

What the Mighty Men of Your Church Really Want

“Battle is the most magnificent competition in which a human being can indulge. It brings out all that is best; it removes all that is base. All men are afraid in battle. The coward is the one who lets his fear overcome his sense of duty. Duty is the essence of manhood.” –George S. Patton

Ninety percent of the men who live in the United States say they believe in God.” Five out of six men in the U.S. refer to themselves as “Christians,” yet only 35 percent of the men in the United States attend church. Only 35 percent.

But another reality is that only one out of five women will have their husband sitting beside them in church today. I look out over the congregations I preach to, in churches all over the world, and so many of the women in each service are not sitting with their husband. It’s a startling statistic. Why?

In my 25-plus years as a pastor and over 30 years in the ministry, I have learned that men respond to straight talk. They like people to deal with real issues and tell it like it is. They don’t need to be talked “at” about stuff way up here that they can’t even relate to. I know my own ADD kicks in fast if I can’t relate to what a speaker is talking about. I know that when I’m reading my sermon outline, if it’s boring me, I don’t have a shot with most of the men.

We need to equate faith with guts. The church, in far too many cases, has feminized the church experience, and we have stopped relating to and speaking to real men. We need to preach in a way that challenges men and connects with men. We need to call men to commitment. Why? Because boys follow men!

Proclaim this among the nations: Consecrate a war! Stir up the mighty men! Let all the men of war draw near and rise. Beat

your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears; let the weakling say, 'I am a warrior!' (Joel 3:9-10).

I refuse to believe that Jesus Christ, one of the toughest men ever to walk this earth, is not relevant to the 21st-century man. But I do believe there's a total disconnect between many men and the 21st-century church experience, especially in the American culture. Men outnumber women in the Hindu faith. Men outnumber women in the Buddhism faith. Men outnumber women vastly, greatly in the Islamic faith. Only in Christianity do women outnumber the men in that faith.

So what is going on, and why is there an absence of manly men in the church? What's going on? Where are the real guys in the church? Where are the risk-takers; the rough-and-tumble strong men of God? There must be a place for men in our churches. There must be a place for real guys in the church. Guys who like real stuff that guys like belong in the church. It is so critical that we find answers to these questions, or we will continue to have churches filled with women without their husbands. Maybe that describes you or your husband.

The church of the first century was a magnet to men. Jesus' ministry was a magnet to men, and they were drawn to it. They liked it. They couldn't wait to get around it.

The Disciples

When Jesus officially started His ministry, one of the first things He did was to find 12 men. And Jesus took those 12 men and turned the world upside down. He chose fishermen—and a business leader, a tax collector and a doctor. Jesus was a carpenter by trade. He chose regular guys, real guys, not super-spiritual guys. Jesus chose strong men and he persuaded them with the same message that we preach today ... and those men responded the same way men have responded for over 2000 years ... all in, and in many darker days, at the expense of their very life.

Real men are not perfect, and real men get into it with each another sometimes. Real men do that every once in a while. Have you ever read the story of where Paul and Peter got in an argument? The Bible says that Paul said, "I withstood him face to face, because he stood condemned" (Gal. 2:11b). Can you imagine that? But that's what real men do sometimes, and real men are able to move on, let it go and remain friends and brothers.

We falsely think men are afraid to commit and they're afraid of structure. But that isn't the case. Others say men don't come to church because they're just not expressive. Well, go to a ballgame with some men and you'll see that simply isn't the case at all. They can get real expressive!

Church Imitating Life

I had a movie-going experience not too long ago with my wife. She wanted me to go to one I knew would be a "chick flick." Even the name had "chick flick" written all over it. That's why I loaded up with popcorn, candy, Nachos—everything. I knew this was going to be a long one, and I needed something to do.

As I settled into my seat, I began looking around the theater and I noticed there were lots of women, but only four other men with their wives. And I said, "Look at these men. Look at them!" They were miserable, absolutely. And then it hit me. This mirrored that one in five number we talked about earlier—only one in five women have their husband with them in church. You know, if we're not careful, we'll turn the church into a chick flick. Men will come only out of duty and obligation. Nothing attracts men. There's no adventure. There's no fire. There's no passion. There's no challenge. There's no conquering. It's just a chick flick, romantic and sweet.

An organization conducted a study focused on words that people associate with church. They used two very different lists of

words and then asked the male and female respondents to choose which list best described the church experience. The lists are below:

List 1: Feelings, Sharing, Love, Communication, Support, Help

List 2: Power, Efficiency, Achievement, Skill, Goal-Oriented, Competition, Success

After having the men and women look at the two lists, they were asked to choose which list of words best describe their church experience. Both groups (the men and women) said that List 1 above describes “church.” But the problem is that one group of words makes men come alive and the other group of words makes women come alive. For men, List 2 makes them come alive, but for most men, that list would not describe their church experience ... and so here we sit, with only one in five women sitting with their husband in church. It turns out men vote with their feet.

There’s a lot of singing in church, and men, in general, don’t like to sing. They are very self-conscious about their voices, and it’s just something they don’t really do in any other part of their life—in public. There’s a lot of hand-holding, and many times that happens with other men. Why are men not attracted to the church? Men don’t like some of that stuff. It’s not a criticism of women or anything like that. It’s just me being honest with you about the things that keep men from the house of God—which, for many men, means we are also keeping them from God. This is not a negative reflection on women. We just need some balance in the church.

Risk and adventure were taken out of the church, and suddenly, it was all about safety, and security. The word “sanctuary” comes from the word “security.” Men want risk and adventure, and when the church becomes just a little safe place, we lose their interest. That’s where tradition comes from. We don’t want to change anything. We want it safe, and we want it

“secure.”

We tell our men, “If you get saved, you’re going to go to heaven.” And we’ve taught them that when you get to heaven, you are going to sit on a cloud and have some little fat babies with angel’s wings and play a harp. Now isn’t that exciting for a man to think about?

But on the other hand, the Islamic religion teaches that “if you go to their heaven, the first thing a man gets is 72 virgins!” Jesus preached about rewards that would be given. And He said, “If you’re faithful in this life, you will rule over cities. You will serve and rule nations with a rod of iron” (see Rev. 2:26-27). That beats playing a harp for fat babies any day.

In families where only the woman serves God, 17 percent of the time, the children will follow in that faith. But in the families where the man serves God with the wife, 93 percent of the time, the family and children will follow Jesus Christ. That’s why Joshua said, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!” (Josh 24:15c). “I’m not taking votes”—“I’m not asking for a poll”—“I’m telling you that, “me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

We need to encourage our men. We need to encourage our teenage sons. We need to encourage these young men in the Lord in the things of God. We’ve got to stop putting them down and telling them everything that is wrong with them. You keep them in church, and God will deal with them about everything.

A Band of Men

Wake up the mighty men. The church has been without one of our greatest resources, mighty men, for far too long. The mentality of the church and what we communicate has got to change. God designed the church to attract men, not repel them. Wake up the mighty men. Wake them up! Challenge them! Call them to commitment!

There is a Scripture in 1 Samuel, chapter 10 that is one of my favorite verses in all the Bible.

“Saul also went home to Gibeah. And there went with him a band of valiant men whose hearts God had touched” (1 Sam. 10:26b).

I remember the first time I read that: “a band of men.” Something in me cried out, “Oh God, give me a band of men in my church whose hearts God has touched.” Because if a man’s heart has been touched by God, he’ll be a better husband—he’ll be a better father—he’ll be a better leader—he’ll be a better provider. What we need more than anything else is men whose hearts have been touched by God. {eoa}

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