

By Chris Van Brocklin, Man in the Mirror's Baltimore Area Director

I hate booting up my PC. It takes way to long, and I am too impatient to wait for it to do its thing. When I want to get to work, I want it immediately. After much anguish, I found out why it takes so long. Apparently, there are several programs in the operating system that need to start up and play in the background. If these are not allowed to start properly, they'll likely become corrupted or dysfunctional and my work will suffer. So, I guess that I have to wait every time, like it or not.



Men's ministry is very similar. In order to have a strong men's ministry, your church's "operating system" needs attention to be functional and corruption free.

There are three essential parts to your church that play in the background allowing things to run smoothly for men. If any of these are weak or not there, your ministry will suffer.

The first of these is what we call your "portal priority". Matthew 28:19-20 records Christ's last instruction to His disciples and us. We refer to it as the Great Commission and it says, "...go and make disciples...". It doesn't say to go and make workers, tithers, evangelizers, or anything else. It says to make disciples. That's because God knows that we will get all of those good things; workers, tithers, and evangelizers if we first make disciples. So, the first question for you is, does your church disciple men? Men's ministry and discipling men can mean two different things. Your men's ministry will rest on solid biblical ground if it is a disciple making ministry. Is it?

The second essential part of your men's disciple making ministry is the "man code" of your church. Every church has a dress code. Some are coat and tie. Others are OK with shorts and football jerseys. The rest fall somewhere in between. We all understand the dress code by the first or second visit to a new church. Likewise, every church has a man code. It either welcomes men, repels men, or something in between. A healthy man code attracts men. It doesn't repel men. In order to understand whether your church welcomes or repels men, look at everything through the eyes of a man making his first appearance at your church, probably on a Sunday morning. Are there other men at the welcome stations, extending a hearty welcome? Not a hug, just an intentional greeting. Can a man find a suitable seat, not too crunched into a pew or rickety folding chair? Is the sermon compatible with the length of the average man's attention span (7 minutes) or is it 35 full minutes of talking head? Are the hymns within the voice range of the average man, or are they sung in the upper ranges? None of these things are game stoppers, but together they say to the average man, "You're not welcome here." Is there anything about your man code that needs adjusting?

The third essential part of your men's disciple making ministry, we call the "three strands of leadership". Proverbs says "A cord of three strands is not easily broken." The leadership of your church and especially your men's ministry will determine its strength. The first leadership question is, "Does the senior pastor realize that if you get the man, you get the family?" If he does, then you're going to have a much easier time. If he doesn't then there is tough sledding ahead. Next, is there a passionate leader who, in cooperation with the senior pastor, cares deeply about men's spiritual health? Is he a man that other men naturally follow. If not, then you'll have trouble. And finally, is there a team of leaders carrying out the men's discipleship plan. Or is it a one-man show? That will burn out in short order. A leadership team creates the strategy and delegates the work through teams of men. This is all part of men's discipleship and multiplication. Are all three chords of your leadership working properly?

Most of my conversations about men's ministry go back to one or more of these three essentials. Your men's disciple making ministries will run better if you pay attention to and make the necessary adjustments to your church's operating system.

For more on this subject read:

No Man Left Behind, by Patrick Morley, David Delk, and Brett Clemmer

Pastoring Men by Patrick Morley

Why Men Hate Going to Church, by David Murrow