



MAN UP • Pastors mentor men to be men

More than one-in-four children in America live without a father in the home. That is over 18 million kids. It's an epidemic that affects every community. For pastors **Robert Crowley** and **Bruce Kirk** in the Chicago suburb of Bolingbrook, it's a problem they want to fix.

"We believe that God through His word, because of the order that God has for the family, says that this is definitely an area that we should really focus on," Crowley said.

Through a consultation with IBSA Evangelism Director **Scott Harris**, Crowley and Kirk are leading Alpha Baptist Church toward a new season of health by reaching men. A key piece in their strategy is an event they call "Man Church."

"Bruce brought me in and asked me, essentially, to talk to him about evangelism," Harris said. "As we did a Next Step consultation, we began to look at what he sensed that God wanted to do, and it was about reaching men."



HARRIS

That led to a four-stage plan that begins with prayer and ends with men reaching men through "Man Church" events.

Crowley said that the response has been surprisingly good and that gearing the events toward men is the key. "When a

man comes in, he'll see a lot of other men who look and dress just like him, who have things in common that they all share, such as barbecue and cars...You'd be surprised how quickly you can get a crowd of men to come and to talk about their cars."

This leads to comfortable conversations and an opening for deeper matters that connect men with God's purpose for them.

During the first car show, Kirk spoke from Genesis about God's role for men as image bearers. At a recent event (pictured above), Kirk turned the tables and had a panel of several men from the church discuss their personal and cultural experiences with the problems caused by fatherlessness.

The importance of their current efforts to reach men is especially personal to Crowley. Almost two decades ago he was a young father, far from God, sitting in the back row at Alpha. Kirk invested in him, and his life has been forever changed.

"I still to this day don't understand what he saw or what he was thinking because I knew that I was sinner. He didn't



know all the sin that I was in," he said. "But I knew that I wasn't deserving to be in any position to try to lead others. But because of God's Spirit working in him and other men, I believe that's why they were able to take a risk on somebody like me."

The message for men at these events is clear. Your families, your communities, and your churches need you to be godly men. And the strategy is working. Kirk said Alpha has now seen more than 50 people join the church, and many of them are men.

