

Can a Men's Ministry Really Last?

by Patrick Morley

A man who recently started a men's ministry in his church said, "I'm a little discouraged. We took a big group of men to Promise Keepers. They were all excited, but now all but a handful have lost interest."

Promise Keepers is the most significant spiritual movement of our generation. The lives of countless thousands of men have been radically transformed by God in a single meeting.

Promise Keepers is the Super Bowl of Christianity. It reaches men in a culturally relevant way men are used to going to football stadiums.

The question is, "What does it take to get to the Super Bowl?" It takes one set of requirements to go as a spectator. It takes an entirely different set of requirements to go as a participant.

We should not be surprised by the drop off from Promise Keepers or any other momentum event. Only a few men are ever willing to pay the price to be a participant.

The parable of the sower is always at work: some hear and forget, some hear joyfully but fall away quickly, others hear but are choked by life's worries and riches, and a few hear and produce fruit.

I suggested to this man that he was in an enviable position. Now he knows who the really serious men are. Now he can begin to build on a sure foundation, rather than building a men's ministry around half-hearted men. That would only lead to more, and greater, discouragement later.

What are the things a man needs to know to not only build a men's ministry that's successful, but not become discouraged in the process? Here are seven truths to add to the "principles" and "components" which we outlined in our article "How to Build a Strong Men's Ministry."

MANAGE YOUR EXPECTATIONS

1. Don't be angry with men because they are not more spiritually mature. When a man wants to help other men grow in Christ, he often realizes that he wants men to be successful more than they want it themselves.

In the Bible study I teach in Orlando on Friday mornings we have about 150 men plus 25 leaders. About 2,000 men have been through our doors. That's after ten years of hard, faithful work.

It would be easy for us to become impatient with new men who are not as mature as we might wish. Yet, isn't that the very purpose we are there in the first place? Don't be angry with men because they are not more involved. Continue to show them Christ through your lifestyle so they find themselves drawn to you.

2. Don't be discouraged when men lose interest. The purpose of large scale momentum events is to cast a wide net. In your net you will find a lot of spectators and a few participants. Focus on the participants you keep, rather than the spectators you lose. A lot of men will "audit" your events - focus on the "for credit" men.

Christ created a huge ruckus and spoke to very large crowds. Yet, by the time he was done he had chased off all but 120 disciples (see Acts 1:15). This was the foundation upon which he built the participants, not the spectators. He looked for the faithful few, not the fickle many.

3. Don't expect more from men than they can, or should, realistically give. For example, we consider perfect attendance making two out of three meetings. Why? With family men in business we know we must allow for glitches, late nights, and early morning meetings.

It's interesting. Often, we get upset with men because they won't leave their families and come to our meetings so that we can tell them they should spend more time with their families.

FOCUS YOUR ENERGIES

4. Focus on making disciples. Recently I found myself blurting out, "The most significant accomplishment of my personal ministry is that I can point to forty-four men who I have helped to disciple."

I really believe this is true, but not on the basis of what I see. What I see is that thousands of men are reading our books and working through our curriculum. To my flesh, that looks like success. Yet, when I study the life of Jesus, I see that His greatest accomplishment (after the resurrection) was to build a band of men ready to invest their lives for the gospel.

I wish I knew who first said it so I could give proper credit, but I just don't know. The idea is to work with "FAT" men - men who are faithful, available, and teachable.

5. Invest in men who will invest in other men. A missionary named John spent the bulk of his years of service meeting with a few young men. Abruptly, his work was cut short when all missionaries were suddenly asked to leave the country.

A man who had viewed John's ministry with skepticism later said, "I look at what has come out of John's life. One of the men he worked with is now a professor mightily used of God to reach and train scores of university students. Another is leading a discipling team of about forty men and women. Another is in a nearby city with a group of thirty-five growing disciples. Three others have gone to other countries as missionaries. God is blessing their work."¹

Your ministry will grow in proportion to your ability to build not just disciples, but disciple makers. Paul said it this way, "The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others" (2 Tim. 2:2, emphasis added).

The focus of a men's ministry leader should be to make disciples of men who will in turn disciple others, and so on. This was the method of Jesus.

Keep your eye out for men who want to make disciples. Be involved with men at all levels (see the five groups to reach in A Look in the Mirror #17, "How to Build a Strong Men's Ministry"). Yet, the greatest return on Jesus' time came from investing in a few "FAT" men. That's where your greatest return will come from, too, although it may not at first seem so.

6. Create a culture of prayer. Once a friend whose wife had just died of cancer asked me about my dearest friend, Tom Skinner, who had leukemia. I said, "He's very sick. I guess the only thing we can do is pray." He looked long into my face, then said, "No, the thing we can do is pray."

We can't do anything without God's blessing, but we can do all things when we tap into the purpose of His will. Prayer is God's designated way to release the will of God in men's lives. Prayer is the currency of our personal relationship with Jesus. It will do us no good to leave it on account. We must take some out and spend it in on men's souls. Prayer is the thing we can do.

7. Be purpose driven rather than event driven. It is not events that create successful ministry, it is purpose. If we are not careful, the tendency can be to "begin" without really knowing where we want to "end." It would be easy to get caught up in the break-neck pace of men's ministry and "event" yourself to mediocrity.

We say, "We measure our profits in changed lives." In some way, your purpose must touch that same train of thought. Measure your success in changed lives, not in numbers of bodies.

Write in the space provided below: 1) Your purpose for having a men's ministry and 2) three, four, or five concrete goals. For example,

Purpose: To reach men in our church with a credible offer of the gospel, and equip them as spiritual leaders in their families, church, work, and community.

PURPOSE:

Concrete Goals: (Example: establish core group, start 5 small groups, have retreat, etc.)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

APPLICATION

Have you ever helped "make a disciple"? What concrete step could you take to get more involved in helping men become like Christ?

¹ Leroy Eims, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978). 23.

Business leader, author, and speaker, Patrick Morley has been used throughout the world to help men and leaders think more deeply about their lives, to be reconciled with Christ, and to equip them to have a larger impact on the world.

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