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# Revitalizing the Church Through Reaching Men With Families

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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

REVITALIZING THE CHURCH THROUGH REACHING MEN WITH FAMILIES

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THE FACULTY OF PORTLAND SEMINARY  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY  
MIKE CONAN

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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DMin Dissertation

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This is to certify that the DMin Dissertation of

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has been approved by  
the Dissertation Committee on February 25, 2019  
for the degree of Doctor of Ministry in Leadership and Spiritual Formation

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## ABSTRACT

Churches today face a unique crisis as most of them are either declining or plateaued, and the culture around them has changed, and men have not responded with faith and godliness, but instead with fear and withdrawal. Churches, especially conservative evangelical churches, who can overcome the worldview struggles and learn to embrace the postmodern, and overcome the struggles of patriarchy and learn to see how the power bestowed by society can be used for good, can see revitalization that will bring renewal to every part of their churches. Reaching these men usually brings new life to the entire church, as often the entire family will come with them.

Churches have tried many different ways to reconnect with men. Some work more effectively than others. There have been many movements to try and more effectively reach men, including two smaller recent movements the Mythopoetics and the Million Man March. Neither of these movements significantly impacted the church. The Promise Keepers movement made an impact on millions of men and their families and gave a quick shot in the arm to many churches, yet the long sustained impact on the local church was hard to discern. Church have also tried internal changes within the congregation, to help churches become friendlier to men. These were insightful and helpful for congregations who desire to keep men in the church. Yet these changes do not necessarily bring men into the church.

None of these attempts needs to be discarded, instead each can be learned from and churches can use similar programs to reach men in the future. However, given the churches' call and struggle, there is a better way to effectively reach men, and this is the focus of Section 3, the proposed solution, discipling men. Training men to reach men

through discipleship is a way for churches to bring new men and their families into the life of the congregation. These new men and their families can then bring new energy and life to everyone in the congregation.

## SECTION 1: DEFINING THE PROBLEM AND OPPORTUNITY

### **Introduction**

*After a busy week, Pastor Joe finally settled into his seat for his flight to California for his denomination's annual gathering. Breathing a sigh as he buckled his seat belt, he began to prepare for departure. Many things raced through his mind. Immediately, he felt a pit in his stomach as he processed his last year of ministry and prepared to meet his pastoral colleagues. He knew that these few days away would be filled with moments of pain, shame and regret as others shared many of their ministry victories over the past year. Although he knew that many of the stories were a tiny glimpse amidst a greater struggle, they were still difficult for his discouraged soul to hear. He would also find hope and inspiration that would almost assuredly fade quickly when he returned to the struggles back home. The church he pastored had been on the decline for many years before his arrival. When he came, a few new families began attending, but over time, things plateaued, and if he was honest, they were actually declining again.*

*The lack of growth and perceived life change in his church and community had become a continual source of shame and pain. Pastor Joe had done everything he had been trained to do. He had faithfully preached each Sunday. He prayed as much as he could, especially when he first started. He offered the best vision he could provide for the congregation, but the church continued to struggle.*



*These days, Pastor Joe survives each week, dreads each leadership meeting, and finds himself pulling back emotionally from the congregation he has agreed to lead, love and serve. He wonders silently if there is any hope for his struggling congregation to experience renewal.*

Many pastors, like Pastor Joe, and church leaders are serving in churches that are struggling to reach and disciple Americans.<sup>1</sup> Alan Hirsch wrote, “Christianity is on the decline in every Western cultural context. In fact, in terms of percentage of the population, we are proportionately further away from getting the job done than we were in the third century!”<sup>2</sup>

Though some studies show that there is a strong core still attending churches<sup>3</sup>, most churches in America today, especially established white churches, are not growing and are, in fact, losing committed attendees and members. One study conducted in 2018 that uses data from over 200,000 of the estimated 330,000 churches in the United States, shows that on any given Sunday less than eighteen percent of Americans are attending a Christian church.<sup>4</sup> This research indicates significant growth in the U.S. population, while significant decline in Christian church attendance. If these trends continue, by 2050 only twelve percent of the U.S. population will be in attendance at a local church on a given

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<sup>1</sup> Mike Regele, *The Death of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 182.

<sup>2</sup> Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways, Reactivating Apostolic Movements* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2016), 1, Kindle.

<sup>3</sup> Glenn Stanton, “New Harvard Research Said U.S. Christianity is Not Shrinking, But Growing Stronger,” January 22, 2018, <http://thefederalist.com/2018/01/22/new-harvard-research-said-u-s-christianity-not-shrinking-growing-stronger/>

<sup>4</sup> Rebecca Barnes and Lindy Lowry, “7 Startling Facts: An Up Close Look at Attendance in American Churches,” April 10, 2018, <https://churchleaders.com/pastors/pastor-articles/139575-7-startling-facts-an-up-close-look-at-church-attendance-in-america.html>

Sunday.<sup>5</sup> Even the Southern Baptists are struggling to reach and keep members. Another study indicates that even in the traditionally strong and growing Southern Baptist denomination, more than fifty-five percent of their churches in the US are currently in decline and another nine percent are plateaued.<sup>6</sup> Yet, these statistics do not discourage David Anderson. He said, “It encourages me that the harvest is greater, I’m somewhat comforted by the idea that Americans have left dead churches.”<sup>7</sup> This insight could be a wakeup call to many churches that are plateaued or declining to pursue resurrection.

The church today operates in a world much different than it did just a few decades ago. This era, called Post-Christendom, is marked by the church no longer being a dominant part of culture. People no longer have church as a central part of their lives. This shift has brought many challenges to the Christian church. Many pastors and leaders are seeking solutions to find revitalization and methods to more effectively reach Americans. Churches have sought renewal through building campaigns, hiring new staff, creating new vision, changing their DNA and pursuing Spiritual renewal to list a few. These may be helpful, but another opportunity exists for churches to find new life.

In patriarchal cultures, men are given unique power and authority to lead<sup>8</sup>. Johnson said that a “male center of focus is everywhere.”<sup>9</sup> If churches can equip men to

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<sup>5</sup> Barnes and Lowry, “7 Startling Facts.”

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Rainer, “Dispelling the 80% Myth of Declining Churches,” June 2017, <https://thomrainer.com/2017/06/dispelling-80-percent-myth-declining-churches/>

<sup>7</sup> Barnes and Lowry, “7 Startling Facts.”

<sup>8</sup> Allan Johnson, *The Gender Knot* (Philadelphia: Temple Press, 1997), 7.

<sup>9</sup> Johnson, 9.

use that power for the Kingdom of God, churches could be renewed. If these churches can discover a way to reach men and bring them into the life of the church, they will often reach entire families, and churches will be renewed. According to Robert Lewis, “If the mom comes, there's a fifteen percent chance the family will (come to church). But if the dad comes to church, ninety percent of the time the family will come along behind.”<sup>10</sup> The entire life and culture of the church could be renewed and restored if the church can find a way to effectively reach men and their families.

The most vivid example of this in scripture may be the conversion of the Philippian Jailer by Paul and Silas. After a miraculous event, he was converted and his family heard the gospel and was baptized as well.<sup>11</sup> By leading this one man to Christ, an entire household was impacted and the church received an entire family.

Reaching individuals in today's culture through discipleship, especially men in patriarchal settings, will allow churches to renew over the coming years, as often wives and children will follow the men into churches. This approach allows the Holy Spirit, working in individuals within churches, and use potential struggles as opportunities to bring people into the faith and into the church.

### **The Problem: Churches are Struggling to Reach Men and Women**

Most churches today are in decline, and they are missing men. Yet, the culture at large still has the same amount of men. They are in the workplace, at Little League

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<sup>10</sup> Robert Lewis, 2007, Rediscovering Biblical Manhood DVD series, Nashville: Lifeway. (Dad is Destiny session)

*\*The reference and study for the quote was not available.*

<sup>11</sup> Acts 16:25-33.

games, watching their favorite television shows, cheering on their favorite sports teams and yes, on the golf course. But, for whatever reason, many of them are not in church.

The demographics of nearly all established churches, especially smaller congregations, reveal that men are not attending church as often as women. According to David Murrow, “Whenever large numbers of Christians gather, men are never in the majority.”<sup>12</sup> George Barna determined a similar number of women and men in the general population, but sixty-one percent of regular church attenders are women (48.7 million) and only thirty-nine percent are men (35.3 million.)<sup>13</sup> Murrow wrote, “Generally speaking, the smaller the church, the more likely it is that they are experiencing a gender gap (more than fifty-six percent female).”<sup>14</sup> Most of the churches in the major denominations in the United States are smaller established churches (under 100 members), and many of them are experiencing a significant gender gap. The Chart Below illustrates the number of congregations with a gender gap in the major denominations in America.<sup>15</sup>

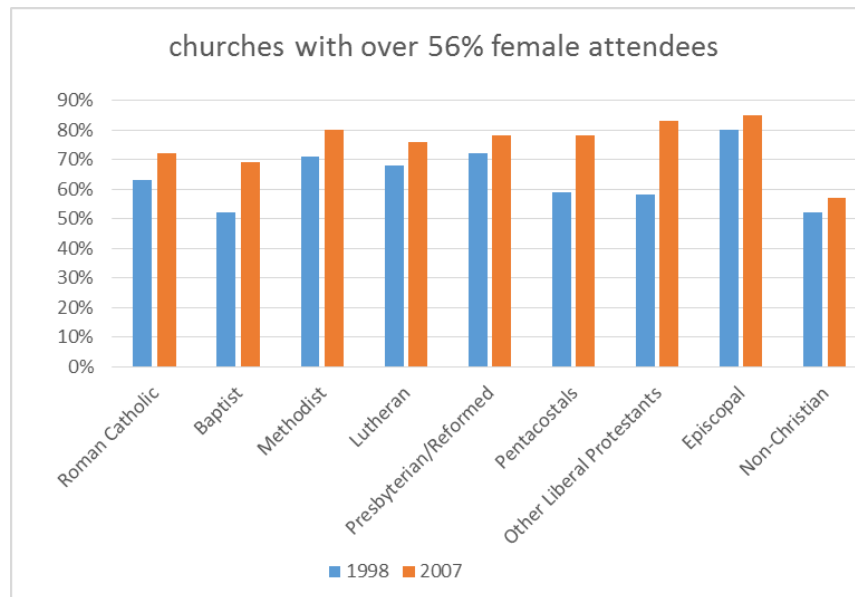
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<sup>12</sup> David Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going to Church* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson 2011), 37.

<sup>13</sup> Susan Barnett, “What Are the Major Challenges that U.S. Congregations Face?” *U.S. Congregational Life Survey*, Spring 2009, <http://www.uscongregations.org/blog/2014/02/17/what-are-the-major-challenges-that-u-s-congregations-face/>.

<sup>14</sup> Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going to Church*, 46.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.



The chart indicates that the gender gap is common amongst most churches in most denominations.

The gender gap is not a new phenomenon. Attempts to address the gender gap have occurred numerous times in church history. In the early twentieth century, the Protestant Church found itself in a similar place. Women were comprising the strong majority of the population of most local evangelical churches. Many pastors and leaders stepped forward to try and bring men into the church, as they had a vision for the streets full of people going into church.<sup>16</sup> Gail Bederman wrote, “Now ignoring the fact that the churches had been two-thirds female for over two hundred years, they discovered or more accurately, constructed – a ‘crisis,’ pointing to the ‘excess of women over men in church life’ as a new and dangerous thought, requiring immediate attention.”<sup>17</sup> The movement that followed was an aggressive attempt to reach men and bring them into the life of the

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<sup>16</sup> Gail Bederman, “‘The Women Have Had Charge of the Church Work Long Enough’: The Men and Religion Forward Movement of 1911-1912 and the Masculinization of Middle-Class Protestantism,” *American Quarterly* 41, No. 3 (Sep. 1989): 432-465.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 438.

church. This movement brought a resurgence of men for many decades. But, at the same time, the women and girls were not cherished like the men the churches were trying to reach. Bederman wrote “Nobody was bothering about the women and girls. They were safely within the fold and there was no other place for them to go. There was more joy over one man who joined the church than over a dozen women.”<sup>18</sup> The modern church, which faces a similar gender gap, would be wise to not exclude the women and girls from the resurgence that is dreamed. An effective church revival movement will find a way to celebrate and cherish women who also bear the image of God while simultaneously seeking to bring more men into the life of the church.

One possible reason that the modern church struggles to reach men is that the church is having difficulty reaching anyone. With the advent of Post-Christendom, most congregations are declining in worship attendance and participation by both men and women.

Women appear to be exiting the church similarly to their male counterparts. Barna’s research indicates that the attendance of women in church has actually declined more than their male counterparts. The percentage of women attending church dropped eleven percentage points from the years 1995 to 2010, while men only dropped by six percentage points over the same time frame.<sup>19</sup> The church, in general, is in decline as both men and women are not attending as often. This means that in many congregations the gender gap is actually decreasing. But, the gender gap is decreasing because women

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 457.

<sup>19</sup> George Barna, “20 Years of Surveys Show Key Differences in the Faith of America’s Men and Women,” *Barna Research Group*, August 1, 2011, <https://www.barna.com/research/20-years-of-surveys-show-key-differences-in-the-faith-of-americas-men-and-women/>

are leaving the church slightly more than men, not because the church is reaching men more effectively.

In surveying the material concerning the numbers of men and women leaving the church, congregational leaders have options to respond and help to reverse this trend. I have found two significant issues that by addressing, churches might be able to attract people to their communities. The two significant struggles and opportunities in the Post-Christendom culture: firstly, worldview struggles coming out of the postmodern shift in culture; secondly the effects of patriarchy and the struggles of men in society in general.

### **Church Decline Factor Number 1: Worldview Struggles**

The rise of postmodernism presents a unique challenge to the life of the church as men and women are no longer overtly searching to believe in something greater than themselves<sup>20</sup>. Philosopher James Sire wrote, “So into this history of the growing pluralism of Western worldviews came the New Age movement whose central thesis is simple: The individual self is the center of reality: The self is the really real. Immanence replaces transcendence.”<sup>21</sup> People are no longer searching for transcendent truth in the universe, but for something that will impact their own lives today. The church has been heavily impacted by the movement in culture towards experience and away from the pursuit of a common understanding of the transcendent. When Church-Going Charlie walks the golf course with his non-Christian friend Alan, he struggles to find common ground and to be able to share his faith in a way that Alan can hear it. And even if Alan

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<sup>20</sup> Gene Edward Veith JR, *Postmodern Times* (Wheaton: Crossway 1994), 16.

<sup>21</sup> James Sire, *Echoes of a Voice: We Are Not Alone* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014), 27.

does hear it, he will often respond with something like “I am glad you have found something that makes you happy.” Alan has little thought that Charlie’s experiences with God, faith and the people of God could impact him the same way, or he believes that he can have those same experiences on a different path than Christianity.

In order to understand the struggles Christians face in American culture, it is important to recognize that Americans view the world differently. The church has not adapted well to these changes and has not been well equipped to engage people in their worlds. This challenge is partially because many Christians themselves do not know what they believe about the world, and therefore struggle to share their views with others who have differing views. If churches can learn to better disciple their people, they can equip them for the challenge of sharing the gospel.

A deeper look at worldview will allow a more profound understanding of the issue, both the struggles and the opportunities. Ronald Nash wrote “In its simplest terms, a worldview is a set of beliefs about the most important issues of life... (It) is a conceptual scheme by which we consciously or subconsciously place or fit everything we believe and by which we interpret reality.”<sup>22</sup> Sire also defines this as:

A worldview is a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being.<sup>23</sup>

Nash emphasizes the thoughtfulness of worldviews and how beliefs impact decision-making. Sire reminds us that worldviews are more than a set of beliefs, but also include

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<sup>22</sup> Ronald Nash, *Worldviews in Conflict* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan 1992), 16.

<sup>23</sup> James Sire, *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2015), 184.



the heart and emotions. The mind and heart are the lenses by which everyone sees the world. Most people today are not aware of the foundational views that govern their lives or how these presuppositions interpret how they see, live and experience the world. Sire suggests, “Everyone has a worldview. Whether we know it or not, we all operate from a set of assumptions about the world that remain to a large measure hidden in the unconscious recesses of our mind. That worldview is private.”<sup>24</sup> The differing ways that Americans understand the world, especially when Americans are largely unaware of their own worldviews, has impacted the opportunities for Christians to dialogue effectively with those around them and left them feeling isolated. Many families today are disrupted when a young adult does not share the worldview of his or family of origin. When a young man goes to college and decides to leave his family’s Christian faith and traditional Judeo-Christian morals behind, he develops a different way to see the world. When he returns home and sees his family’s “old-fashioned” views on differing things in culture from sex to money, it creates tension which can easily cause separation.

Christians themselves will benefit from understanding their own beliefs about the world and how they differ from others. The Christian worldview, which was once embraced in American culture, is not as commonplace and stands in contrast to many competing worldviews in the culture. Theologian and Philosopher Abram Kuyper has heavily influenced Christian understanding of worldview. Kuyper wrote that each worldview, especially the Christian worldview, begins with an understanding of God and then flows to how humans relate to God, others and the world.<sup>25</sup> A Christian’s

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>25</sup> Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1931), 31.

understanding of God, other humans and the world will be different than those who do not share their belief in the scriptures.

The rise of multiculturalism and the technological and information explosion over the last several decades have broadened spiritual conversations, but also lessened people's ability to influence others. Mike Regele wrote, "The combined impact of the Information Age, post-modern thought, globalization and racial and ethnic pluralism that has seen the demise of the grand American story also has displaced the historic role the church has played in that story. As a result, we are seeing the marginalization of the institutional church."<sup>26</sup> The conversations have been broadened by exposing the culture at large to competing worldviews rather than to just the traditional Judeo-Christian worldview. In the wake of this movement, people have learned how to get along with each other and even embrace people different than themselves, thus, tolerance has become a central value. Theologian and Philosopher Stanley Grenz wrote, "The postmodern ethos resists unified, all-encompassing, and universally valid explanations. It replaces these with a respect for difference and a celebration of the local and particular at the expense of the universal."<sup>27</sup> Though they are more respectful of other worldviews, postmoderns are resistant to accepting other worldviews. This can create challenges as postmoderns struggle to get beyond their own thinking or their group's thinking to a greater narrative. Recently, a student at a Christian University in Oklahoma was outraged as a visiting preacher spoke at chapel on First Corinthians chapter thirteen, the love chapter. The student was outraged because he was made to feel that he wasn't loving. He

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<sup>26</sup> Mike Regele, *The Death of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 182.

<sup>27</sup> Stanley Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 12.

wanted the president of the university to make sure that no other speakers came in who would hurt students' feelings or make them feel bad.<sup>28</sup> He represents a growing group in culture who have a hard time when their worldview is challenged.

Situations like these are happening in the larger culture. Challenging people's beliefs and worldviews can make them feel shame and can simultaneously cause the one who challenged them to come under scrutiny. So, rather than risk feeling this way, people resist challenging their co-workers, neighbors or even their closest friends. Over time, this withdrawal has caused historic Judeo-Christian values to be removed from the center of American Culture. A great example is society's views on premarital sex. Even at the end of the Sexual Revolution, in 1969, sixty-eight percent of the population believed that premarital sex was wrong. In 1987, the number had dropped to forty-six percent and, in 1992, it had dropped to thirty-three percent.<sup>29</sup> Amidst the cultures changing views of sexuality, orthodox churches are facing rising criticism. The criticism the church faces for its countercultural belief can impact their effectiveness at reaching people who do not understand them.

The postmodern movement away from logic and absolute truth creates a challenge for the exclusivity of the Christian worldview. Christians believe Jesus was and is real, and that his life, death and resurrection offer unique hope for the challenges facing the world. Throughout the centuries, Christians have lived to proclaim this truth to the world. Yet today, postmodern people are hesitant to join others and follow a specific

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<sup>28</sup> Susan Syriuga, "College President: This Is Not a Day Care. This Is a University," *The Washington Post*, November 30, 2015, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2015/11/30/college-president-rejects-safe-spaces-writing-this-is-not-a-day-care-this-is-a-university/>

<sup>29</sup> Gene Edward Veith JR, 16.

truth, for it is one of many “truths” they are exposed to regularly. Grenz wrote that, “The postmodern understanding of truth leads postmoderns to be less concerned than their forebears to think systematically or logically... they believe that beliefs are ultimately a matter of social context, and hence they are likely to conclude ‘what is right for you is right for you.’”<sup>30</sup> When faced with these challenging conversations, it has become easier for many Christians to be silent. People who, in the past, would invite friends and new neighbors to church, now avoid these difficult conversations, and the church struggles to grow.

The Apostle Peter’s words to “be prepared to give a reason for the hope that is within you”<sup>31</sup> can fall on deaf ears when people believe that their hope is uniquely for them and that others aren’t interested or can find hope in other places. The rise of postmodern thinking, and the churches lack of response, has significantly impacted the churches’ effectiveness and been a major contributor to the decline of the church today. But, there is still an opportunity for the church. If the people in the church can build relationships that allow others to see a difference in their lives, others can be drawn in as they themselves look for a better path. Peter calls Christians to be prepared to offer this explanation of the gospel with “gentleness and respect”.<sup>32</sup> Followers of Jesus have struggled to do this part effectively. But, discipleship, that helps believers learn the gospel and how to communicate this gospel so people can hear it, offers hope even in a postmodern context.

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<sup>30</sup> Stanley Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1995), 15

<sup>31</sup> 1 Peter 3:15.

<sup>32</sup> 1 Peter 3:15.

### **Opportunity 1: Connecting with Postmoderns**

While the postmodern culture has impacted many churches in negative ways and made a traditional approach to effective evangelism and discipleship challenging, it isn't impossible to effectively share one's faith. Teaching churchgoers how to interact and engage with each other within churches, and then with the people who don't know Jesus in a postmodern world, could revitalize the church.

Though postmoderns are not as driven by logic or systematic thinking as the modern age, openings exist within the new paradigm for sharing the Christian faith. One of these openings is a postmodern person's willingness to embrace mystery. The post-enlightenment era was characterized by a need to carefully negotiate arguments so that people would see the logic, rationale, and consistency in a given worldview. Worldviews could be stacked up against each other and weighted for validity based on proofs and argumentation. The modernistic approach however did not offer room for the diverse mysteries in the Christian worldview or any other worldview. A mysterious God who is not bound by the many rules of the universe, such as the ability to divinely heal a person and do other miracles, creates a worldview that other modern thinkers struggled to understand logically. However, postmodern individuals can more easily embrace such mysteries and are often open to taking steps of faith. They are comfortable with mystery, unanswered questions, and logical inconsistencies.

This group is drawn to stories and experiences that help them encounter other people's lives. Grenz wrote, "Although they (postmodern people) have divested

themselves from the meta-narrative, postmoderns are still left with local narratives.”<sup>33</sup>

Most postmodern people are less drawn to the greater story of the world, but they are drawn towards others’ personal stories and, through the local story, they can be drawn to the gospel. When they are drawn in, an opportunity emerges to engage with them and try to help them understand how their story interacts with God’s story in Jesus Christ. If the church can be taught how to draw people in and then share their story and God’s story, doors may open in souls that previously remained closed. Teaching women and men to partner with Holy Spirit and equipping them to winsomely share their stories with others is a central way that existing churches could experience new life within their congregations.

Men will benefit from training that is practical and experiential. This training will be most effective, if the men are given the opportunity to learn about mystery and worship, and how to engage their own story and God’s story. This training, coupled with teaching about listening, could allow men to reach across age groups and racial lines. Nearly all men are subconsciously looking for someone to listen to them and help connect their story with God’s story. Even in their darkest moments, they are searching for God. The human heart is drawn towards being satisfied, and humans seek satisfaction in created things rather than the Creator of all things. C.S. Lewis wrote, “It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily

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<sup>33</sup> Stanley Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1995), 45.

pleased.”<sup>34</sup> The world needs people who can meet others where they are, no matter how desperate their circumstances, and show them Jesus.

### **Declining Factor Number 2: Patriarchy**

Another challenge in the culture at large, has been patriarchy. Patriarchy describes a culture where men have been given unique power and authority. There are differing views of this power, but there is general agreement that men have this *male privilege* in our society. Male privilege is the inherent opportunities and power given to men in a given culture.<sup>35</sup> Western culture has many patriarchal traits.<sup>36</sup> The traditionally masculine virtues of competition, power and significance through achievement are a central part of the culture, especially in white middle class suburban settings.<sup>37</sup> This culture of competition and conquering creates tension for the local church as churches try to reach men. Karen Bloomquist wrote, “No wonder more women than men are found in most churches! It has been far more comfortable for male preachers to proclaim a gospel of self-sacrifice and giving up control to women and other subordinated groups.”<sup>38</sup> The consistent message of Jesus to lay down power, deny yourself, love God, and sacrificially love others is much easier to hear when people have little power. In a patriarchal culture,

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<sup>34</sup> C. S. Lewis and Walter Hooper, *The Weight of Glory, and Other Addresses*. Rev. and Expanded Ed. / Edited, and with an Introduction by Walter Hooper. ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1980), 25-26.

<sup>35</sup> Rachel Davis, “Privilege is an Opportunity, Not a Threat,” November 2015, <https://www.cbeinternational.org/blogs/privilege-opportunity-not-threat>

<sup>36</sup> Johnson, 5.

<sup>37</sup> Johnson, 5.

<sup>38</sup> Karen Bloomquist, *Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse A Feminist Critique* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1989), 68.

when men do have more power, the gospel message is more difficult to receive for men than women. This helps explain the churches struggle to reach men.

### *Patriarchy Defined*

The root meaning of the word for patriarch in Greek, *Patriarkhes*, is the rule (*arkho*) of the father (*Pater*). In Patriarchy, the father has unique power and authority in the household.<sup>39</sup> Yet this patriarchy goes beyond the home and into the culture at large. Johnson wrote, “Leadership is identified with maleness in a patriarchal culture.”<sup>40</sup> Men have been given a unique power and authority in culture. Some call this male privilege. The culture at large responds more favorably to male initiative than female initiative. A commercial by Gillette stirred social media and others as they did an entire minute on all the privileges and power that men have been given.<sup>41</sup> The video challenged men to use their power for good and to build others up, rather than to use the power for their own gain.

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<sup>39</sup> Jane Mummery, *Understanding Feminism* (Trowbridge, UK: Acumen, 2009), 18.

<sup>40</sup> Johnson, 7.

<sup>41</sup> Megan McCluskey, “Gillette Makes Waves With Controversial New Ad Highlighting 'Toxic Masculinity,’” *Time Magazine*, January 2019, <http://time.com/5503156/gillette-razors-toxic-masculinity/>



*Scriptural Analysis of Patriarchy in the Home and the Church*

A traditional view of scripture believes that men are called to proactively initiate and influence those around them towards the greater good.<sup>42</sup> They believe God calls these men to high character and to servanthood. In Ephesians chapter five, the Apostle Paul calls women to submit to their husbands, and says that husbands are the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church.<sup>43</sup> The word for submission, *hupatasso*, in Greek means to come underneath God's arrangement. However, it does not mean to blindly follow or give the men power to do whatever they want in their homes. In the next few verses, Paul calls men to love their wives as Christ loved the church.<sup>44</sup> This seems like a good and high calling on its own, but the very next line takes it a step further. Husbands are called to specifically love their wives by giving themselves up for them as Christ did the church, and they are to protect their purity and bring about a glorious, righteous radiance.<sup>45</sup> In her commentary on these verses in Ephesians, Claire Powell wrote, "Giving in to others or compromising our needs or wishes is something that is necessary to make a relationship work and is eventually a mark of strength, not of weakness. The relationship advocated is not one of doormat to exploiter but of equals giving in at

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<sup>42</sup> Most scholars refer to this view as the traditional view. Other views have been introduced over the centuries, but this represents the most widely held view in church history and in the church today.

W. Ward Gasque, "The Role of Women in the Church, in Society and in the Home," Spring 1988, <https://www.cbeinternational.org/resources/article/priscilla-papers/role-women-church-society-and-home>

<sup>43</sup> Ephesians 5:22-23.

<sup>44</sup> Ephesians 5:25.

<sup>45</sup> Ephesians 5:26-27.

appropriate times to each other in love.”<sup>46</sup> Paul’s vision for marriage is a place of mutual servanthood and equality, not one way servitude and power plays for personal gain or esteem.

A traditional view of scripture calls men to a similar role within the local congregation.<sup>47</sup> Paul wrote in first Timothy that women are to learn in full submission and that women should not exercise authority over men.<sup>48</sup> This passage is quite controversial and has many differing interpretations, as the word used here for submission, *hypotage*, is not used anywhere else in the scriptures. This makes it more difficult to clarify its exact meaning. But in the traditional view, the Apostle Paul uses this section of scripture to call men to important and powerful roles in the life of the church.<sup>49</sup> His appeal back to the pre-fall sinless condition, of Adam being created first and then Eve, is believed by proponents of the traditional view to show that this teaching is not just for this context, but intended for all settings. Additionally, proponents of the traditional view, believe that when Paul outlines the qualifications for leadership in the church, his specific use of husband language instead of inclusive language means that he is referring solely to men to exercise power and authority in a local congregation. According to Ward Gasque, “The Egalitarian View argues that there is no scriptural

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<sup>46</sup> Claire Powell, *Women’s Bible Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2008), 702.

<sup>47</sup> Gregory Boyd, *Across the Spectrum, Understanding Issues in Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2009), 254.

<sup>48</sup> 1 Timothy 2:11.

<sup>49</sup> This does not necessarily mean that women cannot serve in leadership roles in congregations.

reason for women not to share in leadership in the church, or to participate in a marriage relationship that is based on a principle of mutual submission and interdependent love.”<sup>50</sup>

This power is to be wielded carefully, humbly and thoughtfully, and not to be used blindly or arrogantly. Jesus told the disciples who wanted to have more recognition and power, that true recognition and power come through humility and serving others.<sup>51</sup> Michelle Barnewell takes it even further when she calls leaders to follow Paul’s example and be slaves to the people they lead. She wrote, “Paul calls himself a slave of Christ (e.g., Rom 1:1; Gal 1:10), but he is also a slave to all people in order to win them to the gospel (1 Cor. 9:19). Even more he describes his apostolic role to the Corinthians as being their *duolos*.”<sup>52</sup> John Piper and Wayne Grudem wrote a lengthy scriptural defense of male headship in the home and in the church. They call men to be servant leaders. They wrote, “Mature masculinity expresses itself not in the demand to be served, but in the strength to serve and to sacrifice for the good of a woman... Mature masculinity does not presume superiority, but mobilizes the strength of others.”<sup>53</sup> Masculinity is not dominance or diminishment, but servant leadership. In Paul’s letter to Timothy, right before he talks about the authority and submission to men, he calls men to lives of prayer and to be without anger or disputes.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, when he describes the call of leadership

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<sup>50</sup> W. Ward Gasque, “The Role of Women in the Church, in Society and in the Home.”

<sup>51</sup> Mark 9:36.

<sup>52</sup> Michelle Barnewell, *Neither Complementarian nor Egalitarian* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2016), 110.

<sup>53</sup> John Piper and Wayne Grudem, *Rediscovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, IL: Good News, 2006), 789, 780.

<sup>54</sup> 1 Timothy 2:8.

in the church, he calls these leaders to be people of high character. These leaders are to model holiness, gentleness, self-control and to be able to care for their families well. They are called to be blameless.<sup>55</sup> This does not mean perfect, but it does mean that their goal in life is obedience to God.<sup>56</sup> Leaders serve others by submitting to God as others submit to them. In the traditional view, men have been given unique power in the life of the church, they are to use the power given to them by God in the local church to take initiative in the most important things and to have godly character that leads through love, not will to power or coerciveness.

In a complementarian view, women are prohibited from holding offices of authority in the congregation. Complementarians interpret the passages described above to mean exclusive male leadership in the pulpit and the ruling board of the church. Women are allowed to serve in leadership over children and other women, but are prohibited from being in any leadership positions where they would exercise authority over a man. In the egalitarian view, the above passages related to the character of leadership are not understood to be referring to men only. The call for women to not be in authority over men is believed to be referring to a specific situation in the life of the congregation Timothy was pastoring.<sup>57</sup> Egalitarians believe that women and men are equally called to full participation in the leadership of a congregation. They see the overarching teaching as men and women being equals in standing and calling. This understanding begins in Genesis one when it said God created men and women in God's

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<sup>55</sup> 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9.

<sup>56</sup> Titus 1:7.

<sup>57</sup> Boyd, 255.

image.<sup>58</sup> We all bear the image of God and should be treated with dignity and exercise humility. Egalitarians also rely on passages, like Galatians three, that say there are no longer any divisions in the church, specifically male and female division.<sup>59</sup>

There is a belief that embraces parts of each of the extremes.<sup>60</sup> In this case, Genesis one is a paramount passage for understanding men and women. Men and women are both created in the image of God,<sup>61</sup> which means that together men and women form the image of God. It also means that men and women are indeed equal, yet are also divinely different.<sup>62</sup> God has uniquely given them each other to demonstrate God's character to the world and exercise dominion together over the world. Men and women need each other to do what God has called them to do. In this middle ground view, men and women should both be allowed to serve in leadership positions in the local congregation.<sup>63</sup> The church will function at its highest when the full image of God is involved in every important decision that is made. In order for this to happen, both men and women need to be represented. At the same time, men play an especially important role in this leadership.

Male participation in leadership is especially important in churches that reside in patriarchal cultures. If the culture at large responds to men's leadership, it would be wise

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<sup>58</sup> Genesis 1:27.

<sup>59</sup> Galatians 5:28.

<sup>60</sup> This middle view, that embraces the best of complementarian and egalitarian views, is my personal belief.

<sup>61</sup> Genesis 1:25.

<sup>62</sup> Barnewell, 100.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 100.

for local congregations to empower men to take this leadership, so that they may get the best response possible. The most effective congregations will be those that can empower men and women simultaneously. If men can be empowered to take initiative in the most important things, and simultaneously value women as equals and co-image bearers, the church can impact whole families at a time.

### *The Origins of Patriarchy*

Those who embrace hierarchy believe that patriarchy was God's original design for the world, and that nearly every culture in history is divinely drawn to patriarchy.<sup>64</sup> They recognize that the fall and sins entrance into the world put strain and stress into the created order and specifically the relationships between men and women. But those who embrace hierarchy believe that it was God's plan from the beginning to entrust men with authority over women in the home and in the church until Jesus comes back and establishes the new kingdom order in full power.<sup>65</sup>

Others have a wide variety of views for the origins of patriarchy. Some suggest it began after the fall in Genesis chapter three, when Eve is cursed and told that her desire shall be for her husband and he will rule over her.<sup>66</sup> Others believe it originated when culture shifted from a hunting and gathering society which fostered teamwork to a horticultural society which fostered rugged individualism.<sup>67</sup> Still others believe that

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<sup>64</sup> John Piper and Wayne Grudem, *Rediscovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, IL: Good News Publisher, 2006), 287.

<sup>65</sup> Douglas Moo, *Rediscovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 178.

<sup>66</sup> Genesis 3:16.

<sup>67</sup> Lerner, 30.

differing moments in culture, like the rise of capitalism<sup>68</sup>, shifted God's plan for equal power and authority to a patriarchal system.

### *Patriarchy in the United States Today*

Patriarchy is still the dominant culture in the United States. This male privilege is most commonly associated with Caucasians. Though patriarchy is widespread, research indicates that the least patriarchal homes are those where both parties work, or, obviously, homes where there is no male present.<sup>69</sup>

Ruby Payne, a leading expert on systems within the different socio-economic structures of the United States, wrote that household income is the number one contributor to the leadership and power structure within the home. She said that the lower class, homes near or below the poverty line, tend to be almost exclusively matriarchal, often the men are passive or not even a part of the immediate family.<sup>70</sup> Middle income families tend to be patriarchal, which has been the traditional American home. This view that middle class families tend to be patriarchal is widely accepted.<sup>71</sup> In high income, upper class homes, the person with the most money tends to have the power.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Johnson, 43-44.

<sup>69</sup> Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness: From the Middle Ages to Eighteenth-century*. v. 2 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 18.

<sup>70</sup> Some research shows that there is an increasing number of homes below the poverty line that are not as matriarchal. The cost of living has pushed many two income families right at or below the poverty line. Yet, two equal earners can also create a less patriarchal home.

<sup>71</sup> Johnson, 102.

<sup>72</sup> Ruby Payne, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* (Highlands: aha! Process Inc, 2013), 42-43.

This cultural power dynamic gives opportunities for the church. For if middle class homes are most often patriarchal, and a man takes initiative in something like going to church, it is likely his family will follow his leadership. Churches who can build bridges to middle class men can see whole families come in and bring new life to the congregation. As an example, John was a suburban family man in Oregon. He had drifted from his faith and church for a very long time. While watching his son play sports, one of the dads invited him to a men's group. At the group, John connected with the other men and rediscovered his faith. His wife was so overjoyed with the changes she saw in John that she, too, joined the church and their family still attends today.

In lower class families, a man active in his home, faith and church will stand out and have an impact on his family. Rapper Lecrae describes his own upbringing in poverty as a struggle. His father left the family to pursue cocaine. Lecrae had no real male role models to teach him about godly manhood. His life was directionless. But his journey into Christianity led him to find godly men to follow. His becoming a proactive spirit-filled follower of Jesus deeply impacted his family. Lecrae describes his journey into denying himself to serve God in his family as difficult, but ultimately rewarding, as he saw fruit in his wife and children.<sup>73</sup>

### *The Struggles for Women in Patriarchy*

To feminists, this male leadership has not necessarily been a positive experience, especially as it is manifested in culture today. Johnson wrote, "A society is Patriarchal to

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<sup>73</sup> Lecrae, "Gospel Priority for Men," 2012, <https://www.acts29.com/gospel-priority-men/>



the degree that it is *male-dominated, male-identified and male-centered*. It also involves as one of its key aspects the oppression of women... in the simplest sense, male dominance creates power differences between men and women.”<sup>74</sup> In modern culture, feminists see that term through the lens of the control exercised by men over women, which can often lead to violence between men and women and the suppression of women.<sup>75</sup> Bloomquist wrote:

Violent reactions are not surprising when we remember that the defining feature of patriarchy is control or power over women. That control over must be maintained at any cost because it is the core moral value that generates males’ sense of identity and worth in this society.<sup>76</sup>

Males derive their worth from the power they are given, and how they practically exercise that power or do not exercise that power to create their identity. Feminists believe this creates another common characteristic of patriarchal societies, competition. Men seize control to feel significant, and this leaves them looking for other men to validate their manhood. Johnson wrote:

The cycle of control and fear that drives patriarchy has more to do with relations among men than with women, for it’s men who control men’s standing as men. With few exceptions, men look to other men to affirm their manhood, whether as coaches, friends, teammates, co-workers, sports figures, fathers, or mentors.<sup>77</sup>

This constant need for affirmation in patriarchy can create struggles in the home and in the church.

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>75</sup> Piper and Grudem, 211.

<sup>76</sup> Bloomquist, 65.

<sup>77</sup> Johnson, 33.

Men have used the power given to them in a patriarchal system for selfish means rather than glorifying God through serving others. This sinful behavior is something Ron Clark<sup>78</sup> and others call toxic Masculinity. Toxic masculinity has been a problem as long as sin has been a problem. In the Old Testament, the patriarch Jacob does not condemn the rape of his own daughter.<sup>79</sup> Other male writers of the Talmud actually blame the daughter, Dinah, for the rape.<sup>80</sup> Though the numbers are hard to estimate, as so many sexual assaults are not reported, one leader in this area, Dan Allender, estimates that as many as two in five women and one in six boys will be sexually violated before the age of eighteen.<sup>81</sup> These acts will almost exclusively be committed by men. The recent #MeToo movement has brought this darkness into the light, as women all over the country have told their stories of male power and abuse.<sup>82</sup> The sinful struggle is not limited to sexuality as men also have used the power bestowed upon them to keep themselves in power by pushing women down, rather than empowering them, including not allowing women to vote, paying women less than men for the same work, and other inequality issues. Feminism arose in an effort to see women empowered, and this violent and suppressive form of masculinity condemned and equality restored.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Ron Clark, *Am I Sleeping With the Enemy: Males and Females in the Image of God* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2010).

<sup>79</sup> Genesis 34:5.

<sup>80</sup> Ron Clark, "Will Boys Continue to be Boys?" Jan-Feb 2008, <http://archives.wineskins.org/article/will-boys-continue-to-be-boys-jan-feb-2008/>

<sup>81</sup> Dan Allender, *The Wounded Heart* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1990), back cover.

<sup>82</sup> Dan Allender, *#metoo*, [www.allendercenter.org](http://www.allendercenter.org), October 2017, <https://theallendercenter.org/2017/10/me-too/>

<sup>83</sup> Piper and Grudem, 211.

Another struggle for women is that men have used their power to selfishly fulfill only their own needs. Deborah Tannen believes that the core drive of a man is status and the core drive of a woman is intimacy and relationship. She contends that men's constant concern with status has caused them to overlook the needs of their wives for intimacy and relationship.<sup>84</sup> Johnson wrote, "In opinion polls, many men say that family life is more important than work, but when it comes to actual choices about where to invest themselves, the results reflect a different set of cultural values embedded in powerful paths of least resistance."<sup>85</sup> Men have used the power bestowed upon them to escape responsibilities and calling in their homes, rather than live into them.

### *The Struggles for Men in Patriarchy*

If men in the church still struggle to find their worth through accomplishments as compared to other men, men can become discouraged. Some churches may create examples and expectations that end up shaming men by always calling them to more, rather than encouraging them where they are. Perhaps the most vivid example of this is the fictitious character Ned Flanders on the TV show *The Simpsons*. He is portrayed as a man who does everything right all the time. His neighbor Homer and the other men in town struggle with Ned because his relationship with his wife and children reveals their own inadequacies.<sup>86</sup> Men, especially immature men, do not like to feel shame or failure,

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<sup>84</sup> Deborah Tannen, *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation* (New York: William Morrow, 1990), 15.

<sup>85</sup> Johnson, 15.

<sup>86</sup> Scott Satkin, "The Simpsons as a Religious Satire," April 2002, <https://www.simpsonsarchive.com/other/papers/ss.paper.html>.

and if they are constantly exposed and called into a lifestyle that seems unattainable, they will often withdraw from the church. Pastor Carson Tucker describes the jealousy men in the African American community felt when their wives would get connected at the church and with him. Rather than let the men feel shame that they might not measure up, he called them all and told them that he wanted them in church, too. This phone call helped them get beyond their initial shame, and he reported most of them came to church.<sup>87</sup>

This natural competition in a man's soul also presents an opportunity for the gospel. As men become more aware of their failures, the church can help men see a deep desire to be righteous. It is like the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18, where the Pharisee stands before God and talks about himself and his accomplishments while the tax collector stands humbly and beats his breast.<sup>88</sup> Men today can be called to follow the tax collector and set comparisons aside and come humbly before God, seeking mercy and a righteousness that may only come by grace through faith, not by outperforming others. If churches can preach this gospel and men receive it, churches can see men and their families come alive.

Another dark side of Patriarchy is that often men become isolated. Johnson wrote:

Under patriarchy, control shapes not only the broad outlines of social life but also men's inner lives. It does this through its central place in the definition of masculinity: a real man is in control or at least gives the impression of being in control... Since patriarchy isn't organized simply around the idea of control, but of

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<sup>87</sup> Tucker Carlson, "That Old-Time Religion: Why Black Men Are Returning to Church." *Policy Review*, no. 61 (Summer 1992): 13–17.

<sup>88</sup> Luke 18:9-14.

*male* control, the more men participate in the system, the more they come to see themselves as separate, autonomous, and disconnected from others.<sup>89</sup>

The more men seek to find significance through their personal accomplishments compared to others, the more isolated they will become as they seek to compete and outdo each other, rather than to support and work with others.<sup>90</sup> This isolation keeps men from deeply engaging with their families, and it can also keep them from being willing to engage a community setting, like a church.

Piper and Grudem believe that the rise of feminism and the resulting role confusion have left men directionless and lost, and that true and godly masculinity has been lost and perverted. Grudem wrote, “All the major positions of feminism can be traced back to the assumption that there is no significant difference between the sexes.”<sup>91</sup> The lack of role clarification leaves many men struggling to find their place and purpose in the world. The men from Men’s Fraternity 33 also cite the rise of feminism as one of the key sources for masculine confusion.<sup>92</sup> This confusion creates challenges, but also creates opportunities, if they can be reached and changed by the gospel. Larry Crabb shared the same belief in the power of a well-differentiated, masculine man to change the world. He said, “*If men become men, the world will change.*”<sup>93</sup> Men need to move beyond adolescent wandering and hiding and learn what it means to be a biblical godly

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<sup>89</sup> Johnson, 27.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Piper and Grudem, 322.

<sup>92</sup> 33 the series, Nashville: Lifeway, Manhood Realities DVD Series, Volume 1, Session 1. 2012. This is a video curriculum designed by Robert Lewis that is designed to help men understand manhood better and equip them to be better husbands, fathers and workers for good in the world.

<sup>93</sup> Larry Crabb, *The Silence of Adam* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 36.

man. One of the struggles in our culture today is that men do not know the call to live as a godly men.

The power that men are given within the family structure can then create problems. In his book *Angry White Men*, Michael Kimmel wrote “In our families, we are finding that abandoning that sense of masculine entitlement actually enables us to live happier lives.”<sup>94</sup> Kimmel offers the need for men to move away from traditional roles just for the sake of roles and discover a more joyful calling of love and service. Many men are using this power to escape from their call to love and serve, and are pursuing selfish gain instead. James Dobson takes it a step further, and said, “America’s greatest need is for husbands to begin guiding their families, rather than pouring every physical and emotional resource into the mere acquisition of money.”<sup>95</sup> This struggle of many men has increased anxiety in the home and often driven families further from God and the church.

Although, the core of manhood is the ability and willingness to take initiative,<sup>96</sup> many men have stopped taking initiative with the most important things in life, including their faith and their families. The lack of initiative has caused men to drift along with the culture rather than follow God’s path for their lives as is revealed in the Bible. They instead are focused on making themselves and their families happy. Crabb wrote:

One of the great tragedies of our day is that so many men are walking a path that they think leads to the joys of legitimate masculinity. It may be many years before

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<sup>94</sup> Michael Kimmel, *Angry White Men: American Masculinity at the End of an Era* (New York: Nation Books, 2013), 283.

<sup>95</sup> James Dobson, *Straight Talk to Men* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale 2007), 180.

<sup>96</sup> Robert Lewis, Rediscovering Biblical Manhood DVD series, Dad is Destiny session. Nashville: Lifeway. (Session 17, A Biblical Definition of Manhood), 2007.

\*Note: this doesn’t mean that women are not called to take initiative also, just expresses a core calling for men that they are struggling to live out.

those moving in wrong directions realize that the path they have been following releases masculine energy that is more corrupt than genuine, and the path leaves them even more powerless, bitter and terrified.<sup>97</sup>

Many men do take initiative. It is just not in the correct direction - they end up seeking to glorify themselves or something or someone else instead of the God who created them.

As an example, Tom is an involved dad, who coaches numerous teams for his kids.

Initially, he did this to connect with his kids and serve the community. But, over time Tom lost this focus and it became about him. He began to use whatever technique was necessary to get the teams to win, so that he would look good in the community. This included name calling, shaming and often yelling at the kids he coached. Over time this act of service turned into an idol. Coaching sports consumed his spare time and he drew his sense of worth from the kids' performance. Many men, especially middle class men, are active in the workforce, active in the home and active in the community. But, many of this busyness is being done to satisfy a need to feel important or to create status. This core need for acceptance and belonging was designed for God and God's church to meet. But, men seek to satisfy it in other places. John Calvin said that "our hearts are idol factories."<sup>98</sup> Men especially seem at their cores to struggle with going after and serving idols, created things, rather than the Creator of all things.

## **Opportunity 2: Using Power for Good**

In all of the descriptions and struggles of a patriarchy above, one thing is clear, patriarchy is real. Whether one believes it is from God or a product of sin, whether one

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<sup>97</sup> Larry Crabb, *The Silence of Adam*, 48-49.

<sup>98</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion – Volume 1* – (Philadelphia, Westminster 1960), 1.11.8.

believes it should be maintained and continually adjusted to empower others or whether one believes it is toxic and should be abolished, all agree that patriarchy is real and alive in the United States today. Since patriarchy is real, the church has an opportunity to seize the moment and use the patriarchal culture God has given us to further the Kingdom of God.

In a patriarchal culture, women and children are willing to embrace men who take initiative and lead in a winsome way. Leadership guru MaryKate Morris said, “Power used well is potent beyond imagination. Power used poorly corrupts individuals and communities.”<sup>99</sup>

In patriarchal cultures, men have privilege that can be used for the kingdom or for evil. For example, a young man and his fiancé are living in an apartment complex. He spends most of his money and time fixing up his truck, watching sports and playing video games. He regularly follows the path of his father and escapes reality through alcohol. He meets a neighbor, who befriends him and over three months introduces him to Jesus. The young man’s life is turned upside down. He marries his fiancé, gets involved in a Bible Study and they start attending a local church together. The young man became a youth pastor and is still serving God today.

The church faces significant challenges as men have sidelined themselves by not taking initiative in the most important things, but if the church can help these men rediscover their core callings and priorities as godly men, the church can be revitalized. When I was fifteen years old, I helped restore a car. I put it almost all back together

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<sup>99</sup> MaryKate Morris, *Making Room for Leadership Power Space and Influence* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity 2008) 1805, Kindle.



again, including the motor. When I went to drive the car, I discovered that it didn't have any power, it sputtered and stalled and barely kept running. When I returned home, I went through everything and could not figure out the problem. I began to read more about my car and discovered that I had the correct firing order for the cylinders (1,3,4,2), but I had thought that the distributor rotated clockwise. So, only two of the cylinders were firing and giving the car power. When I switched the two wires that were in the wrong order, my car drove like a sports car. Many men are firing on two cylinders. Their wires are reversed. The church can help them switch those wires. Churches today can find renewal if they can rediscover their own priorities and also help men rediscover their priorities through discipleship. Yet, reaching these lost men will not be easy - it will take time, patience and a commitment. Crabb said:

The only way for a man to be manly is for a man to first be godly... Men who learn to be fascinated more with Christ than with themselves will become the authentic men of our day... what we do not need is a temporary burst of resolve and passion. What we do need is reformation, that deep work of God marked by repeated cycles of brokenness, repentance, perseverance and joy.<sup>100</sup>

Churches who are willing to reach and disciple men and lead them into the most important things in life will see renewed life as God works in and through them.

Empowered, spiritual men can have a generational impact on the church as well. In a study done by the Swiss government, they discovered that Father involvement in the life of the church, even in something as simple as attendance, had a drastic impact on his children as adults. According to this study, if dad attends regularly with mom, there is a seventy-five percent chance that kids will be involved in the church as adults. If dad is irregularly attending, but mom is regular attending, then sixty-two percent of kids will be

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<sup>100</sup> Larry Crabb, *The Silence of Adam*, 33, 37.

involved as adults. If dad is not practicing at all, then forty percent of the children will be uninvolved as adults. Interestingly, when they reversed the scenarios, they found that if the dad is involved but the mother is not, the percentages of kids being involved actually increased from when both were attending or dad was partially practicing.<sup>101</sup>

Although this study was done in Switzerland, a much less Christian culture than the U.S., the data is startling and worth learning from by the American church. This data makes us wonder if reaching men would not only revitalize the church now, but perhaps affect it for many generations. It is a reminder that God is faithful to a thousand generations of those who faithfully seek God and obey God's commandments.<sup>102</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Churches today face a unique crisis as most of them are either declining or plateaued, and the culture around them has changed, and men have not responded with faith and godliness, but instead with fear and withdrawal. Churches who can overcome the worldview struggles and learn to embrace the postmodern, and overcome the struggles of patriarchy and learn to see how the power bestowed by society can be used for good, can see revitalization that will bring renewal to every part of their churches. If the church can find an effective way to reach and restore these men, the church would be

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<sup>101</sup> Werner Haug, Phillipe Warner, of the Federal Statistical Office, Neuchatel, *The Demographic Characteristics of the Linguistic and Religious Groups in Switzerland*, The study appears in Volume 2 of Population Studies No. 31, a book titled *The Demographic Characteristics of National Minorities in Certain European States*, edited by Werner Haug and others, published by the Council of Europe Directorate General III, Social Cohesion, Strasbourg, January 2000.

<sup>102</sup> Exodus 20:6.

revitalized. Reaching these men usually brings new life to the entire church, as often the entire family will come with them.

## SECTION 2:

### ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR REACHING MEN

Reaching men, especially in cultures that respond to male initiative, can have a generational impact on a congregation. Churches have sought to reach men for centuries, sometimes more successfully than others. There are two main ways the church has tried to connect with men: through men's movements and by making the local church more man friendly. Each of these has brought positive change to many men's lives, but each fell short of seeing churches fully revitalized.

#### **Alternative #1: Men's Movements**

The greater body of Christ has seen a number of movements to reach and minister to men in American culture. These movements include the early 20<sup>th</sup> century *Men and Religion Forward Movement* that was described in section one. More recently the *Mythopoetic*, *Promise Keepers*, and *Million Man March* movements sought to help men reconnect with God and others. This section will focus primarily on Promise Keepers, as it is by far the largest movement, and it is a movement designed to bring men to a relationship with Jesus Christ and bring them back into the local church. The other two movements, before and after Promise Keepers, impacted considerably fewer men and were not focused on bringing men specifically to Jesus Christ or on connecting them into a local congregation.

*The Mythopoetics/ Iron John Movement*

Robert Bly observed the men coming out of the 70's and 80's, and believed there was something missing. He believed, "Something is wrong with normative white heterosexual masculinity" but failed to couple it with "any clear statement or diagnosis of what something is."<sup>103</sup> Bly observed that many of the men were nice, but they didn't seem happy or energetic. Though he couldn't specifically name the problem, his leadership, poetry, and imagery sparked a movement among men. Bly and the mythopoetic leaders believed that the NOMAS (National Organization for Men Against Sexism<sup>104</sup>) group had coupled themselves too closely with feminism<sup>105</sup>, and he strove to restore a sense of masculinity to struggling men in America.<sup>106</sup>

Bly developed what he called a third possibility that was different than the "self-made patriarchy" or the nice, but non-energetic male. He wanted men to be happy to be men and reenergized for life. Bly's book *Iron John: A Book for Men* was about men rediscovering this happiness and energy and was on the best-seller list for forty weeks.<sup>107</sup> Newton wrote, "The point was not to dominate women but to hold one's own with them,

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<sup>103</sup> Fred Peil, *White guys: Studies in Postmodern Domination and difference*. (London:Verso, 1995) 193, 194, 195

<sup>104</sup> This was a male group sympathetic to feminists birthed in the 1980's. Men in this group sought to engage in the feminist movement and come alongside women as they sought equality.

<sup>105</sup> Judith Newton, *From Panthers to Promise Keepers: Rethinking the Men's Movement*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004). \*This Ebook contains no page numbers <https://georgefox.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=639048&scope=site>.

<sup>106</sup> Deborah G. White. *Lost in the USA : American Identity From the Promise Keepers to the Million Mom March. Women, Gender, and Sexuality in American History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017), 34.

<sup>107</sup> David Gelman, *Making ig All Feel Better*, *Newsweek*, 26 November 1990, 66.

especially the most critical, and, in so doing, to hold one's own with the motherly power they often represented."<sup>108</sup> In the early 1990's, these men started retreating together in drum circles, chanting, reciting Bly's poetry and opening up to each other. This movement attracted hundreds of struggling males who carried deep wounds from their fathers. Many of the men were in their thirties and forties, and were struggling with the changes in culture happening around them.<sup>109</sup> The Iron John movement helped them to bond emotionally with other men, to find confidence and to develop the ability to take initiative in their lives.<sup>110</sup>

These times of retreat focused on the central story of men seeking deliverance from their moms into manhood and self-esteem.<sup>111</sup> This movement was not overtly Christian. Bly's language was inclusive as he often referred to transforming higher powers rather than the God of the scriptures. He called men to unleash the inner "wild man", whom he called Iron John, and believed that many religions spoke about this man inside of them that could come out.<sup>112</sup> Newton writes, "Iron John, it would appear, represented a masculine higher power that helped the prince achieve the "miracle" of breaking free from his mother."<sup>113</sup> This movement believed that some men were struggling under the power of their mom's and needed to achieve their own masculine

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<sup>108</sup> Newton, Ebook.

<sup>109</sup> Robert Bly, *Iron John: A Book about Men* (New York: Addison – Wesley, 1990), 236.

<sup>110</sup> Newton, Ebook.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

independence. As an example, Joe's dad moved out when he was twelve. His mom and he developed a deep bond over the years that became unhealthy. Joe wanted to break free from the connection he felt his mom demanded, so he could become his own man. Bly and others would help Joe be free from the demands he felt from his mom. This freedom would allow him to become his own man.<sup>114</sup> The Iron John movement impacted struggling men during Bly's time, but there isn't much evidence that it deeply impacted local churches.

### *Promise Keepers*

Promise Keepers is the largest and most popular men's movement in the last fifty years in America. Bill McCartney was a successful football coach for the University of Colorado Buffalos. The coach from the relatively unknown school in Colorado was capturing many headlines as his football team was succeeding on the football field. Yet, his family was struggling. His wife and he felt disconnected, and his daughter had two children out of wedlock with different players from his football team. During the 1980's, the football team was experiencing great success, with even more victories on the horizon. He had devoted himself to his football team and gave the team whatever time was needed to experience success, yet his difficulties within his own family made him not feel successful. He blamed what he called his "workaholism" for the breakdown of his family.<sup>115</sup> Through a series of God encounters, McCartney decided to leave football. Deborah White wrote, "He founded the Promise Keepers so that men could use Christian

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<sup>114</sup> Lewis, *Men's Fraternity DVD Section 7: Overly Bonded to Mother Wound*.

<sup>115</sup> White, 34

teachings to redirect their lives and be happier.”<sup>116</sup> In 1990, while driving to a Fellowship of Christian Athletes event, McCartney had a vision for a football stadium filled with men, just like him, in need of encouragement to be godly men, worshipping God together.<sup>117</sup>

Just one year after McCartney’s vision, the first rally was held, and forty-two hundred men came out.<sup>118</sup> Promise Keepers grew numerically from there. In 1996, Promise Keepers hit its peak as they held twenty-two conferences around the country, drawing over a million participants.<sup>119</sup> The group slowly declined and faded away over the next few years, but over the ten-year span of Promise Keepers from 1990-2000 they reached five million men.<sup>120</sup> Newton wrote: “These numbers seemed to include men who returned year after year, but they easily established Promise Keepers as the largest organized effort to transform masculine ideals in the United States.”<sup>121</sup>

Promise Keepers was birthed out of the postmodern changes in society. Men were facing confusion with the rise of feminism and women in the workplace, the LGBTQ agenda, immigration and economic shifts that impacted middle class families’ standards of living and jobs downsized or shipped overseas.<sup>122</sup> White wrote:

When journalists, theologians, and social science scholars sought reasons for these men’s gatherings, they almost universally agreed that the cultural shifts

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>117</sup> Newton, Ebook.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> White, 20.



resulting from the changed economy, immigration, and the rights movements of the '60s and '70s had forced men to seek new ways of being a man. Masculinity was being remade in the '90s, and the process forced men to rework their attitudes and behavior toward women, the family, and children, as well as toward their work, other men, their communities, and the nation.<sup>123</sup>

The leaders of this movement envisioned change, change in attitudes and ways of relating that would help men be equipped to handle all the challenges postmodernity brought.

The leaders, like McCartney, unlike previous groups that were directly responding to the feminist movement, purposely did not blame feminism or any of the other groups.<sup>124</sup> Judith Newton started off suspicious of the movement, fearing the real agenda was for men to take some of the power back from the women who had benefited from the civil rights movements. But, as she researched, she discovered that their agenda was not authoritarian power but servant leadership, with a very strong emphasis on the servant part of the leadership. She wrote "Promise Keepers conferences repeatedly called on men to 'love selflessly', 'serve', 'sacrifice', and 'give' to their wives and children."<sup>125</sup> Promise Keepers was the only mass movement that applied mercy ministry to the home.<sup>126</sup> In Promise Keeper curriculum, they repeatedly called the men to a different level of communication and partnership, saying, "The macho idea that men must make all the decisions, or have the final say, is not what marriage is about. Marriage is about a vibrant partnership."<sup>127</sup> Promise Keepers was not a place for men to gather together and

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<sup>123</sup> White, 31.

<sup>124</sup> Newton, Ebook.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Wagner, *Strategies for Successful Marriage: A Study Guide for Men* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1994), 51-63, 67-69, 70-71, 79.

strategize how to retake the power, it was a place to come worship, share and go home committed to serve at home, in the church and in the community.

The “promise keeper” was someone who desired to keep the seven promises central to the movement. White wrote:

Promise Keepers adhered to seven promises that, briefly stated, committed them to the following: (1) to honor Jesus Christ; (2) pursue vital relationships with other men; (3) practice spiritual, moral, ethical, and sexual purity; (4) build strong marriages and families; (5) support the mission of the church; (6) “reach beyond any racial and denominational barriers to demonstrate the power of Biblical unity”; and (7) influence the world.<sup>128</sup>

These seven commitments defined the men associated with this movement. Men were encouraged to vulnerably speak about these things together and then go home and talk to their wives and churches about these renewed commitments. White wrote, “Men could be more vulnerable with other men than even their own spouses... Male camaraderie would, PK leaders argued, teach men to depend on each other and be less independent and competitive, and this would help them better relate to women.”<sup>129</sup> The movement did not shy away from confronting the challenges they believe men created. Newton wrote, “Promise Keepers were particularly emphatic about training men to confess their faults, take responsibility for their action, ask forgiveness, and undergo change.”<sup>130</sup> Men were called to change and many, if not most of them, did. In her interviews with dozens of random women whose husbands attended the conference, White found that the women liked the men that their husbands were becoming. Most noticed a significant change in

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<sup>128</sup> White, 34.

<sup>129</sup> White, 37-38.

<sup>130</sup> Newton, Ebook.

their husbands' countenance and commitment to serve their families.<sup>131</sup> She wrote, "Most PK wives felt their men became more sensitive and loving once touched by the organization's teachings." Karen Jensen felt this way about her husband. "Women have gone through years of tears, and God is answering their cries," she proclaimed. "Promise Keepers is teaching men how to become servants to their families, and to society."<sup>132</sup>

Promise keepers not only sought to restore men spiritually and redirect their home lives towards servanthood, but one of their highest priorities was racial reconciliation. The sixth promise of the movement was "reach beyond any racial and denominational barriers to demonstrate the power of Biblical unity." Men were repeatedly challenged by African American speakers from the podium. This commitment to racial reconciliation was central to McCartney's vision for the movement. His half African American grandchildren and all of the African American young men from his football days, for whom he had become a father figure over the years, as well as the racial tension outside his own circles, led him to inspire others to reconciliation. The Demographics of the Promise Keepers were largely white males, but also included a percentage of African Americans, as many as 20 percent at the Los Angeles conference. Perhaps the most powerful moment for this was a very long prayer of repentance led by Promise Keeper President Randy Philips, where men confessed their apathy and distance from racial issues and tensions. He led the men to ask God to give them boldness and courage to work for reconciliation instead.<sup>133</sup> McCartney was criticized for using his power as a

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<sup>131</sup> White, 74-78.

<sup>132</sup> Gutierrez-Mier, "S.A. Residents to Join D.C. Gay Rights March," Metro/South Texas sec., 6B.

<sup>133</sup> Newton, Ebook.

white leader to try and help the cause of African Americans. Media leader Ken Hamblin said, “We don’t need a white male army of God’s angels on earth rushing to our aid, overcome with missionary zeal to liberate us from the hellishness of being black in America. What we need is to be dealt with as equals, fully vested Americans.”<sup>134</sup> Despite the criticism, McCartney and the other leaders were committed to reconciliation and kept it as one of their promises.

McCartney also received some criticism for staying out of feminist issues. White tells of one particular feminist critic:

Butler was also disturbed by what she thought was PK’s greater sensitivity to racial matters than to sexism. That PK failed to denounce the sins of “pornography, demeaning women verbally, abuse, sexual sin, power manipulation, [and] lack of emotional support” was “belittling” to women. She summed things up this way: “Promise Keepers envision life as a football game. A great team on the field cheered by women on the sidelines.”<sup>135</sup>

The Promise Keepers leaders did address many of these issues, but they refused to make them the central issues of their movement.<sup>136</sup> Instead, they remained committed to focusing on men and the changes they needed to make, and stayed clear of the controversy of feminism. They repeated the message of service. One exception was Tony Evans, writing in 1994. White records:

Men, the Dallas pastor proclaimed, had abdicated their leadership of the family to women and the only way for them to reclaim their manhood was to reconstitute themselves as head of the household. Here he was emphatic. “I’m not suggesting that you ask for your role back, I’m urging you to take it back.”<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Ken Hamblin, *Patronizing Promise*, first ed., Denver and the West B07, Denver Post, June 25, 1996.

<sup>135</sup> White, 78.

<sup>136</sup> Bartkowski, 12.

<sup>137</sup> White, 40.

This quote brought controversy to Promise Keepers, as people feared it was a “take the power back” movement.<sup>138</sup> Yet, this type of overthrowing language was not used by any of the other speakers in the movement. The other speakers and leaders emphasized the servant part of servant leadership, and Tony Evans himself softened his stance.<sup>139</sup>

The deficit in the church was what caused Promise Keepers to be necessary. Meg Riley, a Unitarian Universalist minister who challenged Promise Keepers conservatism, said, “This is a real testament of how the mainstream churches have failed men; it’s a wake-up call for us.”<sup>140</sup> White wrote, “Even critics and skeptics traced the origins of the Promise Keepers to the failure of the church to minister to men.”<sup>141</sup> Though the movement was originally birthed to help men be better equipped to love and serve their families and the complicated world they found themselves in, there was also a significant emphasis on connecting with a local church. Men were repeatedly encouraged to go home and start a small group of men that would gather together regularly to help keep them on the promise-keeping path. Eighty percent of the men Newton followed up with about the event said that they came home and started a group in their church.<sup>142</sup>

Yet, some in local churches did not support Promise Keepers. McCartney was not a theologically trained pastor, and the movement stayed out of most controversial areas of

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>140</sup> Ann Scott Tyson, “A New Stir Surrounds Men’s Role.” *Christian Science Monitor*, September 17, 1997.

<sup>141</sup> White, 22.

<sup>142</sup> Newton, Ebook

doctrine, so it could appeal to the masses.<sup>143</sup> Promise Keeper critics believed the lack of theological foundation was not giving the men they were reaching clear direction.<sup>144</sup>

In Summary, Promise Keepers came at a moment in history where men were struggling, amidst all the changes in postmodernism, to find their identity. The church had not adequately helped or trained these men to adapt, and Promise Keepers was an attempt to guide these men on the path of the seven promises. Many churches received a short-term boost from these conferences, and large rally experiences like Promise Keepers helped rejuvenate millions of men. The men of Promise Keepers are planning to relaunch in July of 2020 with another stadium style conference to reach and encourage men. This time, one of the stated objectives is to have men go home and come under the vision of their local church and the leadership there.<sup>145</sup>

### *The Million Man March*

The Million man march was a large gathering of men from the African American community on the Washington Mall on October 16, 1995. Most of the Million Man marchers were from middle-income homes, as the travel expenses limited who could afford to attend.<sup>146</sup> White records, “Marchers gave a variety of reasons for participating in the Million Man March, but, generally speaking, it boiled down to their concern about the

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<sup>143</sup> Al Janssen and Larry K. Weeden, *Seven Promises of a Promise Keeper*. Colorado Springs, Colorado: Focus on the Family Publishing, 1994.

<sup>144</sup> John P. Bartkowski, *The Promise Keepers: Servants, Soldiers, and Godly Men* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 11.

<sup>145</sup> <https://www.promisekeepers.org/pk-media>, “Inside the New PK”, 2018.

<sup>146</sup> White, 43.

state of the black family, the state of the race, and racism in America.” The purpose of the march was different than Promise Keepers. While Promise Keepers pushed men to become tenderer, the Million Man March pushed being united as black men to support each other through the unique challenges they faced. They called each other to strength in unity.<sup>147</sup> Yet, both were attempting to reach men, predominately Christian men, and bring them renewal. White wrote, “Promise Keepers was avowedly Christian while the Million Man marchers had a higher-than-average percentage of black men who, by their church attendance and testimony, mostly identified as Christian.”<sup>148</sup>

At the Million Man march, African American men from around the country gathered to acknowledge the struggles they uniquely faced as African American men. Men were able to express their struggles with both American whites and with certain elements in the African American community, and find solidarity.<sup>149</sup> Men also were able to share their struggle to find hope amidst the systemic tide of racism, and find brothers who could uniquely understand the struggles and burdens they carried for themselves and the generations after them.<sup>150</sup> Many of these men felt a deeper connection with God.

White records:

Joseph Lowery, the head of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, called it “the biggest revival that I’ve ever attended.” Men prayed together and held hands in demonstrations of unity and brotherhood. Expressions like “It’s a holy day,” “This is a spiritual day,” “God’s with us now,” and “Only God could be behind this” were common.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 55-56.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 48.

This moment in history was a powerful time of solidarity for African American men. Yet, it was not intended to bring revival to the local churches. The goal was to bring a day of unity and encouragement to help African American men know they were not alone in their struggles and to encourage these men to keep moving forward to do what was right and good in their children, homes and communities, and advance equality for African Americans.<sup>152</sup>

In Summary, the three movements described each had an impact on a significant number of men. Some of the movements were more overtly Christian than others. But, all of them hoped to help men find renewal in their own souls. These movements did help many men reconnect with God and with each other. They showed that reaching across denominational, ethnic and geographical lines can bring encouragement and unity to individual men. Though not many of these movements brought renewal to local congregations, they do play an important role in reaching and renewing men in the past and in the future, especially if the movements can better partner with local churches.

### **Alternative #2: Local Churches Becoming More “Man Friendly”**

Another solution to help churches reach men is to help churches become more “friendly” toward men. Men like David Murrow and Leon Podles have concerns about churches in the United States being too feminine.<sup>153</sup> They, and others, are calling churches to reexamine themselves. Churches would be wise to reexamine their vision, worship environment, their worship experiences, team structure and their opportunities

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>153</sup> Leon Podles, *The Church Impotent: The Feminization of Christianity* (Dallas: Spence, 1999), 1.



for male brotherhood. Churches who redevelop these areas wisely, with both men and women in mind, will more effectively reach men and women.

### *The Uniqueness of a Man*

Masculinity and femininity do vary some from culture to culture. A given church will need to examine its culture's own view of masculinity to best understand what may appeal or turn off men from being a part of their community. Yet, there are a few things that psychology and science have deduced about men that can help any given church.

Most men have a more masculine lens through which they interpret and interact with the world. David Gilmore researched many cultures past and present to help understand men and their roles in society. He discovered that, though cultures do have some variations, "true masculinity" is most often defined by a man's willingness to overcome some sort of force in nature to create something of value for the world beyond him.<sup>154</sup> Gilmore wrote, "One of my findings here is that manhood ideologies always include a criterion of selfless generosity, even to the point of sacrifice."<sup>155</sup> Men, however, tend to express this generosity in a less direct form than do their female counterparts. They often seek to protect, preserve and provide for a culture so that people can directly serve others.<sup>156</sup> Yet simultaneously, men, especially younger men, tend to be autonomous

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<sup>154</sup> David Gilmore, *Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University 1990), 223.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 229.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 230.

and struggle to see beyond themselves to recognize the needs of others.<sup>157</sup> Men have a need to be empowered and make a difference in the world by the work they are doing, and when they are not, they will struggle.

Men's brains are wired slightly different than women's. Women more often have symmetry in the hemispheres of their brains, which allows them to handle and perceive many things at once.<sup>158</sup> This, coupled with a limbic system controlled by estrogen instead of testosterone, can make women more patient than men and better able to tolerate multiple stimuli without a reaction.<sup>159</sup> In his book on masculinity, Wayne Grudem wrote, "The more lateralized male brain would be expected to be more single-minded, focused, less distractible and perhaps less socially aware."<sup>160</sup> Men can find it especially difficult when they cannot understand all that might be happening around them.

### *Creating Vision*

Most churches desire to grow numerically and retain men, especially churches that are declining. Churches may not even realize that barriers to reaching men exist. Thom Rainer, in his book *Breakout Churches*, examines almost 2,000 churches in America. He graded them through the lens of conversions, and discovered that ninety-six percent of the churches he profiled fell short of his criteria for a great church.<sup>161</sup> An

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<sup>157</sup> J. Spence & Robert L. Helmreich, *Masculinity & Femininity: Their Psychological Dimensions, Correlates, and Antecedents* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978), 119; Hicks, R., *The Masculine Journey: Understanding the Six Stages of Manhood* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1993), 77.

<sup>158</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Rediscovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 290, Kindle.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 290.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 293.

<sup>161</sup> Thomas Rainer, *Breakout Churches* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 230-231.

example of a great church is Grove City Church of the Nazarene, in Grove City, Ohio. After years of plateau and decline, they were renewed. The main factor in this renewal was a freshly inspired pastor who inspired his leaders. The renewed and refocused leadership team created an enthusiasm for reaching their community that spread throughout the congregation. They relocated their church and changed their worship style to better impact the community. They have seen consistent growth, conversion growth, for many years.<sup>162</sup> Rainer wrote, “With most of these churches, somewhere in their histories they have become satisfied with the status quo. They resist change and often seek to minister only to those inside the church.”<sup>163</sup> Churches can navigate through the status quo into new life through taking a fresh look at what is really happening in their environments. One wise question to ask would be “would a man feel welcome here?”

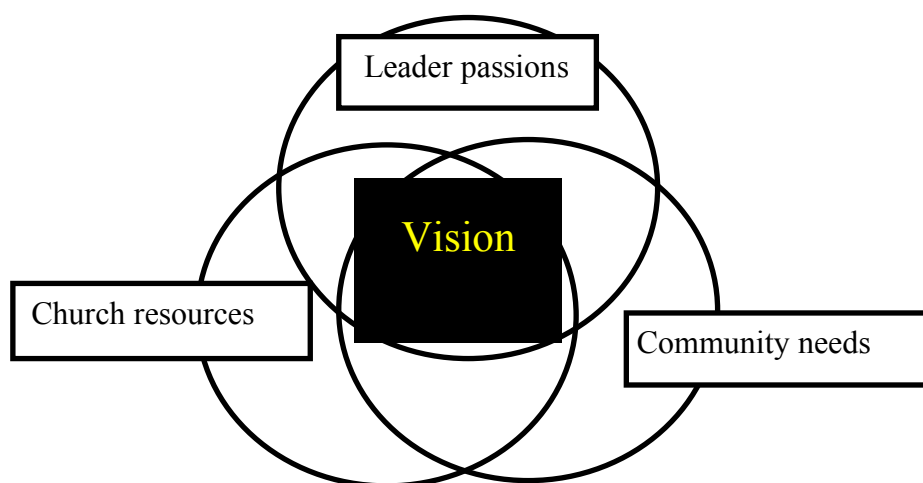
Vision and the mission, and priorities that flow from it, are an important part of the life of a modern church. Churches blossom more often when they have an idea of where they are going, what they are creating, and doing what it takes to get them where they are going. Rainer profiled declining or plateaued churches that had been renewed. He found these churches had seen sustained growth and studied the key things that made them successful. Getting the vision right was very important for all of them. Yet, Rainer said this was not a long drawn-out process, but a simple evaluation of the church

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 23.

leadership, church resources and community needs. Rainer's chart below illustrates this simple principle for setting vision:



Rainer wrote, “The researchers found that the leaders discovered vision through intersection of these three factors: the passion of the leader, the needs of the community, and the gifts, abilities, talents and passions of the congregation.”<sup>164</sup> Congregations that seek renewal would be wise to prayerfully and thoughtfully discern these three areas, and then move in this direction.

Men are attracted to strong vision that allows for each member, men and women, to see clearly what their place within the vision might look like. Murrow wrote, “Men love churches that make the mission clear. They focus on the basics. This is what our church is about. Here is our mission. Here is how you can become a part of what God is doing in our congregation.”<sup>165</sup> In the garden, God created Adam and then immediately put a tool in his hand and challenged him to get to work by exercising authority and care

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<sup>164</sup> Thomas Rainer, *Breakout Churches*, 30.

<sup>165</sup> David Murrow, *How Women Help Men Find God*, 83, Kindle.

over the land and the animals.<sup>166</sup> Men (and women) are longing for a place to work for the glory of God. A church that offers a clear vision that specifically includes space for men to serve, develop, connect and grow will appeal to a man's core need to sacrifice to impact the world beyond himself and will bring energy and life to most men.<sup>167</sup> This vision will be especially effective if it includes a plan for discipleship that allows everyone to develop into the men and women God intends for them to become.

### *Creating "Man Friendly" Worship Services*

Many men, probably most men, would struggle with the emotional tone of many modern worship services. This struggle is not new for men. In 1905, the church had a similar discovery. Historian Gail Bederman wrote, "Nineteenth-century evangelical Protestantism had been emotional, emphasizing the heart over the head; and the Men and Religion activists identified this, rightly, with Protestantism's feminization."<sup>168</sup> The men at that time sought to correct this in the church. Yet, they went to the extreme the other way by eliminating most of the "heart" elements from the worship experience.<sup>169</sup> The church today would be wise to take a balanced approach in reaching the head and the heart. Ed Stetzer wrote, "When we create a God-centered and culturally appropriate worship service, it helps us begin the process of seeking God for other changes that need

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<sup>166</sup> Genesis 1:17-20, 2:15.

<sup>167</sup> D. Gilmore, *Manhood in the Making: Cultural concepts of masculinity*, 223.

<sup>168</sup> Gail Bederman, *"The Women Have Had Charge of the Church Work Long Enough": The Men and Religion Forward Movement of 1911-1912 and the Masculinization of Middle-Class Protestantism*, 441

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 441.

to take place.”<sup>170</sup> Balanced worship allows for the church to find unity that can then lead to deeper changes. Men, like women, want to connect with God, and the churches’ main job in worship is to facilitate this connection by being aware of God and the culture the church is trying to reach.

Most men, especially middle class men, prefer things to be done well, and they find themselves attracted to things that are authentic, well thought-out and delivered with excellence.<sup>171</sup> Churches who let things slide and do not value the details, without realizing it, can detour people from joining them. Rainer wrote, “An environment exists in breakout churches that can best be described as a ‘culture of excellence’... Everything the church does and is gets measured against a barometer of excellence.” The same principle of excellence attracting others is true in most organizations.

In His book *Good to Great*, David Collins wrote about the best organizations in the world embracing what he calls “The Hedgehog Concept”.<sup>172</sup> The Hedgehog concept is a commitment to discovering what an organization can do best and then focusing its resources around something it can do with excellence.<sup>173</sup> Churches would be wise to find what they do best in worship and focus more of their time and energy on doing these things well. For instance, if the church has a lot of socially-challenged, introverted people, it may want to reconsider a long greeting time. Or, if the church does not have a strong praise team leader, it may be wise to put a praise team together or maybe embrace

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<sup>170</sup> E. Stetzer, & Mike Dodson, *Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around and Yours Can Too* (Nashville: B & H Pub, 2007), 223, Kindle

<sup>171</sup> Rainer, *Breakout Churches*, 31.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>173</sup> Jim Collins, *Good to Great* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), 91.

a hymn-based service that doesn't put the focus on the singing leader. If the pastor is an exceptional speaker, it may be wise to have the sermon spot in the worship order, be the pinnacle of the worship experience.

A worship experience that is friendly to all, including men, from door to door is important if a church wants to effectively bring men in and keep them involved in the life of the church. In most churches, the worship service is the centerpiece of the church. The whole church gathers once a week to sing, pray, have fellowship, and experience the word of God through a sermon. People inside and outside the congregation recognize that the Sunday worship experience is the centerpiece of the congregation, and they often refer to the worship service as "church". It is important for the worship experience on Sunday mornings to be a good reflection of the church's vision and for it to be an experience that does not make anyone feel unwelcome or too uncomfortable.

#### *"Man Friendly" Leadership Teams*

High-functioning teams can be a source of energy, vision and great ministry in the life of most congregations. However, over time, these teams can become stale, as the team leader and the team can lose their purpose and end up meeting just for the sake of meeting. These standing committees in many congregations can turn into places of social networking and support rather than vision and action. As was mentioned earlier, men's brains struggle when structure is replaced with ambiguity and teams become mostly social interactions.<sup>174</sup> Churches with less focused ministry teams over time will lose men and professional women.

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<sup>174</sup> Grudem, *Rediscovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 293, Kindle.

Churches that desire to see men serve would be wise to teach their leaders to run meetings with purpose and meaning. The people present can know what is happening and how it fits into the bigger picture of the church. Meetings that stay on-task allow men to stay connected and enthused. Teams that meet for a specific purpose rather than just meeting for the sake of stability will find more success keeping everyone engaged. Stetzer wrote, “Leadership is rated the factor having the highest impact for comeback churches. Churches that are in a pattern of plateau or decline need strong leaders who will point the way to revitalization.”<sup>175</sup> Focused and effective ministry meetings will help the congregation continue moving forward together towards God’s mission and simultaneously keep everyone engaged.

### *Creating Brotherhood Opportunities*

Most adult men do not have close male friends. The culture of men’s clubs and organizations, which allowed for connection in the past, has faded away, leaving most men quite isolated. Men’s ministry leader Pastor Robert Lewis said that less than ten percent of men have a friend that they could call in the middle of the night if there was an emergency.<sup>176</sup> Yet, men desire and need relationships with other men. From the beginning, before sin even entered the world, God declared that it was not good for man to be alone.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Stetzer, *Comeback Churches*, 530, Kindle.

<sup>176</sup> Robert Lewis, *Men’s Fraternity: The Quest for Authentic Manhood Lesson*, 5.

<sup>177</sup> Genesis 2:18.



Churches that recognize men's needs to be with other men and that develop programming that allows men to play, study and bond together as men, will see more men come into the life of the church. Reaching men may not look the same as reaching women. Men are longing for someone to stand with them shoulder to shoulder as they look to take on the world's challenges.<sup>178</sup> Men do, of course, communicate face-to-face as well, and not all men are the same. As men mature, they become more empathetic and compassionate.<sup>179</sup> Yet, the church would be wise to provide avenues and opportunities for men to develop shoulder-to-shoulder friendships, so that many men can come out of hiding and begin to build much needed friendships.<sup>180</sup>

During the man movement in the early 1900's, men brought many leisure activities into the life of the church. "Virtually every denomination was organizing men's clubs, fostering boys' sports, installing bowling alleys and billiard tables when they could get some sort of a club house."<sup>181</sup> The men did come in for these activities, but they were not interested in the mission of the church before they arrived, like helping those in need and working for justice. In an effort to bring men in, many churches lost some of their core mission.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Rodney Cooper, *Shoulder to Shoulder: The Journey from Isolation to Brotherhood* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 9.

<sup>179</sup> Ron Clark, *Am I Sleeping with the Enemy? Males and Females in the Image of God*, 62, Kindle.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 74, Kindle.

<sup>181</sup> Gail Bederman, *"The Women Have Had Charge of the Church Work Long Enough": The Men and Religion Forward Movement of 1911-1912 and the Masculinization of Middle-Class Protestantism*, 455.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 455.

The church is not there primarily to teach men to be friends. The goal for every person in the church, especially evangelical churches, is to believe in Christ, glorify God and work out the plans of God in the church and the world. God's plan for men and women is for them to become more like Jesus and represent Jesus in the world. Side-by-side opportunities allow for valuable friendships and bridges to be built that can help men take the next step towards God, and should not be overlooked. Well-rounded churches teach all of their members to love God, love each other, and to serve God in their communities.

### **Conclusion**

Churches have tried differing methods to reconnect with men. Some work more effectively than others. The Robert Bly/ Iron John movement helped many struggling men rediscover their sense of manhood, but the movement did not significantly impact the church. The Promise Keepers movement made an impact on millions of men and their families and gave a quick shot in the arm to many churches, yet the long sustained impact on the local church was hard to discern. The Million Man march brought unity and inspiration to many African American middle class men throughout the country, but this group was not specifically aimed at aiding the local church. The internal changes within the congregation to help churches become friendlier to men are insightful and helpful for congregations who desire to keep men in the church, yet these changes do not necessarily bring men into the church. None of these attempts needs to be discarded, instead each can be learned from and churches can use similar programs to reach men in the future. However, given the churches' call and struggle, there is a better way to effectively reach men, and this is the focus of Section 3, the proposed solution.

### SECTION 3: PROPOSED SOLUTION

Churches who can equip their members to reach others will experience new life. Especially in a patriarchal culture, I propose that teaching men to reach men through discipling relationships will revitalize churches. This section is dedicated to breaking down and understanding this important plan that will change any congregation. Discipleship is a process that takes time to implement. But, it also allows a congregation to begin with the men (and women) that they already have and to let things grow from there.

Worship attendance is down in the U.S., and it is decreasing proportionately as the population increases.<sup>183</sup> Yet, most churches have a core of people who attend faithfully and give generously.<sup>184</sup> This core, however, is not faithfully helping the group of periodic attenders become more committed. One of the pastors I interviewed said that his church has seen a significant drop in attendance over the past ten years. Yet, their budget was not drastically impacted nor was the vast majority of their programming. What they discovered, like many congregations, was that a small percentage of the congregation was doing most of the giving and providing most of the leadership. Yet, he struggled to get this committed group, of mostly older Christians, to think beyond themselves to reach and minister to others and bring them into the life of the congregation.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> Barnes and Lowry, 5.

<sup>184</sup> Stanton, 1.

<sup>185</sup> Interview with Pastor in Kent, WA.

In the book *Who Moved My Church*, Nazarene leader Oliver R. Phillips, director of Mission Strategy USA/Canada, unpacks the cycles of organizations and shows that growth is often followed by plateau and decline, and encourages congregations to be open to new visions and cycles to stay growing and vital. He wrote, “Successful churches are those that constantly seek ways to reinvent themselves, even when things are going well. The only path that any organization can chart for ongoing success is constant reinvention.”<sup>186</sup> Churches can get into ruts and routines that become an end in themselves. Many who attend the church do so out of routine and commitment. Routine and commitment are good things, but they can lead to legalism, as “good” actions are substituted for a relationship with God. God intends for churches and the individuals within them to be led by Holy Spirit, and this will often mean learning to adapt and change as the leadership and community around them changes. Followers of Jesus are most effective when they are able to discern where God is working and join God’s work there.<sup>187</sup>

Alan Hirsch argues that the church has become stagnant and that people have come to associate church with a building and a holding place rather than a movement of God. He said:

If we are to awaken Apostolic Genius and to recover the dynamic of the outstanding transformational movements in history, then we must flip the dominant metaphor from the essentially static-institutional ones that dominate our ecclesiology to the more dynamic organic-movemental ones. By changing the metaphor to that of organic images and movements, *everything* changes.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Oliver Phillips, “Who Moved my Church?” 2001, [www.usacanadaregion.org](http://www.usacanadaregion.org), 15.

<sup>187</sup> Henry Blackaby, *Experiencing God Workbook* (Nashville: LifeWay, 2010), 79.

<sup>188</sup> Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating Apostolic Movements* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2016), 4243, Kindle.

Hirsch believes that the key for the church to be revitalized is a return to its core DNA, a missional movement. He said, “If we are to unlock the vast potentials that lie largely dormant in God’s people, then the movemental paradigm must supplant the dominant institutional one and become the primary lens through which we perceive the phenomenon we call church.”<sup>189</sup> Hirsch’s missional movement centers around spiritual relationships, serving people beyond the church walls and rediscovering the lost art of discipleship.

The modern church struggles with discipleship. Well-known discipleship author Dallas Willard wrote, “Non-discipleship is the elephant in the church. It is not the much discussed moral failures, financial abuses, or the amazing general similarity between Christians and non-Christians. These are only effects of the underlying problem.”<sup>190</sup> In his later book, *The Great Omission: Rediscovering Jesus’ essential teachings on discipleship*, Willard said, “The word disciple occurs 269 times in the New Testament. ‘Christian’ is found three times and was first introduced to refer precisely to disciples of Jesus. . . . The New Testament is a book about disciples, by disciples, and for disciples of Jesus Christ.”<sup>191</sup> Yet, churches have struggled to prioritize discipleship. Instead, churches have worship services, committee meetings, service projects and occasional small groups. These are all “good” things, but, unfortunately, they do not yield the kind of fruit disciple-making does. Alan Hirsch wrote, “I think it is fair to say that in the Western

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 509.

<sup>190</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1997), 840.

<sup>191</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1997), 1.

church, we have, by and large, lost the art of disciple making.”<sup>192</sup> Jesus put a model before us and his model was discipleship. Discipleship can be defined in many different ways, but togetherness under the Lordship and direction of the Spirit of Christ is a centerpiece. Well-known men’s leader Patrick Morley, in his book *How God Makes Men*, wrote, “Jesus called Peter and the rest of the twelve disciples to be with Him. In other words, He called them into a relationship—a small group, a life-on-life community where they would become like brothers.”<sup>193</sup> The people of God need more than large gatherings, they need purposeful and personal relationships with each other to grow. Discipleship is not just a small group of people committed to be nice and good to each other, but there is expected movement by each member in the group towards Jesus Christ. In His book, *The Way of the Alongsider*, discipleship guru Bill Mowry wrote, “A disciple in the New Testament is primarily a ‘follower,’ ‘imitator,’ or ‘learner.’ When a rabbi asked someone to follow him, it was more than a casual relationship. This was an intentional commitment to learn from a master.”<sup>194</sup> Effective discipleship ministry today will revolve around people gathered together to learn from and become like Jesus.

### **Discipleship Part One: Discovering the Invitation and Challenge of Jesus**

Discipleship groups function differently than typical small groups in that they represent both sides of the character of God. The Gospel writer John introduces Jesus as

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<sup>192</sup> Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 2324, Kindle.

<sup>193</sup> Patrick Morley, *How God Makes Men* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2013), 144.

<sup>194</sup> Bill Mowry, *The Ways of the Alongsider* (Colorado Springs: Nav Press, 2016), 30, Kindle.

the one Son from the Father, who was full of grace and truth.<sup>195</sup> God is simultaneously strong and tender, and followers of Christ will be transformed by the Spirit of Christ over time and become simultaneously strong and tender themselves. The relationships we put ourselves in to develop these two characteristics are simultaneously tender and strong. In churches today, we tend to offer models that are high in tenderness and low in strength.<sup>196</sup> People are invited, welcomed and encouraged to be a part of the group (tender and grace), but seldom challenged (truth and strength) and held accountable for taking up their cross and following Jesus.<sup>197</sup>

Small groups tend to be primarily information-oriented rather than transformation-oriented. People gather together and try to get the facts of Christianity correct and to share an occasional prayer request. Alan Hirsch wrote, “The academy demands passivity in the student, whereas discipleship requires activity. If discipleship primarily involves becoming like Jesus, then it cannot be achieved by the mere transfer of information divorced from the context of ordinary, lived life.”<sup>198</sup> Effective discipleship will involve taking the learning that is acquired and applying it to everyday life. A group of dads that meets every week will become inspired when they apply the material they are studying together to their lives. Application allows them to see the material come alive and makes them want to study and learn. It also puts them in a position where they

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<sup>195</sup> John 1:14.

<sup>196</sup> Mike Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture* (Greenville: 3DM Publishing.com, 2016), 196, Kindle.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., 196, Kindle.

<sup>198</sup> Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 2681, Kindle.

must trust the Lord and depend on God for direction for their lives, rather than meeting weekly simply for the sake of learning together.

Effective discipleship is done through the lens of the gospel of grace and will revolve around training others to embrace their gospel identity and then discerning how to live out that identity in the world. In 2 Corinthians the Apostle Paul tells us that if “Anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has gone and the new has come.”<sup>199</sup> Discipleship guru Mike Breen’s discipleship program focuses on this new life that is offered in the gospel. It is not something that naturally happens, but something that God has designed to come out through the power of the Holy Spirit working in a group. Breen noted, “It is our experience that people want to grow but are unable to will themselves to transformation. They need relationships and structures that keep them accountable and moving toward Jesus. They also know the only way this can happen is with high commitment.”<sup>200</sup> Building healthy discipleship relationships can take a few different forms, but acceptance and accountability will both be present. Crabb wrote, “Jesus brought ordinary men together in authentic relationships where He equipped them to accomplish extraordinary tasks. That was, and is, the elegant simplicity of God’s plan to make men who will be qualified to reach other men.”<sup>201</sup> Disciples come alive in the Spirit of God as they together discern the extraordinary things God is calling them to become and to do. John, a California parishioner, was encouraged to pray and ask God to show him what he might do for ministry in his life. As he prayed, God opened up doors to pick-

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<sup>199</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV).

<sup>200</sup> Breen, 198, Kindle.

<sup>201</sup> Crabb, *The Silence of Adam*, 144.



up food for the local food pantry, serve in a leadership role in his congregation and even start a car repair ministry. These ministries became bridges that allowed him to not only serve God, but share the gospel with others. The end goal of these groups is to reach more men and women with the power of the gospel.

Breen calls these discipling relationships huddles. Breen suggests that, “A Huddle is the group of four to ten people you feel God has called you to specifically invest in, and you will meet with them regularly (at least every other week) to intentionally disciple them in a group setting.”<sup>202</sup> These huddles are modeled after the original huddle created by Jesus with his disciples. Huddle relationships revolve around two main principles: invitation and challenge. Breen wrote:

Time and time again in the Gospels, we see Jesus functioning as a classic horse-whisperer, inviting his followers into an intimate relationship with him while also initiating a direct challenge to behaviors he knew were either wrong or unhealthy... He drew his disciples closer, loved them, but also gave them the opportunity to accept the responsibilities of discipleship.<sup>203</sup>

Jesus created a highly-inviting, but highly-challenging culture for his disciples to function and grow within, and he challenges his followers to do the same. Breen wrote:

Fundamentally, effective leadership is based upon an invitation to relationship and a challenge to change. A gifted discipler is someone who invites people into a covenantal relationship with him or her, but challenges that person to live into his or her true identity in very direct yet graceful ways. Without both dynamics working together, you will not see people grow into the people God has created them to be.<sup>204</sup>

The effective leader will remind people who they are already are in Christ, and simultaneously of the power of God working in them to bring God’s Kingdom to the

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<sup>202</sup> Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture*, 54, Kindle.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 14, Kindle.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

world. Everyone in the church, but especially men, need someone speaking that kind of truth in and out of their lives.

Discipleship, at its core, is learning to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength. Dana Allin describes the struggle in many Christians today to love God with all of their hearts. He said, “I often find that in orthodox and evangelical streams of Christianity, we have a very high view of the nature and authority of Scripture to teach truth. What we can often lack is true hunger for God to feed us and quench our soul’s thirst through His Word.”<sup>205</sup> Allin offers some simple yet good practices to help develop the heart, including prayer, studying the scriptures and pursuing spiritual disciplines. The goal of this development of the heart is to see the fruit of the Spirit come alive in the believer.<sup>206</sup> Allin has four categories for the fruit. First, sacrificial living, which includes love and generosity. Second, gracious living, which includes gentleness and kindness. Third, satisfied living, which includes peace, patience and joy. Last, devoted living, which includes faithfulness and self-control.<sup>207</sup> Allin writes, “What excites me about the qualities of the heart as they relate to the simple discipleship assessment is that they offer a way to quantify our spiritual health in these areas.”<sup>208</sup> Part of any successful discipleship program will be a commitment to develop the heart and, specifically, the fruit of the Spirit in a believer’s life.

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<sup>205</sup> Dana Allin, *Simple Discipleship: Grow your Faith, Transform your Community*, (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2018), 54.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 57-63.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., 63.

Believers are also called to love God with their minds and bodies, as well.

Studying the scriptures, planning and developing a strategy for learning, growing and living are all central to the life of a disciple of Jesus. Allin describes a vision for success, “finding what God wants you to do and then doing it... Our task as believers is to discover the good works God prepared for us in advance and pursue those works.”<sup>209</sup> This will look different for each believer as God has made each one unique. As believers study God’s word, pray and think through the opportunities uniquely in front of them, they can discover and walk in God’s path for their lives. This is what it means to love God with our minds and our strength.<sup>210</sup>

Allin advocates for a coaching approach to these relationships. Disciple makers who can learn how to help others discover God’s call for their lives will experience the most success. Allin wrote: “People are more likely to follow through on plans that they discover for themselves.”<sup>211</sup> I have discovered this practice to be exceptionally helpful in almost all relationships where I am trying to help someone grow. When I offer them my best advice, even if it is good advice, it doesn’t have the same power and more importantly isn’t as motivating as when I listen and help people discern their own paths. Discipleship leaders who can skillfully and carefully help individuals discover how to love God with their heart, mind and strength will have more success with their followers pursuing these paths.

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<sup>209</sup> Allin, 99-100.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., 27.

The content of these discipling relationships may vary, but the ultimate goal is for the people to hear the voice of God and be challenged to obey that voice in their life. Henry Blackaby wrote that there are four main ways that disciples hear the voice of God today, through the scriptures, prayer, circumstances and lastly the church (other disciples).<sup>212</sup> A discipleship group will help people become attentive to each of these things in their lives so that they may hear God's voice. This will often mean training in the core teachings of scripture, like how to pray and how to be attentive to the Spirit of God working in others and in the world around us. Breen wrote, "Discipleship isn't a random assortment of facts and propositions and behaviors; discipleship is something that is you to the core and is completely incarnated in you. If it is information, it is information that has worked its way into you and is now part of you."<sup>213</sup> Besides helping people hear the voice of God, the discipleship leader (mentor) will also challenge the disciple to discern an action that will be required. In Breen's groups, there are two core questions that people answer every week: "What is God saying to me?" and "What am I going to do about it?"<sup>214</sup> Disciples are given the opportunity to experience the tender invitation of God and simultaneously challenged to courageously follow wherever the voice of God may lead them.

Disciplers will discover deep joy as they help people discern, celebrate and live into God's voice in their lives. Mowrey wrote, "When we authentically move into another's life, we discover that our lives are like a good story. Good novels absorb us in

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<sup>212</sup> Blackaby, 90.

<sup>213</sup> Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture*, 30, Kindle.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., 195, Kindle.

their plots, characters, and action. Our lives are like this.”<sup>215</sup> The end result of a discipling relationship based on invitation and challenge is a Spirit-led joyful experience filled with tenderness and strength that is life-giving to all as God is experienced together.

### **Prioritizing Discipleship Part Two: Gathering a Group Where Men Can Connect**

For the church, discipleship is the goal. This begins by taking the church’s current men through a discipleship program. Even if a church is older, beginning with discipleship could be the key. Many younger men would benefit from a discipling relationship with an older man. The scriptures are filled with older men passing on their faith and wisdom to younger men. The Bible contains three letters that the Apostle Paul wrote to his protégés Timothy and Titus. He taught them how to minister to their congregations, encouraged them to stay strong, and gave them direction in how to choose and empower leaders. Perhaps the most vivid example is when Moses’ Father-in-law Jethro walks him through his life and ministry and helps him see the power of delegation.<sup>216</sup> Yet, today, this type of hands-on discipleship may seem intimidating to many in the church who would prefer to stay good Christian church-goers instead of devoted disciples of Jesus. Yet, God calls the church to more. The discipleship process begins by a leader stepping forward and inviting others into a discipling relationship.

In most contexts, this initial leader will be the pastor. The pastor through preaching, teaching and other leadership opportunities can set a new tone and expectation before the congregation. If the pastor is female, then she may disciple the men herself or

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<sup>215</sup> Mowrey, *The Ways of the Alongsider*, 55, Kindle.

<sup>216</sup> Exodus 18.

discern a male leader who can work effectively with the men. If the pastor is a male, and is able to establish a beta group with the men that are already in the congregation who may serve as leaders of future groups, he can begin a movement in the congregation. He doesn't need to start with men outside the church, but hopefully, each church has enough men within the congregation to take through this process together. One of the pastors I interviewed described how he did this in his congregation. He said it was difficult because many of the men had been in the church for years. They liked things the way they were and had created a safe place to attend, give and serve. The pastor could see that the men were actually using the church to hide from God, but the men didn't understand. As he walked them through a discipleship program, they could understand God's desire for a deeper relationship with them that could not come from simply attending church, giving money and serving.<sup>217</sup>

Most churches today have a core group who are faithful to the church. They attend almost every week, listen to the sermons, participate in the community and worship, and generously give and serve.<sup>218</sup> Yet, they often have created a safe life that allows them to be in control. They pursue God on their terms and apply things to their lives in their time and way. Their lives did not require the presence and power of Holy Spirit. Hirsch said, "We seem to make church too complex and discipleship too easy."<sup>219</sup> Many churches have so many things for people to do and be involved in, and yet people are not growing in discipleship, largely because the expectation has not been created that

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<sup>217</sup> Interview with a pastor from Memphis, TN.

<sup>218</sup> Glenn Stanton, 1.

<sup>219</sup> Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 2348, Kindle.

they should have a growing relationship with God. Yet, the soul has a desire to connect deeply with God. The Catholic Church recently launched an initiative called Exodus 90. They challenged men to read scripture daily, spend twenty to sixty minutes of quiet time with God daily, live more ascetically and meet in small groups to process what they were learning for 90 days. The response has been very strong as thousands of men, many of them young adult men, have said yes to Exodus 90. The church is hoping this program will bring healing and renewal, and help people get beyond routines and rituals into a relationship with God.<sup>220</sup>

### **Prioritizing Discipleship Part 3: Fulfilling Mission by Multiplying Disciples**

Most organizations follow a similar pattern of growth, plateau and decline. Members can look at the outward things rather than the very heart of the struggles, perhaps seeking that one magic bullet program that can add people to the mix.

Discipleship pushes people to think beyond hopeful addition to purposeful multiplication. Once disciples are made, there is an expectation that they will rely on the Holy Spirit to help them mentor new disciples. Breen wrote, “Every disciple disciples. You can’t be a disciple if you aren’t willing to invest in and disciple others. That’s simply the call of the Great Commission.”<sup>221</sup> Once someone has been discipled, the call of the Kingdom is for them to take others with them. This means that for each person that is

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<sup>220</sup> Judy Roberts, “Men on a Mission: ‘Exodus 90’ Encourages Spiritual Growth in Contrast to Culture,” January 15, 2019, <http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/men-on-a-mission-exodus-90-encourages-spiritual-growth-in-contrast-to-cultu>.

<sup>221</sup> Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture*, 54, Kindle.

discipled, a chain of relationship-building is unleashed that can have a multiplying effect on the body of Christ.

The church struggles to equip people to make disciples. Dana Allin says, “The challenge is that often, our churches do not create the infrastructure or the expectation that disciples are to make other disciples. Individuals that are engaged in making disciples of others are usually the exception, not the rule.”<sup>222</sup> The building and well-intended programs of the church require time and resources to maintain them. People end up investing in them rather than investing in people through discipleship. Even amidst the challenges, churches cannot lose sight of the intended vision of Jesus for discipleship. Hirsch captured this vision when he wrote, “If the heart of discipleship is to become like Jesus, then it seems that a missional reading of this text requires us to see that Jesus’s strategy is to get many little versions of him infiltrating every nook and cranny of society by reproducing himself in and through his people in every place in the world.”<sup>223</sup> Yet, Alan Hirsch said, “The reality is that most Christians don’t really know what goes on in the lives of non-Christian people. Research indicates that the majority of Christians have no significant relationships with people beyond their church community.”<sup>224</sup> Men will learn to enter everyday life and look for potential men to disciple as they work, go to ball games, the gym, coffee shops, golf courses and other places they would naturally go. The best part about the discipleship model is that it creates an opportunity for the church to reach different men, because the men who would be reaching will be different.

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<sup>222</sup> Allin, 88.

<sup>223</sup> Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 2486, Kindle.

<sup>224</sup> Alan Hirsch, “Listen to the Cultures Stories, Framework for Missional Christianity part 6,” August 17, 2016, <https://saturatetheworld.com/2016/08/17/listen-cultures-stories/>



Personal discipleship is not the end goal in itself. Producing more disciples for God's glory and work in the world is a very important goal of all discipleship. Greg Ogden, in his book *Transforming Discipleship*, wrote "Perhaps an even greater challenge than growing fully devoted followers of Christ is growing fully devoted followers *who reproduce*. Reproduction is the key to fulfilling the great commission."<sup>225</sup> Ogden rightfully calls this a challenge. Creating an environment that stimulates and encourages people to reproduce themselves is challenging especially in a competitive patriarchal system.

#### **Prioritizing Discipleship Part four: Cultivating Spiritual Empowerment**

Many believe that God can do amazing things, like raise Jesus from the dead, but fear and doubt cripple men from taking bold risks like starting a discipling relationship with other men. Breen wrote, "No one was born great at discipling people. It takes time and practice."<sup>226</sup> One of the greatest moments of scripture happens after Jesus has been resurrected. He sets up a meeting with His disciples up on a mountain. He is going to remind them of His mission for them. This has been called the great co-mission, as Jesus is in the mission with them. The great co-mission calls His disciples to represent Him in the world and take His teachings and way of life to the world. Matthew tells us that "When they saw him they worshipped him but some doubted."<sup>227</sup> They didn't doubt that Jesus had died. They didn't doubt that Jesus was resurrected. They didn't doubt he was

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<sup>225</sup> Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2003), 136.

<sup>226</sup> Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture*, 17, Kindle.

<sup>227</sup> Matthew 28:16 (NIV).

indeed the conquering king and messiah they had been waiting to come. They doubted themselves and whether they were worthy and qualified for God's call in their lives. Jesus responds and reassures them by saying, "All authority has been given to me... Go and make disciples... For I am with you always."<sup>228</sup> In this teaching, Jesus reminds them that this mission isn't about them working on their own strength and abilities, but about Him and the Spirit of God bringing His power and authority to them. Yet, we still struggle with God's seemingly overwhelming call in our lives. This inevitable response to God's call in our lives is what Henry Blackaby calls "the crisis of belief". Blackaby wrote, "When God invites you to join Him in His work, He has a God-sized assignment for you. You will quickly realize you cannot do what He is asking on your own. If God doesn't help you, you will fail. This is the crisis belief when you must decide whether to believe God for what he wants to do through you."<sup>229</sup>

The person wondering if they can pull together and lead a discipleship ministry can find comfort not only in the teaching surrounding Jesus' call to make disciples in the great commission, but also in the pattern set by Jesus for creating a discipleship ministry. Discipleship guru Bill Mowry wrote, "Our master disciplemaker began His ministry by spending the night in prayer before selecting twelve men who would be His closest companions (Luke 6: 12-13). This commitment to pray marked the beginning and end of Jesus' ministry (Mark 1: 35; 14: 32)."<sup>230</sup> Jesus knew the power of prayer and he modeled it throughout his life, but this reminder of prayer when selecting disciples is especially

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<sup>228</sup> Matthew 28:18 (NIV).

<sup>229</sup> Blackaby, *Experiencing God, Workbook*, 134.

<sup>230</sup> Mowry, *The Way of the Alongsider*, 38, Kindle.

powerful. The moment when Jesus called his disciples from a group on a hill was not simply done out of random chance or choice, but by the power of God through prayer and submission. Discipleship group leaders can find peace and strength as they follow the model of Jesus. Prayer allows the potential discipler to grow in dependence on God for direction and insight.

As followers of Christ learn to depend on the Holy Spirit to lead them into forming a group to disciple, listening to Jesus' advice to the first disciples will be important for success. Jesus taught them to look for a "person of peace", someone who would receive them and their words. Breen wrote:

Jesus' message to his disciples then, and to us today, is that as we are walking in this world, we are to be on the lookout for a *person of peace*. Who is this *person of peace*, and how do we recognize him? Very simply, a *person of peace* is one who is prepared to hear the message of the Kingdom and the King. He is ready to receive what God will give you to say at that moment. This should be our prayer as we venture forth each day. 'Lord, bring into my path today a *person of peace*, and give me the grace to speak your words to this person.'<sup>231</sup>

Men who have been discipled and are ready to disciple others will be able to gather a group of men to mentor, as they prayerfully look in their worlds for men who are ready to receive the message of Jesus and walk in the ways of Jesus' kingdom.

### **Prioritizing Discipleship Part five: Providing Encouragement**

Disciple-making is an extremely difficult task, and reaching into the community and bringing in more disciples, is even more challenging. In the age of busyness and technology, people seem less open to more commitments and relationship-based activities, and discipleship leaders can easily become discouraged.

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<sup>231</sup> Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture*, 116, Kindle.

Discipleship leaders can learn from the example of Jesus. Jesus was the perfect person: no one was better in all of human history. He was the best leader, the best teacher, the best communicator, and the most tender and strongest person to walk the planet, yet people still rejected him. People followed for a while and then left him. The apostle John wrote:

Jesus said “Does this offend you?” ... Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. He went on to say, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him.” From this time, many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.<sup>232</sup>

If the person Christians follow was rejected and offended others, then it may be a good sign when Christians struggle to find followers. Leaders will be reminded that people being drawn to Jesus in discipleship is God’s work and not the leaders’. We, like Jesus, are God’s vessels.

No one likes rejection, but it is a necessary part of discipleship. Attempting to love, lead and challenge broken people exposes our hearts to wounds that surprise us if we are not prepared for them and, even then, they still hurt. C.S. Lewis wrote, “To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken.<sup>233</sup>” Inside everyone is a wound, men included. It is wounds that can keep men from experiencing everything God would have for them in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Dalbey wrote:

We as Christian men must be willing, even eager, to say to others “We are men who have come face-up against our personal brokenness, and discovered it to be so deep and so intrinsic that we cannot by our own efforts overcome it. We have

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<sup>232</sup> John 6:65-66 (NIV).

<sup>233</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (New York: Harvest, 1971), 121.

found that only by turning our lives over to Jesus Christ do we gain courage and strength to be the men we want to be.”<sup>234</sup>

As men learn to face their own wounds and find healing, they will be equipped and driven to share this healing with others.

Part of the challenge of discipleship is calling people who are entrenched in their current lives to the deepest kind of change. Dallas Willard wrote, “Just as we must change the beliefs of individuals in order for them to become disciples in the first place, so we must further change their beliefs if they are to develop as disciples into that fullness and abundance of kingdom life that has obedience as a by-product.”<sup>235</sup> Leaders can expect a challenge and some resistance from those whom they seek to disciple, but they will find encouragement by being reminded that disciplers work for the greater good of God’s Kingdom. The best disciples will keep this vision before them. In fact, Bill Mowry and Dallas Willard list maintaining and living into this vision for the people that could be disciplined, as a key component to effective disciple making.<sup>236</sup> Disciple-makers believe the truth that the Spirit of God has made a person a new creation, and the old is gone and the new has come. Disciple-makers find encouragement in developing vision for people, and then partnering with God to make it a reality.

Discipleship leaders will be encouraged by having someone by their side when they face these challenges. Jesus sent his disciples out in pairs. He knew the challenges they would face and the encouragement they would need. Discipleship leaders who

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<sup>234</sup> Gordon Dalbey, *Healing the Masculine Soul: An Affirming Message for Men and the Women who Love Them* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1988), 187.

<sup>235</sup> Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 924, Kindle.

<sup>236</sup> Mowry, *The Way of the Alongsider*, 7, Kindle.

model working in pairs and can partner up disciples from the very beginning of the discipleship process. These partners can pray together and form a group together. This would bring both the encouragement and accountability needed to help the groups reduplicate rather than lose their momentum.

### **Thesis Summary**

Many churches around the country are either plateaued or declining, and their leaders are looking for a way to see their churches to come back to life. There are many ways churches can be revitalized, but all of them are difficult and are becoming increasingly difficult as the culture moves further away from the church. Yet, in a patriarchal culture and church, there is great opportunity for churches to be reborn and renewed by more effectively reaching and keeping men. Training men to reach men through discipleship is a way for churches to bring new men and their families into the life of the congregation. These new men and their families can then bring new energy and life to everyone in the congregation. Dallas Willard captured this vision brilliantly:

The greatest issue facing the world today, with all its heartbreaking needs, is whether those who, by profession or culture, are identified as “Christians” will become disciples – students, apprentices, practitioners – of Jesus Christ, steadily learning from him how to live the life of the Kingdom of the Heavens into every corner of human existence.<sup>237</sup>

May the church in the U.S. return to disciple-making. May men especially discover this power so that they may impact their families, and local communities of faith may be transformed.

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<sup>237</sup> Willard, *The Great Omission*, 11.

*Pastor Joe buckles his seat belt on a flight back home from Arizona. It is hard to believe how frustrated he was five years ago, as his church felt like it was falling apart and he wasn't sure they were going to make it. He remembers kneeling before God and changing his focus from worrying about the numbers in the church to making disciples of those who would then make disciples. Were he honest, he would admit a little shock at the incredible things God had done in men's lives and families over the past five years. Now, almost every week he gets an email, text or phone call celebrating a good thing God is doing through the families in his church. Though the church hasn't doubled in size, the people have grown exponentially and, slowly but surely, they are becoming disciples who have a deep impact at home, in the church and in the community.*

## SECTION 4:

### ARTIFACT DESCRIPTION

In 2004, when I had just finished my first call at a church, I took a few months off as a Pastor to listen, pray, heal and be renewed. During that time, the church I was attending held a church-wide men's program called *Men's Life*. I appreciated the program itself, but there were two things that I could not get out of my mind as I prepared to pastor my next congregation. *First, the pastor described his reason for focusing on this ministry in his church.* He said a group of friends were gathered together and suggested that an emphasis on effective men's ministry had brought deep renewal to their congregations. The men were shocked at the results in their churches, so he decided to try it at himself. *The second thing that stood out was the quote used in the first section of this paper from Robert Lewis that, "If the mom comes, there's a 15% chance the family will (come). But if the dad comes to church, 90% of the time the family will come along behind."*<sup>238</sup>

I personally have gone into three churches that were in a decline and experiencing a significant gender gap. I used the things I had discovered about reaching men to bring new life to those churches, and I wanted others to experience this same renewal.

My artifact is a one day seminar that includes an overview and a PowerPoint presentation for an interactive experience that would be given to a gathering of pastors, and leaders, and/or to a local congregation. The presentation describes the makeup and

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<sup>238</sup> Lewis, Robert, 2007, Rediscovering Biblical Manhood DVD series, Nashville: Lifeway. (Dad is Destiny session)

*\*The reference and study for this quote was not available.*



challenges of many churches in the United States. It also looks at the specific opportunities for the church in culture today. It offers hope for revitalization through more effectively reaching and assimilating men and their families into the congregation. The presentation helps the congregation create an atmosphere that will more likely retain men, and some resources for those that want to implement even more proactive programs to help them reach men more effectively. The highlight of the presentation is a call to congregations to return to the ways of Jesus by rediscovering the lost art of discipleship and a call to cultivate strength and tenderness as they hear the voice of God and follow God's direction in their lives. This will allow the existing men of the church to find renewal, and also set the stage for them to effectively reach men in the community. The seminar will be a one day seminar, planned to last from nine to three.

## SECTION 5:

### ARTIFACT SPECIFICATIONS

**Who:**

Primary target audience- Suburban middle class church leaders of plateaued or declining churches who are desiring revitalization.

Secondary target audiences – Suburban middle class church leaders who want to maintain growth, and non-suburban churches who desire revitalization

**Why:**

This presentation is presented to help churches face the reality that many churches today are plateaued or declining, and struggling to reach men effectively. It will also help churches see their own struggles, and offer a path forward that could help churches renew, by using discipleship to more effectively minister to and reach families.

**When:**

A one day seminar on a Saturday from 9AM to 3:00 PM.

**What:**

This presentation will seek to immerse the attendee in a discipleship experience as well as help them to understand the impact reaching men could have on the church today. By the end of the one day seminar all participants will have:

- Become aware of the trends and statistics that show the struggles of the church.
- Seen the opportunity to reverse this trend if churches can bring men into church life.
- Become aware of some of the barriers that may exist to retaining men in the church.
- Been challenged to see the struggle and loss of discipleship in the church.
- Gained some tools to help them get a framework for discipleship ministry.
- Done a discipleship group experience that helps rekindle the art of discipleship.
- Been inspired to be disciples that can equip people to reach others.

**Goals:**

- Goal #1) Congregations discover that they are not alone in their struggles.
- Goal #2) Offer hope of renewal to congregations
- Goal #2) Help congregations see ways that they could more effectively reach men.
- Goal #3) Inspire congregational leaders to return to discipleship
- Goal #4) Have the Spirit of God unleashed and draw men, women and children to Christ through local churches.

**Where:**

This would likely be at a church, open space with tables or possibly at a hotel. A place with five to eight people at a table to dialogue.

**What for:**

So that church leaders could find hope amidst the struggles and be inspired to start a discipleship ministry, beginning with the men and women they have and growing from there.

**How:**

Through a presentation/seminar – Cycling teaching through PowerPoint and breakout discussion at tables. The size of the group would vary, but the target would be a larger group like a denominational gathering with breakout groups at the table. This could also be done similarly with a church elder board or leadership team.

**Scope and content:**

This presentation is designed to ignite and/or fuel a flame in church leaders who are looking to revitalize their congregations. It walks through some of the struggles many churches are facing and offers a way forward. The program offers direction and resources that encourage church leaders in a path of discipleship, so that they can more effectively reach men and have them bring their families to join their congregations.

The intent is to help people see hope amidst the struggles in their congregations.

**Budget:**

This presentation does not require a budget other than potential travel costs which would most likely be covered by the organization to which I would be speaking. The lunch costs would be covered by the group as well.

**Post Graduate Considerations:**

The PowerPoint and accompanying seminar would be able to be shared at any number of church gatherings over the coming weeks, months and years. A secondary seminar could be developed that better equip churches for the journey into discipleship.

## SECTION 6:

## POSTSCRIPT

This artifact was initially developed over a six month span in preparation for a Friends Church regional gathering in Iowa. The material was gathered, processed and then put into presentation form and presented to the group of 150 church leaders. A PowerPoint presentation was created to bring more life and connection to the topic. The table groups then discussed the material as it was presented. A feedback loop was created, so everyone could process from each other. Since that initial presentation the PowerPoint has been adapted to culminate in a call for a return to discipling men to reach other men. Some of the slides and talking points were adapted to help the presentation be applicable to a greater number of congregations.

The presentation was modified to be in line with the teachings of Vella. She developed a seven step way to develop an interactive experience.<sup>239</sup> The presentation was modified to include more stories, breakout times, and even discipleship experience. Each of these would give the people participating in the presentation a deeper connection with the material. It would also allow them to see how discipleship could impact them directly.

I had initially considered writing a book that would cover the material that people could read. I also contemplated making a DVD series with the material. Yet, after pondering it, I believed a live presentation would most effectively encourage congregations that were feeling deflated and desiring revitalization. I believe the other

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<sup>239</sup> Jane Kathryn Vella, *Taking Learning to Task: Creative Strategies for Teaching Adults*. 1st ed. Jossey-Bass Higher and Adult Education Series, (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2001), 127-128.

avenues would have worked as well to communicate the material. But the personal contact that a presentation and follow up time would allow congregational leaders to better process and apply some of the concepts to their setting.

This project took a lot of turns over the last four years. I did not realize that my end conclusion would be that the best hope for churches to reach men would be a return to discipleship. In my initial presentation, I thought that churches could make internal changes and men would come. The more research I did, the more I recognized that cultural changes would not be enough to see revitalization. So, I ended up researching discipleship and how to best equip men to reach other men. The hope was still the same. If churches could find a way to reach men then families would follow.

I believe the next area of research will explore reaching millennial men. This dissertation revolves around reaching middle class suburban men with families to revitalize the church. Many other cultures, including those trying to reach millennials, will benefit from this material. But, millennials appear to be searching for something a little bit different. Though I believe the discipleship model still applies, millennials may be attracted to a different kind of church experience than suburban men with families.

I would add that churches would benefit from learning to reach moms in their communities. The focus of this paper narrowly looked at reaching suburban men with families to revitalize the local church. Some churches may find renewal by learning to effectively reach mothers with families. In today's world, and the rising number of households without men present, there is a lot of opportunity for churches to reach single moms and their families as well. One way that churches may reach these families though

would be to equip their men to mentor children who do not have a father figure in the home.

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## ADDENDUM

**Artifact Overview:** This artifact will be a one-day seminar (9AM-3PM) that will be done at a denominational conference, session retreat or a leadership retreat. The presentation will share statistics, teach the material and give groups from churches a chance to respond and evaluate. It will close with a discipleship taste, where the participants will get a chance to participate in a discipleship moment together.

**9:00AM      Arrival - Guests have coffee and treats and migrate towards tables**

**9:15 – 10:45 – Session 1: The Problem and the Opportunity (PowerPoint Slides 1-20)**

**9:15**                      Mike welcomes and opens in prayer

**9:20**                      Part 1: Presenting the Problem. Goal: Help those attending to see the problem most churches are facing, and the impact men could have on a congregation.

Introductory Lecture: Struggles within the church (Slides 1-7)

- Introductory story (blank slide)
- The challenges of plateau and decline facing most U.S. Congregations. (Slides 1-3 of presentation)
- Some popular solutions for revitalizing churches. (Slides 4-7 of presentation)

**9:30                      Breakout Session #1**

Reflection time 1: Get with a partner and discuss the following questions:

- 1) What stood out to you as you heard about the struggles facing most congregations?
- 2) How do you think lack of growth affects a congregation?
- 3) How is your church doing at reaching new people with the gospel?
- 4) If you tried some of the popular solutions, how did they go?

Task 1: You and your partner list four reasons why churches decline.

Table Feedback 1: Share with your table your answers to above questions and tasks, group agrees on top two reasons churches are in decline.



Large Group Feedback 1: Table groups take turns sharing the top two reasons for church decline with larger group.

**9:55**

Part 2: Presenting the Opportunity for the leaders to connect with the problem. Goal: Help those attending see the affect that men can have on a congregation.

Lecture 2: The impact of men on the church (Slides 8-24)

- The opportunity to reach men to revitalize the church. (Slides 8-13)
- The struggles of men and the church (Slides 14-17)
- The impact reaching men can have. (Slides 18-20)
- Churches benefit from prioritizing reaching men, include it in vision. (Slide 21-24)

**10:15**

### **Breakout Session #2**

Reflection time 2: Get with a partner and discuss the following questions:

- 1) Why do you think men go into hiding?
- 2) How active are men in your church?
- 3) How do you think that reaching men could help the church?
- 4) What are your concerns about trying to reach men?
- 5) Why is it important to include reaching men in the vision for a congregation?
- 6) How would a church include reaching men in their vision?

Task 2: What causes you to go in to hiding? What does the church do that puts you off?

Table Feedback 2: Share with your table what stood out to you most in answers to above task question. Vote on the most interesting response to the task question from this session that one of your group members can share with the larger group.

Large Group Feedback 2: Each table shares their top one or two responses to Table Feedback 2 content

**10:45 – 11:00 Break**

**11:00 – 12:30 – Session 2: Strategies to Reach Men (PowerPoint Slides 25-33)**

**11:00**

Part 3: Exploring common strategies for reaching men. Goal: Help churches evaluate how much they have incorporated reaching men into their congregation.

Lecture 3: Common ways to draw and keep men (Slides 25-28)

- Creating “man friendly” worship experiences (Slides 25-28)
- “Man Friendly” Meetings (Slides 29-31)
- Creating “side by side” bonding experiences (Slides 32-33)

## **11:20 Breakout Session #3**

Reflection time 3: Get with a partner and discuss the following questions:

- 1) How would the experience of your church worship service be for an average man in your community, who came for the first time?
- 2) How would an average man describe a typical meeting in your church?
- 3) Why do you think most men prefer side-by-side to face-to-face experiences?
- 4) What affect does a regular brotherhood experience have on a man?

Task 3: Imagine you had unlimited resources, what are some side-by-side things your church could facilitate that may help men bond?

Table Feedback 3: Share with your table what stood out to you the most in the task question. Vote on top idea from this session that one of your group members can share with the larger group.

Large Group Feedback 3: Share top ideas from each table.

## **11:40 Part 4: An Introduction to Discipleship. Goal: Churches rediscover the call to make disciples and prioritize groups that balance invitation and Challenge.**

Lecture 4: Training men to reach men (Slides 34-43)

- The need for discipleship (Slides 34-37)
- The way of the Master (Slides 38-40)
- Where to begin with discipleship ministry (Slides 41-42)
- Multiplication, the effect of discipleship (Slides 43)

## **12:05 Breakout Session #4**

Task 4: Gather together at your table in groups of four or less. Each person gets a different color of clay. Together you create

something that represents the church with a strong core of men. This creative piece can be an actual replica of a church or it can be a metaphor. Each group will present their piece to the larger group and explain what strengths the men bring and how these are represented in the creative piece.

Table Feedback 4: As you sculpt your piece, discuss the questions below... how do they relate to what you are doing with your hands in this moment?

Reflection time 4: Group discussion questions:

- 1) What did you think of Dallas Willard's quote that "non-discipleship is the elephant in the room of the modern church"?
- 2) How much of a priority is discipleship in your church?
- 3) What does this discipleship look like?
- 4) What are some of the challenges of discipleship?
- 5) Michael Breen said that no one could do discipleship on their own. How have you found that to be true in your own experience?
- 6) Is your church stronger in invitation (grace/love) or Challenge (truth/strength)? How do you notice this?
- 7) What is your church doing to cultivate relationships that are based on invitation (grace/love) and Challenge (truth/strength)? If your church is doing nothing, what would be helpful to you in this area?

Large Group Feedback 4: Have a volunteer at each table to explain one of the sculptures to the larger group.

## **12:30 – 1:15 – Lunch Break**

## **1:15 – 3:00 – Session 3: A Discipleship Experience (PowerPoint Slides 43-48)**

**1:15** Part 5 – Participate in a discipleship experience. Goal: Have attendees see the potential power and opportunity in discipleship groups.

Discipleship Taste: Get into groups of four or less and read out loud through Acts 16:25-34 – The story of the Philippian Jailer. Then, in the same groups, process the questions below.

Unpacking the story questions:

- 1) What stood out to you in the story?
- 2) Where do you see yourself in this story?
- 3) Why do you think Paul and Barnabas found it easier to

sing worship in jail together? Would they have been fine on their own?

- 4) Why is it important to have a Barnabas or two in life?
- 5) Why do you think the disciples didn't escape right away?
- 6) What was the biggest factor in the Philippian Jailer's conversion?
- 7) Who else did his conversion impact?

Application questions:

- 1) How could your church have this kind of impact on families in your community?
- 2) What would be the first step to creating this kind of experience for someone in your community?
- 3) Who could hold you accountable to this first step?

Table Feedback 5: What stood out to you the most from the 'first steps' conversation in the discipleship taste? Do you think these ideas are possible? How could you support them?

Large Group Feedback 5: Have groups vote on what they think the most significant first step to discipleship that was discussed during this time and elect one person to share with larger group.

**2:10**

Part 6 – Conclusion. Goal: Inspire church leaders to implement strategies to reach men in their local congregations.

Lecture 6: Biggest effect on reaching men (Slides 44-48)

- Impact of reaching men on families (slides 44-46)
- Impact of reaching men on the church (Slides 47-48)

**2:25**

### **Breakout Session #6**

Reflection time 6: Get with a partner and discuss the following questions:

- 1) What stood out to you today?
- 2) What will be the biggest challenges to applying this material to your own life?
- 3) What is the greatest opportunity that you can see for your congregation?

Task 6: Everyone get up from their seat and move around the room to find a spot to pray. Maybe it is just another chair, the point is to move. When you find your spot, sit and take a few minutes in quiet prayer. Please, no talking. Ask God to put someone on your heart. Maybe you have been thinking about that someone all day as you have been participating in this workshop. Pray for that person for a

few minutes. When you feel prompted, go, prayerfully, write his name on the board.

Mike will read each name out loud, and then ask someone to offer a prayer for those on the board and also for those in the seats, that they all can obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Table Feedback 6: Go around your table and in two or three words, a sentence at the most, share how this prayer experience was for you.

Large Group Feedback 6: Be prepared to share the church's biggest challenge to applying this material, and the church's greatest hope, if they can effectively reach men.

**3:00**

### **Mike Closes in Prayer**

## Seminar Overview

### PowerPoint Slides and Breakout Sessions

#### Introductory Lecture: Struggles within the church (Slides 1-7)

*After a busy week, Pastor Joe finally settled into his seat for his flight to California for his denomination's annual gathering. Breathing a sigh as he buckled his seat belt he began to prepare for departure. Many things raced through his mind. Immediately, he felt a pit in his stomach as he processed his last year of ministry and prepared to meet his pastoral colleagues. He knew that these few days away would be filled with moments of pain, shame and regret as others shared many of their ministry victories over the past year. Though he knew that many of the stories were a tiny glimpse amidst a greater struggle, they were still difficult for his discouraged soul to hear. He would also find hope and inspiration that would almost assuredly fade quickly when he*

*returned to the struggles back home. The church he pastored had been on decline for many years before his arrival. When he came, a few new families began coming, but over time, things plateaued, and if he was honest, they were actually declining again.*

*The lack of growth and perceived life change in his church and community had become a continual source of shame and pain. Pastor Joe had done everything he had been trained to do. He had faithfully preached each Sunday. He prayed as much as he could, especially when he first started. He offered the best vision he could provide for the congregation, but the church continued to struggle.*

*Pastor Joe survives each week, dreads each leadership meeting, and finds himself pulling back emotionally from the congregation he has agreed to lead, love and serve. He wonders silently if there is any hope for his struggling congregation to experience renewal.*

*Many pastors, like Pastor Joe, and church leaders are serving in churches that are struggling to reach and disciple Americans.”<sup>240</sup> Alan Hirsch wrote, “Christianity is on the decline in every Western cultural context. In fact, in terms of percentage of the population, we are proportionately further away from getting the job done than we were in the third century!”<sup>241</sup>*

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<sup>240</sup> Regele, Mike, *The Death of the Church*, Zondervan, (Grand Rapids, MI, 1995), 182.

<sup>241</sup> Hirsch, Alan, *The Forgotten Ways, Reactivating Apostolic Movements*, (Grand Rapids: Brazos 2016) 1, Kindle.

*Less than 20 percent of Americans attend church on any given Sunday.*



Slide 1

According to Gallup polls this number is 40%, but other data suggests it is markedly less. A paltry 17.7%. By 2050 it is predicted that this number will drop to 12%.

Recent studies show that there is still a core group who are attending church faithfully and giving generously in most churches. This group remains steady, but the church is losing ground with the rest of the world.

*Most churches in the US are  
plateaued or declining!*



Slide 2:

According to a 2017 article from the Christian Post, one denomination found that somewhere around 55-60% of churches are declining and another roughly 10 percent of churches are plateaued. Nearly all churches are looking for a way to revitalize.

In fact, according to Thom Rainer's research only 6% of churches are growing by the same rate as the population of their community. "Stated inversely, 94 percent of our churches are losing ground in the communities they serve," he says.

In 2050, the percentage of the U.S. population attending church will be almost half of what it was in 1990.



*Is there hope for renewal?*



Slide 3:

People can feel overwhelmed by the struggles of decline and can often wonder if it is possible. I hope that churches will not be so discouraged that they lose all hope that they can by the power of God's Spirit see people come to Jesus and join them.

## Church Renewal Options



Slide 4:

Over the years there have been hundreds if not thousands of renewal options. Here are a few:

## Redefining Vision and Purpose



### Slide 5:

The church can find renewal by carefully studying themselves, writing words on a paper and then putting this vision in front of the people. Rick Warren, Bill Hybels and others were big proponents of the vision movement that occurred 15 years ago.



Slide 6:

The church examines its core beliefs and practices and seeks to change the culture of the congregation and the character and drive of its members.

## Spiritual Renewal



Slide 7:

This is the “just pray” and have people come back to their first love portion of the congregation. Repentance is important and prayer should be the life blood of every follower of Jesus and every congregation.

**Breakout Session #1**

Reflection time 1: Get with a partner and discuss the following questions:

- 1) Get with a partner and discuss the following questions:
- 2) What stood out to you as you heard about the struggles facing most congregations?
- 3) How do you think lack of growth effects a congregation?
- 4) How is your church doing at reaching new people with the gospel?
- 5) If you tried some of the popular solutions, how did they go?

Task 1: You and your partner list four reasons why churches decline.

Table Feedback 1: Share with your table your answers to above questions and tasks, group agrees on top two reasons churches are in decline.

Large Group Feedback 1: Table groups take turns sharing the top two reasons for church decline with larger group.

Lecture 2: The impact of men on the church (Slides 8-24)



Slide 8:

Today I am proposing an alternative and that is for churches to be revitalized through more effectively reaching men and bringing them into the congregation.

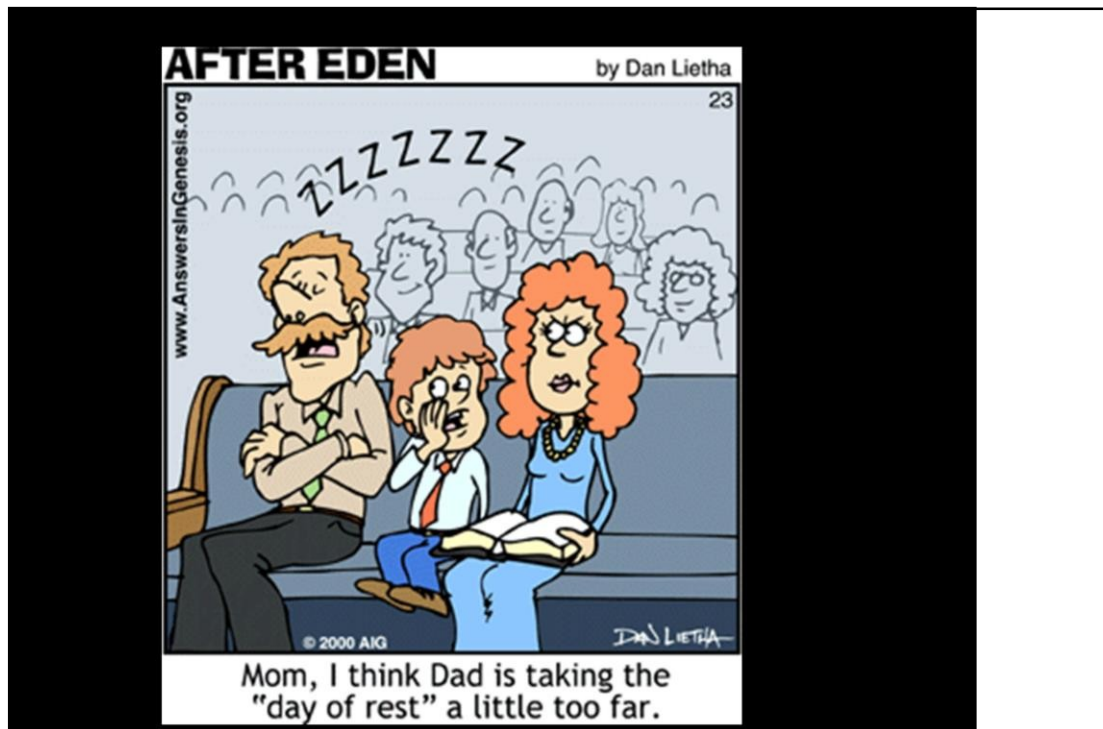




Slide 9:

Wouldn't it be great if our men were this excited about coming to church? I am afraid that the shocked man in the back row of this cartoon better illustrates how most men today feel about church.





Slide 10:

I liked this one as well! Even the men who are faithful attenders of church are struggling often to stay engaged and interested in church. This was my own father growing up. The pastor of the church I grew up in was very monotone and he did not connect well with my dad. He ended up drifting away from the church for most of his life.



Slide 11:

This is probably a more accurate picture. Many men are simply not in church.



Slide 12:

I need to start this presentation by saying that creating a church of all men, that only meets the needs of men is not my vision. Any plan to reach men more effectively that is demeaning or pushes women aside is not going to be what the Lord intended. Yet, since many churches are struggling to reach men, it would be wise to understand men better, so that churches can be more balanced and can effectively minister to both genders in worship and beyond.



### Slide 13:

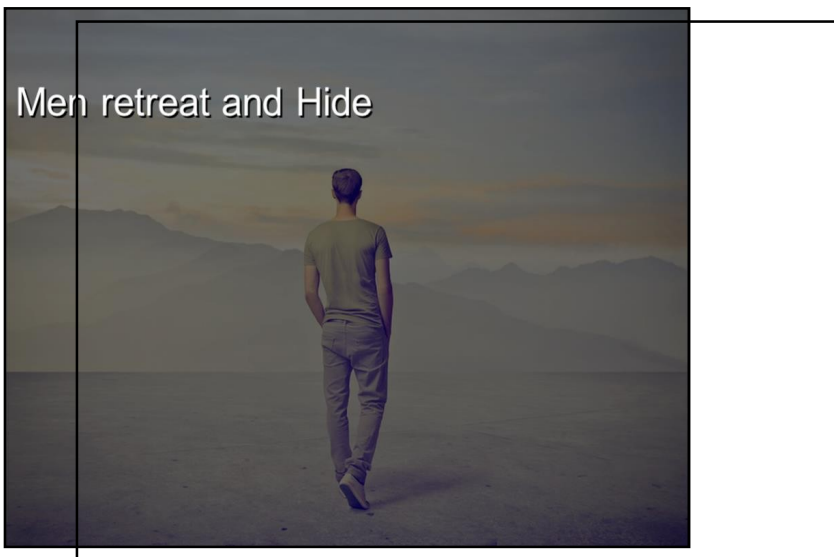
This picture hangs in my office and is a great reminder of men. That is my great, great, great, uncle gathered there at a Presbyterian men's gathering years ago in 1924. He was in the church during a season post war where men came home and were invigorated to build things. Men had a place in the church, they had a drive to lead, to build and to preserve the legacy of the faith. Going to church and being a part of the community was a normal part of a man's life. Though this wasn't 100% of men, a significant percentage of men were actively involved in expressing and living their faiths through the local congregation.

## *Men struggle*



Slide 14:

In reality most of us realize that men struggle to connect and stay connected with the local church. Most congregations, especially established smaller churches, struggle to attract and keep men. Large churches and church plants attract a higher percentage of men.



Slide 15:

Since the fall, men find themselves on a journey away from God and others.

*Rick began attending a small Presbyterian church in his town. Rick was a self-made man who was currently working as a contractor. The pastor thought Rick would be a great fit for the trustees committee as he ran his own business and had skills for helping maintain and improve the building. After attending his first meeting, Rick immediately called the pastor in shock. He couldn't believe what was discussed and wasn't discussed at the meeting. The people on the team spent most of their time talking about their personal lives or complaining about something. Every time an idea for improving the facility was brought up, it was immediately shot down with statements of "we have already tried that" and "no one here helps with anything". He couldn't believe the people's lack of drive and passion. The pastor tried to come alongside him and help him grow in empathy and compassion and at the same time convince him to stay on the committee, but Rick grew more and more frustrated and ended up leaving the team. He stayed at the church, but his commitment level was never the same.*



Slide 16:

These things have caused many younger men to disengage from the church and try to find fulfillment in other ways or things than the church. Many children and grandchildren are leaving the church behind. Sometimes they will go be a part of a church plant or a larger church that better addresses their needs, but statistically speaking we are losing many families, largely I believe because we have not figured out how to properly engage the men.

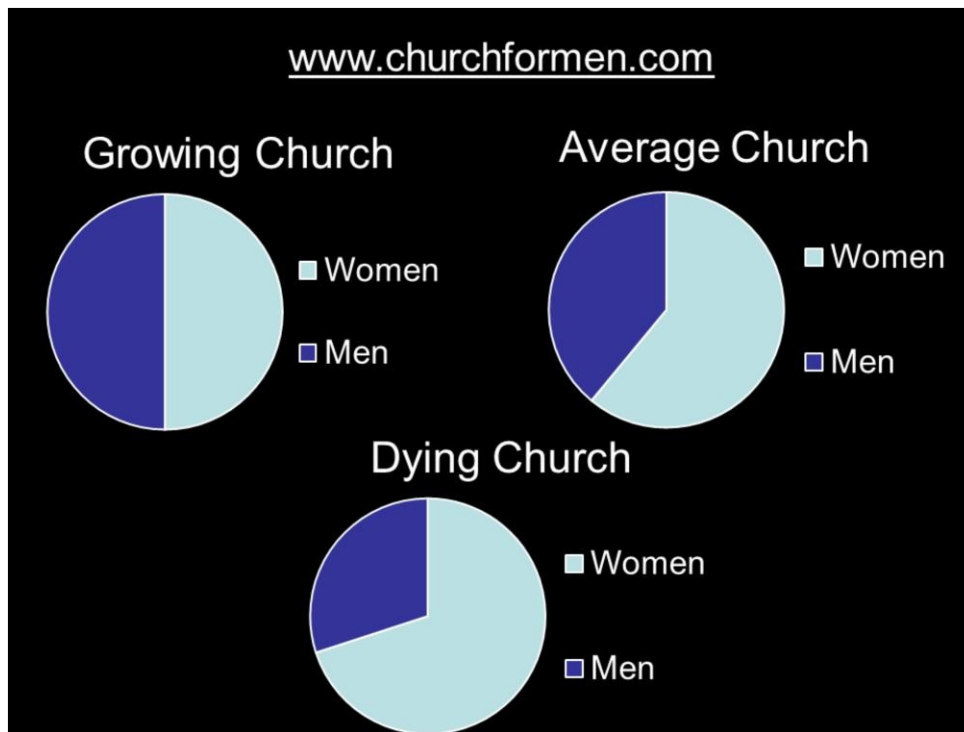
In my own churches I have seen this happen, almost always the man in a family will be the first to drift away. Sometimes the whole family drifts with him and other times the mom holds on for a while, sometimes a long while, but often the whole family ends up adrift.



Slide 17:

Due to this many men in churches feel both frustrated and alone.





Slide 18:

Growing Churches tend to actually be pretty even in men and women, with women only making up about 53% of the population. The average church however has about 61% women and in a dying church, those that have been on decline for a significant period of time you will see about 70% of the church is women.



*If churches can reach men a very good probability the families will come as well.*

Slide 19:

The United States is still primarily a patriarchal culture. Some people resent this term and call this “male privilege”, and others believe it is from God and should be maintained at almost all cost. Yet, there is general agreement that women are more responsive to male initiative, than men are to women who take initiative. Whether we like it or not, this presents an opportunity for churches to renew, if they can reach men.

One survey found if a child is reached there is less than 5% chance the whole family comes and if mom is reached less than 20% chance the rest of the family comes. If the church reaches the man 93% chance the family will follow. Statistics also bear out that dad being involved in the church is huge factor in children as adults staying with the church.

*Martin has been a member at First Presbyterian for sixty years. He and his wife were married in the church and he had his two boys baptized in the tiny chapel. During the sixties, the men had gathered and decided to build a new wing, which included a*

*fellowship hall and several new classrooms for the kids. The men built the facilities while the women decorated the inside along with the kids' classrooms. It was a good system as they took on many building projects during that time, including a sanctuary which could hold all of the new members that were pouring into this congregation. Over the years, he noticed subtle changes in the life of the church that didn't seem to matter much to him. As the church established itself, there was less entrepreneurial stuff to do, like building buildings and starting different groups and outreaches to help bring people into the church. The church became more interested in preserving what it had and keeping the people they already had happy and content, rather than putting efforts into reaching others. Many of his friends became less interested in their church as they stopped attending on Sunday mornings, the men's pancake breakfasts and instead spent the weekends playing golf or finding other work. His children drifted away in their twenties and the boys never returned. His daughters-in-law brought the kids for awhile, but now the family was busy with ball games every weekend without even giving it a second thought.*

*Martin was invited to serve on the church's leadership team as an elder. This was his third time serving on the team, but the first time he had done so reluctantly. As he prepared for the visioning retreat, he found himself in conflict. The church that had once held his primary focus, including a good deal of his time, talent, and treasure, was no longer cherished in his heart. He was deeply discouraged by the decline in the congregation and wondered if there was hope for his and the others' passion to be renewed.*



*If dad is involved in church, high likelihood kids will be as adults!*

Slide 20:

The numbers here are also quite staggering,

Swiss survey "The demographic characteristics of the linguistic and religious groups in Switzerland" 1994

If both parents attend regularly, 33 percent of children will be regular attenders as adults and 41% will attend irregularly. That is 25% uninvolved

If Mother is regular and father is irregular only 3 percent regular, but 59% irregular, 38% uninvolved

If Mother is regular and Father is uninvolved only 2 percent regular, and 37 irregular, over 60% uninvolved

If Father regular and mother irregular 38 percent regular!

If Father regular and mother uninvolved 44 percent regular!

Neither parent, only 4% percent regular attenders as adults and 15% irregular

Promise Keepers and Baptist Press survey:

If father does not go to church 1 child in 50 will become a regular worshiper.

If father is involved, regardless of what mom does 66-75% chance the children will go as adults.

One survey: if just mom is involved in church 15% chance kids will attend when grown. If dad is involved 55% kids involved when adults. If both are involved 72% chance kids will be involved. If none then 6% chance kids are involved.



Slide 21:

This leads us to wonder, as many have wondered, how do we effectively reach and keep men engaged in the life of the church?

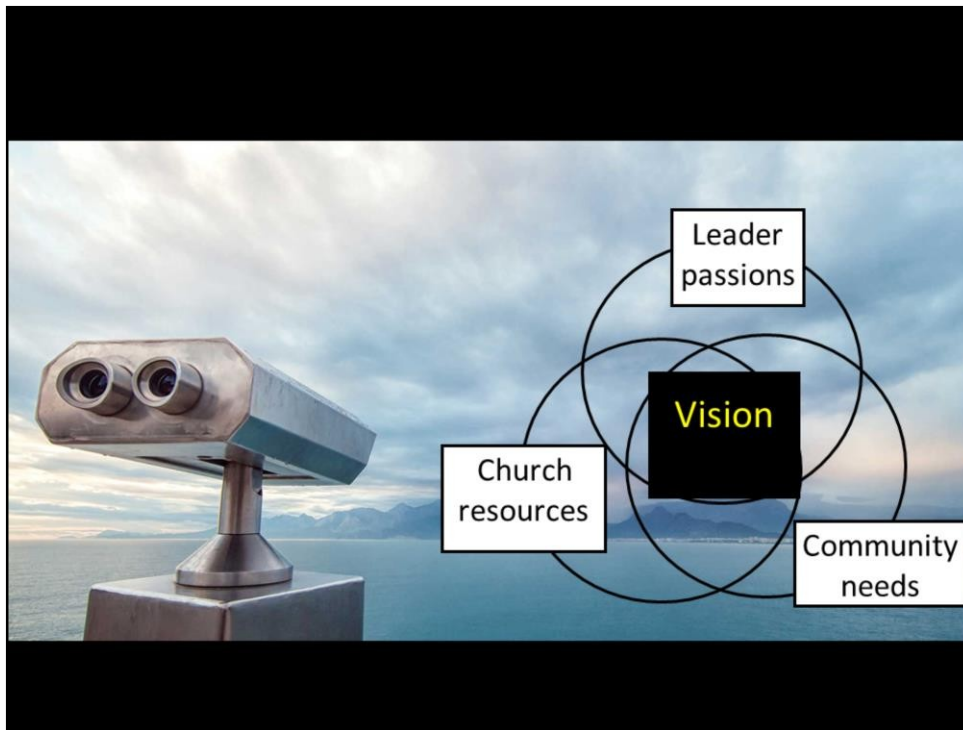


*Some ideas to help*  
*1) Prioritize reaching men*

Slide 22:

The church having reaching men in their priorities (vision/mission) and having clear vision will help keep men in the church.





Slide 23:

Churches should know what God has called them to do. Understanding what is going on in the life of the church and why, helps men stay connected and engaged.



Slide 24:

Wise churches prioritize vision and include space for men. If churches prioritize men they will see more fruit than if they ASSUME men will just come.



**Breakout Session #2**

Reflection time 2: Get with a partner and discuss the following questions:

- 1) Why do you think men go into hiding?
- 2) How active are men in your church?
- 3) How do you think that reaching men could help the church?
- 4) What are your concerns about trying to reach men?
- 5) Why is it important to include reaching men in the vision for a congregation?
- 6) How would a church include reaching men in their vision?

Task 2: What causes you to go in to hiding? What does the church do that puts you off?

Table Feedback 2: Share with your table what stood out to you most in answers to above task question.

Large Group Feedback 2: Vote on the most interesting response to the task question from this session that one of your group members can share with the larger group.

Lecture 3: Common ways to draw and keep men (Slides 25-28)



*Some ideas to help*  
*1) Prioritize reaching men*  
*2) Maintain Man Friendly*  
*worship experience.*

Slide 25:

Believe it or not, some men do not feel comfortable in church. Many feel like and sense that they do not belong and that this may not be the place for them immediately, others it can take a while to discover. If most churches are made up of women, it makes sense that a majority of these churches would have taken on feminine characteristics over time. Most don't even realize it. It doesn't mean that churches need to be "all manly", but becoming "man friendly" is important. Churches who want to reach men and see them stay will provide a space for them to be men

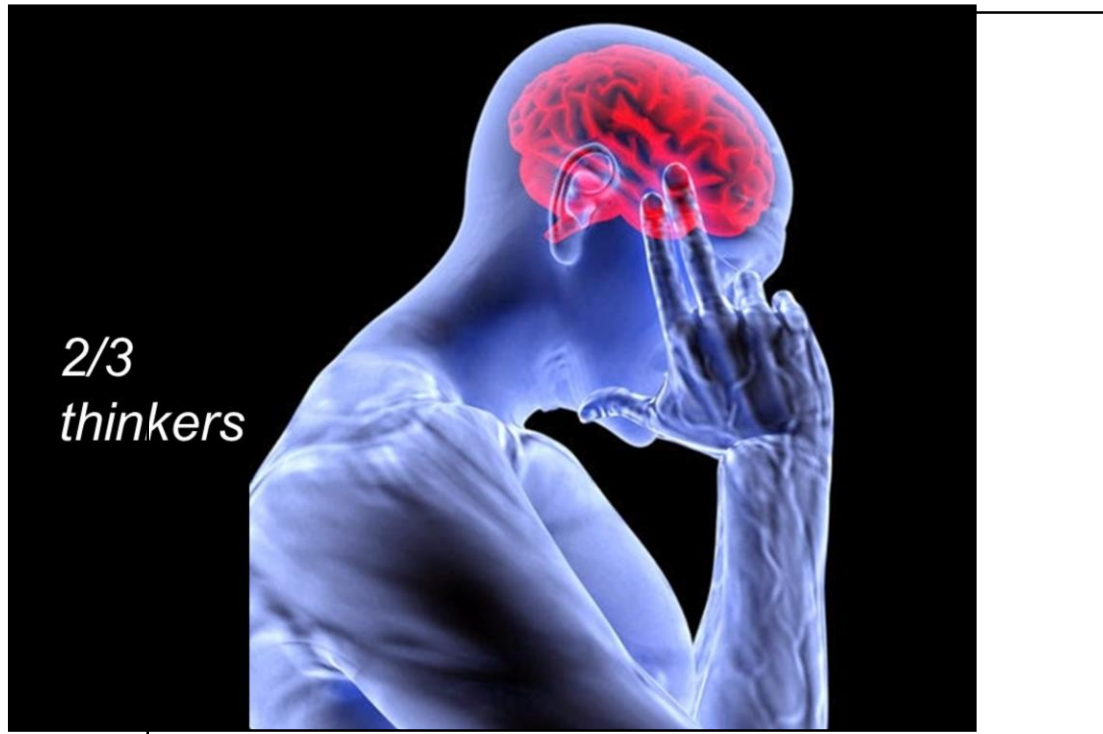


Slide 25

Men, especially less mature men, struggle in worship. From long monologues to love songs sang to another man, to feeling oriented prayers and songs, many men struggle to find their place. At the same time as men mature, they become well-rounded and grow in their empathy and compassion. Wise church's will help develop men emotionally while not being so feeling oriented that they initially turn them off.

*Brent will visit church. His wife has been attending for a long time but Brent has been unsure about coming to church. His wife finally talked him into coming for Father's Day. He parked his car in the parking lot with his defenses already up, he wasn't sure how he would tell the guys at work on Monday that he had gone to church for Father's Day.*

*Brent found himself wandering quite a bit during the worship service. It was obvious that the worship leader was trying to get the congregation to fall “in love” with Jesus. This didn’t seem like a bad thing to Brent, but he didn’t feel “moved” the same way as did the worship leader. Brent looked around and found some comfort that most of the men were standing like him with their mouths closed. During the service, there were a lot of other “bless their hearts” moments as obviously lonely individuals overshaded in the worship service. The soloist during the offering clearly was past her prime and the church was allowing her to sing because of her previous skill level and their love for her. The slides on the screen were often out of order or had the words in the wrong place. Finally, when the sermon began, the pastor stayed behind the podium and, even on Father’s Day, seemed to miss the target with the men in the room. Brent made it through the service and survived the ten-minute greeting time during the service, as well as the awkward moments after service. As you might suspect though, Brent was too busy to go back to church the next week.*



Slide 26:

Most men are thinkers and even the men who are feelers “feel” less deeply than their female counterparts. Women are the inverse of this and their feelings and thinking are different than men’s. Men’s brains do not operate both hemispheres at the same time. They focus on one thing better and have more challenges with randomness and disorganization.



Slide 27:

Feelings are a wonderful part of the Psalms and David was really in touch with his, but most men are not, especially immature men. They struggle with too much emphasis on feelings as many of them become uncomfortable. And they struggle to listen to people's feelings and especially struggle when decisions are based around protecting "so and so's" feelings.

Worship services that lack intellectual depth can cause men and women to disconnect as they feel awkward.

In the early 1900's the church was in a similar place. The focus in worship had shifted to a strong feeling oriented style. So the church did a radical shift and took almost all emotion out of the worship experience. This wasn't healthy either.

Good worship services feed the head as well as the heart.

The best meetings will allow for some heart connection, but not get sidetracked by the vision.



Slide 28:

This is resource that will help you get an idea of how “man” friendly your church is. It has some good thought provoking questions. I am not saying it is perfect or that it is for every church, but it is a good resource to get you thinking and discussing.

They have a survey that you can take that can help you see how man friendly your congregation is. Many might be surprised at the results, the ideal congregation according this group will skew a little to the masculine side, but be mostly balanced.



Slide 29:

The things in between worship services can be most effective if they are man friendly as well. Meetings, groups and gatherings should be places that everyone can thrive, men included.





Slide 30:

Meetings with little or no purpose can drive men and women crazy. As do meetings that are hi-jacked by lonely people or side trackers. Churches should have a place for people to feel heard and connect, but churches who habitually do this in meetings may struggle. They will especially struggle if they do not do the task the team was designed to do.



Slide 31:

The men who are in meetings in these congregations often feel this way inside. They feel disengaged and adrift and bored. Many meetings quickly turn into gossip sessions and all about so and so's problem rather than the actual purpose of the meeting.



Slide 32:

Creating Brotherhood opportunities.

Jonathan Eldridge wrote the book “Wild at Heart” it became a phenomenon amongst many men as men felt called to bold risk-taking adventure and not the status quo. He challenged the church to provide side by side opportunities for men. I am not saying cliff jumping is the answer, but side by side opportunities where men can experience brotherhood can help get and keep men engaged.



Slide 33:

Men tend to respond best to side by side opportunities, especially as they initially get to know each other. Men can also serve, go on mission trips together to bond as well.

Mythopoetic movement – Iron John

In the early 1990's Robert Bly believed men were losing their energy. He started a movement that encouraged men to release their inner man together.

Promise Keepers had a similar vision of gathering men into stadiums to help them rediscover God's call in their lives.

The Million Man March in the mid 90's gathered African American Men together to share their unique struggles with each other.

### **Breakout Session #3**

Reflection time 3: Get with a partner and discuss the following questions:

- 1) How would the experience of your church worship service be for an average man in your community, who came for the first time?
- 2) How would an average man describe a typical meeting in your church?
- 3) Why do you think most men prefer side-by-side to face-to-face experiences?
- 4) What affect does a regular brotherhood experience have on a man?

Task 3: Imagine you had unlimited resources, what are some side-by-side things your church could facilitate that may help men bond?

Table Feedback 3: Share with your table what stood out to you the most in the task question.

Large Group Feedback 3: Vote on top idea from this session that one of your group members can share with the larger group.

Lecture 4: Training men to reach men (Slides 34-43)



*Some ideas to help*

*1) Prioritize reaching men*

*2) Maintain “man Friendly”  
worship experience.*

*3) Maintain “man Friendly” church  
infrastructure.*

*4) Teach men to reach men*

Slide 34: This is the most effective way to change your church. Bring men into a discipleship relationship that helps them grow and mature so that they can reach other men and help them grow and mature in Christ.





Slide 35:

The church has tried big rally's like promise keepers. How many of you have been to one of these?

Great idea, for the most part a great program. They were committed to the men meeting Jesus, servant leadership, starting support groups in local churches, racial reconciliation and impacted over 5,000,000 men! In fact, they are coming back in 2020.

These tend to result in a short term spike in renewal, but fade over time.



Slide 36:

Churches have tried men's conferences and retreats, but often found that men return home to go back to life as it was before.





Slide 37:

The best way for churches to revitalize is not going to be through just becoming man friendly. They will have to equip their men to reach other men. This begins by returning to the ways of Jesus and discipling the men they have and then discouraging them to disciple others.

Dallas Willard said “Non-discipleship is the elephant in the church. It is not the much discussed moral failures, financial abuses, or the amazing general similarity between Christians and non-Christians. These are only effects of the underlying problem.”

page 840



Slide 38:

Jesus poured himself into a smaller group of people who would then taken his mission and message to the world by passing on his teachings and ways to others.

Discipleship primarily means learner. Someone who learns from another.

As followers of Jesus, we devote ourselves to Him through his word and we help spur each other on and encourage one another.

Michael Breen said that they discovered that no one was doing discipleship well on their own, everyone needed someone(s) to help them keep going.



Slide 39:

Creating an environment where men mentor and disciple other men will transform them. A balanced of learning and doing life together.

With the ultimate goal being multiplication. Men grow in their faith enough to lead other men.

These environments simultaneously provide invitation (tenderness) and challenge (strength).

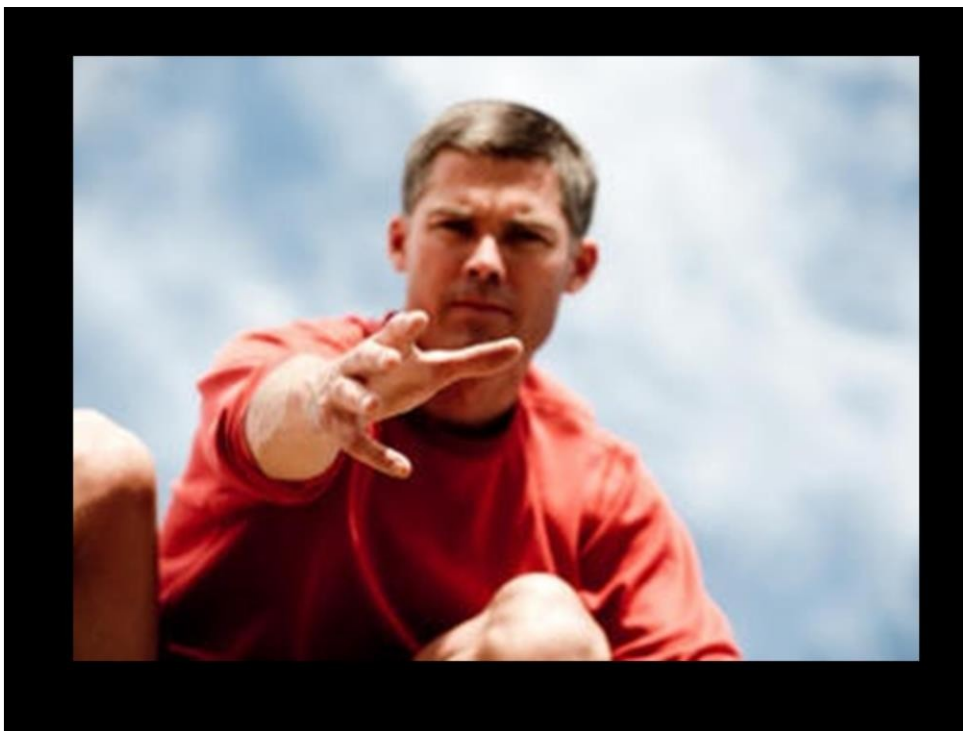
Men are taught how to hear the voice of God and also encouraged and challenged to live into that voice.

The church today struggles to find the balance of invitation and challenge. Most modern churches are very high on invitation and very low on challenge. In fact, many churches have been influenced by Bill Hybels and Willow Creek Church in Chicago.

He actually said they made a huge mistake by not teaching people to be self learners. They assumed people would mature and learn in big groups, but they found it didn't work that way. People needed someone to intentionally come alongside them.

*Gary has been regularly attending Second Baptist church for over 20 years, ever since his kids were young. He has attended men's groups, served as an usher for many years, and even served on the church's leadership as a deacon twice. The church recently hired a new pastor whose passion was discipleship. At first, Gary didn't know what to make of all the discipleship references that kept coming through the pulpit, the Bible studies and the men's group. He had never thought of himself as a disciple. He attended church, gave time and money, tried to make wise and good decisions, and even stood up for Jesus occasionally.*

*Over time, the new pastor began a discipleship group and he invited Gary to be a part of the group. Gary was a little nervous about it, because the teachings on discipleship seemed pretty radical. In fact, he wasn't sure that he wanted to be a disciple. He liked the idea of being a church-going Christian much better. However, the pastor seemed like a legitimately good guy, and part of him wondered if there was more than he was experiencing, so he said yes and joined the group anyway. Though admittedly, he was initially not open to the idea, over time Gary's eyes were opened to a whole different life that was available to him as a follower of Jesus.*

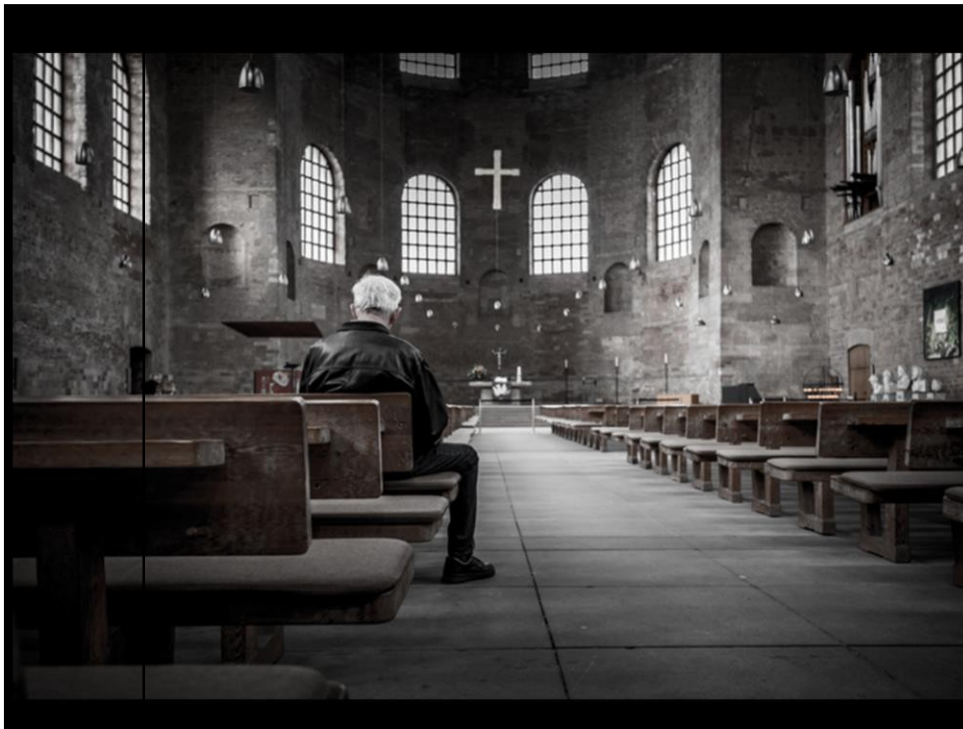


Slide 40:

Men will learn through the power of God's Spirit how to reach other men and bring them into a relationship with Jesus and the church.

Mike Breen "Every disciple discipled. You can't be a disciple if you aren't willing to invest in and disciple others. That's simply the call of the Great Commission."

This will take lots of encouragement and accountability. Each group will have to begin with this end in mind and have to cultivate this aspect from the beginning. It may be wise to envision the disciples pairing off to start their next group.



Slide 41:

Don't overlook the men God has given you already in an effort to reach new men. Reach them and see what happens from there. There are a lot of good men studies out there. Men's fraternity has some great resources. There are many classic studies you can do one is Gene Getz "The making of a man" which walks through what it means to be mature by looking at the qualifications for church leadership outlined in the Bible, a great study for men or even just do a men's only Bible study.





Slide 42:

Part of what men will need to learn is how to reach out to others. Many younger men are looking for older men who are not their fathers to help them get through life. Men will have to put themselves in relationships with people who are outside of the church.

*Larry was raised in a broken home. His parents divorced when he was young, and neither of them took him to church. During a challenge in his life, he was invited to*

*church which he attended for almost six years. He listened to the sermon almost every week. He was known as a nice family-oriented man in the community and had the respect of the congregation. Over the years, he had learned to tithe, to sing with his heart open to God. He attended a small group and was willing to serve in many capacities in the church. His church saw him as the ideal Christian.*

*When Bill invited him to join his small group, Larry thought it would be another great way to get connected to the church and grow in his faith. Yet, as Bill described the group Larry was starting to realize that this was not going to be an ordinary group. He felt honored that Bill thought enough of him to invite him, but was also a little concerned that he really did not know enough about the Bible to be in such a group, and he was worried his lack of biblical knowledge and overall life would be exposed. He was also concerned about the level of challenge that Bill was describing. Larry enjoyed his life and he wasn't sure he was ready to change, and at the same time, the deepest part of him wanted to become more devoted to God, and he recognized a need to learn more and to grow in his personal obedience.*

*Larry joined Bill's group, and from the very first week, his eyes were opened to a life that was more radical than he had imagined. Each week, he was challenged to put himself in a position where God would lead and direct every part of his life, and then he was held accountable for how well he listened and put into practice what God had called him to do. It was simultaneously exhilarating and scary. In a strange way, Larry had never felt so included, but also so uncomfortable. This was unlike any small group he had ever experienced. Yes, in a strange way it felt safe, but at the same time he was challenged to step forward and really live it, not just talk about it.*





Slide 43:

Though this may not work perfectly, in the modern church this is the most effective way to reach men.

### **Breakout Session #4**

Task 4: Gather together at your table in groups of four. Each person gets a different color of clay. Together you create something that represents the church with a strong core of men. This creative piece can be an actual replica of a church or it can be a metaphor. Each group will present their piece to the larger group and explain what strengths the men bring and how these are represented in the creative piece.

Table Feedback 4: As you sculpt your piece discuss the questions below... how do they relate to what you are doing with your hands in this moment?

Reflection time 4: Group discussion questions:

- 1) What did you think of Dallas Willard's quote that "non-discipleship is the elephant in the room of the modern church"?
- 2) How much of a priority is discipleship in your church?
- 3) What does this discipleship look like?
- 4) What are some of the challenges of discipleship?
- 5) Breen said that no one could do discipleship on their own. How have you found that to be true in your own experience?
- 6) Is your church stronger in invitation (grace/love) or Challenge (truth/strength)? How do you notice this?
- 7) What is your church doing to cultivate relationships that are based on invitation (grace/love) and Challenge (truth/strength)? If your church is doing nothing, what would be helpful to you in this area?

Large Group Feedback 4: Elect one of your four clay representations to share with the larger group.

**Discipleship Taste:**

Get into groups of 3-5 and read through Acts 16:25-34 – The story of the Philippian Jailer. Then, in the same groups, process the questions below.

Unpacking the story questions:

- 8) What stood out to you in the story?
- 9) Where do you see yourself in this story?
- 10) Why do you think Paul and Silas found it easier to sing worship in jail together, would they have been fine on their own?
- 11) Do you have someone you could be in jail with and honor Christ together?
- 12) Why is it important to have a Silas or two in life?
- 13) Why do you think the disciples didn't escape right away?
- 14) What was the biggest factor in the Philippian Jailer's conversion?
- 15) Who else did his conversion impact?

Application questions:

- 4) How could your church have this kind of impact on families in your community?
- 5) What would be the first step to creating this kind of experience for someone in your community?
- 6) Who could hold you accountable to this first step?

Table Feedback 5: What stood out to you in the most from the 'first steps' conversation that each group shared. Do you think these ideas are possible? How could you support them?

Large Group Feedback 5: Have groups vote on what they think the most significant first step to discipleship that was discussed during this time and elect one person to share with larger group.

*Biggest Effect of reaching men*

9



Slide 45:

Men and most likely their families will come back to church. Robert Lewis “If the mom comes, there’s a 15% chance the family will (come). But if the dad comes to church, 90% of the time the family will come along behind.”



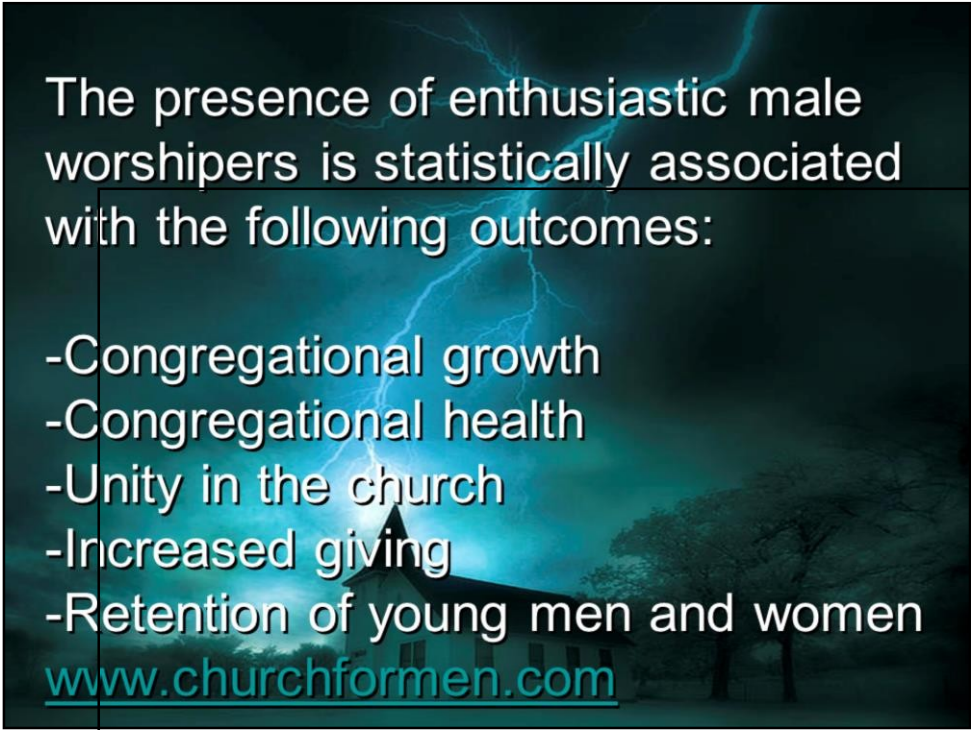
Slide 46:

The ultimate goal is not to see men sit in pews, but to see whole families come to meet Jesus and follow him.



Slide 47:

Reaching men will revitalize your church in many ways!



The presence of enthusiastic male worshipers is statistically associated with the following outcomes:

- Congregational growth
- Congregational health
- Unity in the church
- Increased giving
- Retention of young men and women

[www.churchformen.com](http://www.churchformen.com)



### **Breakout Session #6**

Reflection time 6: Get with a partner and discuss the following questions:

- 1) What stood out to you today?
- 2) What will be the biggest challenges to applying this material to your own life?
- 3) What is the greatest opportunity that you can see for your congregation?

Task 6: Everyone get up from their seat and move around the room to find a spot to pray. Maybe it is just another chair, the point is to move. When you find your spot, sit and take a few minutes in quiet prayer. Please no talking. Ask God to put someone on your heart. Maybe you have been thinking about that someone all day as you have been participating in this workshop. Pray for that person for a few minutes. When you feel prompted go prayerfully write his name on the board.

Mike will read each name out loud, and then ask someone to offer a prayer for those on the board and also for those in the seats, that they all can obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Table Feedback 6: Go around your table and in two or three words, a sentence at the most, share how this prayer experience was for you.

Large Group Feedback 6: Be prepared to share the church's biggest challenge to applying this material, and the church's greatest hope, if they can effectively reach men.



Questions??

Slide 49:

The session would end with a time for questions and follow up.