

ABSTRACT

EVANGELISM THROUGH ONLINE GAMING: COMMUNICATING TO GEN Z BEYOND THE CHURCH WALLS

by

Michael A. McMullen

According to the Entertainment Software Association, sixty four percent of American households own at least one device used for gaming, and every gaming household has at least two gamers (Fitzgerald). This is a huge opportunity to evangelize through a medium that is quickly replacing other mediums of social interaction, entertainment, relaxation, and community (White 12; Schultz 21; Myers 1). In the context of the South Texas Nazarene churches, there has been a trend to embrace technology at such a slow rate that by the time a few churches embrace the evangelism tools available the market of Generation Z has shifted even further away from the Church. The issue then becomes, “how do we overcome these obstacles to allow for Nazarenes to speak into the lives of postmodern online gamers since this is a new medium of communication?” The implication of the research is that in order for the church to maintain relevance in the lives of emerging generations it must incorporate significant training to new pastors in the realm of virtual environments. The administrative portion of the church must create new ways to calculate effectiveness of organic ministries that deal with virtual evangelism. The educational branches of the church need to incorporate more advanced technology classes for students. The intuitional structure needs to realize that much of the way it operates church is held over from the Enlightenment period. The church has an opportunity to develop environments in the meta-verse in which a person can login and

experience three-dimensional immersions into the Bible, making sensory discoveries into a world long forgotten.

**EVANGELISM THROUGH ONLINE GAMING:
COMMUNICATING TO GEN Z BEYOND THE CHURCH WALLS**

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by

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I dedicate this project to my grandmother Claire who passed away with lung complications during the Covid-19 pandemic. I miss you and regret not spending more time with you while you were alive. I also dedicate this project to the pain that my grandfather has had to endure outliving the love of his life. I acknowledge all of my family in this work. I also acknowledge my service animal Obie, who has been a dear friend and patient with me as I have endured this project with my disabilities in balance stemming from a traumatic brain injury from the first Gulf War.

CHAPTER 1

Overview of the Chapter

This project analyzes and identifies obstacles to online gaming evangelism in the South Texas Nazarene churches to discover the most effective approaches to communicate with Generation Z while avoiding those obstacles. The church is becoming more disconnected with Generation Z as technology increases (White 24–27; Tan 108; Ellul; Bausch 7). The fear of adoption or change brought on by these technologies may be one instrument that has led to a chasm between the “brick and mortar” church goers and the virtual generations (Bausch 7).

The purpose of this project was to discover Texas Nazarene church members' objections to online gaming in order to design an evangelistic online gaming experience that avoids those obstacles. The project utilized pre-intervention research design. The project explores theological foundations for evangelism through the Old Testament and New Testament. The project examines theological foundations for the church exploring online systems to engage communities. The project explores biblical foundation of evangelism with specific emphases on social engagement, online systems, online language, and online evangelism models. The project expects to discover the obstacles to online evangelism which limit the South Texas Nazarene Churches.

Personal Introduction

It is 2:00 a.m. central time in Corpus Christi, Texas. PING! My phone jolts me awake by a text message from Jake. Typing the phone keys at 100 mph, Jake is worried about our mutual friend Jim.

Jake cried out through the keys, “Help! Jim is about to shoot himself with a 9 mm berretta!” Jake immediately added Jim to the group chat.

Jim texted, “I feel empty, alone and bullied by others. What’s the use of living?” *I am on the edge of my chair because I know that the correct words are most important right now and a life hangs in the balance.*

Jim yelled in all capitals, “I AM WORTHLESS!”

(Researcher) I first met Jim and Jake on my Christian Minecraft fellowship server. Even though he was not a believer, he joined our group because of Jim who was a Christian and he wanted a safe server to play the game. *I frantically go over past conversations in chat looking for any future oriented dreams or desires that Jim had.* While I was looking, I was encouraging Jim with the assurance that we are here for him.

(Researcher) I shared with Jim, “I get it, it’s hard out there and it seems like no one listens or understands. There are times when I have felt the same, but it does get better.” *Bingo! While searching I found a text of him talking about wanting to be a father someday.*

(Researcher) Jim, you remember how you told me you want to be a father and play with your kids. I remember how you wanted to guide them and teach them. You know Jim; I think you are going to be a wonderful father because of all the experiences that you have gained through some of these difficult times.

Jim said “yeah you’re probably right.” Jim expressed, “my father is just never happy with me, I feel like such a disappointment.”

(Researcher) *I heard the isolation in Jim’s expression.* I recognized that he was expressing the worldview of the foreigner in Dr. David Durst book *Finding God in Your*

World and separation in Paul John's book *Theological Worlds* (Durst 11-17; Jones 21). I recognized that what Jim was longing for was fellowship and life seemed to have come against his every effort to be in fellowship with others. I recognized my best strategy was to stay connected and show that I was here for him. I decided to offer more fellowship opportunities by expressing, "you know Jim it is times like this that teach us how to help others through difficult times."

Jim said, "Yeah, I am glad you and Jake are here to help me."

(Researcher) I expressed, "You could do the same Jim."

Jim then confesses, "You know I have missed having a relationship with Christ but I don't even know where to begin. I feel like I have walked so far away and I just cannot see my way back."

(Researcher) I said "Jim, there is a parable about this exact situation that Jesus teaches His disciples called the prodigal son. In the story, the son finally realizes he wants to return to his father. In the story Jim, of course the father is not an earthly father, but God himself that welcomes us. Jim, the father welcomes the son who strayed far away with open arms, gives him a robe, his ring, and throws a party because the boy returned home. All you have to do Jim is come home to Christ. In that coming home Jim, Jake and I are going to be here right with you at the feast with Jesus."

Jim said, "But I don't know how to pray."

(Researcher) I said "Jim, Jesus has heard every word you have spoken in this conversation. You simply tell Jesus all your fears, all your hurts; all your desires, everything, and then you give it all to Jesus. You ask Jesus to be Lord of your life and

you focus your life around building a relationship with Christ. Can we pray together Jim?”

Jim exclaimed “YES!”

(Researcher) I prayed, “Father God, sometimes I don’t know what to say or what the right words are. Lord you know my every thought. You have heard this entire conversation with Jim. I ask Lord that you encourage Jim in his new found faith in you. Father, we thank you for sending your Son Jesus who experienced every pain we feel while we walk on earth. We give you all honor, praise and glory, in Jesus mighty name. Amen.” Jake, Jim, and I developed a social relationship which allowed for intervention in this case of suicidal ideations because of the online presence we had through virtual platforms. Technology allowed me to back read previous conversation and figure out some of Jim’s hopes and dreams for the future. A sense of belonging helped Jim move from hopelessness and indifference to his life toward belonging in a community (Moon and Simon Kindle loc. 611). Jim’s story is a composite character of five different real-life scenarios derived from the twenty-four people rescued this year from suicide through the intervention of the Minecraft online gaming ministry.

I, myself, came from a dysfunctional family. I left home very early in my youth. I just could not seem to connect with anyone. I was very isolated and alone with no outlet. I grew up in an environment where I was much more technologically advanced than my peers and family. A computer was my babysitter as I grew up, and program coding was my language that allowed me to interact with a machine. I found myself communicating in a language that few people understood. Today, those same machines communicate back with you and can guide you through some difficult experiences. While my

generation, Generation X, seemed to grow increasingly disconnected from the previous generation, at the same time, we were becoming more disconnected from the upcoming generations. At the time, I considered myself advanced in the language of technology. However, in today's environment I recognize that I struggle to keep up with the language of the emerging generations, even though I tend to be more adaptive than many of my pastoral peers. I have observed generations not understanding each other within one life time. Over the span of fifteen years, whole new languages are forming (Hamza 61; Savage 15–18). Technology languages are advancing so quickly that in three years they replace former languages (Savage 15–18). This advancement leaves the older static programming languages obsolete and the younger programmers not knowing the former static code that made the dynamic code they are writing in (Savage 18).

I will just lay it all out here; my home was full of neglect. My story is not unique. Many dual income families do their very best to make enough income to sustain the household. But the children seem to suffer in isolation. I was raised by housekeepers getting paid to take care of me often doing the bare minimum to keep me sustained. I isolated myself in my room while at home. I buried myself in my school life and received all my social interaction there. I realized that there was a disconnect between the generation of “latchkey” kids who raised themselves, like me, and Generation Z (Twenge 28–29). Those raised as “latchkey” kids were taking a more protective stance with Generation Z despite the trend of more mothers working full-time jobs (Twenge 28–29). The church is having less of an impact on society, with only 36% of Americans believing the church has their “best interest at heart” (Barna 116–17). Generation Z is being raised on computer games and receiving new forms of social interaction through social media,

gaming chats, Instagram's, and emoji's (Hamza 61; Lawrence 1; Katz 1). Technology has many schools moving away from the writing styles of cursive that our country's founding documents are based on in lieu of print with hieroglyphic emoji's because keyboards are print based (Hamza 61; Lawrence 1; Katz 1; Taneri and Akduman 186–87). When precise language is used, it is usually for JavaScript and source code in computers and mobile phones.

I was raised in the transition from family dinners around a table to sandwiches in isolated bedrooms. I believe this transition was the first glimpse of the disconnect in how social relationships are perceived between generations. I am currently the first virtual Pastor with a virtual church plant recognized by the Nazarene church called LightStream. Previously, I was the online pastor for the Gulf Coast Conference of the South East Region of Free Methodist and the pastor of Portland Texas First Church of the Nazarene. I own twelve Minecraft servers that minister to 1,097 unique internet protocols with unique in-game usernames. The virtual church I pastor owns a discord server that facilitate chat for over four hundred people, where we have church, Bible study, apologetics, and missions. I administrate another four servers with six hundred individuals who I counsel and minister to on a daily basis. In one year, we have stopped twenty-four suicides and converted thirty individuals from other faith systems.

We have encouraged over one thousand youth and provided a safe place for the youth to ask questions about their faith. While I was in seminary for my Masters of Divinity, I met Dr. David Durst who made a new evangelism tool for ministry allowing evangelists to speak the language of the person who is lost in visually meaningful ways (Durst 11–15; Jones 11–25). I decided to incorporate David's ideas in a gaming

environment to help evangelize people through a gaming module since that seemed to be a new language of social interaction (Durst 11–15; Jones 11–25; Bainbridge 472). I have seen a dramatic increase in talking points for evangelism using mobile applications, gaming, and other online media. I have also seen that old biblical styles of writing have been lost such as Greek formal argumentation diatribe (Evans and Porter 296–97). The online teaching allows believers to help seekers of the faith to learn the old styles in order to better understand what the original authors were saying. I believe if we bridge many of these gaps, we improve the meaning of the message in our lives.

I repeatedly face a lack of support from the boomer generation that continues to fail to understand the importance of bridging the technological gap between the generations. I repeatedly hear the question, “How will this bring people into the church?” Rather than, “How can we help expand your virtual presence?” It sometimes seems that the generations that came before Generation Z will stay incapacitated by fear of change. Previous generations trying to force a “brick and mortar” medium for the new generations to absorb while that information is growing increasingly unimportant to Generation Z (White 24–27; Tan 108, Ellul; Bausch 7).

I dream of a ministry that connects to Generation Z in a way that brings connection and relevancy back to the church. I dream of a ministry that is able to speak into the lives of the youngest generations so they have a good foundation for what the Gospel means in their life. I believe that speaking in their “virtual” languages, such as online gaming, can reconnect to our youth. I believe this is important to help them grow spiritually. I believe if we continue to speak the language of “in the church walls,” we are only speaking to ourselves, and no one is listening. I researched this project to discover

the obstacles that limit our ability as the South Texas Church of the Nazarene to move into the marketplace of where Generation Z experiences social relationships. The place Generation Z seems to be experiencing those social relationships is online which is often made up of gaming groups in virtual communities.

Statement of the Problem

I researched Generation X within the South Texas District of the Nazarene church. This research uncovered the major obstacles that cause resistance to online gaming evangelism by the church. The hope was that the research will expose ways for the church to avoid those obstacles for future models. I investigated the obstacles that keep church pastors and congregations from embracing new technologies. I investigated what keeps them from incorporating these technologies into the DNA of the church. When churches do finally embrace technologies, the churches bring “seekers” into the walls of the church. This approach seems to limit the market place to “seekers” who just happen to enter a particular church building, a building which reminds them of old antiquated languages from the age of tent revivals and potlucks. Though the churches embrace sound technologies, projectors, media soundbites, and RSS feeds, it has failed to embrace the language of affirmation that Generation Z gets through gaming and online chat. The church has not understood that the pastor is not the authority on religious matters any longer; Generation Z seeks chatrooms and peer groups to decide religious matters (Yadav et al. 110).

The issues of theology and life are questioned and answered behind anonymous names in chat forums. The relationships are then evaluated on how they like their answers and what the peer group thinks is best for the questioner. Life and spirituality are

now directed by a “hive” mentality of knowledge with no specific queen bee or authority (Yadav et al. 110). Barna research reports that adults feel that only one in five ministers have influence in their communities (Barna 58). Considering that Generation X is more religious than Generation Z, pastoral influence is on a sharp decline. Within the Generation Z group of fourteen through seventeen age range, thirty-five percent considered themselves atheist (Smith). In addition, only four out of ten people in this age range believe the Bible to be accurate in principals (Smith). Pastors are losing their influence as spiritual leaders toward Generation Z. There needs to be ways to reconnect and influence the lives of youth again (“New Research Explores How Technology Drives Generation Gap”; Yadav et al. 110). If Generation X takes the approach with Generation Z of removing completely online social networks, it may leave the young person feeling isolated and unable to cope with spiritual growth and changes in isolation from its communities (McGavran 8–10). McGavran points out that in evangelism it is often better to leave social bonds intact and change the collective rather than change a person in isolation (8–11). Evangelism through isolation may have worked in the past through individualistic societies; however, today social networks are globalized reaching people from all demographics (McGavran xiii).

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project was to discover South Texas Nazarene church members' objections to online gaming in order to design an evangelistic online gaming experience that avoids those obstacles.

Research Questions

Once the obstacles that limit South Texas Nazarene churches and its members are understood, the church can discover methods in online gaming evangelism that can offer opportunities for growth. The project will explore the following three research questions in order to determine the obstacles:

Research Question #1

What are the obstacles and objections South Texas Nazarene church members have toward online gaming in general?

Research Question #2

What are the obstacles and objections South Texas Nazarene church members have toward some (current) design approaches in online evangelism?

Research Question #3

What are the current design approaches in online gaming toward evangelism that could be utilized (removing objections) by South Texas Nazarene churches?

Rationale for the Project

This project is important because the church is losing significance in the lives of Generation Z for various reasons. One significant factor is how other generations speak a language that Generation Z does not understand or feel is relevant. Teenagers are absorbed with nine hours of media a day which is becoming the main language they understand (White 42). The language of the “brick and mortar” building is lost to hours of media time. Secularism as an ideology in theology has robbed any stable foundation for faith to stand on and pushed religion into a private arena, while Generation Z is bombarded with pluralization of other ideologies and alternative truth statements about

faith (Berger 4–6, 12–16; White 29). Furthermore, the church continues to put its resources toward pew evangelism of dying churches “lagging behind technology 20 to 30 years” believing the youth owe the church something and must attend the “brick and mortar” building further privatizing the little faith that Generation Z has (Rainer; White 28–29). Instead of the church speaking into new language mediums of youth, such as online gaming, it has chosen to allow youth to be influenced by peers and word of mouth. The authority of the pastor has been replaced by anonymous names on a computer screen who state their opinions on matters of faith which seems to have more validity to Generation Z (White 45). Only eight percent of Generation Z cite a religious leader as a role model (White 49). If churches do not speak into the lives of children through their language of online gaming and retreat into the slumber of the churches, the children will be raised by “under protective religiously unaffiliated parents” in the age of Facebook and sexting (White 62). What does that mean for the child “spiritually” (White 62)?

If Christians can reconnect to Generation Z and begin to speak faith back into their lives, they are more likely to give them a religious foundation to stand on in the virtual world that has more significance and occupies more of their time. Generation Z is not motivated by events that bumps them into salvation through Vacation Bible School and church camp. In fact, studies are showing that Generation Z is motivated by process and event (White 109). Therefore, a relationship must be built, walking them through their struggles with faith in a post Christian environment that is hostile to their faith (White 109). How can a relationship be built with the youth if a generation decides not to care enough to spend time in the language of their understanding such as online chat, gaming, and media (Moon et al. 9–11, 13–14, 18–19)? Online gaming has the added

benefit of encouraging youth through reward systems by walking them through a process that leads to the event of commitment that begins the salvific journey (Kapp et al. 56–57). Furthermore, Generation Z speaks through the language of visuals such as emojis and memes (Moon “Practical Evangelism for the Twenty-First Century: Complexities and Opportunities” 159–66; Moon “Fad or Renaissance?: Misconceptions of the Orality Movement” 8–14; Moon et al. “Evangelism Training for the 21st Century: Complexities & Opportunities for Seminary Education” 4–8, 16, 18). Online gaming speaks this language of the visual youth, while formal cursive is being phased out of American schools. This is a new way the church can encourage evangelism amongst a generation who say seventy four percent of the church has no value (White 84).

Definition of Key Terms

Technology: the application of scientific knowledge for practical purposes, especially in industry; the application of scientific knowledge to the practical aims of human life or, as it is sometimes phrased, to the change and manipulation of the human environment (Anderson 5–8).

Generation X: age groups born early 1960s to early 1980s. They are direct, independent, flexible, critical thinkers, self-reliant (Schnitzer & Fabiano). They have a more balanced hybrid type of relationship with technology (Schnitzer & Fabiano).

Millennials or Generation Y: the generation born between 1980 and mid-1990. They were born during the explosive age of technology. In the markers that measure technology use, Millennials use blogging 8.1 percent more, cell phone 12.5 percent more, email ten percent less, instant messaging 18.5 percent more, online communities’ 14.5 percent more, text messaging 12.3 percent more, than the previous generation (Gross 17).

Generation Z: age groups born mid-1990's to early 2000's (Dill). This generation has a significant rise of non-affiliated people to a church or religion. Only thirty eight percent of this generation says that religion is important in their life (White 25).

Generation Z life skills seem to be hampered with “chaos, uncertainty, volatility, and complexity” (White 40). They are the first “digital natives” they have grown up in a society fully immersed in digital technology (Casey). They are more likely to utilize online media, absorbing up to nine hours a day (White 42).

Online-Gaming: the action and practice of playing video games specifically using video games with online chat that create relationships through gaming such as ACN- Agape Creation Network, the online discord chat for the largest Christian Minecraft server group. Video games like Battlefield, Minecraft, Ark Evolved, Space Engineers, Fallout 76 that require groups and relationships to overcome objectives are examples of online gaming.

Evangelism: William J. Abraham's definition of evangelism is “We can best improve our thinking on evangelism by conceiving it as that set of intentional activities which is governed by the goal of initiating people into the kingdom of God for the first time” (Abraham 13, 95; Green 50–51, 78). In this project, I agree with Scott Jones that by Abraham's “for the first time” limits evangelism to an initial encounter without including discipleship beyond that encounter (114–15). Scott Jones defines evangelism as “that set of loving, intentional activities governed by the goal of initiating persons into Christian discipleship in response to the reign of God” (114). Evangelism then is not a single act to initiate a relationship but rather a continuous journey in a relationship which includes

disciplining a person and communal group in that relationship with God (Coleman Kindle loc. 372; McKnight and Willard).

Chat Servers: Computers that create connections from one computer to another which allow voice or text from one computer to another like Discord, Teamspeak, Enjin, Steam Valve, etc. These are the main voice platforms used to develop online relationships through gaming. The chat servers usually have reward systems for inviting others into the online gaming family. The institutions that operate these platforms also reward communities with larger social networks.

Brick and Mortar: the free-standing church building with low technology utilizing traditional means of evangelism that do not actively pursue Generation Z through new communication mediums outside the walls of the building. The congregation may have little interest in the virtual and technology improvements that could connect with youth. They may not have the finances or may have a fear of change. The congregation may simply be ignorant to the new forms of communication.

Virtual: not the physical reality but an alternate reality displaced from actual events. The movie *Ready Player One* describes the virtual experience perfectly. In the movie, a person could wear a device and be hurled into a new reality while escaping the dismal circumstances of their real reality. In the virtual realm, they could become anyone, do anything, and experience all things. They could wear body suits that enhanced the real physical touch outside of the virtual world while experiencing the touch inside the virtual world. The movie shows how the virtual world and the real world are colliding with each other and there are modern applications such as virtual shopping through “Second Life.” Gaming systems have been incorporating real body movements into virtual gaming for a

real-life experience since the popular interactive console game system the Nintendo Wii. Currently, virtual headsets can take you to foreign countries to experience places you may not be able to afford. They can put you on top of mountains you would be too afraid to climb. They can allow you to experience skydiving without the consequence of a parachute not opening. They can take you on amusement rides you would be too afraid to experience. Virtual experiences have opened the door for many applications as it converges with real life experience.

Online-presence: the act of being online. In this dissertation, it may be used to describe the current market place of the Gospel. The term also describes the interaction of a person or product in a virtual place where other players can interact with the product or person.

Objections to online gaming: any obstacle brought up that limits the interaction to online gaming. It can be a perceived objection or a real stumbling block to interaction with online gaming. A perceived objection may be the fear of interacting with online gaming. A real objection may be that the person simply does not know how online gaming can be used to evangelize, for the church, or that it has any function outside of entertainment.

Delimitations

The researcher analyzed the South Texas Nazarene Churches that have a declining rate higher than ten percent or have a congregation of less than twenty that actually attend church. The researcher analyzed Texas Nazarene churches in the Southern region with nominal or no growth. The project did not analyze youth in the questionnaires, focus groups, or participant observation. The project looked at Generation

X's response to online gaming evangelism. The project looked at age ranges older than thirty so it could analyze the reaction of older generations in adopting new platforms to communicate toward Generation Z. Analyzing Generation X allowed the project to evaluate how well they adapt and are receptive toward new platforms for online gaming evangelism. If the project discovers the stressors toward online gaming evangelism in a traditional church format grounded in tradition and conservative understanding of the gospel message, then the church can identify the resistance to the use of new platforms and bridge the gap between the two generations in evangelism. This project did not analyze Generation Z because that generation has been brought up around technology as a part of life and their stressors toward technology are outside the scope of this project. The project analyzed both men and women in the project that are grounded in strong convictions of church tradition. Therefore, those with lifestyles, habits, and social dynamics that are contrary to the teachings of the South Texas Nazarene Church will not be evaluated in this study. Only those individuals that uphold the teachings, lifestyles, habits of the South Texas Nazarene Church were evaluated as participants in the study. The individuals in the study could work in any capacity of the church of the Nazarene or simply be laity. The sample size was a total of seventeen participants in the study. There were three groups of four participants with the researcher conducting and guiding participants. This was due to the availability of computer and resources for the participants to use simultaneously during the study. The churches involved in the study included both rural and urban locations because the research was evaluating individuals in various markets. However, the evaluation dealt specifically with members in churches that have static or declining membership.

Review of Relevant Literature

The relevant literature focuses on evangelism, online gaming, gamification, online language, reward methods that encourage use, and Generation Z in order to understand effective methods for evangelism to Generation Z. It is important to examine how Generation Z is communicating differently so we can increase our chances of success in evangelism. In addition, this project analyzed communication methods toward Generation Z. Examining the technology stressors and technology advances that impact Generation Z was critical in understanding the objections to implementation of technology by Generation X. This project is unique in that it will inform and shape the possibility of mobile applications that can help evangelize and speak the language of the Generation Z group. The project hopes to discover the ability of the Texas Nazarene Churches to embrace new technologies.

Dr. David Durst spoke into the project about visual evangelism utilizing the five theological worlds that categorize the spiritual dilemma that resides in each person (Durst 11–15; Jones 11–25). David's model allows for people to self-identify their spiritual dilemma through visual cues which allows for evangelist to speak the proper language into that spiritual dilemma (Durst 11–15; Jones 11–25). Corey Seemiller and Meghan Grace contributed observations that Generation Z is a generation of observers which need to see things applied before they attempt to interact in learning (Seemiller and Grace 22–23). Michael Bausch, Corey Seemiller and Meghan Grace gave the project insights that Generation Z needs to observe visually when they learn something new (Bausch, 2016; Seemiller and Grace 22–23). The implication of their research was that our approaches toward Generation Z must include visual applications.

Furthermore, does an online gaming community satisfy this need to observe others in learning and cultivate a family dynamic needed by Generation Z (Seemiller and Grace 22–23)? Kevin Kelly informed the project of the technology trends that will be shaping the future by helping the project deal with the “technological forces that shape” Generation Z (Kelly 2–8). Wyl McCully informed the research about the stressors which cause religious leaders to struggle with early adoption of new communication technologies (82–97). The question becomes, why is it difficult pastors to accept new forms of technology into their ministry while Generation Z lives within a technology world? Thomas Koulopoulos and Dan Keldsen showed the project how Gen Z is shaping communication and the future of business so the project can glean from the changing landscape (2016). Business application is one financial driver behind change in technology. Therefore, their research informed the project of future trends Generation Z and future generations will be immersed within. Alshenqeeti, Katz, Lange, and Taneri, informed this project on how literature and writing has changed over the years which informed this project that evangelist need to speak the language of those they hope to bring to Christ (Millard 905–11; Alshenqeeti 2016; Lange 2017; Taneri 2018). The language of the upcoming generations seems to continually change in meaning. This causes a gap in understanding of concepts between the generations. Therefore, their research allowed the research to be more precise in our evangelism techniques specifically language used toward upcoming generations. Dill, Lange, Seemiller and Weitbrecht shed light on how icons can be used in evangelism (Dill 2018; Lange 2017; Seemiller 2017; Weitbrecht 2016). Icons taught many generations of the ignorant through the Middle Ages.

Since the upcoming generations are visual learners, it may be that icons help visually create meaning lost in and through language barriers. Researchers express how the emerging generations are driven by visual cues and learn through observation (Dill 2018; Lange 2017; Seemiller 2017; Weitbrecht 2016). Kelly, Lipka, Moon, Snyder, and Wilcox illustrated for the project insightful thoughts on evangelism toward Generation Z and talking points with Generation Z (Kelly 2017; Lipka 2019; Moon 2018; Snyder 2017; Wilcox 2019). The Barna Group, and Pew Research delivered statistical analysis for the research about Generation Z (Barna 2018). Sims Bainbridge provided an understanding of virtual systems, virtual evangelism, virtual language, virtual social engagement, emerging technologies, virtual organizations, virtual relationships, and the new virtual marketplace of evangelism (Bainbridge 472–77; Weick 23–61; 110–27). The society in which upcoming generations are being groomed for is a virtual world with virtual currency and virtual meaning. In addition, Karl Weick explained how identity and relationships form in organizations. Weick’s understanding of organizations can be applied toward virtual relationships in online communities (23–61; 110–27). Chou, Kapp, Manley, Matera and Moon examined gamification (Chou 2018; Kapp 2012; Kapp 2013; Manley 1999; Matera 2015; Moon 2018). Bainbridge, Chou, Kapp, Manley, Matera and Moon provided the understanding that by adding gamification to evangelism through virtual environments the church has a better opportunity to engage Generation Z (Bainbridge 472-476; Chou 2018; Moon 2018).

Research Methodology

Type of Research

The project used mixed method data collection utilizing qualitative and quantitative methods. This project analyzed the attitudes and obstacles of South Texas Nazarene churches to evangelism through online gaming. The project hopes to point toward methods that will offer promise and new avenues for evangelism in historically traditional holiness churches. The project analyzed data for two months covering October 1, 2021 to December 30, 2021. The design was pre-intervention. Using mixed methods designs of qualitative closed-ended questionnaire, qualitative open-ended questionnaires, qualitative participant observations and qualitative focus groups.

This project used questionnaires to calculate the obstructions in the minds of users that keep them from utilizing the latest tools in evangelism through online gaming. This project used some closed ended questions for concrete data collection along with open ended questions to gather attitudes and perceptions not easily seen through concrete number crunching. The questionnaires had twenty questions of quantitative data that were distributed before the participant observations and focus groups to members of the South Texas District Church of the Nazarene. There was an additional ten qualitative open-ended questions evaluating attitudes and perceptions of those participating in the analysis. Mike McMullen observed participants through interviews and then conducted a focus group after the participant observation. Mr. McMullen did not give compensation to those who participated in the interview section of the analysis.

There was also a participant observation which analyzed the reactions of those participating in mobile gaming apps and online gaming evangelism models. The

participant observation analyzed participants that have varied roles in the church. The participant observation also analyzed the adoption rate of new technologies in online gaming evangelism and chat forums. The assistant district supervisor was asked for assistance in participation to evaluate the health of the Southern Texas District of the Nazarene. The open-ended section of the questionnaire asked questions and sub questions such as what are the obstacles and objections South Texas Nazarene churches have toward online gaming? What are some current design approaches in online evangelism and what are the objections and obstacles there? What are the stressors that limit or enhance communication connections, language, and models toward the youngest generation and the South Texas Nazarene church? There were sub questions in the questionnaires like how comfortable it was for them to use the module?

In the focus groups after the participant observation, there were questions like do you believe this is a module you could use in your ministry. The participants were volunteers that were members of the South Texas Nazarene Churches in order get the best representation of the actual dilemma. The participants were older than thirty years of age. In the participant observation, the researcher observed how the participants interact with online gaming modules that utilize three methods, evangelizing, teaching, and prayer. This was done by exploring their reactions to a web application through the five world's method. It was done by observing them explore Minecraft and go through a teaching lesson inside the game. It was also done by going to a three-dimensional modeling of Solomon's Temple where the elements of the temple were utilized in a way to expose prayer to the individual participant through the Old Testament virtual environment.

In the focus group section, the project asked how can South Texas Nazarene churches utilize current design approaches in online gaming toward evangelism that would be better utilized (removing objections) by South Texas Nazarene churches? The focus group dealt mainly with four subjects: communication to Generation Z, 5worlds evangelism models, online gaming, chat obstacles in relation to their church, and what is the adaptation rate of those surveyed to new models such as mobile online evangelism gaming applications. The participants must be a part of the covenant relationship with the holiness movement with particularity to the South Texas Nazarene Churches. The participant observations were conducted in a location where four computers are stationed so the participants could be guided through the observation study together. In this manner, the participants could be observed in the areas they felt stress from launch of the gaming module, in process of the module, and when the module completed.

Participants

The participants were South Texas District Church of the Nazarene members that have been in membership for at least five years. They were both male and female. The participants were primarily a mixture of Caucasian and Hispanic, however there were other races included in the sample. The primary mixture of Caucasian and Hispanic was because of the region of the data collection in South Texas. There may be some immigrant, multi-racial, and/or pregnant women who participated in the study. These individuals were not being singled out and the project did not cause any risks for them. Children did not participate in this project. All participants were age 18 or older. The participants were older than thirty-five because this study evaluated generational

identities that were not Generation Z in order to see what their adoption rates to technology are with regard to the church. This project utilized volunteers.

Instrumentation

The project utilized four instruments in research:

Instrument 1: The project used a questionnaire with closed ended questions about technology use. This instrument gathered quantitative data for categorization. The closed ended questions were divided into four groups for a total of twenty questions. Questions 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, and 12 were “belief” questions exploring the presuppositions the participant has about technology as it relates to the church or development. Questions 4, 8, 16, and 17 dealt with the “experience” the participant has with technology as it pertains to the church or online gaming. Questions 9, 11, 14, 15, and 18 dealt with the “feelings” of the participant towards online gaming as it pertains to evangelism. Questions 10, 19, and 20 dealt with general objective questions for analysis and categorization of the participants. Appendix A is a copy of the questionnaire utilized on the participant’s questions 1–20 on pages 1–3.

Instrument 2: The project used a questionnaire that has open-ended questions about technology use. The open-ended questions were ten “feeling” based questions about the use of online gaming and technology as it pertains to the church. The questions gathered qualitative information about the participant’s presuppositions about online technology before the participant goes into the participant observation stage of the analysis. Questions were framed with the “how do you feel about” format to maximize the participants ability to feed information into the study that may have been an obstacle that the researcher had not considered. The open-ended questions also gave information

as to “why” a participant has such presuppositions. The open-ended questions are questions 21–30 in Appendix A on pages 4–5.

Instrument 3: The project utilized a participation observation instrument recording the observations as participants interact with an online gaming model and evangelizing web application. Participants were observed as they joined a Minecraft server through “Fully Awakened Ministries” at internet protocol “agapecreation.org. The participants joined the server and were given ranks and warped to a three-dimensional model of Jericho where the instructor retold the story of Zacchaeus the tax collector. This section modeled online gaming in the realm of teaching the Gospel. The instructor then guided the participants to Solomon’s temple within the three-dimensional model in Jerusalem. The instructor talked about the elements in the temple and how they relate to prayer. This model was based on Dr. Cho’s tabernacle prayer model (Packard). The participants were then guided through the prayer model through the temple in Minecraft. The participants were then guided to a realm within the three-dimensional world where five pictures are displayed before them and they are instructed to go through the door of the image that best describes how they feel right now. When they chose an image and went through that door, then the facilitator begins to walk that person through the Gospel message through that spiritual dilemma image they chose based on Dr. David Durst five worlds evangelism model (Durst 1). The instruments used in the participant observation were already utilized and available in hard copy format through Dr. David Durst’s ministry. The project simply adapted the Durst’s model within a gaming module to evaluate the use by participants through observation.

Instrument 4: The project ended with a focus group. The focus group of participants was asked questions about their experiences through the participation observation. How did they feel the online mediums are beneficial or harmful? What are some of the obstacles they experienced while doing the participant observation? How do they feel the mediums can be utilized for their church? What have been, or maybe, some challenges you noticed in incorporating models like this? Do you have any other thoughts or comments about the experience in the participant observation? This section was also filmed so the researcher could best catalogue the observations and review if there were any observations the recording picked up that the researcher missed in the observations.

Data Collection

A questionnaire of both open-ended and closed ended questions was given to each participant before the participant observation to evaluate their presuppositions about online gaming as it relates to evangelism. There were twenty closed-ended questions and ten open-ended questions. The questionnaire was five pages, three pages of closed-ended questions and two pages of open-ended questions. After they took this questionnaire, each participant was given a laptop to join a gaming module. Data was collected by the researcher by filming the observations, casual observation notes, and by stress meter test using a stress meter thermometer and a blood pressure monitor on the finger. The data was collected over four meetings totaling seventeen participants. The meetings were one and one-half hours long each. The researcher was in the participant observation as a leader and facilitator casually observing the stressors on participants.

The meetings were filmed in order to capture observations that the researcher may have missed in casual observation and note taking. The researcher was the guide in the

Minecraft gaming module and taught the biblical lesson of Zacchaeus, taught the prayer through the temple, and facilitated the instructions for observing the participants spiritual dilemma. The data was collected in person and catalogued on a excel spreadsheet. During the participant observation, the participants were also wearing a stress meter to analysis their stress levels during the analysis. The measurements of stress and blood pressure were taken three times during the observation for each participant. The measurements were taken at the beginning, middle, and the end of the observation to evaluate fluctuations in the participants stress level going through the participant observation. At the end of the participant observation, there was a casual focus group where the participants were asked five questions about their experience through the participant observation. Those responses were journaled and catalogued. The researcher also filmed the focus group to assure no information was missed in the journaling and cataloguing of responses in the casual focus group.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data taken from the twenty closed-ended questions on the questionnaires were coded by the questions in four categories: belief, experience, feeling, and objective questions. The responses were put into an excel document and charted for analysis. The belief, experience and feeling questions gave the researcher information about the presuppositions the participants bring into the participant observation. The objective questions gave the researcher the level of experience the participant has had with the given topic. The mean and averages were then calculated by the researcher through the excel spreadsheet.

Qualitative data taken from the ten open-ended questions was evaluated for patterns in feelings such as apprehension, anxiety, stressors, normalcy, and calmness. The researcher then looked for word patterns and themes for frequency. The researcher also looked for pattern shifts such as sharp changes in handwriting that may indicate stressors to the particular questions asked. The researcher also looked for patterns in whether the participant's descriptions of their feelings were personal or distant which may indicate embracement of technology or a lack of engagement.

The qualitative data taken from the participant observation was categorized by how personal or distant the person was in their engagement of the gaming modules. The researcher looked for patterns and themes in the participants conversations while doing the participant observation. Participant observations allowed the researcher to analyze those stressors by participants because participants tend ignore too many inputs because of "sensory overload" (Spradley 55). In addition, the researcher was able to view the observations from a broader perspective while participants are in the moment of the observation (Spradley 56). The researcher tested each participant during three stages of the participant observation measuring stress levels in the beginning, middle and end of the participant observation. Those stress levels were categorized into an excel spreadsheet for analysis and pattern evaluation. Through the recordings of the participant observation, the researcher analyzed body postures and patterns that exposed elements of stress on the participant. These patterns were then categorized in an excel spreadsheet. If the researcher observed multiple stressors in the individual, it was separated into a higher priority of stress. The stress levels were separated into three categories, low, medium, and

high. The researcher then took the mean and average of the stress level of the entire group.

The qualitative data in the focus groups, after the participant observation, increased the “methodological triangularization” of the stressors by allowing the participants to speak about how they felt about the participant observation (Patton 247). This information gave greater detail into some of the patterns being observed by the researcher. The focus groups gave clarity to ambiguous understandings of the data observed in the participant observation and allowed for a more focused interpretation (Lee 52). The focus groups allowed for immediate feedback from the participant observation about the stressors they could self-identify (Lee 53).

Generalizability

This project has generalizability to the greater Bible belt area and outward across the United States wherever there are late adopting holiness churches. The Free Methodist Church, United Methodist Church, Baptist Church, Mennonite Churches, Wesleyan Church, and Pentecostal Churches can all find benefit in the information provided in this research with relation to them and technology. The project has further generalizability in other faith systems that are discovering they are far removed from Generation Z. Furthermore, it has psychology and sociology issues dealing the technology embracing Generation Z and any group of late adopters of technology.

The project dealt with the communication void between early adopters and late adopters as it relates to the church, but this information is not confined to the church and can be used to explore the implications across many sociology and psychology disciplines. The questionnaires were administered and collected by the researcher. The

participant observations were done by the researcher at a secure location where video and computer technology could be used simultaneously. This location was the home of the researcher that was laid out to perform the participant observations. All data was collected, compiled and analyzed by the researcher and secured on a laptop which was password protected. This project is important because the gap in communicating to Generation Z is growing wider for the church models that depend on the “brick and mortar” building. However, it is not just the church that is experiencing this widening gap, many areas such as business, marketing, advertising, psychology, sociology, family dynamics, group dynamics, organizational management, government policy, public speaking, and communication. In all of these disciplines, there are nuggets of information that can be learned from the research which can better facilitate communication and technology effects on Generation Z and the other generations it is in contact with.

Project Overview

Chapter One of this project, the project introduces the research. It explains the purpose and relevancy of the project as well as the research methodology for this study.

Chapter 2 covers the Literature Review for this project. It identifies and discusses the basis for evangelism and technology through the scriptures. It discusses the historical and theological basis for evangelism and technology through the church fathers, history of the church, and the development of creeds, doctrines, and traditions of the church (Evans and Porter 231–37). Chapter 2 continues into themes of research that pertain to the problem posed in this study. The themes are an historical review of the literature is presented in the areas of evangelism, social engagement, online gaming, online language, and online chat. Chapter 2 identifies how and why virtual communities are the new

marketplace for evangelism in the 21st Century. It goes on to identify how virtual systems create communities motivated by identity, observation, and epic meaning giving opportunities for evangelism. Chapter 2 discusses how gamification of virtual communities and evangelism can improve the results of evangelism toward Generation Z.

Chapter 3 covers the Research Methodology for the project. Chapter 3 discusses the data collection methods which was a mixed methods approach utilizing quantitative, qualitative methods. It provides an examination of the data and an explanation of the project design, methods of research, and data analysis. It includes copies of the questionnaires and the interview questions for the project. In addition, Chapter 3 provides consent and release of information disclosure from the participants.

Chapter 4 presents the evidence for the project. It presents the research questions and discusses what are the possible conclusion and theoretical assumptions that can be made from the data. Chapter 4 details the major findings of the study.

Chapter 5 includes a learning report for the project. It details the major findings for each of the research questions. It examines how these findings can be used to improve evangelism through online gaming and the implications of the data. It discusses the possibilities for evangelism based on the data. Chapter 5 also offers a conclusion of the possibilities and consequences of evangelism through gaming. Furthermore, it expresses reflections on the church of the Nazarene, my place in the organization, the journey through the project, and where to go from here.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

The goal of this project was to discover the South Texas Nazarene church members' objections to online gaming in order to design an evangelistic online gaming experience that avoids those obstacles. The relationships between the South Texas Nazarene church members and technology, along with the relationship of Generation Z, the generation groomed in technology, must be analyzed separately and together to discover the obstacles in the relationships. The literature review will look at Generation Z as early adopters of technology because of immersion in the technology age that surrounds them. The literature review will analyze the relationships and obstacles between Generation Z and the church. The review will deal with other similar disciplines about technology and Generation Z such as business, education, psychology, and sociology, in order to grasp fully the context of the objections from Generation Z and the south Texas Nazarene churches. The review will analyze the “marketplace” of the church with regard to Generation Z and how that “marketplace” has shifted. The author aims to establish in this literary review a solid understanding of the obstacles that limit the relationship between south Texas Nazarene churches and online gaming, the language of Generation Z. This literary review finds its centering through the biblical foundations of evangelism and discipleship.

Biblical Foundations

Biblical Foundations for Evangelism in the Old Testament

First, the biblical foundations for evangelism in the Old Testament revolve around the saving work of God pursuing humanity for restoration and how the biblical characters respond to that pursuit (Brueggemann 16–18; Hafemann 33–37, 62–65, 68–70). Second, the whole Bible should be used to speak of evangelism, not simply one book like Romans in New Testament focused soteriology (Abraham 4; Hafemann 33–37, 62–70; Moon 6, 17). The third biblical foundation is that God speaks in narrative about the whole of his saving work (Brueggemann 8–13, 128–129; Hafemann 33–37, 62–70; Moon 23). Fourth, the salvation story should include the stories in the Old Testament dealing with the deliverance of Israel (Brueggemann 9). Fifth, the Gospel is the foundation of evangelism that “invites people to participate” (Brueggemann 7–8, 70).

Since the beginning, God told the first family to be fruitful and increase through the Adamic covenant and rule over every living creature, establishing God’s kingdom with God’s created nation (Coleman Loc. 70; Gen. 1.28). As descendants of the original family, the natural order of God’s plan was for all people to be a part of the holy family (Gen. 1.28; Dongell and Walls 40, 53, 68–69). Adam and Eve sinned, which caused a ripple in the natural order of this plan and since then God has desired humanity to come back into fellowship with God, a return to the garden status of walking with God (Gen. 3.8–9; Hafemann 55–57, 63–65, 116; Olson 13, 75–77;). Out of this genealogy of the original family, the Messiah would come as king of the kingdom of God leading His people (Hafemann 43–44). Therefore, God has set aside a tribe that would spread the news of God and God would make a new covenant with humanity (Gen. 12.1–3;

Hafemann 61–62). God’s intention for humanity may be seen in the pronouncement of the original Adamic covenant through Abraham of possessing the land and multiplying the seed (Barstad 30; Gen. 15.4–5; 17.4–14; Hafemann 71, 77, 85, 90). Scripture gives examples of evangelism to foreigners inviting them into the family of God through healing, slavery, marriage, and circumcision (Gen. 16.1–2; 19.12; 30.3–5; 34.8–17; 41.50–52; Exod. 2.21–22).

There were also people of foreign nations that decided to join the Israelites (Gen. 12.5; Exod. 12.38; Josh. 9.9–27). Therefore, the Abrahamic covenant “increase” includes other nations, and God made special provision for them to be included in the family of God (Coogan 274; Deut. 29.10–15; Jeffers 217–218). There were special blessings for those who helped the Israelite cause (Josh. 6.25; Dongell and Walls 52). God was made known to foreigners by the character of God’s people and the choice of the foreigner to be a part of the Israelites (Coogan 274; Jeffers 217–218; Ruth 1.16). God was made known to foreign generals by the blessings God was willing to make toward them (2 Kings 5.1–10). God also made himself known to foreigners through evangelistic prophets such as Moses and Elisha (Exod. 5.1–11.10; 2 Kings 5.10). Exodus describes a mixed multitude traveling with the Israelites (Exod. 12.28). Some of the multitude were Egyptians that had intermarried with Israelites, while others were Semites who found their way to Egypt (Evans and Porter 684–685; Lev. 24.10). Others were evangelized through their imprisonment as a spoil of war; some of these were employed in the *corvée* (1 Kings 5.1–6). The main form of evangelism throughout the Old Testament was through signs and wonders.

The Bible also sets the parameters of a covenant people which is a lifelong pursuit, whether it be forty years in the desert or four hundred years held captive in Egypt (Kerr 261–262; Gen. 15.13; Num. 14.34). Spreading the story of God’s intention for humanity through the Messiah and the constant being in discipleship toward God in a covenant relationship were lifelong commitments (Green Kindle loc. 780; Kerr 261–62; Olson 112, 119; Dongell and Walls 40). The overall evangelistic Gospel message is the story of God creating the universe with humanity being at the apex of the creation story, giving the garden bliss to humanity, making a relationship covenant with humanity, the fall of humanity, the restorative efforts of God toward humanity, the story of Christ, human response to those stories, and the new community of Christ followers (Green 257, 266; Green Kindle loc. 748, 757, 780; Kerr 151, 261). In short, evangelism is the story of these events where God is seeking to holistically restore humanity to the intended relationship they departed from, which includes a lifelong response of love toward God and neighbor (Green Loc 748, 757, 780; Kerr 193, 261).

Some objections found in the Old Testament toward evangelism may have come from the idea of being God’s chosen people. This is most evident in Deuteronomy 14.2.

For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. (Deut. 14.2 NAS)

כִּי עַם קָדוֹשׁ אַתָּה לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ וַיִּבְחַר בְּךָ יְהוָה לְהִנָּחֵל לְוָלוֹ לְעַם סִגְלָה מִכָּל הָעַמִּים

אֲשֶׁר עַל־פְּנֵי הָאָדָמָה: ס

(Deut. 14.2 WTT)

The support for this thought is derived from three words in this scripture. The first is the word chosen which gives us the understanding that they were picked out of all the other nations. The word chosen also gives the reader the idea that the other nations simply are not chosen. The second word is possession, which gives the reader the idea that this Nation is God's special possession. The word possession also gives the idea of who is not God's possession. The third word is "above" more specifically *עַל-פָּנָי* "Above the face" which implies that the Israelites will be over the other nations because of God's choice. When this verse is read along with verses such as Exodus 19.6, it is easy to see how the chosen group may feel the message was exclusive to them. Furthermore, it would explain why the chosen group would want the message to stay with them.

“‘And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.” (Exod. 19.6 NAS)

The above scripture seems to bestow upon the Israelite Nation a sense of entitlement setting them apart from other nations.

The book of Jonah walks the reader through the elitist mind of a Hebrew prophet that values the Hebrew nation and despises a repentant foreign nation. It is not only that the Israelite nation was the chosen by God, but a great fear to keep themselves pure for God. The Israelites knew the other nations had layered sin upon sin encouraging God's wrath upon themselves, and the Israelites wanted no part of God's wrath coming upon them (Brown 146; Carson et al. 217; Hoerth 221–222). The theological objections to evangelism might be seen easier through the lens of early prayers from the Jewish Siddur (Singer 21).

AHAVAT OLAM

אהבת עולם
 בית ישראל עמו אהבת,
 תורה ומצוות,
 חקים ומשפטים, אותנו למדת.
 על פה יי אלקינו,
 בקרבנו ובקומנו
 נשיח ברחמיך,
 ונשמח בדברי תורתך
 ובמצותיך לעולם ועד.
 כי הם חיינו וארך ימינו
 ובהם נהנה יומם ולילת.
 ואמרתך
 אל תסיר ממנו לעולמים.
 ברוך אתה, יי,
 אהב עמו ישראל.

EVERLASTING LOVE You offered Your people Israel
 by teaching us Torah and mitzvot, laws and precepts.
 Therefore, Adonai our God,
 when we lie down and when we rise up,
 we will meditate on Your laws and Your commandments.
 We will rejoice in Your Torah for ever.
 Day and night we will reflect on them
 for they are our life and doing them lengthens our days.
 Never remove Your love from us.
 Praise to You, Adonai, who loves Your people Israel.
 ברוך אתה, יי, אהב עמו ישראל.
 Baruch atah, Adonai, ohev amo Yisrael.

The Siddur prayers and song seem to express the idea that God was for the Jewish people alone because they were handed the Torah (Singer 21).

Biblical Foundations for Technology in the Old Testament

Multiple instances exist where technology advances the people and sometimes for religious purposes. Technology is not evil, as some have proposed through the lens of Cain’s curse, motives, and advances (Wilcox 1). Technology is also not evil simply because it has directional intent as Schuurman has stated (14–20). Rather, the intent by the user can be good or evil, but the technology has no say so in the matter (Morrow 333;

Radder 896–98). Technology is morally neutral. The motivations of man determine whether technology is used for evil purposes or for the spread of the Gospel (Morrow 333; Radder 896–98). In the Greek roots of the word, it referred to the treatment of an art, and only since the nineteenth century has technology been relegated to primarily a mechanical or industrial definition (Schuurman 13). If one uses the modern definition of technology which deals with mechanical and industrial advances, one can see how the Bible is full of technology advances.

Through the Old Testament, people began to focus on development of city planning and building by Cain at the time of nomads (Bartholomew and Goheen 48; Gen. 4.17). New improvements in the making and use of Harps and flutes began to develop (Gen. 4.20–21; Jer. 48.36). Societies began to use complex advanced instruments like trumpets for signaling (Num. 10.1–10). Craft masters who teach others in the trade of bronze making and iron started to distribute their knowledge (Coogan 182; Elton 111, 116;). Also, new improvements in the forging of the tools for a specific function started to show up in tribes and social groups (Gen. 4.22). The Old Testament also includes the building of complex structures such as Noah's Arc and the Tower of Babel (Coogan 17–18; Gen. 6.13–16; 11.4). The Tower of Babel was a complex structure where people worked together for a common project and goal (Coogan 17–18; Gen. 11.4). The Tower of Babel could be said to mimic a modern industrial building project or manufacturing process (Coogan 17–18; Gen. 11.4). Furthermore, there were advances in building technology that allowed for taller structures (Coogan 17–18; Gen. 11.3; Deut. 1.28).

Technology advances in places of worship from trees, to mountains, to movable tents, to the temple (Murphy, 65, 98, 100–102, 107, 154). There are advances in how

tents are held down using tent pegs (Judg. 4.21). Tribes and social groups begin a movement from nomadic worship to worship that requires complex structures. There are advances in technology in civic engineering through the digging of wells to expand territories (Gen. 21.19; 26.17–23). In Exodus, the Lord is the one who gives wisdom and knowledge in all forms of workmanship and artistic work (Coogan 73; Exod. 31.3–5). Moses was given the ability to cut precious stones and carve wood, and mold gold, silver, and bronze (Exod. 31.3–5; 32.2–4). God certainly would not give Moses an evil talent with technological advances. These same talents may have been attributed to Tubal-Cain with bronze and Iron in the land of Nod, yet here it is the Lord that gives Moses the wisdom to work with metals (Coogan 145–47, 182; Gen. 4.22; Exod. 31.3–5). There are also references to God Himself as a refiner and tester of metals making reference to how God refines his followers (Isa. 1.25; 48.10; Jer. 6.27–30; Mal. 3.2) Therefore, it is not the technological advance of working with metals that may be deemed evil but rather the intent of the heart of the crafter.

In 2 Chronicles, self-pride in the advancements of technology was what was deemed evil by the Lord, not the advances themselves (2 Chron. 26.16). Jerusalem and the surrounding areas had many engineers in the crafting of new technologies in warfare that would have used pulleys and slings (Tushingham 56–67; 2 Chron. 26.14–15). There is a progression and reliance on technology as the people move from nomad, to horseback riders, to chariots to defend cities and mount attacks (Ps. 20.7). Siege ramps, bronze walls, more accurate bows and arrows all gave evidence to technology advances in military (Elton 95, 111; Tushingham 56–67). Social groups began to rely on the wheel and axle which could be used for shipping, grinding of grain, and building projects even

though the original purpose may have been for war (McLuhan and Lapham 179–87; Ps. 20.7; Prov. 20.26). Even though technology seems to grow in times of war eventually, it moves into the domestic avenues of the people (Collins and Harlow 314; McLuhan and Lapham 179–87; Tushingam 47–67). This progression from war to domestic technology advances is best seen in the peoples repurposing war tools into garden tools (Collins and Harlow 313–14; Isa. 2.4). There are also domestic advances in technology using animals with yokes worn to pull heavy carts or farm the land (Collins and Harlow 313; Evans and Porter 305; McLuhan and Lapham 179–87;). People move from being foragers to using storage facilities (Collins and Harlow 1256; Tushingam 59; Gen. 41.47–49).

Technology also advances in artistic fields such as looming and spindle weaving (Prov. 31.19). There are improvements in pottery and how pottery is cured through hot ovens (Hos. 7.4, 7; Dan. 3.23; Tushingam 47–59). There are technological improvements in dyes for clothing, a way for individuals to express their rank and identity in society (Jeffers 27–28; McLuhan and Lapham 119–20; Prov. 13.20–22). There are references to improvements in rug making utilizing a weaver’s loom (Job 7.6). There is also an establishment of where trade, laws, and meetings happen (Prov. 31.23–24). Libraries are established for the government enhancing and centralizing civic affairs of government (Elton; McLuhan and Lapham 172; Ezra 6.1). Writing advances from stone to scroll and a movement from hieroglyphics to alphabet (Millard, 905–911; Coogan 42; McLuhan and Lapham 158–59, 171–72). There are also technological advances in the languages themselves (Coogan 47, 277). There is movement from oral language, to Ugaritic, to non-vowel Hebrew, to Masoretic, to the trade Greek language in the Old Testament caused by either precision required in speech or conquest by invading rulers

(Evans and Porter 459–64, 468–70, 474). There are technological advances in medicine as the people use poultice of figs to heal boils (2 Kings 20.7; Isa. 38.21).

The scriptures make references to doctors applying mastery of technological advances in medicine (2 Chron. 16.12; Jer. 8.22). There is also evidence in the scriptures of embalming and preserving of the dead (Gen. 50.2, 26). Technology improves living conditions with the introduction of aqueducts, reservoirs, and irrigation (2 Kings 18.17; 20.20; 2 Chron. 32.20; Eccles. 2.4–6; Isa. 7.3; 36.2). Social groups began to improve technology with regard to taking measurements (Currid 887–90; Jeffers 9, 148, 150). Therefore, technology is not evil, it is a central part of our being to subdue the earth (Gen. 1.28). The intentions of the user of the technology are where the moral divide begins, not the tools that help shape the society in which people live. Moses proclaims the “I Am” God is greater than all the Egyptian gods. God is therefore the God over all, including technology. The “I am” proclamation by God of who He is, is the proclamation that He is God over all things (Exod. 3.13–15).

Biblical foundations for objections to technology use in the Old Testament revolve around the premise that as humanity’s knowledge increased and humanity united, humanity set its purpose on evil (Gen. 11.1–9). Humanity’s knowledge increased in the area of metallurgy which it used for the purpose of war (Gen. 4.22). Wisdom not meant for man was given by the fallen angels (Gen. 6.1–4). Therefore, God had to limit the age of humanity to limit the possible destruction it could cause (Gen. 6.1–4; Jub. 4.15; 5.1; 1 Enoch 6.1; 13.11). Humanity, because of its fallen nature, perverts technology into weapons of evil.

Biblical Foundations for Evangelism in the New Testament

Evangelism and discipleship make up the great commission of Jesus to his followers (Matt. 28.19; Mark 16.15). Evangelism and discipleship are tenets of belief widely held in most Christian denominations. Jesus gives a strong rebuke to those who avoid this commission and a strong encouragement to those who obey the commission (Matt. 5.12–16). The scripture makes clear that the Gospel is to be made known to those who have not heard the message by those who have heard the message (Col. 1.27). Furthermore, the Gospel is to be pronounced to “every” human (Col. 1.28). How can this happen if the only medium for Gospel is inside the “marketplace” of the church? The unchurched are not meeting in the “marketplace” of the “brick and mortar” church to hear the message. In the New Testament, John the Baptist’s “marketplace” was preaching to the new believers by the waterside (John 3.23). Jesus’ “marketplace” was traveling from town to town preaching the Gospel message (Luke 8.1). Churches began to meet in houses discipling each other (Acts 2.2). The Gospel was proclaimed in the sinner’s house as well as the Pharisee’s (Matt. 9.10–11; Luke 14.1). The Gospel was proclaimed to the poor, the brokenhearted, the captive, the bruised, and the beaten (Luke 4.18). The Gospel was preached to the wealthy, the learned, and the kings (Matt. 19.16–22; John 3.1–5; Acts 26.28). This gospel of Jesus Christ should be proclaimed to the ends of the earth by all possible means (Acts 1.8; 17.22–30). Paul introduced the Gospel to the people of Athens by speaking through their understanding of the gods (Acts 17.22–30). The Gospel message moved from the spoken tongue to the epistles spreading through the Greek churches. The mission of the Disciples was to spread this Gospel as eyewitnesses testifying to what they knew to be the truth of Christ the Messiah (Luke 1.2).

One biblical foundation for an objection to evangelism in the New Testament seems to revolve around wasting the gospel message on unresponsive people to God's love (Matt. 7.6; 10.14). Another objection is that Christians should not waste their time on those that cause division (Tit. 3.10). Another objection may revolve around a fear of false prophets infiltrating the ranks for Christians (Matt. 24.36). However, for the Jewish people resistance to evangelism seems to revolve around the idea of being God's chosen people, the seed of Abraham (John 8.39). However, before these excuses become relevant, the command of Jesus to "go and preach the Gospel to all creation" trumps any resistance to limit the audience of the Gospel message (Mark 16.15).

Biblical Foundations for Technology use in the New Testament

In the New Testament, there are references to technology improvements in wine production which includes a movement from pressing the wine through the feet of the vintner toward using a press with screws (Rev. 14.19–20; 19.15). Technological improvements are seen in perfume, refining wine, distilling fragrance, and oil for lamps (Matt. 25.3–11; 26.6–8; Mark 4.21; Luke 8.16; 11.33). The centrality of government and law has moved from the city gates to the religious center—the Temple (Mark 14.43–50; Luke 22.47–53; John 18.3–12). Paul the Apostle, the writer of much of the doctrine in the New Testament through the epistles, used modern technology in mending and making tents to support his ministry (Acts 18.3; 2 Cor. 5.1). Technological advances are found in civic government requiring the census of the entire Roman government (Luke 2.1–5). There are technological advancements in agriculture through storage devices, winnowing the grain, bits for horses, fishing nets, and screws to press the wine. Advancements in writing can be seen from the tablet of Zacharias to the parchments used in Timothy

(Millard 905–911; Luke 1.63; 2 Tim. 4.13). Weapons such as swords with double edges are referred to metaphorically in scripture (Elton 111, 116; Heb. 4.12). Advanced musical instruments were used to rally forces for battle (1 Cor. 14.8; 1 Thess. 4.16). The scriptures also witness to advances in tables, pottery, and dinnerware (Coogan 11, 1, 18, 108, 110, 115–17, 122–23, 153, 184, 186, 189–90, 233, 278). There are advancements in medicine and professionals in the field of medicine. In the New Testament there is a movement from the trade of nomads toward using common coins throughout the Roman Empire and special Temple coins within the Herod's Temple (Collins and Harlow 1285, 1294). The transition from the Old Testament to the New Testament reveals a movement from the scattered languages in local provinces to trade Greek; then there is a transition to formal Greek (Coogan 277; Evans and Porter 468–70, 474; Murphy 97, 102–103, 119, 341, 412, 427). The New Testament makes it clear that advancing in technology is just a natural progression of life.

The greatest obstacle to the biblical foundation for technology use seems to come from John 15.19. Some evangelists may take this scripture to mean they should avoid the new technologies that distract people from the core message. The issue with this approach is the church moves more into irrelevance as it take the approach to bury its head in the sand toward technology as the generation passes by without the church. Jesus preaches against this reasoning when proclaiming a word about “new wineskins.”

And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new wine will burst the skins, and it will be spilled out, and the skins will be ruined. "But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. "And no one, after drinking old *wine* wishes for new; for he says, 'The old is good *enough*.'" (Luke 5.37–39 NAS)

Another objection may stem from the privacy issues of media, for example a person verbally confessing sins confides in the one they are confessing to. However, a video confession is recorded and Internet protocol addresses are logged giving the general location of the individual (Peters 515). Today, it seems that people are less concerned about their private lives being recorded and categorized. This phenomenon is because as communities use technology and build trust in the online communities they are in (Levine 400). The consumer becomes more comfortable with using those technologies, ignoring the data that is logged about their private purchases. Basically, as long as the company fulfills its digital contract and the user finds benefit through the transaction the “unknown use” of their data is unimportant to them (Levine 400).

Biblical Foundations for Technology use in Social Evangelism

Technology in social evangelism is difficult to see in scripture on the surface, but when two areas appear with deeper examination. The biblical foundation for technology in social evangelism seems to revolve around two main areas roads and social welfare.

Roads in the New Testament help move the method of proclamation from the temple to the traveling preacher. The crowds that followed Christ expose how the Gospel message spread through the cities and the different cities. The roads also facilitated the distribution of the message by the crowds who heard the message and then returned to their various places. Roads were utilized by those who traveled and had an experience on the various roads with Jesus (Luke 24.13–35; Acts 9.3–9). After Jesus’ resurrection, Paul had four missionary journeys to various cities within the Roman Empire spreading the gospel (Acts 13–14, 16–18, 19–20, 20.36–38). Roads throughout the empire made travel easier and allowed the Gospel message to be spread. Michael Green says that through the

ease of trade through roman roads helped “social interchange” which helped spread the message (32–33). One tomb of a merchant exposes that some merchants traveled no less than seventy-two times to Rome (Green 33). Therefore, even though the roads built by Rome were made for strategic purposes and social warfare, they were utilized by the first Christians to spread the message with ease (Ferguson 22, 82).

The Roman cities strived at appeasing their citizens. They had gladiator games, social baths, open markets, and temple worship. All of these buildings were centers of communication for the Roman populous. These centers of communication were where ideas, rumors, philosophy, and business were discussed. These meeting places were fertile ground for a religion whose foundations were built around “loving fellowship” (Green 250, 257). Through these social centers, social values and ideas were shared (Resseguie 69). Roman rulers took pride in building social centers that shared values (Ferguson 29). The social centers enhanced social identities such as neighborhoods, associations, occupations, and religious cults (Ferguson 68). Rabban Gamaliel would say of the empire that it exist because of “tolls, bathhouses, theatres and crop taxes” (Ferguson 96).

The Gospel began to spread from these social centers to house churches. There are examples of house churches throughout scripture. These house churches are usually hosted by either a female or a couple. Since the home often establishes the status of the person, the culture of honor and shame helped foster fellowship in the early Christian churches. The Christian church was very appealing to woman because they were able to take a lead role in a house church (Green 169). Furthermore, because the life of the

individual matched the confession of the believer, it gave credibility to the faith (Green 282). Slaves, freedmen, women, and men were allowed to worship together (Green 322).

Theological Foundations

Evangelism

There has been a long tradition of evangelism in the Christian faith. This section explores tradition evangelism from the second temple period to modern scholarship to establish the theological foundation for evangelism in the Judeo-Christian faith. Among scholars, the majority affirm that the Jewish faith was a missionary faith to varying degrees based on the message of monotheism, national privilege, and spiritual morality (McKnight 2). Since Christianity rose out from the Jewish faith, that same emphasis continued with more emphasis on conversion than national privilege. G. F. Moore states that the passion of the Jewish religion was to establish a future engagement of the one true religion and obedience to the one true God (323–24). Jesus arose on the scene in a world where the Jewish ideology had an obligation to make known to the whole gentile world the one true God of the Jewish faith. The mission of first century Christians was to proclaim the Gospel (Matt. 28.19). Jesus does not ask his disciples to manufacture what they may have seen but for the community of the faithful to proclaim what they remember of Christ (Oden 330). The New Testament scriptures were based on those memories and a shared consensus about the reports of Jesus the Christ (Oden 328–30). This memory of Christ led to the Gospels being written and the understandings of Christ proclaimed through the epistles throughout the Roman Empire (Oden 221). Throughout Christian history, there is an expansion of the Gospel because of the prime directive of Jesus (Matt. 28.19). This prime directive led to distributions of letters, the compiling of

the New Testament, scholastic theological training, the building of universities, the building of hospitals, the building of cathedrals, the building of monasteries, and the translation of the message of Christ in many languages (Olson, 311). There were also increases in evangelism through visual means such as art and iconography (Bigham 325–41; Carr 127–51). From the preaching of Paul about an unknown God to the renaissance age to the preaching of Jonathan Edwards at the gravesite of an unsaved man, evangelism has paved its way through history through the hearts of the literate and illiterate alike (Acts 17.22–31; Marsden 159–69). As the masses became more literate, people like Paul, Jerome, Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp of Smyrna, Papias of Hierapolis, Irenaeus of Lions, Clement of Alexandria, Origen of Alexandria, Athanasius of Alexandria, Cappadocian fathers, John Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, Maximus the Confessor, Tertullian, Cyprian of Carthage, Hilary of Poitiers, Ambrose of Milan, Augustine of Hippo, and Pope Gregory the Great spread the Gospel far and wide (Dunn 715–40; Ford 240–57; Grant 137–48). The Gospel was spread through preaching to prisoners (Dunn 715–40). The Gospel was spread by conquest through the Christian Crusades ordered by the Pope (Shapiro 725–47; Hastings 137–38).

While the Gospel message being spread has had many obstacles, there have been many opportunities. One of those opportunities of spreading the Gospel had to do with Alexander the Great conquering the known world and making a common language for the people (Coogan 277; Frend 36–37; Hastings 19, 42, 44; Thomas 61–81). Roman conquest united warring Greek factions, creating a unified people under the common language of Alexander's Greek language (Evans and Porter 468–70, 474). Christianity spoke in the same Greek common language as education, philosophy, and culture of the

day unlike the competing religions of that time period (Evans and Porter 468–70). Furthermore, because of the diaspora of the Jews due to Tiberius, many Synagogues were left vacant for Christians to have a place of worship (Evans and Porter 284–94). Another opportunity in church history is the martyrdom of the early Christians. because the people believed in Christ so fervently that they were willing to die for their belief (Frend vii, 12–17). Many early Christians believed that Martyrdom was the second baptism that glorified the body (Frend 364; Kim 356; Luter 721). This thought of Martyrdom would cause Ignatius to proclaim, “Allow me to be eaten by the beast, through whom I attain to God. I am God’s wheat, and I am ground by the teeth of wild beasts that I may be found pure bread of Christ” (Ignatius Rom. 4.1).

Martyrdom convinced witnesses of Christianity’s truth because of the steadfastness of the martyr while facing certain death (Ferguson 608, 617; Tyson 43, 54–55). This evangelism through martyrdom was best expressed by Tertullian’s proclamation “the blood of Christians is seed of the church” (Ferguson 608; Apology 50). Furthermore, in the Roman Empire, martyrdom was a public death that piqued the interest of on-lookers toward Christianity (Ferguson 608). The mass appeal of Christianity then and now is the “triumph over death and a happy afterlife” and a “high moral standard” for the faithful (Ferguson 618; Hastings 69, 110).

As history marched forward other opportunities in evangelism developed. One of those opportunities had to do with the Bible being translated into many languages (Coogan 277; Hastings 246–47). Opportunities arose in the first and second awakenings which produced circuit riders to spread the Gospel message to the New World (Hastings 423, 429–31; Snyder 1–4, 21, 31–38, 54; Tyson 318–19, 350). Also, opportunities in

evangelism came in new church buildings and then transformed to house churches that reach people in the midst of even the communist countries of today (Green 318–22; 329–38; Tyson 350). Evangelism through the Christian faith has found success in social holiness and communal fellowship (Collins and Tyson 10–11, 16, 38, 78, 91, 110–111). The Christian experience has always been a relational experience, a communal growth and experience (Collins and Tyson 10–11, 16, 38, 78, 91, 110–111). From the public Martyrdom of Christians, open air preaching to the masses, preaching in the Synagogues of the Jews, visitations of the sick, Christian meetings in homes, small group studies, and new opportunities for the outcast to participate in ministry, the Christian message has always been a social experience in evangelism (Bonhoeffer 8–9, 11, 14, 24–25, 45–48, 72, 75, 76). This would lead the theologian Johnathan Edwards to state the people should “make a business of proclaiming on the house tops, with our mouths, holy and eminent acts and exercises of our hearts” (qtd. in Marsden 289–90). The force behind this type of evangelism to the masses is a person could finally be delivered from guilt and shame. The individual could be reconciled to God in fulfillment of all the Old Testament prophecies proven by the miracles God sends to his followers (Green; Snyder 144–46). Luther would come to believe that the “Christian life was to be lived within a community of believers” (Gonzalez 52–53, 68–69). Kerr states that Luther believed “a man does not live for himself alone in this mortal body to work for it alone, but he lives also for all men on earth” (151). The theologian Calvin would even say that it was the Christian’s duty “to make the civil government conform to the law of God” (qtd. in Gonzalez 86). Albrecht Ritschl believed that the Christian community was the “object of God’s love” and that community filled with God’s love was the solution to all of the Earth’s problems (Green

287; Kerr 227). John Wesley would believe the “world is his parish.” And so he spread the gospel message through social networks called class meetings, bands, open air preaching, and circuit riders (Gonzalez 270–71, 273). Walter Rauschenbusch states “that the Bible itself is dominated by social concern, and that anything less in modern Christianity is a mark of defection from the very source of Christian faith itself” (Green 287; Kerr 257–58). Pope John Paul XXIII would state “may God transform all men into witnesses of truth, justice and brotherly love” (qtd. in Kerr 361). The evangelist Billy Graham would revitalize Christianity through tent revivals and stadium preaching (Gonzalez 483). Billy Graham understood that the message of the cross was for everyone (Gonzalez 483).

There are obviously subtle theological objections to evangelism such as syncretism. However, it seems theological objections to evangelism are best understood through the isolationist Christian communities. One objection that seems to limit the Hutterite community’s evangelism seems to revolve around outsiders refusing to share their goods with the community (Friedmann 147). The Hutterites believe that all goods are shared and there are few that will agree to such an assertion (Friedmann 147). It is possible the Hutterites base this policy that isolates them through the lens of scripture Acts 4.32–35. Another barrier deals with the focus on the German language typically foreign to outsiders of the community (Sterzuk and Nelson 377). Another reason for the isolation seems to result from a strong sense of family, possibly fear of imperialism because of the persecution during Nazi Germany or maybe just a love for their ancestry (Goossen 135–36). Whether the fear resides in absorbing practices of other religions

while evangelizing or a fear of losing identity, the truth remains that the Gospel is a relational story deeply embedded in evangelism.

Theological Foundations for Technology

Throughout history, Christians have taken advantage of technological advances to spread the gospel message of Christ. Technological advances in language have moved the scriptures through oral transmission to an elect people, to Ugaritic which has no vowels, to non-vowel Hebrew, to Biblical Hebrew, to the common trade form of Greek for the known world (Evans and Porter 459–64, 468–70, 474). The additions of vowels into the Hebrew script helped make the reading of the text more precise (Coogan 47; Evans and Porter 459–64). The transition to Greek made the universal language common to all people and the Greek was much more precise a language than the originating languages of Hebrew in the Old Testament writings (Millard 905–11; Coogan 47, 277; Evans and Porter 459–64, 468–70; Murphy; Wallace 18–21). Aeolic, Doric, Ionic and Attic Greek languages were the product of geography and politics (Coogan 278; Evans and Porter 468–70, 474; Wallace 18). Alexander the Great united the languages into koine Greek, the language of the people (Coogan 277; Evans and Porter 468–40; Murphy; Wallace 18–19). This common language allowed the Old and the New Testament to be written in the universal language which had more precise meaning than the Hebrew which combined Semitic style, lexical stock, and syntax (Coogan 277; Evans and Porter 459–64; Wallace 18–22). While Hebrew was isolated to the Hebraic Jews and culturally tied to one people, koine Greek was spoken throughout the Mediterranean region and beyond to Jew and Gentile alike (Coogan 277; Evans and Porter 459–64, 468–70, 474; Murphy; Wallace 18).

As the spoken language developed, the written language advanced into a style that often-addressed Christians through letters and the historical accounts of Jesus, the Christ (Coogan 277). Different than language, writing is a tool to convey messages to the populace and is “fundamentally external and material in its origins and its dependence on technology” (Millard 905–11; Coogan 47, 277; Miller). Plato would believe that the elite would control the masses through writing (Miller). The technology of writing has moved from writing on stone in hieroglyphics to responsive programming code in computers (Coogan 19; Miller). For instance, Karl Marx provided the “Characteristics of class, economic structure, and culture” through writing resulting in Communism (Miller). Historically, when oppressive governing parties would come into power, they made it a priority to burn all the writings of opposing philosophies (Millard 905–11; Cressy 359; Knoll 73–78; Suhelmi 166–12). Then the oppressive power uses the tool of writing to rewrite history to support the philosophy of the dictatorship and use propaganda to control the masses (Millard 905–11; Behreandt 33–39; Jantzen 968–71). As writing tools developed, writing became the standard mode of education which developed schools (Millard 905–11; Ferguson 14; Olofsson 167–78). Schools could be said to end the Dark Ages between 500 AD and 1000 AD (Olofsson 167–78). The first Christian schools focusing on language were established by bishops in 1150 AD beginning the Renaissance Age (Olofsson 167–178).

The offspring of the Exodus Israelites moved into the promised land of Canaan, a land that had developed an alphabet in the late bronze age about the time of their arrival (Coogan 42; Mazar 238). This development can be seen in the difference in writing platforms from the Akkadian letter written on a clay tablet in the thirteen century B.C.E,

to the Ugarit Papyrus Anastasi I to the writings in the Iron Age through the Lachish letters (Millard 905–11; Mazar 282, 286, 361–62, 501). As the language developed, professional writers would spread the Israelite message of this God through precise language (Coogan 47; Mazar 224). Writing became more precise because of the unified Greek of Alexander the Great, but it was not easily dispersed through the empire (Millard 905–911; Evans and Porter 468–70, 474; Mazar 224; Murphy). The Romans expanded territories through conquest, but what was lacking is the ability to quickly copy material. Scribes were limited in their ability to mass produce documents (Cole 327–30). This period of time after the fall of the Roman Empire is known as the dark ages, the age where there was limited transfer of knowledge. One invention which helped pull the Europe out of the Dark Ages was the printing press with movable parts (Cole 327–30; Dittmar 1133; Sweet 5). Christianity utilized the printing press to spread the Gospel with the first Bibles coming of the press in 1439 (Sweet 4). Luther's reformation could not have occurred without the printing press sending his message of Christ throughout the land to the masses (Cole 327–30). Theologians, such as John Wesley, recognized the power of the printing press and used it to spread the message of Christ, Christian thought, and apologetics to the masses (Raymond 317–28). Today, many mainline Christian denominations use magazines, pamphlets, tracts, social media, websites, and chat servers to spread the message of God (Coffman 53–75; Zylstra 17–19). The new printing press is the internet where knowledge can be transferred over large distances instantaneously (Zylstra 17–19). The theological foundation for internet and social media use in evangelism can be found in the reformers use of the printing press in the past (Coffman 53–75; Zylstra 17–19). As new technologies developed, theologians have made it a habit

of capitalizing on new avenues to evangelize the masses (Coffman 53–75; Zylstra 17–19).

Roads were a technological advancement that enabled trade routes which dispersed the philosophies of tradesman across the Mediterranean (Green 32–33; McLuhan and Lapham 90–96; Mazar 336). As the roads developed and made it easier for trade, taxation, open markets, art, and philosophies to spread, the message of the Jewish nation went out to the many cities of the Roman Empire (Coogan 73, 189–90, 356). As grander projects were undertaken by Herod, craftsmen came from all around learning about the philosophies of the Israelites and took these thoughts back home with them (Mazar 379, 410, 448, 450, 501). When the Israelite diaspora occurred because of the Roman Emperor Claudius, the Jews took with them their beliefs to other cities spreading the ideology of one true God (Acts 18.2). Jews in the Diaspora translated their scriptures into Greek (Evans and Porter 284–94, 468–70; Jeffers 277; Murphy; Pearson 164; Rajak 1).

Through the Dark Ages and into the Renaissance, icons were used to teach the illiterate about Christ, salvation offered through Christ, the Saints, and Mary the mother of God (Chadwick 112, 115, 120; Kirk, 119; Lagen 270). The icons helped people feel close to God, and the images crossed cultural barriers and language barriers (Chadwick 115; Kirk 120). Icons introduce and tell a story through imagery (Bonhoeffer 18; Kallis 729). The Bible is full of metaphors that lend themselves to imagery in the reader's mind (Kerr 230–31). Icons draw those images out of language to be viewed by the literate and the illiterate. It might be said that one simply looks at the image of God and feels His presence (Bonhoeffer 18; Chadwick 115). Icons help believers to stay in the dynamic state

of salvation rather than fall into a completed state of a past commitment (Kirk 124). The depth and meaning of icons were assigned value by the believer (Kirk 126). This means that people of different spiritual depth would receive the icon differently (Kirk 126). Therefore, icons transcend the spiritual place of the viewer and have meaning for all who view the icon (Kirk 126). Images help engage the senses into the story of Christ, the compassion of Christ, the faithful saints, and the conquest of Christ (Green Loc 748, 757, 780; Kirk 128). Images are made with the intent to directionally push the seeker and the believer toward deeper spiritual belonging (Kirk 129–30). It was a way of engaging the senses (Lange 159). Icons engage the eyes and foster emotions in the seeker and the believer (Lange, 159). Other elements that added to the worship experience included incense which engages the sense of smell in believers creating memories of ancient times (Lange 159). The smells of worship draw seekers into fellowship like the smells of cuisine draws the hungry into a restaurant. The believers ate communion meals to taste the manna of fellowship, large cathedrals to the awe and majesty of God (Lange 158–60; Snyder 59, 61).

Sounds also draw people into the worship experience from the call to worship bell of Catholic cathedrals to the tent revivals with live concerts attracting seekers and believers alike. Music has been around for years drawing people into the worship experience from the ancient tribal drums celebrating a good harvest to the early Christians incorporating music in their fellowship meetings introduced to them from the Greek culture (Lockyer Jr. 3–5). In fact, references to music, praises and singing trump prayer almost two to one throughout the Bible (Lockyer Jr. 6–11). Clement of Alexandria saw the power of music in evangelizing exclaiming “we cultivate our fields with

praising” (qtd. in Lockyer Jr. 137). Jon Has would state “We not only preach the Gospel from the pulpit, but also by our hymns” (qtd. in Lockyer Jr. 141). Martin Luther would state “music drives away the devil and makes people happy” (qtd. in Lockyer Jr. 143–44). John Calvin believed that nothing was more able to “bend the moral of men” than the power of music (qtd. in Lockyer Jr. 146). All of these approaches connect the believer to the memory of God (Lange 159). This idea is driven home by Susan Willobee’s assertion that a good sermon “engages all the senses” drawing the hearers into the established sensory fixtures of the worship experience (23, 37). This whole experience was the worship experience for the believer in the mind of the church fathers and a means of grace drawing new people into fellowship (Lange 158–60).

The marketplace or contact points for evangelism have changed over the years. Through the books of Genesis and Exodus, God evangelizes men near trees, on top of mountains, and through burning bushes, through plagues toward the oppressive, through flames of fire at night, and by the opening of the earth to swallow the rebellious (Gen. 18.4, 8; 21.33; Exod. 3.1; 3.12; 4.27; 13.2; 19.14). The new marketplace became a movable tabernacle where God could wonder with His people (Exod. 21.1; Snyder 37–38). Then the marketplace became the temple in Jerusalem built for God (1 Sam. 3.3; Neh. 6.10; Matt. 21.12). God’s elect traveled for miles to sacrifice at the temple, to handle legal proceedings, and to present their children at the temple for a blessing (Num. 9.10; Gen. 34.20; 1 Sam. 2.21–22; Matt. 26.2). The marketplace of evangelism then shifted to many house churches throughout the Roman Empire (Banks 32, 192). The marketplace of evangelism moved from traditions of isolated families to families of God that transcended race, color, sex, and age (Banks 54–55; 122–26). Then the marketplace

solidified in Church buildings built in each community across the known landscape supported by the government (Henderson 20). As people moved to the new world, ministers discovered they had to take the message to the frontier. The new marketplace became open air preaching outside of mines and circuit riding across America delivering the Gospel message (Brown 37, 81; Henderson 22, 26; Rudolf 96–97, 109). The marketplace for evangelism was often through facilities the church built such as hospitals, orphanages, food pantries, recovery programs, and prison ministries (Johnson 426; McDonald 6; Woodard 549–53). As the churches and facilities for recovery decline across the landscape of the United States, where is the modern market place to evangelize the seeking (Lipka)?

The theological objections to technology are best understood through the isolationist Christian communities. Some Amish communities take the aggressive action of shunning fellow Amish for joining a more progressive Amish community under the idea of destroying their traditional values (Petrovich 23–26). The Amish community structures its communities through the lens of three theological beliefs being “humble, separation from the ungodly world and salvation by faith” (Petrovich 24). It seems that technology falls under the category for the Amish of participating in the ungodly world because of the consequence of shunning as a direct reprisal for participating in more progressive communities (Petrovich 23–26).

Theological Foundations for Virtual Evangelism

Today, preachers use verbal imagery from the pulpit in order to “make present and appropriate” the message to the hearer (Craddock 51, 200). Billboard signs, church marque signs, crosses that adorn church buildings, pictures that line the hallways of

churches, allegory books such as *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and movies such as Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* or Robert Day's *Peter and Paul* are the modern form of icons that spread the message of Christ throughout the land (Collings 35; Loomis 151–55). The largest generation with the most potential for evangelism, Gen Z with 70 million children and teens, is continually moving toward a virtual experience (Barna 10, Twenge Kindle loc. 231, 232). Screen time has an adverse effect as well; studies show that the more that Gen Z spends on online media the more depressed they are (Twenge Kindle loc. 1119). Other studies show that the less people spend on Facebook the better their mental state (Twenge Kindle loc. 1135). There are even new phobias such as “nomophobia,” which is a fear of separation from their mobile device (Barna 15). In fact, teenagers check their cell phones for activity more than eight times a day (Twenge Kindle loc. 70). Fifty Seven percent of Gen Z spends a minimum of four hours a day on screen media (Barna 16). People are embracing virtual worlds through games like Minecraft and Second Life or laboratory work environments, such as SL (Bainbridge 472–73). Avatars are made by the user to fully immerse them into the virtual experience (Bainbridge 472). There are even virtual shopping experiences through websites like matterport (<https://my.matterport.com/show/?m=BpnrnqHX65V>). These websites allow the user to wear virtual reality headsets and walk through the shopping experience as they buy real items. What seems to be missing in these environments is the voice of the church into these virtual environments (Corts 63–65). What if youth could experience church through online gaming like through <https://www.godsquadchurch.com/> (Corts 63–65)? What if the lost could walk through the Salvation message through the individual's paradigm and spiritual dilemma like

through a mobile app such as in Appendix G? What if youth could walk through the Bible lands, while being immersed in the teachings of the Bible such as through <http://www.fullyawakened.org/> Minecraft servers (Corts 63–65)? What if online experience could enhance the community of faith in such a way that the Gospel message becomes more than Salvation, but also includes the life of Christ and the victory of Christ bringing back the art of storytelling in evangelism such as through communities in discord chat forums like “Lighthouse, Church of the Nazarene” <https://discord.gg/mvrYmnbUAd> or “Scripture Alone” <https://discord.gg/uG9zcQ7pjD> (Moon 8)?

What are the objections in virtual evangelism? One of the strongest objections to technology and virtual evangelism is that the twelve-billion-dollar pornography industry pours its resources into this avenue (Cutrer 66). Television was pornography industry’s main outlet with pay-per-view and Hollywood increasingly stretching the threshold of what is appropriate on television. Video gaming is over-taking Television and the pornography industry is seeing the opportunity (Bainbridge 472; Fernandez). The pornography industry has moved toward the most impressionable age groups through gaming with the likes of *Witcher 3*, *Dragon Age*, *Mass Effect 2*, *Grand Theft Auto V*, *God of War*, and *Second Life* (Corts 63–65; Hayse 68–70; Park; Prekert 438–39). Human sexuality has become so assessable online that people are choosing not to have real life intimate experiences with their partner (Twenge Loc 2911; 2915). The sexually explicit material in games normalizes extreme sexual behavior and objectifies humanity (Owens et al. 107–108). *Second Life* has taken pornography to a new level of sexual online partners with sexually enhanced parts and fantasy (Corts 63–65; Park). Virtual

games are even more seductive than normal pornography modes because of their ability to attach wild sex scenes as goals of the game (Corts, 63–65; Park). Another strong objection is that witchcraft is usually attached to games normalizing sorcery and evil in general at the earliest ages of online gamers such as Minecraft, World of Warcraft, Dungeons and Dragons, Far Cry, Witcher, Dragon Age and God of War (Ewell 435–39; Kirkland 230–39). The final objection is the church has largely been absent from the online gaming industry. Video games engage the art of storytelling on levels the church has lost over the years (Moon 8; Kirkland 230–31). The church is either ignorant of the possibilities of impacting lives in virtual realms, churches do not understand the concept, churches are unwilling to learn the concept of online evangelism, or congregations want to see real bodies in their church dismissing the impact of online communities (Braun 1468–470; Corts 63–65; Hayse 68–76). Since the church has been absent from its role in the online gaming industry, evil has had free reign in the virtual communities (Ewell 436–39; Kirkland 230–39).

Changing Landscape and Marketplace of Evangelism

The meeting place of God has adapted to the changing “marketplace” of the people. From trees, mountaintops, the wilderness tabernacle, Jerusalem temple, house churches, cathedrals, and circuit riders of the revival periods, God has met the people through the changing “marketplaces” of worship (Murphy 65, 98, 100–102, 107, 154). Could it be that God is still adapting to the changing environments of evangelism (Hayse 68–70)? God is still active in people’s lives. God has not abandoned humanity. Rather, God still engages people and will use the tools available to bring His children to reconciliation. However, it is humanity that has separated Christian action and Christian

reflection in mission (Bevans et al. xiii). Bevans states that if Christians only focus on the “Christian arena” they may miss the opportunities in missions to those outside the “Christian arena” (37). Moon asserts that there are different thinking patterns between oral learners and print learners (Moon 10). The mission has moved from geographical expansion toward digital expansion which has a greater chance of spreading the Gospel to the “ends of the Earth” (Hayse 68–70; Bevins et al. 195–97). Since fifty-four percent of students prefer oral learning, has the marketplace shifted learning through stories versus a set of rules from print in the church? Should not mission change its format for reaching the lost (Hayse 68–76)? Christianity has always been a religion with the future in mind, using the resources it has before it to minister to individuals and to the masses (Murphy 131, 133). In Christianity’s infancy, the apostles would use “Greek philosophies and Roman political structures” in order to spread its message across the Mediterranean; today is digital age of information and virtual relationships (Murphy 141). A new marketplace for building relationship and fellowship for Christians may be through online communities (Bevins et al., 232–35; Bilandzic 99; Maddix 10–14). People are shop, socialize, work, play and live life through online communities (Bainbridge 472–76; Maddix 10–14). Through online communities, people communicate their meaningful life experiences that help bond the communities together (Hayse 68–70; Maddix 10–14; Weick 24). People are valued within the communities as contributors in the group they are a part of (Maddix 10–14; Weick 30–31). When people are in these communities, a symbiotic relationship develops where people contribute to the community shaping it, while the community shapes the individual (Hayse 68–70; Maddix 10–14; Weick 34–35). It does not matter if the contributors are real, imagined, anonymous, or perceived,

contributors in the community are influenced by other contributors within the community (Hayse 68–70; Weick 38–39). Humanity is naturally driven to social relationships (Silverman Kindle loc. 100). Humans are social beings searching for communities they “trust” and which have “similar interest” (Silverman Kindle loc. 100, 107, 114, 206). Social networks are expanding and will continue to be the context of community, now and in the future (Maddix 14).

Online gaming engages emotions in better ways than life does through feedback, story-telling, epic-meaning, accomplishment, and social influence (Bell Loc 1514, 1547, 1569; Bissel 2, 11, 34, 96; Chou; Hayse 68–76; Moon). While people live the “Storybook of life,” gamers can simultaneously live through meaningful stories in games where interactive relationships form through common gaming goals (Bell Loc 876; Hayse 68–70; Sweet 98). Games allow for situational risk without real life consequences allowing players to try and experience new things without the fear of failure (Bell Loc 273; Chou 12). Gamers play and develop characters that resemble themselves immersing them into social relationships within the game (Bell Loc 3685; Bissel 76; Bainbridge). Why would God not meet people through the virtual worlds of gaming if it is a new language of Generation Z and an expanding marketplace of emerging generations (Hayse 68–70)?

Games are already making a presence in education and business teaching employees and students through motivational game elements (Bell Loc 278, 283, 336, 590, 648; Chou). Video games and computer games are already taking over the movie industry in dollars, and it is currently cutting into the profits of television (Bainbridge 472; Fernandez). Television was once the main form of communicating social norms (Bilandzic 99). A new “marketplace” quickly taking the place of television is online

media (Bainbridge 472–76; Bilandzic 99–104; Fernandez). Though some Christians may object to technology as “secular” or even “evil,” it is important to mention that the first century church did most of its evangelism on “secular ground” (Green Loc 174).

Popular shows like “the darkest minds” portray young teenagers who have to lie about their abilities in order to keep safe. Generation Z has been morally groomed by the media it uses, and now there is a generation where only thirty four percent that believe lying is morally wrong (Barna 5, 12). Christians in Generation Z crumble under pressure because they are not prepared for the spiritual battles before them (Barna 5–6). Fifty seven percent of Generation Z use screen media “four hours or more on an average day (Barna 12). Twenty-six percent of Generation Z use screen media eight hours or more on a given day (Barna 16). Generation Z does not think there is any more value to face to face interaction over social media interaction. Therefore, social media is all that is needed to sustain a relationship for Generation Z (Barna 17). In fact, Generation feels “most seen” through social media (Barna 20). Furthermore, seventy percent of the world population has an oral preference through the art of storytelling (Moon 8). Most of Generation Z’s time on online media is chatting or texting with videos and stories being a large communication method (Barna 18).

The abandonment of Generation toward the church comes from an underlying belief that Christians are hypocrites and God permits evil (Barna 63). Thirty seven percent of Generation Z believes that there is no proof of God (Barna 64). Although these statistics seem dismal, eighty-two percent of Generation Z church goers believe “the church is a place to find answers to the meaning of life” (Barna 71). However, fifty-nine percent of Generation Z believes church is irrelevant (Barna 72). Therefore, the

opportunity to usurp this distrust that Generation Z has may be to use social media through gamification tools such as stories to enter the market place of Generation Z. Fallout 4, Bethesda's most successful game had a wonderful backstory that kept players engaged in the game (Sledge 2019). However, when Bethesda made Fallout multiplayer and abandoned its backstory Fallout 76 had a dismal entry into the market disappointing the player base (Sledge 2019). In the same way, the church has lost the story which engages seekers. This exodus from the church building by Generation Z is not only because of a loss of story but because the story the church has is in a building disengaged from the marketplace of online media (Kapp 99–108). Lecture style preaching from the pulpit is having less and less effect on the emerging generations driven by interactivity (Kapp 21–22; 119–23). In a recent Gallup study, sixty-seven percent of respondents were not actively engaged in their work because of the lack of interactivity (Buono; Kapp 2013).

The 21st century is a different landscape for evangelist who is faced with pluralism, individualism, relativism, identity and technologies using outdated methods that lecture Generation Z instead of motivating them through stories (Moon 4). Gift baskets and coffee mugs no longer encourage loyalty of a first-time seeker into the family of faith (Moon 4). Evangelists have yet to engage the shared experience required by Generation Z in order to incorporate them into the family (Moon 6). Seventy-five percent of Christians reported that they did not know how to evangelize to non-believers in most contexts (Moon 9). Respondents reported that they were never taught how to evangelize (Moon 9). Is it because they were taught using old methods outside of the current marketplace where Generation Z lives and operates? Jay Moon states that narrative

evangelism is a way to connect with emerging generations (Moon 19). Seventy percent of major employers are already using gamification as a means to incorporate new employees into the entity culture (Chou 11). Gamification is beginning to utilize the most motivational techniques in non-gaming landscapes suggesting that the marketplace of emerging generations is not only through the screen but also through the applied techniques of gamification (Matera 9). Gaming is a medium that resonates with both sexes with fifty-two percent of gamers being girls (Matera 20). The uncomfortable truth of the emerging generations is they have to belong to a family of God before they will believe what the family of God believes (Elmore 49). The online “marketplace” of gaming can and does create social interactions that create the feeling of belonging (Elmore 49; Maddix 10–14).

Virtual Evangelism Models vs Traditional Models

Traditional models speak through the lens of guilt and justice, and the mainline church view has not recognized that the paradigm in which the post-modern lost person comes to the Christ may not be best communicated through traditional paradigms (Durst Loc 116; W. Paul Jones 25–44). David Durst recognized that there are really five paradigms in which a person experiences their spiritual dilemma (Durst Kindle loc. 116). There is the Fugitive which sees the world through the common traditional modes desiring to escape justice and guilt (Durst Kindle loc. 116). There is the Foreigner which is enticed to the Gospel through a longing of community because of the absence of intimacy the feel in life—an absence of authentic relationships (Durst Kindle loc. 116). There is the Flattened which carries the weight and burden of the world’s cares on its shoulders (Durst Kindle loc. 116). The Faint profile fears that their life will have no

meaning and desires significance (Durst Kindle loc. 116). The Fighter desires to correct all the wrongs in the world and is compelled by the mission activity of Christians (Durst Kindle loc. 116). David Durst discovered these paradigms through the works of W. Paul Jones. Jones focused his work on how these paradigm dynamics worked inside the church, while David uses the paradigms to help novice Christians evangelize (Durst Kindle loc. 116; W. Paul Jones 25–44).

Language is becoming rich with visual cues (Thomas 17–20). The new visual languages immersed in symbols and emotes attempts to convey feeling and voice through the screen (Thomas 17–20). In the middle-ages icons helped teach the ignorant the gospel message, whereas today the modern iconography is conveyed through symbols and pictures as it attempts to engage the senses. Today, people are trying to engage the senses through vespers, meditative prayer, and incense. The modern games of today convey emotion through the screen like never before; people are able to identify with the avatar by customization (Shaw et al. 16–18). Artists make the games rich with story lines that are dependent on the choices of the person (Shaw et al. 16–18).

What if the church could engage Generation Z through modern iconography and virtual gaming which could help them become Christians such as applying 5worlds evangelism in the context of a game like Minecraft (Appendix C)? The following images are expressions of the five spiritual dilemmas in a gaming format which allows the user to self-identify their spiritual dilemma and walk through that door. What if a user could be immersed in the biblical stories and biblical worlds for teaching opportunities such as the Babylonian gardens, Babylonian Arch, Jerusalem, the Alexandria Lighthouse, the Colosseum, the Pyramids, Solomon's Temple, the crucifixion, the Garden of Gethsemane

and the burial of Jesus? The pictures in Appendix C show how games can be used to walk a person through biblical stories (Appendix C). What if the ministries that were in a virtual space had a better opportunity to reach the planet than traditional methods such as in the graph below which shows the global presence of the Minecraft server Agape Creation (Appendix D)? What if we could train people to speak to the different spiritual dilemmas through mobile devices that depended less on the person speaking and more on the device that has been theologically vetted by professional theologians (Appendix E)?

Research Design Literature

This project analyzed and identified obstacles to online gaming evangelism in the South Texas Nazarene churches in order to discover the most effective approaches to communicate to Generation Z while avoiding those obstacles. In order to get the best results about the data, a mixed methods method of research design was used in order to “compensate for weaknesses” in single design approaches (Lee 14). The combined strength of the different methods through the mixed approach should enlighten more insight into the data collection (Creswell 2; Creswell & Creswell 4). The location for retrieval of the mixed methods design research was at the location of each church after Sunday service or mid-week church service in order to increase the result of participation in the questionnaires (Sensing 114).

The first approach was twenty quantitative closed ended fixed choice questions (Sensing, 114). The reason for this approach was so analysis on statistical data could be performed and grouped (Creswell & Creswell 4). This approach gave numerical data rather than expressing “cause and effect” relationships in the data presented (Merriam & Tisdell 5). This approach allowed an easy method of creating charts for analysis of data

in the research. The project also used a stress thermometer for quantitative data collection. The stress thermometer evaluated the stress level of the participant during the participant observation section of the project.

The second approach was qualitative by asking ten open-ended questions on a questionnaire. The questions revolved around feelings to help establish the stressors the individual experiences toward the subject of online gaming evangelism (Sensing 12). The project utilized open-ended questions so more detail could emerge from the data collection that could not be retrieved from closed-ended questions alone (Patton 20). The project needed to evaluate the “raw” feelings that influence the objections or stressors toward online gaming evangelism (Patton 20). The project also utilized participant observation during the data collection. The participant observation evaluated the participants as they engaged in an online gaming evangelism platform while videotaped and wearing a stress thermometer. Participant observation allowed the project the “consistency of what people subjectively report” (Sensing 93). The researcher evaluated the responses to the person participating in an online gaming form of evangelism in order to maintain neutrality and avoid interference in the data (Sensing 95).

Summary of Literature

Utilizing online gaming for evangelism is a fairly new avenue for ministry which is foreign to many denominations. This means that even though there is a plethora of information on technology and online gaming, there is very little utilization of online gaming for evangelism. Therefore, the above synthesis of the biblical and theological foundations for evangelism, technology and virtual evangelism unites the terms into a

singular context that is online gaming evangelism. In addition, the literature review detailed where the current marketplace for evangelism is or is heading.

Throughout scripture, God has been the active force in reconciling humanity back to Him since the fall of humanity. The restoration of humanity hinges on humanity's response to God's action around humanity's salvation. From the deliverance of Israel to the grafting in of foreign nations, God seeks all of humanity that is responsive to be reconciled. God has desired and invited humanity into the reconciliation as the great evangelizer of the faith. Humans that choose to participate with God manifest God's gracious acts of invitation by spreading the Gospel to others. At times when humanity has become egocentric due to the special entitlements of God like with the Israelites, evangelism to foreign nations has been limited. This limiting of the spread of the Gospel also occurs when believers begin evaluating the characteristics and behaviors of believers outside their group rather than listening to the command of Jesus to "Go and Preach" (Mark 16.15).

Technological advancements in language, trade, agriculture, and roads, have had a significant impact on evangelism in the past and present. These advancements have allowed the Gospel to move through communities through the philosophies of nomads speaking common trade languages helped along by conquest and expansion. People began to experience the Gospel through new media forms such iconography allowing the illiterate to catch up with the literate spiritually. The technology advancements allowed for people to travel to the centralized hub of religious institutions in grand buildings, but they also allowed agrarian farmers and tradesmen to take these messages to foreign lands.

The marketplace of where people receive evangelism has continually changed throughout history. It began at trees, upon mountain tops, wells, and riverbeds, and it moved towards moveable tabernacles and grand buildings. The marketplace then moved from grand worship hubs to house churches and nomadic preachers. In modern society that focuses its attention on digital and virtual means of communication, the marketplace has shifted once again based on trends and habits of humanity. Objections to embracing technology to evangelize revolve around the sinfulness of humanity to use these resources to satisfy sinful passions. Other objections revolve around the question about whether a virtual social relationship is equal to that of a tangible relationship. However, social relationships are occurring and at a greater rate than ever before across world continents. God has declared a command to “go and preach,” whether it be where the apostle Paul preached at an altar dedicated to an unknown god in Athens or Johnathan Edwards preaching at a gravesite starting the Great Awakening (Acts 17.23). The Gospel is to be preached through the marketplaces that impact the current social world.

The biblical mandate is to “go and preach” usurps any isolationist ideas of self-preservation (Mark 16.15–16). Furthermore, Christians should not operate out of fear, but out of a love for others (2 Tim. 1.7). There is biblical support for not being of the world in the sense of participating in sin, but not to isolate itself from being ambassadors for Christ (Rom. 12.1–2). Instead of hiding from others in the world, the Christian community should seek to proclaim the message of the Gospel first, like Jesus did when he came into the world (Matt. 4.17).

Technology is one of the avenues Christianity can and should use to fulfill its mandate to spread the Gospel. Technology is not evil, but humanity does have the ability

to distort tools and methods for proclamation of the word into malevolent purposes.

Because the population is so great and communities so diverse it seems impossible to have any significant impact in evangelism without engaging in the modern marketplace of technology.

Electronic gaming is a way in which the Christian community can preach the gospel message. The emerging generations are more authentic with their objections to Christianity, being voiced from behind an anonymous name through a computer screen. Also, authentic fellowship can be fostered through a gaming community. It may be a way for the Christian community through the guarded mask of anonymity to reach emerging generations through the use of online gaming to reconnect a disconnected society towards the church. It may be a way for the Christian church to become relevant to emerging generations. As seen in the recent pandemic, online communities are necessary during moments of crisis. In some cases, an online community may be the only fellowship available. As the missiologist McGavran points out, isolating individuals from their social groups creates an obstacle to evangelism (8–11). He observed in collective societies like India, group evangelism had more of an impact because the isolation of an individual convert was often too unbearable (McGavran 10–13). As research shows, Generation Z has more of a “hive” mentality when it comes to decisions. Therefore, group transformations may have a greater impact on evangelism (Yadav et al. 110). Rather than restricting screen time further isolating Generation Z from its identity, it may be better to create environments where Generation Z has the social “hive” empowering their faith walk (Esqueda par. 9; Yadav et al. 110). This creation of social “hive”

empowerment can be accomplished through online gaming and virtual communities (McGavran 11–12; Yadav et al. 110).

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter gives a description of the research methodology for this project. The chapter goes over the nature and purpose of this project and then the research questions utilized in the project. This chapter will show the various instruments used aligned with each research question. The chapter will then go over the ministry context in which the research was conducted. After the ministry context, a description of participants will be discussed. This chapter will then discuss the instrumentation used followed by how the data is analyzed.

Nature and Purpose of the Project

Generation X is the generational group before online gaming became one of the main staples of modern youth. Understanding that the different generations developed at different times in the life cycle of online gaming, the project explores resistance from Generation X that was brought up just before online gaming took hold in the marketplace of society. Generation Z, on the other hand, grew up being immersed in online gaming, online social media, and online teaching. So, it is believed that they are much more open to online gaming. Generation X seems more relaxed in traditional church models, while Generation Z seems to push away at church models that seem to not appeal to their generation. The project asks the question, what can bridge the gap in these generations? This project is important to ministry because as new generations develop there seems to be an increasing communication gap between the generations with relation to the church and the church's mission. While older generations are relying on old models of ministry,

new generations seem unresponsive to the message of the church. Could it be that the church simply is not communicating in a language Generation Z understands? Is it that Generation Z does not see the Generation X message as relevant as it pertains to the church? In order to address these questions, the research must deal with the stressors that prevent Generation X from presenting new applications of evangelism toward Generation Z and Generations that comes after.

The purpose of this project was to discover Texas Nazarene church members' objections to online gaming in order to design an evangelistic online gaming experience that avoids those obstacles. The project hopes to present new avenues of evangelism to Generation X and see how they are affected by the information. The project basis is to uncover those stressors to allow for new avenues to be explored in missiology and evangelism that targets future generations in an impactful and meaningful way. As the missiologist McGavran points out, isolating individuals from their social groups creates an obstacle to evangelism (8–11). Generation Z has a “hive” mentality when it comes to decisions. Therefore, group transformations may have a greater impact on evangelism (Yadav et al. 110). Rather than restricting screen time further isolating Generation Z from its identity, it may be better to create environments where Generation Z has the social “hive” empowering their faith walk (Esqueda par. 9; Yadav et al. 110). This creation of social “hive” empowerment can be accomplished through online gaming and virtual communities (McGavran 11–12; Yadav et al. 110).

Research Questions

RQ #1. What are the obstacles and objections South Texas Nazarene church members have toward online gaming in general?

The project used a questionnaire that has closed ended questions about technology use. This instrument was utilized to gather quantitative data for categorization. The closed ended questions were first divided by research questions. Questions 2, 3, 7, and 8 were associated with this research question. Of the open-ended questions, Questions 1, 9, and 10 were associated with this research question. The closed ended questions were divided into four groups for a total of twenty questions. Questions 2, 3, and 7 were “belief” questions exploring the presuppositions the participant has about technology as it relates to the church or social development. Questions 8 dealt with the “experience” the participant has with technology as it pertains to the church or online gaming. Of the open-ended questions, Question 1 and 9 were “feeling” based questions which dealt with this research question, whereas, Question 10 was an “experience” question relating to this research question. The second part of Question 10 was a “belief” question relating to this research question.

RQ #2. What are the obstacles and objections South Texas Nazarene church members have toward some (current) design approaches in online evangelism?

The project used a questionnaire that has closed ended questions about technology use. This instrument was utilized to gather quantitative data for categorization. The project also used a questionnaire that has open-ended questions about technology use. In the open ended-questionnaire, Questions 1, 5, 11, 12, 13, and 17 questions were “beliefs” based questions having to do with this research question. Question 9 was a “feeling” based question having to do with this research question. Question 4 was an “experience” based question having to do with this research question. Of the open-ended questions, Questions 2, 6, and 7 were “feeling” based questions that deal with this research question.

RQ #3. What are the current design approaches in online gaming toward evangelism that could be utilized (removing objections) by South Texas Nazarene churches?

Instrument 3: The project utilized participation observation instrument recording the observations as participants interact with an online gaming model and evangelizing web application. Participants were observed as they joined a Minecraft server through “Fully Awakened Ministries” at internet protocol agapecreation.org. The participants join the server and were given ranks and warped to a three-dimensional model of Jericho where the instructor tells the story of Zacchaeus the tax collector. This section modeled online gaming in the realm of teaching the Gospel. The instructor then guided the participants to Solomon’s temple within the three-dimensional model. The instructor talked about the elements in the temple and how they relate to prayer. This model is based on Dr. Cho’s tabernacle prayer model (Packard). The participants were then guided through the prayer model through the temple in Minecraft. The participants were then guided to a realm within the three-dimensional world where five pictures were displayed before them and they were instructed to go through the door of the image that best describes how they feel right now. When they chose an image and went through that door, the facilitator began to walk that person through the Gospel message through that spiritual dilemma image they chose based on Dr. David Durst’s five worlds evangelism model (Durst). The instruments we were using in the participant observation were already utilized but in hard copy format through Dr. David Durst’s ministry. The project adapted the model within a gaming module to evaluate the use by participants through observation.

The open-ended questions were ten feeling based questions about the use of online gaming and technology as it pertains to the church. The questions provided

qualitative information about the participants presuppositions about online technology before the participant goes into the participant observation stage of the analysis.

Questions were framed in a “how do you feel about” format to maximize the participants ability to feed information into the study that may have been an obstacle that the researcher had not considered. The open-ended questions also gave information as to “why” a participant has such presuppositions. The open-ended questions are Questions 21–30 in Appendix A on pages 4–5.

Questions 9, 11, 14, 15, and 18, dealt with the “feelings” of the participant towards online gaming as it pertains to evangelism. Questions 10, 19, and 20 dealt with general objective questions for analysis and categorization of the participants. Appendix A is a copy of the questionnaire utilized with Questions 1–20 on pages 1–3. This research question allowed the researcher to analyze the presuppositions the participant was going into the participant observation with. Evaluating the beliefs, experience, and feelings of the participant gave background into the participant’s paradigm about online gaming evangelism as they approached the participant observation.

Instrument 4: The project ended with a focus group that asked questions of the participants about their experiences through the participation observation. How did they feel the online mediums were beneficial or harmful? What are some of the obstacles they experienced while doing the participant observation? How do they feel the mediums can be utilized for their church? This section was also filmed so the researcher could best catalogue all of the observations and review if there were any observations the recording picked up that the researcher missed in the observations.

Ministry Context(s)

The South Texas region near the Texas-Mexico border of the United States has been receiving an influx of 171,000 illegal immigration crossings into South Texas region month over month since March 2021 (Miroff). Though this project has generalizability to the greater Bible belt area and outward across the United States wherever there are late adopting holiness churches, it must be understood that there is a current stressor dynamic in the context of this project with relation to the Texas-Mexico border dynamic. Though the Free Methodist Church, United Methodist Church, Baptist Church, Mennonite Churches, Wesleyan Church, and Pentecostal Churches can all find benefit in the information provided in this research with relation to technology, churches within the border regions of Mexico certainly have a complexity in relationships which may include a necessity to be bilingual in ministry, a lower emphasis on technology and the influences of the Catholic Church coming from the Texas-Mexico region. It is no secret that the Catholic Church has had a long history of missions in the Mexico (Noll 185–87). This region also has influences from heretical ideas coming from areas of South America such as Marian worship, Occult practices, and Iconography (Hedenborg-White & Gregorius; Scheper-Hughes 157–59).

The region is bordered by Mexico on the south side, while being bordered by the Gulf of Mexico on the East side. Mexico also borders the region on the West. San Antonio is two hours to the North and Houston is four hours to the North East. The region explored is from Corpus Christi, Texas down south toward the Texas-Mexico border. While this region has a general respect for pastoral authority within the Generation X demographic, the authority of the pastor in marriage, addiction, ministry

and end-of-life is being eroded away by a rise in indifference and Generational Z's apathy toward religious authority (Moon Loc 595). In this region, the older generations tend to demand respect from the younger generations, but that tether of authority is slowly giving way.

Texas has the highest prison population of any other state with an inmate population above 150,000 (Prison Policy Initiative). The Texas prisons are full to maximum capacity with a 328 percent increase in the last fifteen years (Prison Policy Initiative). The median income in the South Texas region where the participants reside within is \$42,246 per year with only 9.3 percent of the population making an income over \$125,000 (Strayhorn). The main occupations in the region of the project are in the food industry and personal care industry occupying 15.5 percent of all occupations (Strayhorn). In this region, forty percent of the total population has never taken a college course, and only twenty percent have a bachelor's degree or higher (Strayhorn). Most of the degreed people in this region have focused their education in the health profession (Strayhorn).

Texans tend to value families, and this may be one reason for the lower education rates due to valuing working for the family over a future possibility of higher income from a degree. Texans tend to be friendly to strangers and have a lower personal proximity of space requirement than from other areas of the United States. Even though they do not get as offended by invasions of personal space, they tend to live further apart from their neighbors than other areas of the United States. Pastors tend to be male in both traditional church models and non-denominational models in the Texas region. The South Texas Nazarene church has no restriction to ordination of women. However, the

demographics tend to favor a male pastor. The larger cities in Texas tend to have a more liberal leaning political attitude while the rural areas of this study tend to have a more conservative leaning politically. However, the closer participants are to the border and immigration policies become an issue, a more liberal political motivation may be seen.

Participants

Criteria for Selection

The participants for this research project came from South Texas Nazarene Churches that have a declining rate higher than ten percent or have a congregation of less than twenty that actually attend church. The rationale behind using participants from groups in declining or static small churches was to deal directly with the issue of lack of technology typically utilized in smaller declining churches because of limited funds. The age range of the project participants was older than thirty-five so that the reaction of older generations in adopting new platforms to communicate toward Generation Z would be analyzed. The analysis of Generation X allowed the researcher to evaluate how well Generation X adapted and is receptive toward new platforms for online gaming evangelism. If the stressors toward online gaming evangelism in a traditional church format grounded in tradition and conservative understanding of the gospel message are identified, then the church can identify the resistance to the use of new platforms and bridge the gap between the two generations in evangelism. In order to avoid the Hawthorne effect, the participants did not know the observer or the capacity of the observer as a minister (Sensing 82). Therefore, the participants were not influenced by their desire for the observer to do well on the project (Sensing 82). The project analyzed both men and women who were grounded in strong convictions of church tradition in

order to evaluate if the influence of traditional “brick and mortar” church experience had affected their reception of new technology. The participants had a general understanding of technology. However, they were introduced to new applications of technology they may not be aware of in order to evaluate stressors and adaptation. Only those individuals that uphold the teachings, lifestyles, and habits of the South Texas Nazarene Church were evaluated as participants in the study (Sensing 83–84). The individuals in the study could be laity or work in any capacity of the church of the Nazarene other than pastor. The researcher believed it was important to leave pastors outside the scope of the study in order to avoid the Hawthorne effect (Sensing 82). The researcher chose participants of varying age over thirty to deal specifically with generations outside the scope of Generation Z. The researcher selected varying candidates in marital status, employment, and ethnicity (Sensing 84). The researcher chose participants that had been enculturated into the Nazarene Church for a minimum of five years since the researcher believed this would ensure good information in participant observation due to the fact that they were more likely to have acquired the traditional stance of the Nazarene church through accretion of ideas (Spradley 47–48). The sample size was a total of seventeen participants in the study. There were three groups of four participants with the researcher conducting and guiding participants. This was due to the availability of computer and resources for the participants to use simultaneously during the study. Along with computer and internet resources, the amount of gaming accounts to be utilized at a given time on a particular server was a limitation to the size of the participant observation. The churches involved in the study included both rural and urban locations because the research is evaluating

Generation X stressors in various markets. However, the evaluation dealt specifically with members in churches that have static or declining membership.

Description of Participants

There were a total of twenty participants in the research project. The project included both male and female participants. The project did not select candidates by gender so the randomization of gender diversity was by chance. The participants were older than thirty-five years of age. The participants chosen could work in any capacity of the church except as a pastor. The participants did not have to be a part of the staff or volunteer for the church. The majority of participants did not work in any capacity for the church. The participants could be any ethnicity, and the diversity among ethnic groups is purely random. However, due to the higher concentration of Hispanic populous, the participants were typically Hispanic participants. The participants were often in the middle of their life cycle typically from average to lower income house-holds. The participant's education was varied and random, but most lacked a college diploma. The participants were Christian for at least five years because the project selected those who had been members of the Nazarene church for a minimum of five years.

Ethical Considerations

The consent form for the study is in appendix D of this project. The online consent form with the questionnaires is found at <http://fullyawakened.org/Questionnaire.html>. Great care was taken in maintaining all data inside a private server. Therefore, the webserver where the data was collected was a 1u r610 Linux Xeon server housed and maintained privately in the locked office of the researcher at a private residence. No one other than the researcher had access to any online or local data. The server was password protected and has

remote access disabled. All the data is maintained on a server the researcher self-hosts. The participants in the questionnaire were required to select that they have consented to the study or their particular form was invalidated. There forms recorded no names of individuals, no church locations, and no identifying information that could put the participant in danger. If there was any identifying information that was needed for the study, the participant was hidden behind a pseudonym. Information relating to the raw data collected in the study was never shared with anyone. Only the findings of the study were shared with the researcher's dissertation coach, when necessary, no identifying data such as video recordings, data collected from blood pressure machines, or stress meters were shared. If any data needed to be matched with a particular individual a pseudonym was used which was only known to the researcher. All research notes, participant observation notes, journals, raw data, questionnaire data, video recordings, and transcripts were locked in the file cabinet in the researcher's office at the researcher's private residence in a locked office.

The investigator did share significant findings from the project in a colloquium with the faculty of Asbury Theological Seminary. Only the findings of the study were shared with the colloquium with the faculty of Asbury Theological Seminary, no identifying data such as video recordings, data collected from blood pressure machines, stress meters were shared. If any data needed to be matched with a particular individual for any reason a pseudonym was used only known to the researcher.

All electronic data was stored on a password protected server in the private office of the researcher at a private residence in a locked office. Any hard copy of data including all audio and video files was kept in a locked file cabinet in the private locked office of the researcher at the private residence of the researcher. All electronic data will be deleted from

the server by August 30, 2022. All hard copy data will be shredded and destroyed by August 30, 2022

Instrumentation

Instrument 1: The project used a questionnaire that has closed ended questions about technology use. This instrument was utilized to gather quantitative data for categorization.

Instrument 2: The project used a questionnaire that has open-ended questions about technology use. The open-ended questions were ten “feeling” based questions about the use of online gaming and technology as it pertains to the church. The questions gave the researcher qualitative information about the participants’ presuppositions about online technology before the participant goes into the participant observation stage of the analysis.

Instrument 3: The project utilized participation observation instrument recording the observations as participants interact with an online gaming model and evangelizing web application.

Instrument 4: The project ended with a focus group. In the focus group, the researcher asked questions of the participants about their experiences through the participation observation.

Pilot Test

A pilot test was run by analyzing the responses of three participants. The participants were then asked questions about how they felt about the test and were there any obstacles to filling out the questionnaire. One of the adjustments made because of the pilot test was based on the respondents requesting a “not applicable” response on

Questions 19 and 20 for churches that do not participate. Another adjustment was based on the ambiguity of question, “What do you feel is appropriate cost of a current design approach a church should pay for a platform in online gaming evangelism?” The respondents needed more clarification on who was actually paying for the software to properly place where the obstacle blame belongs on software implementation based on cost. The question was changed to “What do you feel is the appropriate cost of a current design approach a church should pay for a platform in online gaming evangelism for its congregation to use in evangelism?” The overall response from the Generation X participants seemed to coincide with preconceived thoughts of their responses. With those two additions added to the survey, it was ready to be distributed to the participants within the project.

Reliability & Validity of Project Design

Triangulation is the method of strengthening research by taking multiple methods and combining them towards a more focused result (Patton 247). This project maximized the results by both triangulating data from a broader group into a more focused group by beginning with blanket questionnaires to a select target group. The blanketed questionnaires were both quantitative and qualitative in design in order to also triangulate the data by receiving information that was conducive to each design approach thus enhancing the project results. The project narrowed the focus into selected participant observations. In this way, the project was able to observe through practical method the stumbling blocks while participants were actually navigating through an online environment. This measurement of observation further triangulates the data from the voiced perception of the participant through the questionnaire toward actual application

and observance. This was important because often participants may voice an opinion about something without ever being in an experiential position.

By placing the participant in the practice of online gaming the researcher was able to evaluate the computational data from the closed-ended questionnaires, their feelings in the open-ended questions, and their actual observed struggles in application. As Patton puts it, if there is only one landmark or study point, there is only a given location along that landmark, but if there is two landmarks or study points and it is known where one is located, then a bearing can be established (247). The project went a step further with a focus group from the participant observations. This was done to receive extra data about how the individual felt within the participant observation. In addition, the focus group gave the opportunity for the participants to feed off each other's answers and adds to answers in a synergistic fashion that goes beyond their initial ability (Patton 386; Sensing 120). This information allowed the researcher to gather extra data not observed and well beyond simply asking an individual while in the participant observation. Triangulation has the added benefit of testing our project for consistency (Patton 248).

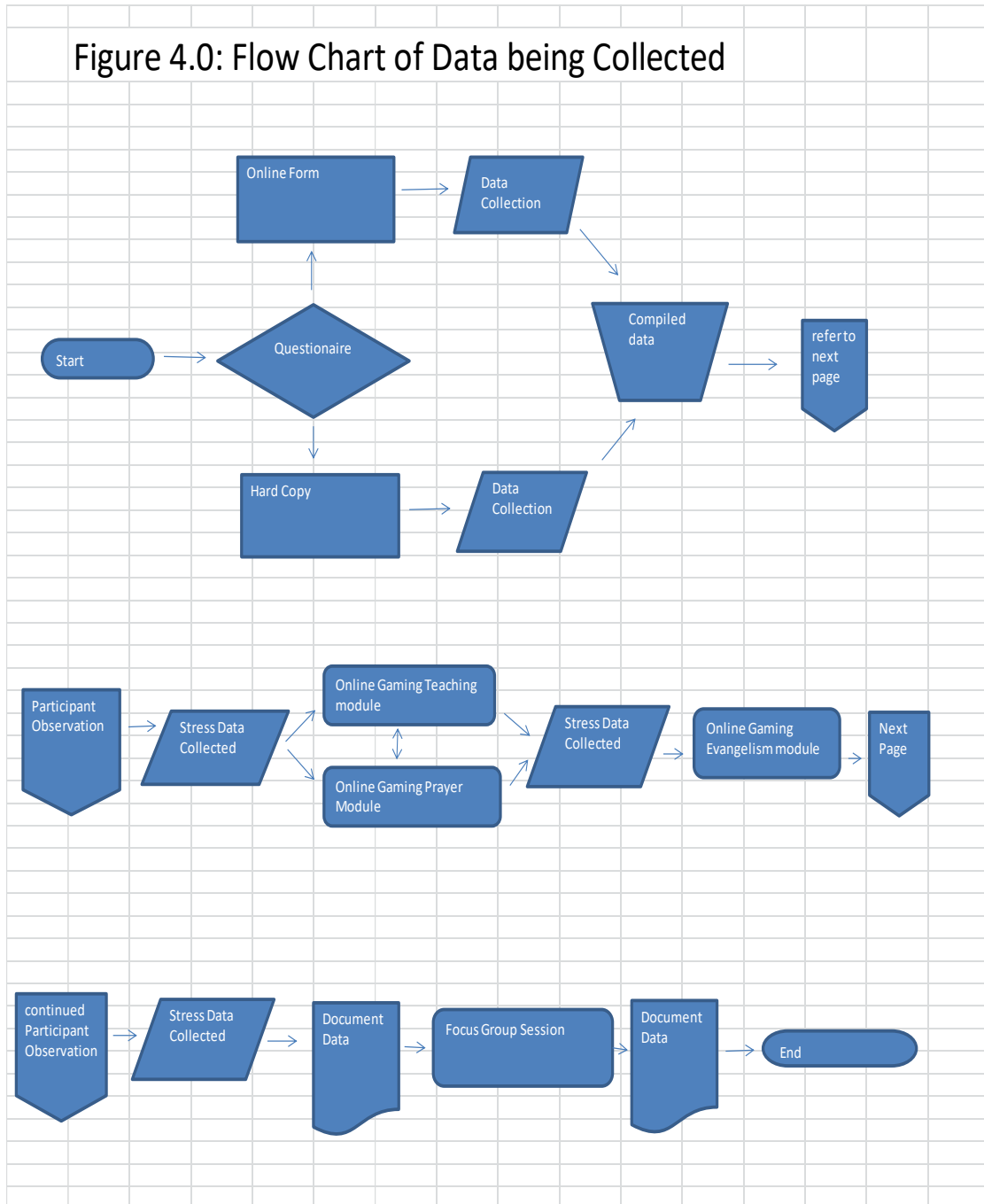
In order to ensure that the tools align with the purpose and the research questions, the project labeled each question in the closed-ended and open-ended questionnaires with the research question it pertained to. The project was looking for obstacles that prevent the use or adaptation of online gaming evangelism tools. Therefore, the open-ended and closed-ended questions distributed to the wider South Texas Nazarene Church explored the beliefs, experience, and feelings which gave insight into the obstacles the individual participant expresses are the obstacles to adaptation of online gaming evangelism. The project starts with a wide audience in order to capture the grander scope of the issue at

hand. The project moves toward a smaller audience to receive data that is rich with intimacy and depth. Since the project dealt with the beliefs, experience, and feelings participants had toward online gaming evangelism keeping the project focused in its general purpose.

This project can be easily reproduced with similar questions and delimiting the participants to Generation X in a traditional church, though it may be more difficult to do the participant observation since the project utilized a gaming model that may be out of date by the time someone decides to reevaluate this project. However, a similar model can be utilized and come to similar results. The researcher recognizes that technology changes quickly and adaptations may need to be made to adjust for those changes. The project was focused on South Texas Nazarene Churches. Therefore, as long as future researchers choose theologically conservative churches while applying technology, the results should be similar.

Data Collection

Figure 4.0: Flow Chart of Data being Collected



This project type was pre-intervention. It was designed to describe the issues at hand and what contributes to those issues. Though normally pre-intervention does not have a tool, like this one did, a tool that would be utilized during the study and only proposes something; However, this project was not evaluating the tool but rather the

responses to new evangelism in order to evaluate stressors to adaptation. The tools were already in practice but decentralized in nature. Only the participant observation utilized a tool, which because it was a participation observation required the interaction of the participants with the online environment in order to study reactions. The project did not test the new models; it sought to evaluate what the stumbling blocks were in order to give insight toward new models that would be more effective at evangelizing the upcoming generation. The project utilized a mixed methods approach of qualitative data and quantitative data. There has been a long debate about mixing methods; however, this project finds it necessary to utilize multiple lenses to analyze the data (Sensing 58). By taking this approach, the project was able to add value to the research by having more participants in the quantitative study and more insightful information in the qualitative study.

The first step was to get permission from the governing authorities of the denomination to allow for the study throughout the district. An email was sent to the Assistant District Superintendent for permission to do the study throughout the South East Texas Region. A copy of that letter to the Assistant District Superintendent is in Appendix K. The next step was to make a closed-ended quantitative questionnaire and an open-ended qualitative questionnaire. The quantitative questions needed to access the beliefs, experiences, and feelings of the participants in order to evaluate where the stressors in the participants are. The quantitative closed-ended multiple choice questions allow the project to blanket the whole district in order to evaluate the full scope of the issue the project is researching (Sensing 82). The quantitative research allows analysis of trends in a grand scope of the denomination. Therefore, a questionnaire of both open-

ended and closed ended questions were given to each participant before the participant observation was performed to evaluate the presuppositions of participants toward online gaming as it relates to evangelism across the denomination.

The next step involved three participant observations of four individuals in each group. The participant observation occurred at the private residence of the researcher or a local church. The room where the participants were located was quiet and had recording equipment as well as stress and blood pressure finger meters at each seating location. Testing of stress levels and blood pressure were taken before the observation began. The laptops were preloaded with Minecraft gaming modules. Each of the four participants was given a laptop and login instructions to join a Minecraft gaming server at internet protocol agapecreation.org. The researcher was already logged into the game and allowed time for the participants to login while giving instructions to the participants. The researcher observed the participants as they stumble through the login process. Once all the participants were logged into the server, the leader teleported each of their avatars to an in game 3-dimensional virtual map of Jericho. In Jericho, the participants met up with Zacchaeus the chief tax collector. The researcher began to tell the story of Zacchaeus, while directing the participants to different map locations in Jericho. After going through the virtual story of Zacchaeus, the participants were tested for stress and blood pressure with the various meters. Then, the researcher teleported all the avatars to a virtual representation of Solomon's Temple. The participants were directed through the prayer through the Tabernacle prayer by Dr. Cho. Data was collected by the researcher by filming the observations, casual observation notes, and by stress meter test using a stress meter thermometer and a blood pressure monitor on the finger. The data was collected in

four meetings resulting in seventeen total participants. The meetings were one and one-half hours each. The researcher was in the participant observation as a leader and facilitator casually observing the stressors on participants. The meetings were filmed in order to capture observations that the researcher may have missed in casual observation and note taking. The data was collected in person and catalogued on a excel spreadsheet. During the participant observation, the participants were also wearing a stress meter to analysis their stress levels during the analysis. The measurements of stress and blood pressure were taken three times during the observation for each participant. The measurements were taken at the beginning, middle, and the end of the observation to evaluate fluctuations in the participants stress level going through the participant observation.

At the end of the participant observation, there was a casual focus group where the participants were asked five questions about their experience through the participant observation. Those responses were journaled and catalogued. The researcher also filmed the focus group to assure no information was missed in the journaling and cataloguing of responses in the casual focus group. There were five focus group questions: How did they feel the online mediums were beneficial or harmful? What are some of the obstacles they experienced while doing the participant observation? How do they feel the mediums can be utilized for their church? What have been, or may be, some challenges you noticed in incorporating models like this? Do you have any other thoughts or comments about the experience in the participant observation?

Data Analysis

Quantitative data taken from the twenty closed-ended questions on the questionnaires were coded in four categories: belief, experience, feeling, and objective questions. The responses were put into an excel document and charted for analysis. The belief, experience and feeling questions gave the researcher information about the presuppositions the participants bring into the participant observation. The objective questions gave the researcher the level of experience the participant has had with the given topic. The mean and averages were then calculated by the researcher through the excel spreadsheet.

Qualitative data taken from the ten open-ended questions was evaluated for patterns in feelings such as apprehension, anxiety, stressors, normalcy, and calmness. The researcher then looked for word patterns and themes for frequency. The researcher also looked for pattern shifts such as sharp changes in handwriting that may indicate stressors to the particular questions asked. The researcher also looked for patterns in whether the participant's descriptions of their feelings were personal or distant which may indicate embracement of technology or a lack of engagement.

The qualitative data taken from the participant observation was categorized by how personal or distant the person was in their engagement of the gaming modules. The researcher looked for patterns and themes in the participants conversations while doing the participant observation. Participant observations allowed the researcher to analyze those stressors by participants because participants tend ignore too many inputs because of "sensory overload" (Spradley 55). In addition, the researcher was able to view the observations from a broader perspective while participants were in the moment of the

observation (Spradley 56). The researcher tested each participant during three stages of the participant observation measuring stress levels in the beginning, middle and end of the participant observation. Those stress levels were categorized into a excel spreadsheet for analysis and pattern evaluation. Through the recordings of the participant observation, the researcher analyzed body postures and patterns that exposed elements of stress on the participant. These patterns were then categorized in an excel spreadsheet. If the research observed multiple stressors in the individual, it was separated into a higher priority of stress. The stress levels were separated into three categories, low, medium, and high. The researcher then took the mean and average of the stress level of the entire group.

The qualitative data in the focus groups, after the participant observation, increased the “methodological triangularization” of the stressors by allowing the participants to speak about how they felt about the participant observation (Patton 247). This information gave greater detail into some of the patterns being observed by the researcher. The focus groups gave clarity to ambiguous understandings of the data observed in the participant observation and allowed for a more focused interpretation (Lee 52). The focus groups allowed for immediate feedback from the participant observation about the stressors they could self-identify (Lee 53).

CHAPTER 4

EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

Online gaming continues to be a major influencer in the environment of Generation Z. Will Generation X churchgoers influenced by the conservative theology of the holiness movement through the lens of the Nazarene church in the South Texas Region be able to adjust to the emergent generations' reliance on online media and visual stimuli? What can bridge the gap in conceptual thinking about online media, especially online gaming, between Generation X and Generation Z? Generation X is the generational group before online gaming became one of the main staples of modern youth. Understanding that the different generations developed at different times in the life cycle of online gaming, this project explores resistance from Generation X that was brought up just before online gaming took hold in the marketplace of society. Generation Z on the other hand, grew up being immersed in online gaming, online social media, online teaching; so, it is believed that they are much more open to online gaming. Generation X seems more relaxed in traditional church models, while Generation Z seems to push away at church models that seem to not appeal to their generation. This project is important to ministry because as new generations develop there seems to be an increasing communication gap between the generations with relation to the church and the church's mission. While older generations are relying on old models of ministry, new generations seem unresponsive to the message of the church. Could it be that the church simply is not communicating in a language Generation Z understands? Is it that Generation Z does not see the Generation X message as relevant as it pertains to the

church? In order to address these questions, the research must deal with the stressors that prevent Generation X from presenting new applications of evangelism toward Generation Z and generations that comes after.

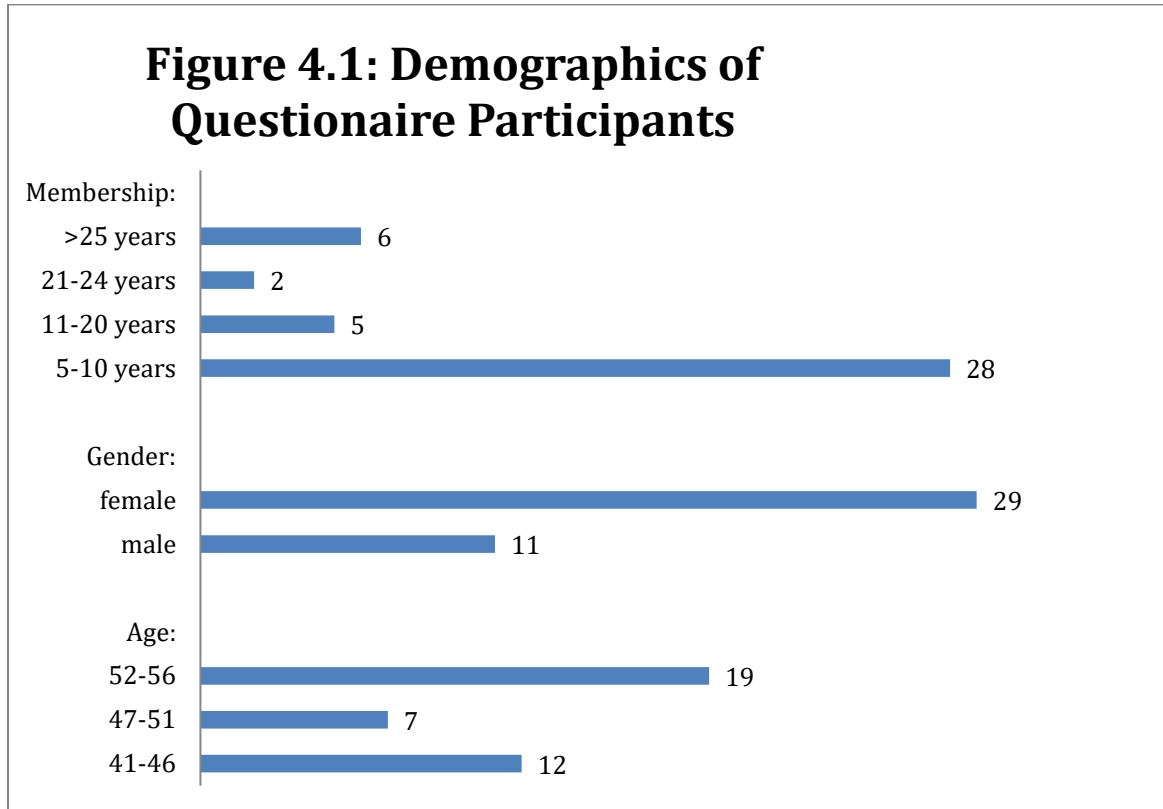
Therefore, the purpose of this project was to discover Texas Nazarene church members' objections to online gaming in order to design an evangelistic online gaming experience that avoids those obstacles. The project hopes to present new avenues of evangelism to Generation X and see how participants from Generation X are affected by the information. The project basis is to uncover those stressors to allow for new avenues to be explored in missiology and evangelism that targets future generations in an impactful and meaningful way. As the missiologist McGavran points out, isolating individuals from their social groups creates an obstacle to evangelism (8–11). Generation Z has a “hive” mentality when it comes to decisions. Therefore, group transformations may have a greater impact on evangelism (Yadav et al. 110). Rather than restricting screen time further isolating Generation Z from its identity, it may be better to create environments where Generation Z has the social “hive” empowering their faith walk (Esqueda par. 9; Yadav et al. 110). This creation of social “hive” empowerment can be accomplished through online gaming and virtual communities (McGavran 11–12; Yadav et al. 110).

This chapter describes the participants who were involved in this study and the quantitative data collected from an online questionnaire with twenty closed-ended questions. There was quantitative data collected on three metered test results of stress, blood pressure, and oxygen levels which were evaluated before, during, and after participant observation. The qualitative data collected was from an online questionnaire

with ten open-ended questions. Qualitative data which was categorized by stressor observations during the participant observations was also catalogued into charts. There were examples laid out in the chapter expressing the qualitative data collected from the focus group questions. Finally, four major findings were gathered from the data.

Participants

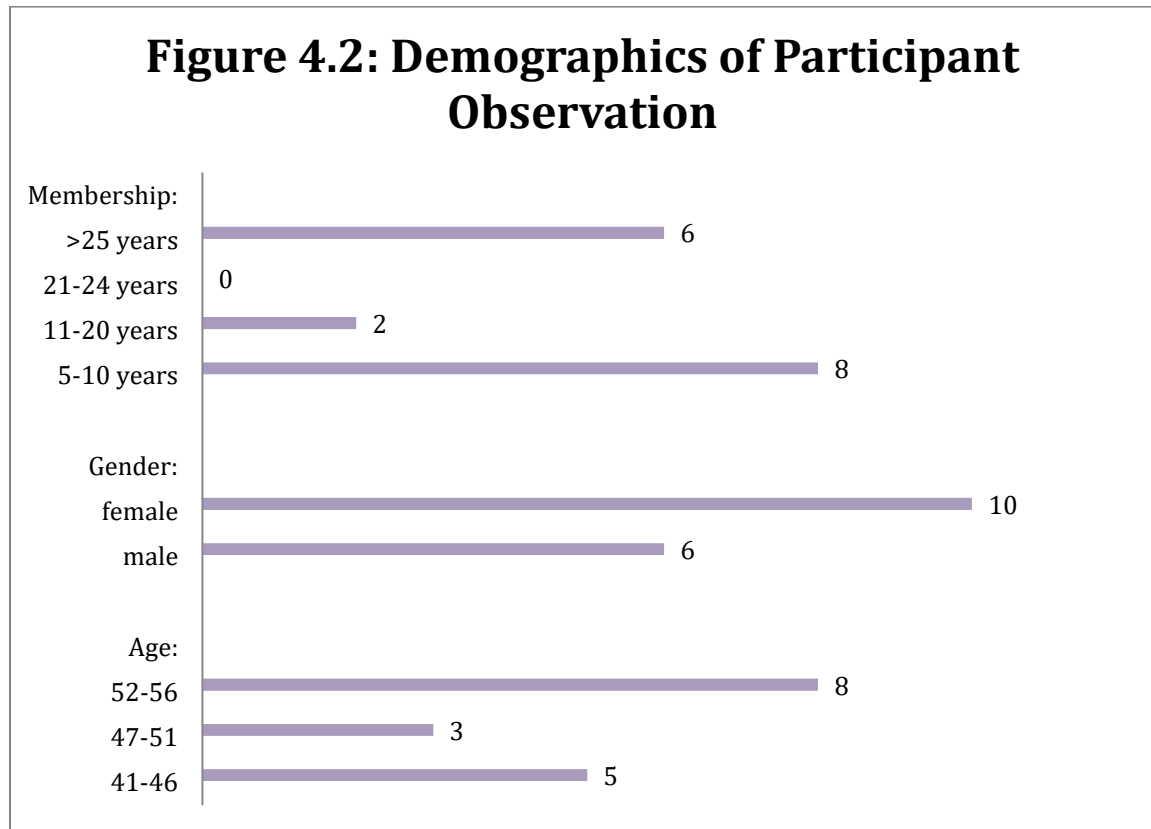
The participants in this study were South Texas District Church of the Nazarene members that have been in membership for at least five years. They were both male and female. The participants were a mixture of Caucasian, Hispanic, and African American. The participants were all over forty years of age and under sixty years of age. Everyone fell within the Generation X age bracket and was with the Nazarene church in the South Texas region for more than five years. They were invited through a district Facebook announcement, individual invites, and individual church announcements. No pastors were in the study to preclude professional and individual bias from the study. The average age of the participants for the questionnaire was 51.1 years. There were eleven males and twenty-nine females who participated in the questionnaire. The average church membership length of the questionnaire was 12.6 years. The demographic profile is displayed on the chart figure 4.1 below.



Out of the forty participants in the questionnaire, seventeen agreed to participate in the participant observation and focus group. Those that were in the participant observation were also in the focus group. The participant observation occurred at the observer's home. There were four separate groups ranging in size from four to six participants. The limitation in size of the groups was based on the requirement of each one to two participants having a computer to participate. Another limitation in size had to do with vocal participants creating a bias among the group through their assertive and persuasive nature. The researcher wanted to minimize single leader dominance and groupthink from the study by having multiple samples rather than one large sample. Each group session lasted between one and a half hours and two hours. One of the participants who volunteered for the study was not able to stay through the entire participant observation due to a family emergency; therefore that participant was excluded from the

demographic profile and the observation. The demographic profile is displayed on chart

Figure 4.2 below.



Research Question #1: Description of Evidence

What are the obstacles and objections South Texas Nazarene church members have toward online gaming in general?

The closed-ended questions portion of the questionnaire dealt with two portions of the research question. It dealt with what the participants believed about online technology and what they experienced. Closed-ended Questions 2, 3, and 7 in the questionnaire dealt with the beliefs of the participants with reference to the research question and Question 8 dealt with the experience of the participant with reference to the

research question. The open-ended portion of the questionnaire dealt with two portions of the research question as well. It dealt with what the participants believed about online technology and how the participants felt about online technology. Open-ended Questions 21 and 30 dealt with the feelings of the participants while Question 31 dealt with the experience of the participant. Figure 4.3 below shows the data collected in the closed ended questions. The top portion shows the participants beliefs toward research question one. The central tendency was 9.5–10 participants responding in a similar way with a standard deviation ranging from .66–1.14. The majority of respondents believed teaching to be the best avenue for online gaming. The majority of the respondents failed to see the relevance that online gaming can have in the Nazarene Church. Furthermore, the majority of respondents believed online gaming impeded social development. However, there was a large portion of respondents that reported they saw no hindrance to social development. As far as experience, the vast majority of respondents at 42.5% reported they do not participate in online gaming. However, there were a significant number of respondents 20% that reported participating in online gaming daily.

Figure 4.3: Belief and experience responses

| Beliefs | | | | | | | | |
|--|----------------|----------------------|---------------------------|--------------|--|-----------|-------|--------------------|
| | Not beneficial | Teaching | Evangelism | Preaching | | no answer | Mean | Standard Deviation |
| Where do you believe online gaming would be beneficial in the Nazarene church? | 15.00% | 45.00% | 32.50% | 5.00% | | 2.50% | 9.75 | 1.14 |
| | Pastor | Congregation | Church Identity | Relevancy | | no answer | Mean | Standard Deviation |
| Who do you believe is the biggest obstacle to online gaming? | 12.50% | 22.50% | 22.50% | 37.50% | | 5.00% | 9.50 | 0.66 |
| | No | Somewhat Disagree | Somewhat Agree | Yes | | | Mean | Standard Deviation |
| Do you believe that online gaming impedes against social development? | 35.00% | 12.50% | 42.50% | 10.00% | | | 10.00 | 1.04 |
| Experience | | | | | | | | |
| | No | Rarely, once a month | Occasionally, once a week | Often, Daily | | no answer | Mean | Standard Deviation |
| Do you currently participate in any form of online gaming? | 42.50% | 5.00% | 7.50% | 20.00% | | 25.00% | 7.50 | 1.10 |

The opened-ended questions with reference to research question one yielded interesting results. The open-ended questions dealt with how the participant felt about online gaming. The first question related to this research question was “how do you feel about online gaming in the modern world? Why?” The answers were divided into whether the respondent had a positive or a negative feeling toward online gaming. The participants had a negative overall feeling towards online gaming at 62% with most respondents saying it “interferes” with social engagement. Here are some example responses in the negative from the open-ended questionnaire:

- Gaming is often an escape from reality, which is fine in small amounts, but we shouldn't be setting up camp there. The real world is where we can meet real world needs and direct people into a better life.

- I feel like the majority of players disassociate human accountability with player interactivity. There's no moral compass to help guide the player to keep God within their mindset of playing.
- It needs to be more moderated by parents. Social and emotional IQ of kids nowadays is leaving much to be desired.

However, 46.15% viewed online gaming as a potential church connection point. Here are some example responses in the positive from the open-ended question.

- The world is leaning more towards this type of technology—so the church should go where the "world" is—and reach the people for the Kingdom of God.
- I believe a Faith based game would give the opportunity to evangelize youth that would never approach a church otherwise.
- Online gaming allows people who feel marginalized to connect to people with similar interests and beliefs. I have some social anxiety issues myself, but gaming has allowed me to connect and be socially active.

The next feeling based question divided into positive and negative feelings was “do you feel there is a specific place for online gaming technology in the church? If so, where do you feel it should be? If not, why?” This question was divided into positive feelings and negative feelings. Of the people evaluated, fifty-two percent believed it could be used to reach the youth. Twenty percent of participants were not sure how online gaming could be used by the church, while 30% had negative feelings towards the use of online gaming technology. Here are some example responses in the positive for use of online gaming technology in the church:

- Yes, with young people and young adults for sure. There are many lessons that can be illustrated and learned through this type of technology—if you have the right leader to explain how they connect. Again, if not done correctly—you will just have people playing video games and not being evangelized—which would totally miss the purpose!

- Youth groups and young adults. Most youth and young adults are visual learners and are easier to engage in life topics while interacting with the games.
- As a teaching tool for the younger people...maybe 17 and younger.

Here are some responses that displayed a negative feeling toward online gaming technology

- I don't really think it is appropriate to engage the world with the things the world is a part of.
- Our church has a very small congregation. Online gaming would not be appropriate for us. If a larger church used it, it would have to be closely monitored.

The next question relating to this research question was experience based. It evaluated what the participant had actually experienced. Here is the question that was asked of participants. "Do you see or experience connections occurring around you in online environments such as online gaming? If so please explain? If not, what do you believe restricts online social interactions in gaming?" The participants primarily answered this question with a negative experience of 64.7%. The respondents did not seem to feel that they experienced true connections online. However, 32% of the respondents reported that they have experienced authentic relationships through online gaming. Here are some example responses in the negative:

- I think the biggest restriction is the accountability of real relationships is rarely there. Online friends can disappear for long periods of time, and you have no ability to check on them. It limits the depth of relationship. In the end, they are often relationships of convenience. Some of them can be very deep and rewarding relationships, but in the end, long distance community will always be limited. I also feel there is a great concern for children being met online and brought into online communities. We should be teaching children to keep things in game and never give out their personal information; which puts the church in a tricky spot if they are actively evangelizing in that same medium. So just like the team sports analogy, it's fine to create a softball team, but if you showed up at random little league games and tried to get young people to join

you for ice cream socials, it would come off as weird. We just need to be modeling the behavior we want young people to practice.

- Personally, I don't. Language content and language barriers tend to be the issue. If I can't understand them, I mute them. If they have vulgar language, I mute them.
- No, as it is done virtually which is much less personal than doing games in person.
- Isolates people, retards social skills.

Here are some respondents that have witnessed connections through online gaming.

- I have definitely met some very nice people playing words with friends and other games. Somehow become lifelong friends so yes you can have healthy social interactions while gaming
- I do not really do much online gaming but I connected online in servers chat and enjoy the fellowship and helping others do peer support a lot help others get help and support too enjoy online music a lot too online talks and messages debates at times too I do outreach in Christian rooms too find it a great tool for helping others spiritually and in other ways too also getting help spiritually and in other ways too it give me a great support system in many ways too also have wonderful brothers and sisters from all over the world in Christ

Research Question #2: Description of Evidence

What are the obstacles and objections South Texas Nazarene church members have toward some (current) design approaches in online evangelism?

The closed-ended questions portion of the questionnaire dealt with three portions of the research question. It dealt with what the participants believed about online technology, what they experienced and what they felt. Closed-ended Questions 1, 5, 12, and dealt with the beliefs of the participants with reference to the research question. Closed-ended Questions 4 and 17 in the questionnaire dealt with the experience of the participants with reference to the research question. Closed-ended Questions 9 and 11 in the questionnaire dealt with the feelings of the participants with reference to the research

question. The open-ended portion of the questionnaire dealt with how one feels about online evangelism and communities.

The closed-ended questions related to beliefs exposed the following results. Figure 4.4 below shows the data collected in the closed ended questions. There were some variations in the total numbers of people divided by the responses because some participants didn't answer certain questions. Question 1 displayed that 45% of respondents believed online evangelism was somewhat beneficial to the Nazarene church. Question 5 displayed that 40% respondents believed online evangelism was appropriate with some caution and 35% had no reservation to its use. Question 12 had a high standard deviation expressing that the majority of respondents believed that online evangelism is worth the time and effort with little variation from that response. Question 13 also had a high standard deviation expressing that most respondents believed that online evangelism would open up opportunities in other avenues within the Nazarene church with little variation from that response. Question 4 and 17 dealt with experience with relation to this research question. The respondents overwhelmingly expected at least a well-studied evangelist at 53% to be involved in online evangelism. At the same time, respondents had experienced little to average amounts of actual online evangelism in their churches. Question 9 and 11 dealt with feelings with relation to this research question. The respondents seemed to feel that awareness about online evangelism at 43% was the biggest factor that limited its use by the church. The respondent's general feeling of online technology at 58% was that it is a tool for use while a smaller percentage of 28% felt it was a social outlet.

Figure 4.4: Belief, experience and feeling responses

| Beliefs | | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|---|----------------------------|--|----------------|------|--------------------|
| | Not Beneficial | Somewhat Beneficial | Beneficial | Very Beneficial | | Mean | Standard Deviation |
| How Beneficial do you believe online evangelism is for your church? | 10.00% | 45.00% | 25.00% | 20.00% | | 10 | 0.93 |
| | No | Sometimes, but with much caution | Yes, but with some caution | Yes | | Mean | Standard Deviation |
| Do you believe online evangelism to be an appropriate medium for the Nazarene Church? | 7.50% | 17.50% | 40.00% | 35.00% | | 10 | 0.96 |
| | No | Somewhat not worth it | Somewhat worth it | Yes | | Mean | Standard Deviation |
| Do you believe that online evangelism is worth the time and effort? | 5.00% | 0.00% | 35.00% | 60.00% | | 10 | 1.77 |
| | No | Somewhat No | Somewhat Yes | Yes | | Mean | Standard Deviation |
| Do you Believe that online evangelism would open up opportunities in other avenues of the Nazarene Church? | 5.00% | 5.00% | 40.00% | 50.00% | | 10 | 1.48 |
| Experience | | | | | | | |
| | Never | Very little | Average Amount | Regularly | | Mean | Standard Deviation |
| Have you experienced online evangelism? | 15.00% | 37.50% | 27.50% | 20.00% | | 10 | 0.62 |
| | Learner, a new Christian | Basic, basic understanding of doctrines | Proficient, well studied | Advanced, at or beyond the level of Clergy | no answer | Mean | Standard Deviation |
| How proficient with bible knowledge does an online evangelist need to be? | 2.50% | 27.50% | 52.50% | 15.00% | 2.50% | 9.75 | 1.35 |
| Feelings | | | | | | | |
| | Personal feelings | Christian views | Relevancy to life | Awareness | no answer | Mean | Standard Deviation |
| What do you feel is the biggest obstacle to online utilization of evangelism tools? | 25.00% | 17.50% | 12.50% | 42.50% | 2.50% | 9.75 | 0.84 |
| | Identity | Social outlet | tool | purpose | Necessary evil | | |
| What is your general view of what online technology provides? | 2.50% | 27.50% | 57.50% | 7.50% | 5.00% | 8 | 1.48 |

The opened-ended questions with reference to research question one yielded the following results. The open-ended questions dealt with how the participant felt about online evangelism. The first question related to this research question was “how do you feel about the church using online evangelism? Why?” The answers were divided into whether the respondent had a positive or a negative feeling toward online evangelism.

74% of respondents believed that online evangelism was a positive move. In fact, many of the respondents expressed that it would reach youth that the church may not be able to reach. However, the respondents tended to believe they had no other option because of the pervasiveness of technology. 20% of the respondents had negative thoughts believing it was replacing social engagement. Here are some examples of the positive respondents:

- I think very good idea as it can reach many who would not go into church buildings at all or could not due to being in home with parents or others who would not allow them too so it great way to reach people also to reach over overseas in places they not allowed to go to Christian churches.
- If used properly with caution and discretion it could be a great beneficial tool. It would draw in many who are already using this type of technology and it would be a great way to reach young children and give them illustrations of God's Kingdom in a "world" they already understand.
- I think it's a tool that should not be ignored. Any chance to reach out to any demographic should be taken advantage of!
- It is a necessary evil. The online market is the biggest market on the planet now.

Here are some examples of some of the responses given in the negative.

- I think it is a waste of resources that could be used in other areas.
- I think evangelists and in general, Christians should always be ready to give an answer for their faith, wherever that is. That said, making the decision to target your time and resources to a form of evangelism that is separated from tangible forms of fellowship, worship and ministry, feels like a misdirection of resources. Much like sending teams to far off destinations for one week a year. It's not a sustainable ministry unless you encourage people to stay in their mindset of escapism and social disconnect of an online world. Which I do not feel is proper for emotional and spiritual growth.

The second question related to this research question was “how do you feel about watching a sermon online versus inside the church? Why? 70% of respondents preferred experiencing a sermon live over an online sermon compared to 24% preferring an online experience. Of the 70% of respondents that preferred the sermon live, the majority of

respondents were not opposed to online if there was not an alternative. Of the 24% preferring the online experience, what was cited most was the safety of home in the current pandemic situation or the time to go over the material at their own pace. The examples below are responses where a negative feeling toward online sermons was expressed.

- I am very social, and I love the interaction with my friends at church. During the pandemic I watched online every week because that was the only choice I have. I realize many people have not come back to church because they got used to watching online.
- I'd rather be in church, yet as long as I get the Lord's word in some way; it is moderately permissible to miss out on a gathering. Don't get me wrong, GOING to church is more important and effective. You don't really get any fellowship and belonging out of watching on your phone/computer.
- An in-person service is far more effective in many ways. However, an online message is still better than no message at all. With an in-person message, you can ask questions directly to the pastor as needed vs the online sermon being impersonal. You can interact with others and share rhema word if it comes to you in a far more personal and effective manner. It is also easier to discern the spirits in person and it is easier to deal with people spouting false doctrine in person.

The examples below are responses where there was a positive feeling toward online sermons over live sermons.

- I have watched and still do watch several sermons online. YouTube sermons have helped me to grow tremendously in my spiritual walk. I am all for online sermons!
- In our current climate, I'm more comfortable at home.

The third question related to this research question was “do you feel you can connect with people in church fellowship through online communities? Why or why not? The respondents were split evenly at 45% holding both a positive feeling towards online communities and a negative feeling. Most of the apprehension towards online

communities revolved around feeling that it was replacing authentic and deeper relationships. The positive respondents toward online evangelism felt that online communities could be just as authentic as communities with a physical presence. The positive responses tended to be longer and have more detail than the negative responses.

Here are some examples of the positive respondents:

- Yes. The younger generations are increasingly more and more connected to one another through technology. Utilizing it in a healthy way can connect people through online communities. I know of two people who met on an online Zoom Bible study who are getting married! They lived in two different countries.
- Yes, I enjoy both online and in person connections. Online allows for me to connect with people that are in so many other places in the world. I have the ability to do personal Bible studies with close friends in places on the other side of the world.
- Yes, I can connect, as long as God is glorified.
- I think you can, I haven't met many who agree.

Here are some respondents that responded with a negative response to connecting in an authentic way through online communities.

- Virtual relationships do not grant the same accountability as a face-to-face encounter.
- Currently, no. I know that there are a lot of people who do play online, but there's no way to identify them or a place to relate with them.
- No. I am a people person and need in person interaction. I have no desire to communicate online.

Research Question #3: Description of Evidence

What are the obstacles and objections South Texas Nazarene church members have toward some (current) design approaches in online evangelism?

The closed-ended questions related to beliefs exposed the following results. Figure 4.5 below shows the data collected in the closed ended questions. The closed-ended questions dealt with four portions of the research question. It dealt with what the participants believed about online technology, what they experienced, what they felt, and some objective questions about current design approaches in online evangelism. Closed-ended Question 6 in the questionnaire dealt with the beliefs of the participants with reference to the research question. Closed-ended Question 16 dealt with the experience of the participants with reference to the research question. Closed-ended Questions 14, 15, and 18 dealt with the feelings of the participants with reference to the research question. Closed-ended Questions 10, 19, and 20 were objective questions with reference current design approaches in online evangelism.

Figure 4.5: Belief, experience, feeling and objective responses

| Beliefs | | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|--|---|-----------------------|----------------|------|--------------------|
| | Below 17 | 17-25 | 26-50 | Greater than 50 | | Mean | Standard Deviation |
| In current design approaches to online gaming evangelism, what age group do you believe would be most impacted by online gaming evangelism? | 47.50% | 40.00% | 10.00% | 2.50% | | 10 | 1.40 |
| Experience | | | | | | | |
| | no | Somewhat no | Somewhat yes | yes | | Mean | Standard Deviation |
| Has your church utilized current design approaches like zoom, discord, or some other chat server platform for preaching or evangelism? | 25.00% | 10.00% | 22.50% | 42.50% | | 10 | 0.85 |
| Feelings | | | | | | | |
| | no | Somewhat no | Somewhat yes | Definitely | no answer | Mean | Standard Deviation |
| If a current design approach to online gaming evangelism was made easy to implement, at a low cost and had significant benefit, would you participate in online gaming evangelism? | 20.00% | 17.50% | 32.50% | 27.50% | 2.50% | 9.75 | 1.67 |
| | Free | \$1 per license | \$5-\$10 per license | \$15-\$20 per license | | Mean | Standard Deviation |
| What do you feel is the appropriate cost of a current design approach a church should pay for a platform in online gaming evangelism? | 22.50% | 17.50% | 32.50% | 17.50% | 10.00% | 9 | 0.47 |
| | no | I believe Online gaming interferes and often irrelevant to social growth | I believe Online gaming interferes but is relevant to social interactions | yes | | Mean | Standard Deviation |
| Do you feel like current online gaming levels or existence interferes with family connections and therefore sends the wrong message if the church utilizes new technological tools through online gaming evangelism? | 35.00% | 12.50% | 35.00% | 17.50% | | 10 | 0.74 |
| Objective | | | | | | | |
| | After work/school | During work/school | During church function | Never | | Mean | Standard Deviation |
| Based on current design approaches, when do you think online gaming evangelism is most appropriate to engage in? | 85.00% | 5.00% | 5.00% | 5.00% | | 10 | 2.53 |
| | 4yrs or greater | 2-3 years | 1-2 years | every 6 months-1 year | not applicable | Mean | Standard Deviation |
| How often does your church upgrade toward a current design approach in advanced technology for evangelism? | 12.50% | 17.50% | 20.00% | 5.00% | 45.00% | 8 | 0.96 |
| | 4-6yrs | 2-4yrs | 1-2yrs | Every 6mths-1yr | not applicable | Mean | Standard Deviation |
| How often does staff upgrade their knowledge toward a current design approach in online evangelism through advanced technology such as through virtual worlds, social chat immersion, or gaming? | 10.00% | 10.00% | 10.00% | 17.50% | 52.50% | 8 | 1.17 |

The open-ended Questions 24, 25, 26, and 29 dealt with how one feels about online evangelism and communities. 88% of participants believed that current design approaches have the most impact on people under 25. Forty-eight percent of respondents believed online evangelism has the most impact on youth under 17 years of age. It is interesting with the Covid-19 pandemic going on during the analysis that only one respondent believed that online evangelism would be impactful to those over 50. Forty-three percent of respondents expressed that their church uses current platforms like Zoom, Discord, and other social media platforms to evangelize online. Twenty-five percent of the sample said their church utilizes no forms of online evangelism. The participant sample seemed to feel that even if all obstacles were removed 38% would not participate in online gaming evangelism. Sixty-two percent of the participants felt that if all obstacles were removed they would participate in online gaming evangelism with 28% expressing they would definitely participate. Twenty-five percent of participants felt that any online gaming evangelism should be free, while 56% believed that the cost should be five dollars of more per person for a gaming platform. Only 35% of participants in the sample believed that online gaming didn't interfere with family connections. Thirty-five percent of the participant sample believed that not only did online gaming interfere with family connection but that it had little help in social growth of people. Generation X believed the contacts made online were inauthentic and did not prepare Generation Z for future social interactions such as work, marriage, and operation in the family unit.

The last set of closed-ended questions, Questions 10, 19, and 20, dealt with objective responses with reference to online gaming evangelism. Overwhelmingly, 85% of respondents thought that online gaming evangelism should only be utilized after other

obligations like school or work. Of the participant sample, 45% never experienced their church upgrading online technology, while 20% of participants only experienced their church upgrading technology every two years or greater. Of the participant sample, 52.50% did not believe that church staff upgraded their knowledge toward online technology or even that it was applicable to the church staff.

The opened-ended questions with reference to research question three yielded the following results. The open-ended questions dealt with how the participant felt about online evangelism with reference to current design approaches. The first question related to this research question was “Based on current design approaches in online evangelism, how do you feel the church should incorporate or not incorporate the latest technology for evangelism? Why?” The following are some common themes behind this open-ended question. The first theme was that people were inadequately trained for modern technology and chasing with the wrong motivation while good local models of evangelism are being replaced by 23% of respondents. The second common theme was that technology should be embraced but focused on a specific ministry. This specific ministry was identified as youth ministry by 23% of respondents. The third and final theme was that the church should embrace all forms of technology and meet the market. This theme was affirmed by 38% of respondents. Below are some of the responses by participants.

- I have seen several churches try to be early adopters in online social technology. I have never seen it become a fruitful ministry. I think the internet is a great tool for communication and should not be ignored, but there is a danger in not being able to use a medium to fully and respectfully communicate the gospel. Much like buying a billboard ad, one should be careful what message we put out that can be twisted by the devil and a sick world. I feel like most churches don't even do a decent job of evangelism on their own websites. If the message is not being eloquently communicated on the streets of our own

cities that is leading to salvations and discipleship, then I would question the ability to commit to outreach to souls across the nation or globe.

- It's not easy to answer. Most online people are looking for an intense rush of excitement. They are looking for getting rewarded by aggressively doing anything (good or bad) with little or no consequence for their actions. Most religions platforms are not able to do this. To me, I think this may require first a change of heart within the player for what is acceptable within an online experience.
- It should be offered to everyone within the church and community a tool also to teach people how to reach out to other spread God word too as in that way teaching them to be active in spreading God new too so it is also a tool in spiritual growth can be used for daily fellowship too for even shut-ins who cannot go to church building so that give more open sharing too.
- In Kid's ministry and above. I believe ages 6 and above would benefit - including Special Needs ministries. Once again, if it is done tactfully and with discretion.
- If you want to reach younger people, you are going to have to meet them where they are.

The second question related to this research question was “Based on current design approaches in online evangelism, what do you feel is the greatest obstacle to church incorporating technology? Why?” The common themes behind this open-ended question were public opinion, knowledge, and cost were biggest obstacles to online evangelism for the church. Public opinion/social concern was the largest concern at 40% of respondents. Knowledge or awareness was the second largest concern at 23.33%. The third largest concern among respondents at 20% was that it was cost prohibitive to the church. Below are some of the responses by participants.

- Money and desire for gaming patrons. Church is run like a business. In business it must be ran efficient and cost must be acceptable. In my opinion, I see the cost as not acceptable.
- Honestly, I feel like using the tools that are a major part of destroying society would also lead to breaking down the Church. When Church becomes a YouTube video and weekly Zoom call, I think we begin to break down the

fabric of authentic community and bond that we get in real fellowship, making easier for people to eventually just walk away from Church entirely. So I feel like the distraction of technology is one of the major obstacles, especially in the gaming world.

I'm honestly not knowledgeable about current design approaches in online evangelism. The greatest obstacle to the church incorporating technology would be the great rift in technological understanding across generations as well as maintaining said systems. The local churches today have so many problems in fighting false doctrine and keeping spiritual tabs on each individual sheep that adding online sheep could pose an issue.

The third question related to this research question was “Based on current design approaches in online gaming, how proactively or reactively do you believe the church functions with regard to this technology? Why?” The common themes behind this open-ended question were either that the church was reactive in its approach to technology at 32% of respondents or that the church is completely unaware, unsure, or interested in online gaming evangelism technology at 61% of respondents. The overall sample of participants viewed the church response to technology in a negative light at 94% of respondents. Below are some of the responses by participants.

- I don't see gaming more different than knitting or photography. You can use hobbies as a way to form relationships and share the gospel, but there is a danger in turning what should be a sacred community bond into a "club" experience. But at least with local hobbies, you can build authentic relationships that can lead to real life ministry. I don't know how an online relationship can grow into accountability and true brotherhood.
- Not many are even remotely aware that the gaming community is such an open and vibrant mix of youth that are searching for identity within the games that they play. It is where kids are going to learn about who they are, where they fit in, and how to deal with life. If we do not reach them, others will.
- Reactive is the approach for some local churches but they are very slow to follow larger churches. They feel as if face to face is the best way to evangelize.
- Re-actively. Tried and true methods of evangelism work. Most churches will stick by a proven model.

The fourth and final question related to this research question was “Based on current online evangelism approaches, how do you feel about church ordained activities occurring virtually such as Baptism, Communion, Funerals, or Weddings? Why?” The common themes behind this open-ended question were either that sacraments should not be performed online which was 65% of respondents or that they could but it often had a qualifier in the answer with 29% of respondents. Out of the 65% of people that said sacraments could not be performed online, the common objections were that it was fake, inauthentic, lacked local encouragement, or was too private a matter. Out of the 29% of respondents that felt online sacraments were ok, some qualified their response with only in desperate times or they were mixed about how they felt.

Participant Observation

Figure 4.6 below presents the quantitative data collected during the participant observation analyzing the body’s reaction to the stressors of online gaming while going through the exercise. This is an appropriate measure of research question, “what are the obstacles and objections South Texas Nazarene church members have toward some (current) design approaches in online evangelism?” The researcher took body measurements to analyze how the body reacts to stressors without the bias of the participants. Overall, stress on average increased as the participants went through the online gaming exercise with an average increase in stress of .72 meaning their body temperature dropped by that amount. The participants pulse increased during the exercise by .75 meaning that an increase of blood against their artery walls. Pulse increase also indicates an increase in blood flow which indicates more tension or stress in a peaceful

environment like sitting down comfortably in a chair playing the game. Oxygen saturation indicates the percentage of hemoglobin returning to the right side of the heart. The researcher realizes there are many indicators of stress but wanted to have a quantitative measure in the mix of qualitative data to limit the bias of perception. It also seems based on the analysis that the tension was moderate as the project began may be due to uncertainty of not know what they were participating in.

As the participant observation progressed, the participants seemed to relax. However, by the end of the observation through the gaming environment, they seemed to become on average more stressed. Though the measurement for oxygen saturation was taken, the researcher did not include that portion in the analysis as it did not seem to be a good indicator of an increase or decrease in stress. During the participant observation, the researcher tried to limit and minimize external stressors from the environment by offering refreshments and fellowship before and during the participant observation so the actors would not feel like they are being analyzed (Spradley 32). One actor was removed during the participant observation before the start of the study because of external stressors occurring to her at the moment. We did not want the participant's results to create an outlier in the study among the participants because of the participant's stress not associated with the study. Furthermore, we did not want the participant's comments related to her stress from an external source to influence the other participants. It also should be noted that one of the participants went through Covid-19 creating a natural immunity to the virus which caused his blood pressure to naturally read approximately 20 points higher than the average participant. The participant was the one who informed the researcher that the elevated readings were due to their recovery from Covid-19. However,

since the analysis was evaluating the change in level of blood pressure the researcher believed the impact was negligible to the sample findings.

Figure 4.6:

| Stress Collection in Participation Observation | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|-------|--------------------|----------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 1st Stress Reading | 90 | 89.3 | 84.6 | 87.5 | 88.3 | 83.7 | 88.9 | 85.7 | 88.4 | 86.4 | 92 | 87.3 | 86.6 | 99 | 92.7 | 93.6 |
| 2nd Stress Reading | 97 | 87.1 | 83.7 | 85.7 | 84.2 | 84.8 | 88.2 | 89.8 | 83.9 | 92 | 92.3 | 91.4 | 92.9 | 85.1 | 93.6 | 95.4 |
| 3rd Stress Reading | 88 | 89.5 | 85.9 | 85.3 | 84.1 | 81.2 | 84.6 | 86.9 | 84.4 | 86.2 | 92.7 | 91.3 | 91.6 | 93.1 | 93.8 | 93.8 |
| oxygen saturation 1 | 97 | 98 | 99 | 99 | 98 | 98 | 96 | 94 | 97 | 99 | 98 | 99 | 99 | 86 | 98 | 96 |
| oxygen saturation 2 | 94 | 98 | 98 | 98 | 93 | 99 | 97 | 91 | 98 | 99 | 97 | 96 | 99 | 98 | 98 | 97 |
| oxygen saturation 3 | 94 | 99 | 98 | 98 | 93 | 99 | 98 | 94 | 95 | 99 | 98 | 95 | 99 | 98 | 98 | 93 |
| pulse 1 | 82 | 68 | 72 | 62 | 85 | 77 | 100 | 77 | 80 | 71 | 60 | 76 | 81 | 79 | 87 | 77 |
| pulse 2 | 90.2 | 90 | 72 | 63 | 77 | 95 | 92 | 90 | 82 | 68 | 60 | 62 | 88 | 86 | 80 | 70 |
| pulse 3 | 74 | 81 | 79 | 65 | 80 | 93 | 101 | 90 | 72 | 75 | 59 | 54 | 86 | 78 | 86 | 73 |
| | Mean | Standard Deviation | Variance | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1st Stress Reading | 89.00 | 0.96 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2nd Stress Reading | 89.19 | 1.10 | 0.19 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3rd Stress Reading | 88.28 | 1.00 | -0.92 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Total Increase of Stress indicated by lower heat | | | 0.72 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| oxygen saturation 1 | 96.94 | 0.81 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| oxygen saturation 2 | 96.88 | 0.58 | -0.06 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| oxygen saturation 3 | 96.75 | 0.57 | -0.13 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | 0.19 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| pulse 1 | 77.13 | 2.42 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| pulse 2 | 79.08 | 2.95 | -1.95 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| pulse 3 | 77.88 | 3.05 | 1.20 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Total Increase of Stress indicated by increase in pulse | | | 0.75 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

The next portion of analysis was the qualitative data collected in the participant observation. The participant observation relates specifically to research question 3 because the participants each went through a current design approach in online gaming evangelism. One common theme that resulted amongst the three groups as the observation began was that people came into the observation with preconceived negative ideas about online gaming evangelism. The researcher noticed the groups talking amongst themselves about what they thought the researcher was studying before it was explained to them or they went through the exercise. The negative thoughts about online gaming evangelism before they actually went through the exercise seemed to revolve around believing that online relationships were not authentic, fear of the transition, and the inability of some to adapt to the change. Below are some examples of the comments

made during the observation. (G will indicate the group number; S will indicate the subject number, e.g., G1S1)

- (G1S2) You only know if someone is genuine face to face. It is by the facial expressions, the body language. That is how you know people are genuine.
- (G1S2) Before Covid-19 my church had both option of taking donations, but now they only have the online way and there is no way to give cash. I like the old way of putting money in the offering plate.
- (G1S4) Older people are afraid to donate online. They are afraid of technology in general. They just don't seem to have the technical knowledge to donate online or be a part of online fellowship.
- (G1S1) People can be fake behind a computer screen. They often turn the video off in a zoom meeting. The person on the other end doesn't know what I am doing.

Another theme during the participant observation is that only 3 of 16 participants or 18.75% traveled in the game without prompting. These three participants seemed to understand the general mechanics of the game and had little apprehension about moving around the map.

Generally the motion mechanics on a personal computer in a gaming environment tend to be the same across games on a personal computer. This seemed to expose that these two participants were more familiar with gaming environments on a personal computer. The general motion mechanics of the game seemed to be a continual struggle throughout the observation for most of the participants. Some of the participants would ask others in the group about how to do more advanced general mechanics besides movement like gathering blocks or building which was not part of the exercise without prompting. This behavior of trying to go beyond what is asked in the exercise seemed to expose genuine interest in the game. The participants did improve over the course of the observation, but this was an observable deficit amongst the participants. Lack of knowing

the mechanics of the game seemed to expose that some of the apprehension was related to the awkwardness of not knowing how to do something. In the teaching portion of the exercise, there was a general awe by each group about how expansive and detailed the biblical map was. Some of the comments are below.

- (G2S1) How long did this take you all to build?
- (G3S5) This is so impressive, and kids are so visual nowadays. It makes sense that you are doing this. I like being able to see the stories I am reading to the kids. I don't think they really get the stories without seeing it. The society is so removed from events of the past this is needed.
- (G3S1) Because I recognize kids are visually stimulated, I use super book in Sunday school, it is kind of like this in that it shows details of actual biblical places allowing them to feel a part of the story.

In the teaching section, one of the participants (G2S4) was particularly interested in follow up with the players and application toward those with ADHD. This participant (G2S4) was also speaking about how the application could be utilized on a big screen for the church to follow through with the gaming application. However, one participant (G2S1) expressed reservations to utilizing the platform inside the church and thought it was great for sparking interest to go to church but not for application inside the church. One aspect of the participant observation was to observe whether the actors would recognize the passive scripture post that show up while playing the game. Without prompting participants, 25% of the participants noticed the scriptures posted inside the game during game play and mentioned how much they enjoyed that insertion during the experience. These scripture postings occurred in the prayer section of the participant observation when the group went through Dr. Chou's stations of the temple prayer.

The common theme was the lack of engagement with the gaming server during the exercise. It seems that prayer for this generation seemed to signal them to stop what

they are doing and listen to the prayer. During the observation, the researcher was looking for signs of interaction with the server during the prayer section which simply did not happen. Instead of engaging the server, the actors were listening intently to the prayer as they went through the stations of the temple. The next section of the participant observation is evangelism. The individuals were teleported to a second server where the user stands before five signs. Each of the signs was a painting of a person going through a spiritual dilemma. The idea was that the gamer will self-identify what their inner spiritual longing by recognizing the image that expresses their dilemma. The researcher went through the scenario of the foreigner illustration which is below in Figure 4.7.

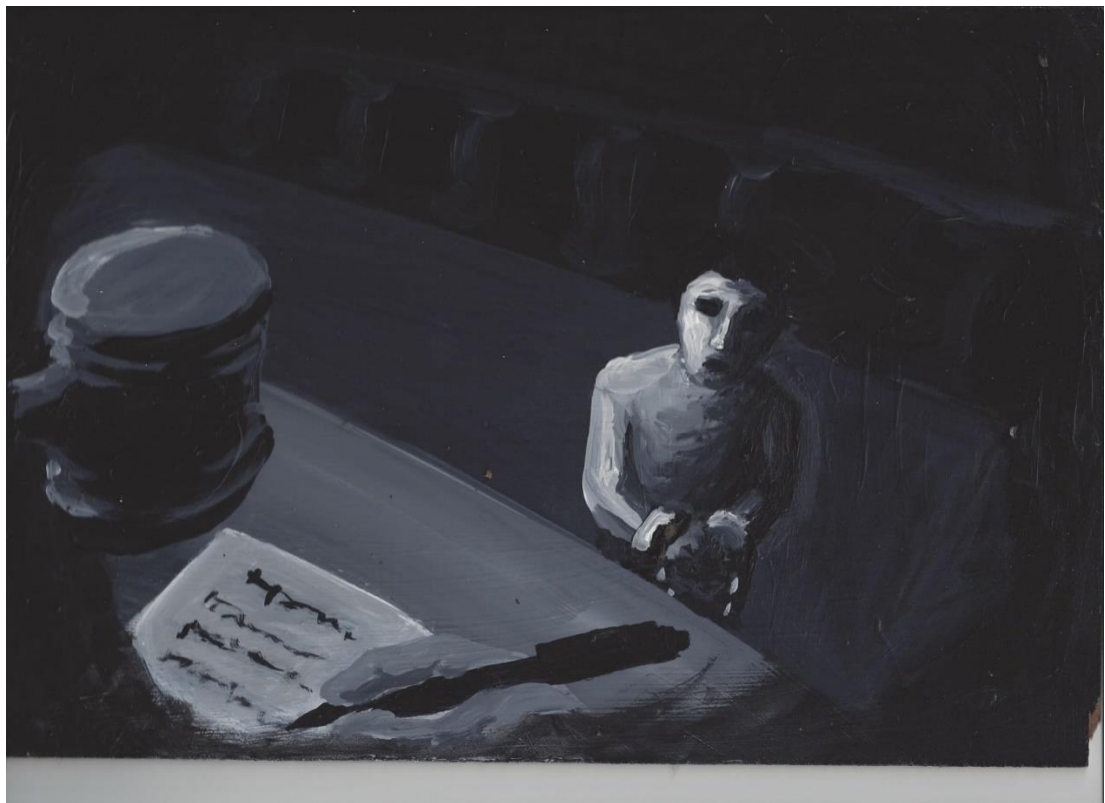
Figure 4.7



As the researcher taught the five theological worlds that express the spiritual dilemmas, the researcher watched for behaviors during the explanation. The foreigner

illustration shows a person lonely in a void. This illustration expresses the person whose inner longing is community but does not know how to become a part of community. They feel alone and isolated even in crowds and often turn off relationships like a switch. The researcher asked the group how they felt the justice/guilt model would work on this person, the model that says you are a sinner who needs a Savior would work on this person? The justice/guilt model is shown below in Figure 4.8.

Figure 4.8



The researcher explained that the person in the illustration already feels worthless and isolated. Does telling this person they are a worthless sinner bring them closer to a relationship with Christ? The researcher then showed how a more effective approach of inviting the person into a community of faith where the sin issue can be addressed through community would be more beneficial. The key to the five world's model is that

the individual self identifies what is obstructing their relationship with Christ by choosing an illustration. The group was very excited during this section. 75% of the participants were roaming around during this section of the exercise and asking questions about more in-depth application of the project. Here are some responses below.

- (G2S4) Do you explain the different paradigms before they choose or do the gamers just choose a picture? *Researcher response* – They choose so we do not influence their self-identifying process but there is a validating statement once they choose to check if they picked the correct paradigm.
- (G1S1) Depression greatest thing kids have to deal with nowadays
- (G1S4) expressed that they could see how a person could say “that’s me” and that what they notice is that many of the kids just do not feel worthy.

Another theme brought to light through the research was a relational theme. Group 1 had only women in it who were either widowed or had a spouse who was unwilling to participate in the study. The research did not ask for or depend on spousal participation. Group 1 had older Generation X ladies in the group whereas Group 2 and 3 contained younger Generation X participants. In Group 2 and 3 all participants brought their spouses to participate. For Group 2 and 3, if one spouse participated in the study application through the online environment, the other spouse tended to not actively engage while one party was involved. If one was driving the participation the other party tended to be silent during those times. There was no time during the study where both parties were actively asking questions or interacting at the same time in the participant observation.

In Group 1, the participants seemed to engage the project on their own without allowing one participant to drive the conversation or interaction. This seems like a significant find because it seems like in online gaming there is one parent that is

particularly vocal either positively or negatively while the other party seems more aloof and defers to the vocal spouse. It also seems relevant that if there was a particularly vocal position by someone in the group it would tend to influence the entirety of the group. This is one reason why there were three control groups rather than one large group. The researcher wanted to minimize polarization or groupthink in the study. There were two exceptions to this common theme of the most vocal steering the discussion. G2S4 and G2S1 were in the same group with opposing views which tended to balance each other out. G1S2 tended to have more of a negative view to online gaming and tended to influence the group they were in. The rest of the informants among all groups were much less assertive about their position.

Focus Group Section

All of the focus group questions focused on the research question, what are the current design approaches in online gaming toward evangelism that could be utilized (removing objections) by South Texas Nazarene churches? The first question was how do they feel the online mediums are beneficial or harmful? Twenty-five percent of the participants believed it to be detrimental by taking away from the church or listed some of their fears about children and youth being online. Another 25% said that it was very beneficial and really could help reengage the youth into the Bible. Here are some of the responses.

- (G1S1) It is beneficial because the youth learn, but how much time are they going to spend on it. My concern is, is it too involved and time consuming?
- (G1S4) It is detrimental because it takes away from their studies (*referencing school*)
- (G1S3) felt like the exercise was all learning and questioned the amount of fun because of it focused on teaching.

- (G2S4) I believe this is very beneficial and can see how this can be applied and used a lot. People are more honest online because they do fear the consequences that come from seeing someone in person. *Described a story of an 11-year-old who died of cancer, and his best friend he never met physically. The whole family flew to the boy's funeral.* I don't want to get to the point where my child's best friend is online, but if that is all they got.
- (G2S3) Youth is visual and this is great. If the youth is not engaged visually the speaking just sounds like noise to them. I have lots of friends who game but have not seen the teaching or evangelism applications to it.

What are some of the obstacles you felt while going through the participant observation? Most of the participants expressed that they were fairly comfortable with the exercise and that any awkwardness was due to the newness of the experience. One interesting obstacle brought up from participant G3S4 was that game play in the first person made the participant slightly sick. They would have preferred to play in third person. The next question in the focus group was "how do they feel the mediums can be utilized for their church?" Most of the responses indicated that online gaming mediums should be targeted to youth audiences. While two participants (G2S1) and (G1S2) expressed that the medium should stay away from the church and operate separately to grow, many of the respondents saw an application within the church with the youth. Some of the responses are below.

- (G2S1) Why bring this inside the lens of the church, this application is best utilized for evangelism outside of the church. It needs to be a gateway. Furthermore, they felt that the need for the church to capitalize on a game night has gone because everyone has a computer now. *One of the participants brought up though that the gaming from his time has changed from single player to a network of players being social.* They agreed.
- (G2S4) I believe online gaming is hot right now and should be utilized by the church.
- (G3S5) It should be utilized by the church because people are visual learners. Everything that is understood today is understood visually. Even these dumb

memes that are all over the place are visual representations of something with meaning behind it that grabs the attention of the youth.

What have been, or may be some challenges you noticed in incorporating models like this? Many of the responses dealt with the perceptions that parents had about gaming. This question was unique in that it brought out some the most emotional responses for the research. Here are some examples below.

- (G1S2) Gaming is viewed as evil as it rots away precious time. I don't recognize the relationships it develops online. I only recognize the relationships it hinders right in front of me.
- (G2S4) Parents saying I just got this child off a game to come to church and the church is going to put them back on the game I just got them off of.

The researcher asked the group at this moment, is placing the kids in isolation by removing the social interaction with others helpful.

- (G1S4) I am concerned about monitoring the conversations that the kids are having.

The researcher asked the group at this moment, do you know what conversations they are having at school versus online? The researcher brought up how the gaming environment is controlled. There is no cursing in the game, no bullying, all conversations are logged and watched.

- (G1S1) It takes away from hobbies and things they could be doing at home.
- (G2S2) Finances of the church are the biggest obstacle to the church.
- (G3S6) Capturing the variety of games into one focal point is the greatest challenge. Games typically are not cross-platform and being able for the church to pick the game that the most kids will participate in and have the functionality seems to be a huge issue.

The largest concern is how online gaming affects the participant's relationship with the child rather than the child's actual health caused by gaming. What was voiced was more about how the gaming affects relationships with people rather than how the gamer is affected by online gaming. A response showing the concern for the gamer may

have been something like development of insomnia through the lighting that mobile gaming causes. Of course, participants are voicing from what they experience so that does have a bearing on this. The primary concerns seem self-centered to the participant's relationship to the gamers not the gamers overall experience with virtual social environments. During one of the group sessions, the reward system that gaming provides was brought up. The researcher went into the details of how rewards for attendance to Bible studies can be as simple as offering a special sword to someone and there is no additional cost to the church. The benefit of this reward system is it has the potential to increase the desire of that person to participate. However, the researcher explained, that they do not want to create the wrong motivations for attendance to virtual Bible studies so they would need to be careful about the reward system.

Summary of Major Findings

There were four major findings which emerged from the analysis of the data collected from participants. The findings are listed below with a brief summary of the major finding. There will be a more detailed description of the major findings in the next chapter.

Major Findings

1. Most participants came into the study with negative preconceived perceptions attitudes and bias toward online gaming and its application within the church.
2. The mechanics of the game were the largest obstacle in practice with participants being observed even though personal computer online gaming movement dynamics tends to be the same across a variety of games.

3. Most of the participants viewed the computer as a tool and gaming as an escape after obligations were completed.
4. The church is ill prepared for online technology and is unaware of the many potential applications in online gaming evangelism.

CHAPTER 5

LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

The South Texas District of the Nazarene Church has an issue with embracing online gaming evangelism into its evangelism model. The research hopes to investigate the obstacles in such a way that effective models can be made going forward. The church has become stagnant by using older dated methods of evangelism that have not been effective on the emerging generations. At the same time, online gaming continues to be a major influencer in the environment of Generation Z. Generation X seems more relaxed with traditional models of the church, while Generation Z seems to push away at models that do not appeal to their generation. Older generations are relying on what they feel are tried and true methods because they worked on them, while new generations seem unresponsive at a growing rate to the message of the institutional church. Therefore, the purpose of the project was to discover South Texas Nazarene Church members' objections to online gaming in order to design an evangelistic online gaming experience that avoids those obstacles.

This section of the research reviews the major findings of the study discovered in Chapter 4. The major findings are analyzed in three categories: personal observations of the researcher; the literary research that supports or does not support the findings, and the biblical support or lack of support for the findings. This chapter addresses both the ministry implications of the findings and the limitations of the study. After that, the chapter will list the unexpected observations that came from the study. The researcher

than offers some recommendation to the church based on the findings in the research.

The chapter then closes with a postscript from the researcher.

Major Findings

First Finding-Negative preconceived perceptions toward online gaming

Most participants came into the study with negative preconceived perceptions attitudes and bias toward online gaming and its application within the church. Most of those negative feelings had to do with how the gamer is removed from the social engagement with the participant (selfish focus) in the study rather than the gamer's actual social needs. However, negative feelings toward online gaming evangelism dropped between 37%-40% from the quantitative canvassed questions to the ending focus group qualitative application. This indicates that as the participants experienced the online gaming environment and participated in the environment a significant shift in their overall attitude toward the online gaming evangelism. By the end of the final focus group questions the findings demonstrated that participants were equally split in positive (25%) and negative feelings (25%) toward online gaming evangelism. These percentages are to be understood through the lens that 74% of participants believe that online evangelism is a positive move that must be explored.

Personal Observation

I have been doing online gaming ministry for about ten years using the Minecraft Java edition and discord chat servers as mediums to minister to youth. It has always been difficult to convince churches to come onboard with this ministry. It is only recently that my own denomination has established a virtual church called Lightstream where I am a Nazarene pastor. There is still no formal way to document what we do virtually.

Therefore, when I try to submit reports about authentic connections our ministry is establishing, there is nowhere to document such analytics. The main establishment is still concerned with physical bodies in the pews of the church and the accounting reflects this. When trying to bring other denominations and churches on board to what we are doing, it is met with resistance. I have found three common themes when I speak to pastors about what we are doing. Pastors do not understand what we are doing and how it is vital for them to begin the ministry. They fear that our ministry will consume what few youth they have in their church. They have an underlying suspicion of online gaming in general. It is difficult to overcome the preconceived negative thoughts toward online gaming evangelism. It may be because the church looks at the extremes of negative gaming such as “Grand Theft Auto.” It may be because the churches main body of Generation X and above did not grow up in the age of social online gaming experience. Instead, Generation X and above comes from an age when games were a single player nonsocial experience.

My own experience as a Generation X pastor developed with these types of single player goal-oriented escape type games. It took many years for me to see the transformation of gaming to include authentic social relationships and a potential for ministry. During the analysis, many of the participants spoke from their experiences in gaming so they came into the analysis with their own thoughts about online. What I recognized is that because the group sets had not experienced authentic relationships online because they grew up in a first-person nonsocial gaming experience, they already had their mind made up about online gaming evangelism within the church. My judgement is that many of the participants took a reactive position based on past experiences where relationships were nonexistent in online gaming. What is interesting is

the reactive approach and suspicious underpinnings they held were exactly what they were critical of the church about because the church is reactive in adapting new technologies.

As the analysis went on, their suspicion subsided, and they began to embrace certain aspects of the project because they were seeing how online gaming evangelism could be effective. I think the most interesting point about this major finding is that the participants focused their attention on how they were affected by a gamers attention to a game, rather than how the gamer views those relationships as authentic. The concern seemed to have a selfish motivation or concern undergirding the responses. Respondents tended to judge online relationships as fake without experiencing those relationships and evaluating them based on actual instances. Furthermore, many made statements like “gaming robs me of my time in a relationship.” By the end of the study, there was a marked difference in the view of the participants toward online gaming. The groups were excited and eager to learn more about the gaming evangelism models. Nearly one-half of participants asked for information on how to go back to the gaming environment so they could offer the platform to gamers they knew. Furthermore, the ones they wanted to invite were socially close to the participant. It is also interesting, that many of the participants stayed around long after the study completed to find out more about the applications of online gaming evangelism.

Literature

There are many factors that feed into an initial impression of negativity toward online gaming being used for evangelism. Studies show that there is a correlation between screen time use and depression (Twenge Kindle loc. 1119). Some studies show

that a decrease in the use of Facebook increases a person's mental state (Twenge Kindle loc. 1135). There are new phobias that are attacking this generation that did not exist twenty years ago such as "nomophobia" (Barna 15). The twelve-billion-dollar pornography industry has poured its resources into gaming environments, and there are games that are focused on sexuality (Cutrer 66). These are just a few reasons why a person may come to the gaming environment with negative feelings toward it. Until a person experiences a positive experience through a gaming module, these negative echoes about the gaming industry are going to pervade the person's idea about the game.

The prime directive of Jesus is found in Mathew 28.19, "Go and make disciples." Jesus did not limit this prime directive to nomadic wonderings. His disciples wrote letters and appealed to the current knowledge of the people through parables and creative speeches like Paul in Athens. As church history progressed through time, new advancements improved the distribution of Christ prime directive through the building of schools, monasteries, hospitals, iconography, and through translation of the scriptures (Bigam 325–41; Coogan 73, 277). The question then becomes if the church fathers, theologians, and disciples believed they should continue to expand the message of Christ by expanding its distribution beyond nomadic wondering, why would the current church stop at icons for the ignorant, food for the prisoners, or hospitals for the poor (Dunn, 715–40)? The Gospel united and spread under the common unified language of Koine Greek through trade and social hubs (Frend 36–37; Hastings 19,41–42, 44; Thomas 61–81). Today, the new unified language of trade and social hubs is online technology (Hayse 68–70; Bevins et al. 195–97). People now shop, work, socialize, play, and even live through online communities (Bainbridge 472–76; Maddix 10–14).

Scholarship agrees that as a person experiences more involvement in an online community and participates in it, a symbiotic relationship develops where while they contribute to the shaping of the community they are being shaped by it as well (Hayse 68–70; Maddix 10–14; Weick 34–35). A community of “trust” develops over time with those of similar interest in an online community (Silverman Kindle loc. 100, 107, 114, 206). As a person participates in the community, the distrust they initially felt will dissipate. If the people are involved in developing the community and have similar interest, it will develop into a formidable relationship. This information seems to collaborate with the findings that the longer a person participates the more inclined they are to see value in the relationships developed online. Furthermore, online gaming has the added benefit of engaging the emotions in better ways than pulpit preaching through feedback, story-telling, epic meaning, accomplishment, social influence, and full immersion in the environment (Bell Kindle loc. 876; Hayse 68–76).

Theological

The Bible should be viewed through the lens of evangelism. The Old Testament gives examples of God inviting people into the kingdom and the responses of those who have been invited (Brueggemann 7–8, 16–18, 70). From the very first book of scripture, foreigners are invited to be a part of the kingdom of God (Gen. 16.1–2; 19.12; 30.3–5; 34.8–17; 41.50–52). Some of the ways the foreigners were invited into fellowship may make readers uncomfortable, but God’s plan is unfolded in history despite the mistakes of humanity. When people work together for a common project, they accomplish mighty things despite their intentions. The tower of Babel is an example of the masses uniting for a common cause to fulfill a goal and working together in social relationships (Gen. 11.4).

Even though the intentions of the people (and animals) was seeking an improper goal, while doing the project they developed a process that made them invested in the project. This mirrors the major finding that as people work together for a common goal, their suspicion of the project decreases and they become more invested in the project. It is not the technology that is evil; it is the intentions of people that can be evil. Some people may point to Tubal-Cain of the land of Nod as an example of technology turning men evil because iron and bronze were used for weapons, but one must remember that Moses was given the wisdom to work with metals by God (Gen. 4.22; Exod. 31.3–5). Therefore, it is the crafters intention were the evil lies, not the technology to craft items.

The same could be said for online gaming. Those that fear online gaming seem to perceive the technology to game as evil when they should focus on the intent of the crafter and the user of that technology. As people utilize the technology and see the benefits for the Gospel, their suspicions about the technology decrease. Can you imagine if the wheel, axle, and grain storage were thought of as evil simply because they exist, when they saved a whole nation in famine (Gen. 41.48)? The disciples themselves took hold of advancements by utilizing scribes and scrolls to pen letters for the churches. The online environment is an advancement in communication that allows for replication and global reach beyond the capabilities of scroll writing. Technology is another avenue in which humanity is to subdue the Earth for the glory of God (Gen. 1.28). Admittedly, there will always be those who utilize technology for evil purposes. However, if Christians are absent from the “marketplace” of social interaction they risk allowing evil to be the only voice in that marketplace. It is clear though scripture that believers should proclaim the Gospel by any means possible (Acts 1.8; 17.22–30). Online evangelism may

be the “new wineskin” that is unpalatable to some because they have grown up within old “wineskins” (Luke 5.37–39). Once it was the Roman roads that brought the message of Christ to people from faraway lands, now it is the internet (Ferguson 22, 82). Once it was the bathhouses, trading routes, and marketplaces where social exchange occurred, now it is in chatrooms and on social media (Green 32–33).

Second Finding-The mechanics of the game were the largest obstacle

The mechanics of the game was the largest obstacle in practice with participants being observed even though personal computer online gaming movement dynamics tend to be the same across a variety of games. The newness, awkwardness, or uncertainty of what to do next with regard to the mechanics in the game was a persistent stressor during the gaming environment.

Personal Observation

What I observed through the presentation was that the largest obstacle for Generation X with respect to the participant observation was the movement dynamics of the game. I will say that a major change happened in the gaming industry with movement dynamics that many Generation Z gamers have not experienced. The change was a shift in the PC using W, S, A, D, and area keys instead of arrow keys situated at the right hand of the keyboard. This allowed the PC gamer to utilize the 1, 2, 3, 4... above the W, A, S, and D keys to be utilized for inventory and the Z, X, C, and V keys to be utilized as specialty keys. In other words, as gaming became more complex, more keys were added in order to give the user a more immersive experience in the game by mimicking actual human responses like head tilts and side-strides. If the Generation X participants had any experience in PC gaming, it was utilizing a different format on the keyboard and was

usually viewing the game from the aspect of a person outside the dimension of the game. Nowadays, games are played in a more 3-dimensional environment where first and third person aspects can be viewed.

Furthermore, Generation X grew up with games that were mostly single player or, if it was multiplayer, you did not play at the same time but rather alternated turns after a player died. The new gaming environment allows for simultaneous play with an almost unlimited number of players in a single gaming environment. Therefore, the members of Generation X picking up a PC controller for the first time in the last twenty to thirty years were placed in a completely different gaming environment from the experience of their youth. The participants were practically apologizing for their clumsiness through the gaming environment. However, after an hour of dialogue and experiencing the game, most were moving around in the gaming environment without a problem. The gaming environments are much more graphic, complex, engaging, and realistic than the Generation X games such as Pitfall, Defender, Donkey Kong, and Pac man.

I found that through the participant observation no matter how much instruction I gave to come the participants about the movement dynamics, it did very little to help their awkwardness or help them. It seemed that only them engaging the process through the awkwardness and talking about the frustrations through the process helped them move forward. The longer they were actively playing the game the more they caught on to the dynamics of the game. They also learned best by watching others move through the gaming environment rather than taking instruction verbally. The verbal cues did help but not to the degree of actual interaction with the movement dynamics. It seems that time playing the game and interacting with the experience were some greatest helps in both

learning the game and relieving anxiety about the experience. There was an anxious unsure feeling prior and during the learning of the gaming dynamics. After individuals learned the gaming dynamics, many acted as if they knew all along how to operate the game or they were very comfortable with engaging a gaming environment in the future. This time in the gaming dynamics opened up the potential and possibility for them to experiment with other gaming modules in the future.

Literature

The researcher did not discover literature that directly dealt with gaming mechanics being a major obstacle in the use of gaming in evangelism. Most of the literature dealt with a community of “trust” developing over time (Silverman Kindle loc. 100, 107, 114, 206). This could mean that there is also a “trust” that develops with the gaming dynamics itself as well. Many of the games use the same gaming dynamics with a few changes in the secondary gaming dynamics. However, the gaming industry has added secondary levels of movement dynamics. While the emerging generations are groomed with these secondary movement dynamics, Generation X naturally reverts to arrow keys and a spacebar. The gaming industry is developing so quickly and pushing people to new experiences maybe the “trust” seems overlooked or even violated. While Generation X sees the changes in the gaming industry with apprehension, anxiety, and suspicion, Generation X may feel comfortable in what they feel establishes “trust.” Furthermore, It seems that the church uses outdated methods because of this awkwardness of change that seems to violate “trust.” The evangelist today faced with the growing threat of pluralism, individualism, and relativism is recoiling into outdated modes of lecture rather than story modes of motivation (Moon 4).

The research findings are supported through literary sources by exposing that when people learn through an awkward experience sometimes there are great gains in evangelizing people. Johnathan Edwards preaching at the gravesite of the dead spurring a great awakening is an example of when people do something different possibly awkward, they discover the potential of the medium (Marsden 159–69). Paul spoke about an unknown god in Acts 17; he tried something different after the normal methods seemed to have failed (Acts 17.22–31). John Wesley preaching in the fields to coal miners must have been awkward for a high Anglican churchman believing at one time that “saving of souls almost a sin” outside of a church (Snyder 33). Billy Graham preached in tent revivals and stadiums in order to get the message to the people rather than hope they show up to church building (Gonzalez 483). These people seemed to understand that through personal awkwardness, one may have a huge impact for the kingdom of God. In their cases, it was bringing the message of the Gospel to the people through methods that were not customary.

Theological

The findings are also supported through the common “trade” language of the people of the time which was Koine Greek. Once the transition was made, a large portion of Christianity spoke through the super highway of this common trade language (Coogan 277; Evans and Porter 468–70; Ferguson 14, 617). Christianity spoke in the common language of education, philosophy, and culture of the day. Once the initial awkwardness of learning a new language was gone the potential for expansion grew exponentially (Coogan 277; Evans and Porter 468–70). The expansion came primarily through the tradesmen speaking the trade language This common trade language creates new

opportunities for Christianity to spread. In a similar way, once the awkwardness of learning the gaming mechanics is overcome, new opportunities for the message of the Gospel become available.

God sought to know foreigners through evangelistic prophets such as Moses and Elisha (Exod. 5.1–1; 2 Kings 5.10). God was made known to foreign generals through blessings (2 Kings 5.1–10). Sometimes God is made known to people outside the fellowship of God through “awkward mechanics” such as intermarriage, spoils of war, signs, and wonders (Evans and Porter 684–85; 1 Kings 5.1–6; Exod. 4.3–4, 30). There is usually “awkwardness” in evangelism. Those who proceed forward through that awkwardness often they experience successful outcomes. Imagine the “awkward” mechanics of oral language through Ugaritic, non-vowel Hebrew, then toward the Greek languages (Coogan 47, 277; Evans and Porter 459–64). These must have been awkward transitions for the people which eventually developed into the precise language that the Bible was crafted in. As noted in the literature review, there is usually a fear that limits the use or adaptation of a medium for evangelism. This often occurs with the fear of false prophets infiltrating the ranks of Christians (Matt. 24.36). There is also a fear of being isolated in revelation. It was awkward for an isolated group called the Israelites to be chosen out from the oppression of Pharaoh’s rule to later become a group of people that established learning religious learning centers throughout the Romans Empire.

Third Finding-Computer as a tool, gaming as an escape

Most of the participants viewed the computer as a tool and gaming as an escape after obligations were completed. The participants could not see beyond the application of the game and recognize that the online gaming environment was an integral part of the

social life of the gamer. Furthermore, the dominant assertive personalities were often the negative voices in the study. The positive voices seemed to have a more passive dynamic within a group setting. The positive voices tended to give long and thought-out answers to the study, seeming to indicate a desire to explore the potential of online gaming evangelism. The negative voices tended to be short and reactive. The negative voices seemed to have responses that were more habitual and closed to interaction or entertaining online gaming as a platform for evangelism. The reactive responses seemed to express a subconscious desire to keep things the same because of fear of change. The reaction response is akin to Freudian slip through behavior. The limited responses limit access to information which could produce an avenue for connection. Therefore, by participants choosing to withhold the rationale for their position, the participant may feel like they are guarding the future from change.

Personal Observation

I observed through the closed-ended questions and open-ended questions that negative responses tended to be shorter. The negative comments toward online evangelism were not developed in any meaningful way and seemed to be reactive instead of thought out. The positive responses toward online evangelism seemed to have more depth and well compiled answers. Furthermore, many of the Generation X responses viewed the computer as a tool, a tool that you use to get a task accomplished. Generation Z seemed to view the computer and other online devices as an integral part of their life and lifestyle. Generation X seemed to be able to detach themselves from the devices based on the responses much more easily than the upcoming generations. This might explain why new phobias like nomophobia are being examined in psychology. This may

explain why Generation X may have preconceived negative feelings towards tools they don't see an application for until they actually see it being utilized. I also observed that the assertive Generation X personalities seemed to be very confident of their position even though their position seemed to be formed before the interaction with the gaming modules. One such person in the study went through the whole study and looked for specific tool utilization of the application rather than viewing the project as a whole. They would respond with this part or that part rather than I like the concept as a whole. The assertive personalities from Generation X also seemed to be more independent when reaching a determination. This is very different than what I experience in online communities of Generation X where they tend to have group chats together to form an opinion on something and tend to ask about others' opinions.

Literature

The reason pastors use verbal imagery is “to make present and appropriate” the message to the one receiving it (Craddock 51, 200). When pastors integrate preaching with imagery, they integrate the message into the life of the person. In the same way, new generations are integrating technology into their lifestyle and identity. Generation X tended grew up viewing the computer as a useful object whereas Generation Z saw a transformation of online technology as an expression of who the individual was. Generation Z, the largest generation with the most potential for evangelism, is continually moving toward a virtual experience (Barna 10; Twenge Kindle loc. 231–232). Avatars allow an individual to fully immerse themselves into a virtual experience with choice of expression such as cloths, hair styles, dance styles, and emoji that the previous generation was not able to experience (Bainbridge 472). Today, whole forms of currency and virtual

property called NFT's are a part of the experience of the gamer. The user can shop and experience life through virtual environments that are an integral part of their life (Bainbridge 472–73). The computer is no longer simply a tool to compute equations and tally databases. However, appropriate caution needs to be expressed. For example, the pornography industry has recognized it can exploit this new media platform (Twenge Kindle loc. 2911; 2915). The negative impressions from the study may be rooted in this caution because Generation X has lived through the expansion of the pornography industry and seen its effect on society (Bainbridge 472). However, video games are able to take an individual through an epic journey. This immersive style of storytelling has been lost by the church over the years (Moon 8; Kirkland 230–31). If the church could learn to utilize the art of storytelling through the epic journey of salvation as an integral part of the user's life, the church may be able to use this medium to immerse new believers into the salvation story, having maximum impact on the user's life (Moon 8; Kirkland 230–31). Unfortunately, the church has largely been absent from incorporating computer technology as an integral part of a person's life and evil has had free reign in virtual communities (Ewell 436–39; Kirkland 230–39).

Theological

Technology has always been morally neutral (Morrow 333; Radder 898). However, the motivations of the persons behind technology often determine whether it is used for evil purposes (Morrow 333; Radder 898). Until the 19th century, technology always encompassed more than a mechanical aspect (Schuurman 13). Even the Greek roots tend to wrap the meaning of technology around art rather than purely mechanical aspects (Schuurman 13). Generation X seems to have embraced the 19th century use of

technology, while Generation Z sees technology as more of an embodiment of the individual. In Exodus, the Lord gives wisdom and knowledge in all forms of workmanship and artistic work (Exod. 31.3–5). Technology, once a tool that becomes a way to evangelize, is becoming an avenue of artful expression to immerse the believer into the life as a believer. Roads were once pathways to trade; they became a place of “social interchange” (Green 23–33). Building centers used for strategic purposes and social welfare became places to exchange ideas, rumors, philosophy, and business. These social centers were places where ideas were shared and fertile ground for Christianity (Ferguson 22, 82; Green 250, 257). In the same way, virtual worlds are the new way to exchange ideas, rumors, philosophy, and business.

Just as Christianity has utilized technology from the past to deliver the message of the Gospel, today Christians have fertile ground in the virtual experience of users. People may initially look unfavorably on new ways of evangelizing like preaching before an unknown God the way the Apostle Paul did to the Greeks in the book of Acts, but these brave acts in scripture have given guidance for the future of evangelism (Acts 17.23). It is John Wesley that would begin to believe that preaching through social networks such as class meetings, bands, open air preaching, and through circuit riders (Gonzalez 270–71, 273). This movement away from the church building was revolutionary for its time and initially made John Wesley uncomfortable. However, these awkward feelings subsided when he saw the effects of open air preaching, especially on a community of miners. This kind of bravery in approaching evangelism through new avenues is mirrored by Billy Graham who evangelized thousands through tent revivals and stadium preaching (Gonzalez 483). Christians must utilize all the tools possible to evangelize the lost as Paul

the evangelist says "...I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some" (1 Cor. 9.22).

Fourth Finding -The church is ill prepared

The church is ill prepared for online technology and is unaware of the many potential applications in online gaming evangelism. The participants viewed the staff of the church as ill equipped to handle the changing environment of online evangelism. Furthermore, the expectation by participants was that church staff's proficiency in the Bible as it was applied to online gaming was to be at the clergy/expert level. Participants overwhelmingly (93.55%) viewed the church's response to online gaming evangelism was negative by being slow, reactive, ill-equipped in technology, and ill-equipped in proficiency in the Bible.

Personal Observation

I observed that many of the participants in the questionnaires had a low opinion of their church's technical ability and the staff's technical ability. When it came to the analysis of staff, the participants said only 18% of church staff is fresh with their technology training. What is even more staggering is we correlate the observations I made of the actors in the participant observation to the questionnaires. I observed that actors came to the gaming evangelism model with a lack of knowledge of the most basic moving mechanics in the game. This seems to imply through correlation that the one's complaining about the staff's technical ability and the church's ability see themselves as better equipped. Ultimately, it seemed that those with low technical gamer intelligence were expressing that they were more equipped than the staff of a church and adapted to their surroundings better than the church. Whether this could be psychologically

projecting their own insecurities to the church or not, it seems the actors felt superior in their abilities. What is even more interesting that I observed is that the participants in the study expected the proficiency of the Bible of online evangelist to be at or near the level of clergy. Here there seems to be an issue where the church puts much effort into training to be clergy and little into how to work with technology.

Literature

Pastors often complain about the difference between what they learned in seminary and church educational programs versus the application in the business of the church and the social dynamics of the church (Krejcir; Lee 632). There is an aspect of the business of the church that may not be expressed easily by those that are not technically equipped in modern computing or management styles. Therefore, I have not found a direct application of the literary analysis to the technical pressures applied to the pastor or staff, but I did find some with the vaguer application of “the business of the church” (Lee, 632). If pastors leave the ministry over the feeling of being ill-equipped to handle the social pressures of the church and the business of the church, imagine the pressures now applied to a field dominated by an older generation being forced to deal with technology they do not understand. Imagine the uncomfortableness of a pastor and staff having to immerse within a virtual landscape of storytelling when their education may have been wrapped around three-point sermons (Thomas 17–20).

Since the very beginning of Christianity, it has always been a religion with the future in mind using all the sources available to minister to individuals and the masses (Murphy 131, 133). Why then are pastors not equipped with the training or the latest technology? Language is becoming rich with visual clues, so why does a lot of the

training of pastor's deal with enlightenment era techniques (Kirk 126; Thomas 17–20)?

Since the middle-ages, the church has engaged the senses with story form iconography, yet today many pastors are focused on non-visual messages. Would not a medium that immersed the person into the senses have more of an impact on the average laity?

Another issue is that most western evangelism techniques deal with personal and individualistic transformations, yet research shows that Generation Z makes decisions through group transformations (Yadav et al. 110). Therefore, a community immersed into visual media may have a better response than the typical focus on an individual (Yadav et al. 110).

Theological

The scriptures are rich with storytelling, parables, and imagery, so why would pastors not use the same methods utilized in scripture. Jesus told parables that came from the life of the people such as parable of the sower (Matt. 13.1–23; Mark 4.1–20; Luke 8.4–13). The Old Testament is rich with the stories of people in the past that inform current theology such as Abraham, Jacob, Jonah, and many more. The books of prophecy such as Daniel, Isaiah, and Revelations are full of imagery that captivates the mind. The application is that pastors can utilize stories, parable, and imagery to continue to captivate the laity. Technology allows for immersion into the stories through virtual worlds and fellowship. Fellowship has also always been a part of the Christian message from commands not to “forsake the assembling of yourselves together” (Heb. 10.25). God himself saw the need for humanity to be in fellowship from initial creation by creating the first family (Gen. 2.18). Furthermore, Christianity has a long history of social centers worship where values and knowledge are shared (Resseguie 69). Opportunities for

Christians to evangelize have often come in the form of small group studies, open air preaching, and fellowship meals (Henderson 14–15). One major use of technology where Christianity utilized the latest methods to evangelize beyond the local fellowship was using the printing press (Sweet 4). The printing press allowed the Gospel to move and be a part of many cultures in many languages. In the same way, online technology allows for the distribution of the Gospel on a massive scale but also through virtual mediums allows the user to feel the Gospel experience.

Ministry Implications of the Findings

Two of the major findings dealt with perceptions and attitudes toward virtual gaming evangelism, while two were more about some sort of skill limitation toward the application of virtual gaming evangelism or ignorance about the application of virtual gaming evangelism. The first major finding was based on the perception about online gaming they brought into the study. Increased participation in the virtual gaming evangelism changed the perception of the participants. The study exposed that with participation in virtual online gaming negative feelings toward online gaming drop drastically. It is important to show the benefits of the virtual online gaming through participation so the clergy and laity can see the benefits unfold before them. This desire to see the application in the real-world which has an impact on lives is probably based on the third major finding that Generation X tends to still view the computer as a tool and not an integral part of life the way or to the extent Generation Z does.

In ministry, it will be important to do walk through scenarios with Generation X so they can experience the virtual gaming world and its application. The longer their participation the more inclined they were to change their perceptions. In a one-and-a-

half-hour session, attitudes toward online gaming changed positively significantly. In the study, the negative responses were usually short and reactive, while those with positive answers seemed to give more detailed responses. It seemed like the negative voices did not feel any need to justify their position or that it was not important enough for them to detail their rationale. However, with participation and more importantly “buy-in” to virtual gaming evangelism these reactive thoughts tended to change into positive positions. It was important to help the user know they are an actual participant in the helping of changing people’s lives. It was difficult at times for the Generation X to realize they were actually participating in the gaming module with users that are real life players. This may be because Generation X grew up in the age of single-player games where networking of avatars was not available.

There were some skill limitations that developed over time through the immersion into a game. Game mechanics was a limitation for Generation X. Games have become more complex and require more ways to maneuver that were not necessary in the games of Generation X. Time spent with the game overcomes most of this awkwardness. Many game-makers have extensive tours through the game to help with the adjustment. However, since Generation X still views the computer as a tool, it may be that many Generation X people will grow easily bored of a stagnant tour without a person walking them through the application. One on one or small group sessions would seem to be the most affective for Generation X to see and discover the application of online evangelism. Another issue is that Generation X does not view gaming as an integral part of life. Generation Z receives a lot of social positive and negative affirmation online and lives in

virtual communities, Generation X still views gaming as something a person does after all their chores are done.

At the core, Generation X does not view online gaming in the same category as visiting with friends, fellowship meals, or playing games together. This is something that the church needs to be aware of and will adjust as Generation Z moves into the financial influencing generation. There are many reasons that may be at the root of complications Generation Z have with real life relationships. One of those reasons may be the rise of indifference in the generation based on the authority coming from peer groups rather than authority figures possibly because these peer groups enhance their sense of belonging (Moon and Simon Loc 595, 611). Another possible reason has to do with authority becoming friendship causing passivity mostly seen in the home (Cloud & Townsend 178). While the authority figure is losing influence, the natural response is to limit use with the source that is gaining influence, namely the internet. The church needs to adjust to be ready for a generation who lives, shops, and expresses emotion through virtual environments and virtual relationships. This is another area in the world of ministry where either the church will see the potential or get left behind to irrelevance. The church is unprepared for the next generation coming up that will be supporting the church over the next forty years or so. Church staff is untrained in this area, and seminaries that train church leadership have very few classes that deal with technology. Furthermore, many churches are moving away from professional clergy trained in seminaries to part time vocational pastors. Therefore, the opportunity to train the pastors through an education platform is decreasing. On a positive note, a vocational pastor may be equipped in this area from their vocation. However, the institution of the church has not valued

technology and observed the shift in ministry toward technology. Therefore, seminary training still focuses on hermeneutics and not application in the modern world. Until the institutions recognize the opportunity they are missing, the church will continue to take reactive actions and take them too late.

Limitations of the Study

This study purposely omitted clergy due to potential bias in desiring their personal congregation to look positive in this area. I believe and have experienced clergy inflating numbers and reports because of the way churches evaluate their staff on numbers. There was one individual during the study that left in the middle of the participant observation because her mother was on hospice and could not concentrate on the gaming module section of the study. I did not include her results in the study because it was not a complete evaluation. The study would be strengthened with more group sessions. However, the cost of doing so was out of the scope of my ability, and the covid-19 restrictions caused a fear of group session meetings. In a lot of ways this study can be generalized to secular environments such as giving game-makers ideas for decreasing anxiety to Generation X gamers especially in the form of gaming mechanics.

Unexpected Observations

Some of the surprises I found in the study while observing the participant observation:

1. Generation X tended to compartmentalize the study into sections instead of viewing the study as a whole. They would point out things they really liked in the study in sections rather than saying this whole concept is great for example. Furthermore, Generation X tended to be individually assertive in their opinions rather than asking others how they felt. Therefore, the study tended to have more

assertive individuals that had the ability to take over the session. This was one reason we chose smaller groups but more of them.

2. The participants tended to see the gaming environment through the lens of a single player action game rather than a community of gamers. This is probably a result of growing up in a time when there were only single player action games.
3. The Generation X players spent little time desiring or attempting to adjust the appearance of their character or seeing the value of doing such. This is interesting because game makers that are adjusting games to fit Generation Z spend a lot of time allowing for individual identity to come through the character. Game-makers allow for body modifications, styles, movement, and attitude specific characteristics to the avatar so the real-life player can express themselves through the game. These are things that were not available to Generation X.

Recommendations

My recommendation is mostly directed to the administrative portion of the church. I recommend that the church begin validating this area of ministry and recognize the potential to change the lives of individuals beyond the institutional walls. My first recommendation is to follow the lead of Reggie McNeil and realize that the institutional church needs to change the “scorecard” for churches (McNeil loc 219). The institution of the church needs to move from “how many, how often, how much” towards a “scorecard” that offers actual insight into the effectiveness of its mission in the “marketplace” which can be physical or virtual (McNeil Loc 219). If the church would begin measuring the life progress of individuals in their journey towards sanctification, it would be a better reflection of the true impact of the church (McNeil Loc 251). If it

would start measuring the impact on new believers the church institution has outside the walls of the church, the institution would have a better grasp at just how disconnected we are from the people we hope to serve (McNeil Loc 251). The secular world seems to be more responsive to the mission of the church through its methods of altruism, celebrities cooking for charities, and shows exposing billionaires trying to impact the lives around them (McNeil Loc 285). This process of changing the world around us was once monopolized by the church but now this voice is being eroded away and trumped by secular society.

I recommend course of study classes in the lifelong study program of most pastors and staff in the virtual area of ministry to keep pace with societal shifts. I believe that the South Texas District will need to expose members to the newest methods of evangelism and allow members to participate in those mediums in order to create buy-in into new evangelism models that are affective. As the project showed, a one-and-a-half-hour course through online evangelism can change the preconceived negative emotions upwards of thirty percent towards a positive feeling with regard to online virtual gaming. The group just needs to experience the application and experience its effectiveness.

Seminaries need to train pastors add this kind of training in the earlier part of seminary study rather than an addition tacked on to the end of a ministry program. Here is the issue, many seminaries are still training how to make a generic website, and this does not advance the pastor in any way. It is the minimum presence to have a website on the internet. The seminary institutions should be training pastors at the maximum not the minimum. A static website course is a reactive class built around the incompetence of most pastors' computer literacy today. Today a pastor really needs to understand a bit of

server management to allow for local distribution of video, audio, visual experience and maybe even a virtual experience. Pastors need to learn how to engage the senses through virtual technology and try to keep pace with the technology. Usually, seminary programs will only have one class dealing with online ministry, and it usually focuses on building a website rather than the immersing of individuals into virtual worlds. Pastors will only truly understand the implications of virtual gaming evangelism if they are actually participating in virtual gaming evangelism.

If the seminaries and hierarchy of the church begin to make programs for pastors and staff dealing with virtual gaming evangelism and other online platforms, pastors will be more equipped to deal with the changing landscape of ministry. If they do not, the church will be left behind in this area of potential growth and relevance. Seminaries should have at least three classes devoted to online technology. One class should deal with an online presence such as through the web. However, they should focus more on helping the pastor make the web presence more dynamic and fresher to Generation Z. Listed below are some items which should be in the course syllabi for presence technology. The class should also deal with chat forums and specifically graded on creativity for application to ministry.

The class will teach pastors how to moderate chat forums and calibrate bots to automate the moderation of chat. The pastors will build a chat server through both a Linux model and web model. They will organize the chat forum in a way that actively teaches Christian disciplines. For example, in the largest chat forum I manage there are currently 8,324 people, and the higher your responsibility in the server your title reflects a higher level of service. I carry the highest position in this server besides the owner, and I

am named a servant. It teaches people to be service oriented rather than motivated by power. The class should demonstrate how to store resources for individuals to easily access, and it should be able to connect to other mediums like social media and the dynamic webpages created by the student. The second course needs to deal with hardware implementation for a church. It should provide sources for church virtualization which includes cloud server management. More importantly, with the increase of censorship by big social media companies like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Vimeo, which churches use as a main staple to preserve presence, the class should teach how to develop your own self hosted cloud server, email server, and media server. This is important because the churches mission can no longer be muted by media giants simply because of that platform's political opinion or agenda. This class would also empower churches to maximize penetration in markets they have never been due to limiters such as geolocation limiters by the media giants. These limitations can be crossed by using a VPN (virtual private network), a proxy server, a Tor browser (The Onion Routing) project or a smart DNS (Domain Name System). The third class should be dedicated to virtual experience and applying ministry to those experiences. Purchasing virtual property in the meta-verse and developing a full-fledged church out of that virtual world, the student lives and experiences life in the meta-verse so they can learn how to minister inside of virtual mediums. They would learn how to create gaming reward systems using virtual item for the progression in the virtual experience. They would learn to engage and think through the mind of the emerging generations figuring out touching points of conversation.

This class will also be evaluated on the creativity in which the student utilizes to create contact points for ministry in the virtual presence. The class will try to encourage the use of as many senses as possible in the virtual experience to emulate an immersive experience in church, biblical world, or coffee shop encounters. These classes will equip pastors to a level where they will be relevant and effective towards Generation Z, not because they are the authority on the subject of God but because they cared enough about Generation Z to offer the sense of belonging Generation Z desires. They offered this by stepping into Generation Z's world and engaging with them. By doing this, the pastor has acquired the social credit to have a voice in the conversation about the life of the person they are witnessing to. The church needs to offer a sense of belonging and purpose to the emerging generations and earn back the voice it has lost by ignoring Generation Z (Moon & Simon 621).

Postscript

I am so thankful for being able to have the opportunity to participate in this study. The study has reinforced my belief that the church needs to be more involved in the "marketplace" of individuals. I have often felt like an outsider in my ministry because the institution of the church just does not have a way to incorporate what I am doing into their reporting which has often left me feeling irrelevant in the eyes of the church. This journey has been a difficult one because I have a lot of passion in this field of study and ministry. My hope is that this study will inform those that come across it and create a passion to reach the lost beyond the wall of the church. I have always believed the church is much grander than the building and much more expressive than the events within the church. The church for me is an integral part of the way we live as a community, and I

believe virtual worlds are a new expression of community. As Jonathan Sprowl expresses, the meta-verse is the new platform and opportunity for ministry and church planting (Sprowl). Virtual currency is becoming the normal capital in the virtual worlds and morphing into NFTs, non-fungible token, which are a way items can have a perception of value beyond their actual worth much like an art piece by Picasso is worth more than a drawing by me. They are both art, but one has a perception of higher value. This new way of thinking about currency in the virtual worlds creates whole new avenues of aspirations. This idea then is applied to lifestyle, character, rewards, which add social credence to the virtual avatar. The point being made here is that the virtual world is quickly becoming more like the one we live in. Furthermore, the meta-verse allows for experiences not possible in our life. It allows for the acquisition of virtual property not possible in the real world. It is not a matter of whether the meta-verse will be relevant in the next forty years, it is already here. The question is will the traditional model of the church have a presence and voice in the next forty years? The church can make some solid moves now by beginning to train pastors to intersect their ministries into the meta-verse. I fear that if the church does not reach for this opportunity in the beginning of the surge of the meta-verse bubble and waits till the church is completely outside of the equation knocking on the door of relevance, that the church will be received poorly and with suspicion by those who have been in the meta-verse since the beginning.

APPENDIXES

A. Technology Use Questionnaire

Technology Use Questionnaire

Thank you for your support?

Thank you for participating in this questionnaire. Below are 20 questions about your technology use and technology adoption rates. There are an additional 10 open-ended questions at the end to help up understand the stressors involved in your technology use. Thank you.

Church Name _____

Participant Name _____

How beneficial do you believe online gaming evangelism is for your church?

 1

 2

 3

 4

Not Beneficial

Somewhat Beneficial

Beneficial

Very Beneficial

Where do you believe online gaming evangelism would be beneficial in the Nazarene church?

 1

 2

 3

 4

Not Beneficial

Teaching

Evangelism

Preaching

Who do you believe is the biggest obstacle to online gaming evangelism?

 1

 2

 3

 4

Pastor

Congregation

Church Identity

Relevancy

Have you ever experienced online gaming evangelism?

 1

 2

 3

 4

Never

Very little

Average amount

Regularly

Do you believe online gaming to be an appropriate medium for evangelism for the Nazarene Church?

 1

 2

 3

 4

No

Sometimes, but with caution

Yes, but with apprehension

Yes

What age group do you believe would be most impacted by online gaming evangelism?

- | | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 |
| Below 17 | 17-25 | 26-50 | Greater than 50 |

Do you believe that online gaming impedes against social development?

- | | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 |
| No | Somewhat Disagree | Somewhat Agree | Yes |

Do you currently participate in any form of online gaming?

- | | | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 |
| No | Rarely Once a Month | Occasionally Once a Week | Often Daily |

What do you feel is the biggest obstacle to online gaming and utilization in evangelism?

- | | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 |
| Personal feelings | Christian Views | Relevancy to Life | Awareness |

When do you think online gaming evangelism is most appropriate to engage in?

- | | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 |
| After School/Work | During School/Work | During Church Function | Never |

Do you feel it is appropriate to charge for online gaming evangelism?

- | | | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 |
| No | Somewhat Inappropriate | Somewhat Appropriate | Yes |

Do you believe that online gaming evangelism is worth the time and effort?

- | | | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 |
| No | Somewhat not worth it | Somewhat worth it | Yes |

Do you believe that online gaming evangelism would open up opportunities in other avenues of the Church of the Nazarene?

- | | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 |
| No | Somewhat No | Somewhat Yes | Yes |
-

If it was made easy to implement, at a low cost and had significant benefit, would you participate in online gaming evangelism?

- | | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 |
| No | Somewhat No | Somewhat Yes | Definitely |
-

What do you feel is the appropriate cost a church should pay for a platform in online gaming evangelism?

- | | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 |
| Free | \$1 per license | \$5-\$10 per license License | \$15-\$20 per |
-

Has your church utilized zoom, discord, or some other chat server platform for preaching or evangelism?

- | | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 |
| No | Somewhat No | Somewhat Yes | Yes |
-

How proficient with biblical knowledge does an online gaming evangelist need to have?

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 |
| Learner New Christian | Basic Basic understanding Of Doctrines | Proficient Well Studied | Advanced at or beyond the level of Clergy |
-

Do you feel like online gaming interferes with family connections and therefore sends the wrong message if the church utilizes new technological tools through online gaming evangelism?

- | | | | |
|----------------------------|---|---|----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 |
| No | Believe Online gaming interferes but do not it sends wrong message | Believe Online gaming does not interfere with family but is not relevant to church | Yes |
- feel

How often does your church upgrade advanced technology for evangelism?

1

4yrs or greater

2

2-3yrs

3

1-2yrs

4

Every 6mths-1yr

How often does staff upgrade their knowledge on new forms of evangelism through advanced technology?

1

4-6yrs

2

2-4yrs

3

1-2yrs

4

Every 6mths-1yr

How do you feel about online gaming in the modern world? Why?

How do you feel about the church using online gaming in teaching and evangelism? Why?

How do you feel the church should incorporate or not incorporate the latest technology for evangelism? Why?

What do you feel is the greatest obstacle to the church incorporating technology? Why?

How proactively or reactively do you believe the church functions with regard to technology? Why?

How do you feel about watching a sermon online versus inside the church? Why?

Do you feel you can connect with people in church fellowship through online communities? Why or why not?

How do you feel about church ordained activities occurring virtually such as Baptism, Communion, Funerals, or Weddings? Why?

Do you feel there is a specific place for online gaming technology in the church? If so, where? If not why not?

B. Informed Consent Forms

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

**EVANGELISM THROUGH ONLINE GAMING: COMMUNICATING TO GEN
Z BEYOND THE CHURCH WALLS**

You are invited to be in a research study being done by Rev. Michael McMullen, a doctoral student from Asbury Theological Seminary. You are invited because you meet the criteria of being over 30 years of age and under 60 years of age. You are currently not an active Pastor in the church. You have been in good standing with the Nazarene church for 5 or more years.

The potential benefit of this study is that we will be able to discover Texas Nazarene Church members' objections to online gaming in order to design an evangelistic online gaming experience that avoids these obstacles.

If something makes you feel uncomfortable in any way while you are in the study, please tell Rev. Michael McMullen. Who can be reached at mike.mcmullen@asburyseminary.edu. You can refuse to respond to any or all of the questions, and you will be able to withdrawal from the process at any time without penalty.

If you have any questions about the research study, please contact Rev. Michael McMullen at mike.mcmullen@asburyseminary.edu.

If taking the online questionnaire, checking the box on the screen means that you have read this material or had it read to you and that you want to be in the study. If you do not want to be in the study, do not check the box. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be upset if you do not check the box or change your mind later. You agree that you have been told about this study and why it is being done and what to do.

All data will be collected, compiled and analyzed by the researcher and secured on a laptop which is password protected in an office at a private residence. Online data will be stored on a private server in a private locked office at a private residence. The webserver where the questionnaire data is collected is at <http://www.fullyawakened.org/Questionnaire.html> which is a private website connected to a private server where the data is compiled. The private server is housed in the primary residence of the researcher in a locked office. All Data pertaining to this study will be destroyed by August 30, 2022.

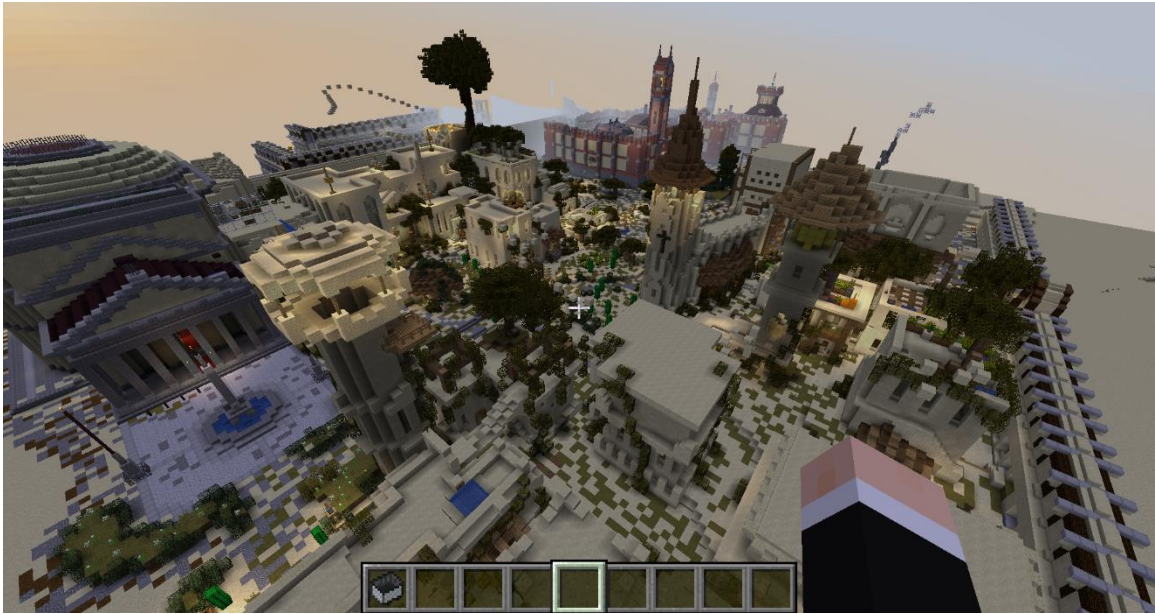
This is a low-risk study with little risk to the participant. The names of participants are not used and no geographic data is taken from the participant.

Signing this paper means that you have read this or had it read to you, and that you want to be in the study. If you do not want to be in the study, do not sign the paper. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be upset if you do not sign this paper or even if you change your mind later. You agree that you have been told about this study and why it is being done and what to do.

Signature of Person Agreeing to be in the Study

Date Signed

C. Relevant Pictures of Biblical Stories through Gaming Module







Appendix D – Relevant Penetration of Current Minecraft Gaming Module across the World



Appendix E – Relevant Photo of 5worlds Web Application Module for Mobile Phones



Appendix F-Approval from District of the Nazarene Church

8/8/2021

Asbury Seminary Mail - Dissertation Research Approval * Rev. Michael McMullen



Michael McMullen <mike.mcmullen@asburyseminary.edu>

Dissertation Research Approval * Rev. Michael McMullen

1 message

K. Ray McDowell <1stp.ray@gmail.com>
To: Michael McMullen <mike.mcmullen@asburyseminary.edu>
Cc: Jeffrey Johnson <jeffrey@southtexasnaz.org>

Sat, Jul 17, 2021 at 7:40 AM

To whom it may concern,
On behalf of Dr. Jeffrey Johnson, this email confirms that Rev. Michael McMullen has been given approval to conduct research for his dissertation on online gaming evangelism.

It is understood that such research could include participate observation, focus group(s) and questionnaire(s).

Any questions or concerns can be directed to me, Rev. K. Ray McDowell, contact information below.

Thank you.



K. Ray McDowell
Assistant District Superintendent
South Texas District Church of the Nazarene
409.330.5851
1stp.ray@gmail.com
*Adaptability * Harmony * Connectedness * Includer * Consistency*

Appendix L. Dr. Cho Tabernacle Prayer Format

TABERNACLE PRAYER - CHO

Father I desire to pray today, so I come to your mountain right NOW -- seeking You. I cry out for your anointing today! Anoint me, Lord! Only through more anointing can I carry out my work according to your will for me and only by your anointing can I fulfill your plan for my life. It was you who commanded Moses to build the tabernacle in the wilderness. Lord, you dwelt there and met your people there. The Tabernacle is the only place the Israelites worshipped. It illustrates your pattern of worship. The Tabernacle holds the sequence of entering God's presence and more effectively activating our anointing! I desire more today. I thank you for the tabernacle model through Moses, in Jesus, and in Heaven. I thank you for the Courtyard – where the Brazen Altar and the Laver are. I thank you for the Holy Place – where the Candlesticks are, as well as the Table of Showbread and the Altar of Incense. I thank you for the Holy of Holies – where the Arc of the Covenant and your Mercy Seat reside. Today – according to your Word – I am a priest in your temple, my body. My spirit is as the Holy of Holies. My mind is as the Holy Place. My physical body is as the Courtyard. Come, Lord Jesus! Work through my spirit, through my mind, through my body. I directly worship you, Lord, through the temple of my body, my mind and my spirit. I am a priest unto the Lord.

Jesus, you are the High Priest of Heaven. Teach me my priestly duties today. Teach me according to your ordained pattern of approaching God.

THE BRAZEN ALTAR

In my imagination I come to temple of the Holy Spirit. I see the Tabernacle Courtyard in my mind. I see the Brazen Altar. I remember the different offerings presented at the Brazen Altar: sin, trespass, burnt, thanks, reconciliation. These foretold the sacrifice of Jesus Christ at Calvary. I recognize the tremendous cost of sin.

CONFIDENCE - I believe the Cross of Jesus Christ replaces the Brazen Altar for me today. The blood of Jesus Christ replaces the blood of animals for me – one sacrifice for all time through Jesus Christ. My sin is forgiven – I am declared righteous through the cross. No guilt and shame for me today; I have a clean slate.

I will enjoy the Glory of God today. The Shekinah Glory is in me.

Lord, through your shed blood you conquered the world and the devil. Give me sanctification and fullness of the Holy Spirit through the blood of Jesus. Any hold that the world or the devil has on me is canceled and broken right now in Jesus's name! Because of the blood, I am free!

You hung on the cross and took my infirmities – I am healed. Sickness is illegal in me. I am healed today! By the stripes Jesus endured in the courtyard of Pilate I am healed!

Through the Cross – through your blood – I am redeemed from the curse.

You hung on a cross so the Abrahamic blessing would be mine. I am a blessed person! I am no longer under the curse. I am under the blessing of Christ today – in my home, work, ministry and family. There is no poverty – no curse for me. You became poor for me so that I can be rich in Jesus Christ. In Christ I am redeemed completely from any negative thinking. No cloudy thinking for me today – only clarity on my freedom from the curse and freedom from poverty. This is a major blessing of the blood of Christ.

I am redeemed from death and hell. Through His death on the cross, resurrection and ascension, I am spiritually with Jesus according to Scripture. I see His redeeming grace flowing to me now.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, that my mind is renewed in you as I pray this way, claiming these truths, worshipping you. Thank you for renewing me from a mind that was clouded with lies and negative thoughts. I have nothing to do with the filthy things of the world. I reject the lie. I cut off every tie with the dark side in Jesus' Name.

Lord, Clarify my vision of myself as an adopted child of God, a member of your family of priests. Make me aware of my new identity – a new person in you, a new creation through the blood of Jesus Christ. I have no more identity crisis. I have a clear identity in Jesus Christ!

I will not accept the devil's messages sent to me today. My mind is no longer victimized by the devil's lies.

I am a NEW CREATURE, a NEW CREATION. I AM HOLY, I am SANCTIFIED, I am BLESSED; the GLORY OF GOD IS MINE!

Everyday that I renew my mind, I confirm and affirm my new identity. I worship Jesus and His sacrifice for me.

SUMMARY

Through the Blood of Jesus I am:

- Adopted into your family as a child of God.
- Ordained as a priest in your royal priesthood.

The Blood has delivered me:

- From sin to RIGHTEOUSNESS.
- From the world and the devil to the HOLY SPIRIT & the THRONE OF GOD.
- From sickness to HEALTH & HEALING.

- From a cursed mindset of poverty to GOD'S BLESSINGS THE ABRAHAMIC BLESSING. I get to experience GOD'S GLORY every day. I discard my cloudy identity of the past and receive a CLEAR IDENTITY in Jesus Christ today! All this happens through the cross and the blood of Jesus Christ. I worship Jesus at the Brazen Altar in the Courtyard of the Tabernacle.

THE LAVER

Lord, I invite you, Expose Sin In Me This is the place I clean my conscience daily like taking a bath or shower. The priests wash their hands, feet and face at the Laver. It is a mirror. Before going into the Holy Place, I look at myself in the Laver. I evaluate my heart as I reflect on the 10 commandments pursuing a clear conscience. I can't drag my guilty conscience into your presence. You won't allow it.

Commandment 1 – Do I worship any other Gods? Do I put myself (self worship) ahead of (worship of Jesus)? There is only one God, in three persons: Father, Son, Holy Spirit. Forgive me, Lord, for dishonoring you by entertaining other gods.

Commandment 2 – Do I bow to any idols? Have I placed my role as husband, father, career person ahead of my role as a priest unto the Lord? Am I giving the first fruits of my day to something else? Am I worshipping graven images of money or power? Forgive me for dishonoring you by worshipping idols.

Commandment 3 – Do I call God's name in vain – any of God's names? Forgive me for dishonoring you by taking any of your names in vain.

Commandment 4 – Do I honor God by keeping the Sabbath Holy? Am I paying tithes and keeping the Sabbath before expecting blessing from Lord? Forgive me for dishonoring your Sabbath commandment. Teach me your ways!

Commandment 5 - Do I honor my parents or blame my parents for my problems? Do I dishonor those you put in authority over me – pastors, government leaders, school board, etc.? Do I gossip about them? Forgive us, Father, for our negative cultural influence that disrespects our parents and dishonors you. May I be free from that influence! Forgive me for dishonoring my parents and any in authority over me. I bring honor to you today. Forgive me for dishonoring you, my Father in heaven.

Commandment 6 - Do I kill by hating? In what ways am I programming my mind or the minds of my children to hate or be angry or hold prejudice against anyone? I forgive others right now. I release all offenses. I repent of any angry words spoken. Forgive me for dishonoring you through angry words and hatred. O Lord, deliver me from an angry,

bitter heart. Only you can do this. I have failed in controlling anger that rises up in me. Only you can give me the grace to have victory over this.

Commandment 7 - Do I commit adultery or entertain lustful thoughts? Forgive me for dishonoring you by being sexually impure. Cleanse me and make me holy! Give me the fear of the Lord. Help me to walk softly before you. Deliver me from the idolatry of the female form. Deliver me from unhealthy appetites.

Commandment 8 - Am I stealing -- from You, Lord, or anyone? Am I squandering or misusing your gifts to me? Am I dishonest in my work, taking anything without paying for it or without permission? Forgive me for poor stewardship, for stealing or squandering time, talents, treasures from you, Lord. Forgive me for my dishonest gains and give me grace to return or restore what I have taken wrongly. Make me a good steward of your temple, my body, and all these things you've given me to manage as a priest in your temple.

Commandment 9 - Am I witnessing falsely? Forgive me for lying. Forgive me for being a false witness of Jesus. Forgive me for believing false ideas and vain philosophies. I want to be a true witness of Jesus Christ. Forgive me for dishonoring you by trusting false things. Give me the way, the truth, and the life in Jesus Christ!

Commandment 10 – Am I coveting? Am I coveting things you don't want me to have – my neighbor's house, car, reputation, wife, children, lifestyle? Covetousness is the first sin – the downfall of Eve and Adam that caused their disobedience. Am I coveting anything? Am I coveting my lifestyle? All blessings are from the Lord. I am grateful for my (spouse), my children, my home, my career.

All abundance is from you, Lord. You are the source of all blessings and abundance. Forgive me for dishonoring you by wanting anything outside of your will for me. God, you are a good God – an abundant God. You have a desire to bless me more than I do! I release my time; I release my money so you can make open space in my life. I want to receive your abundance and blessing! Your will be done. Make open spaces in my life.

All this happens through the cross and the blood of Jesus Christ. I worship Jesus at the Laver in the Courtyard of the Tabernacle.

THE HOLY PLACE

Candlesticks

I open the curtain and walk into the Holy Place. There I see the candlesticks, symbolic of the Holy Spirit, the sevenfold Spirit of God: wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, fear of the Lord, holiness.

Holy Spirit, I welcome a deeper more intimate relationship with you today. Through your anointing give me your wisdom. Help me to solve all the problems I face through your wisdom.

Give me your understanding so that I may understand the deep truths of God, and I may live those truths and pass them on to my children.

Give me counsel so that I will follow your narrow path. If it pleases you, allow me to advise others how to solve their problems.

Give me tremendous might so that I might be used by you to heal the hearts and lives of others and defeat the devil. You are the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Holy Spirit, increase my knowledge of the Bible. Give me a keen fear of the Lord so that I walk very softly before you and not commit any sin. Give me holiness through your presence, O Lord!

Holy Spirit you are a person, not a genie. The Father worked in the forefront during the Old Testament and Jesus worked in the New; I live in the Age of the Holy Spirit.

I don't want to catch quail with my bare hands. I want your wind to blow the quail into my camp. I want to depend on you, Holy Spirit, not my own strength.

You are a Holy Person with a will and emotions. Forgive me for treating you impersonally. You should be welcomed, loved, caressed, adored, and worshipped. You are my senior partner. You are my Lord. I depend upon you. Let's go Holy Spirit. Thank you for your anointing. Let's work together. I will follow you.

THE TABLE OF SHOWBREAD

The Showbread is the symbol of the Word of God.

Thank you for your Logos word and your Rhema word. Thank you for the written word and the inspired Word of God. All the 7,000+ promises of God are written in the scriptures. The Logos written word is potentially mine. Rhema is inspired word made alive in my heart today for a specific application.

Give me Lord, your specific word – your Rhema Word – for my life today. Give me this day my daily bread. I must wait on you, Lord, today – if I want to get your inspired Word.

Knowledge can become a kind of false faith. I want true faith from you today, Lord! Operating on knowledge alone can be disobeying you. I want to obey you in all things today.

Naming and claiming promises my finger lands on in scripture is a dangerous business. Waiting on you, Lord, for Rhema is the way of the mature disciple.

Jesus, you spoke of this truth when you said: Man does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the MOUTH of God. (Matt. 4.4)

THE ALTAR OF INCENSE

Father, you are omnipotent. You can do anything and I will believe you. Give me perfect faith in Jesus Christ.

I CHOOSE by exercising my free will today. I choose to believe YOU! I reject fear and doubt. I will never choose either of them.

I trust you. I trust your Word. I trust you, Holy Spirit. You are always with me. You will never leave me or forsake me. John 14.20 says, you are in me! That's where you live. Make yourself very real to me today! (When you come to this place pause for a few moments to simply praise God, singing in the Spirit or praying as the Lord leads you.)

John 14.20 At that time [when that day comes] you will know [for yourselves] that I am in My Father, and you [are] in Me, and I [am] in you.

John 14.21 The person who has My commands and keeps them is the one who [really] loves Me; and whoever [really] loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I [too] will love him and will show (reveal, manifest) Myself to him. [I will let Myself be clearly seen by him and make Myself real to him.]

THE HOLY OF HOLIES – ARK OF THE COVENANT

I enter with faith and confidence into the Holy of Holies. I see the blood of Jesus Christ sprinkled on the Mercy seat. It is finished! All my debts have been paid off – paid in full. I am free, free from bondage to sin of any kind.

Through the Blood I have the impartation of the righteousness of Jesus Christ! I am God's righteousness in Christ. I come into the presence of God without feeling any condemnation because of what Christ has already accomplished for me.

The blood is the answer – it is the final solution for me.

I praise you, Father, for the wonderful, incredible blessing of righteousness imparted to me, your servant, through your Son, Jesus Christ.

Thank you, Lord, that the devil is my defeated enemy through the Blood of Christ. I will not bow to the fear of the roaring lion. He is bluffing and he is defeated.

The Commandments in the Ark

Christ's blood annuls the power of the law that would make me work for righteousness. The law is my mirror now, not my master. It helps me to clean my face, my conscience. The law does not condemn me.

Christ is my Lord. His blood is the final, finished work that redeems me. The law shows me how to please God and helps me understand when I have grieved and disobeyed God – but it is not my condemner. The blood has changed that forever for me as a New Testament Christian.

No works, no achievements are required for my salvation: only to believe – only faith in the finished work of the Cross.

Thank you, Father, that the blood of Jesus is my deliverance from sin. The blood is my impartation of Christ's righteousness.

The blood brings freedom from fear of Satan. The blood is my freedom from the law of the Old Testament. The blood is my freedom from human works to achieve right standing with you, O Lord!

Eph. 2.8-10 For it is by free grace [God's unmerited favor] that you are saved through [your] faith. And this [salvation] is not of your own doing, it is the gift of God; it is not because of works [the fulfillment of the Law's demands], lest any man should boast. For we are God's own workmanship, recreated in Christ Jesus that we may do those good works which God planned beforehand for us, that we should walk in them [living the good life which He prearranged and made ready for us to live].

Prayer In The Holy of Holies:

As you are standing in God's presence begin to pray personal requests. Pray for those closest to you and work out from there.

It is in God's presence that our hearts have been prepared to have our prayers answered and our petitions heard. Bring them humbly before the Lord with faith and confidence that he hears you and will answer your prayers.

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