

Sustaining Momentum in Your Men's Ministry

by Patrick Morley

Here are comments we frequently hear from men and pastors frustrated in their efforts to make men's ministry work in their churches,

"We just can't seem to get our men interested."

"We have an event, but two months later everything is the same as before."

"The men who need this the most are the least interested."

"After two years we still only have ___ men."

On the other hand, my brother-in-law started a single small group in his church four years ago with five men. Today, they have 62 excited men in five small groups. Another church started with 50 men last fall in 7 small groups, now they have almost 100 men eager to meet and discuss God's word.

What's the difference between these results? Why do some men's ministries flourish while others putter along? These are the questions we will answer in this newsletter.

You created quite a stir around your church! The event you planned was a huge success. Men came out. They heard. They responded. The atmosphere around the church was electric. You created a lot of momentum. You find this very satisfying.

Not only did you create momentum, you captured the momentum as well. When properly challenged, an astonishing 70% of the men attending the event signed up for six week follow up discussion groups on the spot!

Now that they've met for a few weeks, those men are extolling the virtues of men meeting together. Many of them have started to come alive spiritually for the very first time. Others, reticent at first, now look forward to every minute of the discussion time. Some have opened up in ways they've never, ever done before. These men have bonded with each other. You feel like you've had a good return on your labor - but you don't want it to stop here!

On the contrary, you are eager to sustain the momentum you've created and captured. To do less would be like heating the house to a toasty 72 degrees on a cold winter's day, then leaving the front door wide open. That wouldn't make any sense. What do you do now? In two weeks the small groups come to an end. How can you keep men involved and growing in faith?

EXPECT DROP OFF

First, accept that you can't sustain all the momentum. The parable of the sower always works against the command to make disciples. At every additional step you take some seed will fall on the rocky path, the side of the road, or among the thorns. Your reasonable expectation should be that every time you ask men for additional commitment some will give it, but others will fall away. (That's why you want to continue to have additional events periodically to create and capture fresh momentum.)

FIVE GROUPS OF MEN

Second, you must design a next right step for each category of man. Recently a pastor had an "aha!" when he realized he had designed his men's ministry as "one size fits all." Each man has a personal situation that should dictate what you challenge him to do next. We suggest the following five groupings:

Unsaved men - seekers, lookers, investigators

Cultural Christians - men on the "fringe"

Disciples, or men who want to be

Leaders, or men who want to be

Hurting men, men with "broken wings"

You can immediately see the value of knowing to which group a man belongs. Obviously, a man well versed in the Bible with a gift for leadership and administration has different needs than an unsaved man whose wife has just issued an ultimatum to get straight or get out.

You must have an appropriate next step for every man in your church, and they will fall into one of these five groupings. One size doesn't fit all. Therefore, you will want to have a variety of ongoing opportunities that fit the vision and mission of your church, like,

For unsaved men:

Outreach events - like a football player giving a testimony at a breakfast

Social outings - like a fish fry

For cultural Christians:

Small group study of a Christian book

Success That Matters® men's event

For disciples, or men who want to be:

Learner

Pastor's small group Bible study

Accountability group

Men's Bible study

Teacher

Lead a small group book or Bible study

Teach Sunday School

Host a table at a Men's Bible Study

Worker

Prayer Group

Service in the community

Meet needs in the church

Witness

Take a training class

Share faith with new visitors

Share with co-workers, neighbors, friends

For leaders, or men who want to be:

Deacon or Elder training

Men's Ministry Leadership Core Group participation

For hurting men:

Opportunities to meet with disciples/leaders gifted to encourage

Professional counseling referrals

Issue oriented small groups - divorce recovery, dealing with grief, etc.

How do you determine which category a man falls into and, therefore, his appropriate next step?

A PERSONAL INTERVIEW

Third, conduct a personal interview with each man. Once you get to the "sustain momentum" step all the confetti and party balloons are gone. You are settling in for the long, sometimes thankless task of making disciples.

There are no shortcuts in men's ministry. If you want to build men long term, you have to get to know each of those men personally. This means getting off with them one-on-one for a breakfast or lunch and really getting to know the man.

Ask these questions,

"Where are you on your spiritual pilgrimage?"

"Has there ever been a time where you have made a commitment of your life to Jesus Christ by faith?" If yes, "Could you tell me how that happened?"

"I'm going to mention five groups of men. Tell me which of these categories do you most identify with: seeker, cultural Christian, disciple, leader, or hurting?" Then, "Why did you answer that way?"

"In terms of your own spiritual growth and service, which of the following four categories do you picture yourself in right now: Learner, Teacher, Worker, Witness?"

"Based on your answer to the last question, would you say you need to be considered a beginner, intermediate or advanced in that area?"

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Once you have paid the steep price of having someone from the leadership team meet with each man, you will have powerful "design" information. The types of opportunities you need to sustain momentum will likely obviate themselves. As I like to say, most decisions are obvious given enough time and information.

Remember that it takes a long time to make a disciple. So, to be successful you, too, have to be in it for the long haul. Be patient.

Also, most meaningful change will take place in the context of church based small group relationships. Consultant Pat MacMillan surveyed over 2,500 Promise Keepers who had kept their promises. He asked them, "Who helped you keep them?" The two overwhelming answers given were, "My wife" and "My church-based small group." So focus on eventually getting men into small groups to study, pray, and be accountable.

YOUR NEXT STEP

Do you have a desire to sustain the momentum in your men's ministry? Why not get together with the leaders of your church and talk through the ideas discussed in this newsletter? Or here's an even better idea, why not order a copy of the Men's Ministry Action Plan for your leadership team by calling 407-331-0095 ext.15? Then develop a plan of action and begin the long-term process of building disciples.

Business leader, author, and speaker, Patrick Morley helps men to think more deeply about their lives, to be reconciled with Christ, and to be equipped for a larger impact on the world.

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