

Why Is Men's Discipleship So Urgent?

Here is a collection of some of my favorite reflections on men's discipleship that I've posted on Facebook:

Why Reaching Men Is So Urgent: An Example

Recently, my father-in-law and I had lunch. Our waitress, Stephanie (disguised name), seemed a little down so I struck up a conversation. Her car wouldn't start and, not having much money, she was overwhelmed. She is 26 years old, a single mom with 6- and 8-year-old boys, and has no family in Orlando. The father of her children isn't in the picture—he's a bad actor. So she's left to raise two sons without a father figure by earning tips. She has a younger brother who, without a positive father figure, is on the cusp of becoming a bad actor too. So I told her about the work we do with men and gave her a copy of *The Man in the Mirror* for him.

When we said grace over lunch, I invited her to join us. She did, and I sensed that God encouraged her heart. What a perfect example of why God wants us to disciple men. Experiences like this are why we can never, and will never, tire or lose our passion to help evangelize and disciple men. The mission of "men's discipleship" is for all of the broken people, like Stephanie and her sons, left in the wake of misguided men. Those men have no idea of the destructive forces they are setting in motion that will devastate multiple generations. That's why we must urgently help every church disciple every man.

Are We Trying to Solve the Wrong Problem?

The "men problem" has become a crisis that is virtually out of control. The collateral damage among families is staggering. Men under 40 are especially vulnerable to an alien worldview

that is gutting the institutions of marriage and family. Our government agencies, social sector organizations and businesses are overrun trying to cope with the downstream damage of an increasingly fatherless, angry and dysfunctional generation.

By all means, let's continue helping single moms, pregnant teenagers and fatherless boys. But we'll never solve these "symptomatic" problems without treating the underlying disease—the cause—that men don't understand biblical manhood. If you are trying to solve the wrong problem, you can only succeed by accident. Behind virtually every human tragedy, you will find the failure of a man. No problem we need to be working on is more important than men's discipleship.

The Cure for Everything Starts With Men

When my mother was diagnosed with advanced stage 4 cancer, she decided to treat the pain but not the disease. In many ways, that's what we're doing with our mega-problems—like divorce, fatherlessness, domestic abuse, the explosion of pornography, metal detectors in schools, rampage shootings, Wall Street corruption and the normalization of sin on TV, to name a few.

However, behind virtually every sad story, you will find the failure of a man—and he hates himself for it. Can you think of anything that has more potential to solve the problems we face than getting men right through discipleship?

So Much Depends on Healthy Men

- If you want to restore healthy marriages, restore healthy men.
- If you want to restore healthy families, restore healthy men.
- If you want to restore healthy churches, restore healthy men.
- If you want to restore healthy communities, restore healthy men.

- If you want to restore healthy men, take a man under your wing and disciple him into the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus.

Make sure you and your church are treating the underlying disease, not just the pain it causes.

Anything Less Than Discipling All Your Men Is a Moral Failure

Along with my colleagues, I've spent 25 years studying how churches can disciple *all* their men—not just that small percentage who will participate in “men's only” activities. Where did we ever get the idea that any more than a small fraction of men would ever be interested in joining a men's only ministry? Perfectly executed, you might involve 25 percent of your men, tops. But what about men that are part of the worship team, teach middle school boys, park cars, drive the bus or usher? How do they become strong disciples?

Are they excluded because they're not part of the men's ministry? This is the big idea: However many men you have in your church, that's the size of your ministry to men. We call it “all-inclusive ministry to men.”

How are men doing in your church? Do you need to shift your paradigm? Anything less than a plan to disciple all your men is a moral failure.

The Men God Wants Us to Engage

You can see them sitting next to you at any traffic light in America. The pace has numbed their senses. They don't get enough rest. They're always on the fly. They rarely reflect. They do not often sense the presence of God.

Ironically, they spend decades getting what they want, only to find out it doesn't make them happy. They have success but no peace, things but no pleasure, meaningful work but no gratitude for it, money but no vision to serve others, and

relationships but no time to enjoy them. They are unbalanced—unstable, actually—and a high risk to themselves and their families. These are men Jesus had in mind when He said, “Go and make disciples.”

So, when you come across a man like this, reach out. I did this yesterday and offered a man a copy of *Is Christianity for You?* He thanked me profusely and said, “You know, this is timely. Recently I’ve been thinking about my own mortality and what’s comes after. I really need this.”

You just never know! God is right now preparing some of the men to whom you and I will speak to today. They are aching to find “the way.”

We’ll Never Disciple Men if We Don’t Do This

Jesus modeled a foolproof way to bring men to spiritual maturity. It’s for already mature men to take men younger in their faith under their wings and show them the ropes.

Not long ago, I mentored a young man in his late 20s. As with so many younger guys, he grew up in a dysfunctional home, so he’d never seen “normal.” On our fourth visit—long enough for him to size up whether or not he would trust me—he sat down and blurted out, “I have a mediocre business, a mediocre marriage and a mediocre relationship with God.”

See why disciples cannot be mass-produced?

We can’t just enroll men in a class or get them to attend our event and expect them to “get it.” That’s a good start, but not enough to complete the mission. No, we’re also going to have to get our hands dirty—every mature guy. We’re going to have to spend personal time with these men, one at a time, until they no longer have to guess at what normal looks like. You’ll never actually make a mature disciple until you do this.

Patrick Morley is founder and CEO of Man in the Mirror. After building one of Florida's 100 largest privately held companies, in 1991, he founded Man in the Mirror, a nonprofit organization to help men find meaning and purpose in life. Dr. Morley is the best-selling author of *The Man in the Mirror*, *No Man Left Behind*, *Dad in the Mirror*, and *A Man's Guide to the Spiritual Disciplines*.