

## WHY MEN HATE GOING TO CHURCH (REVISED EDITION) DISCUSSION GUIDE

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### CHAPTER 1 - PERFECTLY DESIGNED

1. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

*"I can worship God better out in nature than I can sitting in a church building."*

*"I just don't feel like I need to go to a church to be a good person."*

*"I go to church on occasion, but I've found it rather boring and irrelevant to my life."*

2. Look again at the Mars and Venus values on page seven. Be honest: which set did you pick? Look again at the Mars values (Set A). How many of these values can you honestly ascribe to Christ and his true followers?
3. Gil chose a megachurch because it was the only one that "didn't suck." (page 6) Do men choose their churches based on the quality of the experience?
4. Agree or disagree: Most men see their wives as more qualified to make decisions in the arenas of relationships, childcare, education and faith. Why do you think this is true (or not true)?
5. If you were going to establish a new church, would you more heavily recruit men or women? Why?
6. How well do your gifts match the culture of the church?

**ACTION ITEM:** The next time you're in church, evaluate its "male friendliness" quotient. (You can download our free guy friendliness test at: <http://bit.ly/GuyTest>)

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### CHAPTER 2 - YES, THERE REALLY IS A GENDER GAP

1. Take a guess: what percentage of the adults in your congregation is male?
2. Why do you think Christianity suffers a gender gap, when other religions generally don't?
3. If you are married, who's the most enthusiastic about churchgoing, you or your spouse? Why?
4. According to studies, the larger the church, the more likely it is to have men. Why do you think this is?
5. These days, "brand-name" churches generally attract fewer men than non-denominational ones. And theologically conservative churches almost always draw more men than liberal churches. Why do you think these are true?
6. Do you listen to Christian Radio? Music or talk? Why or why not?
7. Are you a pillar or a caterpillar in your church? Are most of your church's pillars men or women?
8. Have you attended a Promise Keepers rally, or a Women of Faith Conference? What did you think about it? Do you plan to attend another in the future? Why or why not?

**ACTION ITEM:** This Sunday, count noses in church. If your church is typical, about 60 percent (or more) of the adults in your worship service will be female. Report your findings to the group next time you meet.

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### CHAPTER 3 - MEN: WHO NEEDS 'EM?

1. Who takes more risks in your family, the males or the females?
2. Have you ever worked with boys and girls? Which gender is more concerned with the rules? With keeping score?
3. Studies indicate church involvement is good for men (page 23). Why do you think this is?
4. Name 5 to 10 factors that are important in church growth. Rank them by number. Where does "the presence of men" rank?
5. Islam is the world's fastest growing religion. Why do you think it is so attractive to men, particularly young black men in the US? Are there any ideas the church could borrow from the mosque?
6. Murrow concludes the chapter by stating: "The religion that wins men, wins." What does he mean by that? Do you agree or disagree?

**ACTION ITEM:** Find out what percentage of your church's volunteer ranks is female. Report your findings to the group next time you meet.

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### CHAPTER 4 - WHO ARE THE MISSING MEN?

1. What kinds of men are largely missing from your church?
2. Dr. Michael Lindsay reports that about 60% of the prominent Christian men he interviewed do not regularly attend a local church (page 30). Why do you think this is?
3. Are high-achieving men justified in investing their time and money into parachurch organizations instead of a local congregation?
4. Why are young single men so reluctant to go to church? Why are student bodies at Christian colleges so heavily female?
5. Researchers Cox and Miles (page 31) found that men who were interested in religion were more likely to answer surveys “like a woman” than men who were irreligious. Why do you think this is?
6. What is it about old age that calls men back to church?
7. How do you view conflict among Christians? Should we fight things out, declare a winner and move on? Or should we handle conflict in a more diplomatic fashion? Which is more true to the example of Christ?

**ACTION ITEM:** Is your church producing a crop? Write down a list of all the “lasting fruit” (John 15:16) your church has produced in the last 12 months, and share it with the group next time you meet.

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### CHAPTER 5 - THE MASCULINITY BANK

1. If you are a man, list at least three man laws you follow (example: I do not kiss other men; I do not wear the color pink)?
2. A century ago there were “woman laws” as well (example: women don’t wear pants; women don’t smoke). Do “woman laws” exist today? If so, name a few.
3. If you are a man, name some things you do to fill your masculinity bank (extra points for honesty on this one).
4. Have you ever seen churchgoing as womanly behavior? Do you know any men who do?
5. Have you ever hidden your faith from other men? Have you ever given your friends vague, man-acceptable answers to questions about your faith practices (page 41)? Why did you do these things?
6. My straw poll (page 42) found that many more men regarded church and Sunday school as a womanly place. What do you think? Are church and Sunday school more akin to a baby shower or a football stadium?

**ACTION ITEM:** Ask some guys you know if they see church as a manly or a womanly place.

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### CHAPTER 6 - THE TWO JESUSES

1. Think about your church. Which Christ is presented more often, the lion or the lamb?
2. When you think of the essential nature of Christ, do you picture a mild man or a wild man? Is Christ at his core a God of comfort or a God of confrontation?
3. Do people fear God any more?
4. Other than “The Three Blessed Exceptions” (page 49) is there any time Christians are allowed to be bold, aggressive or even violent in practicing their faith?
5. Are competition and Christ compatible?
6. Do you believe *who Jesus is* trumps what he taught or what he did? How do you handle Bible passages that seem to contradict your understanding of who Jesus is? (for example, read what “The Prince of Peace” says in Matthew 10:34)
7. Do you know someone who feels wounded by the church? Did they leave the church over their feelings? Share their story with the group (if you can do so without gossip).
8. How can we re-introduce the Lion of Judah to our churches without causing disruption? Is it even possible? Is it a good idea? Will it bring men back?

**ACTION ITEM:** Grab three items: a pink highlighter, a blue highlighter and a paperback New Testament. Highlight in pink all the passages in the gospels where Jesus is soft, gentle and merciful. Highlight in blue all the passages where Jesus is bold, harsh and commanding. Share your findings with the group next time you meet.

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### CHAPTER 7 - VICTORIA'S SECRET... WHEN WE LOST THE MEN

1. Confession time: when you saw the words, "Victoria's Secret" in title of this chapter, what did you think it was about?
2. Do you believe that Christianity has softened since the days of the Puritans? Why do you think that happened?
3. Church services much more emotional than they were in the 1700s. Why do you think this is the case?
4. Victorian pastors had a reputation as sissies. Is this still true today? Are modern pastors softer than the average guy? How about worship leaders?
5. In your church, who keeps the ministry machine going, men or women?
6. Children's ministry as we know it did not exist 150 years ago, yet today it's an indispensable part of church life. How and why did children's ministry become foundational in nearly every church on earth?

**ACTION ITEM:** Go to the Internet and search for the original text of Jonathan Edwards' famous sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," preached July 8, 1741 in Enfield, CT. Read the sermon through and ask yourself, "What might happen if this sermon were preached in my church today?"

**CHAPTER 8 - THE CHRISTIAN INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX**

1. Men, do you remember the day you decided to put away childish things? Tell the group about that day.
2. You're in the bathroom. It's time to shave. There are two razors in front of you, with identical five-blade cutting surfaces. Would you pick up the Venus Embrace or the Fusion ProGlide? Why?
3. Murrow believes that modern Christianity is being presented in a female-oriented package. Have you noticed this, or is the author all wet?
4. Did you abandon your faith for a time as a young person? If so, what things did you do to declare your independence from religion? If not, what kept you faithful?
5. Have you noticed the change in Sunday school Jesus? Does the new Jesus seem kind of sissy? Childish?
6. Do you listen to Christian music on the radio? Is it just me, or does it seem wimpy to you?
7. Do you purchase many Christian products? Who purchases more – you, or the women in your life?

**ACTION ITEM:** Go to your local Christian bookstore and compare the size of the women's section to the size of the men's section.



**CHAPTER 9 - MEN AND CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP**

1. Did you experience the “worship wars” in the 1980s and 1990s? Which side were you on?
2. In general, do you prefer praise songs or hymns? Why?
3. Murrow writes, “The old worship was formal, corporate, and emotionless. The new worship is informal, individualistic, and touchy-feely.” Do you agree? Which do you prefer?
4. Discuss the positive aspects of the new worship on men, beginning at the bottom of page 73.
5. Praise and Worship (P&W) has introduced a familiarity and intimacy with God that’s absent in many hymns. Is this a good thing for men?
6. Murrow writes, “The great hymns summon men to the battlefield—but many of today’s PW songs seem to be summoning men to the bedroom.” Have you noticed this? How do you react to songs that describe our love for God in romantic, even erotic terms?
7. Have you ever felt that a worship leader was trying to manipulate your emotions? How did he/she attempt to do this?

**ACTION ITEM:** This weekend, take a seat near the front of the church. As the congregation sings, look over your shoulder and count the number of men who join in the singing. Then count the number who don’t. Share your results with the group.

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### CHAPTER 10 - TWELVE THINGS MEN FEAR ABOUT CHURCH

1. Are men really afraid of church? Why?
2. Do you think of Christian men as softer than other men? Why do men think this?
3. Look back over the dozen fears. Are you (or a man you know) affected by any of these?
  - I'll hate church, like when I was a kid.
  - I'll lose control.
  - I'll get stuck with some weirdo.
  - Is he gay?
  - If I become a Christian, I'll become soft.
  - Church is tough on single guys.
  - Christians don't get much sex.
  - Church is full of hypocrites.
  - All they want is my money.
  - I'm jealous.
  - I'm being held to an impossible standard.
  - I'm afraid of heaven
4. Some men become jealous of Jesus because they feel women love Him more. But aren't women supposed to love God first? Where is the balance point?
5. Be honest: when you hear of a Christian family in crisis, do you assume the man is to blame? Why?
6. Are you looking forward to heaven, or does it sound dull? Which sounds better to you – eternal singing, or eternal sex?

**ACTION ITEM:** Ask a man who doesn't go to church why he doesn't. If he asks, "Why are you asking?" tell him you're reading my book.

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### CHAPTER 11 - THE STARS VS. THE SCRUBS

1. Have you ever participated in team sports? Were you (are you) a star or a scrub? If a scrub, tell the group what it's like.
2. Murrow sums up "the rules of church" on page 90. Do you agree with the lists he's presented? Are these really the skills one needs to be a star at church?
3. How important are verbal skills in church?
4. How important is studiousness?
5. How important is sensitivity?
6. Are the men who run your church verbal, studious and sensitive? How about the men who attend?
7. Murrow summed up the chapter with two equations:
  - a. Men + church = low competence
  - b. Men + work and hobbies = high competenceDoes this square with your experience? Does the competence gap explain why men focus on work and hobbies and not on church?

**ACTION ITEM:** Attend a sporting event and observe the players on the bench. Pray for them.

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### CHAPTER 12 - CHECK YOUR TESTOSTERONE AT THE DOOR

1. What do you think when a Christian organization gender neutralizes sacred music, liturgy and scripture?
2. Have you ever been invited to have “a personal relationship with Jesus?” Does the term seem feminine? Accurate? Biblical?
3. Murrow quotes an author who writes in a Christian men’s book, “Through Jesus God reveals that he loves us passionately and longs for an intimate relationship with us.” What’s wrong (if anything) with this sentence?
4. How do you feel when people become emotional during a worship service? What’s appropriate and what’s not?
5. Is the décor of your church sending a message? If so, what?
6. Is there a time during your worship service when everyone is encouraged to hold hands or hug? How do you react to that?
7. What do you think about personal expression during a worship service? How much is too much? Should parishioners be given an opportunity to speak up during a worship service?

**ACTION ITEM:** Call another man and ask him if the two of you “can have a personal relationship.” Report back to the group in your next session.

**CHAPTER 13 - HOW CHURCHES FEMINIZE OVER TIME**

1. Is your church playing offense or defense?
2. Is it possible to change a church without causing conflict?
3. Have you ever seen an innovative idea crushed in the local church? What happened? Was it due to a family of God mentality?
4. Murrow believes the shift from offense to defense causes men to check out. This leads to the departure of young men, and then younger women. That leaves faithful old women as the dominant group. What do you think of this theory?
5. When Sister Sherry tendered her church resignation, one of the elders celebrated (page 111). Was that a Christlike response?
6. Have you ever been part of a church where one cranky member (or family) held the church hostage? Tell your story (without naming names).
7. Do you see your church as an outpost in the kingdom of God, or a close-knit family of God? Extra points for honesty.

**ACTION ITEM:** In what ways is your church “trolling for men?” Find out if there’s a low-energy, below-the-surface effort to engage men in the life of your congregation.

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### CHAPTER 14 - HOW CHURCHES DRIVE BOYS AWAY FROM THE FAITH

1. Men, did you ever participate in a sport you were no good at? How long did you willingly participate?
2. Men, did you abandon the church as a boy? Why? At what age did church lose your interest?
3. Were you “good at” Sunday school as a child? Did your interests and abilities match the culture of Sunday school?
4. Have you noticed the Sunday school Jesus has changed in the past 20 years? Which can you relate to better – the somber Jesus among men or the smiling Jewish camp counselor?
5. Was it Jesus’ custom to spend much time with children?
6. What role does body movement play in the spiritual lives of young men?
7. Describe some of the ways youth group has changed in the past 30 years. Have these changes been good or bad for young men?

**ACTION ITEM:** Attend the youth meeting in your church and assess its “boy friendliness quotient.”

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### CHAPTER 15 - THE BATTLE TO REENGAGE MEN

1. Does your church have a gymnasium? How is a gym compatible with the mission of Jesus? (provide a Bible passage that proves your point-of-view).
2. Athlete-turned-evangelist Billy Sunday was criticized for “doffing his coat, breaking furniture and employing sports metaphors” as he preached. What would you think of a pastor who did such things?
3. Is there still a need for organizations such as the YMCA and the Boy Scouts to link manliness and godliness in the popular imagination? Is that still what these organizations do?
4. Murrow sees a clear link between the presence of men and church growth. How does this square with your experience?
5. Murrow concludes that postwar men flocked to mainline churches (Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopal, Lutheran and United Church of Christ) because these churches had spent decades building trust among men. Do you think this is true? Why are men abandoning the mainline today?
6. Have you attended a Promise Keepers stadium or arena event? What did you think of it? Was it effective in reaching men with the gospel?
7. Is it time for another men’s movement in the church? What would it look like? What WOULDN’T it look like?

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### CHAPTER 16 - WHY MEGACHURCHES ARE MEGA

1. Is it possible for a small church to create the kind of culture that welcomes men? If so, how?
2. The two most famous megachurches in America set out to reach an unchurched man. Yet most church plants target “young families” which is to say, young mothers. Who does your church target?
3. Does your church governance structure facilitate change or slow it down?
4. Does your church offer a quality worship service? How can your church offer more quality without it becoming a slick, canned sales pitch for Jesus?
5. Does your church need to remove some man repellent stuff? Toss out a couple of ideas – if you dare.
6. What percentage of your church’s worship service is vertically focused, vs. horizontally focused? 80/20? 70/30? 50/50?
7. In your opinion, what percentage of your service *should* be vertically focused?

**ACTION ITEM:** Attend a megachurch service this weekend, if you don’t already. Note the ways it differs from a traditional worship service. Pay close attention to any man-friendly elements that may be employed.

-or-

Visit your church’s web site, looking at it through the eyes of a man who does not attend church. Compare it to other sites that are male-oriented (sports sites, men’s products, men’s movies, etc.)



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### CHAPTER 17 - PASTORS AND MEN

1. Tell the group about your favorite pastor of all time. What made him such a great person?
2. Murrow writes to pastors, "Men will choose or reject your church based on their respect for you." Is this true? Do men really judge an entire congregation by its leader?
3. What are some of the characteristics of a healthy masculine pastor? How can ministers avoid the extremes (macho or wimpy)?
4. Does your pastor have the trappings of manhood? (page 148) Does he talk about guy stuff from the pulpit?
5. Have you ever noticed "preacher-speak?" Why is it hard for some pastors to speak normally when they preach and pray aloud?
6. Can you relate to the story of the pastor who feared men? (beginning at the top of page 150) If so, share your story.
7. Which do you think is most important for a pastor's spiritual health: Bible study, prayer, or fellowship with Christian men?

**ACTION ITEM:** Write your pastor an encouraging letter or e-mail this week.

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### CHAPTER 18 - TEACHING AND MEN

1. Recall the last sermon you heard. What was it about? What were the pastor's main points?
2. When is the last time you were astonished at church? In a small group?
3. Are object lessons appropriate for adults, or are they primarily for children?
4. Do you prefer short sermons or long ones?
5. Argumentation, give-and-take, good-natured teasing, and put-downs. Are these compatible with the gospel?
6. Do your church services start and end on time?
7. Have you seen someone engrossed in a smartphone during a worship service?
8. Women: If your pastor were to initiate a men's huddle at the end of the service, would you see this as a valuable opportunity for the men, or would you feel left out?

**ACTION ITEM:** If you teach in the church, what's one way you can "man up" your teaching?

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### CHAPTER 19 - GETTING THE BIG STORY RIGHT

1. What are some of your favorite movies? Do they involve a hero who saves the world against impossible odds?
2. Is the gospel about saving the world against impossible odds, or is it about having a relationship with a man who loves you?
3. Is it ever wise to rebuff a man who's seeking to follow Jesus?
4. Do we beg and plead too much in church?
5. What are some healthy ways we can promise reward in church (without being manipulative)?
6. If we promise more risk and reward in church, will more high-octane men join us? Will we gain or lose men?

**ACTION ITEM:** Watch a guy movie. Identify the Christ figure.

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### CHAPTER 20 - WHAT ABOUT WOMEN?

1. Talk about Murrow's Iron Clad Rule of the Genders: Women are fascinated by the things of men. But men are repelled by the things of women. Have you experienced this?
2. Men, how do you feel when your wife says, "Hold my purse for a minute." Why do you feel that way?
3. Do the women of your church hold a "velvet veto" (page 175)?
4. Men, do you suffer from "She'll-take-care-of-it-it is?" (page 177).
5. Should churches set aside leadership posts for men, or is that unacceptable sexism (page 177, bottom)?
6. Have you ever known a woman who lorded her spiritual superiority over her husband? What impact did that have on the husband? The children?
7. Dr. Leon Podles predicts women will come dominate the clergy within a generation. What do you think?

**ACTION ITEM:** Men, carry a purse into a public place and see how people react.

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### CHAPTER 21 - YOUNG MEN AND FAITH

1. Men, did you ever secretly like something only girls were supposed to like, such as the music of Barry Manilow? Be a man and tell the group about it.
2. Look at the charts on pages 181 and 182. Do they ring true with you? Does a man's religiosity run opposite to his need to be perceived as manly?
3. How do other religions initiate their young men into manhood? Why doesn't Christianity do this?
4. If you are married, who is the spiritual leader in your home – you or your wife? Who is walking more closely with God?
5. Society is becoming suspicious of men who want to spend time with boys, yet this is the essential relationship through which faith passes. How can we encourage this relationship without exposing boys to possible abuse?
6. Studies indicate that the father's religious devotion is a more important predictor of the future devotion of his children. Does this square with your experience?
7. The chapter ends with a mind-bending question: What if we canceled youth group and put that effort into building up the men of the church? Would such an approach, in the long run, win more youth to Christ?

**ACTION ITEM:** Visit a local high school event or shopping mall and observe the many ways young men act “manly.”

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### CHAPTER 22 - MEN, PRAYER AND A FEW OTHER THINGS

1. Do you like to pray aloud in a group? Why are so many men so reluctant to pray aloud?
2. When you pray aloud, do you speak normally, or do you lapse into “prayer-speak?” If so, which dialect do you speak? (see page 192)
3. Do you like praying aloud in groups? Why or why not? Is this exercise harder on men or women?
4. Have you ever been in the middle of a prayer mushroom? (page 195) What did you think of the experience? Do prayer mushrooms encourage or discourage men from sharing prayer requests?
5. Murrow says, “Nothing in scripture suggests long prayers are better than short ones. The Bible recommends consistency and frequency, not length.” Agree or disagree?
6. Murrow says the “big four” spiritual disciplines (page 209) have the unintended consequence of isolating men. What do you think?
7. Murrow says “the men who stay faithful to God are those who walk closely with other Christian men—not necessarily those who read the Scriptures day and night.” (page 197). So where is the balance between individual spiritual disciplines and corporate ones?

**ACTION ITEM:** At the end of your meeting, pray together, using one of the two strategies Murrow suggests at the bottom of page 194.

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### CHAPTER 23 - HOW MEN MINISTER TO OTHERS

1. Read the first paragraph of chapter 23 aloud in the group (page 201). Men – how would you feel if your pastor made such an announcement? How would you women feel?
2. Think about your church's roster of ministries. Are there specific offerings that use men's skills and gifts (such as a chain-saw team)?
3. Are there opportunities for adventure in your church's ministry portfolio (page 204)?
4. Is it OK to seek publicity when your church does something in the community? Or is it better to do your good works in secret, as Christ commanded in Matthew 6:1-4?
5. Is it right to charge men money for ministry, such as a class, retreat or seminar (page 205)?
6. Does your church offer clear entry and exit points from its ministry programs?
7. Read Pat Morley's story at the end of page 206 aloud in the group. Does your church have a plan to disciple every man in the church that wants to be discipled?

**ACTION ITEM:** Volunteer at church. Try something new.

**CHAPTER 24 - HOW TO MINISTER TO MEN**

1. Does your church offer a men's ministry program? Describe it. What percentage of the men who attend your church participates in the men's ministry program?
2. Pastor Mark Driscoll has built a church full of young men without a men's ministry program. Instead, he sees his *entire church* as a men's ministry program. Could you say the same about your church?
3. Men's ministry often falters for this simple reason: it's actually women's ministry for men. Have you ever attended a meeting in which men were expected to respond like women (page 211)?
4. Murrow says, "Women bond face-to-face, whereas men bond side-by-side." Is this true? Tell the group about your bonding experiences.
5. Read the definition of a spiritual father (bullet points in the middle of page 215). Does your church have any men doing this kind of work with other men?
6. In your experience, what's the most effective way to disciple men: large group teaching, small group Bible study or one-on-one discipleship?
7. Murrow says the first question you should ask before starting a ministry program for men should not be, "What am I going to teach?" It should be, "How am I going to organize?" What role does organization and structure play in the spiritual lives of men?

**ACTION ITEM:** Ask God if he is calling you to be a spiritual father someday. If he says yes, then find a father who will disciple you.

**NOTE: THERE ARE NO DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTER 25.**