

Why Men's Discipleship Is a Difficult Calling

After decades of “information” flow, the church is still resistant to men's discipleship. Not everywhere, of course, but enough to make you wonder, “*What's going on here?*” It's not hard to imagine a spiritual battle raging in the cosmos over the souls of men.

Ministry to men can be lonely and discouraging. Let's face it. Magazines, newspapers, radio and TV stations are not exactly clamoring to interview us about the unglamorous trench work of ministry to men!

Most of the leaders I started with have moved on. I don't fault them. It's not easy when you want more spiritual success for men than they want it for themselves.

And yet, here you are. What lures you to this conflicted world of ministry to men?

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We are hardly the first ones lured into a difficult calling. Not a week goes by that I don't think about how God “tricked” Isaiah into a ministry doomed to fail. You remember the story. “In the year King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord” (Is. 6:1ff).

The glory of the Lord filled the temple with smoke. Isaiah got all excited and had “a moment” with God—a glorious, holy experience. Isaiah was fired up!

Then the Lord asked, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?”

Isaiah, now bursting to do something for God, squealed, “Here am I. Send me!” I've been there, and I know you have too.

But then the Lord gave Isaiah his marching orders. The Lord told Isaiah to go and tell the people not to listen. "Go and tell this people: 'Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.' Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes"

A stunned Isaiah asked, "For how long, O Lord?" And God told him for a very long time.

Frankly, most of the men we admire in the Bible had long dry spells. David dodged the spear of King Saul. Joseph suffering as a brother sold into slavery. Daniel's faithfulness landed him in a lion's den. And Abraham *never* saw the promise fulfilled.

Jeremiah, who spent 23 years ministering to people who finally got so tired of his message that they imprisoned him, bemoaned, "O LORD, you deceived me, and I was deceived; you overpowered me and prevailed" (Jer. 20:7). Peter was crucified upside down by his own choice, Paul's hardships and trials are legendary, and our Lord Himself was brutally murdered.

A major step in ministry success is to accept that men's discipleship is a difficult calling reserved for a few. You're special. Success, however, takes a tough, determined leader with a flinty forehead willing to grab a shovel, get in the ditch, and keep digging long after everyone else gives up.

Is it possible that God has "lured" you to this great cause because, like the great servants of old, He knows He can count on you?

We Need Other Brothers

When I was in business, I attended a resident executive education program. On the first day, during the welcome reception, I thought, I've made a terrible, terrible mistake. I have never seen a group of people with whom I have less in

common.

There were men and women from in their 30s to their 60s from every conceivable industry and country. It was like the university had intentionally put together the most heterogeneous group of people they could find. The only thing we had in common was that we were all the owners and presidents of private companies.

Three days later I had completely changed my mind. I thought, This is absolutely the most homogeneous group I have ever been around. Yes, the school had intentionally diversified the group. But when we started sharing our common problems, struggles, challenges, questions and opportunities, I realized that I had more in common with those people than any other single business group.

The same is true in men's discipleship. We each come in our own unique "package." We are young, old, black, white, brown and yellow. We're from all over the world and every theology. And yet "men's discipleship leaders" are absolutely the most homogeneous group of servants we will ever be around.

To realize that the problems, struggles, challenges, questions and opportunities I face are exactly the same ones you face creates a common bond. "We are in this together." And that is very encouraging.

Do You Need a Kick in the Pants or a Hug?

We need to spend time together. You already know this, but serving God is expensive. People you thought were your friends drop you because they think you've become a fanatic or a Jesus freak (you have, of course, but more on that in some future article).

The math is simple. God says, "You can have all of Me when I can have all of you." He demands everything you've got in return for everything He has to offer. Not a bad deal, but

painful in the beginning.

Sometimes we need a hug, but other times we need a kick in the pants. Sometimes we need to hear, "Suck it up. We are not our own. We have been bought with a price. We're in His army now. We have been crucified with Christ and we no longer live. To live is Christ; to die is gain. His Word is in our hearts like a burning fire!"

Other times we need a hug: "I love you, brother. How can I pray for you? What is bringing you joy? How is your walk with God? How are you really doing? You're not in this alone." Or at least you don't have to be. In fact, it's doubtful you can survive on your own.

Being Together Is All About Fuel

Being together is fuel. Like a runner needs energy. Like an entrepreneur needs ideas. Like a soul needs worship. Like a man needs brothers. Like a leader needs strategies. Like a discipler needs knowledge. Like a soldier needs skills.

Whether you need a hug or a kick in the pants, or you don't know what to do next; God has crafted you in such a way that these needs are best met by spending time together.

How's that going to happen, you ask? There are many ways, but it all depends on what you do next. Man in the Mirror wants to stand with you. We have a dizzying number of free online resources at .

Just don't try to do this alone. That's tempting the trolls.

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