

The Surprising Key To Successful Men's Ministry

Over the years, reaching men with the gospel has been an important but challenging effort. From the early days when Edwin Louis Cole launched the Christian Men's Network, to Coach Bill McCartney's Promise Keepers, hundreds of thousands of men have been transformed, and yet momentum has been difficult at best.

But now, a local pastor with a national media ministry is turning "men's ministry" on its head. G. Allen Jackson, pastor of World Outreach Church in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, has taken his experience leading one of the largest churches in America and re-thought exactly what it means to reach men in the 21st century. That strategy is culminating in the "Mighty Men Conference" featuring G. Allen Jackson and Angus Buchan in Nashville on November 23. I had the opportunity to discuss the subject recently with Pastor Jackson, and here's what happened:

Phil Cooke: What we call "Men's Ministry" is alive and well, but it's not in the headlines much anymore. In the 1980's and 90's it exploded and culminated with Promise Keepers, which was one of the biggest movements of its time. What going on today?

Allen Jackson: Promise Keepers seemed to be a "God initiative." I know many worked hard to see Coach's vision become a reality, but the outcome exceeded imaginations. I believe it served a purpose for a season, calling men to an awareness of their roles as men of faith. Ultimately the church must be awakened to this message because events alone will not sustain the momentum.

PC: Have you always placed a priority on reaching men through

World Outreach Church?

AJ: We have always recognized the significance of men engaging with faith. As our congregation has grown, the expressions of that idea have changed consistently. For too long men imagined their primary role in church to be a decision maker/committee member. The activity of ministry was often not imagined to be of sufficient significance to attract the focus of capable men. We recognized men needed to be invited towards a meaningful, challenging interaction with God and His people. Faith demands results. Men will respond to this awareness.

PC: What do you see happening in the culture today that gives you an urgency to reach men with the gospel?

AJ: We live in a cyclone of confusion—confusion regarding ethics, life objectives, morality, faith, our place in the world; many things. Godly men make a difference. Godly men choose to develop character, not just be a character. Godly men provide leadership for younger generations. Duty, honor, responsibility and sacrifice are concepts required for healthy homes, churches and cultures. Permanent adolescence is not fulfilling; it is avoidance. We are created as image bearers of Almighty God, to make a difference for His Kingdom in our world.

PC: You appear to have captured a wide range of men – not just a certain segment or interest group. What's the key to connecting with such a wide variety of men?

AJ: Effective ministry to men, in my opinion, is rooted in a constant awareness of the impact of ministry on men as an integral part of the life of the congregation and therefore the Kingdom assignment of the community. We built nursery spaces that would appeal to men as well as children because we asked men to serve with the children. We want to integrate men and all they represent into the life of church. We do occasional events with a focus for men, but these are an

expression of ministry that is occurring routinely.

PC: How did you meet Angus Buchan, and why do you teach so well together?

AJ: I met Angus in Jerusalem. We had both been invited to speak at a Feast of Tabernacles Celebration. I was so impressed with his dynamic love for Jesus that I wanted to meet him. I think we made a connection because of a shared commitment to the Kingdom. Angus is anointed as an evangelist. People respond, in a truly remarkable way, when he shares a Jesus story. I am able to provide a context and rationale for what we are working towards. God seems to have placed us together for this season. It is His initiative.

PC: Angus has massive men's outreaches in South Africa. Why does his message connect so well with men?

AJ: Men recognize the genuine faith in Angus. We have seen so many pretenders. Angus is not polished; you do not feel as if he is manipulating you. Angus speaks with a sincerity and confident faith that enables men and women to imagine they could have a meaningful relationship with Jesus. He does not present theological principles for consideration. He invites people to live their faith today. For many the invitation is a great blessing.

PC: If you could say one thing to encourage more pastors to be intentional about reaching men in their community, what would it be?

AJ: Ministering to men is a skill set; it is not mysterious. Do not isolate ministry to men to an occasional weekend or event when there is a male oriented topic. Become conscious that every ministry experience needs to add value and opportunity for the men you are leading.

PC: What's next for Allen Jackson and World Outreach Church?

AJ: I believe we have an opportunity to see an awakening within the American church. I am a pastor; my heart is for the people who are searching for hope. Becoming a Christ follower does not diminish your life experience; it will dramatically improve the quality of your life. We are busy looking for opportunities to tell the Jesus story and to develop tools that will enable others to live free.

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