



Action Plan

Presented by:

**CHURCH
FORMEN**

P.O. Box 672316

Chugiak, AK 99567

www.churchformen.com



What is *Go for the Guys Sunday*?

Why do we need a special Sunday targeted at men and boys? Isn't the church already male dominated?

Although most of the senior pastors in America are men, the pews are dominated by women. Consider the facts:

The facts are clear: churches are slowly losing their men and boys. What was once a trickle is becoming a flood.

A lack of male participation is not only heartbreaking, it's strongly associated with overall church decline.

- The average US worship service draws an adult crowd that's 61 percent female and 39 percent male. (This compares to 53-47 percent in 1952)
- About 90 percent of the boys who are raised in church abandon it during their teens and twenties. Most never return.
- This Sunday in America, six million married women will worship without their husbands. That's one out of five.
- Most churchgoing guys are "lifers" who grew up in church. Men are the hardest group to reach.
- Less than 10 percent of churches can maintain a thriving men's ministry.

You would probably love to have more enthusiastic men and boys in your church. But where do you begin? A great first step is to conduct a *Go for the Guys Sunday*.

What is *Go for the Guys Sunday*?

The idea behind Go for the Guys Sunday is to attract a wider variety of men to church.

Go for the Guys Sunday helps your congregation broaden its outreach to the not-so-religious guys Jesus attracted.

Simply put, it's a special service your church conducts once a quarter, designed from the ground up to attract guys. Everything from the atmosphere to the sermon is delivered with a masculine accent.

After you've done a couple of these Sundays, your men will look forward to them as an opportunity to invite their male friends to church. According to research, 85% of church visitors come as a result of a personal invitation. But too often the men of your church are afraid to invite their buddies because they know in their gut that church services don't usually appeal to guys.



A *Go for the Guys Sunday* gives men the confidence to invite their friends, assured that the service will resonate with a man's heart.

What about the women? Will they feel left out?

Bottom line: women do masculine, but men DO NOT do feminine. This is why we need to tip the balance toward the masculine spirit in worship. That's the format most likely to make everyone comfortable.

Here's a wonderful truth about women: they are comfortable with guy things. For example, Home Depot has a *Do-it-Herself Workshop* once a week, where women learn to use power tools. But JoAnn Fabrics does not have a *Do-it-Himself Workshop*. Men don't gather to work on decorative pillow shams.

So a guy oriented worship service is the format most likely to pique the interest of both men and women. Most women will gladly try something new in order to attract their hard-to-reach husbands, sons and fathers.

Isn't this just a marketing ploy? Are we pandering to men?

Let's say an immigrant population has moved to your community. You want to reach them with the gospel. What would you do?

You'd learn their language. You'd familiarize yourself with their culture. You'd meet their needs. Once these immigrants knew that you truly cared about them, you would deliver your gospel presentation in a way that's relevant to their culture.

Men are the world's largest unreached people group. They have their own language, culture and unique needs. It's clear that the church has ignored these needs far too long. *A Go for the Guys Sunday* is a small way your church can begin to communicate to men in a way they understand.



Step 1: Choose a theme

Please – don't call it *Men's Sunday*. Or *Go for the Guys Sunday*. Men won't come if they think they'll be singled out for special attention.

It's important to choose a theme that men will get excited about – one that reflects the interests of the men in your community

Men rally around a theme. Choose a theme that best represents the men you're trying to attract. For example, if you live in an area where there are a lot of outdoorsmen, call it "Great Outdoors Sunday." Then build your service around that theme, including décor, songs, sermon topic, object lesson, video and audio clips, etc.

Here are a few sample themes you might want to use:

- Great Outdoors Sunday (hunting and fishing)
- Sports Sunday (team sports, or golf, tennis, etc)
- Slam Dunk Sunday (basketball)
- Tool Time (power tools, construction)
- Big Iron Sunday (classic cars, motorcycles, snowmobiles, etc.)
- Aviators' Sunday (airplanes)
- Big, Bad Barbecue Sunday (country theme, and host a barbecue after church)

You can probably think of dozens more. The key is to choose a theme that men will get excited about – one that reflects the interests of the men you're trying to reach.

Once you have your theme, you're ready to plan the rest of your elements. Here's what you'll need:

- Announcements for bulletin and pulpit
- A handout to help men invite their friends
- A decorating scheme
- Appropriate music
- Fun elements
- An man-oriented message
- Object lessons
- Video/Audio/Drama elements
- A men's huddle



Step 2: Promote it

Logo

If you have a graphic artist in your church, ask him or her to come up with a logo. Choose a design that's masculine and non-religious — something a guy would be proud to wear on a hat or t-shirt.

Use the logo in the bulletin, on your projection screen and in the church newsletter. Every time you promote the event, use the logo.

Put a lot of effort into promoting the event. The worst thing you can do is plan the event but not promote it. If it flops, it will reinforce the negative stereotype that men just don't care about God.

Handout/Equipping

Prepare a simple handout that men can use to invite their friends. A small card that's postcard size or ticket size is often most effective. Call it an *event* rather than a *church service*. Emphasize that it's going to be fun, relevant, and one hour long.

You may want to do more in the area of personally equipping your members — both men and women — to invite their friends to this event. If you have a men's ministry or women's ministry meeting coming up, announce the event there. Give out handout cards. Perform a role-play skit showing how to invite your friends. Remember: 85% of visitors come to church because someone they know invites them.

Pulpit announcements

Here are some sample announcements you can give from the pulpit. Keep these light-hearted and humorous.

Be creative and clever with your announcements. If you have video capability in your sanctuary, tape an announcement at a local sporting goods store, for example.

3 weeks out:

On Fathers' Day we're going to do something a little different around here. We're calling it Great Outdoors Sunday, in order to reach out to the men of our community. (Give a few details of what you're planning)



2 weeks out:

For Fathers' Day, invite guys to Great Outdoors Sunday. We're decorating with a hunting theme, I'll be wearing my camo jacket to church. The service will be just one hour long and my message will be just 10 minutes long. Guys, can I have an AMEN? (more details)

1 week out:

Next week is Great Outdoors Sunday. If you know guys who don't go to church, this is the Sunday to invite them. The service will be shorter than normal, and we're including lots of things guys like (details). The ushers are passing out a ticket that you can give to guys as an invitation. We're also going to have prizes for...(give more details)

Bulletin Announcements:

- *June 18 is Father's Day, and we're going all out for the guys. We're calling it "Great Outdoors Sunday" and it's a great opportunity to invite your male friends to church. For more information...*
- *When's the last time you wore blaze orange to church? Now you can! June 18 is "Great Outdoors Sunday" at New Life Church. We're going all out for the guys, and Pastor Don has promised to preach in camo! For more information...*
- *Next week is "Great Outdoors Sunday" at New Life Church. Talk about a guy-friendly worship service: Pastor Don is preaching in camo and his sermon will be just 10 minutes long. Guys, can we have an AMEN? For more information...*

Newspaper announcement:

On Father's Day, New Life Church is going all out for guys. Join us for "Great Outdoors Sunday." Pastor Don Snell will be offering a guy-friendly 10-minute sermon, and the whole service is built on a hunting and fishing theme. Lots of fun and even a prize for the loudest blaze orange jacket. For more information...

Step 3: Prepare for it

It's important to go all out for men during the event. Obviously, you want to tailor your worship elements such as singing and sermons to the tastes of men. But equally important are little things like décor, dress and an element of fun.

Decor

Men are intensely symbolic creatures. They wear symbols all over their bodies: their favorite NASCAR driver's jacket, their favorite baseball team's cap, etc. Men are stimulated by what they *see* more than by what they *hear*. Masculine décor makes them feel at home.

When a man walks into a typical Christian church, most of the symbols he sees are either gender neutral or feminine. Soft, lavender walls. Cushiony pews. Fresh flowers. Boxes of Kleenex. Lace doilies. And, of course, quilted banners on the walls. No wonder men feel out of place in church!

It's very important to go overboard decorating the sanctuary, the lobby, even the parking lot, so men see the symbols they recognize. For example, if your theme is "Big Iron Sunday" contact the local classic car club and have them bring a dozen shiny vehicles to the event. Park them at the front door so men walk right past them when they come in. Park a Harley in the lobby – or better yet right next to the pulpit!



Classic cars greet men as they enter the worship center at Bethel Church in Richland, WA

It's also important to hide the quilted banners, lace doilies and fresh flowers, at least this Sunday.

Here are some decorating ideas, by theme:

- Great outdoors: Camping gear, tents, boats, fishing gear, lanterns, camp stoves, mounted animal heads. Cut fresh pine boughs moments before the service to enhance the smell in the sanctuary
- Sports: Sporting goods of every kind. Pictures or

- banners celebrating local sports teams.
- **Tool Time:** Contact the local carpenter training center and ask the students to build some frames out of 2-by-4s. Bring the frames into the sanctuary. Surround them with toolboxes and power tools. Men love the smell of fresh cut lumber.
 - **Big Iron Day:** Park as many great vehicles in and around the church as space allows (see above). Ask the local Snap-On tool guy to bring his truck and park it right outside the sanctuary door.
 - **Aviators' Day:** If you have pilots in your church, they'll have access to propellers, maps and aviation gear of all kinds. See if you can get one of them to park a small plane at the sanctuary door.
 - **Big, Bad Barbecue Day:** Dress up the sanctuary in a BBQ theme. Woo, pig soooley!

Dress/Fun elements

Encourage your folks to dress according to the theme. If the theme is Tool Time, give a prize for the rattiest pair of blue jeans. If it's Great Outdoors, give a prize for the most obnoxious outdoors outfit. Choose prizes that are consistent with the theme: gift certificates to the sporting goods store, the auto parts store, etc.

*Cyndi Lauper sang, "Girls just wanna have fun."
Truth is, guys really like it when we have fun in church. One way to do this is through friendly competitions.*

If you really want to put the men at ease, do something off-the-wall. The sad truth is most guys have never had fun in church. Most never laughed much in church as children. So be intentional about adding fun to your service. In our church we've had log-sawing contests, golf-ball hitting contests, paper airplane flying contests, etc. Guys really love friendly competition. It's a great way to break the ice early in the service.

Now wait just a minute...

Some of you may be just about ready to hyperventilate. You can't imagine a sanctuary with a Harley in it. You can't imagine a pastor preaching wearing a camo field jacket. You may feel that competition is unChristlike. Or you may feel that paper airplanes flying through the house of God detracts from the dignity of the worship.



Please, think about this for a minute. Objects such as candles, robes and quilted banners feel “holy” to us because they’ve always been in church. Motorcycles, tents and saws don’t feel holy because we’ve never seen them in church.

*C'mon, have fun this week.
You can go back to having
no fun next week.*

But Jesus used the cultural icons of his day: wheat, sheep, coins, oil lamps. We must be just as bold, using today’s masculine symbols to reach men. And there’s nothing unholy about having a little fun! Not only will the men appreciate it, so will your young adults (men and women).

Step 4: Worship service elements

What research has taught us about men

- *Men are generally less verbal than women*
- *Men are generally more visual/spatial than women*
- *Men have more testosterone than women*
- *Men tend to be mission focused rather than relationship focused*
- *Men have an attention span of 6 to 8 minutes*
- *Men respond to masculine imagery, but are turned off by feminine imagery*
- *Men love humor*
- *Men like to learn something, then go try it out*
- *Men like friendly competition*
- *Men like to maintain their personal space*
- *Men are generally not as sociable as women, and are less gifted at making "small talk."*

If we're trying to craft a worship service that reaches men, we need to understand them. Fortunately, we know a lot about men (see left column).

Here's the big question: how can we craft a worship experience that gives proper honor to God, but still meets the needs of men? It's not that hard, but it does require some outside-the-box thinking.

Service length

When reaching men, shorter is better. Less is more. That's why at Church for Men we recommend that Sunday worship services be wrapped up in one hour or less.

I can hear pins dropping all over the world.

If you normally worship for 90 minutes or more I know this will be tough. But this particular worship service should be complete in one hour or less. Advertise it as such. More men will come if you promise to let them out in one hour. They will think, "One hour? I can endure that."

Music

Great music can usher men right into the presence of God. Here are some things to consider when choosing music:

Lyrics. Pick songs with words that men can relate to. If your church sings mostly hymns, you're in luck. Your hymnal is full of great anthems for men, including: *A Mighty Fortress is Our God, How Great Thou Art, Rise up O Men of God*, and that politically incorrect favorite, *Onward Christian Soldiers*.

If your church sings mostly praise and worship songs, things get a bit trickier. Many of today's praise songs sound like Top-40 love songs. The problem is, men don't

express their love to each other using words like “hold me close” and “you are beautiful, my sweet sweet song.” Men don’t talk this way, except to women. It sounds strange to sing these words to a male deity.

Avoid rapturous love songs to Jesus. Choose songs that focus on our mission.

There are a few good praise songs that resonate with men. Probably the best is “In Christ Alone.” Not only are the lyrics masculine, the song makes you feel as if you’re stepping onto a battlefield (on the other hand, many praise songs make you feel as if you’re stepping into a bedroom!)

Tempo: Men prefer upbeat songs, as opposed to slow, dreamy, romantic sounding songs. Men like anthems and ballads. Young men like a good beat, and love call-and-response (if you doubt this, listen to a little hip-hop or rap music).

Length: Here’s something that drives men crazy: songs that repeat over and over and over and over. And over. I would suggest that no song go more than 3 minutes. Men like to sing, but they don’t necessarily want to sing the same chorus 11 times.

Key: Many Christian songs are too high for men to sing. Drop the key a bit.

Sermon length

Here goes another sacred cow. The ideal sermon for men should be 10 minutes long – or less. It should have one point and be built around an object lesson.

It’s not how long you preach, but the impact of your preaching that makes the difference for men.

How do I know? Because that’s the method our founder used. In Matthew 13 the Bible tells us: “Jesus always used stories and illustrations like these when speaking to the crowds. In fact, he *never* spoke to them without using such parables.” (NLT, emphasis mine)

Parables are built around an object or word picture. They’re easy to remember. And they’re short. Want to know how long the average parable of Jesus takes to preach? Just 38 seconds. The longest parable clocks in at a whopping 2 minutes 20 seconds.

Jesus made it clear: it's not how long you preach, but the impact of your preaching that makes the difference for men. This is why most men forget the sermon minutes after they hear it, but they spend all afternoon thinking about the children's sermon. Parables worked in Jesus' day, and they work today — especially with men.

Sermon topic

Men like to learn something they can use in their daily lives. They feel like their time in church accomplished something.

Men like truth they can use. Make sure your sermon gets men thinking about their own lives. (This is not the Sunday for an expository sermon from the book of Leviticus). And please, DO NOT preach on giving!

I'd also avoid an overtly evangelistic message. You're not going for a conversion on the first date. Ideally, *Go for the Guys Sunday* is designed to change men's perceptions of church — it's boring, irrelevant, full of hypocrites, and they just want my money. If you show men you're sincere about following God, and that you care about them, they will be back.

The importance of object lessons

Object lessons — they're not just for kids' sermons any more

Men's brains are less verbal than women's. This is another reason Jesus used object lessons. His teachings survive to this day for one reason: *men remembered them*.

Have men's brains changed in 2000 years? No. Men still need concrete objects to cement truth into their minds.

For example, if your message is on sin and forgiveness, bring a bow, arrow and target to represent the Biblical concept of *missing the mark*. Or better yet, invite a local archer to illustrate the concept for you. Guys will love seeing an expert firing arrows into a target. And they will not soon forget the spiritual truth they learned.

There should actually be two object lessons in this service: one during the sermon, and a second one during the men's huddle (more on that in *Step 5: Finishing Strong*.)

Verbal illustrations and stories

Choose illustrations from battle, adventure, survival, sports, aeronautics and the outdoors. Personal stories are best, especially if you served in the military or worked in a blue-collar field.

Use media to enhance your message

*The web site
movieministry.com has
hundreds of illustrations from
popular movies.*

It's often wise to set up your sermon with a video clip from a popular movie. Men are real movie buffs, and they like action-adventure films. A good clip from a "men's picture" that relates to the topic at hand helps lower men's defenses.

A short drama can be a powerful illustration for men. However, make sure you've got a good script and talented actors. There's nothing worse than a half-baked drama.

If you use PowerPoint in your sermon, you can embed lots of pictures, sound effects, or even a snippet of a popular song. The more variety you include, the more men will like it.

Offering

When the basket is passed, invite your visitors to "be our guests." Let them know they're not expected to give. This builds trust in men.

Humor and fun

Guys love to laugh. They are the number one viewers of comedy shows on TV. If you can get a guy to laugh the guards come down. The more he laughs, the more likely he'll be back.

As I mentioned earlier, program some fun into your service. Some sort of friendly competition is always good for men. It's even better if the competition fits your theme and ties into the sermon. Be sure to give out prizes to winners and losers. Don't be afraid to poke a little fun at the losers – give them a booby prize.

Step 5: Finish Strong

Church services end in a variety of ways. Mainline churches usually end with a benediction. Baptists often end with an opportunity to receive Christ. Pentecostal services sometimes end with people “slain in the spirit.”

If you really want to go for guys, I’d encourage you to think differently about how you end your service. Try a *Men’s Huddle*.

The men’s huddle concept was pioneered at a church plant in Peoria, Illinois. The men love it and look forward to it each week. That little church has doubled in size in six months.

The concept of a men’s huddle is simple. Just as the service is wrapping up, call the men forward for the Men’s Huddle, using an invitation such as this:

I want to thank all of you for celebrating Great Outdoors Sunday with us at New Life Church. I want to do one more thing with the guys before we go. Right now I’d like to invite all the men 18 years and older to join me here at the front for three minutes. Just three minutes and then I’ll let you go. Again, it’s all the men 18 years and older. Join me up front now. For the rest of you, God bless you and we’ll see you next week. (or offer a benediction, if this is your tradition).

Once you have your huddle of guys, tell them a quick story, or give them another object lesson that relates to the topic of your sermon. This is the time you cement your teaching into their minds.

Here’s an example. Remember the arrow and target the sermon? Build on that by bringing an arrow into the huddle. Point out the importance of the tail feathers for keeping it on target. The three feathers can represent prayer, Bible reading and hanging out with other Christian guys, for example.

Here's a touchstone idea: have a basket of arrowheads. Invite each man to take an arrowhead and place it in his pocket that week. Then challenge the men this way: "Men, every time you feel that arrowhead in your pocket this week, ask yourself: am I moving toward the target, or away from it? Am I praying? Am I leaning on Christian buddies to help me hit the target?"

If you want to really cement the concept in their minds, give each man a *touchstone*, a small physical object that reminds them of what they learned. Explain to them what the touchstone means, and challenge them to carry it with them in their pocket all week, or place it on their bedside table.

You can end with prayer, or if you feel like the guys are into it, have them put their hands together in the center and do a *1-2-3 break*, much as men would do before playing a game.

Why a Men's Huddle?

It draws the men close to their leader, the pastor. The Bible says that Jesus "appointed twelve—designating them apostles—that *they might be with him* and that he might send them out to preach." Men grow when they come physically close to the pastor.

It singles men out for attention. Less than 10 percent of U.S. churches have a thriving men's ministry. But 80 to 90 percent of churches have women's and children's ministries. Men have been neglected for years. They're bone dry – but give them a little personal attention and they grow like mad.

It gives family men a chance to be spiritual leaders. Most men have never shared a spiritual truth with their families. But the huddle equips the average Joe to be a spiritual leader in his home. How? As soon as Joe and his family are in the car, his wife and kids are going to ask, "What did the pastor say in the huddle?" Joe will produce the touchstone from his pocket and explain the lesson to them. The kids will pass the touchstone around the back seat. Bingo. Joe is being a spiritual leader to his family.

Is the age limit important? Yes. It gives the younger boys something to look forward to. It's a rite of passage. Unfortunately, in today's church the biggest rite of passage for boys is leaving it behind. Set the age limit wherever you want, but I think 16, 17 or 18 is the best.



After the service

Your service is going to be done in one hour – what do you do with the extra time? Plan some “hang time” after the service for anyone who wants to participate.

Go for the Guys Sunday doesn't have to end once the men break huddle. You can use the time after the service to capture momentum from the event. Some “hang time” after the service will give the men a chance to socialize and make some acquaintances in a low-pressure environment. Here are some suggestions.

Provide food. It's true: the way to a man's heart is through his stomach. Give a man something to eat, and he's more likely to stick around. (This where the Big, Bad Barbecue theme has the advantage over all others!)

Move it outside. Men feel safer if they are outdoors. They feel trapped indoors. Being outside gives them the feeling they can leave at any time.

Continue your theme. If you're doing Great Outdoors Sunday, invite a local sporting goods store to have a fly fishing demo in the parking lot. Ask the men of the church to bring their fly rods and teach the kids to cast. For Slam Dunk Sunday have basketballs and hoops set up in the parking lot. For Big Iron Sunday have a mini classic car show in the parking lot. You get the idea.

Give men a next step. God may move powerfully in the lives of some men during this event. You need to have a “next step” for those guys, to draw them in. Why not set up a *GET CONNECTED* table for men? Make it a place where they can learn more about your men's ministry, the softball team, the men's retreat, etc. Make this a low-pressure venue – no arm-twisting. (This is not the place to recruit ushers)



Step 6: Follow up

Once you've completed your first *Go for the Guys Sunday*, take the pulse of the congregation.

Ask for e-mails

Put an announcement in the bulletin, asking for e-mail responses. Ask for the opinions of both men and women, both pro and con. Discuss the responses at your next church board meeting.

Don't let this Sunday be a one-time event. Chances are the men of your congregation really liked it, but being men, they are less verbal about sharing their feelings. Unless you ask them, you may never hear how God used this service to draw them closer to Christ.

Realize that you'll probably get some hate mail from traditionalists in the congregation. But you may also get some tales of life change. Consider these comments from a pastor in Hawaii who started making the men's huddle a regular part of his worship services:

"We continue to give God the glory for the impact that these huddles are having on our church.

"At the Monday night board meeting everyone was saying how much the huddle "amped" up the energy level. ALL the women tell us they asked their husbands what happened in the huddle! This really works!

"At Wednesday pastors staff meeting, the other pastors are excited about what next Sunday's huddle will be.

Go for the Guys Sundays should become a regular part of your church's outreach.

"During my small group meeting last night, three of us had our touchstone, the eraser, and started talking about it. We were meeting at the shopping mall. One of the guys told us that someone had just "stolen" his parking space, and he was about to yell, but then he touched the eraser in his pocket and remembered, "FORGIVE." This whole conversation made a great impression on the pre-believers we had in the group. They had a chance to talk about the huddle, and it gave them another reason to come to church."

Finally, start getting ready for the next *Go for the Guys Sunday*. Ideally, your church should do a man-targeted service once a quarter (if not once a month). I can guarantee this: if the men of your church come alive, your church will come alive!

Pre-flight checklist

Choose a theme

- Is it masculine?
- Does it reflect the interests of the men you're trying to reach?

Promote it

- Have you prepared a simple handout?
- Are your announcements written? Are they clever and creative?
- Have you contacted the local newspaper and/or Christian radio station for promotional help?

Prepare for it

- Is there a décor plan? Who's responsible for gathering all the elements?
- Is there a plan to hide the feminine décor this week?
- Will you be encouraging people to dress for the occasion?
- Have you planned a friendly competition? What about prizes for winners and losers?

Men will respond to the gospel, if it's delivered in a context they understand

Worship service elements

- Will the service be wrapped up in an hour?
- Is the music man-friendly?
- Is the sermon brief, and built around an object lesson?
- Is the sermon topic relevant to guys?
- Is there plenty of humor and fun?

Finish strong

- Have you prepared an object lesson for the men's huddle?
- Have you rehearsed the huddle with a small group of guys to work out the kinks?
- Have you decided on an age limit?

Follow up

- Are you ready to solicit feedback in the bulletin and newsletter? Have you set up a special e-mail address to receive these comments?

A few things to avoid

I've tried to focus on the positive — what you should do to reach guys. But here's a few things you DO NOT want to do during *Go for the Guys Sunday*:

So many times, men get beaten up in church. They're made to feel inadequate, Biblically illiterate and dumb. They already know they're not measuring up as husbands and fathers. This is not the Sunday to try to "fix the guys." Instead, encourage them. Point out the noble things in their lives. Show them Christ's love and acceptance – just as they are.

- Ask everyone to hold hands
- Ask everyone to hug each other
- Trot out the children to sing or perform (this reinforces men's notion that church is for kids)
- Encourage a lot of weeping and emotional displays
- Ask visitors to stand up and tell their names
- Take prayer requests from the congregation (prayer and share time)
- Plan lengthy responsive readings and liturgical readings
- Beat up on men for being lousy husbands and fathers
- Use "churchy" language, such as: *Let's just praise the holy name of Jesus, amen? Hallelujah, isn't this a special day to be in the presence of the Lord?* Talk like regular a man, and regular men will respond.