

**WHY NOT TRY  
TO HIT THE**

**REAL**

**TARGET**



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# INTRODUCTION



I was recently talking with a friend about my observations while traveling for Knights of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century over the past five years, particularly regarding the level of resistance churches face when they are considering the development of a men's ministry. In some cases, a men's program is not created because a pastor is doubtful about the likelihood of men responding positively. In other cases, men have asked their pastor for his permission to start a group and have been told no. Regardless of the reasons why, effective men's programs are rare. As we talked, I saw that the real challenge of starting a men's ministry is not that it cannot be done—it is rather that churches often fail to recognize or are ignorant of what it takes to get men involved.

As our discussion continued, I shared the statistics regarding the impact of a father's church attendance versus a mother or child's church attendance. If a child attends church, the likelihood of the rest of the family attending is less than 20%; if a mother attends, the likelihood is less than 25%; if a father attends, the likelihood that the rest of the family will attend is more than 90%. It is men who will lead their entire family to church. Every area of a church will grow when it discovers the secret of getting men involved in church. As my friend Dave Murrow explains in his book *Why Men Hate Going to Church*, when a church makes conscious efforts to appeal to men, the entire body of Christ will be strengthened. Men bring their families, and along with that, they bring a financial commitment and their friends.

In business, when an effective process, technique, value or procedure proves to significantly benefit a company, other companies rush to replicate it and revel in its positive effects. If the number of men attending church leads to the growth of the church (which equals more souls choosing to follow Jesus and increasing the strength of the collective force that is willing to fight the negative cultural trends of our world), wouldn't encouraging more men to come to church be a vital target? It is a fact that when more men come to church, the church becomes stronger. Filled with frustration, I asked my friend, "Why not try to hit the real target?" With so much at stake and such clear statistics, it makes no sense for Christians to continue following the ineffective status quo. The addiction recovery community defines insanity as "doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." Many churches are guilty of this; the target is men, yet they refuse to take aim and try to hit this crucial target.

If you are not interested in trying to hit the target, stop reading now! If you are still reading, it's because you see the value in involving men more intentionally in your church. You know what working with men can do, not only for their lives, but also for those they influence. Although you may have problems, insanity (at least in this regard) is not one of them. Our goal is to help you guide your passion for leading men, which will inevitably lead to a stronger men's program. Our focus is on men and creating an effective men's group in a church setting.

This book will not be a discussion of all of the church's reasons for not pursuing the real target or how to develop a man-friendly church. It is about the steps that are involved in creating a vibrant men's ministry. We will explore the components for the success of a men's program that will encourage men to meet regularly in the church and develop the kinds of relationships that enforce accountability,

including a relationship with Jesus. We will give you tips on how to help your program grow. We hope that you not only believe men are worthy targets to aim for as you work toward developing an effective church, but that you will give it your best shot. Take aim and ask God for His help and guidance—He will empower your ministry to succeed for His kingdom.

Each chapter has discussion questions at the end that can help with your group's organizational decisions. There are also questions that will give your leadership team an opportunity to talk together about what you collectively want to accomplish as a group. Growing spiritually as a team ensures that you will navigate through the various challenges of leading men in ways that honor God. This book will prepare you to accomplish what God has called you for. There are very few things that have a more significant impact than a man who has changed his life. 90% of men say they don't have a close male friendship; less than 1% of males participate in a church-led ministry to men; fewer than 10% of churches can sustain a vibrant ministry to men.<sup>1</sup> When you study and attempt to positively influence the negative cultural trends that are created when males isolate themselves, you are choosing to work on the cutting edge of change—for the church and the world. May God bless your efforts!

It may be helpful for some of you to read Chapter 11 before you begin your ministry efforts. This chapter presents various facts and research about males and identifies specific male needs that a ministry should focus on meeting, which will allow you to understand the context of some of the discussions from a strategic perspective. Since Chapter 11 has a more research-based, factual emphasis, it comes at the end of this book for those who are not as interested in this kind of information. Some concepts are repeated throughout

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1 Barna.org

the book, which we hope will increase your understanding of the basic building blocks of a men's program. At times, there may appear to be contradictions in some of our discussions, but they are necessary for achieving balance. Learn how to develop a leadership team that works together.

Knights21 has developed online resources that can help you create a successful men's ministry program. Visit [Knights21.com/target](http://Knights21.com/target) and select the **keywords** included throughout this book to access additional leadership tools regarding certain topics. Although Knights21 has produced many books and curriculum/DVD programs for men, this book is not meant to be an overview of our program or products. With the exception of a few references throughout, information regarding Knights21 and its design are included in the bonus chapter at the end of the book. We hope to help you achieve what God has called your team to complete, and as you do this with God's help, it is our prayer that you hit the target!



## **BEFORE YOU TRY TO HIT THE TARGET— THE BIG QUESTION**



Let's start by asking a simple—yet important—question: has God called you to build an effective men's ministry? If you are not called by God or if you are unsure whether you are called, there are many other tasks that you can spend your time on. Have you experienced a strong men's program in your church? Is it weak or non-existent because of a series of ineffective starts and stops? If a strong men's ministry program is available to you, you are one of the few fortunate men.

Sometimes, the men who step up to lead a men's program have not considered whether or not God has actually called them to do it. This may explain why there is often regular turnover in the leadership of men's ministry groups, which ultimately limits the effectiveness of the ministry. It is not unusual for a potential participant to be told by a leader, "I'm not in charge of the men's ministry anymore—someone else is." Men's leaders are typically in this position for less than three years, which causes us to wonder if this was God's plan or if they were defeated. Did they accomplish their mission, or were they not called in the first place? Do these continual changes in leadership reflect a lack of effort, the difficulty of the task, or does it demonstrate an ignorance regarding how much men need these types of spiritual growth opportunities in their lives?



Men's ministry leaders are motivated for a variety of reasons, some good and some bad. The most important question is whether they are motivated to lead men's groups because God has called them to do it. If any other reason becomes the primary reason for a leader's motivation, turnover occurs rapidly, which leads to inconsistent results. Men's leaders can positively impact a church's success in significant ways, as the spiritual growth of the men who participate in the men's program compels them to lead their families in Christ-like ways. Hitting the target by developing a strong men's group will strengthen the church and benefit the communities and families of those involved.

Some of what motivates men's ministry leaders can undermine their reliance on God's call to lead a men's group. For example, some people may think that a man's ability to lead men is a statement about who he is. They assume that a men's leader should be quite manly himself. If this kind of affirmation is a primary motivation, it will not last; leading men is a challenge that requires more than simply appearing to be manly. Men will compete with and test another man's leadership; affirmation of a leader takes time and demands patience. Other men's leaders may lack confidence and feel that they are inadequate, which may cause them, like Gideon in Judges 6:15, to deny their call or the strength that is available from God to fulfill it. A man's increasing awareness of being socially isolated from others can also motivate him to begin a men's group. He recognizes his legitimate need for support and hopes to receive it through his leadership of other men. This need will not typically be met through his role as a leader, but rather by the leadership team itself. Being a leader requires a servant attitude which often conflicts with getting his own needs met. The discussion questions at the end of each chapter can be used to stimulate and encourage the spiritual growth of your leadership team.

This is a sample. Some pages have been omitted.

## TARGET PRACTICE

Discuss your answers with your leadership team.

1. Talk about your week, briefly identifying the highlights or the concerns.
2. Discuss an idea from this chapter that stood out to you. How does it relate to your life?
3. Has God called you to work with a leadership team and build an effective men's ministry program within your church? How has God affirmed His call?
4. What gifts can you contribute to reach this God-given goal?
5. Identify the personal challenges that limit your effectiveness as a productive teammate. What difficult tasks has God called you to accomplish?
6. As you look at your particular circumstances, identify some challenges that could limit your success. What strategies will you use to overcome these challenges?
7. Discuss Ephesians 2:10: "We are God's creation. He created us to belong to Christ Jesus. Now we can do good works. Long ago God prepared these works for us to do." How does this verse relate to your leadership team? How much choice do you really have to follow God's call for your life?
8. Take some time to pray about each other's lives and about your men's ministry.



## **BUILD THE STRUCTURE TO HIT THE TARGET**



A men's group leader must always be aware of the small, organizational tasks that are vital to the success of any men's ministry. Some of these tasks do not need to be done immediately; you will learn how to do them gradually, as your men's ministry progresses. Don't be overwhelmed by our discussion of these tasks. We are preparing you to be ready for them as the need for them arises. To get started, my prayer is that you will find several leaders to help you with each task:

God, you love the men whose lives will be changed by this effort to develop an effective men's ministry. Strengthen these leaders as they create opportunities for you to teach these men and bring about change in their lives. Give these leaders the wisdom they need to build an effective leadership team. Draw men to them who are willing to show initiative, serve you and influence change in the lives of men and their families. May their spiritual ministry together be strong, their friendships solid, their teamwork effective and their love for the men they serve unwavering. May the fruit of their labors be bountiful. Bless the lives of these leaders as, together, they grow spiritually through

serving you. Protect their families. Take care of them physically. May they grow in your wisdom. Amen.

Do your best, follow God's guidance and let Him take care of the outcomes. Relax—place your confidence in God and who He called you to be, one step at a time.

Many years ago, I dreamed about becoming a counselor and developing a counseling center. After years of hard work, I began a counseling practice out of my home: my living room served as a waiting room, and one of the empty bedrooms became an office. I can see how God has led me through the good and bad moments of this journey. He has allowed me to grow toward manhood and strengthen my walk with Jesus. My home practice grew into one clinic, which led to more clinics. Today, Pennsylvania Counseling Services ([pacounseling.com](http://pacounseling.com)) has 600 employees who provide a wide variety of counseling services: helping children with autism; working with juvenile delinquents; assisting children who are at risk of being placed outside their home because of mental health issues; offering inpatient drug and alcohol treatment in lieu of prison; developing sex offender groups; offering a full range of individual counseling; providing drug and alcohol outpatient programming.

The point is, we need to start where God wants us to start, focus on our relationship with Jesus and let Him control the outcomes of our efforts. Not everything that God asks us to do will become a huge success. I have experienced many instances when I felt that God led me to do a task which eventually prompted me to ask one of life's constant questions: "Why?"

When I first opened my counseling practice, I worried and obsessed about many of the details, both those that I planned for and those I may have overlooked. I soon realized that these concerns had very

little effect on the success of my efforts. The plan was God's; all I needed to do was follow Him, one step at a time.

This chapter focuses on two important elements of leading a men's ministry: (1) The specific steps that are needed for creating a structure to sustain your men's program; (2) A group of strong leaders who will assist and encourage each other. The following steps can help you achieve your dream of creating an effective men's ministry.

You may have already determined some of the steps that will be needed to build a men's ministry in your church. Keep in mind, you may want to make changes to some of these steps after discussing the information in this chapter. Briefly review the information that applies to the parts of your program that have already been developed, and carefully work through the information that can be applied now. The steps can be done in any order. The more important issue is that you and your leadership team consider each step. Remember, God called you! It does not matter whether you already have a group of men. God will bring them to you when you are ready. Be willing to begin with what He has given you.

**STEP ONE:** Talk to the pastor. It is important to include your pastor's leadership strategies, influence and engagement in your ministry efforts. This ministry has the potential to be one of the best things that has ever happened to your church. Make a deliberate choice to include the pastor as you start to plan the program structure, and encourage him to attend your meetings regularly. If there is resistance to your efforts from within the church, consider developing a men's group outside of your church. If you take this approach, encourage the men who participate to also be involved in the church; support the pastor's agenda and pray that the church will accept your ministry—someday.

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Discuss your answers with your leadership team.

1. Talk about your week, briefly identifying the highlights or the concerns, or give an update on anything you talked about last week.
2. Discuss an idea from this chapter that stood out to you. How does it relate to your life?
3. How supportive and motivated is the pastor regarding building a men's ministry? If you are a pastor, how motivated is your congregation to do this? What do you hope an effective men's ministry will contribute to your church?
4. Discuss what motivates you to be a part of a leadership team that is attempting to develop a strong men's group. What are your concerns about your life, your church and your community that have motivated you to apply yourself to this mission?
5. Talk about some of your dreams regarding the men who will be a part of your men's ministry. What are your hopes for their spiritual growth? How do you hope this ministry will influence your church and community?
6. Discuss the following agenda:
  - When would you like to begin your program?
  - What day of the week, time and location will it be scheduled for?
  - Will the program be aimed toward the men in your church or a broader outreach?



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## **HIT THE TARGET—5 AREAS THAT ALL MEN STRUGGLE WITH**



God loves men so much that He cares about all of who they are. Understanding the big “S,” little “s” distinction and how they work together to complement each other in men’s ministry encourages a men’s leader to use any angle he can to improve a man’s life. A knowledgeable approach is something men not only appreciate, but are hungry for. This effort to engage men in every area of life helps them access any motivation they have for: self-improvement, life mastery, problem solving, relational harmony, skill development or understanding their own identities. The areas of life which motivate them can be used to point them to their need for a relationship with Jesus. They need this spiritual source of strength, not only for their future eternal destination, but also to be empowered by God on a daily basis to live life successfully. Many males are clueless about their need for God. Their own self-focus and aggressive nature causes them to rely on their own wits, muscles, strategies, hustle and manipulation to survive. God calls them to thrive, and to do this, they must meet Him. You can often break through a man’s defenses when he has a need or is experiencing a circumstance that creates stress that cannot be fixed. “Hitting bottom,” an Alcoholics Anonymous term, creates an internal state that motivates a person to look beyond themselves and seek other alternatives.

The 5 struggles which are discussed in this chapter are common issues that most males have difficulty with. Through a men's ministry leader's understanding of them, he has an opportunity to interest men in receiving assistance in an important area or theme of their life which they are already struggling with. Their motivation is then ensured as they feel the emotional discomfort of having a need and not yet reaching a solution. God wants this human need to be met; a relationship with Jesus is a starting point for satisfying this need. A man wants this need to be met so he can move on positively with his life. The church and its men's group are representatives of God's love. They step up and teach men how to deal with these 5 struggles. As men grow, they naturally invite others to join them. As they feel better about themselves, life and who God is, they have no doubt their friends will benefit as well. As challenging as these struggles are for each man to face, they represent opportunities for a men's ministry program to make a practical difference in every attendee's life. The big "S" is used to support men in their lives, which encourages them to discover the small "s" spiritual disciplines that can make them whole.

## **STRUGGLE 1: SEARCHING FOR MANHOOD**

Males have an inherent desire to become men. This instinctual need to believe in their manhood causes them to observe older men and try to create relationships with them in order to achieve manhood. Often a male's desire to be a man is so strong that he convinces himself that he has achieved manhood, even if he hasn't. Despite the fact that males mistakenly believe that manhood is simply achieved at a certain age, they also know instinctually that it requires toughness, an ability to face their challenges with courage, a willingness to take risks, endurance, the respect of other men and a drive to compete aggressively for life's rewards. Males understand that they cannot

achieve manhood on their own; it must be also be affirmed by others. Saying “I achieved it” just to themselves feels hollow, as they have an internal awareness that simply saying it to themselves is not enough. Their manhood must be acknowledged from an external source.

When males cannot find older men from whom to learn about manhood, they lower their expectations and look for affirmation from their immature male peers. Gangs and sports teams often become cheap substitutes for the positive manly relationships that males search for, but cannot find. The church, which should encourage these positive relationships, loses a great opportunity by not putting effort or resources into an outreach program for males to discover how to integrate God’s definition of manhood into their lives.

No matter what age they are, all males need to know that they have achieved manhood. If a male defines himself, or others define him, as less than a man, he will carry great disappointment within himself, which is often expressed aggressively. His real need—a relationship with Jesus—is ignored. Jesus is the Ultimate Man; if males are encouraged to move toward manhood, they will be more likely to appreciate the characteristics of who Jesus is and consider what a relationship with Him has to offer.<sup>1</sup>

Because of the reality of sin, each person has character flaws and negative tendencies. When a male chooses to pursue manhood and identifies what he needs to do to be a man, he will be immediately confronted with the negative aspects of himself which Paul describes in Romans 7. Willpower alone does not help a man change. His own self-destructive tendencies demand that he receives support and direction from outside of himself. Setting any goal is humbling, as a man’s internal resistances and sin nature work against his success.

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1 For further reading on seeing Jesus as the true definition of manhood, see *On Becoming a Real Man* by Edwin Louis Cole.

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## **9 CRUCIAL ELEMENTS TO HITTING THE TARGET**



Many men have given their lives in their attempt to build effective men's ministries. These ministries produce strong men of character who become foundational to the effectiveness of many other church programs as well. Just as rebar reinforces concrete, men strengthen and maintain the stability of the church and its mission. Despite their important role in church development, men have sadly been ignored. Churches hesitate to spend time, energy and money on developing much needed men's ministry programs. Instead, men are either taken for granted or given up on. The end result is unfortunately the same.

Most men's ministries seem to lack an overall plan for success. This lack of vision results in what you would expect—an ineffective men's ministry. You, and leaders like you, can change this “business as usual” approach. You are going to target men and help them grow. By teaching them to discover their manhood and the power of God in their lives, they can enlarge the kingdom of God through their efforts. Emphasizing the development of men will bring growth to your church and all of its ministries.

By striving to achieve the following 9 crucial elements to an effective men's ministry, you and your leadership team can successfully reach men and lead them to become a valuable source of strength for your church:

**1** An effective men's program creates momentum. As any coach will tell you, it takes time for a team to display the level of skill and endurance the coach wants from them. Your ministry will gain momentum when the men involved understand the vision. This can happen when men meet together regularly to talk about themselves and how they have integrated God into their lives, along with their hopes and disappointments, at levels of intensity which foster teamwork and give them opportunities to practice life skills together. The combined strength of many men working together and applying what God has called them to be is required to make a difference in our churches and communities. Momentum is essential to the unification of a ministry's focus and application of each member's God-given gifts. Success is difficult when a program is continually started and stopped. Men have difficulty forming even basic levels of trust; they usually need to meet together 7-12 times before they can form a trust bond with each other. You can tell trust has been established when a man stops defending himself and starts defending the guy beside him. (Knights21.com/target – **Why 24 Weeks Is Important To Men Video**<sup>1</sup>)

Toward the end of a short program, men will often start sharing less intimately because they know that the time they've spent together is coming to an end. They unknowingly begin to grieve because deep down inside they long for an ongoing support system. When a program ends, men naturally return more quickly

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1 Visit [knights21.com/target](https://knights21.com/target) and select the keywords included in this chapter to access additional leadership tools regarding the specified topics.

to their previously held (and sometimes, more comfortable) lifestyle—independent, defensive and isolated. Many men’s ministries never build momentum because they are not structured to allow men to meet together regularly enough to build the trust that is necessary for creating ongoing relationships with each other. A successful ministry builds enough momentum to compel the men to continue their relationships—even after the program has ended. Any good coach or military officer recognizes that momentum brings success, and without it, loss is endured.

Those who study group dynamics find that as groups evolve, they get stronger. For teamwork to occur, the men must have time to test each other out and reduce their defensiveness, which allows them to establish trust and talk about their differences and areas of conflict. Through the process of experiencing and resolving conflict, the deepest human bonds are created. Saying what everyone else wants to hear does not build trust. Teamwork is fostered through an ongoing process that cycles through varying levels of distrust, tension, trust, tension and deeper trust.

**2** An effective men’s program is unique to the needs of men. The content has to be for men and about men, making it possible for them to feel understood and valued. Each man has his own way of viewing life and needs to feel that his viewpoint is heard. There must be an emphasis on solving problems that matter to them. Men are interested in learning about themselves. They appreciate information that will help them live better. Life is a challenge; mature men are willing to expend energy in order to prepare for mastering the challenges that are specific to their lives. Like a new tool that makes household chores easier, men look for ways to improve their lives and the lives of those they love.



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2. Discuss an idea from this chapter that stood out to you. How does it relate to your life?
3. Share a thought or an idea from this chapter that caught your attention. How does it relate to your life?
4. Brainstorm some ways to create momentum in your men's program. What are the advantages of creating momentum? What kills momentum?
5. What is unique about men that needs to be considered for a men's program to be effective? How can you create a challenging program? What mission outreaches can be initiated or developed that will pull the men together in active ways that are helpful to God's kingdom?
6. Identify two spiritual goals that you have for the men who are participating in your program. What can you do to encourage them to achieve these goals?
7. Evaluate how the leaders in your men's ministry program are doing. How effective are their groups?

This is a sample. Some pages have been omitted.

**When men come to church,  
the church becomes stronger.**

**Aim for the real target—men—by  
learning how to build an effective  
men's ministry within your church.**

**It will change the lives of  
men, their families,  
communities and  
the world.**

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