

## WHY MEN HATE GOING TO CHURCH (REVISED) 12 SESSION DISCUSSION GUIDE

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### CHAPTERS 1 AND 2

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. 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)?
4. If you were going to establish a new church, would you more heavily recruit men or women? Why?
5. If you are married, who's the most enthusiastic about churchgoing, you or your spouse? Why?
6. According to studies, the larger the church, the more likely it is to have men. Why do you think this is?
7. Do you listen to Christian Radio? Music or talk? Why or why not?
8. Are you a pillar or a caterpillar in your church? Are most of your church's pillars men or women?

**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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### CHAPTERS 3 AND 4

1. Have you ever worked with boys and girls? Which gender is more concerned with the rules? With keeping score?
2. Name 5 to 10 factors that are important in church growth. Rank them by number. Where does “the presence of men” rank?
3. Murrow concludes the chapter by stating: “The religion that wins men, wins.” What does he mean by that? Do you agree or disagree?
4. 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?
5. Why are young single men so reluctant to go to church? Why are student bodies at Christian colleges so heavily female?
6. 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?
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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### CHAPTERS 5 AND 6

1. If you are a man, what are some man laws you follow (example: I do not kiss other men; I do not wear the color pink)? Do “woman laws” exist today? If so, name a few.
2. If you are a man, name some things you do to fill your masculinity bank (extra points for honesty on this one).
3. 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?
4. 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?
5. 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?
6. 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?
7. 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)
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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### CHAPTERS 7 AND 8

1. Do you believe that Christianity has softened since the days of the Puritans? Why do you think that happened?
2. Church services much more emotional than they were in the 1700s. Why do you think this is the case?
3. Victorian pastors had a reputation as sissies. Is this still true today? Are modern pastors softer than the average guy?
4. In your church, who keeps the ministry machine going, men or women?
5. Murrow believes that modern Christianity is being presented in a female-oriented package. Have you noticed this, or is the author all wet?
6. Men, do you remember the day you decided to put away childish things? Tell the group about that day.
7. 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?
8. Do you listen to Christian music on the radio? Is it just me, or does it seem wimpy to you?

**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?"

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### CHAPTERS 9 AND 10

1. In general, do you prefer praise songs or hymns?
2. 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?
3. Discuss the positive aspects of the new worship on men, beginning at the bottom of page 73.
4. 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?
5. Are men really afraid of church? Why?
6. Do you think of Christian men as softer than other men? Why do men think this?
7. 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
8. 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?

**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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### CHAPTERS 11 AND 12

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. Are the men who run your church verbal, studious and sensitive? How about the men who attend?
4. 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?
5. 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?
6. How do you feel when people become emotional during a worship service? What's appropriate and what's not?
7. Is the décor of your church sending a message? If so, what?
8. 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.

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### CHAPTERS 13 AND 14

1. Does your church play offense or defense? Is it possible to change a church without causing conflict?
2. Have you ever seen an innovative idea crushed in the local church? What happened? Was it due to a family of God mentality?
3. Have you ever been part of a church where one cranky member (or family) held the church hostage? Tell your story (without naming names).
4. Do you see your church as an outpost in the kingdom of God, or a close-knit family of God? Extra points for honesty.
5. Were you “good at” Sunday school as a child? Did your interests and abilities match the culture of Sunday school?
6. Have you noticed the Sunday school Jesus has changed in the past 20 years? Which do you like better – the somber Jesus among men or the smiling Jewish camp counselor?
7. What role does body movement play in the spiritual lives of young men?
8. Discuss some of the ways youth ministry 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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### CHAPTERS 15 AND 16

1. 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?
2. Murrow sees a clear link between the presence of men and church growth. How does this square with your experience?
3. 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?
4. Is it time for another men's movement in the church? What would it look like? What WOULDN'T it look like?
5. Does your church governance structure facilitate change or slow it down?
6. 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?
7. Does your church need to remove some man repellent stuff? Toss out a couple of ideas – if you dare.
8. 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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### CHAPTERS 17 AND 18

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. Have you ever noticed “preacher-speak?” Why is it hard for some pastors to speak normally when they preach and pray aloud?
5. Recall the last sermon you heard. What was it about? What were the pastor’s main points?
6. When is the last time you were astonished at church? In a small group?
7. Do you prefer short sermons or long ones?
8. Argumentation, give-and-take, good-natured teasing, and put-downs. Are these compatible with the gospel?

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

-or-

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

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### CHAPTERS 19 AND 20

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. Do we beg and plead too much in church?
4. If we promise more risk and reward in church, will more high-octane men join us? Will we gain or lose men? What are some healthy ways we can promise reward in church (without being manipulative)?
5. 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?
6. Men, do you suffer from "She'll-take-care-of-it-it is?" (page 177).
7. Should churches set aside leadership posts for men, or is that unacceptable sexism (page 177, bottom)?
8. Dr. Leon Podles predicts women will come dominate the clergy within a generation. What do you think?

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

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### CHAPTERS 21 AND 22

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. How do other religions initiate their young men into manhood? Why doesn't Christianity do this?
3. 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?
4. 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?
5. When you pray aloud, do you speak normally, or do you lapse into "prayer-speak?" If so, which dialect to you speak? (see page 192)
6. 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?
7. Murrow says the "big four" spiritual disciplines (page 209) have the unintended consequence of isolating men. What do you think?
8. 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 AND 24

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. 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?
4. Is it right to charge men money for ministry, such as a class, retreat or seminar (page 205)?
5. 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?
6. 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)?
7. Murrow says, "Women bond face-to-face, whereas men bond side-by-side." Is this true? Tell the group about your bonding experiences.
8. 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?

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

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