

Reflections From the Man in the Mirror

In 1986, Patrick Morley discipled a handful of men who met together in an Orlando-area bar to study the Bible. Today, he challenges men in 80 countries to be Christ's disciples. New Man recognizes an icon of the modern men's movement.

The letter came from a New Jersey man who attended a conference sponsored by a Methodist men's group. The featured speaker: Patrick Morley.

"I truly believe [Pat's] presentation saved my marriage," the man wrote. "My wife and I had agreed to get a divorce the night before the gathering. I felt as though Pat were talking directly to me. Everything he said fit what I was going through and made perfect sense."

Making sense to men is what Morley, the founder of the Orlando, Man in the Mirror (MIM) ministry, has been doing now for 20 years.

In 1986, long before house churches and other worship alternatives became the wave the 21st century church would ride, he gathered 15 men for a Friday-morning Bible study—in a bar.

Although that group quickly outgrew the space, some 160 participants still gather weekly in a neutral setting. The primary difference in today's meetings is Internet hook-ups, which enable men from 80 countries to link to the sessions.

Morley openly credits the Web-linked instruction to a Friday-morning "table leader"—one of his ministry volunteers—who was developing technology for Sony Corp. in the late 1990s.

"What's webcasting?" Morley first asked in response to the man's offer to spread his teaching sessions worldwide.

"It was totally new at that point," he recalls. "I had never heard of it. Frankly, most of the things that have worked out for us have been somebody else's ideas."

Such self-effacing stories are the former real estate developer's trademark, according to those whose lives he has touched. Cheerful, deliberate and thoughtful at a time in life when early retirement occupies the minds of millions of other middle-aged men, the 57-year-old Morley recently wrapped up his dissertation for a doctorate in leadership and organizational change.

And, although he has turned over the reigns of daily management at MIM to create more time for his writing and strategizing, Morley has no intention of retiring soon. "I'm not going anywhere," he declares. "I've got 30 or 40 good years left."

Such determination demonstrates what David Delk, MIM's president since 2003, calls the plodding nature of the ministry, which was named for Morley's 1989 best-seller. The book emerged from his mid-1980s Bible studies and is nearing 3 million copies in print today. Seventeen years after being published for the first time, *The Man in the Mirror* (Zondervan) remains popular, speaking to men about such realities as purpose, workaholism, finances and biblical beliefs.

One of the philosophies the ministry embodies is "crawl, walk, run"—the idea that success comes from pushing steadily over a long period of time. Delk says that observing this principle of faithfulness helped him become a better husband and father.

"One of the things Pat has done is help me understand the power of faith and believing in the call and vision God gives," Delk, 40, says. "Pat is not the kind of person who

looks at all the reasons why something can't be done. He's the kind of person who says, 'If God is really behind this, then there will be a way for this to get done, and all we have to do is be faithful.'"

Orlando real estate developer Scott Crossman echoes that sentiment. Last November, Crossman spearheaded an evening kickoff for the nation's first "Purpose-Driven Community"—a program established to encourage 100,000 Orlando home-group members to read through pastor and author Rick Warren's best-seller, *The Purpose-Driven Life* (Zondervan), before the end of March. By mid-December, he had enlisted almost half the 10,000 home-group leaders that he envisions will lead the members through the book.

Crossman points to Morley's influence as key to inspiring him with the willingness to tackle such an ambitious project. The effort attracted 10,000 people to Orlando's T.D. Waterhouse Centre and included flying in Warren from California for the kickoff.

"No matter what you do, half the people in the world are going to hate you, and the thing to do is make sure they hate you for the right reasons," Crossman says of his favorite Morley quote. "Pat has modeled that in his life, helping change men's lives."

Getting Men on Track

Morley's vision and faith have touched countless men. At its current pace, the ministry's cumulative seminar attendance will reach 100,000 in 2007. Sessions focus on such topics as purpose, priorities, fatherhood and spiritual fulfillment. While MIM doesn't track the number of conversions or life-changing decisions that it's responsible for, men with such experiences abound.

There are figures such as Robert Tunmire of Waco, Texas—a hard-charging corporate executive whose first two marriages

collapsed before he decided to follow Christ. Soon after his 1999 conversion, he picked up a copy of *The Man in the Mirror*.

To say it struck a chord with Tunmire would be an understatement. He estimates he has given away 2,000 copies, including a case or two at his company's monthly meetings of managers and franchisees.

Tunmire attended MIM's leadership training and put its principles into action. In January 2005, he established a weekly Bible study at the Waco Hilton. Today, several dozen men attend the sessions, which include a roundtable discussion and prayer.

"The thing that stands out for me is his absolute passion and devotion to reaching men," Tunmire says of Morley. "He has such a heart for changing the core value of men and core beliefs of their heart so they grow in relationship to Christ."

Many men have benefited from Morley's teaching, regardless of their backgrounds. Peyton Day, whose father founded the Days Inn motel franchise, grew up in a Christian home. After his father died when Peyton was 17, he looked for mentors—and found one in Morley.

"One of the things I've loved about Pat is his whole concept of transparency and being vulnerable," says Day, who today develops land in Atlanta and along the Gulf Coast and is founder of Day Holdings. "You need to be vulnerable and let people know you're struggling with some issues. As the leader of an organization, that's important. People respect that."

Day has read *The Man in the Mirror* twice, and a hotel chain he once owned gave away 20,000 copies during his tenure.

Thanks in part to Morley's book, Day helped organize the Association for True Hospitality (ATH). The seven hotel owners who make up the group have pledged to remove porn from their

properties whenever possible, providing business travelers with a place to stay that's free of X-rated influence.

"Without question [Morley's book] helps solidify your conviction about [not providing] porn," Day says. "Reading the book helped me see what's going through men's minds and see as a businessman, that's something I can deal effectively with."

Through personal encounters, Phil Downer has seen Morley as peacemaker and unifier. When he was president of Christian Business Men's Committee (CBMC), Downer attended one of the early meetings of the National Coalition of Men's Ministries (NCMM)—a consortium of about 80 groups that Morley helped launch in 1996.

Because of various misunderstandings among the groups represented at the meeting, Downer says the room brimmed with suspicion, pain, critical attitudes and mistrust. Morley was poised to discuss business, but when he sensed the atmosphere among the men, he laid down his tools to explore their feelings.

"As our leader, he had the wisdom to spend the better part of two years building relationships before he brought out the whiteboard and magic marker again," Downer says of his longtime friend. "That's been the key to the men's movement." Morley has also been a source of encouragement for the ministry Downer formed five years ago, Discipleship Network of America (DNA). With his wife and various family members helping at times, Downer leads about 40 seminars a year on marriage, leadership and discipleship.

"Pat's been a great mentor, a model," Downer says. "Most of all, he's been willing to stand with me through some of the darkest, most difficult times of my life. Without Pat's leadership in NCMM and his encouragement, I'm not sure there would be a [DNA] ministry."

Tested by Fire

Every would-be, high-profile leader who thinks being in Morley's role means demonstrating superior knowledge amid an aura of invincibility should study him, as he loves to open his talks with jokes about himself.

Take the one about how his wife's broken ankle prevented her from doing household chores for a month. One Friday while out with a friend, Morley asked if he had some extra time so they could stop at K-mart. When his friend asked why, Pat replied, "I either need to buy a six pack of underwear or I'm going to have to do laundry."

His down-to-earth image includes taking up racing his 1974 Porsche IROC in 2004. He has competed in amateur races sanctioned by the Sports Car Club of America and two other organizations. In his first 32 races, Morley racked up 15 wins in such places as Sebring and Daytona, Fla., and Savannah, Ga.

"I've always loved racing," says Morley, who once dreamed of professional acclaim. When his fiancée, Patsy—now his wife of 33 years and mother of their two adult children—called home to tell her parents that she and Pat planned to live out of a trailer while he entered motorcycle races, her mother responded, "It must be love."

However, humor takes a back seat when Morley explains his passion for disciplining men. Its origins stretch back 80 years, to the dark day his paternal grandfather deserted his family. Pat's father grew up in a single-parent home with three siblings, all scrambling to survive. His first job was at age 6.

Wanting to break the fatherless cycle and to get their own children religious and moral instruction, Pat's parents joined a church. But at age 40, Pat's father, burned out on endless activities and embittered over some experiences, left the church.

"Over the next two years, the wheels fell off the wagon,"

Morley says of the family. During that time, Pat quit high school to join the Army, and a younger brother also quit school and later died of a heroin overdose. Another sibling has struggled with employment; another is divorced.

“[Dad] was the top layman in our church,” Morley says. “Unfortunately, our church did not have the vision to disciple my father to be a godly man, a godly husband and a godly father. It just hit our family with such a force that he never saw it coming. The church should have seen it.

“The reason I’m so passionate about men’s discipleship is because I know that in every church, there are men just exactly like my dad. Men who really want to do the right thing. They are there for all the right reasons, but the church isn’t going to help them.”

Were it not for Patsy’s influence, Pat might have ended up like those men who “play church” only to quit when religion fails to produce the vibrant spiritual relationship men seek. Thanks to her convincing him that a relationship with Christ was exciting, the Morleys became a host couple for Executive Ministries. They chaired evangelistic dinner parties at private clubs and hosted smaller dinners in their home.

Sensing a need to hold Bible studies specifically for the men inspired Morley to start his Friday-morning study. Ironically, no dinner-party participants ever came, but the study developed a life of its own.

It not only led to his writing *The Man in the Mirror*, but it also in 1991—thanks to Morley’s increasing spiritual growth—convinced him that it was time to leave behind the 59 real estate concerns he had created. Unanimous feedback from his wife, friends and business associates sealed his decision.

“We’ve never had an extra dollar, ever,” Morley says, reflecting on the highlights of his second career. “But we’ve always had enough money to do all the ministry God wants us to

do.

“It’s been deeply encouraging and faith-building. At this point, I have a tremendous sense of peace that God will provide.”

Still, the progress hasn’t come without pain. In another of his best-sellers, *Seven Seasons of the Man in the Mirror* (Zondervan; formerly titled *The Seven Seasons of a Man’s Life*), Morley noted that entering ministry meant wanting to quit twice a week instead of just once.

Such feelings have passed. The quantum leaps he lists since 1991 include:

1. Focusing solely on ministry to men following a strategic meeting with an Atlanta-based consulting firm
2. Launching the National Coalition of Men’s Ministries, which he believes will change men’s work from a “ministry” to an “industry,” something Morley says is needed for it to last
3. Initiating an effort in 2000 to give away 1 million copies of *The Man in the Mirror*, which spurred a low-cost printing offer from Zondervan. Thanks to other support, he distributed close to 1.2 million copies that year.

The book-distribution effort helped his supporters “see God do something that hadn’t been done before. It created a new paradigm for the distribution of Christian literature,” he says.

MIM started with Morley and a single assistant. Today, the ministry employs 20 full-time and six part-time employees. Thanks to its host of resources, including Morley’s 11 books, revenues have surpassed the \$3 million mark.

Seeing men changed for Christ remains his passion, however. Last year he challenged men to read the Bible through in 2005. One man in his Friday Bible study, a curmudgeonly senior

citizen, was guarded and suspicious.

Near the end of the year, though, he exhibited warmth and friendliness. Intrigued, Pat wanted to know why.

“Unbeknownst to anybody, he had been reading God’s Word every day, and God had been visibly transforming his life,” Morley says. “And he wasn’t even aware that God was in the process of changing him. That was just an extremely touching moment for me.”

Numerous superlatives could describe Morley’s embodiment of modern men’s ministry, but it is in the hearts of the men he has turned to Christ that one finds the living proof.

Ken Walker, a freelance writer based in Huntington, ., was one of seven

contributors to *Align: The Complete New Testament for Men* (Nelson Bibles). This article originally appeared in *New Man* magazine in 2006.