

How to Turn Bored Men into Bold Men for Jesus

One of my fondest memories of pastoring in California during the 1990s is of a trip I took with a group of men to a Promise Keepers event at the Oakland Coliseum. It was truly an awesome experience to be in attendance with 50,000 other Christian men from around that region.

Hearing so many guys singing together was emotionally overwhelming. The speakers motivated and challenged all of us. The pastors who attended received prayer from the men who were with them. The stadium was riveted with excitement as men engaged in uninhibited worship and genuine fellowship. It was a powerful time.

But as soon as many of those men returned home, out of the glare of the lights and the manly environment, many fell back into their boring routines. Life went back to normal. Today, the typical American congregation draws an adult crowd that is 61 percent female and 39 percent male. This gender gap shows up in all categories, according to a recent study.

The question, “Where are the men?” has pastors across the country baffled and leaders of men wondering if endeavoring to reach men is worth their time.

In 1 Samuel 22, King David is running for his life from King Saul. Saul has tried to take David’s life before, so here we see him fleeing first to the land of his enemies, the Philistines, and then to a cave in Adullam where he hopes to find some much-needed rest.

The last thing on David’s mind is people. However, an additional 400 men arrive in his camp, each with his own issues. The Bible describes these men as troubled, in debt and angry. As a leader of men, I have met a few of these guys, and

they always present a challenge! The amazing thing about David is that he saw something in these 400 “losers” that motivated him to become their leader (see 2 Sam. 22:2).

As you continue to read David’s story, you can see that a transformation takes place in many of these men. They are no longer the troubled, bitter misfits of old, but “mighty men” (2 Sam. 23:8); they are not just oddballs in David’s ragtag army but they become leaders in the nation. The account of David and his mighty men should give hope to all pastors and leaders that men can be radically transformed and become mighty men of God.

Do you believe this is possible? I know it is! Transformation is defined as the act, process or instance of changing a thing into something different, often involving major change in form, nature or function. Transformation of bored men into bold men requires passionate commitment by pastors and men’s leaders.

The Secret of Reaching Men’s Hearts

In biology class, children are taught about the metamorphosis a caterpillar goes through to become a butterfly. This type of transformation can also happen within the lives of men. But where do you start?

David saw the value that God had placed in the lives of each of his men. It was through realizing this value that he gained a passion to become their leader.

The Genesis account is the first place the Bible talks about the value God placed upon man. Genesis 1:27 says, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (NIV).

Man was created to reflect the image of God and was blessed and commanded to “be fruitful and multiply” and to “fill the earth and govern it” (v. 28, NLT). God validates the value He places on man when He says, “Then God looked over all he had

made, and he saw that it was very good!" (v. 31, NLT)

The solution for having a life-changing ministry to men is wrapped in value. It's only when pastors and leaders see the value God places in men that we become deliberate about ministry to men.

Oftentimes, when one asks a man to define greatness, the explanation involves social status, financial means, athletic ability or some other form of recognition. Every man desires to leave a legacy. The Gospel of Mark even records an episode when two of Jesus' disciples, James and John, had the audacity to ask if they could sit in positions of honor next to Jesus when He ruled.

This is not just a desire of men who are highly driven. God has instilled this craving for legacy in every man. One of the greatest passages for men in Scripture is found in Ephesians 2:10 (NIV): "For we are God's workmanship ["masterpiece," NLT], created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." (This is not to say that God hasn't placed a desire in women to do good as well. However, my personal belief is that women generally express this desire much differently than men.)

4 Critical Questions Men are Asking

1. Who am I? This question speaks to a man's identity. The most important thing about a man's identity is what God says. At his baptism, God the Father spoke to the identity of Jesus when He said in Luke 3:22, "You are My beloved Son..."

2. Whose am I? This question speaks to a man's significance. Fathers need to solidify the significance of their children in the same way that God the Father told Jesus, "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well pleased" (NASB). Every child needs to hear his father say, "I love you, and I am proud of you." Many men struggle with their own significance because the affirmation of a father's love is missing in their lives.

3. Why was I created? This question speaks to a man's purpose. A man's purpose flows out of knowing his identity and understanding his significance.

Jesus entered a synagogue one Sabbath and read about His own purpose in the book of Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.... Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:18-21, NIV; ref. Isaiah 61:1). This passage is an encouragement for men to realize that God has a purpose for their lives as well.

4. What am I destined to become? This question speaks to a man's potential. Many times we stop short of reaching our potential in the Lord because of our own inadequacy and distorted mindsets. Potential is unrealized possibility. Paul tells us in his letter to the Ephesians, "... God prepared in advance for us to do [good works]" (2:10, NIV). We have been destined for greatness, and our potential is our God-given ability to walk out God's plan for our lives.

At the heart of nearly every social issue in our nation you will find a man. That's why the solution to nearly every problem will often be found with men. Men are influencers, for either good or bad, righteousness or unrighteousness. We are at a critical time in America's history, where the need for bored men to become bold men is imperative. The consequences of continuing with the status quo will only result in more casualties.

Years ago, I read a Christian brother's testimony that appeared in Charisma's *New Man* magazine. This man wrote:

Five years ago, my faith in Christ was hanging by a thread. I loved God, but I hated going to church. Sunday morning would find my body in the pews, but my heart was elsewhere. I was so

desperate I began exploring alternative religions, including Islam. Did I mention I was an elder in my church?

I was not alone. Truth is, a lot of faithful, churchgoing men are not all that excited come Sunday morning. Quite a few attend out of habit, surviving on the memories of victories won years ago. Others attend services simply to keep their wives happy. Most guys do nothing midweek to grow in faith. Few churches are able to sustain a viable men's ministry.

Why are men so bored in our churches? Of course, there are the hypocrites. But even men who are born-again, Spirit-filled, longtime Christians are clamming up and dropping out. What's going on?

A business guru once said, "Your system is perfectly designed to give you the results you're getting." Christianity's primary delivery system, the local church, is perfectly designed to reach women and older folks. That's why our pews are filled with them. But this church system offers little to stir the masculine heart, so men find it dull and irrelevant. The more masculine the man, the more likely he is to dislike church.

What do I mean? Men and young adults are drawn to risk, challenge and adventure. But these things are discouraged in the local church. Instead, most congregations offer a safe, nurturing community—an oasis of stability and predictability. Studies show that women and seniors gravitate toward these things. Although our official mission is one of adventure, the actual mission of most congregations is making people feel comfortable and safe—especially longtime members.

I am a "results" kind of leader. I want to see things happening. I want churches to start men's ministries, successful men's events or conferences. When I feel we've hit a wall and ministry to men is stagnant, I'm encouraged by

Jesus and His men— men such as Peter, James, John, Andrew, Matthew and Philip. When I read their stories, I find they were ordinary men who struggled with sin, commitment, attitudes, truthfulness and fears. They were simple men who lived routine lives. They did the same job every day.

Jesus understood the principle of transforming bored men into bold men. He issued them a challenge: “Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19, NIV). Jesus called them to a life of adventure, to a playing field where they would learn teamwork and to the harvest field where they would learn the principles of losing to win and dying to live. Their story is remarkable as we follow them through three years of mentoring by the Master who made them fearless and bold disciples.

Let me draw a picture of what the typical church looks like on Sunday morning:

- The typical U.S. congregation draws an adult crowd that is 61 percent female and 39 percent male. This gender gap shows up in all age categories.
- According to Christian researcher George Barna, almost 25 percent of married, churchgoing women will worship without their husbands on any given Sunday.
- On any given Sunday there are 13 million more adult women than men in America’s churches.
- Fewer than 10 percent of American churches are able to establish or maintain a vibrant men’s ministry.

I think you are getting the picture. During this critical time when churches and denominations are abandoning men’s ministries, it’s time to get serious about reaching and equipping men for Jesus Christ. The problem is not going away. It’s time to become intentional and passionate about men’s ministries.

As a denominational leader, pastors often ask me, “How do I

start and maintain vibrant men's ministries?" I have given much thought to the question and offer the following suggestions:

1. It starts with vision. Proverbs 29:18 says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he" (KJV). The pastor must have a vision for men, or men will perish.

2. Provide pastoral support, not micromanagement. There is a major difference between supporting and leading. Many pastors become discouraged with men's ministries because they often end up having to lead the ministry. You must find others to carry this load.

3. Find the right leader. The right leader is the difference between success and failure. The pastor's delegated man can lead other men and complement the pastor's vision.

4. Develop team leadership. Don't leave the leader out by himself. This will only result in discouragement and failure. The leader needs to be surrounded by a team who will help shoulder the responsibility.

5. Know your plan and implement it. Proverbs 19:21 says, "Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails" (NIV). As with all ministries, the purpose of God is foundational to the success of ministry.

Is all this possible? Can it really happen? Do we value the men in our churches? Can bored men become bold men?

I often use Paul's challenge to Timothy in my men's training conferences and seminars. I love the way The Message Bible paraphrases 2 Timothy 1:6, 7: "The special gift of ministry you received when I laid hands on you and prayed—keep that ablaze! God doesn't want us to be shy with his gifts, but bold and loving and sensible."

Scripture says that Peter and John were once men of routine. But once they were filled with the power of the Holy Ghost, they were transformed into bold men. During their defense before the Sanhedrin, they did not buckle under pressure, but spoke with authority concerning salvation in Jesus Christ.

The Sanhedrin could not dispute what they witnessed. Acts 4:13 says, "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus" (NKJV).

This same marvelous transformation can happen today in our churches if we will introduce men to a bold, daring and adventurous Christ!

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