one African member nation within FIFA. Within 50 years, 52 African nations had joined FIFA.

1.4.2.3 The South African context (FIFA 2010 World Cup™ Finals)

The FIFA World Cup™ is the flagship money-spinning event of FIFA. Held every four years, the next event is in 2010 and will be hosted in South Africa. All FIFA member nations entered a qualifying campaign that will lead to 32 nations playing in the four-week tournament in June-July 2010. The global audience is expected to be in the region of 3 billion people. Up to 3 million spectators will attend the games throughout the tournament, with hundreds of thousands of international guests expected to travel to South Africa (FIFA World Cup South Africa™ 2009).

1.4.2.4 Missions involved in sports ministry

[All the following information is adapted from Sports Ministry in Africa:2008].

- Athletes in Action (AIA)

In 1975 AIA were the first ministry established in South Africa that were dedicated to sports ministry. As a branch of Campus Crusade for Christ, AIA focused on evangelism and discipleship of student and professional athletes. Initially this took place primarily within the sports of cricket and rugby. More recently, AIA have begun discipleship groups with professional soccer players.

- Sport for Christ Action South Africa (SCAS)

SCAS were the first ministry developed by South Africans and began operating in Stellenbosch in 1985. SCAS initially primarily worked within the Afrikaans communities and focused on the sports of rugby, cricket and hockey.

- Sports Outreach Africa (SOA)

As sports ministry began to grow across Africa, SOA was formed in 1995 to assist in the training and developing of African sports ministers. SOA also have a focus on outreach at major sports events including the Africa Cup of Nations biannual football tournament.

- Ambassadors in Sport (AIS)

AIS established a full time base in South Africa in 2001 and were the first ministry in South Africa to focus exclusively on the sport of soccer.

- Upward Sport SA

Upward Sport is one of the latest ministries to launch in South Africa. Their particular emphasis is on developing church-based sports

programmes designed at reaching out to children. They offer a variety of sports, including soccer.

- Sports Ministry Partnership (SMP)

In 2001 a networking body for the sports ministries operating in South Africa was formed. The Sports Ministry Partnerships stated objective is to facilitate the growth of church-based sports ministry throughout South Africa.

- South Africa Sports Coalition (SASCOL)

In response to the opportunity presented by hosting the FIFA 2010 World Cup™, the sports ministries in South Africa consulted with church leadership and formed a new organisation in 2005. The objective of SASCOL is to unite churches across denominational lines to maximise the outreach potential afforded by major sports events. The formation of SASCOL was a significant step forward towards sensitising churches across the country to sports ministry.

A project of SASCOL is Ubabalo eAfrica, a church based soccer programme which is seeking to have 1000 affiliated churches in South Africa by 2010. A second project of SASCOL is The Ultimate Goal (TUG). TUG is the umbrella brand for church-based evangelism and community outreach in 2010. A national structure is in place to help train, equip and resource churches for evangelism and community outreach during the FIFA World Cup™.

1.4.2.5 The City of Tshwane

The City of Tshwane is in Gauteng Province, South Africa and was established in 2000 through the amalgamation of a 13 former local governments in the greater Pretoria area (Gauteng: City of Tshwane Metropolitan, 2009). The population of Tshwane is around two million people with Pedi, Afrikaans, Tswana, Tsonga, Zulu and English spoken by 85% of the population. The

growth rate of the population between 1996 and 2001 was 4.1% which is considerably higher than the national average which stood at 2.1% (About Tshwane: City Profile, 2009).

The city is named after Chief Tshwane who settled in the area before the Voortrekkers (Afrikaner diaspora across South Africa). It is believed that Tshwane was the authentic African name for the area that later became Pretoria. Pretoria itself was founded in 1855 by Marthinus Pretorius, a leader of the Voortrekkers, who named it after his father Andries Pretorius. It became the capital of the South African Republic soon afterwards.

The city of Tshwane continues to be the diplomatic capital of South Africa and hosts around 2010 foreign representative bodies (A brief history of the City of Tshwane, 2009).

1.4.2.6 A brief demographic profile of the selected churches (congregations) in Tshwane

The church pastors who participated in the empirical research were leaders of churches who were connected to The Ultimate Goal (TUG) Tshwane network. This network was chosen because it contained a wide demographic representation of churches and because of the interest that was being shown in utilising the FIFA World Cup™ for evangelism.

The questionnaire was sent to 72 church leaders. A total of 32 responded. The table below gives the basic demographic detail of the churches that these leaders represented and demonstrates that the sample was representative of all church communities across Tshwane.

Church Name	Denomination	Suburb	Membership	Ethnicity
Eastside Community Church	Baptist	Garsfontein	220	White
Pretoria East NGK	Dutch Reformed	Arcadia	2500	White
Hatfield Christian Church	N/A	Pretoria North	2500	Black and White

North				
St Johns	Church of England in South Africa	Queenswood	100	Mixed
Bethesda Revival Church	Full Gospel Church of God in South Africa	Laudium	500	Indian/coloured/black
Ekklesia AOG	Assemblies of God	Eersterust	100	Coloured and black
Central Baptist Church	Baptist Union	Arcardia	375	Mixed
Moreleta NGK	Dutch Reformed	Moreleta Park	15000	White
Capital Park NGK	Dutch Reformed	Capital Park	430	White
Lewende Woord	Independent	Brummeria	8000	White
Emanuel Presbyterian Church	Presbyterian	Faerie Glen	350	White
Pretoria Salvation Army	Salvation Army	Pretoria West	100	Mixed
Reformed Church in Africa	Reformed Church in Africa	Laudium	180	Mixed
Restoration Bible Church	Independent	Mamelodi	150	Black
Grace Baptist Church	Baptist Union	Rosslyn	38	Black
Choose Life	Charismatic	Garsfontein	1600	White
Lynnwood Ridge NGK	Dutch Reformed	Lynnwood	3000	White
Outreach Christian Community Church	Independent	Centurion	600	Black
Riviera Community Church	Grace Communion International	Riviera	65	Black/white
Elloffsdal Assembly	Full Gospel Church of	Elloffsdal	120	White

	God in SA			
New Life Conquerors Church	Charismatic	Mamelodi	180	Black
Garankuwa Church	Independent	Garankuwa	120	Black
Melodi ya Tshwane	Uniting Reformed Church	Vermeulen	2359	Black
Waverley Oos NGK	Dutch Reformed Church	Waverley	1150	White
Free Methodist church	Free Methodist	Pretoria	1000	Black
St Albans Cathedral	Anglican	Pretoria	780	Black

1.5 Methodology

This study falls within the discipline of Practical Theology. Kevin Smith (2008:204) states that the “key characteristic of practical theology is that it seeks to apply theological reflection to solve real-life problems.”

1.5.1 Zefass Research Model

The Zerfass theological research model of will be used in this study. Figure 2 demonstrates the process that will be followed (Heintink 1993:114):

Figure 2: Adapted Zerfass Model

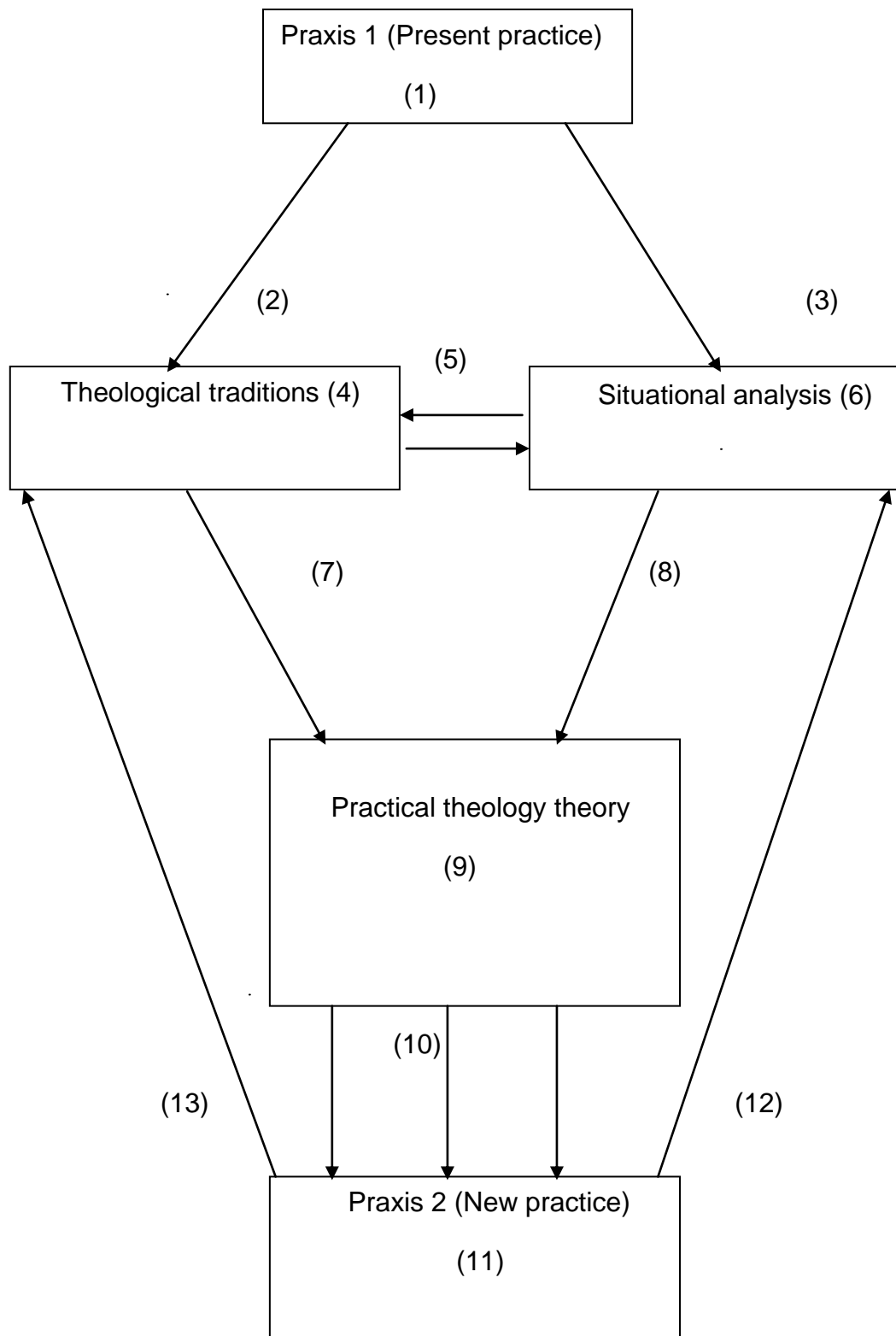


Figure 2: Adapted Zerfass Model

1.5.2 How the Zerfass model will be utilised in this study

Praxis 1, the present practice, represents the current situation in sports ministry, as well as the theological framework held by pastors and church leaders that determines their approach and involvement in ministry through sport. This is both influenced by their church and theological traditions, and the context of the situation within which they minister.

The dialogue between the church and theological traditions, on the one hand, and the situational analysis, on the other hand, takes place on the basis of new information obtained from the situation. Information regarding the situational analysis can be obtained empirically (empirical research), as in this study, or by using the results of other sciences and then to integrate it with one's own practical theological theory (the so-called interdisciplinary approach). Theory must become *praxis*, and therefore the new theory should be applied in practice. To complete the circle, the new *praxis* should be tested in terms of the situation and the theological tradition (Heyns and Pieterse 1990:39 ff).

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 will present the historical, theological and Biblical foundations for sports ministry. This will include a historical survey of the relationship between church and sport, a literature review of the theological frameworks for the engagement of Christians with sport, and a Biblical survey of sport in Scripture and a Biblical exposition of selected passages relevant to sport ministry.

In Chapter 5 an empirical survey will be conducted using qualitative (interviews) research. The study will investigate the perceptions amongst church leaders in selected churches in Tshwane in order to determine which theological factors are driving the engagement or disengagement of churches with sports ministry.

Chapter 6 will recommend a strategy to assist churches to become actively involved in sports ministry, in particular, to assist pastors and church leaders in the development of a long-term sustainable sports ministry using mission outreach through soccer in selected churches in Tshwane.

1.6 Literature Review

The following sources will extensively be used in the course of this research paper.

1.6.1 Alegi P 2004. *Laduma! Soccer, Politics and Society in South Africa.*

This is the most comprehensive book written on the history of soccer in South Africa. It traces the roots of the game and particularly focuses on the relationship between the game and what was happening in South African society at large. Alegi is Assistant Professor of history and co-Director of the African/African American Studies Programme at Eastern Kentucky University, USA.

1.6.2 Garner John, (ed) 2003. *Recreation and Sports Ministry: Impacting Postmodern Culture.*

This book explores sports ministry in great detail and is written to promote sports ministry amongst churches in America as a strategy to reach postmodern culture. Although focused on America, the authors draw out principles that are helpful for sports ministry at large. The editor, Garner, is the Recreation and Sports Ministry Leader at LifeWay Christian Resources in Nashville, Tennessee.

1.6.3 Higgs RJ and Braswell MC 2004. *An Unholy Alliance.*

Higgs and Braswell have written this book, which examines the relationship between sports and religion, to counteract arguments that sport is a new religion in America. A particular focus of the book is the distinction between the sacred and the holy in relation to sports. Higgs has also written *God in the Stadium*, another study on the historical relationship between sports and religion in America. Higgs was professor of English at East Tennessee State University. Braswell is a professor in the Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology at East Tennessee State University.

1.6.4 Ladd T and Mathisen J A 1999. *Muscular Christianity*.

This book surveys the relationship between church and sport over the past 200 years, with a particular focus on the influence of Muscular Christianity in America. The authors identify periods of engagement and disengagement of the church with sport and explain the underlying theological, social and pragmatic reasons for each period. Ladd is chair of the department of Kinesiology and Athletics at Wheaton College. Mathisen is chair of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Wheaton College.

1.6.5 Linville G 2007. *Does sports ministry aid local church evangelism?*

This doctoral thesis seeks to develop a model to assess if sports ministry is effectively aiding local church evangelism. Linville lectures in sports ministry at Malone College, Ohio.

1.6.6 McCown L and Gin VJ 2003. *Focus on Sport in Ministry*.

In this book the authors seek to clarify the role of sport in ministry from a historical, theological and philosophical perspective. The book presents the McCown Sport in Ministry Map as a tool for Christians to utilise to determine where their most effective avenue to utilise sport in ministry would be. McCown is the founder of 360° Sports™ and Gin is Associate Professor of Recreation and Leisure Studies at Gordon College.

1.6.7 Putney C 2001. *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports*.

This book traces the roots of Muscular Christianity in America and examines how Protestant churches in the 19th Century promoted competitive sports and physical education to create an ideal of Christian manliness. The author also examines how these ideals impacted the world through missionary endeavours. Putney is Assistant Professor of History at Bentley College.

1.6.8 Weir JS 2000. *What the Book says about Sport*.

This book seeks to present a Biblical perspective on sport and examine how Christians should respond to the world of sport. Weir was the executive director of Christians in Sport, UK.

1.6.9 *The Holy Bible, New International Version. 1973.*

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations in this thesis will be from the *New International Version*.

CHAPTER 2

The Historical and Theological Basis for Sport Ministry

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide a historical survey of the relationship between church and sport with special reference to the theological framework that underpins the engagement of churches with sport. Particular attention will be given to the Muscular Christianity movement.

In pursuit of this aim the following topics will be dealt with:

- A Historical overview of the development of sports ministry
- The Theological framework for engagement with Sport
- Theological influences towards disengagement from Sport
- The historical relationship between church and sport in South Africa

This chapter will attempt to set out a historical survey from the time of the church fathers until the present day and seek to highlight the theological influences that determined the churches attitude and engagement with sport. Through this process an attempt will be made to highlight the importance of having a strong theological framework in order to undergird the current pragmatic movement, in order to move from temporary engagement with sport, towards long-term sustainable influence within the world of sport. This process will predominantly focus on trends that have occurred in the West purely because that is where the research has taken place. However, to conclude this chapter a summary will be given of the influences that have determined the level of engagement of the church in South Africa, specifically within the sport of football.

2.2 A Historical overview of the development of sports ministry

2.2.1 Introduction

The history of the relationship between Christianity and sport goes back to the early church. Sports played an important role in both Greek and Roman cultures, with the apostle Paul drawing analogies from the world of sport to illustrate Christian principles (Garner 2003:39). However, we cannot be certain of what the general view of sports in the early church was, whether tolerated, criticised or embraced (McCown and Gin 2003:113-114). As Roman sports began to become more gruesome and the Coliseum became a venue for sporting atrocities, the church understandably distanced itself from sport (Garner 2003:39). The Olympics, which originated in Greece in 776 BC, were banned in 351 AD by emperor Theodosius 1 who considered them “pagan idolatries” (Higgs and Braswell 2004:7). Tyndall (2004:8) gives a helpful summary of this period:

In prayers, processions, sacrifices, dancing and athletic contests the Greeks sought diligently to appease their gods. Remarkably Christians did not oppose these Games. The number of sporting metaphors that the apostle Paul used in the Scripture to describe the Christian life: ‘running the race’, ‘collecting the prize’ and ‘towards the goal’ would seem to indicate tacit approval for the games. However, this was not the case with the Roman games; they were of a very different nature ... the Romans preferred fierce contests.

With the emergence of the Roman Catholic Church the distance between Christendom and sport was maintained to such an extent that by AD 744 a ban on sports was declared by the residing Pope (Garner 2003:39). The Church Fathers were greatly influenced by Plato’s teaching that saw matters of the mind as being elevated over physical activity (Putney 2003:51). This dualism pervaded the teaching of the church in the Middle Ages which viewed sport as at best an unhealthy distraction or, at worst, sinful with the terrible associated teaching that the body must be beaten into submission (Hyland 1990:90). This

all came about through, “the gradual affirmation of ideas that set greater store by the spiritual dimension to the detriment of anything that had to do with the physical, material, dimension” (The World of Sport Today 2005:16). This prevailing theology at this period of history prevented Christians from meaningful engagement in sporting pursuits. This remained the status quo until the Reformation, but true reengagement with sports only occurred in the 19th Century with the Muscular Christianity movement.

What is demonstrated through this brief overview of the history of the early church’s relationship to sport is that the church’s theological framework greatly influences her attitude to, and engagement with, the world of sport. If we view the church today we can observe that churches are actively engaging in sports (Connor 2003:33). This is a global trend that is being fuelled by major sports events such as the FIFA World Cup and the Olympic Games. Linville (2007:42) argues that the growth in sports ministry is driven by pragmatism; churches partake in sports because sport is seen as an effective evangelistic tool that can lead people to Christ. Pragmatism, in its basic form, acts on the principle that it works, so we do it. If the results are holy, then the means are justified (Viola and Barna 2008:68). The modern growth in sports ministry appears to display this attitude.

Since the 1940’s the significant model of sports ministry has been one which is driven primarily by the pragmatic principle that sport is a huge influence in contemporary society and so getting involved in sport is a means of reaching into that culture with the Christian message (Daniels and Weir 2008:3).

Higgs, in his book *God in the Stadium* (1995), casts a critical eye over the evolution of the relationship between Christianity and sport in America. He states that the motive of Protestants in utilising sport is to “gain converts” (1995:287) and that “one of the trademarks of modern muscular Christianity is

its anti-intellectualism” (Higgs 1995:288)³. Higgs is basically criticising the pragmatic approach of Christianity to sport and the general acceptance of the status quo in the world of sport, rather than Christianity having a transformational impact. He sees the relationship between church and sport in America as being “symbiotic”. Both sports and the church are currently benefiting from the relationship (Higgs 1995:21). Ladd and Mathisen (1999:170) concur with the appraisal that a symbiotic relationship exists between the worlds of sport and church in America. One must therefore ask the question as to what the church’s response would be to the sports world if it were no longer receiving the perceived benefits of winning souls.

Although the motives of churches engaging with sport in order to win converts is not necessarily wrong (and there are many testimonies of those who have come to faith through sport), the concern is that if pragmatism is not coupled with a strong theological and biblical framework, then the role of the church in sport will not be sustained (Linville 2007:36). Without a theological basis there is no framework to test the church’s approach to sport. If the only barometer of effectiveness in engaging with sport is perceived as reaching converts, then the natural conclusion would be that the church would disengage once more from sport if this were no longer happening. It is the author’s belief that a broader missional approach is required to the world of sport.

2.2.2 Disengagement: Pre 19th Century

As has already been seen, the church remained largely disengaged from the world of sport throughout the time of the early church and into the Middle Ages. In Britain, the role of sport in society was largely controlled by the preferences of the monarchy, although the church attempted to control leisure practices that were deemed unacceptable on holy days (Tyndall 2004:10). The majority of clergy considered sport a distraction that took people’s mind and attention away

³ Although some would argue against this; “It can be argued that Muscular Christianity and its rebirth in the form of Sports Ministry, has provided the basis for much of the research and scholarship on Christianity and sport today” (Watson 2005:44).

from the things of God (Garner 2003:39). The church fathers had been greatly influenced by Plato's teaching, which regarded the body as having little meaning (Putney 2003:51). This dichotomy between what was considered "spiritual" and what was considered "secular" persisted in the church. Activities that were perceived to make one more spiritual or holy were advocated; those that were considered secular were actively discouraged (Putney 2003:51). The message from the church was that the sacred (such as prayer and worship) should never be contaminated by the secular (e.g. sport).

2.2.3 The Reformation: changing attitudes

This dualistic thinking was in fact not at all in line with the Biblical approach to humanity. The Jewish worldview was far more holistic, which viewed all of life, physical and spiritual, as being of equal importance. Mind and body, belief and action, were intertwined and not separated (McElrath, McNicol and Thrall 1999:101).

It was through the Reformation that the door was opened for Christians to return to a more Biblical view of the relationship between the body, mind and spirit. Ultimately this would eventually lead towards a Biblical foundation for the church to reengage in sports.

Martin Luther (1484–1546) was one of the primary forerunners of the Reformation and, along with leading the church back to Biblical doctrine on matters, such as 'justification by faith,' he also taught that the body should be honoured. Garner (2003:40) demonstrates the role Luther played in challenging the prevailing teaching that pleasure was sinful and recreation 'of the devil':

"Luther ... challenged the idea of pleasure being sinful. Prior to the Reformation, monks degraded their bodies in an attempt to glorify their soul ... Luther argued against degrading the body: 'God has indeed created body and soul and desires both to be allowed and give recreation but with proper measure and purpose.' Luther also spoke out for the participation in recreation. In a 1534 letter, he

wrote, 'To have pleasure in sins is of the devil, but participation in proper honourable pleasures with good and God-fearing people is pleasing to God'" (Garner 2003:40).

Although Luther's theology allowed for sporting endeavour and valued bodily activity, other reformers, such as John Calvin still regarded the body to be "vile" (Putney 2003:51).

That same century in the United Kingdom it was still illegal to partake in games and sport on a Sunday. The church was still largely opposed to sports and sought to actively prevent parishioners from partaking in what was perceived to be sinful activities (Daniels and Weir 2008:1). However, in the following century great changes occurred through an edict issued by King James in 1618, which became known as the *Book of Sports* (Garner 2003:41). This edict even legalised Sunday sports (as long as they followed "divine services") and various forms of recreation that had previously been outlawed. However, the backlash from this was the Puritan philosophy that rebelled against this document (Garner 2003: 41). As the Puritans were persecuted in England and made their way to the United States, their doctrines greatly influenced the Founding Fathers who saw little value in sports (Price 2001:15).

The Puritans were not totally against sports (Tyndall 2004:12). They did encourage endeavours that would prepare young men to defend the theocracy (Higgs 1995:8). The dualism of the Puritans was not nearly as pronounced as in the Medieval Church. Yet physical endeavours were geared towards a strong work ethic rather than leisure. Sport for sport's sake was not encouraged. Physical activity had to have a purpose (Higgs 1995:24) and certainly sport on Sunday was considered a great sin (Putney 2003:20). Sabbatarianism caused a constant tension between those participating in Sunday recreation and the Puritans and has continued to be an issue for Christians as the popularity of organised sport increased (Tyndall 2004:21).

Despite the emergence of a more holistic theology in this period, the church as a whole remained disengaged from sport. Some of Luther's (and others) teaching did impact the education system as physical education began to be

included at some schools (Higgs 1995:49), but total engagement between church and sport was still some way from becoming a reality and no specific theology of sport had been developed.

2.2.4 Muscular Christianity in the 19th Century

The modern sports ministry movement can trace its roots directly to the 19th century (Watson 2005:§1). Tyndall (2004:29) states that the Muscular Christianity movement built an important bridge between sport and Christianity at this period in history. The Industrial Revolution had a dramatic effect upon the whole world, changing the face of Western cities, and impacting African and eastern nations through the scramble for emerging colonies. As the cities in the West grew, so the demand for organised leisure and sporting activities increased (Watson, Weir and Friend 2005:§1). Whereas workers previously had maintained health through their jobs (e.g. farming and rural life), now alternative forms of exercise were required, particularly for those working in the factories and mills. Organised sports grew to meet this need as urbanisation changed the Western cultural landscape (Higgs 1995:86). This market for sport was met through the emergence of gymnasiums and sports clubs. By the end of the century, in Europe and America, sports had become imbedded in Western culture (Higgs 1995:86).

The church correspondingly underwent a complete shift in its attitude towards sport as the theology that undergirded the Muscular Christianity movement permeated itself in church belief and practice around the world (Armstrong 2003:1). The scope of the influence of Muscular Christianity has impacted the Twentieth century church worldwide as Muscular Christianity became the backbone of the late 19th Century missionary mobilisation (Armstrong and Giulianotti 2004:8).

Muscular Christianity was a movement that flourished in the United Kingdom and United States between 1860 and 1920. Defined by Putney (2003:11) as “a Christian commitment to health and manliness,” the movement arose as a response to a number of factors influencing the churches thought and practice. Foremost among the influence was the view that sports could play a vital role in

the formation of the Christian character and manliness of young men (Watson et al. 2005:§2). Primarily Muscular Christianity grew from the pragmatic need to address what was being perceived as the “feminisation” of the Christianity. The clergy in particular were being perceived as “weak and womanly” (Putney 2001:54). Coupled to this were new challenges facing the church to be relevant to a growing urban population in the post-industrial era. As people were beginning to partake in sport and leisure *en masse*, so the church needed to reappraise its stance towards the body and sport (Putney 2003:55).

Christians could not ignore the sports phenomenon. Particularly in the United Kingdom and United States, Christian thinkers re-evaluated what the true Christian response to sport should be.

2.2.4.1 Muscular Christianity in the United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom it was the writings of Charles Kingsley and Thomas Hughes that brought Muscular Christianity to a broad audience. Kingsley saw physical activity as a consecration of one’s body to God. He also saw social benefits in sport such as the bridging of Britain’s divided social classes (Watson et al. 2005:§10).

Thomas Hughes introduced Tom Brown to the world, a character in the novel “Tom Brown’s School Days” (1857) and “Tom Brown at Oxford”. Tom Brown was painted as the ideal Christian: full of faith, vigour and intelligence, excelling not only academically but also in sport, and underpinned by a strong commitment to Christ (Armstrong 2003:1). Hughes’ doctrine of manliness also reflected the United Kingdom’s preoccupation with empire building: “for if the country were ever to fulfil its imperial ambitions, its authorities could not ‘allow English people to grow up puny, stunted, and diseased’ (Putney 2003:13).

Watson et al. (2005:§20-22) have demonstrated how the public school system in the United Kingdom was greatly impacted by Muscular Christianity as sports became elevated to a new level in the development of young people. The doctrine of “healthy body, healthy mind” became foremost in the formation of the ideal young Christian. The influence of Hughes writings cannot be

underestimated in this process as the Tom Brown books became mandatory reading for all Victorian schoolboys (Tyndall 2004:44).

Another factor that gave Muscular Christianity in the United Kingdom great impetus was the conversion of a number of prominent sporting heroes. Most notably was CT Studd, the most promising cricketer of his generation and a man revered by the masses (Armstrong 2003:3). He went to China as a missionary with six others, who together received popular acclaim as “The Cambridge Seven” (Tucker 1983:264). Although Studd did give up his career to go and become a missionary, he continued to value sport as an opportunity to glorify God (Mason 2003:19). These sporting muscular missionaries personified the ideal of manliness, faith and character espoused by the Muscular Christianity doctrine.

The Cambridge Seven helped redefine what it meant to be a Christian and serve the Lord as a missionary (Pollock 1955:10). However, the British churches were not only sending sportsmen to foreign fields, but also saw the opportunity sports gave to impact communities on home soil. Between 1850 and 1900 churches around the country were forming sports clubs to combat the social unrest and political instability at the time (Oakley 2005:4). It is estimated that one quarter of all sports clubs in England originated in the local church (Daniels and Weir 2008:1). Many of these clubs still exist today, although their relationship with their church of origin is in most cases severed (Oakley 2005:4).

2.2.4.2 Muscular Christianity in the United States of America

Muscular Christianity was also highly influential in the United States. Fuelled by the teachings of Hughes and Kingsley, organisations such as the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) were birthed in order to promote “a strenuous religion for the strenuous life” (Putney 2003:44). The YMCA was perhaps the most influential organisation in the bringing together of Christianity and the world of sport (Putney 2003:64). The YMCA’s goal, as stated in their 1866 purpose statement, was to improve the spiritual, mental, social and physical condition of young men (McCown and Gin 2003:115). The YMCA not only promoted sports, but invented sports that would become universal cultures in

and of themselves; most notably basketball and volleyball (Putney 2003:71). The YMCA was therefore not just an organisation that responded to the burgeoning sports enthusiasm in the 19th Century, they actually became major players in forming the sports culture. Wherever the YMCA spread, so did organised sport amongst young people (Higgs 1995:208).

The rise of “Muscular Christian” evangelists had also helped to promote the new discovery that sports could be utilised to share the Gospel. Men like Orville Gardner and Billy Sunday had been successful sports people who utilised that platform to draw crowds to hear them preach (Ladd and Mathisen 1999:13). An influential Muscular Christian to grow out of the YMCA was Dwight L Moody. As an evangelist and sports enthusiast, he became lauded as the archetype of manly Christianity (Armstrong 2003:2). Moody’s stature and message appealed to many sportsmen; indeed most of the Cambridge seven had been influenced by Moody (Mason 2003:19). Other evangelists followed suit. As Christianity was propagated on the American frontiers through revival meetings, so sports events and muscular Christianity found new audiences (Higgs 1995:64).

However, throughout this period, the sacredness of the Sabbath, particularly in the South, was keenly maintained and enforced through legislation (Higgs 1995:68). Yet engagement between church and sport had largely been accomplished with Christians at the forefront of transforming sports from being social and spontaneous, to becoming a highly organised and structured core component of American life (Connor 2003:32).

2.2.5 Disengagement in the early 20th Century

This overview has taken us to the early 20th Century. Sports ministry was growing and playing a vital and vibrant role in churches in Western countries, and, through missionaries, into foreign nations (Oakley 2005:4). However, the momentum slowed and Christians began to turn their backs on sports ministry – even becoming overtly critical of Christians partaking in sport. This turn around can be termed “disengagement” (Ladd and Mathisen 1999:18).

The relationship of church with sport had undergone a golden era in the United Kingdom and the United States of America. The church had embraced sport and seen it as a useful agent of change and an opportunity to bring glory to God. Christians had even been used by God to increase the profile of sport and promote its social and spiritual benefits. However, as the 19th Century closed and the new century began, sport became even more popular and powerful. As sports stars gained fame and fortune, the church began to turn its back on what it had previously embraced. The church viewed its embracing of sport as having backfired. Sports were becoming popular at the expense of faith with sport becoming a religion in and of itself (Connor 2003:32).

As this period of church/sports ministry history is examined it can be seen that sports ministry did not have a solid biblical foundation. Those involved in sports ministry were pioneering, pragmatic and energetic, but a clear biblical apologetic (defence) of sports ministry was not high on their agenda (Linville 2007:36). As the popularity of sport grew, so the church did not appear prepared to cope with what it now began to view as a threat. The result of this was that when church leaders began to denounce sport and use the Bible to condemn involvement in sport, those who had pioneered the ministry had no Biblical framework from which to defend “Muscular Christianity” (Linville 2007:36). Just as in ancient times, the role of religion in sport had diminished over time, so it appeared that modern sports were once again to move away from their origins in faith (Polley 2007:23). As the centuries turned, many evangelicals turned their backs and abandoned sport (Ladd and Mathisen 1999:18).

Whereas sports stars such as CT Studd had been hailed as champions of the faith and their sporting pedigree considered praiseworthy, now Christian sports stars were encouraged to turn their back on sport and denounce its influence on the world. One example is Billy Sunday. A once prominent baseball player turned evangelist, he denounced the very sport that had made him famous (Ladd and Mathisen 1999:80). The church withdrew from the world of sport and Christians were actively encouraged not to partake in competitive sport. Disengagement meant that Christians lost their influence within what was to

become one of the most important cultural phenomena across the globe of the 20th Century (Oakley 2005:4). This in effect created a vicious circle. The more the church retreated from sports, the more sporting culture displayed signs of moral decay, which in turn sparked harsher criticism from Christian leaders which seemed to justify their disengaged stance. Ladd and Mathisen (1999:94) state:

Perhaps the most significant of all was the lack of leavening influence from the Christian community in the development of sport in the United States. Not only did the withdrawal of evangelical muscular Christians eliminate any kind of witness in society, it eliminated input from them to influence the ethos of sport.

2.2.6 Re-engagement: the Muscular Christianities rebirth as Sports Ministry

In the United States, many churches continued with sports and recreation as a means to have the benefit of fellowship and provide a healthy alternative for those who enjoyed such pursuits (Garner 2003:47). However, it wasn't until the post-second world war period that the power of sport to proclaim the Gospel was once again discovered (McCown and Gin 2003:118).

In the latter half of the 20th century, with the USA leading the way, the church has reengaged with the world of sport and seen the potential to impact the world for Christ through sports outreach. This rebirth gave rise to the term "Sports Ministry" (Mason 2003:20). Some of the key factors and events that have lead to this reengagement are as follows:

2.2.6.1 Crusades: Sportsmen draw a crowd

Ladd and Mathisen (1999:112-115) introduce us to Gilbert H Dodds, literally the "fore-runner" of the reengagement that was to occur between church and sport:

- Gil Dodds was one of the top middle distance runners of his generation. He was a full-time athlete between 1938 and 1945, but more than that, he was a committed Christian. Dodds saw a direct correlation between

his faith and his success on the running track, and boldly proclaimed his faith.

- In 1944 the evangelist Jack Wrytzen invited Dodds to share at his crusade in Madison Square Garden. As the newly crowned one-mile indoor world record holder, Dodds made a great impression on the crowd.
- From July 1945 Dodds joined Youth For Christ (YFC), joining Billy Graham on many crusades, and his fame as a star runner attracted crowds to hear the Gospel not only around the United States, but in as diverse places as Sweden and Taiwan (Mason 2003:20).
- YFC, with Billy Graham at the forefront, in effect took sports evangelism on from where the YMCA had left it, once again utilising Muscular Christian ethos to impact crowds across America and beyond (Ladd 1999:113). This paved the way for a new institutionalisation of Muscular Christianity which became known as Sports Ministry (Ladd and Mathisen 1999:135).

2.2.6.2 Sports mission teams

After the Second World War, mass evangelism crusades became increasingly popular (e.g. the Billy Graham crusades that packed out stadiums around the world). This was obviously mirrored by the crowds who would go to sporting events to cheer on their favourite teams. It took Dick Hollis, in 1952, to see the potential of combining a sports crowd with a gospel crusade (Mason 2003:20). Hollis and his missionary team organised a basketball game in Taiwan between Taylor University and the Taiwan national team (amongst other opponents). At half time the Gospel was shared and an invitation given to receive Christ (McCown and Gin 2003:116-117).

2.2.6.3 National sports ministries

National sports ministries can be defined as organisations seeking to impact the culture of sports within their own country, rather than focusing on mission opportunities overseas. These sports ministries identify the sporting culture as an unreached people group needing to be infiltrated with the Gospel.

From the 1950's within the USA models of sports ministry emerged that are still popular today. These include sports camps, clinics and rallies where a high profile sports person would share his or her testimony. Organisations like the Fellowship of Christian Athletes (1950) and Athletes in Action (1966) were formed to promote sports ministry across the country (Ladd and Mathisen 1999:135).

In 1969, Europe's first sports ministry, Sportler Ruft Sportler, was founded in Germany. The UK soon followed with a national sports ministry founded in 1972 called Christians in Sport (CIS). The mission of CIS is "reaching the world of sport for Christ - encouraging and supporting Christians to share the good news of Jesus with their sporting friends" (McCown and Gin 2003:121,122).

2.2.6.4 Major sports events outreach

Starting in 1968 at the winter Olympics in Grenoble, France, it was recognised that major sports events provided opportunity for high impact outreach and evangelism (McCown and Gin 2003:119).

This model of sports ministry seeks to use the impetus and focus of a major sporting event (e.g. Olympics, World Cups) to be a catalyst for evangelism. The range of ministry that can occur at a major sporting event varies from the handing out of tracts to providing chaplains to the sports men and women themselves (McCown and Gin 2003:120). A major focus of those planning major event outreach is to mobilise the church to impact their communities, through either showing live screenings of the sports or organising sport outreach events to coincide with the Games.

2.2.6.5 Outreach to high profile sportspeople

As professional sport grew exponentially in the 20th Century, so the separation of high profile sports stars from "regular life" continually increased. This provided another opportunity for ministry to athletes who were exposed to the pressures and demands that came with fame and fortune (Ladd and Mathisen 1999:140).

In the 1970's, Norm Evans began "Pro Athletes Outreach," a ministry specifically geared to provide discipleship and fellowship for professional sportspeople in the United States (McCown and Gin 2003:122).

Probably the high-profile ministry that has gained most renown is Atletas de Cristo, a Brazilian based ministry to professional sportsmen. Founded in 1986 by Alex Riberio, their vision was to reach Brazil's superstar soccer players, and through them to reach the world (McCown and Gin 2003:123). In 1994, five of the World Cup winning Brazilian squad were committed Christians. By 2002, the testimony of Brazil's Christian players impacted the world as they knelt in prayer to thank God following another World Cup victory.

2.2.6.6 Conferences

There is one trend within sports ministry that has had a tremendous impact in uniting and defining the vision of the global sports ministry movement worldwide (McCown and Gin 2003:125). This has been the sports ministry global conference movement, which developed into the International Sports Coalition (ISC) in 1985. The first sports ministry conference was held in Hong Kong in 1984 with fourteen nations represented. Since that time conferences have been held every four years with hundreds of delegates attending representing over 200 countries.

Coupled with this has been the growth of regional conferences. As the sports ministry world has now become so large, these regional conferences will play a vital role in keeping the network functioning effectively.

2.2.6.7 Church based sports ministry

The final factor that needs to be noted is what has been an increased emphasis on the role of sports ministry to serve the local church. In fact, all of the above models need to be viewed through this perspective. In order for the church not to once more disengage from the world of sport, then the role of the local church within sport needs to be clearly defined.

In the United States, an organisation called Church Sport Recreation Ministers (CSRM) was formed in 1995 with the specific goal of mobilising the church for

sports ministry (McCown and Gin 2003:119). Other established sports ministries, such as Christians in Sport and Ambassadors in Sport clearly define themselves by how effectively they work with local churches in their sports ministry endeavours.

On a global scale, the “Global Community Games” (GCG) model of ministry, incorporating Kids Games, Teen Games, and Family Games, is a movement that operates through networking local churches to work together to offer high impact outreach events (McCown and Gin 2003:128). Follow up and discipleship materials are made freely available through the Internet which has facilitated the rapid growth of GCG.

Since the post 2nd World War reengagement between Christianity and the world of sports, the modern sports ministry movement has indeed seen tremendous growth. This has particularly taken place in the last 30 years with more than 150 countries in the world having developed sports ministry in some way (McCown and Gin 2003:126). Whereas the sports ministry movement initially primarily took hold in the Western world, in recent years the expansion has been most rapid in the developing world.

2.3 The theological framework for engagement with sport

In both periods of Christian engagement with sport, in the guises of Muscular Christianity and Sports Ministry, were largely driven by pragmatists who seized on the opportunity that sport afforded to reach large numbers with the Gospel. These forerunners of sports ministry primarily viewed sport as a tool for evangelism. However, in spite of being pragmatically driven, there are discernible theological frameworks that surfaced in each period. In some cases the theology paved the way for engagement, in others, the engagement caused a reappraisal of theology.

2.3.1 The Theological Framework of Nineteenth Century Muscular Christianity

As has been seen, the pragmatic reasons that the church embraced Muscular Christianity were primarily related to the changes in society caused by

urbanisation due to the Industrial Revolution. One result of urbanisation was participation in physical exercise and organised sport by the masses. Coupled with this was the churches own recognition that it needed to “modernise” in order to be able to relate to the challenges of evangelism in the 19th Century. It was recognised that sport was growing in popularity and if the church didn’t embrace sports, they would be viewed as irrelevant and remain out of touch (Putney 2003:55).

The world was rapidly changing. Global expansion also presented new challenges for the church to advance to reach new countries and cultures with the Gospel (Connor 2003:30). There was now no more place in the church for weak men, but adventurers were required to take the Gospel to the masses in the newly accessible lands (Zezeza and Veney 2003:127).

The pioneers of Muscular Christianity, Charles Kingsley and Thomas Hughes, both saw Muscular Christianity as an essential component for advancing British imperialism which would come about as a direct consequence of a healthier people applying the healthy body, healthy mind principles of Muscular Christianity (Watson et al. 2005:§4).

However, aside from these pragmatic driving forces behind Muscular Christianity, there were also theological shifts that allowed for the church to interact with sport. These included a reappraisal of the following: how Scripture viewed the body; doctrines concerning masculinity; eschatological shift towards pre-millennialism; and a heightened focus on evangelism and world mission.

2.3.1.1 Body theology

Putney (2003) in his history of this period highlights how a fresh emphasis emerged among theologians with regards to the human body. Previously the dualistic undertones of the church’s teachings implied, indeed sometimes explicitly taught, that the body was the enemy of the soul (Putney 2003:51). This teaching was re-evaluated in the light of what became termed a “new

theology” which focused on the body as being the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20) (Putney 2003:56). It was reasoned that something cannot be considered bad which receives the honour of being called the Temple, the residing place of the Holy Spirit. This new emphasis gave a biblical mandate to encourage young people to be physically fit and involved in sport.

German theologians were at the forefront of this new teaching as they began to focus on the humanity of Christ. The emphasis shifted from the future redemption of the body towards the present redemption of the body (Putney 2003:54). The bodily incarnation of Christ became a focal point of how theologians began to engage with sociological issues, with the embodied soul therefore receiving greater significance (Watson et al. 2005:§12). The place of the body was suddenly far more highly elevated than had ever previously been taught.

The new theology of the body had three main foci. Firstly, it prioritized making health Scriptural and held as its heroes the Biblical characters who displayed a strong physique. Secondly, the body as temple theology sought to glorify the body and refute the concept that the body was weak and sinful. Christ was hereby set forth as the example who, as the incarnate Son of God, honoured the human body when “the Word became flesh” (John 1:14). Finally, given the high esteem now given to the body, to fail to look after it became considered dishonouring to God and sinful (Putney 2003:56).

This was completely contrary to the previously held doctrine which didn’t value the body in the slightest. In its extreme form, body theologians began to hold that Muscular Christians displayed saintly characteristics, while the sickly were sinners (Putney 2003:57). Reverend Dr Theodore Munger in 1897 illustrates the huge shift in doctrine that had occurred during the 19th Century with regards the human body:

Any religious experience that is connected with a weak or diseased body is to be regarded with suspicion. There can be no health, no thought, no moral feeling, no sound judgment, no vigorous action, except in connection with a sound body (Putney 2003:45).

2.3.1.2 Doctrine of masculinity

Closely connected to Body Theology is the doctrine of masculinity; a direct response to what was considered to be the “womanliness” exhibited in the church and particularly in Ministers of religion (Putney 2003:54, 80). Watson et al. (2005:§13-15) demonstrate how one of the forerunners of Muscular Christianity teaching, Charles Kingsley, developed a “doctrine of masculinity” that connected spirituality and manliness. One influence on the writings of Kingsley was Thomas Carlyle whose emphasis on the human body, health and heroism all resonated with Kingsley’s ideals of “Christian manliness” (Watson et al. 2005:§14).

Thomas Hughes’ Muscular Christianity was founded on studying the physical humanity of Christ. His ideal of Christian manliness was based directly upon his understanding of Christ’s example as the “archetype man”.

For Christ’s whole life on earth was the assertion and example of true manliness – the setting forth in living act and word what man is meant to be. And how he should carry himself in this world of God’s – one long campaign in which ‘the temptation’ stands out as the first great battle and victory (Hughes 1887:599).

In his book, “The Manliness of Christ”, Hughes responds to the widespread perception that Christianity was only for the weak-willed. Hughes’ definition of manliness is summed up in the word “courage.” He viewed courage as the foundation of manliness, and manliness as “the perfection of human character” (Hughes 1887:578).

Although Hughes’ teaching on manliness no doubt impacted his view of sport and what it meant to be a Muscular Christianity, it appears perhaps Hughes’ view of sport as being the key to becoming a “manly Christian” has been somewhat overemphasised by recent authors. By defining manliness through the lens of courage, Hughes taught that courage could equally be displayed in both strong and weak bodies, thus the role of sport could easily be overstated (Hughes 1887:583). Nevertheless, his focus on Christian manliness greatly

influenced the Muscular Christian movement that saw an intrinsic link between health, sporting achievement and what it meant to be masculine (Tyndall 2004:44).

In the United States, a similar emphasis on Christian manliness was emerging. This was again in response to the apparent womanliness displayed in the Clergy. Putney gives a number of factors that influenced an emphasis on a doctrine of masculinity in the US. Among these was the rising influence of women in the church and apparent “feminisation” of Christianity. A Baptist minister, Carl Case, wrote a book in 1906 entitled, “The Masculine in Religion” to refute the idea that religion was “natural” for women and “unnatural” for men” (Putney 2003:74, 75, 80).

Men were being drawn away from church and felt more at home in the “Lodges” where they related far better to other men of the same ilk than to the minister in the pulpit. One response was to seek to make Christianity more practical. Just as Christ, as a young man, had reformed the religion of his day, so men were called to reform the church and rid it of its image as being for children, women and the elderly (Putney 2003:76,77).

One way in which this was propagated was through the “Brotherhood” movement which swept across the US in the late nineteenth century. Brotherhoods would minister to the needs of men and therefore contribute to the expansion of Christ’s Kingdom among young men (Putney 2003:84-85).

Other evidences of the impact of the doctrine of manliness can be seen in the rising militancy of denominations that sprung up at that time, such as the Salvation Army, and also in the hymns that were been written which emphasised manly themes (Putney 2003:96).

The doctrine of masculinity undoubtedly arose as men saw their place in the church as being under threat and as the church became increasingly viewed as a place where the needs of women, children and the elderly were met. The re-evaluation that took place focused on the manliness of Christ (Putney 2003:92)

and sought to provide space for men to understand the courageous role they needed to play within God's Kingdom.

It was therefore only a natural step for the church to collaborate with sport in order to become more appealing to men, and for the doctrine of masculinity to undergird such organisations as the YMCA who specifically reached out to young men. The doctrine of masculinity became foundational in the Muscular Christian's apologetic for involvement in sport which has had a lasting influence over the past 150 years:

The doctrine of masculinity has been absorbed into the 'deep structure' of society and continues to have a pervasive influence in athletics, religion, and men's movements within modern Anglo-American culture (Watson et al. 2005:§15).

2.3.1.3 Eschatology

Ladd and Mathisen (1999:26-28) demonstrate how the eschatology of the church in the USA in the 19th Century greatly influenced its approach to sport. Initially 19th Century theology in the USA was shaped by post-millennial optimism.

Postmillennialists emphasised "present aspects of God's kingdom which will reach fruition in the future." This present growth of God's kingdom would come through Christian teaching and lead to moral transformation and better social conditions as the influence of God's kingdom extends across the world (Elwell 1991:313).

In America, the growth and expansion of God's Kingdom was seemingly synonymous with the influence of the USA in the world. Fuelled by postmillennial doctrine, Muscular Christians saw sport as a vehicle for social change with the resultant better health and improved lifestyle that it afforded those who partook. Coupled with this was the drive for education which was seen as the gateway to progress (Ladd and Mathisen 1999:26,27,31).

Muscular Christians such as James Naismith (the inventor of basketball), believed that as people's social conditions were improved and the world

became a better place, so they would become more amenable to accepting the Gospel (Ladd and Mathisen 1999:74).

However, as the century drew on, the postmillennial view of human advancement was brought under question by events such as the American Civil War, the French Revolution and other violent uprisings across Europe. There was also a growing interest in the role of the Jews within eschatology. Premillennialism returned to popularity; the belief that Christ's return, and subsequent thousand year reign on earth, would be preceded by certain signs including the persecution of the church (Elwell 1991:313,315).

As Muscular Christians re-embraced this doctrine, their attitude towards sport changed. Previously sport had been the great agent for social change which would in turn bring about the salvation of those involved. Now, with a new urgency for evangelism, sport became a vehicle through which the Gospel could be preached to their generation (Ladd and Mathisen 1999:73).

Although Muscular Christians were united through their passion for sport, tensions did emerge between the two doctrinal camps. For example, the YMCA had been birthed in the postmillennial tradition, but emerging leaders, such as Moody, evangelistic zeal was based upon a premillennial doctrine. By the early 20th century, the debate between the two positions became increasingly polarised as evangelical, premillennial Muscular Christians turned their attention away from social improvement and towards world mission (Ladd and Mathisen 1999:41, 73).

2.3.1.4 World evangelisation

Evangelism was always a primary motive of the Muscular Christianity movement. Mass crusades and revival campaigns were the birth place of sports ministry, as prominent sports people such as boxer Orville Gardner gave dramatic accounts of their conversions to Christ (Their focus was primarily evangelistic. It was organisations such as the YMCA and in particular James Naismith (inventor of Basketball) who saw sport as an opportunity for character building and discipleship (Ladd and Mathisen 1999:11-12, 70).

However, as the postmillennialists focused on societal improvement through sport, a new urgency for evangelism and world mission was being fuelled by those influenced by premillennial doctrine (Ladd and Mathisen 1999:56). They elaborate as follows:

American revivalism helped form a symbiotic relationship, so that the eventual engagement of religion and sport infused a missionary zeal in those who participated in sports and stimulated the idealism of a generation of muscular Christians who felt called to win the world to Christ in their generation. Sport became an essential element in their strategy to reach the world (Ladd and Mathisen 1999:13).

A combination of premillennial emphasis with the doctrines of body theology and masculinity spawned the growing movement of 19th Century Christians towards world evangelisation and the mobilisation of “muscular missionaries” (Putney 2003:127).

The Muscular Christianity movement in the United States and United Kingdom towards the end of the 19th century was largely responsible for the mobilisation of missionaries, particularly through the Student Volunteer Movement, whose vision was to win the world for Christ in their generation (Putney 2003:128).

A primary agent for this mobilisation was the annual Northfield Conferences in the United States where speakers such as D L Moody and H Drummond greatly influenced men such as John Mott who became a leader within the Student Volunteer Movement. Those from the Northfield conferences were enthused with a vision of utilising sport for world-wide evangelisation. Fuelled with pre-millennial urgency, the catchword became “the evangelisation of the world in this generation” (Ladd and Mathisen 1999:54, 56).

Volunteers were dispatched to the unreached lands of Africa, Asia and the Far East. The missionaries were replacing what was considered the tedium of the

modern corporate West to exert their masculine heroic spirit in the cause of the Gospel (Putney 2003:130).

It was only natural for the muscular missionaries to take with them not only their Western ideals, which history has since criticised them for (e.g. Zeleza and Veney 2003:127), but also their sports with which to “civilise” the “heathen” people they were seeking to reach (Putney 2003:131). Muscular Christianity was therefore exported to the ends of the earth with sport as a primary vehicle for evangelism (Watson et al.2005:§26)

There is sufficient evidence that the result of the theology which undergirded the Muscular Christianity movement in the 19th Century is a significant reason for not only the propagation of the Gospel around the world, but also for the propagation of organised sport. This phenomenon has been recognised by many sports historians, particularly within the context of Africa, who have noted that, “elite missionaries endeavoured ‘to create Tom Brown in Africa’ through linking moral training to muscularity” (Armstrong and Giulianotti 2004:8).

Sport therefore became a primary vehicle for these muscular missionaries to connect with African people. Often the strategy involved the establishment of mission schools (Connor 2003:32). Sport was utilised by the missionaries as a primary motivational tool to encourage young African children to attend their schools (Church 1966:21). Missionaries continued to use this strategy into the 20th Century as sport, and particularly football, helped to bridge cultural divides and provide a vehicle through which to connect with Africans (Elgin 2001:47).

The goal of evangelising the world and the birth of many mission agencies can therefore be directly linked to the Muscular Christianity movement of the 19th Century.

2.3.2 The theological framework of the twentieth century sports ministry movement

Undoubtedly the 20th Century Sports ministry movement views the 19th Century Muscular Christianity as its forefather. This can be seen in the number of

references made to Muscular Christianity in the writings of sports ministry apologists (e.g. Connor 2003:30; Mason 2003:17; McCown and Gin 2003:115). As has been stated above, the modern sports ministry movement was also developed by pragmatists who recognised the role sport was playing in society and that sport therefore served as an incredible vehicle for evangelism (Daniels 2008:3). Just as in the 19th Century (e.g. DL Moody), these pragmatists were not necessarily sports stars themselves, but evangelists, such as Billy Graham, who were utilising sports as part of their strategy for mass evangelism (Ladd and Mathisen 1999:95).

However, as the modern sports ministry movement began to become more institutionalised with the emergence of established sports ministries (Ladd and Mathisen 1999:141), so the need to develop a systematic apologetic for sports ministry emerged.

It has only really been in the last fifteen years that those involved in sports ministry have begun to put in writing what they believe to be the biblical and theological basis for their engagement in sport. As this process has taken place, so a number of theological themes have emerged that underpin the modern sports ministry movement. Although there is some cross over to the theological framework for the 19th century Muscular Christianity movement, the author will highlight those themes that seem in some way distinctive to the modern sports ministry movement.

2.3.2.1 Redemption

All of the prominent sports ministry apologists focus on the theme of “redemption”. Rodger Oswald (in Garner 2003:26) says,

Theology introduces us to the facts that the God of the Bible is a redemptive God (Gen 3:7, 12; Luke 19:10). God is also declared to be a relational God (John 1:12; Heb. 4:16) who is gracious and liberating (Rom. 5:8; Eph. 2:8-9; Gal. 2:16).

Greg Linville (2007:28) states that the “foundational principle espoused by Oswald and other Church Recreators in the church is to be a mission agency

flowing from the fact that God is a God of redemption.” However, within this broad topic of redemption, there does appear to be differing emphases. The first focuses on the people of the world of sport that need to be introduced to the saving love of Christ, and the second considers the redemption of the world of sport itself.

Rodger Oswald (Garner 2003:27) focuses on the mandate that Christians have to proclaim the Good News to all nations and thus fulfil the commission given by Christ in Matthew 28:19. Given that sport transcends all nations, cultures and languages, it is therefore a powerful medium through which the Gospel can be taken to the ends of the earth (Daniels and Weir 2008:5). Oswald’s focus is on the redemptive message that needs to be proclaimed to the world through the medium of sport, when he says:

The mandate is clear ... Jesus is to be proclaimed. Jesus is to be preached. There is to be a testimony. There is to be a witness of Jesus Christ that goes out into all the world (Oswald 2002b:2).

This theme of redemption is taken further by other sports ministry apologists who view the world of sport as the object of redemption in Christ (Daniels and Weir 2008:2), and therefore, sport itself being restored to the place of bringing glory to God (The World of Sport Today 2006:65).

McCown and Gin call this the “sports-valued approach.” They argue that sport is not just a tool to proclaim the redemptive message, but that sport itself can, and should, be redeemed. This focus changes the approach of those involved in sports ministry from simply pragmatically utilising sport as an opportunity for evangelism, to valuing sport “*in and of itself*” because “sport has value simply because God created people of sport who are wired to live, move, and be” (McCown and Gin 2003:30).

To put it another way, the world of sport, infected by sin as much as any other human activity (McCown 2003:41), needs to be transformed and redeemed so that the values expressed in sport are restored and purified so that God is

honoured in and through sport (The World of Sport Today 2006:12). McCown and Gin (2003:41) elaborate:

Redeemed people of sport have the ability and opportunity to restore sport the way God intended by restoring sport back to its proper relationship with God, self, others and Creation.

2.3.2.2 Creation

To further give a strong theological foundation for the sports ministry movement, sports ministry authors and apologists focus on Creation and the role sports plays as an expression of God's creativity. This focus on creation has both a macro and micro emphasis. On the macro level sport is considered as part of God's created order and therefore He can be glorified through sport as through all of His creation (Oswald 2002a:10). On a micro level, the people of sport are regarded as made in the image of God and therefore the sporting gift in itself is viewed as part of being an image-bearer (McCown and Gin 2003:28).

Stuart Weir (2000:26) argues from Genesis chapter 1 that sport must be considered part of the created world and therefore included within the "very good" creation that God blessed in Genesis 1:31 (Mason 2003:38).

Sport forms part of the physical world and should, as instructed by Timothy (1 Timothy 4:4), be accepted with thanksgiving. Therefore, as God takes pleasure in His creation, so God can take pleasure in those who participate in sport, utilising their God-given ability on the field of play; "Seeing a footballer execute a brilliant chip can bring pleasure to God, pleasure in something that he has created, as much as any other human activity" (Weir 2000:26).

McCown and Gin (2003:28) conclude from Acts 17:24-28 that, as God is found in all of creation and His created beings, rather than in temples or buildings, that it is also possible to find God in those participating in sport.

From this macro perspective of sport being part of the created order, sports ministry theologians then focus on Christian sports people as "image bearers" (Weir 2000:27). Drawing from Genesis 1:27, the gift and ability of sport is valued because sports people can recognise that they have been "uniquely

designed by their Creator, genetically wired to move, to crave competition, to be instinctively active, and to be energised by challenges” (McCown and Gin 2003:28).

McCown and Gin (2003:28) also draw from the imagery of Psalm 139:13. God has knit the sports person together in a specific way, created to enjoy the gift of sports, and through utilising the gift, bring glory to God. Thus, participating in sport can in itself be viewed as an expression of being made in God’s image and part of the dignity assigned to being the pinnacle of God’s creation (Oakley 2005:15). Weir (2000:27) quotes Leonard Browne who stated that “God created man with a desire to play.”

Bringing these macro (God as Creator) and micro (humanity made in His image) factors together, sports ministry theologians also recognise the creativity expressed through the activity of sport as being something that reflects the creativity of God (Oswald 2002a:10). In other words, as those made in the image of God creatively utilise their sporting gift, they give testimony to human dignity and express the “inner-self and character” which reflects the Creator (Oakley 2005:15).

In utilising sporting gifts we are acknowledging God as the source of who we are, but more than that, through the creativity expressed in sport, sports people are themselves testimony to the fact that humanity has the stamp of the divine upon them as the pinnacle of God’s creation (McCown and Gin 2003:28, 46).

2.3.2.3 Worship

Graham Daniels and Stuart Weir in their book written for Christian sports people, “Born to Play” (2004), argue that Christians, made in the image of God and utilising their sporting gifts, are thereby offering up worship to God:

When, as Christian players we recognise that our ability to play sport is a gift from God, we will more and more want to use those talents to please him – simply because of who he is, the creator and Lord of the universe and the God who loves us so much. We

will want to offer our talents and abilities as an act of worship (Daniels and Weir 2004:17).

Many sports ministry theologians draw on a quote by Eric Liddell (1902-1945) who was a top sprinter before the 2nd World War and was widely acclaimed for his Christian testimony (Wilson 1996:32). Liddell, in the film “Chariots of Fire” was quoted as having said, “God made me fast. When I run, I feel His pleasure” (McCown and Gin 2003:45).

This quote has become something of a mantra for the sports ministry movement as it both acknowledges God as the source (creator) of the sporting gift, while also highlighting the responsibility of the sports person to acknowledge and give thanks to God for the gift as an act of worship, giving recognition to God as the giver of the gift (Oakley 2005:16).

Weir argues that worship is not to be regarded as an event that takes place in church, but to encompass everything the Christian does, including sport. He highlights Romans 12:1-2 as a biblical mandate to offer God worship in everything we do. Sport provides a very physical way in which one’s body can be offered as a “living sacrifice”. Weir goes on to appeal to the Westminster confession which states that man’s chief purpose is to bring glory to God, and asks, “Is there any reason why that should not be on a sports field just as much as in a church?” (Weir 2000:31, 32).

Through this focus on sport as worship, the sports ministry movement is placing tremendous value on the act of sport which has implications for how sport is to be played. It is taught that if sport truly is a gift of God, then Christian sports people, in honouring the giver of the gift, should participate in a way that is pleasing to Him (Daniels and Weir 2008:3).

Daniels and Weir utilise Colossians 4:2-6 as a framework for Christian participation in sport. They argue that not only does the way a Christian plays sport indicate their desire to please God, but it also will have an impact on their co-participants in sport who are observing their behaviour (Daniels and Weir 2008:4).

Sports people can thereby earn the right to share with others about their faith as they themselves participate in a way that reflects the character of God. The theological framework espoused therefore recognises that God, as Creator of the universe, is to be glorified through His creation participating in sport. This in turn will impact the individual participant in sport who should seek to offer their sporting talent in worship to God. The Christian sports person thereby sacrifices their own desires (see Romans 12:1-2) to the greater good of glorifying God (Daniels and Weir 2004:34).

This has a direct outward expression in the actual way sport is played by Christians which not only results in the redemption of sport, but also serves as a living testimony to all co-participants in sport. In this regard, McCown and Gin (2003:48) state the following:

As believers, it is our responsibility to identify and acknowledge God as the Creator and Giver of these skills. We can play and watch sport, giving glory for the talent to the Creator, not the created ... It is necessary that we play, teach sport, train (coach), and govern sport the way God intended sport to be. It is up to us to redeem sport by honouring the Creator of sport and uphold sport to its proper biblical perspective.

2.3.2.4 Liberty and expediency

The final theological emphasis that comes through the writings of modern sports ministry writers builds upon the text of 1 Corinthians 9:19-23. Here Paul is giving a justification of the different means he used to reach people with the Gospel. Whether he be reaching Jews, Greeks, Gentiles, slave or free, the Apostle would utilise a method that most suited the audience he was seeking to impact. The message never changed, but the means and medium he utilised would be altered taking into consideration the background and culture of the recipients (Oswald 2002a:11).

Oswald uses the word “expediency” to describe this approach to ministry. He defines expediency as “excelling in all things to accomplish the greatest

results.” He goes on to argue that, as the apostle Paul utilised the best method to get the maximum result, so the church today needs to consider sport as one of the principle methods for evangelism in today’s world (Oswald 2002 a:7, 11).

David Oakley (2005:18) calls this approach the “liberty principle.” God has given Christians freedom to find the best means to reach people with the Gospel. Greg Linville (2007:30) concurs that there is “methodological freedom in the churches redemptive activities”.

Coupled with this, there is recognition of the calling upon each individual. Stuart Weir (2000:30) states that Christian sports people need to be set free to recognise that their ability is a gift from God and they are liberated to enjoy it and bring glory to God through it.

In Ephesians 2:10 we read that every individual Christian has a responsibility to discover and conduct the “good works” that they have been created to fulfil. It can therefore be concluded that those who have been created with a passion and gift for sport are at liberty, or indeed compelled, to utilise this gift and passion for redemptive purposes (Garner 2003:29).

In Colossians 3:17 Paul exhorts Christians to give their best to God in everything they do (Weir 2000:30). Mason (2003:39) argues that this verse gives a mandate to Christians not only to participate in sport, but also to have the freedom to seek to excel and perform at the highest level they can, because this in itself is a testimony to God and an expression of worship.

2.4 Theological influences towards disengagement from sport

In the previous section the theological influences towards the engagement of Christianity and sport have been studied. However, in order to understand the historical and theological development of sports ministry, it is also important to understand theological influences that have led to periods of disengagement.

Although the Muscular Christian movement of the 19th Century brought a reunion between the worlds of sport and Christianity, this “marriage of convenience” was not without its challenges, particularly in the early 20th Century before the emergence of institutionalised Sports Ministry. Ladd and

Mathisen view this as a period of “disengagement” where the church and prominent Christian leaders “abandoned” sport (Ladd and Mathisen 1999:18). Although not everyone agrees that this is can be viewed as a definable historical period (e.g. Linville 2007), what is clear is that a form of dualism once more influenced Christian thinking. Sport was viewed as secular and Christians were encouraged not to partake in something which was a distraction from more spiritual pursuits (Connor 2003:33). The result was that whereas once Christians had been hugely influential in the development of modern sport (e.g. inventing the sport of basketball, forming the English football clubs), now the church negated their influence and their voice was silenced (Oakley 2005:5). This practical dualism was influenced by a number of factors which caused the church to rethink its approach and relationship with sport.

2.4.1 Idolatry

The role organised sport played in the West grew exponentially during the 19th Century (Connor 2003:32). One result of the social changes brought about by the industrial revolution and urbanisation created a seedbed for the massive growth in the subsequent popularity of sports. Some even argue that sport has become the prevalent religion in America (Ladd and Mathisen 1999:145).

The irony for Muscular Christianity is that sports began to be elevated more than the Gospel (Watson et al. 2005:§16). Whereas DL Moody had viewed sports as a means of reaching people for Christ (Higgs 1995:249), sports increasingly became seen as an end in itself, entrenched in Western society (Connor 2003:33).

Coupled with this was the rise of professional sport and athlete heroes. Not only could sport itself be seen as a religion, but the athletes attained the status of idols (The World of Sport Today 2006:60). As mega-stadiums were built (the new cathedrals), and with the advent of television, the popularity of sport and the status of athlete heroes grew exponentially (Connor 2003:32).

On an individual level, Body Theology, which previously had given credence to Christian participation in sport, when taken to the extreme, can become the cult of the body (The World of Sport Today 2006:30). As exercise and fitness became more popular, the motivation of being involved in sport as “to the glory of God” was diminished and supplanted by “body worship.” These trends can still be seen today:

For we have moved beyond concern for personal health and personal grooming to the worship of the body and its physical dimension (The World of Sport Today 2006:6).

Higgs and Braswell (2004:4) concur that the focus on the body went beyond reasonable proportions, and, fuelled by modern media, the “body has assumed a tyranny over the soul.” The church looked on as sport became increasingly a cultural idol which, although birthed through Muscular Christianity, was increasingly becoming a phenomenon that seemed out of control and out of proportion when compared to more regular church pursuits (Connor 2003:32).

The church’s reaction to the rise of the false god of sport was to retreat from the playing fields (Connor 2003:32). As the church retreated, so a void was left which allowed sport to form its own culture (Connor 2003:33). And, as sport developed into a religion with its own culture, this no doubt led to the further disenchantment of the church with regards to sport, as the sporting culture increasingly began to display unbiblical characteristics.

2.4.2 Professionalism

Tyndall (2004:22) states that; “The issue of earning one’s living from sport raised its head early on...” The Muscular Christian ideal in the 19th Century was that participation in team sports could help develop godly character in young men (Oakley 2005:12). Participation in sport was seen as a means to this end. However, as sport grew in popularity, so did the opportunity for young men to make their career from sport as the economy of sport grew (Connor 2003:32). This opportunity was multiplied as corporate sponsorship, marketing and the media all elevated the profile of professional sport (Oakley 2005:12).

With the rise of professionalism, so the motivation for participation in sport changed from the original ideals of character development towards a more competitive culture which encouraged “win at all costs” (Connor 2003:32). The result with this growing economisation of sport is that the Muscular Christian values were pushed to the periphery (The World of Sport Today 2006:37). The fruit of this has been seen in the general moral decay evident in 20th Century professional sport (Oakley 2005:13). Again, the church, rather than being a prophetic voice within the world of sport, moved to the periphery and was unable to reconcile a way for Christians to be involved within the ungodly world of professional sport (Connor 2003:32).

The world of professional sport did not seem compatible with Christian virtues and the basic teaching of Scripture . The biblical worldview of the church could not accommodate this unforeseen change of events, which meant that big business and corporate interests became the chief influencers within the emerging world of professional sport (Ladd and Mathisen 1999:93). Furthermore, they assert that:

without a clear connection between muscular Christianity and sport, the emerging social phenomenon had no solid philosophical underpinning (Ladd and Mathisen 1999:94).

This in turn led to the demise of the values and principles that had underpinned sport in the 19th Century.

2.4.3 Associated “sins”

As has been seen above, the church largely withdrew from the emerging sports culture that was becoming entwined with Western society. The effect was that sports culture emerged without the theological framework of Muscular Christianity, and in turn began to display characteristics which confirmed the church’s view that sport was an “ungodly” place.

The church never declared sport itself to be sinful, as it had in previous centuries. However, it was the associated sins which caused the church to retreat further from the world of sport. This list of sins would include gambling,

alcohol, Sunday participation (Daniels and Weir 2008:2). But more than that, ethical practices such as cheating and rule violations became common place as the “win at all costs” mentality took hold (Ladd and Mathisen 1999:93).

The church’s response was to actively encourage sportsmen and women to lay down their desire to play sport at a high level in exchange for more “wholesome activities” (Connor 2003:33). Indeed, a former Muscular Christian and professional baseball player, Billy Sunday, very publically turned his back on professional sport, finding it incompatible with the Christian message he proclaimed as an evangelist (McCown and Gin 2003:16). In particular, his doctrine did not all allow for participation in Sunday sport (Higgs 1995:255).

However, not all athletes went to the extremes of Billy Sunday. Eric Liddell also found sport on the Sabbath to be against his belief (even to the extent of foregoing the opportunity to win Olympic gold), but continued to participate in events held on other days of the week (Wilson 1996:56).

As this period of church/sports ministry history is examined, it can be seen that sports ministry did not have a solid biblical foundation to cope with the changing place that sport had in society. Those involved in sports ministry were pioneering, pragmatic and energetic, but a clear biblical apologetic for sports ministry was not high on their agenda. The result of this was that when church leaders began to denounce sport and use the Bible to condemn involvement in sport, those who had pioneered the ministry had no Biblical framework from which to defend “Muscular Christianity.”

2.5 The historical relationship between church and sport in South Africa

Organised and intentional sports ministry is a relatively new phenomenon in South Africa that has begun to develop in the last 30 years. Up until recently, church leaders appear to have not had a theological framework which has allowed for the development of sports ministry. Those sports ministries that have emerged have largely been lead by Para-church ministries rather than local church congregations. Given the fact that, as was seen above, organised sport was introduced to Africa by missionaries, it may seem surprising that the

church has not retained an active influence within South African sport. However, it is apparent that the “muscular missionaries” were again pragmatic in their approach, utilising sport to reach their desired goals of evangelising Africa, but not leaving a theology that would assist the new church to continue this interaction with sport. The missionaries’ goal was not to redeem sport as an avenue to bring glory to God, but rather to utilise sport to proclaim the message of salvation, while also utilising sport to espouse Western culture (Zezeza and Veney 2003:127).

Beyond that, the evidence suggests they did not teach their new converts a theological framework that encouraged continued engagement with sport. Rather, sport took on a life of its own as it grew in popularity outside of the church, and, just as in the West, developed a culture of its own which displayed characteristics that the church could not reconcile with Scripture. This further reinforced the churches disengagement and isolation from sport. In particular the sport of football became the popular sport of the masses which quickly emerged into an important and influential sub-culture in South Africa which, although introduced initially by the missionaries, soon became devoid of the influence of the church.

As Africa became colonised by Europe, so African leisure was greatly impacted through the imported sports and games that the Europeans brought to the Continent. No sport became more popular amongst Africans than football which took on an African flavour as it became the sport of choice (Armstrong and Giulianotti 2004:8). Peter Alegi (2004:58) demonstrates how, in South Africa, the influences of traditional games and leisure that predated soccer began to impact not only the ambiance and atmosphere at a soccer match, but the very way the game was played. This included a greater emphasis on individualism rather than teamwork (Zezeza and Veney 2003:132) with “spectacular displays of individual talent” capturing the imagination of the crowds rather than the end result (Alegi 2004:58).

It is clear that although the African soccer players loved the sport of the colonisers, they were to stamp their own brand of play upon the game. Perhaps

it is even true to say that the message of the missionaries was in some ways overlooked as the game itself won the hearts of the African population (Alegi 2004:49).

Initially, Christian missionaries in South Africa were still at the forefront of organising sport, but the next generation of African sports leaders were, although of mission school stock, more focused on the opportunity for positional leadership that sport afforded than continuing the mission focus of sport (Alegi 2006:67). Football thus disengaged from the heritage of Muscular Christianity to develop in its own way. This understanding of African culture placing its stamp on the “imperial games”, gives insight into the “Africanisation” (Alegi 2004:49) process that took place once the African masses took ownership of the sport.

As soccer grew in popularity, it appears that the Christian community retreated from the playing fields. As the African church became established with structures and denominations, so the initial symbiotic relationship between soccer and Christianity, so enthusiastically promoted by the missionaries, did not translate into an ongoing sustained ministry by the churches. In fact, just the opposite happened. Church leaders became suspicious of sport and actively opposed their congregants from participating in sport.

My hypotheses from studying the role of soccer in African society is that, as soccer became its own sub-cultural phenomenon and became an increasingly important factor within the African identity struggle of the 20th century, so the church increasingly distanced itself from the sport. And, as the church withdrew from the playing fields, soccer took on a whole new life of its own. No longer was soccer an imported game of the colonisers; it became an African sport. The void left by the church was filled with cultural factors that the church struggled to reconcile with Scripture, thus causing Christians to retreat even further from what many considered to be the “devil’s playing fields”.

The following is a summary of some of the factors that began to shape soccer in Africa, as the Africanisation process took hold, leading to the development of an African football culture which in turn fuelled the vicious cycle of Christian disengagement.

2.5.1 Political struggle and new identities

Whereas sport had been introduced by colonising nations to “civilise” Africa, and, in the minds of the missionaries to introduce the Gospel, the African people began to view football as an opportunity to exert their own political will (Alegi 2006:68).

One reason soccer became popular was that it was an avenue where Africans could feel equal with the European settlers and colonial authorities. Soccer was the great leveller, and an opportunity for an African individual to, for a short period, gain the upper hand against their oppressors (Zezeza and Veney 2003:131).

Football became viewed as an opportunity for African's to demonstrate their equality with the rest of the world, as the continent sought to shake off the inferiority complex which is the legacy of colonialism. One example of how this is still true comes as recently as 1990. The Cameroonian football team put together an incredible run of results in the FIFA World Cup – including almost knocking out one of the favourites, and former colonial power, England. However, the hero of the team, Roger Milla, recalls that, “the image of the World Cup he treasured most was that of Paul Biya, the Cameroonian President, shaking hands with other heads of state after Cameroon had beaten Argentina” (Kuper 1998:113).

As soccer garnered self-esteem, so it naturally evolved to become an agent for political activism as part of the struggle for independent self-rule. Colonialism had divided up Africa into nations, which in effect were artificial boundaries uniting disparate tribes. However, as African national soccer teams began competing on the world stage in the post-World War 2 era, so this began to invoke feelings of national pride and spur on the process towards independence (Armstrong and Giulianotti 2004:8).

Nigeria serves as a great example of a nation that seems, on many levels, to struggle to unify under the Nigerian flag. Yet when the Super Eagles play (the

national teams nickname), everyone becomes a 'Nigerian' (Armstrong and Giulianotti (2004:75).

In South Africa, the stadiums themselves became the place for promoting political ideals, as it was the one arena where Black South Africans could legally meet *en masse* (Lungu 2001:206). In the 1940's, the ANC began organising soccer matches to raise funds for their organisation and no doubt promote liberationist ideas (Alegi 2004:62).

As the stranglehold of apartheid took hold, dividing people along colour lines in all spheres of society (including both churches and sport), so football continued to be an avenue to promote Black pride and experience temporary freedom; "football could bring together disparate locations, towns, and cities, and forge an 'imagined community' of Black South Africans united by a shared sporting experience" (Alegi 2004:62). This trend has continued in the new South Africa:

Beyond independence, football has continued to be a powerful force within African society as the search for identity, purpose and freedom has continued (Armstrong and Giulianotti 2004:17).

Undoubtedly, the church has struggled to find its place within a football culture that began to exhibit such political undertones. Previously the evangelistic zeal behind sport had been the message of the muscular missionaries. Now, the evangelistic zeal was that of progressive African visionaries who were spreading the message of independence and utilising the medium of sport towards these ends.

2.5.2 African traditional religion

Perhaps the most unique feature of the "Africanisation" process was the merging of African traditional religion with the sport of football (Armstrong and Giulianotti 2004:15). This swift alliance resulted in teams across Africa consulting with Sangomas (traditional healers), who would prepare teams for matches through a variety of rituals. In Durban, the initial Christian influence within soccer soon disappeared, and by the 1950s nearly every team "relied on the services of a religious specialist" (Alegi 2004:50).

Alegi links the practices in South Africa back to the martial practices of a previous era. Just as Zulu warriors would prepare for battle through purifying themselves by mysterious ritualistic practices, so soccer teams will now go on retreats where powerful medicines are administered amidst symbolic rituals. Although these links between witchcraft and soccer are known, most soccer players are extremely reluctant to talk about what actually goes on (Alegi 2004:50).

In Armstrong and Giulianotti's book, *Football in Africa* (2004:15), they treat this marriage of African religious practices with soccer as simply a contextual form of superstition. But there is no doubt that many across Africa believe passionately in the spiritual power behind the rituals, and their influence upon the outcome of a match. Many Christian players have shared the incredible pressure there is to participate in the rituals and how they can be treated as an outcast if refusing to do so (with the resulting blame for a bad result). Others have shared of the spiritual pungency at some games and the realities of the influence of this "magic" on matches across the Continent.

As South African football began to become synonymous with African traditional religious practices, so the church increasingly distanced itself from the sport. The fact that football was rife with these practices further entrenched the church's opinion that it was wrong for Christians to partake in soccer. The divide between the two continued to grow.

2.5.3 The allure of fame and fortune

As football in the West has become increasingly big business, with players earning huge salaries and living the so-called "high life", so it has become increasingly desirable for African soccer players to seek a lucrative football contract in Europe.

Footballers in Africa were, from the earliest developmental stages of the game, already considered local heroes. The adoring fans would give their heroes nicknames to magnify their accomplishments on the field of play (Alegi 2004:52). This also reflected a previous era where praise-singers would extol

the virtues of warriors in song and their name would go down in posterity. Football soon became an avenue for young Africans to earn both respect and cash.

In more recent times, the magnitude of hero-status accorded to African football players has increased drastically. Fuelled by the media, African heroes playing in Europe receive the plaudits of all across the Continent, while encouraging the next generation to seek escape from their circumstance through the holy grail of a contract with a European club. The pressure has compounded another problem in African football, that of “age-cheating.” This is the deliberate falsifying of the age of players in order that older players can be registered to play in tournaments for which they are illegible (Ricci 2008:70). This common practice, and others, such as the bribing of referees, is indicative of the reasons why many church leaders associate soccer with corruption and unscriptural behaviour.

2.5.4 The church retreats

A combination of these factors explains why the church in South Africa, in spite of the Christian heritage of soccer, has largely disengaged from the sport. Football not only became a political force, but was also seen as the domain of a rival religion who overtly practised rituals contrary to Scripture. Not only that, football itself could be considered a rival religion, with local heroes becoming the idols of the masses. Coupled with this, football increasingly was played on a Sunday, thus violating the Sabbath rest, and the fans attending the games would often be well lubricated by alcohol (Alegi 2004:52).

As football became more contextualised within African culture, the church struggled to reconcile this with Scripture and took an easy route – retreating from the playing fields. In personal conversations the author has had with pastors, football was viewed at best as a distraction from the Lord’s will, and at worst, outright sin.

A theological explanation for this is that many church leaders developed dualistic thinking when it came to matters of the spirit versus things of the body.

A dichotomy was made between what was considered “spiritual” (like attending church, prayer meetings, and Bible studies), and things “secular” (such as sport). Coupled with dualistic thinking was perhaps a miscomprehension of the concept of missions. The church was viewed as “sacred ground” to which sinners should come to seek repentance. Christians were not taught to become “salt and light” (Matthew 5:13-16) in secular places (e.g. football fields) in order to practically demonstrate the love of Christ and allow “sacred space” to impact the “devil’s playing fields”.

The irony is that as the church retreated and football increasingly became a domain where Christianity was not at all represented, so football itself became increasingly secular. Very few churches broached the subject of how to impact football players for Christ. Those churches that did develop soccer programmes tended towards starting alternative so-called “Christian Leagues.” The symbiotic relationship between Christianity and sport seemed dead and buried, and most African people began to see the two as mutually exclusive.

“The fact that non-Westerners eventually adopted the missionaries’ sport is hard to dispute, given the participation of non-Westerners in the modern-day Olympics” (Putney 2003:132). Yet despite missionaries being one of the major agents that brought Western sport to Africa, the South African church on the whole rejected sport as being “worldly” and “of the devil”. As has been seen, many church leaders were dualistic in their thinking and viewed things of the physical realm as of far less importance than “spiritual” things, thereby sadly neglecting the unique opportunity the church had to be culture formers within the embryonic world of African sport.

Although in the post-colonial era Africans have viewed much of what the colonialists did and brought to Africa with great suspicion and have focused on African identity and traditional culture, Africans have continued to embrace the sports of the colonisers. However, they have taken the organised sports of the West and very much made them their own. Going to a sporting event in Africa is

a unique experience of colour, noise and fanaticism. Even the way sport is played by Africans has a distinct flavour and flare about it that cannot be found elsewhere. Yet the church on the whole has avoided sport and seen it as a competitor for the souls of the African people. And perhaps more than anywhere else in the world (other than South America), sport in Africa has become a religion.

Deeply entrenched within the sporting culture of this continent are elements of African Traditional Religions. Sangomas are visible at many sporting events (particularly football) and many players prior to their match partake in rituals to bring luck. It is sadly true that, while sport has been thriving, many churches have been struggling to reach their communities in relevant and meaningful ways. The church needs to see the challenge of reaching the sports culture for Christ as a unique opportunity that God has given the 21st century Church.

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter the author has sought to trace the historical relationship between the church and sport, and in particular draw out the theological forces that have driven periods of engagement and disengagement. This process has primarily focused on available sources which highlight what has occurred in the West. Although little research has been done within the South African context, it is probable that there are similar theological influences that have led to the church in South Africa remaining largely disengaged from the world of sport. Although there are large contextual differences, the primary cause of disengagement appears to remain that of dualistic thinking. As sport has grown and developed, dualism has prevented churches from engaging in mission through sport as sport has been viewed as a secular activity and not an arena for Christian involvement. The church became more entrenched in this position as sport itself displayed many characteristics that were considered unbiblical. During periods of disengagement in the West, these characteristics included the following: sport being an idol; the professionalism and business of sport; Sabbath

violation; and sinful activities associated with sports people. In South Africa sport, and particularly football, became politicised and an arena for the affirmation of African culture, including that of African traditional religion. Coupled to this, sport was increasingly played on Sunday's and sportspeople began to be associated with a lifestyle that was not conducive to Christian behaviour.

As the church in South Africa is now re-engaging with sport, a theological framework that underpins the engagement is imperative in order to ensure a lasting, fruitful and biblical foundation for sports ministry. In the following chapter the author will therefore reflect further on the theological foundation for sports ministry as a vehicle for evangelism.

CHAPTER 3

The Theological Foundations of Sports Ministry: Sport as a Field for Evangelism

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to examine the theological foundations of sports ministry through studying sport as a field for evangelism. The basis for this chapter is a survey of relevant literature relating to the following:

- The definition of evangelism and sports ministry
- Theological reflection on evangelism
- The theological foundations of sports ministry, especially sport as a field for evangelism in South Africa
- An examination of three contemporary theological models for sports ministry

The importance of developing a theological framework for sports ministry is highlighted by Greg Linville (2007:42):

While it is realised most denominational bodies have never specifically addressed sport and competition through their theological grid-work and since there are no specific, didactic teachings concerning sport and competition, and furthermore, since the only references to sport or competition are in the form of metaphor and analogy, it becomes obvious it is imperative to create a theological framework from which the corporate church and the individual Christian can know what to believe, what to think, and how to act in relationship to sport and competition.

Through this chapter, the researcher is seeking to identify a sound theological foundation for sports ministry which will enable the development of a sustained sports ministry through the local church in South Africa. As evangelism is a

major component of sports ministry, it is important to both define and reflect theologically upon evangelism, and apply it as a framework for sports ministry. Beyond this, a review of three contemporary theological frameworks for sports ministry will be examined. All this information will then be utilised in Chapter 6 to formulate a proposed theological framework for sports ministry in terms of PRIOR model.

3.2 The definition of evangelism and sports ministry

3.2.1 Defining Evangelism

McCloskey (1986:ch.4) states succinctly that “evangelism is the activity of communicating the good news of the gospel.” CH Spurgeon defined evangelism as “one beggar telling another beggar where to get bread” (quoted in Green 1990:8). In its very broadest sense, this definition of evangelism is helpful because it demonstrates how the Good News is to be transmitted from one person to another. The responsibility rests upon the recipient of God’s grace to share with others how they too can find forgiveness in Christ.

William Temple (quoted in Green 1990:9) provides a more comprehensive definition:

To evangelise is so to present Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit that men shall put their trust in God through him, to accept him as their Saviour, and serve him as their King in the fellowship of his church.

The New Testament makes it clear that the good news concerning salvation through Christ should be shared throughout the world (Luke 19:1-10; 1 Timothy 2:4; John 3:16). Evangelism is therefore the proclamation of the good news with the desired result of changed lives and the growth of Christ’s church in the world. Weber (1991:166) divides evangelism into the following three components: the *message, method and goals*. These three components further help define evangelism in its fullness.

3.2.1.1 The message of evangelism

The Message proclaimed through evangelism is unchanging and is entirely based upon the Word of God. It is the Good News that through Christ's life, death and resurrection, reconciliation between a holy God and sinful people is possible (McCloskey 1986:ch.4). The Lausanne Covenant states that:

To evangelise is to spread the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures, and that as the reigning Lord he now offers forgiveness of sins and the liberating gift of the Spirit to all who repent and believe (quoted in Weber 1991:166).

John 3:16 is the classic text that defines the message of evangelism in that it demonstrates that Jesus Christ is the medium of reconciliation for those who believe the message. Moreover, Christ claimed exclusivity as the only way to the Father (John 14:6). Jesus transitioned from the one proclaiming the Kingdom of God (e.g. Mark 1:15), to the central content of the message proclaimed by the early church (Green 2003:80). In following Christ's example, the message proclaimed must remain completely true to Scripture for evangelism to be taking place (Connor 2002:57).

3.2.1.2 The method of evangelism

The message of the Good News is unchanging, but the church has liberty in determining the most effective method for evangelism to take place (Weber 1991:166). This may change depending upon the context within which the message is proclaimed (Connor 2003:57). However, what is absolutely essential in every context is the role of the individual Christian as communicator of the message. God's chosen method is to communicate his message through the medium of human beings (Spurgeon 1995:23). The methodology of evangelism recognises that God has created each Christian with different gifts and passions which can be utilised for evangelism and ministry (Cash 2002:70). These gifts and passion contribute to one's call and the specific method of evangelism that individual Christians, or collective groups, utilise in the world.

As the Lausanne Covenant states, the physical presence of the Christian in the world as a witness for the Gospel is essential to effective evangelism (Weber 1991:166). This approach is “incarnational”, again following the example of Christ (John 1:10-12). The physical presence of Christians in the world embodying the Gospel in deed is inseparable from the proclamation of the Gospel in word (Cash 2002:65). As Spurgeon (1995:165) puts it, “We have not only to be witnesses and pleaders, but we also have to be examples.” As the first Christians spread through the Roman world, they took the message and embodied it in ways that were relevant and effective within different contexts. They applied appropriate methods of proclamation within each context, although the message remained the same (Acts 5:42; 8:4, 12, 25, 35, 40; 10:36 and 11:20) (McCloskey 1986:ch.4). God is glorified as he uses his people to bring about the message through varying means (Spurgeon 1995:23).

3.2.1.3 The goals of evangelism

Chafer (1993:27) states the following regarding the main goals of evangelism:

All evangelism finds its consummation in one phase of the great Scriptural word, ‘Salvation.’ It is a word which covers more than the objective of evangelism, in that it includes, beyond the deliverance from the penalty of sin and condemnation of sin, both the deliverance from the present power of sin and the final unfolding development of the saved one into the image of Christ.

When Christ commissioned His disciples to proclaim the message of salvation to the ends of the world, it is clear that he expected results. He instructed his early followers to make disciples, baptising and teaching them everything he had commanded (Matthew 28:17-20). The anticipated response from those who are evangelised is that they believe the message (Romans 10:14-15) and, in this faith response, commit to a lifelong process of discipleship, growth and fruitfulness in faithful service of Christ. Yet the Scriptures teach that salvation is a work of the Spirit in a person which causes the response of faith (Romans

8:9-11). A “divine illumination” (Chafer 1993:45) is required in order for someone to be saved out of Satan’s realm and into the kingdom of light.

However, the Gospel message is reasonable and appeals to the conscience in such a way that it should stir people to a response (Spurgeon 1995:15). Paul expected a response to the message he proclaimed as he appealed to people to be reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:11, 20). In the case of Peter’s evangelism at Pentecost (Acts 2:13, 38), some responded by rejecting the message, but others responded by becoming Christians as Peter challenged them to “repent and believe”. True evangelism will always challenge people to make a decision (Green 1990:10). This decision, however, is not just a one-time response but a call to a changed life, incorporation into the church of Christ, and a commitment to serve him in the world (Weber 1991:166).

3.2.1.4 A definition of evangelism: a summary of its three components

Evangelism therefore is the proclamation of the Good News. This centres upon the Biblical message concerning salvation through the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ which has brought reconciliation between humanity and God (Green 1990:9). This message is proclaimed through human means utilising methods which can most effectively impact each generation of unbelievers. As the message is proclaimed in a variety of methods, in faith, results are anticipated as the Holy Spirit works within the unregenerate heart in order to bring people to a point of salvation as they believe in the work of Christ. The Berlin World Congress on Evangelism stated that evangelism is therefore, "an affirmation concerning all that is central in the work of Christ for men and in men; and all that is fundamental in that transforming experience to which the exercise of personal faith in Christ gives rise" (McCloskey 1986:ch.4).

3.2.2 Defining sports ministry

In chapter 1, Sports Ministry was defined as; “seeking to glorify God in sports, thereby extending his Kingdom through sports.” There are two main components in this definition:

- The concept that those engaged in sports are principally partaking in order to glorify God with their gift as an act of worship; and
- In so doing, they have opportunity to share their faith with those in the world of sport, thereby proclaiming the Gospel and expanding Christ's kingdom on earth.

Mason (2003:17) equally brings out these two elements:

Sports ministry provides stimulation to those wishing to use their physical talent for God's glory and the extension of his Kingdom, as well as a motivation towards personal witnessing in the sports arena.

It is quite clear that historically there is an ancient relationship between sport and religion (Tyndall 2004:8). Sports were viewed as a way of honouring or appeasing the gods and the ancient games were full of religious rites and rituals (Connor 2003:28). However, in defining sports ministry, it is important to realise that it is far more than simply an association between the Christian faith and sports. Sports ministry is not just bringing Christian rites and rituals to the world sport, such as the pre-game prayer rituals that now dominate many sports (Higgs 1995:194). Nor is sports ministry simply providing alternative sporting activities within a Christian environment as a form of leisure, such as a church family sports day (although some may argue this is a valid component of a church based sports ministry). The researcher believes that sports ministry must have an intentionality that is seeking to bring glory to God in the world of sports through the proclamation of the gospel in relevant and strategic ways (Daniels and Weir 2004:51).

It may be possible to argue that any Christian partaking in sports is involved in ministry. This should be the case as Christians should not form a dichotomy between what is ministry and what is not. However, it is also true to say that many Christians do not partake in sport for the goal of winning the lost, glorifying God and extending His kingdom. Many partake for health, social, or even selfish motivations. Therefore, when discussing sports ministry, the researcher is referring to those who are intentionally using their sporting gift to glorify God and extend His kingdom on earth. Garner (2003:8) helpfully states that intentionality in sports ministry “is the purposeful inclusion of sharing the gospel during recreation and sports ministry events.” Therefore, a person playing sport who happens to be a Christian cannot automatically be considered partaking in sports ministry. Only if individuals are involved in sport with the primary purpose of seeking to please God and make their love for Christ known to others, can they claim to be “doing” sports ministry (Oswald 2001:1). For example, a church which organises a soccer match for their members may not be intending to minister but rather just to have a fun time; whereas a church that includes non-Christians in its social match in order to build relationships with them is definitely involved in sports ministry.

Therefore, the researcher believes that, those involved in sports ministry must be *intentional* in their endeavours. “All ... sports programmes/ministries of the church must have the ultimate goal of outreach. We must not settle anymore for activity for activity’s sake” (Garner 2003:146). This means that there must be a vision, plan, and strategy to bring glory to God and extend His kingdom through the sporting endeavours (Connor 2003:106). This does not have to be on a grand scale but can start in a simple way. However, whether the goal is to reach the masses or build relationships with children who play in the church car park, the values of glorifying God and extending His kingdom are the same.

Those who are intentionally engaged in sports ministry will therefore continually be seeking to glorify God in their sporting participation, with the outcome that His kingdom will be extended as opportunities arise for the proclamation of the Gospel.

A further examination of these dual and mutually inclusive components of sports ministry will give greater depth to this definition of sports ministry. Besides the above examination of the two supporting components of the definition, the role of the local church and the prophetic nature of sports ministry will also be highlighted in the following four sections.

3.2.2.1 Glorifying God in sport

In the 19th Century, Bishop William T. Manning cited in Price (2001:25) said:

Clean, wholesome, well-regulated sport is a most powerful agency for true and utmost living ... True sport and true religion should be in the closest touch and sympathy ... A well played game of polo or of touch football is in its own place and in its own way as pleasing to God as a beautiful service of worship in the Cathedral.

The Concise Dictionary of Evangelical Theology defines “worship” very succinctly as: “To worship God is to ascribe to him the worth he is due” (Rayburn 1991:564). Worship, for Christians, is about honouring God in everything we do.

Many Christians see worship as simply the singing of songs to, or about, God (Weir 2000:30). Christian services include “times of worship” which gives a false impression that worship can be compartmentalised into sections of our life rather than incorporating all our life. Stuart Weir (2000:31) argues for a broad definition of worship that can incorporate our participation in sport:

The Biblical view of worship is a seven-days-a-week lifestyle activity, rather than requiring but one hour on a Sunday morning ... The Christian is to please God in everything, by doing it as if for God. That includes sport.

Jesus called His followers to worship in “Spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). In Matthew 15:1-21, Jesus, in discussion with the Pharisees, challenges their perceptions of ‘clean’ and ‘unclean’ worship. For Jesus, worship was not about

rites and rituals, but about having a pure heart before God. From Jesus' teaching example, we see that worship is not so much about what we do or where we do it, but far more about who we are (being right before God) and how we honour Him with everything we do and say (Milne1982:223).

This is in line with the true holistic approach to worship that was supposed to permeate the life and soul of the Israelite nation. God's command to the Israelites was that they were to love Him and worship only Him (Exodus 20:1-6). Jesus confirmed that this was the greatest commandment (Mark 12:29-31). God then gave Moses laws that outlined the outworking of this in every aspect of their religious, social and working lives. The context for the books of Deuteronomy and Leviticus is the command that the Israelites were to be true God-worshippers. Clearly, worship pervaded every facet of Israelite life and was not just about occasional religious acts (e.g. Deuteronomy 10:12 - 11:32).

In the New Testament, Paul, in Romans 12:1-2 illuminates what this means. Our "reasonable service" to God is to totally yield our bodies as a "living and holy sacrifice, pleasing to God). In reflecting on this passage, Willard (2002:170-171) states:

This total yielding of every part of our body to God, until the very tissues and muscles that make it up are inclined toward God and godliness and are vitalised in action by the powers of heaven, breaks all conformity with worldly life in this age and transforms us into conformity with the age to come, by completing the renewal of our minds – our powers of thought and imaginations and judgement deeply rooted in our bodies.

Rinehart (1998:118), also reflecting on Romans 12:1-2, helpfully states that worshipping God is the primary goal of all ministry, rather than ministry being a "task, program, or production" (Rinehart 1998:118).

Colossians 3:17 (NIV) states, "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." This verse, within the context of all Scripture, therefore makes it clear that,

as beings created to bring glory to God in all our lives; sport provides one avenue of worship for the devoted follower of Christ. This verse also brings a Biblical critique upon the performance-driven sports person. For the Christian, participation in sport is not for self-glorification. The results of our sporting endeavour are secondary to seeking to glorify God and pleasing Him in the way we participate (Daniels and Weir 2004:8).

3.2.2.2 Extending God's Kingdom through sport

The second aspect of the definition will be an outflow of worship; the extension of God's kingdom through sport. Scripture teaches that the kingdom of God is extended wherever God's will is carried out on earth, as in heaven (Matthew 6:10) (Willard 2002:86). Christians are living in eager anticipation of the full realisation of God's kingdom (Luke 21:31; 22:18); yet Christ made it clear that the Kingdom of God is already present through every Christian (Luke 17:21). The Kingdom is available to all those who seek it with all their hearts (Matthew 6:13).

All Christian ministries should have the focus of expanding God's kingdom (Garner 2003:18). This equally applies to sports ministry. As Christians seek to glorify God in sport, this will provide a natural platform from which to share their faith with others and seek to extend God's kingdom (Daniels and Weir 2008:§2¶11). 2 Peter 3:15 (NIV) can be aptly applied to Christians involved in sport; "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect ..." God has gifted sports people to utilise their passion and talents for sport in order to intentionally seek to build His kingdom through any and every opportunity. If Christian sports people do not utilise this opportunity, they are in danger of denying the sovereignty of God in their lives (Garner 2003:32).

Sport serves a dual function within the goal of extending God's kingdom. The world of sport is a field of evangelism which the church should infiltrate with the Gospel in order to seek to glorify God in sports. Yet sport is also a relevant

medium through which the Gospel can be proclaimed; particularly as sport itself serves as a powerful metaphor for many Biblical truths (Bennett 1993:144) (as will be seen in chapter 4). As Christians faithfully seek to bring God's kingdom values, principles and transforming power to the world of sport, kingdom growth will occur as God uses his available people for his kingdom purposes (Garner 2003:18). The physical gifts, skills and abilities of the sports person, when completely surrendered to God, can result in much spiritual fruit (Oswald 2002:11).

3.2.2.3 Sports ministry through the Church

Another factor when considering the definition of sports ministry is the relationship between sports ministry and the church. Mazza (2006:62) asks the important question "how does the Church realise her mission in sport?" This question not only needs to be asked on a macro level of the catholic universal church but, given the influence of sport in the world today, and the number of Christians engaged in sport, also by every local congregation. Sport provides a wonderful opportunity for the Church to bring glory to God and extend his kingdom across the world and it also provides a platform for a local church to effectively impact their local community (Garner 2003:3). Every local church should be missional by nature (Milne 1982:220). Therefore, it is the responsibility of those involved in sports ministry to recognise the importance of serving through the local church.

Mason (2003:20) affirms the local church as God's "mechanism for change," the physical representation of the transformation that Christ offers within their community. Paul, in Ephesians 3:10-11, emphasizes that God's "intent" is that all that has been accomplished through Christ should be made known "through the church." This call can be greatly enhanced through sports ministry. He concludes the "the local church is ready made for sports ministry." Oswald (2002:9) warns those involved in sports ministry against the danger of operating independently of the local church. Those operating within sports ministry as defined above need to ensure that they continually have a platform of working through a local church. This does not necessarily mean that all sports ministry

must be done under the banner of a church. As will be seen below, incarnational ministry is about “presence” within the world of sport rather than just running sports programmes. However, it does mean that, for sports ministry to be truly effective, there must always be accountability from those involved in sports ministry towards church, so that the church can recognise and support the ministry (Oswald 2002:13). This mutual interdependence is a vital component in sustaining effective sports ministry.

3.2.2.4 Sports ministry as a prophetic voice

From the platform of serving through the local church, the researcher believes that those involved in sports ministry need to recognise their prophetic role. The meaning of “prophetic” in this context is seeking to be God’s mouthpiece within a world that does not recognise His kingdom rule.

There is much in the world of sport that is dishonouring and displeasing to God. It might be true to say that the world is over-absorbed in sport and that sport itself plays the role of an idol to many, and, as some believe, is becoming a religion in its own right (Tredway 2006:47). However, Higgs (2004:21) argues against sport as being a religion; he believes that terming it a religion is somewhat sanitising the over-indulgence and addiction that the current world has towards sport. A better word to describe the influence of sport on the world today is fanaticism. Willard (2002:203) points to the dangers of fanaticism. The warning is that those who are not rooted in God find a “flow outside of themselves to take over their thoughts, feelings, behaviour, and social relations.” Under this definition, sport therefore becomes an idol in the heart of the fanatic which creates a barrier to the work of God in their lives.

Whether the language of “fanatic” or “religion” is utilised, there should be a recognition that the influence of sport in the world is out of balance. Just a cursory glance at the world of professional sport will reveal an imbalance with regards to the status of sports stars and the overall economy of sport (Mieth 2006:23). Price (2001:34) cites the opinion of Sports Illustrated journalist, Frank Deford, who “suggested that if Marx had lived at the end of the twentieth

century ... he would have declared that sport is the opiate of the people, anesthetising them to the struggles of the classes.”

Those in sports ministry need to be aware of these challenges and be careful to maintain a biblical approach to life and sport. Over-absorption in any activity is considered idolatry according to Scripture (e.g. Ephesians 5:5). Apart from this, there are numerous ethical challenges within the world of sport that need to be evaluated against Scripture. For example, Higgs (1995:32) identifies the “ferocious spirit of sports” and win at all costs mentality as one area for concern. Therefore, sports ministers need to be rooted in Scripture and accountable to a local church in order to effectively serve as a prophetic witness within the culture of sport. Sports ministers should recognise a prophetic responsibility not just to accede to the prevalent culture of sports, but also to live for and proclaim God’s Word to the world of sport. This prophetic nature needs to be imbued within sports ministry as a defining factor.

3.2.3 The relationship between evangelism and sports ministry

As was seen in section 3.2.1, Weber (1991:166) highlighted three core components in relation to evangelism. These three components are the message, the medium and the goals. In examining the relationship between evangelism and sports ministry, it is possible to demonstrate that sports ministry aids the church of Christ in its evangelistic function in each of these three areas.

3.2.3.1 The message of evangelism in sports ministry

As has been stated above, the message of evangelism is the unchanging Gospel which is to be proclaimed to unbelievers across the world. Those involved in sports ministry need to ensure that the message proclaimed is not in any way compromised or polluted, but remains true to the Gospel revelation. Given the global popularity of sport, sports ministry proponents argue that the world of sport encompasses perhaps the largest global people group that needs to be infiltrated with the Gospel (Weir 2000:113). Therefore, through sports ministry, there is a huge opportunity for proclaiming the message to a largely

unreached people group. Bryan Mason (2003:11) argues that the global sports culture can accurately be included within the “world” Jesus referred to in the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19. The church therefore needs to harness this missional opportunity and recognise the platform provided through sports to share the eternal Gospel message.

3.2.3.2 The method of evangelism through sports ministry

The mission call in Romans 10:14-15 is clear; Christians of every generation have a responsibility to proclaim the message to those who have not had an opportunity to respond. Coupled with this, Christians have liberty to utilise appropriate and relevant methods to proclaim the unchanging message (1 Corinthians 9:21-22). In order to accomplish this, God has given his people different gifts, talents and passions with which to serve him (e.g. Romans 12:4-13). Yet, in spite of these different gifts and talents, there is a common call to evangelism and missions (Cash 2002:71) and each Christian should submit his or her body in sacrificial service to God (Romans 12:1).

This liberty in method of evangelism should equally apply to those involved in sports. Not only is the sports world to be reached with the Gospel, but sport, and principally sports people, are the best positioned to do this. However, the intent of the sports person involved in sports evangelism remains the same – to bring people to salvation through Christ (Cash 2002:62).

An important factor to recognise here though is that sport can equally be an obstacle to the Gospel. If the Christian sports person is contradicting his or her faith through their actions on the sports field, this could lead to a rejection of the message that is proclaimed. It is important therefore that the methodology of sports ministry empowers a Christ-centred approach to sports participation in order that the medium (sports ministry) is not incongruous with the message. As McCloskey (1986:ch.4) states, “it is more than a matter of just not contradicting the gospel. The medium must also support and enhance the gospel” (McCloskey 1986:ch.4). An important factor here is that the primary intent of glorifying God and extending his kingdom must remain the priority for all those

utilising the method of sports ministry. Hudson Taylor (Steer 1990:291) learned this lesson in relation to utilising medical missions and other “auxiliaries” for evangelism. I believe what he learned in the 19th Century provides a helpful “check” to those utilising sports for evangelism in the 21st century:

Let us feel that everything that is human, everything outside the sufficiency of Christ, is only helpful in the measure in which it enables us to bring the soul to Him ... Let all our auxiliaries be auxiliaries – means of bringing Christ and the soul into contact – then we may be truly thankful for them all ... Let us exalt the glorious gospel in our hearts, and believe that it is the power of God unto salvation. Let everything else sit at its feet ... We shall never be discouraged if we realise that in Christ is our sufficiency (Steer 1990:291).

3.2.3.3 The goals of evangelism through sports ministry

The goal of evangelism is to see previously unregenerate people become reconciled to their Creator and be reborn as children of God, committed to lifelong growth, service and worship. This is a task of restoration; a theme McCown and Gin (2003:46) clearly connect to sports ministry. This links back to the definition of sports ministry. The goal of sports ministry is that those reached through sport will themselves recognise that they can worship God in sport and extend His Kingdom through sport.

Garner (2003:21) highlights the following four results from the engagement of churches in sports ministry: numerical growth, spiritual transformation, ministry expansion and kingdom advance.

A danger highlighted in chapter 1 of this research paper, and drawn from the historical relationship between church and sport, is that Christian engagement in sports ministry for purely pragmatic reasons (Daniels and Weir 2008:3); that they are only interested in the results (numbers “saved”) and are not concerned with the process of engagement with the world of sport itself. Weir (2000:110)

writes, “If we are to reach the world of sport for Christ, we need to be true to the integrity of the gospel and also to the integrity of sport”. The theological framework for evangelism has so emphasised the need for converts (an accusation by Higgs 1995:287), that it has neglected the area of kingdom advance and the extension of God’s influence within the world of sports. If sports ministry is purely a means to an end, just a tool to aid church growth, then the role of sport can be undervalued which would compromise the method of sports ministry (McCown 2003:29). McCown and Gin (2003:30) therefore helpfully provide the balance through proposing a “sports-valued” approach to evangelism through sport. Through this approach, the results are not just viewed in terms “converts”, but in the actual transformation of sport itself. As a godly influence is extended to the world of sport, this should result in a restoration of Christian values in the world of sport itself.

3.3 Theological reflection on evangelism

3.3.1 Preaching (*kerugma*) as a function of the church

In 2 Timothy 4:2, Paul instructs Timothy to “Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season”. The Greek word used for “preach” is *kerysso*, meaning to “proclaim it like a herald in the market-place” (Stott 1973:106). In the New Testament, the church was called to the public proclamation of the Gospel through the act of preaching through a preacher (Baird 1991:394). The Greek word, *kerugma*, was utilised to denote this primary responsibility. Dodd (1964:ch.1) specifically sees the act of preaching as “the public proclamation of Christianity to the non-Christian world.”

The apostle Paul recognised and embodied this task. In 1 Corinthians 1:21 he uses the verb *kerugmatos* to state his responsibility or preaching, through which, “God was pleased ... to save those who believe”. However, the word *kerugmatos* does not merely focus on the act of preaching, but his emphasis was rather on the content of the message (Morris 1958:45).

Although the word *kerugma* is used infrequently in the New Testament, it has received a lot of attention by theologians in recent times (Green 2003:89). In particular, biblical scholars have sought to ascertain whether their *kerugma* was a consistent and definable message that was preached by the early church, and, if so, what were the clear components of this message. This search has resulted in an anglicised word, the *kerygma*, denoting the message to be preached (Green 2003:89). In particular, a distinction has been drawn between the *kerygma*, what was preached to non-Christians, and the *didache*, what was taught to converts (Stott 1973:42).

Dodd (1964:ch.1) was a strong proponent of a distinction. “While the Church was concerned to hand on the teaching of the Lord, it was not by this that it made converts. It was by *kerygma*, says Paul, not by *didache*, that it pleased God to save men”. He saw specific elements that Paul regarded as “his gospel”, which in turn laid testimony to the existence of a common Gospel proclaimed by the New Testament church (Dodd 1964:ch.1). These essential elements of the Gospel are outlined by Dodd (1964:ch.1) as: The Old Testament prophecies being fulfilled, the new Age inaugurated by the coming of Christ. He was born of the seed of David. He died according to the Scriptures, to deliver us out of the present evil age. He was buried and rose on the third day. He is now exalted at the right hand of God, as Son of God and Lord of the living and the dead. He will come again as Judge and Saviour of men. (Dodd 1964:ch.1).

It is clear that a distinction between the free presentation of the Gospel to unbelievers through preaching, and the orderly instruction of Christians, does exist (Baird 1991:395). However it is important not to overstate the distinction as there is an overlap between the two. Stott (1973:42) states, “both concerned the gospel, for the *kerygma* was the proclamation of its essence, while the *didache* included the great doctrines which undergird it as well as the moral behaviour which follows from it.”

Green (2003:105) believes that too much has been claimed by the proponents of a specific *kerygma*. However, he concludes that from the New Testament we

can discern both a common approach to evangelism by the early church, and a consistent pattern in what was preached (Green 2003:105).

What is clear when considering the biblical mandate upon the church to preach the Gospel is that these truths must be proclaimed clearly, passionately and consistently to an unbelieving world, with an expectation of a response (Spurgeon 1995:5). The preaching, *kerugma*, is part of the process utilised by God to elicit faith in unbelievers (Green 2003:93). The life and health of the Church is directly proportional to its fulfilling the continuing mandate to “Preach the Word, in season and out of season” (Baird 1991:395).

3.3.2 Evangelism (the gospel, *euangelion*) as an important aspect of preaching

The word evangelism comes from the Greek noun “*euangelion*” which simply means “good news” (Cash 2002:61). It was a commonly utilised word for the pronouncement of significant good news; for example, victory in battle or a pronouncement from the gods (Green 2003:83). The New Testament authors were therefore intentionally utilising the word to draw a sharp contrast between the Good News proclaimed by the Roman Imperialists, and the Good News of Jesus Christ (Green 2003:88).

The Greek verb “*euangelizomai*” is used for the pronouncement of the good news, the gospel (Weber 1991:166), which was a primary activity of the early church (e.g. Acts 5:42; 8:4, 12, 25, 35, 40; 10:36 and 11:20). The usage of the words *euangelizomai* and *euangelion* are much more frequent in the New Testament than *kerugma* and its derivatives, and, in their usage, the authors were not so concerned with a theological term, but with the day to day practice of spreading the Good News (Green 2003:78). The Greek verb *eugelion* was primarily used to specifically announce to those who had not yet heard about the events comprising the Good News, that is, the life, death, and resurrection of Christ (Green 2003:77). *Euangelion* carried very much a similar meaning to the word *kerysso*, which meant “to bring or announce good news, proclaim, preach” (McCloskey 1986:ch.4). Paul utilises both these words in Romans

16:25-27 to give a wonderful summary of both the purpose and content of his evangelism.

From the above it is clear that *kerugma*, the proclamation to unbelievers, and *eugelion*, the message of Good News, are inextricably linked in the New Testament. However, the transmission of Good News is not just in public proclamation, but also through one-to-one interaction between Christians and non-Christians (McCloskey 1986:ch.4).

3.3.3 The mandate of the Great Commission

Following Christ's resurrection, he met with his disciples and commissioned them (Matthew 28:18-20). France (1985:413) states, "Jesus' universal Lordship now demands a universal mission." This mission was to extend to *panta ta ethne*, 'all nations' (1985:414). In Acts 1:8, just before his ascension, Christ affirmed this commission, instructing his disciples to take the message from Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. The call here was to be *martyria*, witnesses; to testify regarding the things they had seen and believed (Milne 1982:227).

This universal mission is also a universal call. The commission is to all believers to reach the entire world (Cash 2002:63). The goal of evangelism is therefore to fulfil this commission by making disciples of Jesus Christ (Green 1990:11). God's desire is for all people to have an opportunity to respond to the Gospel (Romans 10:15 and 1Timothy 2:3-4). The Great Commission includes all Christians in the task of evangelism, the proclamation of Good News and the truths of Scripture (Spurgeon 1995:5).

The mandate is clear: Jesus is to be proclaimed. Jesus is to be preached, Christians are to have a testimony. We are to be witnesses of Jesus Christ into all the world (Garner 2003:27).

3.3.4 Incarnational evangelism

Lingenfelter and Mayers (1986:13) propose that God's model for mission through relationship evangelism is the incarnation. John 1:14 tells us that the eternal Word became flesh and made his dwelling among humankind. Lingenfelter and Mayers (1986:16) argue that God not only became a man, but, by being born a Jew, within a particular people group, also became a learner:

God's Son studied the language, the culture, and the lifestyle of his people for thirty years before he began his ministry ... He identified totally with those to whom he was sent, calling himself the Son of man.

Tredway (2006:48) argues that, in the light of growing secularisation in the world today, the church needs to return to an incarnational model of ministry. A key to fulfilling the Great Commission is to have a greater understanding of the call to incarnational evangelism (Lingenfelter and Mayers 1986:123).

As was seen above, the call of the Great Commission is to each and every Christian. As witnesses for Christ, the life of the Christian should exemplify Christ and demonstrate who he is to a watching world (Cash 2002:65). Christ used the metaphor of "salt and light" in order to describe the Christians impact and influence in the world (Matthew 5:13-16). The incarnational call is clear; all Christians of all time are to live as public testimonies in the world of the hope that they have in Christ (Garner 2003:28). Paul utilised the word "ambassadors" to stress this point (2 Corinthians 5:20). As ambassadors, Christians are personal representatives of Christ, translating his message through their lives, imploring people to be reconciled to God. This is done not only through words, but by means of demonstration (Spurgeon 1995:71).

In this general call to incarnation evangelism, God has also given Christians a uniquely personal call based (Garner 2003:29). "Christians are uniquely prepared by God to use personal and specific ministries for the purpose of evangelism and mission work" (Cash 2002:70). Therefore, the incarnational call is not only a general call to live in the world as Christ's representatives, but it is

also a mission call to be incarnate within a community, culture, or people group, and so represent Christ in a way that will be specifically relevant in that context. Spurgeon (1995:81), speaking of Paul's example in 1 Corinthians 9:22, states that we are to become "suitable instruments" for the task at hand.

If we can put ourselves on a level with those whose good we seek, we shall be more likely to effect our purpose than if we remain aliens and foreigners, and then talk of love and unity. To sink myself to save others is the idea of the apostle (Spurgeon 1995:121).

The effectiveness of evangelism is proportional to the suitability of the messenger and their ability to relate that message to the participants. Christ's incarnation demonstrates an evangelistic model that needs to be followed as the church seeks to fulfil the Great Commission.

3.3.5 Sacrifice for evangelism

The call to evangelism is a call to personal sacrifice (Green 2003:72). The Christian is called to put aside personal considerations for the sake of sharing in the glory of seeing others come to Christ (Spurgeon 1995:82).

A cursory reading of the book of Acts reveals that the early Christians underwent great sacrifices including hardship, suffering, and persecution, in the task of evangelising the unreached world. The apostle Paul often reminded the early church of the hardships that would be endured (e.g. 2 Timothy 3:10-13). The call of Christ was to daily take up one's cross to follow him (Mark 8:34). Peter (1 Peter 2:21) stated that, just as Christ suffered for Christians, he also left them an example for them to follow. This is part of the calling. Yet, just as Christ's followers share in the call to sacrifice for the sake of the Gospel, so they share in the motivation. Hebrews 12:1-3 is a call to endure as Christ did "for the joy set before him", which was victory over death and the salvation of many (cf. Philippians 2:6-11).

3.3.6 Sport as a field for evangelism

In Luke 10:2 Jesus stated that the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. As a field of evangelism, the world of sport provides an opportunity for the proclamation of the Gospel to millions of people who otherwise may not hear the message. The popularity and influence of sport in the world today is undeniable (Weir 2000:113). Sport has become a way of life, “intensely popular” (Leaman 2008:1) and some claim that sport has become a “surrogate religious experience” (The World of Sport Today 2006:6). Tredway (2006:56) maintains that, in many respects, sport and its heroes have replaced Christianity as the most popular religion of Western society (Tredway 2006:56). Weir (2000:113) terms the world of sport as the “largest people group in the world.” As Christ commissioned his followers to “go into all the world, Mason (2003:11) argues that this must include the world of sport as “the largest people group across the globe, where language, creed and culture lose their divisive tendencies.”

It appears undeniable that sport can therefore provide the church with a unique opportunity for evangelism in the 21st century. Cash (2002:77) terms sport a “tool for harvesting”. However, the researcher does not view sport merely as a tool; rather, sport is the field that requires harvesting. A better phrase also used by Cash (2002:72) is that sport is a “universal language” implying that the Gospel, incarnated in Christian sports people, can be communicated to fellow sports people as they share in the sporting experience. The challenge for the church is to mobilise evangelists into the sports fields in order to reap the harvest which Christ has prepared.

3.4 An examination of three contemporary theological models for sports evangelism

A growing number of sports ministry practitioners are presenting theological models as a framework for sports ministry. In this section three of these models will be examined with the key components of each being highlighted. These models are all presented in books that have been written for the general Christian market and, therefore, they are perhaps not fully developed but

nonetheless provide very useful frameworks towards a theological basis for sports evangelism/ministry.

3.4.1 Steve Connor

Steve Connor (2003:49) proposes five “unique but interrelated” principles which give a theological basis for sports ministry. From these foundational principles he proposes a methodology towards fulfilling the Great Commission of “making disciples.”

3.4.1.1 Proclamation

Connor’s foundational verse for his principle of proclamation is Romans 10:14-15. He believes that “verbalisation of the truth” (2003:53) is an essential component of evangelism which is the core of sports ministry. The “transmission of truth” is vital in the Christian’s evangelistic task. The truth is God’s truth, but how it is proclaimed is the responsibility of each generation of Christians. “The message must be clear and our method strategic” (Connor 2003:55). The message is unchanging, but the way it is proclaimed must take into account the particular cultural context (Connor 2003:57).

Other key verses for Connor are Luke 12:48 and Mark 8:38 where he reiterates the responsibility that rests upon Christians for the message entrusted to them. Connor (2003:57) differentiates between “formal and informal” opportunities; formal being clear public presentations of faith, informal arising out of relationships.

3.4.1.2 Demonstration

For Connor (2002:65), demonstration entails the “visualisation of truth”; the physical embodiment of Christ’s command to love God and love people. A key verse is Romans 5:8 (NIV): “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Connor's emphasis is on incarnating God's love through Christians to others. Without this physical demonstration, the Gospel message is, at best, incongruous to others and, at worst, compromised (Connor 2003:66). It is essential that demonstration balances proclamation in order to extend God's influence in the sports world (Connor 2003:29).

3.4.1.3 Maturation

Connor (2003:74) proposes the following formula: incubation + education + application = maturation. The process of maturation involves the cultivation of truth in the life of a believer until they, "become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12, NIV).

Connor believes that sports ministry is imbalanced if there is not an intentional approach to discipleship; "setting up a system for growing Christians is key and should be implemented from the beginning of your sports ministry" (Connor 2003:74). He draws on the example of Christ who "created a healthy climate" for the maturation of his followers (Connor 2003:75). Utilising a sporting metaphor, Connor states that ministry is a marathon (Connor 2003:77) and he goes on to give practical advice on how to disciple those who come to faith through sports ministry.

3.4.1.4 Reproduction

2 Timothy 2:2 is Connor's key verse when emphasising the need to "reproduce reproducers" (Connor 2003:85). Here Paul instructs Timothy to entrust his teachings to "reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others." Connor's challenge is to consider what each person will "leave behind" because each person will have to give an account of their time on earth (Romans 14:12) (Connor 2003:87). He advocates a strategic approach of "training others to reproduce" (Connor 2003:87). He believes that, "the key to cohesive sports ministry in the local church is leadership training" (Connor 2003:88).

Again, the example of Christ within his immediate sphere of influence, the twelve disciples, clearly demonstrates this principle of reproduction. Connor (2003:88-89) shows how Christ loved them (John 15:9), prayed for them (John 17:9), set an example for them (John 13:15), shared his victories with them (John 14:3), shared his hurts with them (Mark 14:34), revealed truth to them (John 14:6), sent them out (Matthew 28:19); and promised to go with them (Matthew 28:20). Connor's emphasis here is on discipleship as a lifestyle, rather than a programme, through which one person's example is imbedded in another, hence producing a reproducer (Connor 2003:90). Sport therefore provides a powerful medium through which this level of interaction and discipleship can take place.

3.4.1.5 Sportsmanship

The final principle in Connor's model is sportsmanship; encouraging a Christian sports culture (Connor 2003:93). Connor recognises that the world of sport itself needs to be influenced and transformed by the way Christians compete (Connor 2003:94). Titus 2:6-8 gives a mandate to Christian sports people to be "self-controlled" and to set a "good example." Connor (2003:99) goes on to give seven "Christian virtues to infect the world of sport." The reality is that the competitive nature of sport often serves to reveal the character of the participant. However, sport can also provide an avenue for character development if Christians apply the word of God to their participation (Connor 2003:96).

3.4.2 Rodger Oswald

Rodger Oswald has written a number of publications giving a theological and biblical framework for sports ministry. His target audience is principally the church. His main theological emphasis centres on the mandate, means and methodology for sports evangelism. Upon these pillars he exhorts the church to consider sports as a key field of evangelism in the world today.

3.4.2.1 The mandate

Rodger Oswald's launching point for his theological framework for sports ministry is the general Biblical mandate for evangelism. "The mandate is clear: Jesus is to be proclaimed. Jesus is to be preached. Christians are to have a testimony. We are to be witnesses of Jesus Christ into all the world" (Oswald 2003:27).

Oswald refers to the Commission of Christ, as provided in each Gospel, to highlight the mandate to make disciples (Matthew 28:19), preach the Gospel (Mark 16:16), proclaim the forgiveness of sins (Luke 24:27), as those sent by Christ into the world (John 20:21). He underlines that it is a contradiction to be a follower of Christ and not make His message known to others; therefore the mandate of Christ is applicable to all believers in all walks of life (Oswald 2002:9).

3.4.2.2 The means

With the mandate to Christians being clear and unchanging, Oswald views the means of sharing the message as having individual and corporate implications. Firstly, God has chosen that the means through which the message is to be transmitted to humanity is through each individual believer. This is seen in Acts 1:8, where "Jesus has left a call on the individual believer to carry on His redemptive work by being His witness" (Oswald 2002:9).

Jesus intention was to change the lives of individual people in order that they could, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, transform others (Garner 2003:28). Oswald (2003:28) identifies this as a general call upon all believers (Matthew 4:19; Mark 1:17). However, giving examples from Acts (chapters 11, 13, 15, 16) he goes on to highlight that Jesus has also placed a specific call upon individual Christians to reach out to certain people and communities (Oswald 2002:9).

Often this specific call is matched to one's skills and passions. "The bottom line is that while there are a general and a personal call, there is also a special call

as people use unique talents or abilities to fulfil the mandate given by the Saviour” (Oswald 2003:29). Oswald concludes that the means through which God will reach sports people with the Gospel would be through Christian sports people with a specific call to utilise their sporting gift and passion in service of Christ (Oswald 2003:29). Oswald (2002:9) elaborates:

As one who serves the Lord and the gospel message, we often find that we have a special gift, ability or even the uniqueness of where we are born and the things we have accomplished that makes our proclamation more poignant ... perhaps even the distinctive of being an athlete or athletically inclined for the sake of the gospel.

Although Oswald identifies the means as Christians called and chosen by God to serve Him in the world, he recognises that this does not mean individual Christians are to operate as independent islands. Rather, there is a corporate call for the church of Christ, God’s primary means to bring hope to the world, to understand her responsibility as the custodian of the Gospel message (Oswald 2002:9). It is as members of the body of Christ that Christians should be seeking to “to determine the most effective means of carrying out the work” (Oswald 2002:9).

3.4.2.3 The methodology

Finally, Oswald looks at the methodology through which the church of Christ should be fulfilling its responsibility as the means to carry out the mandate. Specifically, Oswald (2003:30) underlines the importance that any culturally relevant method of evangelism should still be tested against Scripture, “to determine a biblical pattern for carrying out the mandate” (Oswald 2003:30). Oswald (2002:10) explains:

... [A] methodology must be identified that allows man and the church to be maximally effective within a biblical construct. If, in the employment of sports ministry, man and the church develop a

culturally relevant way to carry out a God-given mandate, sound philosophical ground will have been established.

Oswald (2002:10) observes though that the Scriptures do not make any direct statements about whether sports ministry is a valid method of fulfilling Christ's mandate. This being the case, he seeks to develop an apologetic for utilising the method of sports ministry through identifying principles from scripture that warrant a biblical case for the utilisation of sports ministry (Oswald 2002:10). In his writings, Oswald goes on to give Scriptural principles which he believes, "create an apologetic that endorses, liberates, and compels one to consider where this unique ministry ought to fit into one's life or into the ministry life of the church" (Garner 2003:30). Through these biblical principles he believes a "clear latitude for the employment of methodology (even sports ministry) for the sake of the gospel" (Oswald 2002:10), is given.

3.4.3 Graham Daniels and Stuart Weir

Graham Daniels and Stuart Weir have written a number of articles and books geared to mobilising Christian sports people towards evangelism. Through the ministry of Christians in Sport in the UK, Daniels and Weir have developed a practical theological framework for sports evangelism based upon Colossians 4:2-6. They state, "It can be argued that the mission of the Christian in the world of sport is summed up by the three words pray, play and say" (Daniels and Weir 2008:§2¶7). More than just a theological framework, the pray, play, say model has been challenging Christian sports people around the world to utilise their sporting platform to intentionally serve the Lord and seek opportunities to share the Gospel with other sports people. The following is a summary of the key points in this model.

3.4.3.1 Pray

Paul writes in Colossians 4:2-3, "Devote yourselves to prayer... And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message." "For Paul, it is critical that believers pray both for openings to explain the good news of Jesus Christ and

clarity in explanation when that opportunity arises” (Daniels and Weir 2005:8). The challenge to Christians in the world of sport is to pray for those who they interact with on the sports field in order that opportunities to share Christ’s love will emerge.

3.4.3.2 Play

However, Daniels and Weir contend that opportunities to share Christ’s love will emerge only in proportion to how Christians demonstrate Christ’s love through their sporting participations: “it’s the way we play, both on and off the field that will earn us the right to speak of Christ” (Daniels and Weir 2005:9).

Christian sports people must always be cognizant that they are always “Christ’s ambassadors” (2 Corinthians 5:20) and therefore need to always, “be wise in the way you act towards outsiders” (Colossians 4:5). Those who have sporting gifts need to recognize that they are living out their faith in a public arena and that the effectiveness of their testimony is directly linked to the way they play. Daniels and Weir (2005:10) encourage intentionality in this process; that Christian sports people need to be actively seeking opportunities to impact the culture of sport with the Gospel as they seek “greater the opportunities to represent Christ in word and deed” (Daniels and Weir 2005:10).

3.4.3.3 Say

Paul goes on to say, “make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone” (Colossians 4:5b-6, NIV). As Christians pray for opportunities to share their faith; and as they live lives which actively demonstrate the love of Christ, so opportunities to verbally proclaim the Gospel will transpire. It is therefore vital that Christians are able to respond effectively when these opportunities occur. “He (Paul) wants them to take the chances they get to share the good news which they have discovered for themselves. Those who pray are more likely to get to say!” (Daniels and Weir 2005:10).

What Daniels and Weir are advocating is sports based relational evangelism. They view the world of sport as a massive mission field which serves as an amazing opportunity for the church to impact the world in a relevant and effective way (Daniels and Weir 2005:11). However, this is not done merely through prayer and proclamation, but through the active participation of Christian sports people dedicated to worshipping Christ through their sports participation. Through active participation in a godly manner, friendships can be formed which can lead to openings to share the Gospel with other sports people (Daniels and Weir 2005:11).

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter the researcher has sought to examine the theological foundations for sports ministry through studying sport as a field for evangelism. This process has included an attempt to define evangelism and sports ministry, to reflect theologically on evangelism and to demonstrate that sport is an open field for evangelism. The researcher has also summarised the theological frameworks provided by contemporary sports ministry authors and highlighted their unique foci.

This chapter has demonstrated that a strong theological framework is absolutely essential in seeking to develop a theological foundation for the development of a sustainable sports ministry through South African churches. Evangelism, as defined in this chapter, is a major component of sports ministry and therefore the South African church requires a sound theological understanding of its responsibility to evangelise the world of sport.

In Chapter 6 the researcher will attempt to integrate all the information contained in this chapter and propose a theological framework for sports ministry in South African churches in terms of the PRIOR model.

CHAPTER 4

The Biblical Foundations for Sports Ministry

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will consider the Biblical foundations for sports ministry. As Smith (2008:209) advises, this will not be an “in-depth exegetical analysis” but will give an overview analysis of key passages of Scripture relating to sport.

This chapter will attempt the following:

- Consider the challenges of conducting a Biblical survey of key passages pertaining to sport and sports ministry by considering the difficulties presented by the silence of Scripture on the subject.
- Consider the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture in relation to the silence of Scripture with regards to sports.
- Present a survey of recreation and sport in Scripture by examining those passages that do mention sport. In these cases the passages will be studied within their context and lessons applied to the approach of Scripture towards sports.
- Conduct an overview of the meaning of certain Greek words in the New Testament which portray the Christian life in terms of a sporting metaphor.

Developing a biblical foundation for sports ministry is vitally important in order to establish a sustained church-based sports ministry. Leaman (2008:1) states that “anything so influential upon the church necessitates that it be examined through a Biblical lens” (Leaman 2008:1). However, as will be seen in this chapter, the undertaking is not straightforward because there are no clear passages of Scripture that speak directly on the subject of sport.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine those Biblical passages that refer to sport. However, this task is not designed to state categorically what the biblical view of sport is, because, unlike other subjects such as finance, marriage and government, there are “no didactic teachings” on the subject of sport (Linville 2007:25).

Therefore, our task is not to seek to justify Christian participation in sport/sports ministry per se, but to conduct a survey of biblical passages which refer to sport and recreation and seek to gain a better understanding of how Scripture approaches this topic and what lessons can be applied to the church with regards to sport and sports ministry.

4.2 How do we approach Scripture with regards to sport?

4.2.1 The silence of Scripture regarding sport

Although, as we shall see, there are numerous references to sport in the Bible providing metaphors to teach about concepts such as commitment (e.g., 2 Timothy 4:7), victory (Philippians 3:12-14), and discipline (1 Corinthians 9:24-27), it is almost impossible to find any passage of Scripture that either commends, or condemns, the activity of sport. Youngblood, Bruce and Harrison (1995:GAMES) point out that sport and games are utilised in Scripture to give historical context, or provide an “example for a theological or ethical teaching”. Rodger Oswald (2002a:10) goes as far to say that, “it would be impossible to find an endorsement of sports ministry in the Bible.” However, Oswald (in Garner 2003:34) maintains that the “silence of Scripture” is actually an argument *for* the usage of sport in ministry, rather than against. He argues that, if the Lord viewed sport in and of itself as being intrinsically wrong, then surely the Scriptures would be forthright in stating this as it does for other cultural practices (Oswald 2002b:7). Oswald believes that, if God were opposed to sports, then surely the Holy Spirit would not have inspired the New Testament authors to so frequently utilise sports as a metaphor for the Christian life and experience (Garner 2003:34).

As we shall see later in this chapter, the Bible utilises many sporting images, metaphors and words. Even though not immediately apparent, the cultural activity of sport was a reality in both the Old and New Testaments. Although the researcher agrees that there is no didactic teaching on the intrinsic worth of sport (as Linville 2007:25 maintains), much can be gleaned through studying the Biblical usage of sport and applied to the role of modern sports ministry. However, the Biblical foundation for sports ministry cannot be based purely upon these passages. As Oswald has rightly stated, due to the apparent silence of Scripture on the subject, other Biblical principles need to be applied to the activity of sport in order to build a full Biblical foundation for sports ministry (Oswald 2002a:10). These principles will be applied within the proposed theological framework for sports ministry in terms of the PRIOR model in Chapter six.

Sports and games were clearly common cultural activities during Bible times. As the Bible never overtly criticises these activities, we can conclude that they are morally and ethically neutral. Therefore, the value of sport, as other cultural activities, is therefore subject to the attitude, intent and actions of the participants. “Certainly one’s motivations, actions, and attitudes within those activities give opportunity for rebuke and/or instruction, but the activities themselves are not condemned” (Oswald in Garner 2003:26). An example of this is the Greek Games. Paul utilises the Games as a metaphor for Christian life and character. However, the Games themselves were in honour of Greek gods (Unger, Harrison, Vos and Barber 1988:§Games-Grecian) and a form of idolatry which is condemned throughout Scripture (e.g., Deuteronomy 5:6-10). If something were inherently evil in sport then Paul would probably have found a more suitable metaphor for the Christian life (Garner 2003:34). Yet Paul was clearly not condoning the idolatry associated with the Games themselves.

Oswald (2002b:4) draws a comparison to watching television. Obviously the Bible is silent on watching television so Christians cannot point to chapter and verse which either condones or condemns this modern cultural activity. However, certain principles from Scripture can be applied to this cultural activity which can guide Christian usage of television (see also Peppler 2000:43).

Likewise, the morality of sport is determined by the heart of the participant and the whole testimony of Scripture needs to be applied to sports participation. We must recognise that the human heart is sinful and polluted therefore the sports world and sports culture, like any other human cultural activity, is fallen and polluted. Hence the need for Christ to be demonstrated and proclaimed in that sports culture. However, we must again affirm that if God has been directly opposed to sports themselves, then surely the Bible would be clear on this. Yet all participation in sport must be subject to Biblical principles that instruct a Christian on how to engage with sport in a godly way (Daniels and Weir 2004:10).

The danger with focusing on the silence of Scripture as an argument for Sports Ministry is that it is open to abuse. In particular, verses must not be taken out of context and twisted to condone actions and attitudes within sport that are ungodly. The role sport plays in society, and the Christian attitude towards sport, need to constantly be tested against the whole testimony of Scripture. Peppler (2000:43) states that, "Doctrine and practice need to be founded on what the Bible does 'say' and not on what, it does not say." Therefore, the focus on the Silence of Scripture with regards to Sports Ministry needs to be balanced with an understanding of the Sufficiency of Scripture.

4.2.2 The sufficiency of Scripture

The researcher approaches Scripture in the belief that it is the inerrant and infallible Word of God as summarised by Paul in 2 Timothy 3:16. Therefore, one concurs with Peppler (2000:43) when he states, "The Scriptures contain ALL we need for faith and life. If they do not then they are less than fully authoritative and are in fact inadequate." What the Bible contains is exactly what God intended and there is nothing to be added or taken away; the Scriptures are entirely sufficient as the revelation of Truth. Grudem (1994:127) defines the sufficiency of Scriptures as:

The sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contained all the words of God he intended his people to have at each stage of

redemptive history, and that it now contains all the words of God we need for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying Him perfectly.

As has been noted above (4.2.1), the Scriptures are silent with regards to the merits or demerits of Christian's involved in sport. In Chapter 2.2 we saw that, in church history and Christian tradition, many have taught that partaking in sport is wrong and have argued from the silence of Scripture to create a doctrine that sport is sinful. This dualistic teaching viewed bodily activity as of intrinsically lower value (even sinful), than "spiritual" disciplines. However, Grudem's (1994:133) insight on the sufficiency of Scripture help counter-balance these claims; "With regard to living the Christian life, the sufficiency of Scripture reminds us that *nothing is sin that is not forbidden by Scripture either explicitly or by implication* [emphasis added]." The sufficiency of Scripture therefore helps overcome concerns that the silence of Scripture may raise regarding sporting activity. If God had wanted to prohibit sport He certainly would have ensured the Bible clearly stated this. Grudem (1994:133) further illuminates this point and his illustration can equally apply to sport:

To walk in the law of the Lord is to be blameless (Ps 119). Therefore we are not to add prohibitions to those already stated in Scripture. From time to time there may be situations in which it would be wrong, for example, for an individual Christian to drink coffee or Coca-Cola, or to attend movie theatres or to eat meat offered to idols (see 1 Cor. 8-10), but unless some specific teaching or some general principle of Scripture can be shown to prohibit for all believers for all time, we must insist that these activities are not in themselves sinful and they are not in all situations prohibited by God for His people.

The belief in the sufficiency of Scripture should cause Christians to search the Scriptures when seeking to apply biblical teaching to everyday life (Grudem 1994:133). The Bible is not simply a rule book to be applied to every facet of life; but rather it is "living and active" (Hebrews 4:12) which requires careful

study and Spirit-led application in order to live a holy life. This applies to developing a biblical foundation for sports ministry. A thorough examination of Scripture is therefore required in order to build a theological framework for the engagement and participation of Christians in sport.

The key thing in our approach to Scripture is that we do not take passages out of context or build a theology around one or two verses of Scripture. Rather, we must be thorough in our study of Scripture and find principles that are consistently revealed throughout Scripture and then test our participation in sport against these principles. Peppler (2000:43) applies a similar approach when dealing with the silence of Scripture. Giving the example of the cultural phenomenon of television, of which Scripture is silent, he states, “the Bible says nothing about watching television, but it does instruct us to guard our souls and to be careful of what we look at” (Peppler 2000:43).

Oswald (2002b:7) takes the sufficiency of Scripture a step further when applying it to the actual instances of sporting illustrations in Scripture. Given that God is the author of the Bible through human agents (2 Timothy 2:16; 2 Peter 1:21), we recognise that it was the Holy Spirit’s prompting that caused Paul to liken his Christian life to that of a race. Likewise, given God’s character of holiness, Oswald (2002b:7) argues that if God was anti-sport, then surely an explanation would have been given when it was used as a metaphor in such passages as 1 Corinthians 9, Hebrews 12 and 2 Timothy 4.

Although this may not be conclusive, the onus is surely on those who maintain that sport is not an appropriate activity for Christians, to demonstrate this scripturally. As this is not possible, the challenge for those in sports ministry is therefore to build a Biblical case for how sport should be utilised in ministry.

4.3 An examination of Bible passages referring to recreation and sport

4.3.1 Sport and recreation in the Old Testament

The Old Testament has a holistic approach to life that views spiritual truth as being revealed through physical means. This worldview pervaded Jewish

culture and writings and is characterised through their belief that physical reward resulted from righteousness, while physical judgment resulted from sin. This had both an individual and corporate outworking (See for example Job 4-5 and cross-reference 2 Chronicles 7:13-22). Although records of the Jews engaging in sport are very sparse, it is clear that the Old Testament views God as Lord of the physical realm and not just the spiritual realm. He is the Creator and all that He created was “good” and man, the pinnacle of his creation, was seen as “very good”, made in His own image (Genesis 1:27-31). As human beings are made with the capacity for physical endeavours and sporting activity, this falls within the “very good” of Creation. However, as with the entire physical world, it has become subject to God’s judgment as a result of sin (Genesis 3:17-19).

The Jewish worldview that developed through the Old Testament saw all of life, physical and spiritual, as being of equal importance. Mind and body, belief and action, were intertwined and not separated (McElrath, McNicol and Thrall 1999:101). This holistic Jewish worldview is reflected in Paul’s writing to the Colossians.

For by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together (Col 1:16-17NIV).

The Bible equates the physical as having equal importance and significance as the spiritual. God has created us as physical beings, made in His image. Therefore, what people do with their own bodies does matter. Both the Old Testament and the Jewish worldview teach us that “God created humankind with the intellect, creativity, abilities, instincts and resources to create sport” (McCown and Gin 2003:34). One can conclude from this that participation in physical activity, in and of itself, cannot be seen as intrinsically evil.

Leaman (2008:5) points to the fact that leisure in the Old Testament began on the seventh day when God rested from his work of creation (Genesis 2:2). It appears that leisure and recreation was a part of life in Eden as God shared in the joy of walking in the garden with Adam and Eve (Garner 2003:25).

Beyond the fall, the Old Testament presents a holistic view of life that keeps in balance the toil of work, the responsibility of serving God, and the need for rest and recreation. This is well described in Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 (Leaman 2008:5). Here the author is emphasising the need for life to be balanced. The famous passage is introduced thus: "There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under heaven" (Eccl. 3:1:NIV), and although play, recreation and sports are not specifically mentioned ("dance" being the recreational activity specifically mentioned in 3:4), the list is not intended to be exhaustive. One can conclude that the author would consider play, recreation and sport to be part of the created world and therefore should be included within his catchall phrase "every activity under heaven."

The value of recreation and play is also seen in prophecies such as Isaiah 11:8-9 and Zechariah 8:5.

Isaiah 11:8-9 is preceded by a Messianic prophecy which gives the requirements for the Messiah's reign of righteousness and faithfulness (Watts 2002:174). The fruit of such a reign is then given through picturing a "return to Eden's tranquillity and innocence" (Watts 2002:174). Under the rule of God, the child can play without fear of being harmed. "The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand in the viper's nest" (Is. 11:8-10, NIV). This picture is also a poignant reversal of the curse. In Genesis 3 it was the serpent that was depicted as at enmity with humanity. Once the power of the curse is destroyed, the serpent becomes "harmless and a plaything for children" (Achteimeier 1985:137).

Likewise, Zechariah 8:5 is painting a picture of life in Jerusalem restored to God's intention. Zechariah is prophesying regarding the future blessing upon Jerusalem and a sign of that blessing will be the security children will have to

play in the street (Youngblood, Bruce & Harrison 1995:§Games). Zechariah sees children being able to play safely in public places as a key element of life under God's kingdom rule in a renewed world under His reign (Achtemeier 1985:136).

In both these passages the activity of play demonstrates the securing of peace that comes through God's rescuing of His people from their enemies. Ultimately, these prophecies allude to the age to come when the glory of Eden is restored. Higgs (1995:35) terms play as being "Edenic" in nature, meaning the activity of play has an element of innocence about it that reflects life before The Fall. Higgs' (1995:35) sees play as a contrast to competitive sports which he views as more related to combat, conflict and war. Achtemeier (1986:137) summarises the association between play and the age to come as follows: "The Kingdom is a playground for children."

Other than recreation, rest and play, the Old Testament also indicates that sport played a role in Israelite culture. Anderson (1996:§Athletics) has identified twenty seven athletic/sporting references in the Old Testament. Some of these compliment the strength, agility and skills of an individual (e.g., Gen. 21:20; Dt. 9:2; Jdg. 20:16; 1 Chr. 12:1-2). In 2 Samuel 22:33-37 David identifies God as the source of his athletic giftedness. He gives praise to God for his physical strength (vs.33), his speed (vs. 34), and his skill with the bow (vs. 35). However, these gifts from God were given to enable him to be effective in battle rather than in athletic competition (vs. 35).

Some of the specific sporting activities recognised in the Old Testament that the Hebrews participated in can be identified as: archery (Gen. 21:20), wrestling (Gen. 32:22-30), running (Job 9:25); rowing (Ezk. 27:26). However, the ultimate goal of athletic ability was to be an effective warrior, as epitomised by David's "Mighty Men" (see 2 Samuel 23:8-39). These men had distinguished themselves in combat through performing incredible physical acts of bravery and strength (Freedman 1996:§2,49). Higgs (1995:24) states that the Hebrew attitude towards sport foreshadowed the Puritans attitudes. Sport needed to be purposeful, with the primary purpose of preparing strengthened and skilled men

for the defence of their nation. Youngblood, Bruce and Harrison (1995:§Games) confirm this:

Many of the games and sports mentioned in the Old Testament were of a combative nature. The purpose of these games was probably to prepare young men to handle themselves in warfare (Youngblood, Bruce & Harrison 1995: GAMES).

The Jewish approach to competitive games was quite contrary to the Greeks and the Romans. For the Greeks and the Romans competitive sport was an end in itself. The sporting festivals were dedicated to worshipping their gods. However, this was completely foreign to the Israelites who did not include any sports at their festivals and forged no connection between sporting activity and their religious duties (Unger, Harrison, Vos and Barber 1988:§Games). Therefore one must conclude that competitive sports did not have a significant place in ancient Israelite culture (Achtemeier 1985:849). Again, Unger et al. (1988:§Games) confirms that what public games did exist were for the purpose of training young men for military service (e.g. see Jdg. 20:16 and 1 Sam 20:20).

In the inter-testament period, it appears that there was a movement amongst the Jews to adopt the Greek athletic culture (Youngblood, Bruce & Harrison 1995:§Games). The erection of a gymnasium by the priest Jason is recorded in 1 Maccabees 1:14 and 2 Maccabees 4:12-14. However, it was viewed upon as “heathenish” and “abominable” by the orthodox Jews (Youngblood, Bruce & Harrison 1995:§Games). The fact that the Gospels are entirely absent of references to games indicates that the movement towards adopting the Greek sports did not deeply infiltrate or impact Jewish culture (Unger et al. 1988:§Games).

Although, as we have seen, the activity of recreation and sports is referred to in the Old Testament, the Old Testament says little regarding the value of sport in and of itself. Psalm 147:10-11, indicates that the LORD’s delight is not in

athletic prowess, but in putting one's "hope in his unfailing love" (Ps 147:11, NIV).

However, there are three Old Testament passages that provide additional insight into sporting endeavours and their usage as a metaphor for truth; Psalm 19:5, Ecclesiastes 9:11; Jeremiah 12:5 (Achtemeier 1985:849). These shall be examined in greater detail.

4.3.1.1 Psalm 19:5

Psalm 19 is a celebratory song of praise to God. The first half of the psalm depicts creation giving praise to the Creator. Unlike other ancient belief systems which personified and worshipped the physical creation, here the heavens, skies, and sun are distinct from, and subject to, the Creator (Craigie 2002:181).

In verse 4 the author depicts the heavens as a tabernacle for the sun which traverses across the sky. In verse five two metaphors are given to illustrate how the daily orbit of the sun reflects the glory of God. The second metaphor is of a champion joyfully running his race. Spurgeon (1993:66) captures the essence of this metaphor as follows:

As a champion addresses himself to the race, so does the sun speed onward with matchless regularity and unwearyingly swiftness in his orbit. There are no signs of effort, flagging, or exhaustion. No other creature yields such joy to the earth; but all his glory is but the glory of God.

The champion of the metaphor, (Hebrew: *gibbowr*), is the Israelite mighty warrior, or valiant man, within the context of "military skill and prowess" (Renn 2005:2052). He is running (Hebrew: *ruwts*) his race (Hebrew: *'orach*), path/course (Renn 2005:2274) just as the sun has a set course to run each day. This metaphor is noteworthy as it indicates that the Israelites possibly held athletic contests for their champions, or, at least, the champions would undergo vigorous athletic training. However, what is even more noteworthy is that the psalmist links the emotion of joy to the experience of the warrior-athlete. The

Hebrew word used is *suws* and means “to rejoice” in almost all of its 27 Old Testament occurrences (Renn 205:1746). The warrior rejoices in God to be able to utilize his physical strength and energy to run his course (Craigie 2002:181).

Within the context of the Psalm, which glorifies God from the perspective of the created world, this metaphor indicates that God is also glorified through a human-being’s physical activity, in this case, running a race. It is acknowledging that God can be worshipped through such activities and that people, created by God, can experience the pleasure of God and the emotion of joy through exercising their bodies.

4.3.1.2 Ecclesiastes 9:11

This verse is unique in the Old Testament because it is the only place where the Hebrew word *merowts* is used, directly referring to a race run by athletes (Renn 2005:1692).

The book of Ecclesiastes is concerned with understanding life’s meaning under God’s sovereignty. It is a pursuit of wisdom against the apparent meaningless of life. The context of chapter 9 is that “wisdom is subject to the future’s uncertainty” (Walvoord and Zuck 1985:1000). The point the author is making is that, against the uncertainty of the future, people need to seek contentment in the present and recognize that “what they do is in God’s hands” (Eccl 3:1, NIV). In verse 11 the author utilizes a sporting metaphor to illustrate this point. In this verse he highlights the “arbitrary nature of life” (Garret 2001:332) by showing that success cannot be guaranteed even when one is the most skilled, most diligent and most prepared. “Wisdom, skill, and hard work can promote but not guarantee success” (Garrett 2001:332) just as the best and most prepared runner may not win the race.

The value of this verse in understanding the Old Testament approach to sport is twofold. Firstly, it indicates athletic competition was not entirely unfamiliar to Israelite culture. As Spence-Jones (2004:228) points out, this need not be taken as an allusion to the races in the Greek games but the author is most likely

referring to whatever experience of racing and athletics were familiar to Israelites. Secondly, the nature of the metaphor is a forerunner to the New Testament sporting metaphors which take seriously the experience of the athlete and apply them, in a broader sense, to the experiences of all people in life. As we will see in the New Testament, the Bible seems to have a high view of sporting participation as being parallel to spiritual experience.

4.3.1.3 Jeremiah 12:5

Jeremiah 12:5 is a direct word from God to Jeremiah which uses a sporting metaphor. The context of the verse is that Jeremiah is fatigued, concerned about his future and sets his complaint before the Lord (Jeremiah 12:1-4). In direct response God replies, “If you have raced with men on foot and they have worn you out, how can you compete with horses?” (Jer. 12:5, NIV).

The Lord is likening Jeremiah’s experience to that of an athlete who gets “worn out” (Hebrew *la’ah*) in the race (Hebrew: *ruwts*) (Renn 2005:2282). God then utilizes the Hebrew word *Tacharah*, translated “compete” by the NIV and “contend” by the KJV, to illustrate that if Jeremiah had thought it had been tough to, as it were, race against men, how much harder will it be to compete against horses. Through athletic imagery the Lord is warning Jeremiah of the troubles that still face him in the future and that the “competition” is only going to get fiercer.

The striking feature of this verse is that the athletic metaphor is a direct word from God to Jeremiah and compares the call of the prophet to a sporting competition. A precedent is therefore set which the apostle Paul picks up on in the New Testament when he compares, in numerous places, his call to ministry with running a race.

4.3.1.4 Conclusions from the Old Testament

In spite of these three verses utilising the metaphor of a footrace, the scarcity of references when compared to other metaphors in the Old Testament (e.g., farming related metaphors), probably indicates that “competitive sports had no

significant place in the social life of ancient Israel” (Achtemeier 1985:849). However, the following are some summary statements with regards to references to sports that we do find in the Old Testament:

- A factor of being created in God’s image is a need for rest and a desire for recreation. God’s plan for our life includes rest and recreation, which we see pre- and post-Fall.
- It would appear that the Israelites did not train in athletics for the same reason as the Greeks (personal accomplishment at the Games), but it was required as a means to better prepare them for warfare and survival than purely for recreation (Higgs 1995:7). The activity of sport was therefore not an end in itself but served as a means to achieve other goals.
- One can conclude that physical strength was held in high regard in the Old Testament (e.g., with David’s mighty men 2 Sam 23:8–39) and there was a value placed upon physical fitness which was associated with youthfulness (e.g. Isaiah 40:31). Physical strength and health were viewed as a gift from God.
- Exercise and strength are viewed as being of some value (Ps. 147:10-11) through which joy can be experienced (Ps 19:5).
- In a handful of cases, sport was utilised as a metaphor for spiritual truth.

4.3.2 Sport in the New Testament

The usage of sport as a metaphor is far more prevalent in the New Testament than the Old Testament, particularly in the writings of Paul. The primary reason for this is that, due to the Greek and Roman Games, competitive sport was a far greater component of everyday life and therefore more accessible to the recipients of the epistles (Sauer 1956:37). Coupled with this, the New Testament writers and Paul in particular, sought to present the Gospel message in a manner that would be most accessible to the readers (Sauer 1956:35).

Although Jesus didn't himself utilise athletic metaphors, his example of sharing truth through images set a precedent for the New Testament authors. It is possible that the apostle Paul followed Greek philosophers in drawing parallels between sport and life as they sought to understand the deeper values of sporting participation (Linville 2007:31). Certainly the athletic metaphor, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, gained in popularity (Bennett 1993:144). Thus we can state that, in the New Testament, the arena of sports "provide illustrations to important teachings" (Youngblood et al. 1995:GAMES).

Linville (2007:31) believes that the usage of these metaphors does, to a certain extent, demonstrate God's blessing upon sporting activity. Sport, he argues, is not like other metaphors such as prostitution and war which are condemned elsewhere in Scripture. If sport were viewed as sinful by biblical authors, surely this would be somewhere stated? Yet all the sporting metaphors exist to encourage positive Christian behaviour, and sport seems to be utilised as a positive physical example for the conveyance of spiritual truth (Linville 2007:31).

The Apostle Paul's usage of sport is particularly noteworthy because of the intimate detail he uses in his metaphors. His descriptions could imply firsthand experience of the Games. Perhaps the Apostle Paul attended the pan-Hellenic contests at Corinth or Ephesus (Achtemeier 1985:849). MacArthur (2001:241) writes using contemporary sporting language, "Judging from the frequent use of athletic metaphors in his writings, the apostle Paul must have been a sports fan." Also, as a Roman citizen, Paul would also have been familiar with the Roman Games. This is made clear by a direct reference to the Roman beast-fights (Gk. *ethēriomachēsa*) in 1 Corinthians 15:32 which are used as a figurative description of the struggles he had against those who opposed his message (Unger et al. 1988: GAMES).

However, some view Paul's attendance at the Games as highly unlikely and believe Paul's Jewish tradition and the religious nature of all the Greek and Roman Games would have made attendance anathema to him. Sauer (1956:50), who wrote an insightful book on the sporting metaphors contained in the New Testament, believes that:

The early Christians did not obtain their knowledge of heathen sporting customs by visiting these sporting institutions, or by personal participation in the games, *after* their conversion to Christ. For Paul even *before* his conversion a visit to these festivals was completely excluded. For every orthodox Jew, to which company Paul as an earnest Pharisee belonged, such participation was forbidden in advance ... The grounds for this lay in the religious character of these institutions. The contests were indeed one with heathen religion.

Yet, what is extremely interesting in Paul's usage of sporting metaphor is his consistent use of the analogy he makes between a running race and his call to ministry (e.g., Philippians 3:12-15). As we shall see, Paul didn't only utilise sporting metaphors to teach truth to others. Rather, he saw himself as a spiritual athlete on a racetrack prepared by God and needing to run his race of ministry until he himself crossed the finish line. Although the running race was Paul's favourite sporting metaphor, he did also refer to other sports (e.g., boxing) and many of the traditions and practices associated with the Games. However, team sports were unknown to the pan-Hellenic culture and therefore do not feature in his metaphors (Garland 2003:440).

Although we cannot know for certain how the New Testament church and, in particular Paul, felt towards sport, we can certainly affirm that sport had become such an integral part of the pan-Hellenic and Roman culture, that it provided a great metaphor for New Testament teaching (McCown and Gin 2003:13). Yet, more than that, it appears that there was something intrinsically of value within sport that made it such a great metaphor because of the similarities between the experience of the athlete, and the Christian's spiritual experience. In what follows, an overview will be given of a number of the New Testament passages that utilise sporting metaphors.

4.3.2.1 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

For the Corinthians, intimate knowledge of the Greek Isthmian and Nemea Games, both of which happened in near vicinity to the city, would have made these metaphors of Paul extremely poignant (Linville 2007:31). However, Garland contends that knowledge of the Greek games was so widespread that he may not have necessarily had the Isthmian Games in mind (2003:439). Paul himself is demonstrating a knowledge that some authors believe belies firsthand experience of the Games which could have come during his time in Corinth (Broneer 1951:96).

This passage in 1 Corinthians 9 is sandwiched between two sections where Paul is dealing with the issue of idolatry and, in particular, the issue of food and drink offered to idols (1 Cor. 8:1-13; 1 Cor. 10:14-22). The Corinthian church's "dalliance with idolatry" (Garland 2003:439) was based upon a misunderstanding in relation to their freedom in Christ, which Paul corrects with a concluding statement in 1 Corinthians 10:24-33, before going on to give clear instruction in relation to public worship and the usage of spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 11-14).

In the middle of this section Paul utilises his own life as an example of how he has denied his rights and freedom for the sake of the Gospel (1 Cor. 9). To bring this point home he utilises the sporting metaphor in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. Garland (2003:438) views this sports analogy as clarifying three issues. Firstly, the Corinthians craved honour and Paul contrasts the temporary honour received by an athlete with the eternal reward in store for the disciplined Christian. Secondly, it likens the discipline that athletes require to be successful with the disciplined life of voluntary restraint that Christians should practise for spiritual success. Thirdly, it warns that, just as an athlete can be disqualified from competition, so a Christian may be disqualified from the eternal reward should they become sidelined by the attractions of this world (Garland 2003:438).

Paul begins this series of athletic metaphors with an emphatic statement. In a running race (ἐν σταδῷ [*en stadiōi*]), all athletes are running to win but only one will get the prize. Christians therefore need to run to win (1 Cor. 9:24). Here there is immediately a parallel and a contrast drawn. Paul is paralleling the experience of the Christian with the athlete. Yet, whereas the Greek Games were only for Greek citizens, Paul is showing that every Christian is in a spiritual race (Wiersbe 1996:§1 Cor. 9:24-27) and, in this race, there can be a “multitude of victors” (Garland 2003:440).

Paul goes on to explain this parallel and contrast even further. Just as athlete who competes in the Games (ὁ ἀγωνιζόμενος [*ho agōnizomenos*]) must train in a disciplined and rigorous manner in order to receive a temporary crown, so a Christian must train in a disciplined and rigorous manner to receive an eternal crown (1 Cor. 9:25). For the Greek athletes the training period began 10 months before the race (MacArthur 1996:214) and anyone found breaking the rules of training would be disqualified from competing (Wiersbe 1996:§1 Cor. 9:24-27). The athletes had to swear on oath that they followed this strict training regimen (Garland 2003:441). The crown that the athletes were competing for was a corruptible crown (φθαρτον στεφάνον [*phtharton stephanon*]). This was a wreath made from olive leaves (Wiersbe 1996:§1 Cor. 9:24-27). Paul’s intention is not to pour scorn on the athletes but rather to shame the reader into introspective contemplation. If an athlete does all this just to receive temporary acclaim, how much more should Christians seek to discipline themselves, for the spiritual race in order to receive an eternal reward (MacArthur 1996:214)? Paul draws “ironic contrast between the athlete’s great effort and the paltry prize received for it” and is emphasising “every victory has its price in the effort and sacrifice put forth” (Garland 2003:441).

Paul then directly turns the attention to his own example and includes another sporting metaphor from the world of boxing (1 Cor. 9:26-27). Paul is not just a runner but also a fighter battling in the arena and enduring physical hardship with the motivation of being better able to serve others (Garland 2003:443). His discipline in training serves an eternal purpose. He “endures physical privations to win over his bodily cravings so that he can then win others to Christ” (Garland

2003:443). He does this so he will not be a competitor who is disqualified from the contest but one that will receive the ultimate prize of eternal life.

In this passage Paul has utilised different aspects of sports to highlight the importance of endurance, training and personal sacrifice. Through each of these he is encouraging Christians to be focused, exercise self-control and to persevere in their Christian life, often in the face of opposition. The motivation for athletes is the victor's crown which will not last; the motivation for Christians is to receive an eternal crown (Reavely 1992:7). Paul is here identifying values in sporting competition that are "compatible with Christianity" (Reavely 1992:7). Although this does not condone all sports, it does demonstrate that Paul recognises many good qualities, particularly within the discipline of training for sports. However, it could also be argued that he is purely providing a contrast between something that, although it may be not be intrinsically bad, seems somewhat foolish in comparison to matters of eternity.

4.3.2.2 Galatians 2:2 and 5:7

In both of these verses, Paul is comparing the Christian life to that of a race. Paul consistently used the metaphor of running a race to describe his life and ministry. As Bruce (1982:110) writes, "Athletic imagery came readily to Paul's mind". We see this also in Acts 20:24 (NIV) where Paul is sharing with the Ephesian Elders and says:

However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me – the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.

Paul's favourite sporting metaphor was that of the footrace (MacArthur 2001:242). Paul viewed his ministry as a race that began the day he was saved and would not conclude until he had finished the race and entered heaven. The context of Galatians 2:2 is Paul's reference to his consultation with the leadership in Jerusalem at the beginning of his ministry. His concern was not that he was off-track as he was already running (Greek: τρέχειν [Trechein]) (Vincent 2002:§4:94). Rather, he desired for them to acknowledge that he was

running the race he was specifically called to; that of preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles. His intention in going to Jerusalem was most likely to put the leaders' minds at rest concerning his vision and intentions, and certainly, "Their formal declaration that he had not been running in vain would materially aid him in his mission" (Vincent 2002:§4:94).

In Galatians 5:7 he is applying the same metaphor to the Galatian church. They had also begun the Christian race, and indeed it was a "good race", but they were now going off track and in danger of not making it to the finish line (MacArthur 1997:§Gal 5:7).

In this section of his letter to the Galatians Paul is exposing the danger the church was facing due to the false teachers that had infiltrated the church. In particular, the false teachers were espousing the need for the Gentile Galatian church to adopt Jewish religious customs such as circumcision (Gal. 5:1-6). These advocates of circumcision may seem to be co-runners in the race but Paul is graphically demonstrating that their teaching and influence is seriously compromising the Galatians own spiritual race.

Paul likens the "agitators" (Gal. 5:12) to an athlete who distracts, trips, or deliberately blocks another runner, cutting in on them and preventing them from completing the race. Such an athlete would not only provoke the anger of the other athletes and the spectators but, having clearly broken the rules of the Games, would be disqualified (Hansen 1994:§Gal 5:7). Through this metaphor Paul is graphically exposing the deviousness of the false-teachers and warning the Galatians of the danger they are facing. The reality is that the Galatian church members were not innocent victims but had exposed themselves to the danger by allowing the false teachers to enter their race-track and run alongside them. The "good race" was turning bad and Paul was pleading with them to get back on track and resume running in such a way that would lead them to the finish line (Gal. 5:16-26).

4.3.2.3 Philippians 3:12-15

In this passage Paul is once again applying a sporting metaphor to his own spiritual life in order to teach principles and lessons to his readers. MacArthur (2001:242) contends that Paul was countering the claim of some in the Philippian church that perfection was attainable in this life. He makes a “forceful disclaimer of spiritual perfection” (MacArthur 2001:242) while demonstrating the need to earnestly seek spiritual growth and maturity. This pursuit of spiritual growth should be the goal of all who enter the racetrack. Paul is showing that if he, as apostle and church planter, needed to still continue pursuing spiritual growth, so the Christians from Philippi should likewise recognise this need. Although Christlikeness and perfection will not be obtained this side of eternity, Paul was totally dedicated to pursuing this goal (MacArthur 2001:244).

The athletic imagery that Paul utilises is striking. The metaphor of verse 13 and 14 is picturing the Greek runner not looking behind to see how others are doing, but completely focused on being the first across the line (Wuest 1997:§Php.2:13-14). The Greek word utilised is ἐπεκτεινόμενος and translated in the NIV as “straining towards” the goal. “It describes stretching a muscle to its limit, and pictures a runner straining every muscle to reach the finish line” (MacArthur 2001:248). Bengel (in Vincent 2002:449) graphically puts it this way: “The eye outstrips and draws onward the hand, and the hand the foot.” Just as the athlete is straining for the finish line, so Paul was in “hot pursuit” (Silva 2005:175) of Christlikeness.

Paul doubly emphasises his desire to “strain towards” the prize by stating that he does not look back on past successes or failures but says “I press on,” chasing after the prize. “It speaks of an aggressive, energetic endeavour” (MacArthur 2001:245). Paul is deliberately using this imagery to emphasise his singular focus in life which is to “win the prize” which God has prepared for him.

Paul utilises the metaphor of sport to illustrate the importance of focus, determination and discipline. One can imagine Paul watching an athletics event and admiring the single-minded focus of the runner and desiring that the Christians would express similar zeal in their Christian life. Higgs (1995:325)

accuses those who view such passages as a theological justification for sport as in danger of “Scripture twisting.” Yet, although such a passage may not be an out and out endorsement of sport or sports ministry, Paul clearly finds the athlete an inspirational analogy and praiseworthy (Reavely 1992:8). It is almost as if he himself has modelled his own zeal for the prize on that of the athlete and is thereby urging the readers of the letter to up their own game and single-mindedly pursue the calling of God on their life.

4.3.2.4 1 Timothy 4:8

Some would consider this to be Paul’s clearest endorsement of physical exercise and athletics. The Greek word used for “physical training” is γυμνασία *gymnasia* which was a very common Greek word, although this is its only usage in the New Testament (Robertson 1997:§1Tim 4:8). It appears that Paul is here indicating that physical exercise is of value for the purpose of improving the body (Louw and Nida 1996:527). However, the King James translation points to Paul being disparaging of athletic training as it translates this verse that physical training “profiteth little”. Yet, the comparison Paul seems to be making is that if physical exercise is required to keep the body fit, then surely spiritual exercise is required to keep spiritually fit. Wiersbe (1996:§1 Tim.4:7) elaborates:

Certainly we ought to care for our bodies, and exercise is a part of that care ... But bodily exercise benefits us only during this life; godly exercise is profitable now and for eternity ... Paul challenged Timothy to be as devoted to godliness as an athlete is to his sport.

The context of this passage is how to avoid falling into false teaching and that spiritual exercise is the key to maintaining sound doctrine. Spiritual exercise is the antidote to apostasy (spiritual ill-health).

Wuest (1997:§1 Tim.4:6-7) sees Paul’s reference to a more direct correction of a specific “ascetic practise which took the form of physical exercise” which he was seeking to correct. As such he believes it is impossible to infer anything from this passage in relation to the value of athletic activity. However, Reavely

(1992:8) comments that, “While godliness receives the greater endorsement, bodily exercise is also commended.”

What is most likely however is that Paul is again drawing a comparison and stating that physical training is beneficial for a time (when compared to some of the ascetic teaching of the day). So a good translation may be that exercise is profitable for a little while and extends to only a few things whereas spiritual training is profitable for all time and extends to all things (Vincent 2002:249). Paul’s main point is that spiritual training is of far greater value because it is eternally profitable and if one spends time on physical training, how much more should time be spent on spiritual training. Therefore it is possible to read this verse as both a correction to those who are prioritising their physical well-being over their spiritual health, while at the same time recognising that there is temporal value in seeking to keep fit through sporting activity.

4.3.2.5 2 Timothy 4:7-8

Here, at the end of his life, Paul uses sporting metaphors in a similar way as he has done previously; espousing the value of perseverance against a backdrop of hardship. He vividly uses the language of sport and again demonstrates an intimate knowledge of the Greek Games. What is extremely poignant about this passage is the way Paul parallels the experience of the sportsman with his own spiritual life (Barclay 1956:241). As he was approaching the end of his race with his imminent departure from this world, Paul views his Christian experience through the lens of sporting metaphors.

Firstly, Paul uses the language of boxing/wrestling stating that he has “fought the good fight” (2 Tim. 4:7 NIV). Mounce (2002:579) points out that Paul is not claiming to have fought well, but that “the fight of Christian ministry is inherently good.” He is acknowledging that all Christians who seek to live productively and effectively for Christ will undergo the same kind of physical exertion and struggle as the wrestler. Yet this is to be embraced because the Christian fight is something beautiful, as the Greeks also considered wrestling in its aesthetic form to be something of beauty (Wuest 1997:§2 Tim.4:7). Paul utilises the

Greek word ἀγωνίζομαι (*agōnizomai*), derived from ἀγών (*agōn*), which means to fight or struggle. His use is in the perfect tense, “speaking of an action completed in past time with present results” (Wuest 1997:§2 Tim.4:7). In the following verse he defines these results as being awarded the “crown of righteousness” (2 Tim. 4:8 NIV).

Secondly Paul returns to his more familiar athletic metaphor of the footrace. In Acts 20:24 Paul is recorded as having spoken to the Ephesian elders of the race ahead of him. Now, the racetrack is behind him as he has finished the race (Robertson 1997:§2 Tim.4:7-8). Paul, by his example, is providing encouragement to every Christian still in the race and stating that to complete what God has laid before them is attainable. Paul throughout the Christian struggle on the Christian racetrack had “kept the faith” until the finish line.

To underline this encouragement, Paul uses two further images from the Greek Games. In referring to the “crown of righteousness” Paul is bringing to mind the image of the reward the winning athlete received. Paul’s reward would be eternal life with Christ. “As an athlete completes the course and receives the crown, so Paul has completed his course and his crown of life in heaven awaits” (Mounce 2002:582).

His assurance of receiving this reward is based upon his knowledge of the character and goodness of the “righteous judge”. His language here is not from the judicial bench, but from the athletic games. The “judge” (Greek: κριτής *kritēs*) was the umpire at the Games who would ensure that the athlete had competed according to the rules and was worthy of the prize. “Thus Paul, the spiritual athlete, his victory won, is resting at the goal posts, awaiting the award which the judge’s stand will give him” (Wuest 1997:§2 Tim. 4:8).

These verses are perhaps the most insightful that we have in Scripture in relation to considering the value and role of sport. Paul, having been tried and sentenced to death, is writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit his final words to the churches he had planted. Given this context, the fact that Paul uses a sporting metaphor to summarise his life, ministry and calling to eternity,

must be considered noteworthy. Linville, (2007:33) puts a strong case for the Scriptural endorsement of sport based upon these verses:

God chose to encapsulate the life of His most pre-eminent apostle by using a sports analogy! Paul didn't choose this. God did! This is a model of models for the church ... It does not seem rational, nor logical, to state that God would have chosen a negative, inherently, sinful analogy to summarise Paul's life (Linville 2007:33).

If this were merely an isolated instance of Paul utilising a sporting metaphor then perhaps one would have to question Linville's conclusion. However, as has been seen, Paul consistently returned to the realm of sport to provide an illustration for the Christian life. Coupled to this, Paul saw his own Christian life and ministry as parallel to the athletes. Therefore, one could argue that above all other human activity, Paul valued sport as being the human activity that best represented the attributes he desired to see in followers of Christ.

4.3.2.6 Hebrews 12:1-3

Hebrews 12:1-3 is an important passage as it is the only sporting metaphor utilised in the New Testament by an author other than the Apostle Paul.

Following one of the most inspirational chapters of Scripture, Hebrews 11 and the hall of fame of the righteous, the author of Hebrews strikingly utilises a sporting metaphor to encourage his readers to follow in the footsteps of those who have gone before. The picture is of the great amphitheatre with row upon row of spectators supporting the participants in the race. However, those witnessing are not merely sports fans, but those who "testify from their own experience" (Robertson 1997:§Heb. 12:1). Their support is more than just verbal encouragement; their life and testimony urge on the current participants (Wuest 1997:§Heb. 12:1).

Those on the racetrack are being exhorted to "keep on running" (τρέχωμεν [*trechōmen*]) the race before them with patience and perseverance (Robertson 1997:§Heb. 12:1). Every person who has faith in Christ is called into the race

and it is a race that must be run (Sauer 1956:69); the Christian life being compared to a marathon rather than a sprint, along a course that God has preordained (Reavely 1992:10).

The passage also gives instruction on how to run. Firstly, the runners must strip off every hindrance with the emphasis on laying aside every weight that might slow them down (Greek *ogkon* (ὀγκον)). This could refer to the training period in which the athlete gets fit for the race (Wuest 1997:§Heb. 12:1). It is more likely it refers to the direct preparation an athlete underwent prior to the race - that of stripping off of the outer clothing so that nothing could tangle them up and cause them to stumble in the race. Just as the runner needs to be stripped of everything that holds them back, so the believer in Christ needs to be stripped of sin and the Lord's discipline is a means through which this is achieved (Sauer 1956:79).

Secondly, the race must be run with perseverance. The Christian race is a marathon not a sprint (Carson 1994:§Heb 12:1) and requires endurance to see it to the end. Support is gleaned from those who have gone before (Reavely 1992:11), but each Christian is required to see their race through to the end. This is only accomplished in relation to the third piece of advice given here, that all runners must have the right focus. Just as the athletes on the track focus on the finish line, so Christians must focus on Christ who has already crossed the finish line and awaits the reward of the "joy set before him". Christ is the leader in the race (Greek: *archēgon*), the pioneer who has gone ahead (Carson 1994:§Heb.12:2-4). Through his victory, certain victory can be attained for all who follow after him. As He suffered and endured, so His followers can run and endure all opposition and hardship along the way. As such, this short section also prepares the reader for the importance of discipline which the author is shortly to turn to (Hebrews 12:4-13). And as the runner applies himself to the race with the goal of victory, so the believer sets about his race focused on the joy of the victory before them (Sauer 1956:81).

4.4 A word study of sporting metaphors in Scripture

The following section gives a brief overview of some of the key Greek sporting words utilised by the New Testament authors in many of the passages that have been studied above.

4.4.1 The athlete: *athleo*

The verb *athleo*, from which our modern word athlete is derived, is the most general of the sports-oriented words in the New Testament (Bennett 1993:142). It means to “engage in a contest, contend in public games, contend for a prize” (Thayer §:αθλέω). *Athleo* is used in 2 Timothy 2:5 as a metaphor, reminding Timothy of the disciplines the athlete requires to strive for victory. In Hebrews 10:32 a related noun *athlesis* is utilised to compare the Christian life to a contest (Bennett 1993:142).

4.4.2 The race: *dromos* and *stadion*

Two Greek words are utilised to describe a running race. *Dromos* refers specifically to a footrace, or running race, and is used by Paul in Acts 13:25; 20:24; 2 Tim. 4:7 and the author of Hebrews 12:1 (Vine et al. 1996: Vol 2, 134). The New Testament usage utilises it as a metaphor for the course of one’s life (Renn 2005:1692). Paul in particular seemed fond to utilise the noun *dromos* as an illustration of the entire Christian life, utilising this word to describe both John the Baptist’s (Acts 13:25) and his own (2 Timothy 4:7) completed course through life (Bennett 1993:143).

Stadion, from which we get our modern word *stadium*, refers specifically to the race in an arena or stadium. It relates to a fixed distance of approximately 185 meters, which was the standard length of a running track in Greece (Renn 2005:1692). Paul, in 1 Corinthians 9:24, writes of the runners *en stadion*, literally, *in a race course* (Vincent 2002: Vol 3, 234). Perhaps we could state in modern sports terminology, “on track”. The image of the running race was the most popular sporting metaphor of the New Testament authors (Sauer 1956:52).

4.4.3 The contest: *agon*

Agon – to struggle, and its derivative, *agonizo*, to contend, are utilised to demonstrate the “struggle implied in the athletic contest” (Bennett 1993:142). Renn (2005:1692) states that *agon* refers primarily to a fight or contest. There is an emphasis with this word on the act of competing or taking part in a competition (Louw and Nida 1996: Vol 1, 527). Again, it is Paul who turns to this metaphor for the Christian life most frequently referring both to his personal struggles (1 Thessalonians 2:2), to summarise his endurance (2 Timothy 4:7), and to encourage others to *agonison ton kalon agona* “fight the good fight of faith” (Bennet 1993:142). Although the word is often translated “race” in Hebrews 12:1, it is actually the word *agona* that is used. The author is encouraging perseverance in a contest rather than specifically a footrace (although a footrace is obviously also a competitive competition). However, this word was usually linked to combat sports such as wrestling and boxing. The link to perseverance is clear when it is recognised that this is the root word for the English word, agony. The verb, *agonizomai*, further emphasises this and is used both literally and metaphorically in the New Testament with regards to striving and persevering in the Christian struggle (Renn 2005:827).

4.4.4 To run: *trecho*

The word used for the participants in the footrace (*stadio*) is the verb *trecho* which means “to run” in most of its New Testament uses (Renn 2005:1838). This is used generally in the New Testament to describe the act of running (e.g., Matthew 27:48), but specifically in the sports related passages to describe the athlete. In 1 Corinthians 9 the focus is not on the race, but on the runners; “Do you not know that in the race (*stadio*) all the runners (*trechontes*) run (*trechousin*), but only one gets the prize? Run (*trecho*) in such a way as to get the prize’ (v. 24)” (Bennett 1993:144). When Paul speaks to the Galatians, he reminds them that they were running (*etrechete*) a good race but have since been sidetracked. The author to Hebrews tells his readers they must run (*trechomen*) with endurance the race prepared for them (Bennett 1993:144).

4.4.5 The wreath/crown: *stephanos* and the prize: *brabeion*

The *stephanos* was the athlete's motivation and was the physical garland or crown received for winning at the Games (Renn 2005:490). It was the reward for victory, the symbol of accomplishment and, for many, the "pinnacle of human happiness" (Renn 2005:490). Often translated "crown" in the English bible (2 Tim. 4:8; 1 Cor. 9:25-26; Rev 2:10; Jas. 1:12; 1 Thess. 2:19; Phil. 4:1; 1 Pet. 5:3,4), the *stephanos* itself was a garland or wreath and was made from pine or celery (Garland 2003:445) and Garrison (in Garland 2003:445) claims that the worthlessness of the wreath underscored the honour of competing. It served as a symbol rather than being of any intrinsic worth.

Sauer (1956:61) sheds light on the usage of *stephanos* in Hebrews 12:2. At the start of the games the *stephanos* was placed at the foot of Zeus as the motivation for the athletes. "For the combatants it was 'the joy lying before them'" (Sauer 1956:60). The Scriptures draw sharp contrast between the athlete's *stephanos* and the crown received for living faithfully for Christ. As Christians, Christ is set before us and our *stephanos* is entwined with His victory on the cross. Therefore, we fix our eyes on him who won us to himself as the joy set before him.

Another word utilised twice was *brabeion* meaning "prize" (Renn 2005:1660) and is used by Paul to refer to the prize of the athlete in 1 Corinthians 3:14 and in reference to his own life-goal of receiving an eternal prize in Philippians 3:14).

4.5 Conclusions from the New Testament passages

Under the direction of the Holy Spirit, the New Testament is replete with imagery taken from the sports field. This sporting imagery is utilised either as a comparison with, or metaphor for, the Christian life. Not only was sport used in general terms but the usage indicates that the authors were intimately aware of both the life and motivation of the athlete, and the structure and nature of the Games. "Scarcely one essential feature of the whole course of the games has escaped the writers of the New Testament and not been employed in their figurative speech" (Sauer 1956:61). At the very least, the Holy Spirit was

leading the writers to utilise imagery that would be palatable and meaningful to the readers. Some would argue, however, that the way in which the imagery is utilised demonstrates something of intrinsic value in sport itself. Sport is more than just a medium to espouse godly values; the very activity of sport can, to some extent, reflect the image and character of God in humankind.

When the New Testament sporting passages are studied from the perspective of the athlete, the insight with which the metaphors are utilised is striking. Paul did not merely make reference to sport as a token gesture or passing comment but utilised every aspect of the athlete's experience as a primary illustration for the Christian life. Paul recognised values within the activity of sport that were compatible with the values he applied to his own Christian life and espoused others to follow. He paralleled the earthly, temporary sporting experience with the eternal spiritual life of the Christian.

Bennett (1993:144) highlights five main themes that can be gleaned from the New Testament sporting metaphors:

- The Christian life is not easy and requires effort to keep moving forward.
- Discipline is important both in terms of spiritual training and to observe the rules (Reavely 1992:12).
- Christians will experience harsh opposition as the "chief opponent is the devil" (Russell 1993:144).
- Christians are competing for a prize which will be obtained and which make all the sacrifices worthwhile (Reavely 1992:12).
- Christians are part of a team and do not need to struggle alone.

Although it is not possible to affirm an absolutely clear Biblical foundation for sports ministry, it is possible to infer a very positive attitude towards sport in the Scriptures. Certainly the role of sport in the Greek/Roman world was not condemned in the New Testament. One can therefore legitimately conclude that Paul and the New Testament authors would approve of utilising contemporary

parallels between sport and faith in order to advance the Gospel message. If the theological mandate (see chapter three) for diversity in the forms of evangelism is coupled with this endorsement of sport as a metaphor for Christianity, the researcher would suggest that the arena of sports as a field for evangelism, and the vehicle of sports as a medium for proclamation, would be strongly approved by the New Testament authors and, therefore, the Holy Spirit. This view is confirmed by Reavely (1992:11) who offers a good summary of the New Testament approach to sport:

Many of the ideas Paul borrows from athletics carry values which coincide with his picture of the Christian life. Those values include abiding by predetermined rules, single-mindedness, self-control, goal orientation, reward for success, and discipline. These values are common to both athletics and Christianity. If Christian values are compatible with athletics, then the connection would certainly commend athletics to Christians (Reavely 1992:11).

Coupled to this, when one considers the sporting context of the era in which the Bible was written one could argue that the Biblical authors could have vehemently written against Christian involvement in sport had that been their position. The Greek and Roman Games were conducted in honour of heathen gods. The underlying philosophies of the Greek Games were contradictory to Biblical teaching and the Roman Games were violent and dehumanising for many participants Unger (1988:§GAMES). It is interesting that, although the Bible clearly teaches against idolatry, heathen philosophy, and violence, no teaching is contained in Scripture which can be interpreted as forbidding Christians in participating in the activity of sports itself. Rather, in view of the way sport is referred to in Scripture, a better conclusion is that sport, conducted in a God-honouring way, is viewed as a very positive activity for Christians.

4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter the researcher has sought to present the Biblical foundations for sports ministry. The challenges associated with this endeavour were examined

by highlighting the silence of Scripture with regards to teaching on the subject of sport. It was proposed that, given the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture, and that there is no biblical injunction against sport, one can therefore conclude that God is not anti-sport. This is confirmed through the study of sporting references in both the Old and New Testaments whereby many positive aspects of recreation, physical exertion and sports competition are espoused. The two most striking facets of the Biblical foundation for Sports Ministry relate to sport being utilised as a metaphor for Christian discipleship, and athletic competition, notably the running race, being paralleled to the Christian journey through life. Finally, an overview of New Testament Greek sporting words was given which demonstrated the way in which the Biblical authors, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, utilised what would have been familiar terminology and images to the readers.

In Chapter six the Biblical precedent for utilising sport as a metaphor to proclaim spiritual truth will be integrated into the theological framework for sports ministry in South Africa in terms of the PRIOR model.

CHAPTER FIVE

An Empirical Survey of the Perceptions of Leaders in Selected Churches in Tshwane Regarding the main Reasons why Churches are Engaging or Disengaging with Sports Ministry Introduction

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter the researcher will seek to ascertain the perceptions of leaders in selected churches in Tshwane regarding the main reasons why churches are engaging or disengaging with sports ministry. This will be done by means of an empirical survey, which involves both quantitative and qualitative research: the collection of firsthand information through a questionnaire that requires structured and semi-structured responses. Once the research has been completed, recommendations and conclusions will be presented.

The empirical survey will consist of the following aspects:

- The purpose of the investigation
- Research methodology (data collection techniques)
- Description of the empirical survey
- Presentation of the data (results and analysis)
- Key findings, recommendations and further research
- Conclusion

5.2 The purpose of the investigation

The purpose of the questionnaire was to determine whether there was a discernable re-engagement between churches in Tshwane and the world of sport and to ascertain some of the reasons why a re-engagement may or may not be taking place.

Rodger Oswald (2002:2-4) gives nine reasons why he believes churches should develop sports ministry as an ongoing facet of their church programme:

- A strategy for evangelism
- A tool for discipleship
- A means for fellowship
- A source of support
- A teacher of servanthood
- A trainer of leaders
- A maintainer
- A conduit for God's call
- A missions tool and stimulus

Given these proposed benefits for sports ministry, the researcher was seeking to identify the following through the empirical survey:

- To determine the main hindrances to churches partaking in sports ministry.
- To understand the primary concerns that church leaders have regarding their members actively partaking in the sport of football.
- What primary motivations they would advocate for the development of sports ministry in their church.

5.3 Research methodology (data collection techniques)

5.3.1 Research approach and design

Data was collected by means of an empirical survey using a three-part questionnaire as the research instrument (see Appendix 3). The questionnaire was distributed, along with instructions, via Email and/or fax to church leaders in Tshwane, South Africa. The three sections of the questionnaire were as follows:

- Section A: Background information.
- Section B: a self-administered questionnaire for the collection of quantitative data.
- Section C: a semi-structured section which allowed for the respondents comments for the collection of qualitative data.

5.3.2 The design of the questionnaire

5.3.2.1 The front page

The front page of the questionnaire served to give an introduction to the questionnaire and obtain certain information on the respondent. The basic key information required pertained to both the respondent's details (e.g. name) and the church of which they were in leadership (e.g. name and denominational affiliation). The respondents were given assurance that information would be held in strictest confidence. The front page also contained instructions for the completion of the different sections of the questionnaire.

5.3.2.2 Self-Administered questionnaire: Section A and B (quantitative research)

The self-administered questionnaire was divided into two sections, section A and section B.

a. Section A

The purpose of Section A was to obtain basic demographic details pertaining to the respondent's church and to whether or not they were intending on utilising the FIFA World Cup™ as an opportunity for evangelistic outreach.

b. Section B

The purpose of Section B was to determine their existing approach to sports ministry. The questions firstly ascertained whether the church had a sports ministry. Those that did have an existing sports ministry were asked how long

the sports ministry had been in existence and the reasons they had for developing a sports ministry. They were also asked what some of the challenges and benefits were to having a sports ministry. Those that did not have an existing sports ministry were asked whether they were considering developing a sports ministry and what the hindrances were to this process.

The final task of section B was for the respondents to rate twelve statements that the researcher has experienced as common concerns of church leaders regarding their church member's participation in the sport of soccer. The respondents were requested to rate the statements out of twenty with 1 being of lowest concern, and 20 being of highest concern. The sport of soccer was chosen because of a) its prevalence and popularity, b) the pending FIFA World Cup™ (at the time the research was conducted), c) to provide a focused sample relating to one sport, and d) it being the researcher's primary area of expertise in sports ministry.

5.3.2.3 Semi-structured questionnaire: Section C (Qualitative research)

In Section C, the semi-structured questionnaire, respondents were presented with an adaptation of Rodger Oswald's (2002:2-4) motivations for developing sports ministry in the local church. A list of ten motivations were given and the respondents were asked to mark with an X the four they believed to be most important for a local church. They were then required to provide reasons and Biblical support for the four motivations they had chosen.

5.3.3 The validation of the questionnaire: A pilot study

The questionnaire went through a process of eight revisions with the researcher's supervisors before it was considered ready for distribution. A pilot study was then conducted in order to discover whether there were any deficiencies in the questionnaire and if further revisions were required (Smith 2008:235). For the purposes of the pilot study, the questionnaire was distributed to ten people comprising of colleagues of the researcher with experience in sports ministry, and pastors from outside the geographical area of study. Those included within the pilot study were not only asked to complete the

questionnaire, but also to give feedback to the researcher on any areas of ambiguity and their recommendations for improvements. Their input helped to finalise the final draft of the questionnaire in preparation for distribution.

5.4 Description of the empirical survey

5.4.1 Procedure

The questionnaire was prepared in such a way that it could be sent via Email or fax to the respondents. In order to conduct a survey of this nature, two accompanying letters were required. The first (Appendix 1) was a letter from the researcher explaining the purpose of the survey, why they have been particularly chosen to partake in the survey, and assuring them of confidentiality. This letter was contained in the body of the Email and was personally addressed to each recipient. The second letter was from the researcher's supervisors (Appendix 2) representing the institution under whose auspices the research was being conducted. This letter is extremely important in order to validate the questionnaire to the recipients and was sent as an attachment to the Email. The full questionnaire (Appendix 3) was also sent as an attachment to the Email in Word format in order that it could be digitally completed and returned to the researcher.

The questionnaire was sent via Email to each individual who was being requested to respond. The details of each person who was sent the Email was logged on a spreadsheet with the specific date that the Email was sent. A follow up phone call was then made to each recipient to alert them to the questionnaire they had been sent and in order to request a response. Some asked for the questionnaire to be sent via fax, and one person requested a postal copy. As responses were returned, the date and details were logged on the same spreadsheet and all the data collated.

5.4.2 Sampling method

Smith (2008:237) states that “sampling is a way to get a lot of information from not so many people”. To obtain an effective sample, the respondents need to represent the “same types of people in the same proportion in which they appear in the total population” (Smith 2008:237).

Smith (2008:238) identifies three main sampling techniques, *Representative sampling*, *Random sampling* and *Cluster sampling*. For this study the *Representative sampling* method was utilised which sought to survey a sample of church leaders in Tshwane which were representative of the broader population of church leaders in Tshwane. The sample was selected from a database of church leaders who had attended one or more meetings of The Ultimate Goal. The Ultimate Goal was a network of churches and ministries that were considering opportunities for outreach during the 2010 FIFA World Cup™. The churches involved came from diverse traditions, backgrounds and communities across the city of Tshwane.

5.4.3 Sample size and response

It was difficult to gauge what the response would be to a survey conducted via Email. There is also no guarantee that a questionnaire sent via Email has been received or read by the recipient. Therefore, it was decided to send the questionnaire to all the church leaders contained on The Ultimate Goal Tshwane database, a total of 72 church leaders. These Emails were distributed between November 2008 and February 2009. Three leaders responded to decline participation in the study. Wherever possible, a follow up phone call was made to those who did not respond immediately and a number confirmed that they would complete the survey but never did. In total, 32 completed questionnaires were returned to the researcher (45%). This response was considered representative of the broader body of church leaders in Tshwane and was therefore acceptable for the purposes of the research.

5.5 Presentation of the data (Results and analysis)

Once all the questionnaires had been completed and returned, the data was collated in preparation for analysis. The responses to Section 1 and Section 2 were recorded in a spreadsheet, while for Section 3 a spreadsheet and Word document were used to record the semi-structured responses.

Once all the data had been recorded, it was assessed and evaluated by the researcher. The data of the structured was converted into percentages or averages for better analysis. In the semi-structured questionnaire, the comments made by the respondents were grouped together and analysed in order to determine common themes.

5.5.1 Background details of respondents

The background information pertained to both the biographical information of the church leader who completed the questionnaire and the church they were in leadership of.

5.5.1.1 Biographical information of church leader

The biographical detail obtained from the church leaders was in relation to their gender, role and length of service in the church.

5.5.1.1.1 Gender

Figure 1 shows the distribution of respondents according to gender.

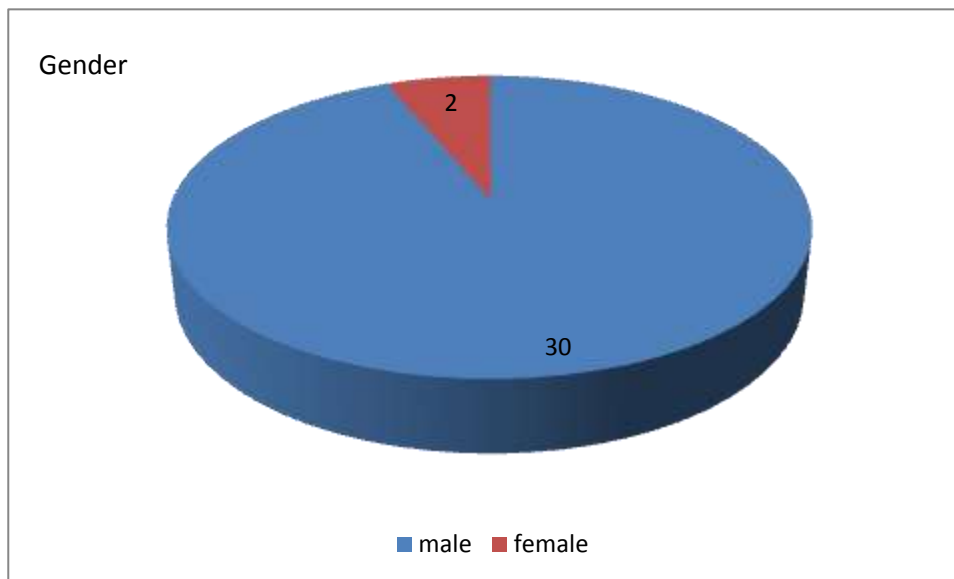


Figure 1: Percentage of respondents according to Gender

The respondents to the survey were predominantly male. Given that the questionnaire was aimed to full-time church leaders/pastors, this was perceived to be representative of church tradition in Tshwane.

5.5.1.1.2 Role in the church

Figure 2 shows the distribution of respondents according to their role in the church.

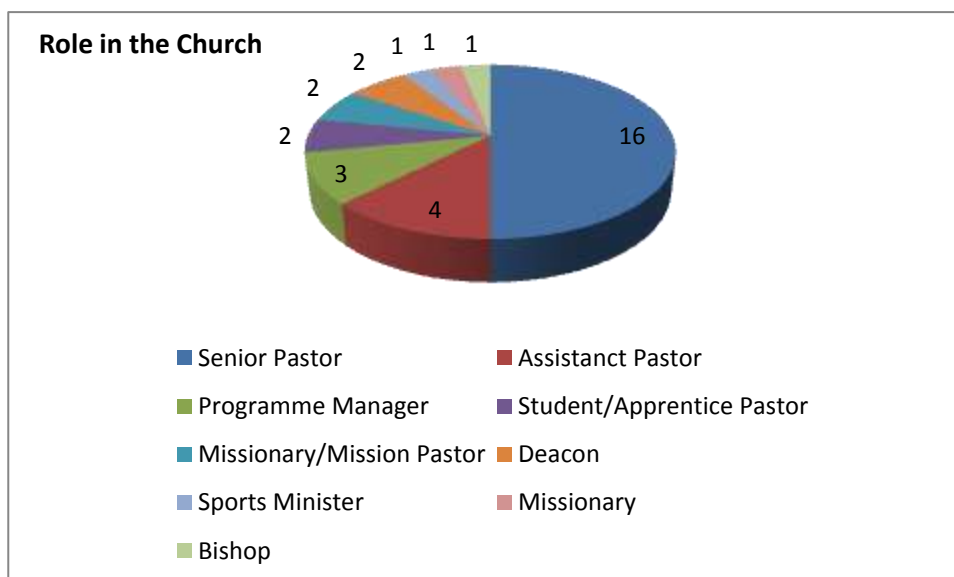


Figure 2: Role of respondents in their church

All of the respondents to the survey were in significant leadership positions in the church. 50% identified themselves as being the senior pastor, with the remaining 50% divided between various leadership functions.

5.5.1.1.3 Number of years serving in that church

Figure 3 shows the distribution of respondents according to the number of years they had been serving in their church.

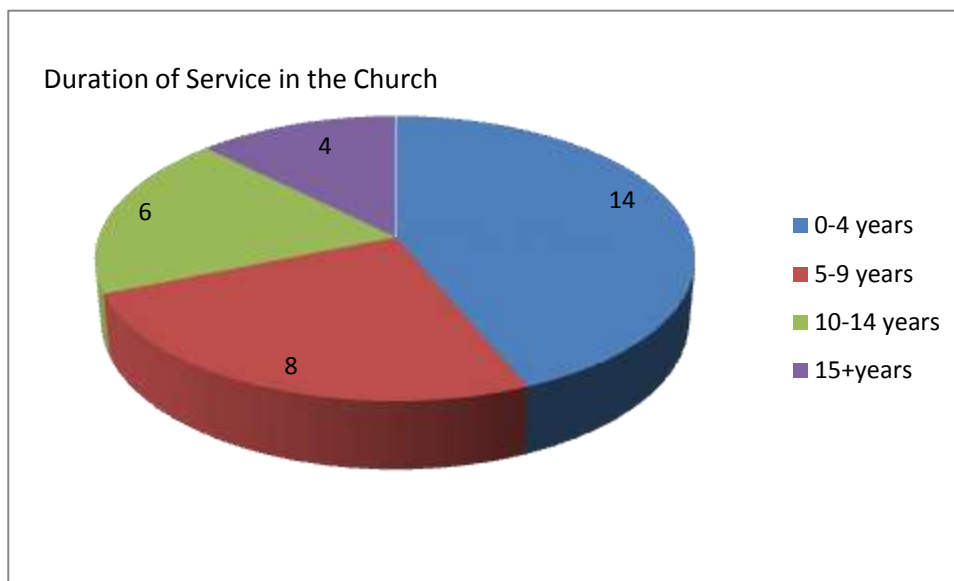


Figure 3: Duration of service in the church

It was important to have a good spread in terms of duration of service. 12.5% of respondents had served in their church for over 15 years, whereas 43.75% were relatively new in their church, having served for between 0 and 4 years. A further 43.75% had served between 5 and 14 years. The variance in experience and duration of service was vital in getting good representative data.

5.5.1.2 Church background

The background information on the churches that was requested was in relation to denomination, number of members, approximate average age of the congregation and their race. Additionally, respondents were asked if they had an existing sports ministry and were planning to utilize the FIFA World Cup™ as an outreach opportunity.

5.5.1.2.1 Denomination

Figure 4 shows the distribution of respondents according to their church denomination/tradition.

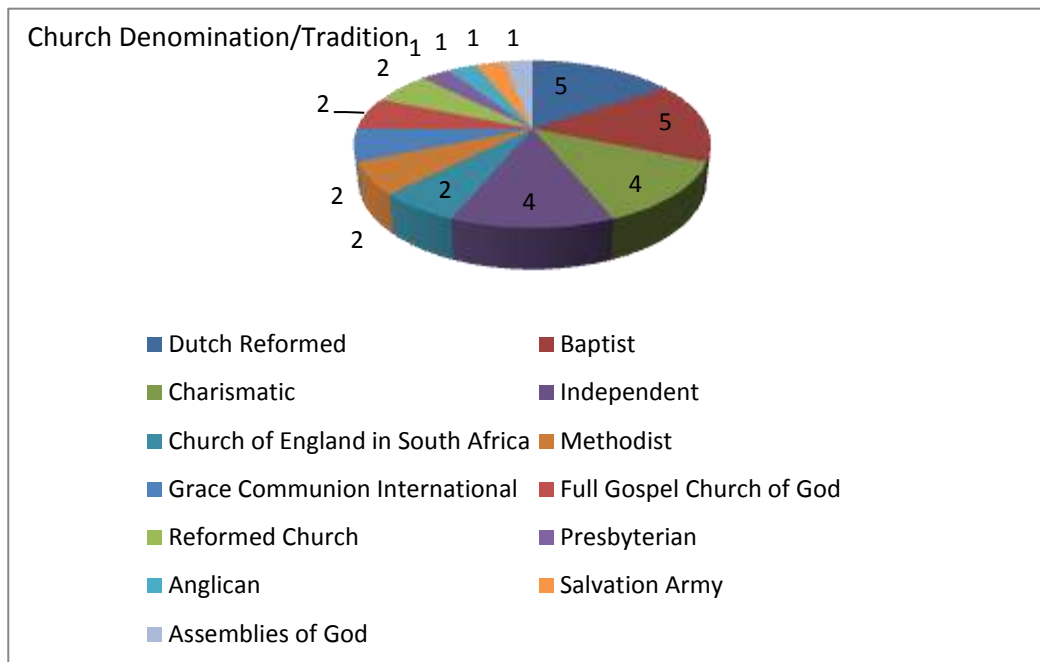


Figure 4: Church Denomination/Tradition of Respondents

The church leaders came from a broad variety of denominations and church traditions which was representative of the variety of denominations in Tshwane.

5.5.1.2.2 Number of members

Figure 5 shows the size of the respondent's churches based upon their number of members.

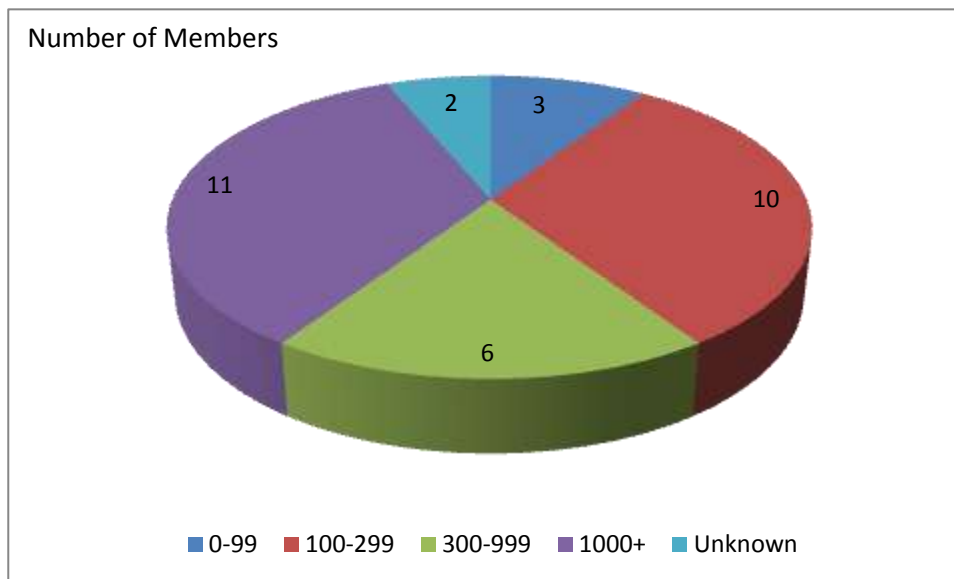


Figure 5: Number of Members

Although it is recognised that the respondents may have differing understandings on the interpretation of the word “members”, figure 5 does demonstrate that those surveyed represented a wide variety of church sizes.

5.5.1.2.3 Approximate average age of congregation

Figure 6 shows the average age of the respondent’s congregation.

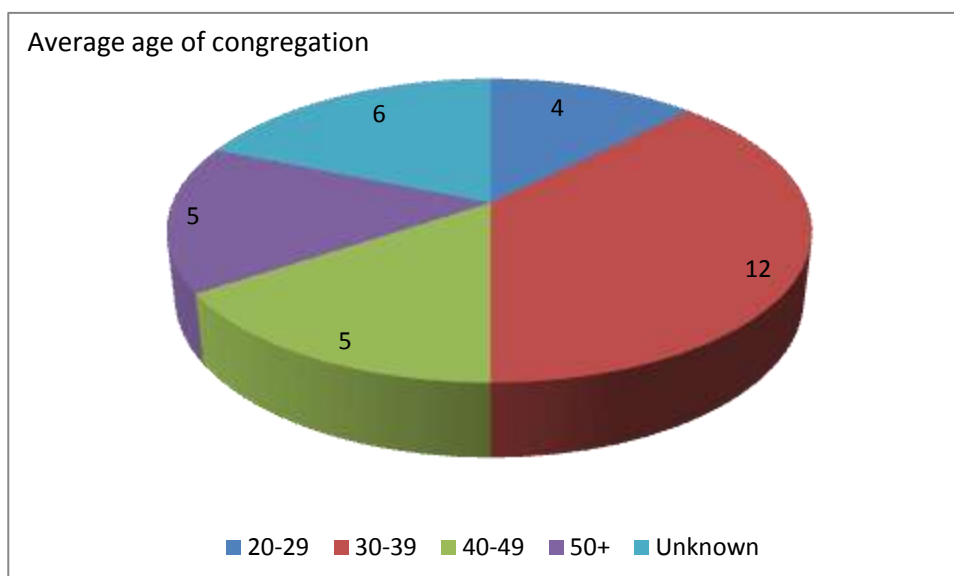


Figure 6: Average age of the respondent's congregation

The respondents were asked to give the approximate average age of those who attend their church. Although this was not scientifically obtained, the responses again demonstrate a wide variety of representation from younger congregations (12.5%) to more mature congregations (15.6%).

5.5.1.2.4 Ethnicity

Figure 7 shows the predominant ethnic grouping of the respondent's church members.

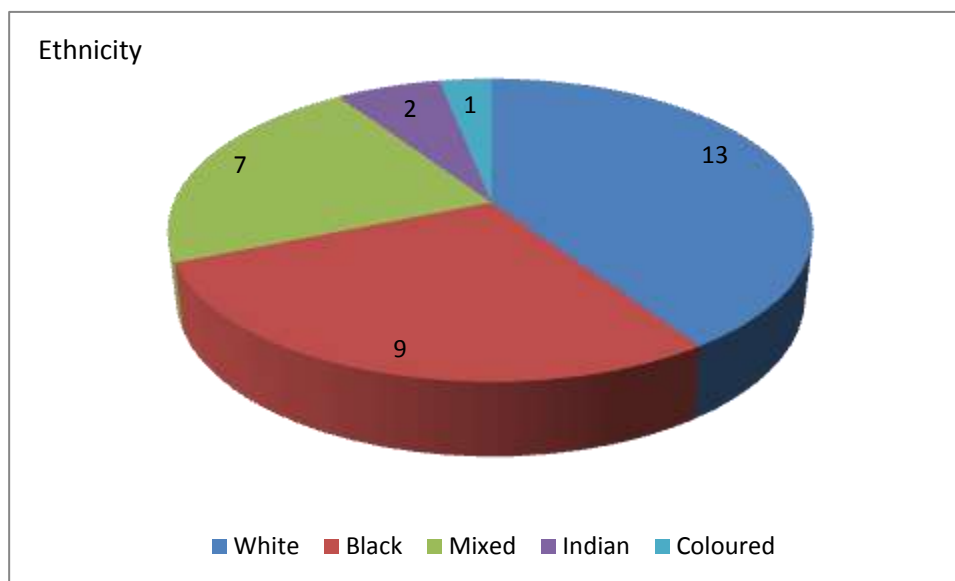


Figure 7: Predominant ethnic group of congregation

The ethnic groupings listed are those generally utilised in the South African context of Black, White, Coloured and Indian which serves to demonstrate, for the purposes of this study, that all ethnic groups were represented by this survey.

5.5.1.2.5 Do they have an existing sports ministry?

Figure 8 shows the number of the respondent's churches that have an existing sports ministry.

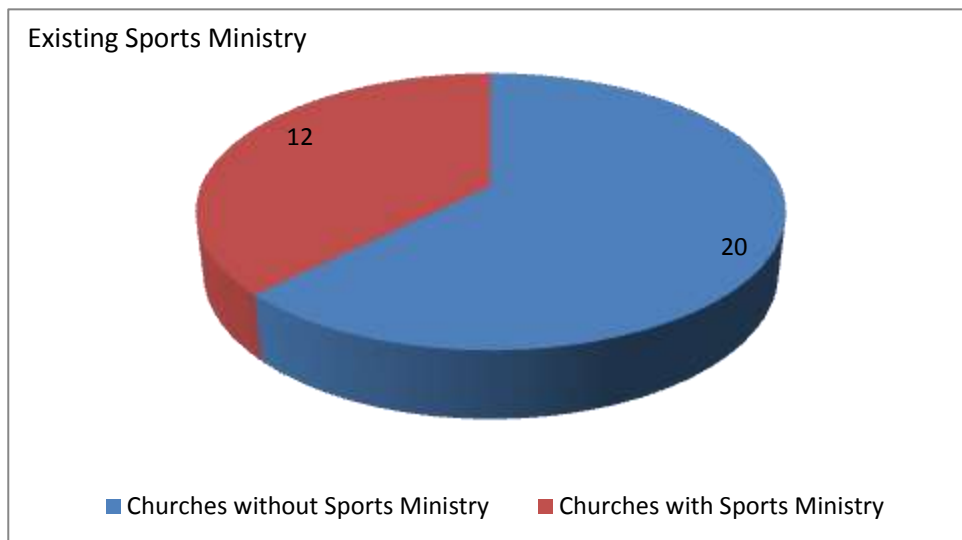


Figure 8: Churches with or without an existing sports ministry

5.5.1.2.6 Were they preparing to utilise the World Cup for outreach?

Figure 9 shows the number of respondent's churches that were forming plans to conduct outreach during the 2010 FIFA World Cup™.

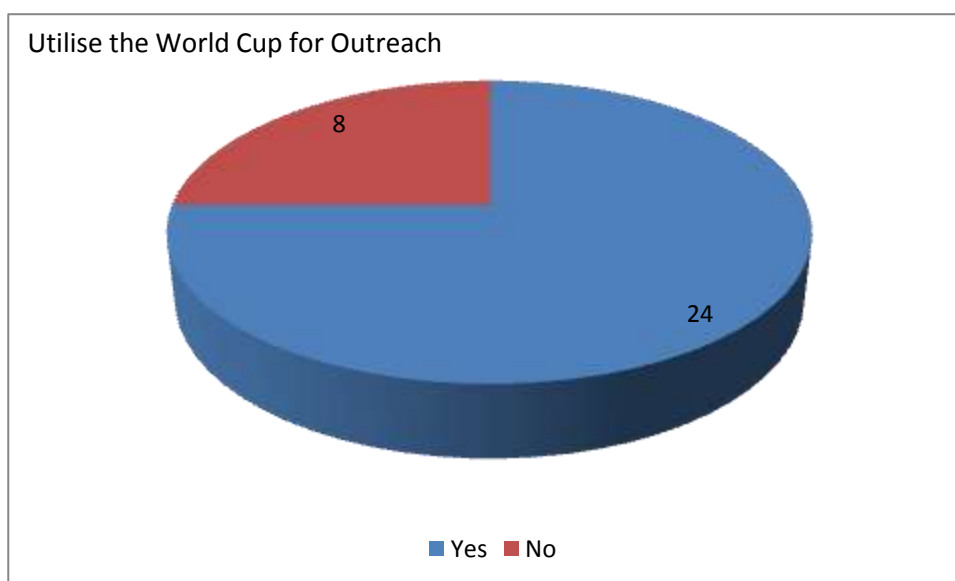


Figure 9: Plans for World Cup outreach

5.5.2 Results from sections B and C of the Questionnaire

5.5.2.1 Rankings of the concerns for members partaking in sport

The empirical survey in Section B was designed to ascertain the respondent's chief concerns about their members' involvement in sport, and particularly the sport of soccer. A quantitative approach was used which asked the church leaders to rank their main concerns from a list of 12 common concerns that the researcher has experienced over 10 years of sports ministry in South Africa. The respondents were required to rate each statement out of 20, with a low score of 1-7 meaning they were not concerned about this issue; a middle score of 8-14 meaning they were somewhat concerned, and a high score of between 15-20 meaning they were very concerned about this issue.

5.5.2.2 Graphic representation of the findings

When compiling the responses, the researcher listed the 12 possible concerns that the church leaders had, and calculated the average score that each concern had received in order to be able to rank the responses from the one that caused the most concern to the one that caused the least. The results were as follows and Figure 10 gives a graphic representation of how these were ranked.

Concern for member's involvement in Sport	Average score out of 20
The pressure to participate on Sundays	10.23
Soccer can easily become an idol	9.1
The prevalence of alcohol and drugs	7.77
Soccer is rife with Muti	7.1
The competitive nature of soccer	6.73
The immorality associated with soccer players	6.6
The time commitment away from church life	6.53
An environment not conducive to discipleship	6.23
A distraction from spiritual life	5.53
Soccer promotes gambling, cheating, bribery	4.83

Soccer is frivolous and a waste of time	4.00
There is no biblical mandate for playing soccer	3.40

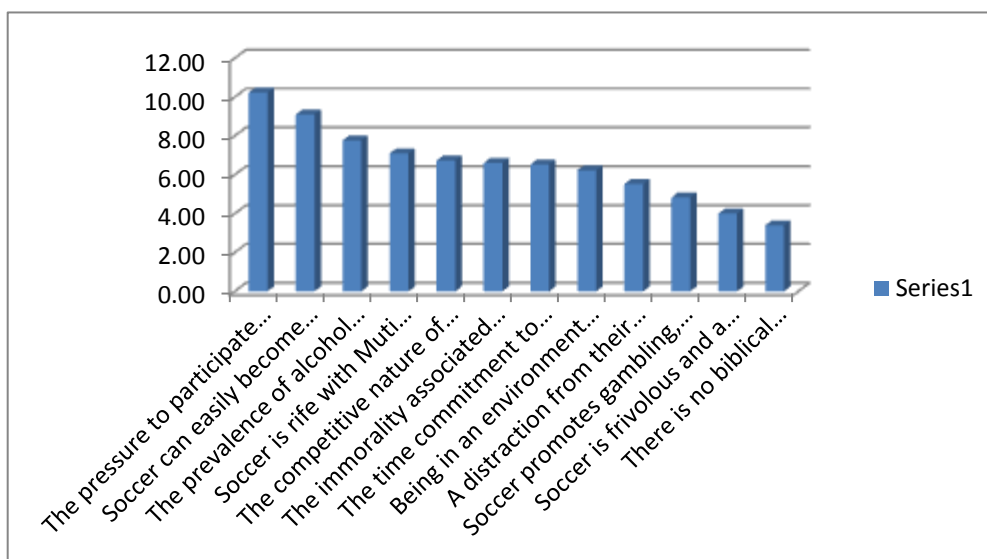


Figure 10: Responses concerning church members involved in soccer

5.5.2.3 Summary of findings

From the above rankings, it is clear that the four main areas of concern for church leaders regarding their member's involvement in the sport of football are as follows:

- Playing sport on a Sunday which is considered Sabbath breaking and keeps participants away from church.
- The sport of soccer being an idol in the life of the participant which can compete with God's place in their life.
- The association of participating in sport with consuming alcohol and drugs.
- The prevalence of other religious practices in South African soccer such as the usage of Muti and the involvement of Sangomas.

It is also interesting to note that the lowest ranked concern is that there is no biblical mandate to play soccer.

5.5.2.4 Rankings of motivations to develop a sports ministry

The empirical survey in section C utilised a quantitative and a qualitative approach. The respondents were required to choose, from a list of ten, the four primary motivations they would have in developing a sports ministry.

5.5.2.5 Graphic representation of the findings

The data gained in section C was collated in terms of rating each motivation based upon the number of church leaders that had selected that motivation as one of their four out of the ten. From this, the researcher was able to determine which motivations were the primary motivations of the ten. Figure 11 is a graph which shows the motivations from the highest ranked to the lowest.

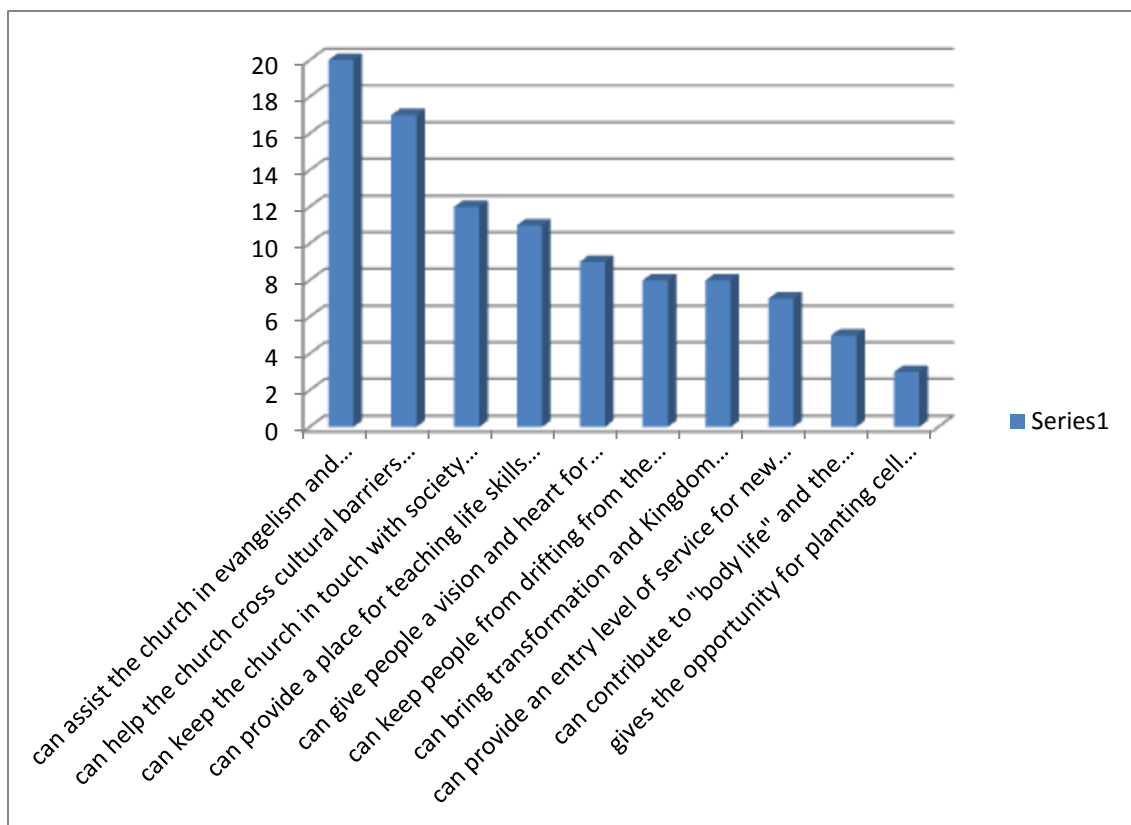


Figure 11: Motivations for developing sports ministry

5.5.2.6 Themes from semi-structured questionnaire relating to the motivations for developing sports ministry

The semi-structured questionnaire (section C) included a qualitative approach. The respondents were required to provide an explanation as to why they had chosen those four motivations for developing a sports ministry and to provide Biblical support.

When the data was documented and analysed as above, the four most selected motivations that the respondents had for developing sports ministry were as follows. Contained with each is a selection of comments that were made by the respondents motivating their choices.

- a) Sports ministry can assist the church in evangelism and fulfilling the great commission.

“We are commanded to go into the world and make disciples of all nations. Soccer gives a great opportunity to do that. We have Paul's example of being all things to all men for the sake of the Gospel, which applies to soccer in our country today. We are told to let our light shine and be the salt of the earth so as to make the Gospel attractive and produce the fruits of its truth – soccer creates an environment for this to happen, for the sake of the Gospel.”

“Evangelism is a reaching out to a people who are in need of a change in behaviour and the sports arena is an ideal place to meet un-churched people.”

“It was commanded and it should be done no matter what strategy we use as long as it is not against God's principles we can use it.”

- b) Sports ministry can help the church cross cultural barriers and other barriers thereby extending greater influence in their community and engaging in mission.

“This is one of our biggest challenges in South Africa. Sport gives an opportunity for people to play together. It also gives an opportunity for Christians to play together and show solidarity in Christ across cultural barriers.”

"I agree sports ministries creates the greatest avenues to break every kind of barrier, the church can move into cultural evangelism and makes cross cultural evangelism easily accessible to reach the lost. Sportsmen are the great ambassadors for Christ."

"In Sport there are no barriers. People speak the same language. In sports there is no discrimination, people support one another. Encourage each other. Sport brings different people and culture together (Philippians 2: 1 – 11)."

- c) Sports ministry can keep the church in touch with society and culturally relevant.

"Sport, particularly in South Africa has reached idol status. People actually plan their days and weekends around sport. It therefore is something impacting the community and society so for the church to remain relevant it is important to have."

"One of the languages spoken in our communities is sports. I believe if the church could use the sports language to bring the message of the cross, it will be understood by many."

"It connects theology and real life. It connects believers with unbelievers. It connects protected clergy to the real world."

- d) Sports ministry can provide a place for teaching life skills and developing leaders.

"Sports give opportunity to discover and develop leaders. Teamwork and leadership skills are needed to develop a good team and these can be learned by participation in sports. Life skills can be taught through this means and modelled by coaches and Christian players."

"Sports are great tools to teach: physically, mentally and spiritually. Paul even uses sports metaphor to express the achievement of life."

“Prov 22: 6 teaches us that we need to train up a child in the way he should go, and he will have direction for his future. Life skills are an essential part of this ‘train up’ that needs to take place. The sports field affords players the opportunity to apply their knowledge and skills cultivating wisdom.”

5.6 Key findings, recommendations and further research

5.6.1 Key findings

a) A re-engagement with sport is occurring

Of the 32 respondents, twelve had an existing sports ministry in their church. However, of these twelve, eight had only begun their sports ministry in the past two years. Therefore, only 4 of the 32 church leaders had what may be considered an established sports ministry. This finding supports the thesis that churches were re-engaging in sports ministry, and that the FIFA World Cup™ was a factor in this renewed engagement with sport. This is supported by the fact that 23 of the 32 church leaders were intending on conducting some form of outreach during the 2010 FIFA World Cup™ itself.

b) Reasons for being disengaged from sport

Of the 20 church leaders who did not have an existing sports ministry, 11 stated that their church had considered developing a sports ministry. Therefore it can be concluded that only 9 of the 32 church leaders are entirely disengaged from sport. Of the 20 churches without a sports ministry, 13 of the church leaders highlighted a lack of resources as being the main factor that was preventing them from pursuing sports ministry. This lack of resources mainly centred on a lack of volunteers, but this also included time and facilities. When asked what assistance is required to develop a sports ministry, 50% of these church leaders identified training as their major need if they are to pursue this ministry opportunity.

c) Church leaders are concerned about sport on Sunday's

The questionnaire also sought to determine the concerns church leaders have about their members being actively involved in sport (football was utilised as the example because it is the number one participatory sport in South Africa).

The chief concern expressed by church leaders was the pressure to participate on Sunday. It appears that concern for the protection of the “Sabbath” and practical involvement in church meetings is of paramount importance to church leaders. The second main concern was the threat that football can become an idol in the life of the participant. The church leaders were least concerned that “there is no biblical mandate for participation in football,” therefore indicating that church leaders do not see sport as unbiblical.

d) Church leaders are motivated by evangelism

The researcher compiled a list of motivations for developing church-based sports ministry based upon the work of Rodger Oswald (2002:2).

The most selected motivation for developing sports ministry was that sports ministry can assist the church in fulfilling the Great Commission. The second most selected motivation was that sports ministry can help the church cross cultural barriers thereby extending greater influence in their community and engaging in mission. Both of these motivations are highly evangelistic in nature and therefore demonstrate that the church leaders believe that sports ministry is essentially evangelistic and missional in nature. It is also worth noting that many of the leaders cited the enthusiasm for sport in the South African context as being a primary factor in why they would consider sport as an arena for evangelism and cross-cultural engagement.

Interestingly, however, is that the least selected motivation for developing sports ministry was that it gives the opportunity for planting cell groups, and ultimately planting churches. Two conclusions that can be drawn from this are that firstly, local church leaders see sports ministry as a medium to reach their own local community and therefore grow their own church. A second conclusion is that multiplication comes as a result of maturity, and therefore, the juvenility of

sports ministry in South Africa means that church leaders are not yet considering it as a vehicle of church planting.

5.6.2 Recommendations

As a result of the empirical research, it is possible to make the following recommendations with regards to the development of sports ministry in Tshwane churches.

- a) Church leaders seem ready to embrace sports ministry but feel hindered by a lack of resources and training. Therefore, training courses in practical sports ministry need to be made available to churches to equip those who are interested in developing sports ministry in their church.
- b) Church leaders are not concerned about sport itself being unbiblical but about issues associated with participation in sport. It would therefore be helpful to church leaders if the issues of Sunday sport, idolatry, alcohol and drug usage, and religious practices (Muti) were considered biblically. It would be possible to have seminars and articles produced on these topics that particularly take into consideration the African context.
- c) Church leaders recognise sport as an opportunity for evangelism. With the focus on the FIFA World Cup™ as an event, there is a challenge to channel this enthusiasm beyond the event into long-term ministry. To avoid disengagement, a theological understanding of sports ministry needs to be engendered in church leaders. To develop a long-term engagement with sports ministry it is therefore recommended that sports ministry should be included as a component within theological training at Bible colleges and theological institutions.

5.6.3 Further research

As sports ministry is a very new field of study, there are a number of areas of further research that could be considered. Research could be conducted in each of the following areas:

- a) The effectiveness of sports ministry in those churches that have existing programmes.
- b) The number of churches that continued with sports ministry after having conducted an outreach during the 2010 FIFA World Cup™.
- c) The issue of Sunday sport and a biblical response for church leaders who consider this a major concern for Christians involved in sport.
- d) Developing effective training programmes in sports ministry. A number of Sports Ministries have training programmes and these could be evaluated in terms of their effectiveness in assisting churches to develop sustainable sports ministry programmes.

5.7 Conclusion

Through means of empirical research, this chapter has sought to discover the perceptions of church leaders in Tshwane regarding the main reasons why churches are engaging or disengaging with sports ministry.

Chapter 6

A Practical Strategy for Equipping Tshwane Church Leaders to Develop a Sustainable Sports Ministry for Mission Outreach

7.7 Introduction

From the empirical research conducted in chapter five, it was concluded that a reengagement between Christianity and sport is occurring in Tshwane churches. The 2010 FIFA World Cup™ has given the reengagement impetus as churches have pragmatically recognised the opportunity the event presented for evangelism. Coupled with this, church leaders are acknowledging both the role that sport plays in society and the ongoing opportunity sport provides for evangelism. However, there are challenges in implementing sports ministry due to a lack of experience, manpower and resources.

In chapter 2 it was demonstrated that there has been a historical pattern of disengagement occurring after periods of engagement. The purpose of this chapter is therefore to propose a practical strategy to enable church-based sports ministry to flourish, be sustained, and ensure there is not a further disengagement. This approach has an emphasis in two areas:

- To provide a theological framework as a foundation for the development of sustainable sports ministry based upon the theological and biblical foundations in chapters three and four respectively.
- To give a practical step-by-step guide for the development of sports ministry in Tshwane churches.

7.8 The theological foundations for sports ministry in terms of the PRIOR model: some practical implications

The researcher believes that Tshwane church leaders must have a strong theological foundation in order to develop a sustainable sports ministry. In chapter 3.1 Linville (2007:42) was quoted as saying:

It is imperative to create a theological framework from which the corporate church and the individual Christian can know what to believe, what to think, and how to act in relationship to sport and competition.

In this section a theological framework for sports ministry is proposed which integrates both the theological and biblical foundations for sports ministry, contained in chapters 3 and 4 respectively, into the PRIOR model:

- **P**roclamation: the message
- **R**econciliation: the motivation
- **I**ncarnation: the means
- **O**rganisation: the medium
- **R**eproduction: the maturation

This framework includes practical implications for churches seeking to build a strong foundation for sports ministry. This model is not sequential, but an emphasis on each component should be equally evident in order that an emerging sports ministry has a solid foundation.

7.8.1 Proclamation: the message

A key finding of the empirical research, conducted with Tshwane church leaders in chapter 5, was that fulfilling the Great Commission is a primary motivation for the development of sports ministry. Chapter 3, section 3.3.1 considered Preaching (*kerugma*) as a primary component of evangelism and a function of the church. In chapter 3, section 3.4, it was shown that contemporary sports ministry theologians Connor (2003:52), Oswald (2003:27), and Daniels and Weir (2005:10) all include proclaiming the Good News as a component of fulfilling the Great Commission within their theological frameworks.

Evangelism, by definition, requires the public proclamation of the Gospel;

evangelism itself is the proclamation of the historical, biblical Christ as Saviour and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to him personally and so be reconciled to God (Taken from the Lausanne Covenant 1974 quoted in Weber 1991:166).

Jesus himself commissioned his disciples to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth (Matthew 28:18-20), and the New Testament consistently teaches that the followers of Christ are to proclaim the message (e.g., 2 Timothy 4:2-5), following the example of the early church in Acts (starting with Peter on the day of Pentecost Acts 2:14-39). It is clear from Christ's commission and the example of the early church that no sector of society was to remain untouched by the Gospel. Within today's sport-mad society the challenge to the church is to find effective means to proclaim the unchanging message in a relevant way, to the world of sport.

The Apostle Paul stated the challenge extremely clearly in Romans 10:14-15. Quite literally, the sports world requires Christians to utilise their "feet" in order to effectively have opportunity to proclaim the Gospel with their mouths.

The focus of proclamation is to accurately share the Gospel message as revealed in Scripture. As Connor states (2003:55), the message must not be changed or compromised even if the methods of evangelism are adapted for the sporting context.

Yet the Scriptures clearly give liberty in how the message is to be proclaimed. Those in sports ministry should therefore seek to be creative in the ways they proclaim the Gospel (Oswald 2002a:10). As was seen in chapter 4, Scripture sets a precedent in utilising the arena of sport as a metaphor for the Christian life and the proclamation of truth. Just as the Apostle Paul utilised sport as a metaphor for the Christian life (e.g., 1 Corinthians 9:24-27), so the world of sport provides many metaphors for the Gospel that can be utilised by Christian sports men and women to highlight Gospel truths. Proclamation need not be from a platform or a pulpit, but the testimony of a Christian sportsman or woman's life can be the platform which provides an opportunity to proclaim the truth of the

Gospel in a manner which other sports people can understand, and, through the work of the Spirit, accept. Daniels and Weir (2005:9) underline this succinctly with regards to proclamation through sport, “it’s the way we play, both on and off the field that will earn us the right to speak of Christ.”

Just as Jesus tasked the disciples to be his witnesses to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8), so church leader’s need to commission their members to take the Gospel onto the field of sport. As was seen in the definition of sports ministry given in chapter 3, section 3.2.2, sports ministry needs to be intentionally outreach focused. Linville (2003:146) helpfully practically applies this to the church, “All ... sports programmes/ministries of the church must have the ultimate goal of outreach. We must not settle anymore for activity for activity’s sake” (Linville 2003:146).

A further practical implication is that the church, in mobilising members for sports ministry, must ensure that those in sports ministry are effectively trained to proclaim the message of the Gospel. This is not an add-on to sports ministry, but the strategy for proclamation must be considered from the onset.

7.8.2 Reconciliation: the motivation

The second most popular motivation for developing sports ministry in the qualitative section of the questionnaire was that sport can help the church cross cultural barriers, and other barriers, thereby extending greater influence in the community (see chapter 5, section 5.5.2.5). Many of the church leaders who chose this motivation then went on to make the point that, given the historical context of South Africa, sport is a powerful vehicle for inter-cultural interaction and reconciliation (see chapter 5, section 5.5.2.6 b).

In a divided world, sport provides a practical medium through which to proclaim the message of reconciliation. In particular, the continent of Africa has found a shared identity through the game of football (Hawkey 2009:5). This provides a powerful metaphor for sports ministers to utilise when sharing the Gospel and has also helps to sensitise those involved in football in Africa towards the concept of reconciliation.

In South Africa, the general public is very aware of the concept of reconciliation and the power that sport can play in facilitating reconciliation between people of different backgrounds. This clearly happened in 1995 during the Rugby World Cup which was hosted in South Africa and spurred on by the person of Nelson Mandela (Carlin 2008:203). More recently, the 2010 FIFA World Cup™ contributed towards reconciliation and the concept of nation-building.

Reconciliation is a key biblical principle and serves as the motive for evangelism through sports ministry. As was seen in chapter 3, section 3.2.1, the message that is to be proclaimed is one of reconciliation between a holy God and sinful people through Jesus Christ.

In 2 Corinthians 5:18 (NIV) the Apostle Paul states that we have been given the “ministry of reconciliation” by Christ. He goes on to say in verse 20 that we have therefore become Christ’s “ambassadors” in the world, His representatives, in order to publicly proclaim this message of reconciliation. This primary motive, to bring reconciliation between sinners and a holy God through the cross of Christ, should influence the mission and vision of all those involved in evangelism through sport. Rodger Oswald (2002b:9) was quoted in chapter 3, section 3.4.2.1 as stating that the mandate for sports ministry is to make this message of reconciliation known to the world of sport.

However, this ministry of reconciliation does not only apply to individual participants of sport. More broadly, there is a very real opportunity to bring the ministry of reconciliation to the world of sport itself, seeking to bring godly values and principles to the very core of sport. As Mazza (2006:65) rightly points out, sport, as part of the created world, “has been called to salvation in Jesus Christ, [and] is also in need of redemption.” There is a need for the values that underlie much of sport to be redeemed, and this can only occur in proportion to the ministry of reconciliation being embodied within sport.

Sport is one of the human activities which is also waiting to be enlightened by God through Christ, so that the values it expresses

may be purified and elevated at both the individual and the collective level (The World of Sport Today 2006:12).

The practical challenge for churches is to mobilise their members to influence the world of sport as ministers of reconciliation. Church leaders responded to the question regarding their concerns about church member's involvement in sport by highlighting Sunday participation, idolatry and the prevalence of alcohol and drugs as being their primary concerns (see chapter 5, section 5.5.2.2). However, if Christian sportspeople are motivated by the message of reconciliation, then church leaders need not fear that the negative aspects of sport will dilute their members, but rather, they must prayerfully support Christian sports people to actively embody the message of reconciliation within the world of sport.

This approach, as was seen above, is the Kingdom-minded approach of evangelism through sport; that transformation can occur not only through sport, but in the world of sport, as the message of reconciliation takes hold and sportspeople begin to live according to biblical standards.

7.8.3 Incarnation: the means

The means through which the message can be proclaimed and true reconciliation made known in the world of sport, is incarnational ministry. The core of incarnation is the practice of Christians being present in the world to physically represent Christ.

Our Christian presence in the world is indispensable to evangelism, and so is that kind of dialogue whose purpose is to listen sensitively in order to understand (Taken from the Lausanne Covenant 1974 quoted in Weber 1991:166).

Mason (2003:42) says, "For society to be transformed by the Word of God it has to be first of all penetrated by the people of God." Given the sport-mad culture of the 21st century, the playing fields of the world are therefore a prime harvest-

field for Christians to practise incarnational evangelism. McCown and Gin (2003:136) write:

The sport experience accelerates and enhances the ability to become friends, to see unveiled character traits, and to build a strong sense of camaraderie,” and go on to say, “the relational connections that come about naturally through sport make ministry in and through sport the best way to minister to the people of sport.

The Apostle Paul’s example and teaching with regards to his means of evangelism is summed up in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23. He states that his strategy is to become like those he is trying to reach in order to more effectively connect with them and share the Gospel. He states emphatically, “I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I may save some” (1 Cor. 9:21 NIV). It is surely possible to argue that, should Paul be seeking to reach sports people, he would actively partake in sport so as to build a bridge for the message.

An incarnational approach to ministry is not just modelled upon Paul’s strategy, but upon Christ who, being God himself, took on the nature of a servant in human form (Philippians 2:6-8), in order to practically demonstrate the love of God to mankind and provide the means for reconciliation (John 1:10-13). The doctrine of the incarnation of Christ is central to Christian belief and is therefore a powerful model for ministry (Weir 2000:105). The call of Christ was that Christians be “salt and light” in the world (Matthew 5:13-16). God is calling “salty” Christians to spread the light of the Gospel in the dark world of sport. The encouraging factor for sport-minded Christians is that they do not need to change their passion for sport; they simply need to submit this to their passion for the Gospel, and allow God to utilise it for the advancement of His Kingdom. As Tredway (2006:62) states, “the incarnational strategy in soccer [or sport] is simple as it only requires the Christian soccer person to be themselves.”

The theological framework of Daniels and Weir outlined in chapter 3, section 3.4.3 emphasises the importance of incarnational evangelism. At the centre of their model is the concept of Play; that through actively playing alongside non-believers Christians will earn the right to “say” the message (Daniels and Weir 2005:9). This is qualified by Colossians 4:5 (NIV): “be wise in the way that you act towards outsiders,” with an emphasis on the vital importance of the individual Christian’s actions. The action, behaviour and example of the Christian sportsperson is critical and should demonstrate Christlike character if true incarnational ministry is to occur. In chapter 3, section 3.4.1.5 Connor’s theological framework for sports ministry was examined. He highlighted the importance of sportsmanship. The way Christians play sport is a vital component of their witness (Connor 2003:99) and Scriptural teaching concerning Christian character needs to be practiced both on and off the sports field.

This touches on the area of sport ethics and the need for Christian sportspeople to be biblically ethical in their sporting participation. Oakley (2005:4) writes of the crisis that Christian sportspeople can face when seeking to apply biblical ethics to the “win at all costs” mentality within competitive sport. He concludes that, it is only “as Christian sportspeople understand more deeply their identity in Christ as affirmed by the Spirit then changes in behaviour will start to emerge” (Oakley 2005:103). Linville (2003:166) has coined the term “Christmanship” as a Christian alternative to sportsmanship or gamesmanship. Christmanship, he claims:

encourages athletes to live out the characteristics, attitudes, and skills that emulate Christ and conform to his image in the arena of competition (Linville 2003:161).

Church leaders can practically help Christian sportspeople in this area through seeking to apply biblical truth to the tensions and temptations that sportsmen and women will no doubt face as they incarnationally witness to Christ within the sporting arena.

Rinehart (1998:133) writes, “The people of God gathered will not reach the world. Only the people of God scattered can do it.” Jesus instruction was to “go into all the world” (Matthew 28:19 NIV). Therefore, incarnational sports ministry is the means through which the world of sport can be reached with the Gospel, as those gifted in, and passionate for, sport follow Christ’s command and go into the world of sport. The way they play should in itself testify to Christ, providing opportunity for proclaiming the Gospel. This participation needs to be practically encouraged and supported by church leaders as a form of mission in order to see Christ’s kingdom extended to those who otherwise may never experience a tangible witness of the love of Christ.

7.8.4 Organisation: the medium

Since the 1950s, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of registered Sports Ministries. Ladd and Mathisen (1999:160) have termed this the “institutionalisation of muscular Christianity” (Ladd & Mathisen 1999:160). However, the researcher is not here referring to the Organisations (capital “O”), but the strategic organisation (small “o”) of evangelism through sport that needs to occur for the ultimate effectiveness of sports ministry (in which Organisations may play a part).

The Apostle Paul was clearly led by the Holy Spirit in his life, calling and ministry (e.g. Acts 13:1-3 and Acts 16:6-10). However, this did not mean he was haphazard and spontaneous; rather he was both intentional and strategic in his evangelism (Romans 15:17-21).

As has been stated within the definition of sports ministry (chapter 3, section 3.2.2), evangelism through sport must be intentional and therefore there has become an increasing need for organisation as the medium for effective sports ministry. In order to grow the impact of the Church in the world of sport, to facilitate the proclamation of the message of reconciliation, and to mobilise incarnationally operating Christian sports people, effective organisation needs to occur. This organisation is part of what John Garner (2003:69) terms “Kingdom planning” and applies to all individuals, churches and other

institutions seeking to engage in evangelism through sport. Garner (2003:71-90) goes on to propose nine steps to organising an effective sports ministry. McCown and Gin (2003:145-159) propose an alternative approach to organising for sports ministry based on a “Sports Development” model. These nine steps have been adapted below (section 6.3) as a process towards organising a church-based sports ministry. Within this process, there are many models and materials that can greatly assist all those involved in sports ministry.

Organisation is a means to effective sports ministry and it can look different in different contexts. Intentional sports ministry will involve strategic planning and a solid structure, all in submission to the Holy Spirit’s leading, in order to be fruitful and effective. Connor (2003:106) states that the starting point for developing sports ministry is to have clearly defined goals and objectives. However, organisation within sport needs to spark creativity rather than simply seek to dictate programmes (Garner 2003:121).

From the responses to the questionnaire (chapter 5, section 5.6.1) it was apparent that the two major hindrances to developing church-based sport ministries were a lack of resources and a lack of training. In other words, church leaders were struggling to consider how to practically organise and develop sports ministry given the many other pressures they were facing in ministry. To ensure sustainable sports ministry, the area of training and assisting a church in developing resources, is therefore a high priority which is also addressed in section 6.3 below.

7.8.5 Reproduction: the maturation

As was stated in chapter 1, section 1.2.2.3, a concern in the development of sports ministry is that it is purely motivated by pragmatic reasons rather than from a strong theological framework. Pragmatism looks for immediate results rather than for long-term sustainability.

Connor, in his theological model examined in chapter 3, section 3.4.1.4 proposes a strategic approach that must include “training others to reproduce” (Connor 2003:87). For something to be truly sustainable, it needs to be able to

reproduce. Therefore, the sign that a sports ministry is maturing is that it is reproducing both in terms of growing disciples, and in terms of planting new sport ministries.

Jesus appointed his disciples in John 15:16 (NIV) to “go and bear fruit – fruit that will last.” His clear intention was for His work to continue through those he had appointed as his apostles. Jesus reproduced his ministry through His disciples and they served as His witnesses to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). His command to the Twelve was to “make disciples” (Matthew 28:19), not to merely proclaim the message. The Apostle Paul recognised the importance of reproducing himself in others, as he did with Timothy, and instructed Timothy to do likewise (2 Timothy 2:2). Reproduction demonstrates maturity, and, within the Christian context, this involved discipleship. Rick Warren (1995:107) states that:

Discipleship is the process of helping people become more like Christ in their thoughts, feelings, and actions. This process begins when a person is born again and continues throughout the rest of his life.

The challenge to make disciples is extremely relevant within the South African and African context where much emphasis is given to evangelism through proclamation, but is not always followed by discipleship. A true understanding of evangelism will always include discipleship because giving birth without ensuring there is opportunity for growth in the faith is contrary to the pattern of the early church (1 Corinthians 3:6-9). In making disciples, the fruitfulness of ministry is multiplied because reproducers are being reproduced.

The world of sport provides a wonderful environment for discipleship and leadership training to emerge (Mason 2003:193). This is a continuance of the incarnational approach. As a mature sporting Christian continues to “Pray, Play and Say” (according to the Daniels and Weir model in chapter 3, section 3.4.3) alongside a new believer, their common experience in sport can provide many teaching opportunities, as the Bible is applied not only to sport participation, but

to life (Connor 2003:90). The Bible itself provides the precedent for the effectiveness of sport as a vehicle to teach spiritual truth. Chapter 4 demonstrated how, throughout Scripture, sport provided a metaphor for the Christian life. In particular, the apostle Paul consistently compared his Christian life to that of an athlete participating in a race. The experiences of an athlete therefore provide analogies and parallels that a Christian, with experience in sport, can utilise when discipling a sportsperson. Oswald (2002b:6) states that “sport and discipleship go hand in hand.” Just as the sign of a mature leader is that he will seek to develop the next generation of leaders (Rinehart 1998:132), so the sign of a maturing sports minister is that he will seek to disciple other sports people. The result of this discipleship is the multiplication as a new generation of sports people who will be equipped to minister through their giftedness.

In the same way, a maturing church-based sports ministry and specialist sports ministries should seek to reproduce themselves through training others by sharing what they have experienced and learned in the arena of sport. Through this sharing of knowledge and experience, sports ministry will become stronger and more sustainable as emerging ministries can learn from both the successes, and failures, of their predecessors.

Sports ministry can also provide opportunities for the reproduction of churches through church planting. Oswald (2002a:4) provides a case study of how a church was planted in the Philippines by a sports ministry team. The researcher is aware of other such examples in Africa. However, in the questionnaire, the least selected motivation for developing sports ministry was that it afforded the opportunity to plant new churches (see chapter 5, section 5.6.1). This confirms that sports ministry in the churches surveyed in Tshwane are yet to reach maturity as their emphasis is more on proclamation as an extension of the churches evangelism, than on reproducing sports ministries or planting churches through sport.

If the church is to continue to be engaged with the world of sport in South Africa and elsewhere, then there must be a process whereby those involved in sports ministry can reproduce themselves in others. This involves the processes of discipleship and leadership training which was advocated by Connor (2003:88). Connor believes that, “the key to cohesive sports ministry in the local church is leadership training” (Connor 2003:88).

7.9 A proposed eight step process for equipping churches to develop a sustainable sports ministry

The PRIOR model outlined above serves as a theological foundation for sports ministry. This can serve any church to ensure it has a strong biblical framework upon which to develop its sports ministry. The respondents to the survey in chapter five highlighted a further need in developing sports ministry; that of practical training due to a lack of experience and expertise.

What follows is an eight step process that an emerging sports ministry leader, who feels called to developing a sustainable local-church sports ministry, can follow. These eight steps have been adapted from similar processes developed by John Garner (2003:71-90) and Rodger Oswald (2001:1-40). This process has been designed for a sports ministry leader to follow sequentially, over a period of six to twelve months, as he practically seeks to develop a sports ministry in his local church, for the purpose of reaching out to his local community.

7.9.1 Step 1: Establish support from church leadership

Enlisting your pastor’s support is the first and extremely vital step in developing a sports ministry. It will be an impossible task to develop a sports ministry with your local church unless you have the support of your church leadership. This cannot be simply meeting with them and telling them what you are going to do. Ideally you do not just want their endorsement of your idea, but their complete “buy in” and ownership of the sports ministry programme in your church. This process may take some time, but it is essential in ensuring that your ministry programme is planted in fertile soil. For a successful church-based sports

ministry to emerge it is essential to have the full support of your church leadership. Remember, Christ taught that the wise builder will build on rock rather than on the sand (see Matthew 7:24-27). Taking the time to ensure that your church fully understands sports ministry, and how it can assist in fulfilling the mission of the church, may at times feel like a costly exercise, but it is simply a part of ensuring that your ministry has a strong foundation and will prevent painful experiences at a later stage.

Church leaders will be favourably disposed to sports ministry if they understand how it helps them in the following three ways:

A. To Obey Christ...

If there is a Biblical reason for the church to be involved in sports ministry, then one really does not have to look any further than “the Great Commission” given by Christ in Matthew 28:18-20. This is the standard by which one tests all we do as Christians. Jesus is not specific on how we are to spread the Good News, just that we do it in order that “all nations/cultures” may come to know Him. Our task is to make disciples. If this can be accomplished through sport then what other reason is needed?

B. In Gathering a Harvest...

Matthew 9:37. If there is one thing that can be said about sport as one looks at the world today, it is certainly a huge and plentiful harvest field. And within the field there is a vast variety of crops - rich, poor, old, young; all nations, colours and religions can be reached through sport.

But, sad to say, the harvest is plentiful and the workers are few. We need to pray that more churches become aware of the need for labourers to gather the harvest of sporting souls.

C. To walk in Christ's steps...

John 1:14. This is the great miracle of the Christian faith; that almighty God, became like one of us through His incarnation. In so doing, Jesus sets us the example of how we are to reach out to the world around us - through

going to where the people are - doing what they do, and becoming like them in every way.

What better way can this be accomplished than through incarnating ourselves in the number one activity of people across the world - sport? Sport involves becoming a part of a team, sharing the ups and the downs, being dependent on one another – it is life condensed into a game. In this environment Christians have a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate Christ-like attitudes, showing through our actions what it means to be a follower of Him.

Sports ministry is incarnational, through which Christians can get on the front line, where it matters. Jesus set the ultimate precedent for sports ministry.

Paul himself would have probably used it as an evangelistic tool as he said, “I have become all things to all men that by all possible means I may win some to Christ” (1 Cor. 9:22, NIV).

Although having this Biblical framework is vitally important, most pastors are also extremely pragmatic and want to know how sports ministry can help their church fulfil its vision. They may ask, “what benefits would there be to the church through having a sports ministry ... is the investment of time, effort, resource, manpower etc., going to be worth it?”

Before going to meet with your pastor/church leadership it is essential that you yourself can articulate the mutual benefits of having a sports ministry integrally connected with your church and broader church ministry.

The following is a summary of some of the mutual benefits of sports ministry being intrinsically church-based:

What Sports Ministry has to Offer the Local Church

Obviously sport can be seen as a tool for evangelism and discipleship but, apart from this, a church can benefit in a number of other ways through being involved in sports ministry (the following list is adapted from Oswald 2002a:2-4).

- Sport can keep the church in touch with society and culturally relevant.
- Sport can contribute to “body-life” and the fellowship aspect of a church.
- Sport can keep people from drifting from the church - particularly young people.
- Sport creates an “entry level” of service for new believers.
- Sport provides a place for leadership development.
- Sport can give people a vision and heart for reaching the lost.
- Sport gives the opportunity for planting cell groups, and ultimately planting churches.
- Sport can help the church to cross cultural barriers and other barriers thereby extending greater influence in the local community and engaging in mission.

These are just some of the many benefits a church receives from engaging in sports ministry. One can probably think of many more.

What the Local Church has to Offer Sports Ministry

There are four primary benefits to having a sports ministry firmly rooted in the local church. The researcher believes that these benefits make it essential that all Christians involved in sporting activity are firmly grounded in their local church, and that they are operating with full support and backing of the church.

A. Stability and Support

The church needs to recognise that it has a vital role to play in seeking to cater for the needs of all Christians involved in sport. Practical support can be given to the sports ministry department through the following:

- Provide an understanding and supportive home base.

- Do not place unrealistic demands to be involved in other ministry areas.
- Meet their spiritual needs.
- Provide a stable place in the unpredictable world of sport.
- Pastors and leaders, who express genuine interest and concern, should biblically articulate/defend sports ministry against criticism.
- Establish support groups (Home group, cell group) that prayerfully and actively support those in sports ministry.
- Provide financial support.
- Provide leadership training.

B. Accountability

Christians involved in any kind of sporting activity need to be fully aware that there are dangers and potential conflicts with their faith. Although the researcher believes that sporting activity does glorify God, Satan does attempt use sport to pull people away from God, if he is allowed to do so, and there is much in the sporting world that is anti-God.

Some of the dangers inherent in the world of sport are:

- Aggressive competitiveness
- Over-absorption (sport as religion)
- Sporting culture (drink, drugs)
- Pressures on participants to win
- Pursuit of money
- Use of witchcraft

There are also specific dangers for those in sports ministry

- Working too hard

- Lack of any church involvement
- Neglecting one's spiritual life
- Neglecting one's family

In many of these areas it may be hard for an individual involved in sport to know where to draw the line. The church can play a vital role in placing mature, understanding Christians (perhaps those who have been involved in Sports themselves) alongside the sportsperson/minister, to whom they are accountable.

The ultimate goal of accountable relationships is reflected in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 (NIV): "May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

- C. People Resource: the mobilisation of a multiplicity of gifted people to assist in the sports ministry department (further discussed in section 6.3.3 below).
- D. Follow up: Sports ministry has often been correctly criticised for being very proactive in sharing the Gospel and leading people to Christ, but very poor in follow-up strategies. Those who are reached for Christ on the sports field need to be followed up and, wherever possible, integrated into a local church where they in turn can be nurtured in their faith.

Exercise

Prepare a 10 minute presentation for you pastor on why you believe God has given you and your church a biblical mandate to develop a sports ministry.

NOTE: Your purpose at this stage is not to present a comprehensive plan, but to receive the blessing and support of your church leadership to begin the journey towards developing a sports ministry.

Meet with your church pastor (and leadership team if possible – ask for at least one hour of their time). After you have given your presentation ask for feedback and discuss the following questions:

- a) What exposure has the pastor/church leadership had to sports ministry – has it been positive or negative?
- b) How could a sports ministry complement the existing vision and ministry of the church?
- c) What concerns does the church leadership have about developing a sports ministry?
- d) Discuss the steps towards developing a sports ministry (as laid out in this section) and ask for counsel in implementing these steps in your church?

Make some notes from your discussion and write up the key points from each of the above discussion points.

7.9.2 Step 2: Envision and educate the church

It is not enough to simply have the support of the leadership. It will be vitally important to envision and educate the entire congregation in order to enlist support, and mobilise people, for sports ministry. Ideally, envisioning the church should firstly be done by the church leadership. Their public endorsement and support will go a long way towards ensuring the buy-in of the congregation. But envisioning and educating the body for sports ministry is an ongoing process – not a once-off presentation.

The sports and recreation ministry leader needs to develop a base of support – of consensus, so that there will be advocacy for the ministry ... Part of communicating the vision means to stimulate interest and motivate the congregation to want to be involved (Oswald 2001:2).

Orientating the church to consider sport as an avenue for ministry may take time and a strategy to sensitise all members to the importance of this ministry may need to be developed (Garner 2003:72).

Garner (2003:84) advises that:

One of the jobs of the recreation and sports ministry team will be to see opportunities to share the story about what is happening in the ministry. This can be done through several means: newsletters, promotional mailings, reports to the church, flyers, handouts, personal stories about involvement in the ministry in a recreation and sports ministry newsletter, and other opportunities as they are made available.

However, to truly envision people, the best strategy is to get them involved. When Jesus needed to envision people He did not give them a newsletter, hand them a flier, or even get someone to give a testimony. No, Jesus invited people to “come and see” (e.g., Mark 1:17).

The Come and See Principle: A Case Study

Recently my ministry was asked to conduct a soccer coaching clinic for children from a poor community. The organisation that hosted the day had prepared food for all the children. We then coached them soccer for two hours – integrating life-skills and Bible lessons throughout the morning. After lunch an assembly was held with the Gospel clearly shared. The children then played a tournament before being given a testimony booklet of soccer players who shared their love for Christ. For our ministry this was a fairly typical day – the love of Christ being shared in practical ways (giving of food), fun activities (soccer), the spoken and written word, and through the enthusiasm and love of our coaching staff. What was different is that the host ministry had the foresight to invite a number of local church leaders to the event. The church leaders came in shirts and ties thinking they were coming to a seminar on sports ministry ... what they got was ministry in action. Throughout the day our coaches engaged with the pastors and explained the rationale behind what we were doing. Yet, what impressed the pastors most, were the smiles on the faces of the children, and the way they responded positively to every aspect of the day. These images would have been impressed on the minds of the pastors as they began to consider how the Lord may lead them to use sport as part of their churches ongoing ministry.

The “come and see” approach is nothing new. It is exactly the way Jesus operated. Read the opening chapters of any of the four Gospels and consider what caused the disciples to “follow Jesus”. Was it because of what they had heard him say? I would argue that it was because of what they saw Christ do that they caught a Kingdom vision that would lead them to follow Christ and ultimately change history!

Exercise

Consider now how you could best envision your church for sports ministry. How can members of your church who perhaps have no interest in sport catch a Kingdom vision for how sports can be intentionally missional in your church?

Rather than just standing up on a Sunday morning and giving a talk (even if you have a PowerPoint), perhaps the first thing you should do is to practically expose your church members to the power of sports ministry through a firsthand experience.

Consider how this could best work with your congregation.

If your church is not yet ready to plan its own event, then perhaps you could find a local sports outreach event that you could take your congregation to. Or you could contact an existing sports ministry and find out what is on their upcoming programme.

Note the following:

- Not all of your congregation will be able to come to see the sports ministry event so, if possible, make sure you make a video of the event and have permission from your pastor to share what happened at the following Sunday service. Even better would be to get a member from your congregation to share his or her experience of the event. From this platform you can then go on to share more details about sports ministry and how the Lord is leading the church to develop a sports ministry.
- The Come and See principle needs to remain a key component of your sports ministry as you seek to keep your church members envisioned for

sports ministry and enlist their prayerful support. Wherever possible, seek to inform your congregation of what is happening and invite them to get involved in some way.

- When appropriate, ensure that testimonies are shared of people who have come to Christ through the church's sports ministry.
- Beyond envisioning, sports ministry can be a wonderful vehicle to expose your congregation to mission, and educate the church on mission principles. Look for these opportunities; what is happening through sport could equally happen in other cultural/recreational spheres.

What is being spoken about here is “experiential learning”. Your church will more quickly grasp and support sports ministry once its members have experienced the fruit – once they have “tasted and seen” its goodness. Therefore, continue to share the stories and aid your church to remain envisioned and enthusiastic for sports ministry.

7.9.3 Step 3: Recruit a sports ministry team

The effectiveness of your sports ministry will be in direct proportion to the strength of the sports ministry team that you develop within your church. Garner (2003:70) outlines the process for developing a team as follows:

Enlisting – finding the right person for each job.

Empowerment – Trusting the people with responsibility and authority to get the job done – their way.

Nurturing – Growing people in a job to become more than they thought they could be, thus providing training for larger leadership roles in the future.

Developing relationships – Fostering trust and interdependence among ministry team members.

Coaching – Helping ministry team members to be effective.

Intentionality – Making sure that the gospel is presented at every opportunity.

Consider

What steps do you think you will need to take to identify, enlist, and form your sports ministry team?

What are the qualifications that you consider most important in identifying your sports ministry team members?

Is interest in sport a pre-requisite and do you expect every sportsperson in your church to be part of your sports ministry team?

Consider how you could practically go about finding/recruiting your sports ministry team?

Rodger Oswald (2001:3) gives the following requirements for establishing a sports ministry team. He indicates that “you need to find people who have specific characteristics”:

- Commitment to the Sports and Recreation mission
- Submission to your leadership
- People who are trainable – teachable
- People who have discretionary time to give to the ministry
- People who love God, the church, and the lost
- Athletic experience has some value, but is not critical.

An important part of the process of identifying your sports ministry team is to consider who within your team can assist in leadership – and possibly one day succeed you in leadership.

Oswald (2001:3-4) again has some important input regarding sports ministry leaders:

- A sports and recreation ministry can be labour intensive, so having leaders that multiply themselves, is essential.
- The “2 Timothy 2:2 principle” should be followed: the sports ministry leader should invest into other leaders who invest themselves into the participants.
- Just because someone has an interest in sport does not necessarily make him or her, a good candidate to lead within sports ministry.
- The Sports Ministry leader must equip his or her team through both spiritual and technical training.
- It is critical that sports ministry leaders understand and are impassioned about how they will be able to serve God, serve the church and serve the lost.

Exercise

Considering this leadership challenge, answer the following questions:

- How would you seek to identify leaders?
- How would you seek to train and equip leaders?
- Why is Sports Ministry in particular a great vehicle to facilitate leadership development?

Note: Some who come through your sports ministry may develop leadership gifts that could benefit other areas of church life, ministry and mission!

Carefully read the following chapters of Matthews (chapters 4, 8, 9, 10) gospel. Make notes on the process Jesus went through in choosing His ministry team:

Just as Jesus did not rush in choosing His team, so you should take some time to carefully consider how to form your sports ministry team. Seek counsel from your church leadership.

Take some time out now to reflect and pray for the Lord's guidance in this process.

7.9.4 Step 4: Develop a mission statement

A common question that many non-Christians have is why are there so many different local churches in the Christian community? (I guess many Christians also have this question). This can possibly be answered by recognising that, within the global body of Christ (the invisible Church), there are many local expressions (the visible church), each with its own unique Kingdom role and calling. It is therefore possible for two congregations within the same community to have the same general mission (bringing the Gospel to the world), but two different focuses on how that is worked out in their community. For example, one church may have an emphasis on youth and have a vibrant schools programme while the other may have a focus on supporting overseas missionaries. This "reason for existing" would normally be defined in the mission and vision statements of each church.

Within the world of sports there are many different opportunities for Christian witness. It may be a daunting task for your newly formed sports ministry team to identify how and where to begin. Developing a mission statement is an important starting point as this can become the guide in determining what should be done. The mission statement should be something that everyone within your sports ministry can identify and align themselves with. "A mission statement for the sports ministry of any church must complement the church's mission statement" (Garner 2003:83). Oswald (2001:2) makes the important point that there should be a consistency between the mission statement of the sports ministry and that of the broader church:

A responsibility of the sports and recreation (S&R) ministry leader is to merge an S&R mission statement so that the ministry goals are consistent with the church's mission statement and allow the S&R ministry to assist the church in achieving her mission statement.

Exercise

In forming the sports ministry mission statement it may be helpful to discuss these questions with your sports ministry team (you should also seek input from your church leadership):

- Why does our local church exist? [If you can succinctly answer this question then most likely you are in some way articulating your churches mission statement].
- What implications does this have for us as we develop a sports ministry?
- How can the sports ministry arm complement the overall mission of the church?

Once formed, your mission statement will help direct you towards the vision and strategy for the developing sports ministry. But a helpful stage before finally deciding “what” you are going to do is to conduct research.

7.9.5 Step 5: Conduct research

In Step 3 above, when recruiting a team, it might be necessary for you to conduct some kind of survey to find out the level of interest and range of giftedness in your church. You now need to take the research component to another level – looking at two areas or research that will in turn impact your vision and strategy as you seek to merge the sports ministry mission statement with a vision and plan of action. [Note – this research component could be a great team-building exercise to focus your newly developed sports ministry team].

The research component is vitally important in seeking the Lord’s will and the purpose for your church’s sports ministry. The research phase has two components.

Firstly, from the example of Moses; utilising what you have got in your hands (what is already available to you – see Exodus 4:2).

Secondly, from the example of Nehemiah; assessing the needs of the community (Nehemiah 2:11-20).

Both this inward and outward research should be done in an attitude of prayer so that the Holy Spirit can begin prompting you and your team towards the vision and strategy that will emerge (which will be discussed in Step 6).

Inward Research

The inward research is seeking to discover what resources are available through the people in the church. These resources include the following: people who are available to serve, facilities that could be utilised, access to equipment, and connections to other people who may be able to assist. Oswald (2001:4) advises:

... it would be wise to determine the sports and recreational interests of the church members, as well as members of the community. It is equally wise to determine whom the gifted people are that God has provided within the church.

One way this information can be collected would be through conducting a survey of your church members. Perhaps conducting a survey sounds a great idea – but in reality it may be more difficult to do than it appears. You need to ensure that you survey the right people in the right way so that you can collate meaningful information. Your questions need to be well thought through so that the answers given are not so vague that they are meaningless, and not too detailed that you find it takes weeks to gather the information you need.

Exercise

With your sports ministry team develop a survey to determine the following:

- How many of your church members are actively involved in sport?
- What sports do members of your congregation regularly participate in?
- How many hours per week do members of your church participate in sport?

- How many hours per week do members of your church watch, or read about, sport?
- At what level do members of your church compete: leisure, amateur, competitive, or professional?
- Are any of the members interested in being involved in sports ministry?

Form these questions, and others you may consider, into a survey which provide you with an overview of how actively your church members are involved in sport, what sports are most popular, and what availability members may have to get involved in sports ministry.

Having prepared the survey, you should now consider how you can best conduct the research in your church. The following are some suggestions:

- Place the survey on every seat before a Sunday service and ask them to be placed in a box at the back of church after the service.
- Ask the Pastor to make an announcement that anyone willing to take part in the survey should come to meet you at a ready-prepared table after the service.
- Stand at the door of the church and ask congregants to take the survey home with them after the service and return it the following week.
- Ask the church secretary to send the survey around via Email to all the members of the congregation.
- Ask the church web designer if the survey can be placed on the church website for download.
- Send out a posted survey to every church member and ask them to complete and return to the church office (or bring with them to a future meeting)
- Open a Sports Ministry Facebook group and conduct the survey through contacting everyone who joins.

- Ask the church secretary to include the survey in the church bulletin or newsletter as a pull-out section. Include instructions as to where the surveys should be placed once completed.
- Ask your Pastor for a slot in a church service or members meeting and take five to ten minutes there and then to hand out the surveys, have them completed, and collect straightaway.

Obviously a key consideration in all of these suggestions is how to have the maximum response. It may be, having evaluated all of these suggestions, that you will choose a different method – or perhaps do a combination of the above. Write down what your chosen method is – and then state the timescale for completion.

Outward Research

Nehemiah was one of the great Old Testament leaders. Living as a Jew in a foreign land following the exile, his passion for God remained, and his heart was grieved that Jerusalem was in ruins. Having an advantaged position as cupbearer to the King, he eventually felt the Lord's leading to request permission to return to Jerusalem and oversee the reconstruction of the city walls. Permission was granted.

When Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem he did not immediately commence with the rebuilding the walls. He was full of vision and passion – but before beginning his work, he did a thorough survey of the task at hand so that he could effectively strategise (see Nehemiah 2:11-20). In Nehemiah's case, the results of his survey revealed how big the task at hand was.

In your first phase of research you performed inward research; taking a look at what is already in your hands (in this case in your church). In this phase of research you are following outward research in line with Nehemiah's strategy; seeking to understand the environment in which you will be working in order to develop the right strategy. But, just as with Nehemiah, you need to continue to conduct your research through eyes of faith (see Nehemiah 2:20).

One key thing you would need to find out is what other churches in your community are already doing in the area of sports ministry. Your goal should be to complement what is already being done – not to compete against other churches. Other churches or sports ministries may have specific focuses, so therefore find what are the gaps? How has God positioned your church in terms of gifting and calling to complement what He may already be doing through other churches?

Exercise

Outward Research

Obtain a map of your community, town, and suburb. Locate your church facility or where you believe your sports ministry could be located (perhaps this will be a school or your local sports fields). Draw a circle of a 10 km radius around your church. List the following:

- Number of churches. List the names and anything you know about them.
- Number of schools and if they are High Schools or Primary Schools.
- Number of sports clubs and the types of sports being offered.

Select two of each of the above (churches, schools, sports clubs) and find out more information about their sports programmes. The best way to find out this information is to arrange to meet with the sports ministry leaders, sports teachers, or club coaches. In this way you could extend a hand of fellowship with them and build relationships that may be essential in the future.

Write a one page report of all you discover and draw conclusions on the following:

- a) The types and quality of sporting experience being offered in your community.
- b) The amount of Christian influence within the sports culture of your community.

- c) The gaps/needs that your church could consider meeting.

Please remember – your most effective ministry may not involve starting something new, but bringing Kingdom influence into something that already exists, so keep your spiritual eyes and ears open to the Lord's prompting!!

7.9.6 Step 6: Develop your goals and strategy

Having done the needs assessment with your Sports Ministry Team, you are now ready to develop your vision and strategy. It may be that you are not able to meet all the needs that have been identified, but you prayerfully need to consider the following:

- What are the long-term goals for your sports ministry, taking into consideration both your mission statement and what you have discovered regarding the needs in your community?
- Develop specific and measurable goals...
 - What should be accomplished in 10 years?
 - What should be accomplished in 5 years?
 - What should be accomplished in 1 year?
- Focus now more specifically on your 1-year goals and develop a time-line. In order to accomplish them, what needs to have happened six months from now, two months from now, one month from now, next week? ... What do you need to do tomorrow?
- Consider all the obstacles and potential risks that might prevent you from fulfilling your goals.
- Now develop your strategy which will help you accomplish your goals.

It's vitally important that the strategy you develop is intrinsically linked to fulfilling your goals!

The use of mission/purpose statements, goals, and objectives allows leadership in a recreation and sports ministry to focus on ministry with intentional purposes. The further a purpose or mission is developed through goals and objectives, the more likely that intentional ministry will be kept in focus (Garner 2003:118).

Your church's mission will dictate your sports ministry vision, which in turn will determine the strategy. This is the right approach. When strategy determines vision, this is pragmatism, and is born out of seizing an opportunity rather than prayerfully considering what God wants you and your church to accomplish.

This example from the mid-19th Century may seem humorous, but at least the Reverend Mr Blaney (obviously a classical Muscular Christian) knew that he wanted to grow his church through attracting new members, and therefore developed a fairly novel (and perhaps controversial) sports ministry in order to accomplish this:

The advert for his Sunday services read as follows:

The reverend Mr Blaney will preach next Sunday in Dempsey's Grove, at ten A.M./and at four o'clock P.M., Providence permitting. Between services the preacher will run his sorrel mare, Julia, against any nag that can be trotted out in this region for a purse of five hundred dollars!

"The purse was made, and Julia, amid deafening shouts, won the day. Not only did the congregation stay for the afternoon services, but some two hundred joined the church: some from sincerity, some from the excitement of the day, and some because the preacher was a 'damned good fellow!'" [Robert J Higgs 1995:68 quoting from Clark, *The Rampaging Frontier* 1939:156].

As you develop your sport ministry strategy there are four considerations that you need to be cognisant of at this stage. These are: identifying who you are seeking to reach, determining what you want to do, considering the resources available to you, and developing effective partnerships.

a) **Who** you want to reach before **what** you want to do ...

It is far more important to ask “who are we going to reach?” than “what are we going to do?” Identifying your target audience will in turn help you determine the best strategy/sports ministry model to reach that audience. It also focuses one’s attention on “people” rather than on “product”. Many sports ministries make the mistake of developing a great sports ministry programme but have not taken cognisance of who God is calling them to reach. Therefore, their sport events end up predominantly being attended by church members rather than the community at large, and this in turn soon leads to a church-based recreation ministry rather than an intentional missional approach.

There needs to now be a convergence between the Moses and Nehemiah principles above. In this way you would know both who/what you have in your hands, the people and resources available, as well as the needs/gaps in your community which your church-based sports programme could fill. Consequently this could help you to determine how God has best gifted/positioned your congregation for ministry to the sport community in the vicinity of your church.

Figure 1, the McCown Sport in Ministry Map, is a very useful tool to help determine the focus and strategy for sports ministry (see McCown and Gin 2003:87). McCown has identified four main “categories” of sportspeople that could be the focus of a sports ministry. The following is a very brief summary:

- i. Identity outside of sport: these are sportspeople who perform at a recreational or social level and do not profess Christian faith.
- ii. Identity in sport: these are high level sportspeople who do not profess a Christian faith.
- iii. Recreational sport: these are sportspeople who perform at a recreational or amateur level and do profess a Christian faith.
- iv. Achievement sport: these are sportspeople who compete at a high level and do profess a Christian faith.

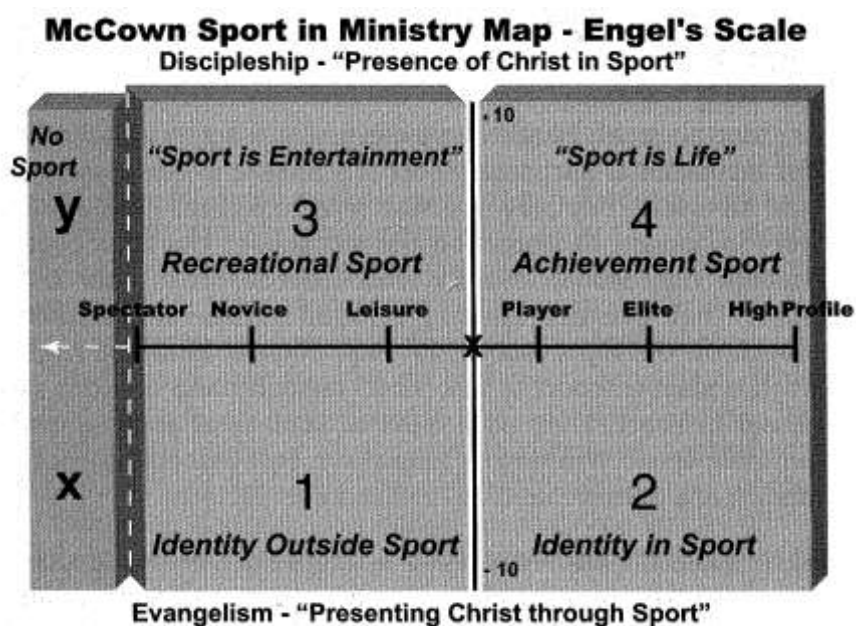


Figure 1: McCown Sport in Ministry Map

It is not possible to put the fuller explanation of the McCown map in this thesis, however, it would be a useful exercise to go through the map as a sports ministry team and seek to plot in which quadrant your target group falls. Knowing where sports people are on the above continuum can help determine the most effective way to impact them.

b) **What** you do must be appropriate to who you want to reach

Having determined who you are trying to reach, it is important to choose the right activities/programmes/model of sports ministry to effectively impact that target group. In other words, if you are seeking to reach serious sportspeople who do not yet know Christ, your strategy may not be to have a fun and games and a picnic in the local park. But if you are seeking to disciple youth through sport, then a more social and recreational environment would be appropriate.

Exercise

Do you believe it is better to base your programme around the target audience you would like to reach, or the giftedness and passions of the people you have available? Consider both approaches and give pro's and con's for each.

The previous question is not easily answered, however, you will primarily find that those that are available for your sports ministry team, will determine the passions you have, which in turn will determine those you are positioned to reach in your community.

It may be that in your community you have identified sportspeople in three or four of the categories identified on the Sport in Ministry Map. In that case, the deciding factor on what your focus should be in your ministry may be determined by the level of sport participation appropriate to your sports ministry team.

The following pyramid (see figure 2) has been developed by the researcher and seeks to complement the McCown Sports in Ministry Map which will begin to help you determine the right approach:

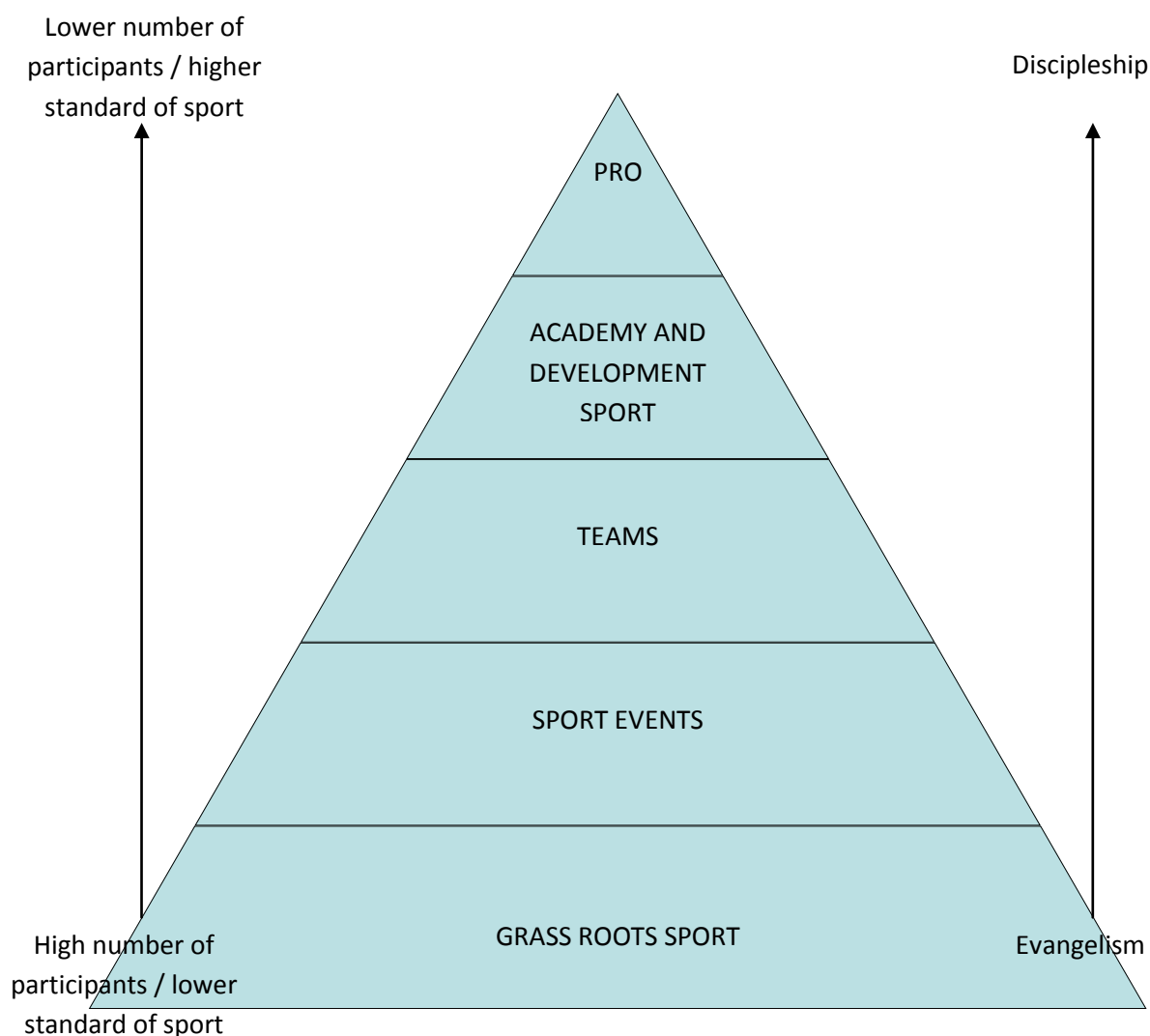


Figure 2: Ministry to the World of Sport

This pyramid represents the world of sport. Everyone who participates in sport in **any** way can be placed in this pyramid. In some ways it reflects the horizontal axis of the McCown Sport in Ministry Map.

From a sport perspective, as you go up the pyramid two things happen; firstly, the seriousness of sport involvement increases, and secondly, the number of participants at each level decreases.

In terms of ministry, as one moves up the pyramid there is also a change in emphasis from evangelism to discipleship. The implication is that, at grass roots level, there is more of a focus on sowing seeds through mass participation; while in professional sport one is looking to impact individuals through one-to-one discipleship.

Combining these two has led the researcher to coin the phrase “quality time ratio”. As there are fewer participants at the higher end of the pyramid who are giving more time to their sport, there is the possibility for a greater quantity of ministry time per participant. Whereas at grass roots, where one might be playing for one hour per week with some children on the street, the quality time per individual is far less!

Quality Time Ratio = Number of participants ÷ Amount of time committed to ministry

However, what is absolutely imperative to understand is that there is no difference in value between the ministries. Grass roots ministry is equally valid as a discipleship programme to elite sportspeople. There are just different approaches and each is as important as the other. In fact, those in sport ministry will be most effective when there is a multiplicity of ministry happening across the different levels of sport involvement. Consider this scenario:

A local church has a sports ministry aimed at reaching children in local parks who play social sport on Friday afternoons (Grass Roots level sports ministry). Some weeks as many as 50 to 100 children show up, and the church sports ministry team (consisting of two to three members), faithfully show up each week, kick the ball around (or hit the ball if cricket is the chosen sport that week) and seek to build relationships.

The school holidays are coming up and the same church has decided to run a sports camp during the holidays (Event level sports ministry). Some of the regular church children have registered to come, but the sports ministry team have also invited the park children to attend. Thirty register and come to the five day non-residential camp where a different sport is played each day. Integrated

within the sport are Bible lessons that give an evangelistic lesson. The camp is a huge success. Some of the park children give their life to the Lord.

Following the camp, five of the young people (early teens) approach the sports ministry team on the following Friday afternoon. They all have a desire to play sport (cricket in particular) more seriously and ask if the church has, or knows of, a team they can join. The church sports ministry team discuss this and at present feel that the church does not have the resources to start its own club. However, they are aware that another sports ministry has started a cricket club and are playing in the local league (Team level sports ministry). Someone contacts the ministry and finds out the details. Within a couple of weeks the five youngsters are now training twice a week with a team that has ongoing devotions and Bible studies as part of their programme. At the same time, the church sports ministry team continues to build a relationship with the five youngsters ... three of whom are coming to church regularly with their families.

Two years later one of the young cricketers has shown incredible promise and gone on to play Provincial Under-15 cricket and has been accepted into a high performance cricket development programme. Together with the local sports ministry that has run the club he's been playing for, they have approached the academy and found out that they have a Christian chaplain who serves the club (Academy/elite level sports ministry). The protégé is introduced to the chaplain who includes the youngster in his discipleship programme.

This scenario may appear somewhat idealistic, but it is designed to show how important it is that each church/ministry, called to work within a specific sphere of the sports community, should do so, as faithfully as their service to the Lord.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-26. Although the context here is the broader church community, the principle is also true for sports ministry. Everybody has a role to play and no role is more important than any other. As each one does his or her part, God will bring about the increase and the world of sport can be impacted from the smallest child to the famous millionaire.

Within each level different models of appropriate ministry can be identified. These models will be explored in greater length through some research in the next unit. What is important is that the model of ministry you choose is appropriate to effectively reach your chosen target group.

c) The Resource Challenge

Many people cite a lack of resources as the reason why they cannot begin a sports ministry. The researcher presently leads a relatively well resourced sports ministry with plenty of equipment. My personal story demonstrates that one should not be limited by a lack of resources.

I was a youth Pastor in Cape Town in a relatively well off community. In the late 90's the demographics were changing, and young people from different cultural backgrounds were moving into the suburbs. Our church was faced with a challenge of effectively seeking to reach these young people who had little in common with the current church culture. This is where my sports ministry began. Because football was a common language, I acquired one soccer ball and on Sunday afternoons began playing informal soccer with some of the boys. Some of them started coming to the youth group on Friday evenings. Then I was approached to start a team for them. I contacted the school that some of them attended (a rugby only school), and we organised weekly practices on the school fields. Other churches heard about what we were doing, and fairly soon we had six churches playing in a youth soccer league. By this time I had about 15-20 young people involved – some who stayed in the suburbs and some who lived in the townships surrounding Cape Town.

This was the seedbed of what became Ambassadors in Sport Africa. It all began with one soccer ball and a handful of young people kicking around on a Sunday afternoon.

It is not that resources are unimportant, but as you step out in faith and begin your ministry, trust that God will provide. Do not wait to have the resources you need before beginning. Rather move forward with what you have. Oswald (2001:5) sets out the challenge,

Most churches do not have sports and recreational facilities. This is not an acceptable excuse for not having an S&R ministry; it simply means the leadership needs to be creative and flexible.

However, as your sports ministry grows and develops, you will need to consider how you are going to fund the ministry.

Exercise

Prepare a Budget

Consider the plan you made for the coming year. Now develop a basic budget of what you think it will cost in order to accomplish everything you've planned. [Even if all you need is one soccer ball – record that cost!!]

Here are some of the items that may appear on your list:

- Sports Equipment
- Sports Clothing
- Transport Costs
- Food and Drink
- Facility hire
- Administration (photocopying etc.)
- Other miscellaneous costs (e.g., Laundry)

[At this stage the assumption is that your church-based sports ministry will be conducted by volunteers and therefore I have not included personnel costs. This may come at a later stage]

Many of these costs may be covered by donations in kind, but it is still worth recording the actual cost should you have to purchase what you need. In that way in future years you will know the real cost to run your ministry.

Now that you have your annual budget, you will need to develop a plan to secure the funds that you require.

Develop a funding plan

Here are some of the more common ways that church-based sports ministries secure the resources they need.

Potential sources of resource/funding:

- Donations in kind (e.g., sports equipment)
- Fees paid by participant
- Church subsidising
- Gifts from church members/others
- Corporate donations
- Civic/government partnership
- Sponsorships
- Fundraising activities

Consider the above: within your context how would you envisage funding the sports ministry in your church?

Are there other ways you can think of to resource your sports ministry?

[I've heard of a sports ministry in South America that was funded through the sale of cookies (biscuits) ... so be creative!]

Now develop your funding plan:

State how much you need for the coming year (total budget):

State, in detail, the method you are going to use to secure the funds:

The question arises: What do you do if your expected budget exceeds your anticipated income? You could just move forward in faith, but this goes against

Jesus' advice to count the cost before beginning an initiative (Luke 14:28-30) - the implication being that it is unwise to begin something that cannot be completed or sustained!

Another option, therefore, is to rethink what you aim to accomplish and perhaps scale down. Rather start small and grow from there than aim too big and not be able to meet your targets. For example, if you want to run a five-day sports camp and have targeted to have 100 children, but your available resources will make it difficult for you to do this effectively, simply scale down to what you can accomplish and either do a three-day camp or have a maximum number of 50 children. I know that this sound like common sense. However, through making these adjustments you will create a culture of success which means your ministry can grow from strength to strength.

d) Partner to maximise your impact

Partnership is a powerful biblical principle in both the Old and New Testaments:

Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 and Philippians 1:3-6

Write a paragraph on the benefits of partnering for the sake of the Gospel.

Now think of the different types of partners you will need to fulfil your vision.?

How will you begin to raise up partners that will help you become more effective?

One primary area of partnership that you may consider will be to connect with established sports ministries and share your vision with them. They may be able to help with practical resources (e.g., the ministry that I work with happily loan our equipment to churches that are developing sports ministry), counsel and expertise, connections in the sports world, training and equipping, and even additional manpower. Again, review your external research above and see which ministries in your community you could effectively work with for the benefit of the Kingdom of God.

Remember that partnership should also be mutually beneficial to those you are working with. Rather than just considering what you can get out of a

partnership, also consider how you can serve those whom you are in partnership with.

Just a word of caution though, partnering without a common purpose can be an extreme waste of time. Find partners who share your vision and with whom you can journey as companions towards a common goal. Rather have one or two effective partnerships than connect with numerous organisations that all have their own agenda.

7.9.7 Step 7: Create a culture of success

Sports ministry may be a new concept for your church and therefore a new programme on your church's ministry calendar. Some people in your congregation (including some leaders) may be sceptical about the development of sports ministry. Ideally you should be seeking to have the whole church supportive of the sports ministry programme. This may take some time, but the key to creating church ownership is to create a culture of success within the sports ministry department, success that needs to be shared and celebrated by the whole church. In order to create this culture of success you will need to strive for excellence, receive ongoing training, develop effective programming, conduct continual evaluation and provide consistent communication.

a) Strive for Excellence

Colossians 3:17 (NIV) says; *“And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”*

Sports ministry is not just about running a great sports event or having the best church sports team. Sports ministry, as it has been previously defined, is *glorifying God in sport thereby extending His Kingdom through sport*. In striving for excellence we should not be so concerned about “performance” as to bringing glory to God. Bearing this in mind means that we will not tolerate shoddiness or half-hearted attempts, rather:

Everything the Sports and Recreation ministry offers ought to be done with quality. It is a reflection of the church; it is a reflection of our Saviour, it is a reflection of the Christian, and we want to create a reflection that attracts people rather than repels them (Oswald 2001:7).

b) Receive ongoing training

The integrity of your sports ministry will be influenced by the skilfulness with which your sports ministry team conducts your programmes. If coaching is required, then your coaches must be adequately qualified. If playing is the focus of your ministry, then it is important that your players can compete at the appropriate level. If a tournament is being organised, then it should be organised with excellence, and so on.

This may require your team to receive further training. What is most important is that the training you receive is complementary to the vision that you have established. In other words, if your target is to reach grass roots sporting participants, then the course should be appropriate. If your target is to reach high level participants through coaching, then you will require the appropriate qualifications.

Established sports ministries are one avenue that can provide assistance in this important area. In South Africa, the Sports Ministry South Africa (SMSA) network compiles a list annually of courses being offered by sports ministries across South Africa. These courses would be a good place to start for a church-based sports ministry. In addition, the established sports ministries will be able to offer ongoing support and resources to assist your developing ministry.

Most of the above ministry principles combine with practical instruction in the various models of ministry. If you feel that you would prefer to receive entirely practical instruction in a particular field of sport, then it would be advisable to contact the sporting federations in your country in order to discover the courses they offer. If you require a stronger theological foundation, then you could contact the South African Theological Seminary; they have developed courses

in sports ministry that can be studied via distance learning. There are also good web-based resources and materials that can strengthen the knowledge base of your sports-ministry team.

c) Effective Programming

In the above steps the importance of the mission statement was considered, as well as the need for clear goals and strategies for the sports ministry. Effective programming takes these goals and strategies and seeks to implement them in a way that will have maximum impact.

There are a number of considerations you will need to make when deciding on your sports ministry programme:

- Sporting seasons – all sports tend to be seasonal and this must be taken into consideration when developing your ministry programme.
- Church programme congestion – consult with other ministry departments particularly before setting dates for major sports outreaches/events.
- Communicate clearly to the wider church with regards to what is on the sports ministry programme. If possible, include all dates and events in the church calendar and on the church website.
- Ensure availability of your sports ministry team. If you are devising a weekly programme then knowing on which days people are available is vitally important.
- Scale down and do little with effectiveness rather than trying to do too much and not having the available volunteers or resources.
- Consider community festivals or local sporting events. Do not plan your own programme to clash with what is already established in your community. Rather seek to serve within existing community programmes than compete with them.

- Be on the lookout for signs of burnout in your sports ministry team. Your team members need to be energised by their involvement rather than drained.
- Remain focused. Many good opportunities will present themselves. Decide upon what you can do and stick to that programme rather than jumping at every opportunity.
- Keep your church leadership up to date with your programme so that they can give input on how it impacts on overall church life. Wherever possible, make your sports ministry team available to serve other ministry departments whenever they have events that require volunteers.

d) Continual Evaluation

Consider these two quotes on the evaluation of ministry programmes:

Organisations that do not evaluate successes and failures are setting themselves up for ineffectiveness if not outright failure. The evaluation process is concerned with the collection of qualitative and quantitative information. The leadership team will evaluate each activity and, at the end of the programming year, evaluate the overall ministry (Garner 2003:89).

Recreation and sports ministries differ from other agencies in delivering the same programs in that ministries are involved with the eternal. The end result is not only a satisfying recreation experience but a closer glimpse of God. To be most effective at doing this, evaluation of ministry programs is a mandate not an option (Stutz 2003:126).

Why do you think continual evaluation is so important? List some reasons:

Paul Stutz (2003:127) gives seven purposes of evaluation:

- To show others that the programme is worthwhile.
- To determine whether a programme is moving in the right direction.

- iii. To determine whether the needs for which the programme is designed are satisfied.
- iv. To determine the costs of a programme in terms of money and human effort.
- v. To obtain evidence that may demonstrate to others what is already believed to be true regarding the effectiveness of the programme.
- vi. To support programme expansion or reduction.
- vii. To assist in comparing different types of programmes in terms of their effectiveness.

Exercise

One of my favourite tools is to do a SWOT analysis on a regular basis. With your entire team (it is important to have everyone's input - not just your own input or that of those who are happy with how things are going!!). Write SWOT on the top of a flip chart or white board. Start then with the letter "S" which stand for "Strengths". Write on the board all the current strengths of the ministry. Then move on to "W" which stands for "Weaknesses" – and do the same thing. Following that look at "O" – the "Opportunities". These could be new opportunities or opportunities to strengthen the strengths or deal with the weaknesses. Finally, "T" is for "Threats". Generally these will be the "what if's" of not dealing with the weaknesses.

Following the SWOT analysis take some time to pray through what has been brought to light – and then develop an action plan.

This is a useful team-building exercise. You may also want to do it for different components of the ministry, or for team members to personally consider their own role (a form of appraisal). The SWOT analysis is helpful in keeping the team accountable to the goals while assisting in practically finding solutions to problems that have arisen or to determine ways of improving for the future.

According to Stutz (2003:129), the important thing to remember about evaluation techniques is that they help to collect information for three definite areas of concern to the recreation and sports ministry:

1. Were ministry goals and objectives met?
2. Were the lives of participants changed in a positive spiritual manner?
3. What changes, if any, need to be made to the programme in order to make it a more effective ministry tool?"

e) Consistent Communication

It is a sad truth that many sports ministries that were initially birthed by a local church end up becoming somewhat isolated from the church. Historically, many sports clubs, including a number of English football teams, were begun by churches but quickly distanced themselves from their faith-roots. The researcher has seen this with many church-named football teams who play in church leagues. The teams carry the name of the church, but the reality is that most members of the church do not even know they exist and they therefore do not have the prayer cover and practical support of the congregation. Often the end result is that the team loses any sense of being a ministry, and just becomes another football club.

The way to avoid this is by ensuring that there is good communication between the sports ministry and the wider church community. The first level of accountability should obviously be to the church leadership. How this occurs needs to be worked out with the church leadership and depends upon the church structures that exist. The researcher would suggest that there should be at least a quarterly report to the elders/church leaders, with a written report given for the churches Annual General Meeting. The sports ministry team also needs to be open to input and, where necessary, subject to correction from the church leadership. The sports ministry should remain in submission to the overall church leadership as would all ministries in the church.

The second level of accountability is to the broader church in your community. The sports ministry team needs to find creative ways of sharing what is

happening on the sports fields in your community. Communicate to the Church your successes! Have testimony nights – or sports services – where the sports ministry department can give feedback on all that is taking place [but be honest – do not succumb to the temptation to exaggerate the effectiveness of the ministry!] Consider developing a newsletter or including an article in the church's existing newsletter. Develop a website or Email-based prayer letter. Facebook and Twitter can also be helpful tools to raise awareness and keep people posted. It is easy to be criticised for under-communicating. Very rarely will someone be criticised for over-communicating.

The culture of success you are seeking to develop is not just for the sports ministry team, but for the church at large. If the sports ministry team does well, then the church should praise God with you for the success. If this level of ownership can be obtained, then the church will also stand with you in tough times, and pray with you at all times.

A successful church-based sports ministry will be considered as vital to the church as any other ministry of the church – be it music, finance, drama or children's work.

The International Sports Coalition (Local Church Sports Ministry Manual 2006:42) gives the following helpful advice towards integrating sports ministry into the life of the church:

- ***Involve and expose the staff*** and leaders of the local church wherever possible to the Sports ministry – activities, initiatives, team meetings, etc.
- Look for ways to ***involve other ministries*** of the local church in the Sports Ministry activities – i.e., children's, counselling, worship, youth, men's, women's, etc. Work with these ministries to show them how they might use Sports to help them reach their mission. Consider providing helpers and activities for their events.
- Encourage Sports Ministry participants to ***be involved in other ministries*** of the church.

- **Publicize visually** the activities of the Sports Ministry in the church.
- **Publicize regularly** to the whole church the initiatives and results of Sports Ministry activities – using stories, pictures, testimonies. Highlight when a person's involvement in the Sports Ministry leads to their integration into the life of the local church. Some churches even use a regular Sports Sunday to highlight these efforts.

Exercise

Consider how striving for excellence is important when seeking to create a culture of success. What could be some of the ramifications should you not “hit the targets” in terms of administrative and operational excellence?

Conduct an assessment of the skills on your sports ministry team. What are your corporate strengths? In what areas are you lacking when considering fulfilling your strategy? What can be done about this?

Prepare an ideal programme for the coming year considering the factors listed above. Get feedback from your church leadership as to how feasible, manageable your proposal is. Make adjustments as necessary.

Consider a strategy to provide ongoing information to the broader church body on the progress you are making with your sports ministry. In particular, develop a process through which you can mobilise prayer and share testimonies.

7.9.8 Step 8: Multiplication of the sports ministry

Spend some time meditating on the following Scriptures: Genesis 1:26-3; Genesis 12:1-3; Isaiah 49:8-26; John 15:1-8; 1 Corinthians 3:5-15.

God has created the world so that the principle sign of health is growth and multiplication. What is true in the physical world is also true in the spiritual world.

Consider again the above verses (and any others that come to mind on the same theme). There are two main outcomes that God has ordained from healthy growth; firstly, God's blessing coming to mankind, and secondly, God's

glory being revealed on earth. In sports ministry growth is not merely for growth's sake, but in order to extend God's blessing and bring glory to Him.

However, healthy growth occurs over time and must not be rushed. It also may not mean that your particular church's sports ministry grows into a huge organism, but your Kingdom influence within the world of sport should increase over time. Also, there may be opportunities for you to multiply the ministry through training other churches in sports ministry and inspiring them to go through the same process that you have been through. As was seen above in step 6, to reach the world of sport in its entirety requires people with different passions and gifts operating within different spheres, but all working to the same goal of bringing glory to God in sport, thereby extending His kingdom through sport.

7.10 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to propose a practical strategy for the development of sports ministry in Tshwane churches. A theological framework in terms of the PRIOR model has been developed to underpin all church-based sports ministry, and a practical, step-by-step guide, has been proposed which can help a church practically to implement a sports ministry.

It is the hope of the researcher that, through proposing this strategy, churches will be equipped to develop sustained sports ministry and that a growing engagement will occur between churches and sport across Tshwane. The fruit of this engagement should be that the message of reconciliation, the Good News, becomes more effectively demonstrated and proclaimed to sportspeople who have, as yet, not responded to the Gospel.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

In this final chapter the researcher will attempt to offer a synthesis of the research by providing: (1) a restatement of the research problem and the research objectives; (2) a summary of the research findings; (3) recommendations regarding the implementation of this research; (4) the contribution of this research to practical theology and; (5) a conclusion.

7.2 Restatement of the research problem and the research objectives

7.2.1 Restatement of the research problem

The following questions summarise the main research problem:

- a) What have been the theological factors influencing historical periods of engagement and disengagement between Christianity and sport? (Chapter 2)
- b) What are the biblical foundations of sports ministry? (Chapter 3)
- c) What are the theological foundations of sports ministry? (Chapter 4)
- d) What are the main factors driving engagement or disengagement as perceived by selected Tshwane church leaders? (Chapter 5)
- e) What theological framework could ensure a sustained engagement between Tshwane churches and sport, and how can this be facilitated through a step-by-step training programme? (Chapter 6)

7.2.2 Restatement of the research objectives

The following are the main objectives of this research:

- a. Historical and Theological basis for sports ministry (Chapter 2)

The first aim is to provide a historical survey of the relationship between church and sport with special reference to the theological framework that underpins the

engagement of churches with sport. Particular attention will be given to the Muscular Christianity movement.

b. The Theological foundations for sports ministry (Chapter 3)

The second aim is to provide a theological foundation for sports ministry. This will involve an examination of sport as a field for evangelism.

c. The Biblical foundations for sports ministry (Chapter 4)

The third aim is to examine the Biblical foundation for sports ministry, including a Biblical survey of sport in Scripture and a Biblical exposition of selected passages relevant to sport ministry.

d. Empirical survey of selected churches in Tshwane (Chapter 5)

The fourth aim is to investigate the perceptions amongst church leaders, from selected churches in Tshwane, in order to determine which theological factors are driving the engagement or disengagement of churches with sport. Although the city of Tshwane has been chosen as the delimitation for empirical research, it is believed that the same trend of reengagement between church and sport can be discerned across the country. Therefore, the lessons learned in Tshwane apply to other cities across South Africa.

e. A practical strategy for sport ministry (Chapter 6)

The fifth aim is to propose a practical strategy that will equip Tshwane church leaders to develop a sustainable sports ministry for mission outreach, based on the *theological traditions* of sport – its historical, theological and Biblical foundations (Chapters 2, 3 and 4) and a *situational analysis* of the Tshwane churches (Chapters 5).

7.3 Summary of the research findings

7.3.1 A review of the historical basis for sports ministry

Chapter 2 provided the general context for this research paper through tracing the historical relationship between the church and sport. Particular attention was given to the following: (1) A Historical overview of the development of sports ministry; (2) The theological framework for engagement with Sport; (3) Theological influences towards disengagement from Sport; and (4) The historical relationship between church and sport in South Africa.

Some of the key findings were that periods of disengagement were marked by, among other factors, the doctrine of dualism. Dualism held a dichotomy between what was viewed as secular and what was viewed as sacred or spiritual. Sport was primarily viewed as secular and promoting ungodly fruit such as idolatry, professionalism and Sabbath breaking.

During periods of engagement between Christianity and sport, more holistic doctrines such as “body theology” with an emphasis upon “masculinity”, underpinned the engagement between Christianity and sport. These teachings were embodied in the Muscular Christianity movement of the 19th Century. In the 20th Century, the sports ministry movement has focused upon biblical teaching on matters such as redemption, creation, worship and expediency in order to give a theological framework for engagement with the world of sport.

In the South African context it was apparent that disengagement from sport was largely driven by dualism, and influenced by the political and traditional religious nature of African sport (particularly soccer).

It was concluded from the historical context that a sound theological framework would be required in order to sustain a re-engagement with sports ministry.

7.3.2 A review of the theological foundations for sports ministry

Chapter 3 provided the theological foundations for sports ministry with an emphasis upon sport as a field for evangelism. In particular, chapter 3 dealt with the following: (1) The definition of evangelism and sports ministry; (2)

Theological reflection on evangelism; (3) The theological foundations of sports ministry, especially sport as a field for evangelism in South Africa; and (4) An examination of three contemporary theological models for sports ministry

This chapter considered evangelism as a primary focus of sports ministry and sought to examine evangelism in terms of the message, method, and goals, applying each of these to sports ministry and thereby recognising how sport provides both a field and vehicle for evangelism. Further reflection upon evangelism highlighted the necessity of proclamation, the message of the Gospel, the mandate of the Great Commission, and an incarnational and sacrificial approach to evangelism.

Chapter 3 concluded that evangelism is a major component of sports ministry and therefore the South African church requires a sound theological understanding of their responsibility to evangelise the world of sport.

7.3.3 A review of the Biblical foundations for sports ministry

Chapter 4 sought to present the Biblical foundations for sports ministry through attempting to: (1) Consider the challenges of conducting a Biblical survey of key passages pertaining to sport and sports ministry by considering the difficulties presented by the silence of Scripture on the subject; (2) Consider the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture in relation to the silence of Scripture with regards to sports; (3) Present a survey of recreation and sport in Scripture by examining those passages that do mention sport; (4) Conduct an overview of the meaning of certain Greek words in the New Testament which portray the Christian life in terms of a sporting metaphor.

The challenges associated with this endeavour were examined by highlighting the silence of Scripture with regards to didactic teaching on the subject of sport. It was proposed that, given the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture, and that there is no biblical injunction against sport, one can therefore conclude that God is not anti-sport. This is confirmed through the study of sporting references in both the Old and New Testaments whereby many positive aspects of recreation, physical exertion and sports competition are espoused.

Chapter 4 concluded that the most striking facets of the Biblical foundation for Sports Ministry relate to sport being utilised as a metaphor for Christian discipleship, and athletic competition, notably the running race, being paralleled to the Christian journey through life.

7.3.4 A review of the empirical survey of selected Tshwane church leaders

In Chapter 5, through means of empirical research, the researcher sought to discover the perceptions of church leaders in Tshwane regarding the main reasons why churches are engaging or disengaging with sports ministry. Through the questionnaire it was discovered that the primary concerns church leaders have about their members partaking in sport (soccer was used for illustrative purposes) are as follows:

Concern for member's involvement in Sport	Average score out of 20
The pressure to participate on Sundays	10.23
Soccer can easily become an idol	9.1
The prevalence of alcohol and drugs	7.77
Soccer is rife with Muti	7.1
The competitive nature of soccer	6.73
The immorality associated with soccer players	6.6
The time commitment away from church life	6.53
An environment not conducive to discipleship	6.23
A distraction from spiritual life	5.53
Soccer promotes gambling, cheating, bribery	4.83
Soccer is frivolous and a waste of time	4.00
There is no biblical mandate for playing soccer	3.40

In the qualitative (semi-structured) section of the questionnaire, the church leaders were asked to identify the four primary motivations, out of a list of ten, which they would have for developing sports ministry. The respondents ranked the motivations for sports ministry from the most to the least common as follows:

1. Sports Ministry can assist the church in evangelism and fulfilling the Great Commission.
2. Sports Ministry can help the church cross cultural barriers thereby extending greater influence in their community and engaging in mission.
3. Sports Ministry can keep the church in touch with society and culturally relevant.
4. Sports Ministry can provide a place for teaching life skills and developing leaders.
5. Sports Ministry can give people a vision and heart for reaching the lost.
6. Sports Ministry can keep people from drifting from the church – particularly young people.
7. Sports Ministry can bring transformation and Kingdom values to the world of sport, thus redeeming what has become the devil's domain.
8. Sports Ministry can provide an entry level of service for new believers.
9. Sports Ministry can contribute to “body life” and the fellowship aspect of a church.
10. Sports Ministry gives the opportunity for planting cell groups, and ultimately planting churches.

Chapter 5 concluded that a re-engagement between Tshwane churches and sport was occurring which was being driven by the upcoming FIFA World Cup™ and a strong desire for evangelism. However, many church leaders were concerned about issues surrounding sport, particularly Sunday participation, and feel a lack of resources and training as being a major hindrance to the development of sports ministry.

7.3.5 A review of the practical strategy for equipping Tshwane church leaders to develop a sustainable sports ministry for mission outreach

Chapter 6 sought to respond to the research presented in the previous chapters and propose a practical strategy for the development of sports ministry in Tshwane churches. The purpose of the chapter was twofold: (1) To provide a theological framework as a foundation for the development of sustainable sports ministry based upon the theological and biblical foundations in chapters three and four respectively; (2) To give a practical step-by-step guide for the development of sports ministry in Tshwane churches.

The theological framework for sports ministry was given in terms of the PRIOR model and was based upon the *historical, theological and biblical* research (chapters 2, 3 and 4), as well as the *situational analysis* (chapter 5). The author arranged five theological foundations for sports ministry into the acronym PRIOR and gave a detailed description of each:

- **P**roclamation: the message
- **R**econciliation: the motivation
- **I**ncarnation: the means
- **O**rganisation: the medium
- **R**eproduction: the maturation

In order to provide further practical assistance to Tshwane church leaders seeking to develop sports ministry, the author developed an eight step strategy for the development of sports ministry in a local church:

- Step 1: Establish support from church leadership
- Step 2: Envision and educate the church
- Step 3: Recruit a sports ministry team
- Step 4: Develop a mission statement

- Step 5: Conduct research
- Step 6: Develop your goals and strategy
- Step 7: Create a culture of success
- Step 8: Multiplication of the sports ministry

7.4 Recommendations

The recommendations for the development of sports ministry are too numerous to receive exhaustive treatment in a single study such as this one. However, the main recommendations for the development of sustainable sports ministry in Tshwane churches are as follows:

- 1) That teaching and training on the theological foundation for sports ministry be provided to church leaders in Tshwane in terms of the PRIOR model.
- 2) That Tshwane church leaders encourage sport-minded members to utilise the eight steps training programme, for the development of sports ministry, in order to establish effective and sustainable church-based sports ministry programmes.

7.5 The contribution of the findings to Practical Theology

The research of this thesis, sports ministry, is just one facet of Practical Theology. Although the study was delimited to churches in Tshwane, South Africa, the research also presented Biblical principles for sports ministry, which can apply to all churches. Furthermore, the empirical survey confirmed the need for the development of a theological framework for sports ministry and to provide a practical training programme to help churches to develop a sustainable sports ministry.

The findings of this study logically fit within the parameters of Practical Theology. It is the hope of the researcher that the findings of this study, the theological foundation for sports ministry in terms of the PRIOR model, and the eight step training programme for the development of sports ministry in the local

church, will help to promote the development of a church-based sports ministry, not only in the context of this study, but also in the wider context of other churches.

7.6 Conclusion

As a leader of a national sports ministry in South Africa, the researcher is very concerned about the development of a sustainable church-based sports ministry. It is the researcher's belief that sports ministry can play a vital role in assisting churches to fulfil the Great Commission in their community. Christ gave a very clear challenge in Matthew 5:13-16 (NIV):

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.

You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

The researcher is of the opinion that, the theological foundation in terms of the PRIOR model, coupled with the eight step training programme for the development of sports ministry, will enable churches in Tshwane to effectively become "salt and light" for the Gospel to the sporting community.

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Appendix 1

Dear Church Leader,

I am writing to request your assistance with the research component of my MTh which I am completing through the South Africa Theological Seminary (SATS). The title of my thesis is;

“A strategy for the development of a sustainable sports ministry using mission outreach through soccer in selected churches in Tshwane.”

As we approach the 2010 FIFA World Cup™ an increasing number of churches are considering developing sports ministry programmes. The purpose of my thesis is to seek to establish what factors are driving this process of churches engaging with sport, and to propose a strategy to ensure that the processes that are driving this current move towards sports ministry are sustained into the future.

Please find attached to this Email a questionnaire with all the necessary instructions for the completion thereof. I have sent you this questionnaire to you electronically and request, if at all possible, that you complete it electronically and Email it back to this address. If however you should so wish, please feel free to print it, complete, and fax back to me on 0865236234.

Your Email address has been made available to me through the Tshwane Ultimate Goal (TUG) network of which I am a member. Both your personal information and responses to the questionnaire will be kept strictly confidential. If you prefer to remain anonymous in your responses, then please print, complete and fax back the questionnaire to me, leaving the space for your name and your church details blank.

I also have attached a letter from my Supervisors confirming the legitimacy of this Email and humbly requesting your cooperation in assisting with my research. If at all possible, it would be appreciated if you could complete and return the questionnaire to me within one week of receipt.

Yours in Christ,

Tim Tucker

0827128235

Tim Tucker

AIS Africa Team Leader

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Appendix 2

Dear Pastor,

A survey to discover the reasons why churches in Tshwane are engaging with sports ministry.

This is to certify that Mr Timothy Tucker is presently involved in doing research towards his MTh degree under the auspices of the South African Theological Seminary, entitled:

“A strategy for the development of a sustainable sports ministry using mission outreach through soccer in selected churches in Tshwane.”

It would be greatly appreciated if you would assist by completing the attached questionnaire.

The contents of the Questionnaire will be kept in strict confidence.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated as we believe your input will significantly contribute towards the success of the research project.

Yours in Christ,

Dr Mark Pretorius

MTh Supervisor

and

Dr Noel B Woodbridge

MTh Supervisor

South African Theological Seminary

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Appendix 3

QUESTIONNAIRE

A survey to discover the reasons why churches in Tshwane are engaging with sports ministry conducted by Tim Tucker in association with the South African Theological Seminary (SATS).

1. Name
2. Date Questionnaire Completed
3. Name and address of your church?
.....
4. Church denomination/affiliation?
.....
5. What is your position in the church?
.....
6. How long have you served in this position?
.....

- Please note that your questionnaire will be held in strict confidence. The purpose of this survey is to establish the *reasons why churches are engaging with sports ministry in Tshwane*, so please complete the Questionnaire as honestly as possible.
- Thank you for your willingness to participate in this survey.

Instructions:

Self-administered questionnaire (Sections A and B)

1. In Section A please complete the answers within the spaces provided.
2. In Section B: For Question 1, please simply answer whether or not you have a sports ministry in your church, and then continue to answer the respective questions depending upon whether you answered yes or no. For Question 2, please score the concerns listed out of 20, 1 meaning that this does not concern you, and 20 being of great concern to you, with regards your church members being involved in soccer.

Semi-structured comments (Section C):

3. Work through the table of reasons for developing a sports ministry and indicate which four of the motivations for developing sports ministry listed are the ones that you believe are the most important for a local church.
4. Using the table provided, list the four reasons for developing sports ministry that you selected. In the space provided, please give further motivation for why you chose these and give Biblical support where appropriate.

Once completed, please return this to timtucker@ais-africa.co.za or fax to 0865236234

SECTION A

1. Background information

1. Please give some information on your congregation:

a. Number of members?

.....

b. Approximately what is the average age of your church members?

.....

c. What languages are spoken?

.....

d. What is/are the prevailing ethnic group/s of your congregation?

.....

.....

2. Does your church have an existing sports ministry? (circle) Yes / No

3. Is your church preparing to utilise the FIFA World Cup™ for outreach?
(circle) Yes /No

4. If Yes, please describe the kind of outreach you are planning for the FIFA
World Cup™?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

SECTION B

STRUCTURED QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Does your church have an existing soccer/sports ministry?
(circle) Yes/No

2. If yes, please answer the following:

a. How long has it been in existence?

.....

b. Why did the church develop a soccer/sports ministry?

.....
.....
.....
.....

c. What are the core elements of your sports ministry programme?

.....
.....
.....
.....

d. What challenges have been faced in developing a sports ministry programme?

.....
.....
.....
.....

e. What have been the positive benefits to having a sports ministry programme?

.....
.....
.....
.....

If no, please answer the following:

a. Have you considered developing a sports ministry programme?

.....
.....
.....
.....

b. Are you intending on developing a sports ministry programme?

.....
.....
.....
.....

c. What factors have prevented you from developing sports ministry?

.....
.....
.....
.....

d. What assistance would you require to develop a sports ministry?

.....
.....
.....
.....

2. Many church leaders may have concerns about their members being involved in sports – particularly the sport of soccer.

What would be your greatest concerns about members of your congregation being involved in sport/soccer? Please rank the statements from 1-12, 1 being your greatest concern and 12 being your least

Rank 1-12	Concerns about involvement in sport/soccer
	A distraction from their spiritual life
	The time commitment to soccer means that many men cannot serve in other areas of church life
	The immorality associated with soccer players
	The prevalence of alcohol and drugs in soccer
	The competitive nature of soccer can bring out the worst in people
	Soccer is rife with Muti (the use of “medicine men” to influence matches) and non-Christian beliefs
	Being in an environment that is not conducive to Christian discipleship
	Soccer can easily become an idol
	The pressure to participate on Sundays
	There is no biblical mandate for playing soccer
	Soccer is frivolous and a waste of time when compared to more serious Christian disciplines
	Soccer promotes gambling, cheating and bribery

SECTION C: Semi-Structured Questionnaire

Reasons for developing a Sports Ministry

Rodger Oswald (2002:2) has proposed a number of reasons a church should develop sports ministry.

1. Consider the following 10 motivations for developing sports ministry and indicate which four of the motivations for developing sports ministry listed are the ones that you believe are the most important for a local church.

Reason to Develop Sports Ministry	Indicate with a X the four you've chosen.
<i>Sports ministry can keep the church in touch with society and culturally relevant.</i>	
<i>Sports ministry can contribute to "body-life" and the fellowship aspect of a church.</i>	
<i>Sports ministry can keep people from drifting from the church - particularly young people.</i>	
<i>Sports ministry can provide an "entry level" of service for new believers.</i>	
<i>Sports ministry can provide a place for teaching life skills and developing leaders.</i>	
<i>Sports ministry can give people a vision and heart for reaching the lost.</i>	
<i>Sports ministry give the opportunity for planting cell groups, and ultimately planting churches.</i>	
<i>Sports ministry can help the church cross-cultural barriers and other barriers thereby extending greater influence in their community and engaging in mission.</i>	
<i>Sports ministry can assist the church in evangelism and fulfilling the Great Commission.</i>	
<i>Sports ministry can bring transformation and Kingdom values to the world of sport, thus redeeming what has become the "devil's domain".</i>	

2. Having completed the table above, record the four reasons (just place the number in the column provided) you chose in the table below and then further motivate, giving Biblical support where appropriate, why you feel these are the most important reasons for developing sports ministry.

Reason number Motivation for why I agree with this statement		
Example	<i>Reason 2</i>	I agree with this reason because... Etc. etc.
1.		
2		
3		
4.		