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# IS PASTORING MEN WORTH THE EFFORT?

**M**uch has been made about the “men problem.” You can hear about it from Oprah. You can read about it in *Time*. You can watch the destruction it creates with Dr. Phil.

Schoolteachers can barely educate on the heels of it. Social services are overwhelmed because of it. Employers are stumped by it. Law enforcement feels the brunt of it. Many jails and prisons are full because of it. Politicians don’t know what to do with it. Candidates avoid it.

Authors and academics have assembled alarming statistics to prove it. Health-care professionals publish convincing reports to document the human cost of it. Cable shows rant at it. Talk radio personalities have all the answers for it. Movies glamorize it. Television commercials mock it.

The “men problem.” Divorce courts are at capacity because of it. Families are ripped apart by it. Wives soak their pillows with tears as a result of it. Children grow up in poverty as a consequence of it. Teenagers experiment with drugs and sex to cope with it.

A lot of money gets spent to treat the symptoms of it. We open teenage pregnancy centers, start divorce recovery groups, establish substance abuse centers,

increase budgets for social services, build homes for battered women, authorize more jail space, put extra beds in our homeless shelters, increase the number of law enforcement officers, and fit our schools with metal detectors to deal with it.

Everyone is concerned about it. Many address the consequences of it. Yet very few people are doing anything that will change the root of it. The “men problem” is among the most pervasive social, economic, political, and spiritual problems of all time.

As I wrote in my book *Man Alive*, the statistics are jarring:

- 80 percent of men are so emotionally impaired that not only are they unable to *express* their feelings, but they are even unable to *identify* their feelings.<sup>1</sup>
- 60 percent of men are in financial trouble, paying only the monthly minimums on their credit card balances.<sup>2</sup>
- 50 percent of men who attend church actively seek out pornography.<sup>3</sup>
- 40 percent of men get divorced, affecting one million children each year.<sup>4</sup>

The conclusion is inescapable: *Men have become one of our largest neglected people groups.* As a result, they are prone to get caught up in the rat race, lead unexamined lives, and become cultural (rather than biblical) Christians.

### CHECK OUT THE COLLATERAL DAMAGE

Alone, the men problem is horrific, but the collateral damage on marriages and families is staggering. Tonight, 36 percent of America’s seventy-two million children will go to bed in a home without their biological dad. But perhaps the greatest cost to the *physical* absence of fathers is the *practical* absence of mothers. Essentially, one person must now do the work of two. As a young woman who grew up without a dad said, “When my mom and dad divorced, I didn’t just lose my dad. I also lost my mom, because she had to work long hours to support us.”

- Of men who married between 1970 and 1974, just 46.2 percent were still married after thirty years.<sup>5</sup>
- 48 percent of women are choosing cohabitation over marriage.<sup>6</sup>
- 41 percent of babies are born to single mothers.<sup>7</sup>
- 36 percent of children live in homes without their biological fathers.<sup>8</sup>
- 18 percent of pregnancies are terminated by abortion.<sup>9</sup>

- Children in female-headed families are five times more likely to live in poverty, repeat a grade, and have emotional problems compared to families where a father is present.<sup>10</sup>

We have become a nation of *spiritual* widows and *practical* orphans (James 1:27). These are real people—real casualties. For example, my father-in-law and I have lunch once a week. One Monday our waitress, Abby (name changed), seemed a little down, so I struck up a conversation.

She told us the parking lot in front of the restaurant had flooded during a torrential Florida storm the day before, and now her car wouldn't start. She had tears in her eyes, so I knew there had to be more to the story.

I guessed she was so overwhelmed by what for most of us would be a small inconvenience because she didn't have much money. I told her how sorry we were, and that we would say a prayer for her when we prayed over lunch.

Then I asked her a few more questions. She was twenty-six years old, a single mom with six- and eight-year-old boys, and had no family in Orlando. The father of her children wasn't in the picture anymore, so she was left to raise two sons without a father figure by working for tips.

Her mother died when she was fourteen and her younger brother was eight years old. Their father did not step up. Perhaps he didn't know how, but he still failed them. She had made some bad choices, but now was trying to do the right thing for her two sons. Yet it worried her that they had no positive male influence.

After she brought our food, she started walking away. On impulse, I called her back and invited her to join us as we prayed; she did, and I sensed that God encouraged her heart.

Then she went on to say that she was deeply worried about her younger brother, now twenty, who, without a positive father figure, was on the cusp of making some poor life decisions as well. So I told her about the work we do with men and gave her a copy of *The Man in the Mirror* for him.

It's an all too familiar pattern, isn't it? Abby has five men in her life. Her father? A poor male example. The father of her children? Another poor example. Her brother? Which way will he go? Her two sons? What will become of them?

What a perfect example of why God wants us to disciple men. Experiences like this are why we can never, and will never, tire or lose our passion for evangelizing and discipling men. The mission of "men's discipleship" is for all of

the broken people, like Abby and her sons, left in the wake of misguided men. Those men have no idea of the destructive forces they are setting in motion that will devastate multiple generations.

As a police officer once said, “Statistics are tragedies with the tears wiped away.”

### IT'S A CHRISTIAN PROBLEM, TOO

There's more. We also have a *Christian* “men problem” with devastating results. As I wrote in my book *Man Alive*, I'd estimate that as many as 90 percent of Christian men lead lukewarm, stagnant, often defeated lives. They're mired in spiritual mediocrity—and they hate it.

Despite their good intentions, after they “walk the aisle” and “pray the sinner's prayer,” most men return to their seats and resume their former lives. They don't take the next steps. Almost imperceptibly, one disappointment at a time, the world sucks out their newfound joy and passion for life in Christ.

Men lose heart, go silent, and anesthetize their pain. Then they give up, burn out, drop out, or just slowly drift away. ***It's not just getting older; it's an assassination of the soul.***

And isn't that exactly what the enemy of our souls wants? As Jesus said, referring to the devil, “The thief comes to steal and kill and destroy” (John 10:10).

Today's average man is like a deer caught in the headlights of a Humvee. He doesn't fully understand—and so can't apply—what God has to say about a man's identity, purpose, relationships, marriage, sex, fathering, work, money, ministry, time, emotions, integrity, and dozens of other subjects.

As a result, most men are tired. They often have a lingering feeling something isn't quite right about their lives. Often their lives are coming unglued. And it is common for them to feel like nobody really cares. Even in the church, men are being left behind. The situation is so significant that in the next chapter we will explore this in depth.

Yet men routinely “bluff” when asked, “How are you doing?” Pastors observe this all the time. For that reason, I think we should be just as concerned about the men who have not become statistics as those who have.

No man fails on purpose. None of us wakes up in the morning and thinks, *I wonder what I can do today to irritate my wife, neglect my kids, work too much, let my walk with God lapse, or have a moral failure.* But many of us will. And that, in a nutshell, is the “men problem.” And it is screaming for an immediate solution.

## THE OPPORTUNITY

Reaching these men is one of the great strategic opportunities—and needs—of our time. **In this book I’m going to bring you up to date on what works with men, what doesn’t work, and why it matters now more than ever.**

Instead of the “men problem,” some quarters need to start seeing the “men opportunity.” Pastors are the logical choice. Pastors bring grace to the equation. They see men not so much for what they are, but for what they can become in Christ. Pastors are the ones whom God has called to instruct, encourage, correct, challenge, inspire, and call men to “act like a man.” This is a significant yet solvable problem. There is no human or spiritual reason why we can’t get this done. Of course, “it” will take time and dedication.

The purpose of this book is to equip you to more effectively pastor *all* of your men. God’s vision is that *every* man in your church becomes a disciple of Jesus. Men’s ministry needs to be redefined so that it is “all-inclusive.” However our men got in so deep, can you think of any other solution than to disciple them out? *This is a book about why and how to disciple every man in your church.*

**You’ll learn an *intentional process* that can help you disciple every “willing” man in your church to find Christ, grow in his faith, and serve the Lord. And I’m going to show you how to build a *sustainable ministry* that will . . .**

- Increase the number of men in your church
- Inspire men to populate your new and existing spiritual growth groups and classes
- Encourage men to serve in your new and existing ministry opportunities
- Surface men who can become leaders for your church

For example, a friend of mine started a small group with seven men in his Birmingham, Alabama, church. During the next seven years, his ministry grew to seven groups totaling 128 men. At that time his church needed about 150 leaders to function properly. One hundred of those leaders came through his small groups. But what’s especially intriguing is that approximately seventy-five of those men—fully half of the church’s leadership!—started in his groups as cultural Christians who would (probably) not have otherwise stepped up to become church leaders.

You would not be holding this book in your hands unless pastoring men was

important to you. But if I were to ask you, “Are you effective in pastoring your men?” like most pastors you would very likely say, “No.” I’ve discovered that even pastors who rank among the most successful at pastoring their men are hesitant to say, “Yes, I’m effective.”

When asked why he was so tentative, one successful pastor said, “I know too much. I know that even though we’ve made progress with a man by taking him through our basic discipleship course, then officer training, and now he’s a leader—I still see areas in his life that need work—as in my own, or I hear about someone who had a negative experience with him and I say to myself, ‘Hmmm, he’s not quite there.’”

Most church leaders we talk to are profoundly dissatisfied with the number of men in their churches who are effective disciples. But the majority of churches that have tried to implement men’s discipleship initiatives have not been able to sustain them. They need better information, models, methods, and processes grounded in research, field testing, and biblical authority. That’s why I wrote this book.

This is not a book about how to get a men’s group going in your church. This is not a book about changing the décor of your sanctuary. This is not a book about starting a “separate” men’s ministry that reaches a fraction of your men. Those are secondary concerns.

Since 1973 I have been “pastoring men,” and here are three promises I want to make. By the end of this book you will know:

- *The state of your men*—how they are doing, what they want, what keeps them from getting what they want, and what they need (chapters 2–5)
- *The essential factors* to successfully disciple men (chapters 7 and 8)
- *A concrete, sustainable strategy* to help you organize your passion for men’s discipleship without a lot of new programming. As you will see, you are probably already doing most of what needs to be done (chapter 9)

### WHY I CARE SO MUCH ABOUT YOU AND YOUR MEN

Helping pastors disciple their men is my passion for personal reasons. In 1926, when my dad was two, the youngest of four children, his father deserted his family.

The stress got the best of my grandmother. She had a stroke, so she and her four young children moved in with two of her unmarried sisters (my great-

aunts). Together, those three women raised my dad and his siblings. They did a great job, but they were dirt poor.

In those days, long before government programs, the community closed ranks when some of “their people” were in need. The one sister who worked was an elevator operator at the local bank. Knowing the situation, the employer paid her a generous salary of \$50 a week (roughly \$15 an hour in today’s dollars). She bought groceries each day on her way home. The grocer told her, “Nina, you take whatever you need, and pay whatever you can.”

When my dad turned six, he went to work with his older brother, Harry. They had two jobs. They rose every morning at 3:00 a.m. to deliver milk and then worked a paper route. The school gave them a permanent tardy slip.

My dad never knew the warmth of a father’s embrace. He never felt the scratch of a dad’s whiskers. He never overheard his dad whistling or singing while he worked, never smelled his work clothes, never heard him joke around or read a bedtime story, never tossed a ball, never felt a dad tussle his hair, never heard him say, “I love you, son” or “I’m proud of you, son,” and never had a father’s approval or guidance.

When Dad became a man, he had to decide if he would repeat or break the cycle. As the oldest of four boys, I’m grateful my dad wanted to break the cycle. But fathering was unexamined to him. So our family joined a church because Dad and Mom wanted to get some moral and religious instruction for their four sons. Like many people, they believed the church would be the one place in the world where they could turn for help.

Our church had a vision to put my dad to work and, because of his strong work ethic, he responded to the challenge. By age forty, my dad was the top layman in the church. I suppose that’s what he thought it meant to be a “good Christian.”

Of course, there is a lot of work to do in the church, but our church did not also have a vision to disciple my dad to be a godly man, father, and husband—the real reason he joined. He did the best he could, but he was left to “guess” at how to father my brothers and me.

Something happened in the church that hurt my mother’s feelings, and my dad was burned out, so we quit church when I was in the tenth grade and my youngest brother was in the third grade.

Our family was soon hit by a force from which we have still not fully recovered. I quit high school in the middle of my senior year. My brother Robert fol-



lowed in my footsteps. He eventually died of a heroin overdose. My other two brothers have had a variety of employment, substance, and marriage issues.

My dad just never saw it coming. If he could have seen around the bend of that decision, I'm sure he would have done things differently. If he was still alive I know he would say, "I take full responsibility. That was my decision." And I respect that. Every man does need to take responsibility for his own life. Don't you wish more men would?

But I would like to suggest that the church is culpable. The church knew (or should have known) what was around the bend. The church should have had a vision to disciple my Dad. But it didn't.

Fortunately, God is the Redeemer, and this story took another turn—I fell in love with Patsy. She went forward at a Billy Graham Crusade to publicly profess her faith at the age of eleven, and has never wavered. God graciously grafted the gospel back into my family line through Patsy's family line—Patsy led me to Christ.

Then God allowed me the joy of leading my brother Robert to Christ before he died. Another brother has also professed Christ, and so has my only niece on this side of the family. Dad and Mom also both came to Christ (or came back—I'm not sure). Neither one of them ever got over their bitterness toward the church, but they both affirmed their faith in Jesus on their deathbeds.

Both of my children grew up loving Christ. My Dad and I had the same DNA, so what was the difference? Why did I succeed where he failed? The difference was that I belonged to a church that had a vision to disciple me to be a godly man, husband, and father, while my Dad did not.

When I walked through the front door of that church, there were men who were ready for me, and other men like me. They had sat around a table and pondered, "Why would he do that? Why would a man walk through our front door? What is the problem he's trying to solve?" Those men took me under their wings and showed me the ropes. And our pastor was behind it all the way.

Church is where I learned how to study the Bible for myself, how to study together with others, and how to share my faith and lead someone to Christ. In other words, church is where I became a disciple and disciple-maker. Where else could that happen?

The reason I am so passionate about equipping pastors and churches to disciple men is this: I know that in every church there are men just like my Dad. These are men with good hearts and good intentions who have come to church

for all the right reasons. How tragic when they fall away.

I also believe that in most churches there are men like my grandfather—men who are not only going to pull the plug on church, but on their families too. And they have no idea of the forces of destruction they're about to set in motion—that a century later, like me, their children's children may still be trying to recover from that fateful decision.

At the Man in the Mirror ministry, we see it every day in the broken homes and shattered lives of families who have lost a husband, father, and provider.

Obviously I will never know what it might have been like to grow up in a family with a dad who was discipled to be a godly man, husband, and father. My hope and prayer is that by learning and applying the skills in this book, you will feel equipped to more effectively pastor men like my dad and the grandfather I never knew—and men like me who sincerely want to break the cycle but can't do it without your help. May the young boys growing up in your church today never have to one day repeat a story like mine.

## THE ANSWER: THE DISCIPLE-MAKING CHURCH

It's hard to picture solving problems like fatherlessness, divorce, poverty, pornography, racism, homelessness, and Wall Street corruption—to name a few—isn't it?

But Jesus can do it. Jesus Christ and His gospel is the hope of the world. And we, His body, the church, of whom Christ is head, though deeply flawed and far from perfect, are and always have been God's primary and most effective means of bringing Christ and His gospel to the world.

So this is the question: How do we bring Christ and His gospel to the world in the most effective way? That question has already been answered. Jesus said, "Go and make disciples." He did not post it on Facebook for an opinion poll. See if you agree with this statement. . . .

*No matter how we got into the current situation, the only solution is to disciple our way out.*

We believe the discipleship opportunity with the most leverage in the world today is to help churches more effectively disciple men.

Why? First, many of the most receptive men already attend church, or are hanging around the fringe. As D. L. Moody said, "I would rather wake a slumbering church than a slumbering world." Why did he say that? Again, it's about leverage.

Second, men are pacesetters. When men become disciples of Jesus, that discipleship percolates into their marriages, families, workplaces, communities, Facebook posts, gym conversations, and the world. Again, leverage.

Can you picture ever getting your community right without first getting your churches right? Not very likely, is it?

Can you picture ever getting your churches right without getting families right? Probably not going to happen, right?

Can you picture ever getting families right without getting marriages right? That's straight out of family systems theory 101.

And can you picture ever getting marriages right without getting men right? That's just not going to happen, wouldn't you agree?

It really is about the men. And virtually every church has a "men problem."

Scientists keep looking for a holy grail that unifies the cosmos—a "theory of everything." Pastors don't have to keep looking. We have a unifying theory. Jesus taught us the holy grail for unifying His church: it's making disciples. Discipleship is the core mission Jesus gave His bride.

*Making disciples is God's designated way to release the power of His gospel on every problem your men face.* It's the irrefutable biblical mission of your church.

Discipleship is how men become civilized. The institutional church is God's appointed means—the "first responders"—to help men become disciples. However, the church (in general) has not been making disciples at a proper pace. According to one survey, only 16 percent of church-attending adults are involved in organized discipleship classes, and twice as many women as men. (Discipleship, of course, is a lot more than attending classes; we will examine discipleship closely in chapters 5 and 6.)

One day a highly placed executive in one of America's largest evangelical denominations told me, "In our denomination, we are not making disciples. And that's because our pastors have never been discipled."

Later, my wife and I went to dinner with the chancellor of a seminary and his wife. I told him what the denominational leader (from a different denomination) had said. He lamented, "Well, I'm not surprised. We find that when our students arrive, they have never been discipled. And we have no plans to disciple them while they're here." (He later initiated a pilot program with full-time staffing to disciple their students.)

So people who have never been discipled go to seminary where they are not

discipled, and then they are sent to churches where their main responsibility is to—what? Make disciples.

Talk about an elephant in the living room! As a result, many pastors feel ill-equipped to disciple their men. They don't feel like they understand what their men are going through or how to help them. The unhappy result is that men don't get what they need from their church, and the church doesn't get what it needs from its men. That's why I wrote this book—to give you the confidence and tools you need to disciple your men.

If you project out twenty or fifty years, can you visualize any way of ever getting the world right if men are wrong? The “men problem” is the root cause behind virtually every problem that ails us. It's an untreated cancer that keeps producing more and worse tumors.

One day a major donor said, “Pat, I can't support your ministry anymore.”

I said, “That's fine, but tell me why.”

He said, “My heart is really in prison ministry and teenage crisis pregnancy centers.”

I laughed out loud. I said, “By all means please support that important work. But why do you think so many young men end up in prison? And why do you think a young teenaged girl would hop into bed with a boy?” (We dialogued more and he did continue his support.)

Let's treat the symptoms, of course, but let those who can—pastors—also treat the disease. A disciple-making church offers the only *systemic* solution to what ails us.

We need a fresh, research-based, pastor-led, biblical, field-tested approach that results in lasting change—one that is “actionable.”

## WE NEED A FRESH APPROACH

There have always been men's movements. The contemporary secular and Christian men's movements both started circa 1990. The secular men's movement went “blip” and promptly disappeared.

The problem with the secular men's movement was that it had no answer for “Tuesday.” Men were lured into the woods on Saturday where they painted themselves up like Indians, beat on tom-toms, talked to trees, and cried out in existential pain. By Sunday they felt relief. But on Monday they had to return to civilization, and by Tuesday the futility and pain had returned.

The contemporary Christian men's movement has survived because Jesus Christ prevails on Tuesday. Instead of war paint, whoops, and grunts, men are being disciplined into the gospel of Jesus. By the late 1990s, the nexus of the movement had shifted from loud stadiums into the quiet corridors of the local church.

Yet by the early part of this century, the Christian men's movement could be characterized as "a lot of men with really good hearts doing the best they could." There had been a lot of false starts.

Many pastors and laymen had devoted as many as ten years to untested strategies that really were doomed to fail from the start. And I didn't see any reason to think things would be different in another ten or twenty years—unless we came up with a fresh approach.

### WE NEED A RESEARCH-BASED APPROACH

At the same time, I have also sensed the need for a more research-based approach to men's discipleship. So in 2002, to augment my master's in theological studies, I embarked on doctoral research, which led to earning a PhD in management in 2006. For my dissertation I studied the question, "Why do some churches succeed at men's discipleship while others languish or fail?"

My research revolved around two major issues. First, I wanted to learn, "How do church-based men's discipleship ministries that succeed differ from those that languish or fail?" Second, I wanted to discover, "What are successful pastors doing differently than the pastors of ineffective or failed ministries to men?"

I wanted to know from a management perspective, "What are the factors that lead to success or failure when implementing a men's discipleship program?" To get at the answers, I decided on multiple-case-study research. I compared and contrasted churches that had effective men's discipleship programs to churches that had ineffective or failed programs.

We will dive into the deep end of the pool and cover my research findings in chapters 7 and 8, "Success Factors in Discipling Men," but here is the indisputable bottom line: *The senior pastor is the key to everything.* These are the three main factors in the highly effective churches:

1. A senior pastor with the *vision* to disciple every man in the church
2. A senior pastor with the *determination* to succeed
3. A senior pastor who found a *sustainable strategy* to make disciples and disciple-makers

Of course, Jesus is the perfect example of these three factors. In fact, His sustainable strategy has outlasted every institution, organization, kingdom, and government ever established.

When it comes to ministry to men, I am aware of how brutally many overzealous laymen have treated their pastors. Yet, without you, the pastor, men's discipleship in your church will never be more than a fringe activity. And, as we will see, you can be successful at this without adding a lot of new programming.

### WE NEED A PASTOR-LED APPROACH

I cannot overstate this: *No one has more influence with your men than you do.* While writing this book, I was invited to speak to a special men's class at a local church during the Sunday school hour. My speaking was well publicized—both the senior pastor and the executive pastor announced it. About thirty-five men attended, and we had a wonderful time. Simultaneously, the senior pastor was teaching a three-week series for men on Sunday evenings. He had five hundred men attend his men's classes. It was a priority to this pastor, and the men sensed it.

As the pastor, you can accomplish what laymen can only dream about—and so much more quickly. With the support of his senior pastor, John started a small-group ministry in his very busy 1,000-member church in Atlanta. Over the span of seven years, his ministry grew to ten groups with a combined total of about 120 people.

Then a new senior pastor came on board. He shared John's vision for small groups. He convinced the leadership that the congregation should stop coming to the church building on Wednesday nights. Instead, he wanted to break people into small groups that would meet in homes.

In the spring he announced that they would start the new small-group ministry in the fall. Over the summer he preached on the importance and value of small groups. On the first night, 817 people met in small groups.

It took seven *years* for a talented, committed layman (he's in top management with a Fortune 500 company) to recruit 120 people into small groups—even with his pastor's full *support*. With the pastor's *personal involvement*, it took only seven *months* to recruit 817 people into small groups—an increase of nearly 700 percent.

There's no getting around it—the senior pastor is the key to everything.

Everything points to this overarching conclusion: For a critical mass of men

to become disciples in a church, pastors will need to take the lead. To succeed you will need biblically sound, research-based, field-tested strategies and models. It would not be fair to ask you to develop these tools on your own.

### WE NEED A BIBLICAL APPROACH

Suppose you wanted to start a company to make computers. You put together a business plan to manufacture 100,000 computers over the next five years. You raise \$100 million from an investor.

Five years later your investor returns and asks for a report. You say, “We’re doing great! We did it! We produced 100,000 units! We made 15,000 refrigerators, 10,000 toasters, 21,000 microwave ovens, 50,000 lava lamps, and we’re up to 4,000 computers!”

Your investor replies, “Wow, 4,000 computers. But that’s only 4 percent of what you projected.”

“Oh yes,” you say, “but look at all the other useful things we’ve produced!”

“That’s wonderful,” he says, “but I was planning to use those computers to change the world. Now it can’t happen. You’ve made the world more comfortable. I wanted to make it different.”

For 2,000 years we (the church) have only had one business plan: “Go and make disciples” (Matthew 28:19). The final marching orders from Jesus are “Go and make disciples.” Those orders still stand. They have not been amended, altered, or rescinded. More millions of people and more billions of dollars have been mobilized by this brief message than any other speech in recorded history.

Our “investor,” Jesus, could have directed us to make anything He wanted. He could have said, “Go and make *worshippers*.” But He didn’t. He said, “Go and make disciples.”

He could have said, “Go and make *workers*.” But He didn’t. He said, “Go and make disciples.”

He could have said, “Go and make *tithers*.” But He didn’t. He said, “Go and make disciples.”

Does that mean Jesus isn’t interested in worshipers, workers, and tithers? Of course He is. But Jesus knew we wouldn’t get worshipers by trying to make worshipers. Making worshipers can be little more than teaching people how to sing. No, we get worshipers by making disciples. Because how would people be able to worship a God they do not know?

Jesus also knew we wouldn't get workers by trying to make workers, tithers by trying to make tithers, and so on. But everything falls into place when we make disciples. True disciples can't wait to work and worship and tithe (and serve, do acts of mercy, evangelize, love one another, and so on).

The central mission of the church—the overarching goal—is to “make disciples.” Discipleship is the “portal” priority through which all the other desired outcomes of the *ecclesia* are achieved. (The “portal” priority concept is explained graphically in chapter 9.) The key to success at every point is, “Go and make disciples.” The pastor's chief role is to make disciples.

There is one, and only one, way in which a man can win the battle for his soul. It is simple and concrete. His single greatest need is to become a disciple of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. To be a disciple of Jesus is the highest honor to which a man can aspire. The goal of pastoring men, then, is to disciple men into the gospel.

## WE NEED A FIELD-TESTED APPROACH

What I'm presenting in this book has been learned and practiced in the field. It's not theoretical. My personal mission is to help men grow as disciples and disciple-makers—starting at home. A large part of my purpose and calling—and also for *Man in the Mirror*, the ministry I founded in 1991—is to help bring vision, strategic thinking, and organization to the Christian men's discipleship movement.

I am a men's specialist—a “one-trick” pony—a consultant on men's issues, and an advocate for men. So are the individuals on the large field staff of *Man in the Mirror* who consult with churches in all fifty states to help them disciple men more effectively. Our vision is “for every church to disciple every man.”

While I do have a seminary degree, God did not call me to become ordained. Instead, God's clear calling on my life has been to serve pastors by helping them reach and build men. From the time I became a Christian in 1973, my overarching passion has been to challenge men to stop, examine their lives, be reconciled to Christ, and make needed changes based on God's greater purposes for their lives.

Since 1986 I have taught a new Bible message (almost) every week to the estimated 15,000 men who attend *The Man in the Mirror Bible Study*—150 men who meet every Friday morning at a local civic center and the rest online.



The Man in the Mirror Bible Study is now downloaded thousands of times each week—many of those for men’s groups that meet in churches, conference rooms, and cubicles around the world. I figure I’ve prepared and delivered over 1,250 different messages tailored specifically to men.

When I wrote *The Man in the Mirror* in 1989, no one, and least of all me, ever imagined the millions of men God would touch through that book! After all, I was an anonymous commercial real estate developer plying my trade here in Central Florida.

In fact, if it weren’t for pastors, I wouldn’t be in ministry today! In 1989 we had a warehouse full of unsold copies of *The Man in the Mirror*. So we offered them for free to pastors. Seven thousand pastors took up the offer, started quoting from it in sermons, taking elder and deacon groups through it, and that’s how the book took off.

And the rest, as they say, is history. I have written twenty books for men and several hundred articles for and about men. In 2000, we started a program to offer books by the case for under \$2 each. At this writing, ten million books have been distributed to men through churches. Our faculty members have conducted over a thousand men’s seminars in churches throughout the United States and the world.

To date, we have helped 35,000 churches impact 12 million men. Our Leadership Training Center has equipped thousands of churches and leaders in the highly acclaimed No Man Left Behind Model that I will unpack for you in chapter 9, “The No Man Left Behind Model: A Sustainable Strategy to Disciple Every Willing Man in Your Church.” Churches throughout the United States are engaging “all” their men using Equip Your Men’s Leaders (appendix A), a process we developed for churches to implement the No Man Left Behind principles.

In 2010 we conducted research on the effectiveness of the No Man Left Behind Model. The results seemed too good to be true, so we sent the data off to a university to be verified by PhDs in statistics. We found churches that implemented the No Man Left Behind Model experienced a 48 percent increase in the number of men attending in two and a half years on average; and an 84 percent increase in the number of men involved in discipleship during the same period.

Of course, we immediately realized we had been entrusted with something special to steward. First Corinthians 4:2 says, “Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.” So we began asking the question,

“What does faithful look like?”

After much prayer and seeking counsel, we concluded that God wants us to proliferate No Man Left Behind to as many churches as possible throughout America and the world. For that to happen, we are building a field staff who can work with disciple-making pastors and leaders in local communities where they live. We eventually plan to have trained field staff—“boots on the ground”—in every community.

Why am I telling you all this? I tell you these things because I want you to know that I am not writing from an announcer’s booth; I am actively in the game, as are you. In this book I consider it my privilege and duty to share with you what we have learned through these field-tested experiences.

Research-based, field-tested concepts are important so you don’t waste your time—often measured in years—on plans and programs based on untested theories, strong opinions, or good intentions. For example, a lot of thinkers have tried to turn the church’s failures with men into a gender issue. They offer solutions that address making the church more male friendly. I’m certainly not against this, but it falls in the category of “second things.” It’s just a theory, and one that may prove costly. As my dissertation committee often asked me, “Sez who?”

If you’re not careful, you can end up with a committee talking incessantly about decorating themes instead of how to lead men into a vital communion with the living Christ. I’m almost embarrassed to write those two concepts in the same sentence.

I don’t think Jesus minds if your church wants to park a Harley in the narthex—it’s not the main thing, but neither is it prohibited (and it’s probably a culturally relevant idea). But I do think Jesus desperately cares if your church wants to disciple men into His gospel, equip them to disciple others, and help them become friends of God.

It takes a long time to make a disciple, the process is often messy, and it rarely proceeds in a “step-by-step” sequence. To illustrate, I’ve included a case study of how I became a disciple in chapter 6.

In Appendix B, “Why the Man in the Mirror Men’s Bible Study Works—A Case Study,” I will break down for you what I think makes this long-running, field-tested Bible study an effective model for men’s discipleship—as well as share with you the major challenges we’ve had to overcome.

## WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A MAN BECOMES A DISCIPLE?

As the pastor, you hear a loud knock on your door. It's Jason Steele—a “Sunday only” Christian for seventeen years. But three years ago you decided that discipling men needed to be one of your top priorities. Two years ago, your church sponsored a seminar to create momentum among men on the fringe, and Jason attended. Though it wasn't anything you hadn't said all along, the speaker came at things from a different angle, and the message rang Jason's bell. (Actually, the only reason an outside speaker can harvest is that you have faithfully prepared the soil. See John 4:36–38.)

Jason surrendered his life to Christ at that point—whether for the first time or as a recommitment, it's hard to say.

When offered a six-week, follow-up discussion group, Jason leaped at the chance to sign up. At the end of the six weeks, the leader asked him for “six more weeks” to go a little deeper. Eventually, the group gelled into a long-term Bible study and prayer group.

Jason, like many men in your church, has come to know and love Christ with a passion. And now here he is, standing in your doorway. He says, “Pastor, you have to give me something to do—a work or service or ministry of some kind. As I have grown to understand more about the unfathomable work of the cross, I can no longer sit idle. I can no longer be happy unless I do something to serve this great God. What can I do to help you?”

This is a great day in your life. Even though the results seemed small at first, you persevered with “discipling men” as a top priority. The long hours of building into the lives of your men, the countless prayers for God to send workers, your determination—at this moment all of it seems worth the effort.

Soon after Jason, other men begin to trickle, then flood, into your office. At the five-year mark, you actually run out of ministries for men inside the church! Now you start “sending” workers into community-based ministries.

One day the financial secretary brings you a report that the church has a surplus. As the men have grasped their roles as stewards, they have been much more generous. Gone is the need to plead for finances. You have been able to respond to additional requests from missionaries for support that you once had to turn away.

One afternoon your secretary announces at 3:00 p.m. that all your marriage counseling appointments for the day are finished.

“What?” you say, in a mild state of shock. As your men have come to understand their duty to love and nurture their wives, marriages have been healed and the counseling load has dwindled. On that happy day, you arrive home early and have a meaningful conversation with your own wife!

Then one day, your youth minister brings you a report that the youth facilities are out of space. Apparently, as the young people have watched their fathers transformed before their very eyes, they want in on what’s happening. They have flocked to the youth meetings to learn more about this Jesus, this radical person who changed their fathers’ lives.

More men. Growing men. More workers. Better leaders. Bigger budgets. Restored marriages. Curious youth. A balanced workload. A strong reputation in the community. An increase in first-time visitors. Spiritual satisfaction. A calling come true.

Sound too good to be true? There are churches all over America experiencing these results because the pastor has focused on discipling men.

## IS PASTORING MEN WORTH THE EFFORT?

There is raging in the cosmos and all around us a titanic battle between the forces of good and evil for men’s souls. This battle is raging out of control in neighborhoods across America—your neighborhood. Sound overstated?

Think for a moment about the casualties taking place on your street, where your men work, even in your church. Men leave homes, women weep, a little twelve-year-old girl prays, “God, why is my daddy always so angry?”

This is a real battle. These are real men with real families.

I love the church, but the church on the whole has not been able to muster an ongoing will or comprehensive strategy to disciple men. Pastoring men is not a top priority in *any* denomination based upon their actual allocations of financial and intellectual resources.

Nevertheless, we should be optimistic. Together, we can create a national dialogue about the importance of reaching men—men like my dad, my grandfather, and me. I thank God all the time for inserting me into a disciple-making church. In fact, I shudder at the thought of what might have been.

This is a battle worth fighting. Woodrow Wilson said, “I would rather fail in a cause that will ultimately succeed than succeed in a cause that will ultimately fail.”

## Pastoring Men

This is also a battle we can win. The challenge before us is daunting, but not impossible. In fact, Jesus Christ will win. We cannot, we must not, and, by God's grace, we will not fail. Pastoring men is worth the effort.

Ultimately, though, we need to pastor men because it's the right thing to do. Pastoring men may not be easy or glamorous, and it's often thankless work. Yet when a man conquers his "men problem," that will likely change the entire course of his family for many generations to come.

And what if you're behind? A Chinese proverb says, "The best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago. The second best time is now."

So where should we start? Before we work on the solution, let's make sure we're clear about the "men problem"—how are men doing, what do they want, and what keeps them from getting what they want?