



Forging Strong Men For Leadership Initiation, Validation, Camaraderie, Team-oriented Kingdom Mission

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Clueless

(1) Most pastors and church leaders have no idea how to preach and disciple a generation of fatherless, uninitiated, emasculated, broken men who have been nurtured in predominantly feminized settings (especially church and school).

(2) Masculine formation is absolutely vital to the health of a church and it moves beyond keeping men busy with programs. The once a week informational bible study, the basketball night, the annual camping trip, the paintball weekend, might be good for guys getting to know each other but it does not constitute leadership formation for the sake of mission. Programs do not always lead to, nor create the context for, Christ-centered masculine formation.

Programs aren't the problem but, rather, developing programs that engage and challenge men are missing in most churches.

(3) If you don't have a specific plan to build up and disciple men, then you won't have any; it won't happen without intentionality.

Churches Without Strong Men Die

(1) Without strong men your church is going to suck

(2) Some stats from David Murrow's website:

- The typical U.S. Congregation draws an adult crowd that's 61% female, 39% male. This gender gap shows up in all age categories.
- On any given Sunday there are 13 million more adult women than men in America's churches.
- This Sunday almost 25 percent of married, churchgoing women will worship without their husbands.
- Midweek activities often draw 70 to 80 percent female participants.
- The majority of church employees are women (except for ordained clergy, who are overwhelmingly male).

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- As many as 90 percent of the boys who are being raised in church will abandon it by their 20th birthday. Many of these boys will never return.
- More than 90 percent of American men believe in God, and five out of six call themselves Christians. But only two out of six attend church on a given Sunday. The average man accepts the reality of Jesus Christ, but fails to see any value in going to church.

No Church Growth Without Reaching Men

Research by Focus on the Family remind us that **when a mother comes to faith in Christ, the rest of her family follows 17 percent of the time. But when a father comes to faith in Christ, the rest of the family follows 93 percent of the time.** All the bells, whistles, techniques, and seminars in the world will not make up for your inability as a pastor/ministry leader to build and disciple strong men. Without building strong men, especially men ages 18-29, you'll soon be selling insurance or working for a car dealership because you won't have much of a church for very long.

Today's Church Primarily Meets the Needs of Women

The Evangelical church in America is designed to primarily reach 40-something-year-old women and their children. Church is largely sweet sentimental, nurturing, and really, really nice where we get together to sing love ballads and prom songs to Jesus (I totally stole this from Mark Driscoll).

Your Music Maybe Part of the Problem

Much of the music in the evangelical world is so oriented toward women that even non-Christians have picked up on it. Take a look at this episode from South Park (which, by the way, is a very blasphemous episode that creators will have to account for on the Day of Judgment). But the episode does highlight a real problem.

South Park Episode—"Christian Rock Hard"

Kyle:*[being herded into an FBI van with the other boys]* I don't know! *[Cartman's house. He, Token and Butters begin to practice]* Cartman:All right, guys, this is gonna be so easy. All we have to do to make Christian songs is take regular old songs and add Jesus stuff to them. *[some sheet music is shown. Cartman has already crossed out the original author's name]* See? All we have to do is cross out words like "baby" and "Darling" and replace them with *[writes next to "baby"]* Jesus. All right, Butters, give me a beat. *[Butters doesn't understand, but starts drumming. It's rather good]* Okay, nice. Very nice. All right, Token, give me a smooth bass line.

Cartman:All right. Nice, fellas. Nice. *[begins to sing]*

I need you in my life, Jesus.

I can't live without you, Jesus

And I just want to feel you deep inside me, Jesus.

You know, Jesus? I've been thinking a lot about you lately and, well, that's why I wrote this song.

I love you, Jesus. I want you to walk with me

[the fans sway back and forth]

I'll take good care of you baby. Call you my baby, baby!

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***You died for my sins, and you know that I would die for you, right?
What's the matter, baby? You tremble at Jesus, baby!
Your love... is my life! You know when I'm without you, there's a black hole in my life! Oo-ohhh!
I wanna believe. It's all right, 'cause I get lonely in the night and it's up to you to
Save me! Jee...sus...bay-by!***

Later in the episode a Christian music industry executive raises questions. . .

Executive 1:*[looking at some papers, starts off hesitantly]* We just have one question, though. We were looking over some of your lyrics, uh... "I want to walk hand-in-hand with Jesus on a private beach for two./I want him to nibble on my ear and say 'I'm here for you.'" Eh it seems you *really* love Christ.

Cartman: Yes, we sure do.

Executive 1: Eh no but it appears you are actually... in love with Christ. *[the boys look at each other confused]*

Cartman: *[turns the tables]* Well what are you saying? That, that *you* don't really love Christ?? Executive 1:*[on the defensive]* Well uh of course I do. I mean I just-

Cartman: Well what's the difference?! You love Christ, you're in love with Christ, I mean, uh, what the heck is this??

Executive 1: Uh, we'd just like to make sure the bands we sign are in it for God, and not for the money.

Cartman: I resent that, sir! I have never in my life done anything just for the money! If I'm lying may the Lord strike me down right now.

Butters:*[slowly moves away]* Um, oh. *[leaves his chair]*

Executive 1: That's- all we needed to know. Just, sign here and we'll get your album sold.

Pastors Must Speak Into the Issues that Men Wrestle With

(1) The questions men wrestle with-- Am I a man? How do I know? What is a man? Do I have what it takes? Does my father delight in me? Like a siren, these questions haunt the American male. How do you answer questions like this? Or better yet, how can the church embrace the battle for the hearts and souls of men? Is the answer, "be nice, stay out of trouble, and read your Bible so you don't sin?" Or is there something more?

(2) Healing Wounds-- Every man carries wounds. We live in a fallen world and are born into fallen families. Woundedness begets woundedness. The Enemy delights to see men shackled to their pain. Moreover, most men have wounds that go unhealed or unaddressed because there are few contexts where men are free to disclose them and receive long awaited, regular validation from God and other men. Most men will not journey down that road. We'll deny the wound behind bravado, minimize the effects of past pain, or say "I sucked it up and it made me stronger." Meanwhile we will live as posers and frauds, fashioning a fig leaf, faking life as if we have it all together and running from things that might expose us.

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Pain trumps theology. Men in pain can have the best theology in the world but if his pain is not being healed by the gospel it can eventually override what he knows to be true. This is how church leaders end up cheating, embezzling money, abusing power, and so on. A man not in the process of being healed by the gospel is a leader on a path of destroying your church.

2 CAUTIONS: (1) Be careful not to put a man into leadership who has not been initiated into the process of the Gospel healing his wounds, exposing his sin, and answering his questions about identity. Much of our sin is in response to the wounds of our pasts. You do not want a man taking his questions about his identity to ministry. He needs to do the work of the Kingdom out of a place of knowing who he is as a man made in God's image, not because of the number of people in his small group, or at the new members class, or the number of kids that show up at youth group.

If ministry is a man's source of validation he will be unteachable, reckless, arrogant, and will not invite correction. Or worse, he won't be able to act or think on his own because he's afraid of failure. He may be leading out of a sense of shame and he will be a people-pleaser and will look to you for approval for every minute detail.

Leaders who look for validation outside of the triune God are "the wolves" in your midst.

(2) Be very careful about who you choose to lead your youth ministries. Most guys in their 20s are still working through serious identity issues. Most have never been initiated into the masculine journey of what it means to be a God-made man. Many are fatherless, unhealed, and have deep unanswered questions. The guy does not need to have it all together but he, at least, needs to have entered a process of openly recognizing what his false masculinity struggles are and where they come from.

As a pastor, it's your job to make sure that your youth pastor is being disciplined, formed and shaped, and firmly loved by an older man or in a community of older men. If it's not you personally (which is ideal) you must find him one (or some). Your youth pastor's spiritual health depends on it. Otherwise you may have a situation where the blind is leading the blind.

You need to have answers to these questions: "who is walking through life with my youth pastor teaching him what it means to live a holistic Gospel-centered masculine story?" "Who is fighting with my youth pastor so that he is not shackled by the sins embedded in false masculinity (women, success, sports prowess, etc.) and idols?"

Piercing Quotes from Podles

"Because Christianity is now seen as a part of the sphere of life proper to women rather than to men, it sometimes attracts men whose masculinity is somewhat doubtful. By this I do not mean homosexuals [but] rather religion is seen as a safe field, a refuge from the challenges of life, and therefore attracts men who are fearful of making the break with the secure world of childhood dominated by women. These are men who have problems following the path of masculine development. . ." (xiv)

"As one layman put it, 'life is like a football game, with the men fighting it out in the gridiron, while the minister is up in the grandstand explaining it to the ladies.'" (5)

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Helpful Concepts To Work Out Practically In Your Local Church In Order To Cultivate Male Leaders (taken from Murrow, Podles, Marx)

(1) Men don't follow programs; they follow men: A woman may choose a church because of the programs it offers, but a man is looking for another man he can follow. Throughout our lives, men are transformed through encounters with inspiring men: teachers, coaches, fathers, uncles, fathers, grandfathers, etc.

If you aren't the kind of man who represents the masculine image dimensions of the image of God, men will not follow you. When you are assessing your male leadership it is appropriate to ask, "is this a guy that other men will want to follow?"

(2) Men must have strong leadership—if you want to attract men, you must put a high priority on developing dynamic male leaders. Men are not just looking for theologians, small group leaders, praise band leaders, or Sunday school teachers. They are looking for men who will lead them to greatness; so that they can have great impact in the world for the Kingdom: "Take up my cross and follow me."

(3) Men are attracted to insane Kingdom visions. If the vision of your church is too broad and nebulous don't expect men to show up. Jesus invites men to be homeless, poor and die. Men were eager to follow him.

(4) Men need purpose. Why am I here? What am I suppose to do? If men don't know why they are on the earth and why they are at your church do not expect any Christ-centered leaders to emerge.

(5) Men need pastors who are strong, masculine, firm, clear, forthright, fearless—not passive/aggressive, cowardly, overbearing, sheepish guys.

(6) Men need to know that their pastor is a regular dude—a guy who doesn't mind getting dirty, has sin problems, doesn't have all the answers, has gastro-intestinal episodes, wants sex with his wife, is a regular human being, and so on.

(7) Men learn through personal discovery; hands on. Men learn by doing, testing, failing. One of the best things you can do for your men is to give them freedom to fail. God blessed us with failure so that we can make more wise decisions about what we should be doing in the future; and failure helps us identify who we are as men. It's good to know your limits. Jesus sent the disciples out so that they could be tested and when they failed Jesus was there to help them interpret their failure and reaffirm that they were still needed and vital to the mission.

(8) Men need challenging conversation, dialog. Expect men to pushback on some of your ideas. It's ok. Invite it. If your leaders never pushback they're probably dead and need to be replaced. If you have a group of passive "yes men" at your church it is the beginning of your tyranny and the death of your church.

(9) Men need pastors who have the testicular fortitude to say what needs to be said—many teachers feel that every word out of the Christian's mouth must be pleasant, nice, soft, sweet, non-offensive, and so on. Jesus would have had no trial if he preached and taught like many evangelical men are expected



to sound. Men respect a teacher who tells it like it is and doesn't beat around the bush. Speak right to the point and no rubbish.

(10) Men need challenging teaching—the more frank and hard-hitting the teaching, the more men like it—as long as it doesn't get abusive, stupid, oppressive, or over the top. Speak and challenge people with the truth IN LOVE.

(11) Answer the questions men are asking: what does it mean to be a man, do I have what it takes, what's my sexuality for, what am I good at, how do I love this women, what am I supposed to do with my kids, why I'm a so bored, etc. Apply this to your local context. Men are needed to fight in different ways in different contexts.

(12) Get the women on board with letting men be men. Women must allow men to gather without women around to offer input or attempt to control. Women need to be more open to letting their husbands choose the church instead to the other way round. Women have to let men lead. Not emasculate or belittle men or act superior (esp. in public). You can't have strong male leaders if women do not want them. Women must have key roles in encourage men to lead and give them space to do so. As pastor, your job is to present to the women a vision of what a God-made man should look like and invite women to do whatever is necessary to create an environment where leaders can be formed. This will be costly, however.

(13) Men need opportunities to use their gifts—to discover them, focus, mission, adventure, something larger than themselves or the mundane patterns of American life.

(14) Invite men into something risky. Christianity based on risk avoidance will never attract men. If our message is full of don'ts, don't be dangerous, don't cause trouble, move slowly, etc. men will tell you what they think of your call to mediocrity with their feet.

(15) Camaraderie and discipleship— Most churches do not disciple men. They give them stuff to do—service projects, folding chairs, etc.—but they are NOT discipling men long-term. Moreover, men aren't taught how to disciple other men, including their own sons. Christ-centered masculine leadership formation is bestowed from one man to another and/or in a community of intentional men.

(16) Men need to know that they are a vital part of a team. An army of one. Every man needs a band of brothers to walk the Kingdom-oriented masculine journey with them. Every man. Your church must create a context where men are being sharpened by other men and that masculinity is being bestowed from one generation to another, one man at a time.

(a) More than accountability groups—group penance. This is NOT formation. Men need more than accountability. Men need the masculine formation that occurs in the sharing life together in a band of brothers, "Encouraging each other daily," journeying through the seasons of life together locally, casually, intimately, authentically, with the intentionality of mutual masculine formation and validation.

Men sharpening other men into **the image of Jesus, who through blood, sweat, and tears, fought** to make the world right again demands more than a weekly, quarterly, or annual confession booth, check-list, penance meeting. Local, daily iron sharpening.

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Whenever I hear of one these "accountability groups" starting up it reminds me of how they will likely be locked into immaturity(milk), legalism, a time for empty penance, while never really arriving at the life-committed, God-made masculine daily formation and validation that men need to make it. "Not sinning" is not masculine formation.

Accountability groups are often empty, hollow penance, where guys "meet" to run through the check list but they're not sharing life together. Read this from the *Journal of Biblical Counseling*, Spring 2006, Vol. 24, No. 2:

With legalistic accountability, the main motivation for not sinning is punishment or embarrassment.--
Journal of Biblical Counseling (JBC)

Accountability groups become circles of cheap grace—JBC

"Although the aim of accountability groups is good, the practice is often misguided. Accountability groups often smack of legalism. Failures to trust God are punished through graduated penalties (an increased tithe, buying lunch or coffee for the "partners," or unspoken ostracism from one's peers). . .As a result, our motives for holiness are warped. Confession in such contexts is relegated to "keep from doing it," making discipleship a duty-driven, rule-keeping journey."

Alternatively, accountability groups can devolve into a kind of confession booth from which we depart absolved from guilt, fearing merely the passing frown of our fellow priest.

I confess my sin; you confess yours. I pat your back. You pat mine. Then we pray. Accountability groups become circles of cheap grace through which we obtain cheap peace from a troubled conscience. This approach to holiness backfires and we begin to take Christless comfort in the confession of sin.

As a result, confession is divorced from repentance, reducing holiness to half-hearted morality. Accountability becomes a man-made mix of moralism and cheap peace."--JBC

I would add, not only is confession divorced from repentance it is also divorced from God-intended masculine formation, identity and good, healthy masculine validation that needs to occur on a continual basis as daily life is shared together in constant communication, prayer together, fighting together for what is good (Phil 4:8).

(b) Men need real comradeship—"Comradeship is the love that is the unexpected fruit of the hell of war. . .comradeship is not quite friendship; it focuses on the other, on the comrade. Men experience a fusion of personality with the comrade, a union which is not interrupted by death."—Leon Podles

If your church is not cultivating comradeship among men it will have no leaders to draw from.

(c) Men need a context where real relationships of mutual love can be cultivated. Men are made for brotherly love.

(21) In order for your men to embrace their missions as leaders and cultivators of strong men, they at least must wrestle with the following demands and expectations of all God-made men in the Kingdom.

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1. Declare war on the sins of false masculinity (women, work, sports, etc.). You do not want a leader who is using the church to validate and answer his deepest questions about his masculinity.
2. They must pursue relationships that foster mature masculine identity in the best, multi-generational way possible.
3. Your leaders must embrace their calling into the adventure of dangerous kingdom mission. Being a Godly man is life-threatening.
4. Every man is called to be leader. Some are called to lead little kingdoms and some are called to lead big ones. But everyman is called to lead.
5. Part of the masculine dimension of the image of God is to be men who fight against evil wherever it's found—i.e., men who live for justice (the weightier matters of the law).
6. Your leaders must desire to be men who seek to have empathy for those who are under the assault of the evil one (to love what God loves and to hate what God hates), thereby thinking in harmony with God.

(22) Men were created to serve others—that's the core of our calling as men. This is very anti-American but your leaders need to know that serving others is not "special" it's normal. And that your leaders need to be the kind of men who can multiply servant-leadership.

(23) Long-term leadership development for men is life-on-life and multigenerational. Leaders are not made overnight. For some it will take months, for others years. Cultivating good leaders takes time. Do not be discouraged by long-term processes. Jesus had his disciples for three years before they were finally sent out.

Sources: *Why Men Hate Going to Church* by David Murrow; *The Church Impotent: The Feminization of Christianity* by Leon Podles; *Season of Life*, by Jeffrey Marx,