

THE DYNAMICS OF MEN'S MINISTRY
FOR
WILLIE BURKE

The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King said, "Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase." There is a phenomenon that has been occurring and growing and evolving for the past twenty seven years in our society that shows us that men, as an integral and major sector of our culture, searching for faith and a positive place and voice in the world, are seeking out and responding to movements that speak to the soul. Consistently increasing numbers of men are attending Promise Keepers inspired events throughout the United States and internationally. What began as a gathering for four thousand men at its inception grew to crowds estimated at over 800,000 on the Mall in Washington DC less than ten years later. Clearly, a universal part of the male soul was touched. Since its inception, tens of thousands of participants have experienced the euphoria that can well up from the adrenaline and enthusiasm borne in a group setting. We have heard and seen the immediate results that occur at stadiums packed for Promise Keeper rallies, but life is not lived at a mega-event. Adrenaline doesn't course through our bodies full time... so where do we reach.... What well to we tap into in order to self generate what has been learned from the the valuable principles and faith based revelations of these powerful, emotionally vibrant, and inspirational sessions? How does one take his faith and find the tools to build individual and collective staircases that will guide us to sustained practice even when we're in the trenches of everyday life? So many of us get caught up in the crowd swell of enthusiasm, but let's face it...it's not so easy to maintain our lives with the force and impact of attending a stadium sized event. Mundane, regular life is there to pull us back in and threatens to "curb our enthusiasm." It looms and lingers and dangles everyday

mediocrity and sameness in front of our faces. It challenges us to be unique.... daring.... inspired leaders for our selves, our families, and our communities.

We've all had that “mountaintop” experience. It's special. It's rare. It leaves a resounding impact. It provokes us to cast off our shackles of inaction while seducing us into making commitments we probably won't keep. BUT... what if we worked together to find the way to sustain the commitments we vowed would change our lives instead of watching our words and actions fade and send us back down that staircase from glory to inaction?

The founders of Promise Keepers had the great idea to access a way to appeal to men so that there would be a level of familiarity and comfort that formed the context for the attendees to explore and connect to the deeper meaning and purpose of their Christian faith. With rallies conducted at large football stadiums and sports arenas, it was brilliantly natural to connect with God in a place **where so many have prayed before....** (**This is meant to be a little joke.... Do you want to emphasize it?**) The competitive setting was transformed into a venue in which everyone was and is on the same team, literally praying for the **ultimate** group win.

Many men go into the event not knowing what to expect, but few... if any... are able to leave without being deeply affected. Attendees are profoundly touched and find themselves transformed by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. I've seen such incredible impact even through attendance at just a single stadium event. These rallies create intense “mountaintop”

experiences, but authentic and sustained impact must last longer than a week or two after that “moment of impact.” Promises are made to oneself and to others.... to inspire those that have yet to attend Promise Keeper events... to start and maintain men’s ministries... to live an ideal... perfect... God driven life fueled with the energy that so deeply resonated, only to find the intrusions and distractions of the same mundane lives they placed on hold to attend their respective event. The passion and zeal that so powerfully accompanied the attendee with the intention to create lasting impact soon loses air like last week’s deflating birthday balloon.

The tech entrepreneur, Drew Houston, has said, “there are 30,000 days in your life. When I was 24, I realized I’m almost 9,000 days down. There are no warm-ups, no practice rounds, no reset buttons. Your biggest risk isn’t failing, it’s getting **too comfortable**.” He goes on to say that every day, each one of us writes a few more words of our own story. The question is, do we want our stories to have meaning, to make a difference, and celebrate our relationship with God in partnership with our brothers? It’s a very personal question and only you can respond to yourself, for yourself.

Deep down inside, we are all leaders and whether we tend to a ministry of one, a few, or an entire congregation, each one of us has the ability to summon the passion, encourage others, and support others in building the staircases to their own faith. You can see from the growth in the

Promise Keeper movement that the power to be able to encourage, inspire, and sustain one's faith is the secret to a fulfilling life.

Does the initial excitement have to fade? How can we learn the technology required to be able to access and keep the passion.... Even when "life" gets in the way? How can we build the networks and matrix to support other men to build their faith? These are some of the questions we turn to in this equipping newsletter, The Key Principles of a Strong Disciple Ministry. Remember, we are all part of the same team and as representatives of God's mission on earth, we must remain focused, mindful, and intent to fulfill our combined purpose. We may not always be perfect in our quest, but it's essential that we practice self awareness in order to inspire others to action and expression of their connection to faith.

- **THE FIVE GROUPS TO REACH**

In every church community, there are five groups of men:

1. The mass of unsaved men
2. The mass of cultural Christians
3. Men who are or want to be disciples
4. Men who are or want to be leaders.
5. The men who are wounded and hurting.... Those with "broken wings."

In order for a ministry to work and sustain itself, all members must be respected and recognized and honored. Every member is a unique individual with concerns and considerations, and as each man expresses himself, he acts as a mirror for us to examine our relationship to our fellow man, the ministry, and to God. None of us operates in a vacuum and none of us is better than the next person. While some may feel certain they are born leaders, they cannot lead without their followers. They cannot lead without knowing the lessons of those that preceded them, and they will not be effective leaders if they are not adept at self reflection and examination. Each of the five groups of men complement the others. By interacting with compassion, we create the possibility of every group being actively engaged and interested in the process of kingdom building. That's not to say that everyone needs to have the same point of view or the same level of participation... it means that in order to build a diverse, inspired, faith based context, it must be organic... meaning that it lives and breathes through the participation and contribution of each member.

Arnold Toynbee, an English philosopher, teaches us, "Apathy can be overcome by enthusiasm, and enthusiasm can only be aroused by two things: first, an ideal, which takes the imagination by storm, and second, a definite intelligible plan for carrying that ideal into practice."

- **LONG TERM, LOW PRESSURE**

Every person grows, learns, and adapts at his own pace. It's important that we respect the time that a person needs to stand on the rim.... Look in.... Observe....consider. Every man is entitled

to take the time he needs to join at his own pace. The truth of the matter, as many of us know, is that if something is meant to be, it will happen, and if it seems like nothing is being accomplished or progress is slow for some members to have their moment of reckoning, that has to be respected. Some suggest that it's important to slow down one's journey through life. We have been taught that life is not about the destination, it's about everything that happens on the path from beginning to end. Life and faith are measured in the moments that mean something, and in order for those moments to be identified, absorbed, and responded to, there must be a respect for time. There is a condition in life that conspires to make us rush... we eat fast food. We take freeways to our destinations. We look for shortcuts to experience. Building a kingdom of God's work is far too important to rush through and glaze over. The most important Godly moments are found in the small incidents and details. That's "where the magic happens." Everything we need to know about life is right in front of us. In order to appreciate those moments and in order to have the wisdom to support others in finding their faith based purpose, it's important to demonstrate patience... and that goes for all aspects of life. Remember when you were in school and there were times in class when you had to read long passages in a textbook silently and to yourself? Didn't it always bug you when some kids rushed through and finished way before you? The pressure was on!!! Allow people the space to learn, question, absorb, and have revelations in their own time. The commitment will be that much more sincere in the long run.

Admiral Hyman Rickover said, “Good ideas are not adopted automatically. They must be driven into practice with **courageous patience.**” Patience truly is a virtue, especially when it comes to supporting our fellow congregants.

- **SHOW MEN CHRIST VS. FIX THEIR BEHAVIOR**

I recall one time, several years ago, when a member of our Outreach Bible study received Christ, but when it came time to demonstrate what he had experienced, he seemed to be reluctant to accept Christ’s influence, which revealed itself in some aspects of his behavior. One morning at our leaders meeting, a member suggested that a group invite this man to lunch and confront him...because.... Well.... You **KNOW** how effective that kind of pressure is with **YOU!** (**Say this as a little joke and wait for the laugh**). We know.... Actions speak louder than words. We discussed the pros and cons and realized that it would be best to **show** him Christ rather than judge him and confront him on his behavior. It is the Holy Spirit that will ultimately awaken change in men, but it's essential that we all act as a team to guide the way and point our brothers in the right direction towards Christ.

By the way, this incident also demonstrates the importance of patience and the need to act with respect for every person’s unique process. I hope you also realize these points are not exclusively for kingdom building. Following these guidelines in life will take you far as well...

remember... all that we do in ministry is to enrich our relationship to our faith in order to live even more godly and worthwhile lives.

- **RELATIONSHIP BASED VS. TASK ORIENTED**

The foundation, purpose, and mission of building a successful and thriving men's ministry has to do with only **ONE** thing: **RELATIONSHIP**. Each one of us has had various reasons to explore joining the mission of expressing faith, and every reason and consideration we might come up with has to do with interacting, sharing, supporting and guiding our friends and colleagues both in our ministries, our church communities, our homes, schools, and neighborhoods. And while we organize to plan events and strategies to improve the lives and enforce the faith of others, through godly ministries we learn the true meaning and power of connection.

In Proverbs 13:20, we are reminded, "Walk with the wise and become wise, for the companion of fools suffers harm." I think the lesson in this is that as we walk with one another and as we strengthen our bonds to each other and God, we find support and encouragement in those that are proud to walk with us. There is comfort in true friendship and wisdom to be found in deep and supportive conversation. It is through profound and meaningful relationships that men begin to feel a trusted sense of community. If we fall into the trap of thinking that all we have to do is **DO**... accomplish something... show a result, attain a goal, that does not honor the most important aspect of building a godly ministry which is finding the strength and power of **human connection**. While events may attract a man's attention, it is building authentic friendships

forged on common interests, respect, and faith that will form the deepest and most lasting roots.

It's important to plan and execute events to support our ministries, but it is more important to foster healthy and meaningful relationships from bonding over experience.

- **FIVE GOALS FOR EVERY MAN**

through practice, observation, and examination, over the years I have identified five things a man can do to keep his life on track. While these five actions will in no way earn salvation, they are part of a much more important plan to keep one's integrity, focus, and life purpose on track.

They may not be the key to a "fast track" to enlightenment, nonetheless, being conscious of them and practicing them provides wisdom.

- The man that truly wants to know God will place himself on the path of falling more deeply in love with Jesus.
- He will devote consistent quiet time to pause and reflect on life and what it means to him to live a godly existence.
- He will find and attend an organized and encouraging Bible study group.
- He will become an active member of an accountability group.

- He will find a way in which he can be actively involved in church and even consider a personal ministry when he is ready.

For anyone that might be interested, we have developed these ideas more fully in “A Look in the Mirror”. The piece is called, “The Five Defining Disciplines of Growing Men.” You can request this by contacting our office at _____.

It is the purpose and intention... of especially the first four of these disciplines that their practice will encourage a deeper and more profound awareness of a man’s connection to, and gratitude for, his personal relationship with Jesus. If given the space and opportunity to really experience the shifts that will occur in their lives, the impact will be astounding. With the added chance to serve on a leadership team, as discipleship group leaders, and possibly as planners and executors of momentum events, these actions complement one another and form a complete and effective means to experience the true meaning of serving God.

- **FIVE RESPONSIBILITIES OF EVERY MAN**

- Every man must be taught and demonstrate that he has learned and continues to take personal responsibility for his own private life in five important areas. As members and leaders of men’s ministries, it is important that you guide your members to honor these responsibilities as they will have far reaching and positive effects. You know that no one else

will take care of you and as such it is important that you share that message so that it is understood, respected, and followed.:

- His walk with God
- His relationship with his wife
- His relationship with his children
- His personal finances
- His health and well being

- **SENIOR PASTOR SUPPORT**

This is possibly the most important of the steps to pay attention to. The Senior Pastor has demonstrated his commitment to his faith and to his congregation. He has probably been trying to get participation from his constituents for a long time. And while you may approach with a fresh enthusiasm, your Pastor will be delighted.... After all, he's just witnessed **YOUR** transformation! Forge partnerships with respect and intention to make a difference and build modern, strong ministries filled with devoted disciples.

We've discussed what it takes to build a ministry, but the other side of the discussion is, "Why do Men's ministries tend to lose steam?" Some ministries seem to be set up to move along at an

admirable pace while others just seem to burn out... You want to avoid the latter. Recently I visited a church where I tried to establish a men's ministry, but instead I found a group of burned out workers. Apparently they didn't follow the practice of "pacing" and did too much too soon. While the Bible teaches, "Go and make disciples baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, (Matthew 28:19), it seems some wires got crossed... somewhere along the line "disciples" might have been interpreted as "browbeaten workers." That kind of mission doesn't affect positive results. Disciples are born out of the passion for their faith and that needs to be honored. And even when "The harvest is so great," we need motivated "workers" that are passionate about doing the work of God. Disciples are there out of their love for their faith. Remember the part I mentioned a while ago about the five points of personal responsibility? Every man has to take care of himself. Remember the part when I said the foundation of a successful ministry is relationship? Men in ministry must look after one another. We must preserve our own resources and well being in order to devote our best to God.

The three essential components of a strong disciple making ministry consist of:

- **A strong leadership team-** Bill Bright has shared his wisdom by reminding us that "Everything boils down to leadership." It's true. It all starts from the top. Assemble four to twelve devoted men willing to see God work his magic. Meet as brothers once a week and use the time to bind and strengthen each other's faith. Resist the temptation to focus on "operations." Study your Bible as a group. Suggest that each man form his own discipleship group. This will strengthen their commitment to leadership and relationship.

- **Interesting, productive, and relationship building events.** (**This was not mentioned in the earlier part of the speech. I added after I read further**) - from momentum building mega events to community participation, sports retreats, arranging for guest speakers, and other functions, there are always new and creative ways to support and build engaging, productive ministries.
- **Discipleship groups-** identify disciples in your group that are ready to move up. Those that are worthwhile as leaders will self-identify. Try to avoid persuasion. That doesn't work and the disciple probably won't last as a leader. It's important to encourage vision in the younger, less experienced ranks. Remember how you felt as you considered identifying yourself to take on more responsibility. Also remember to be patient. As Richard Foster said, “ Our tendency is to overestimate what we can accomplish in one year, but underestimate what we can accomplish in ten years.” the very nature of a disciple tells us it takes time to cultivate and nurture the passion required to accept the responsibility.

It's also important to take time to encourage your team of disciples and leaders. Encourage them as you would be encouraged, and remember the depth of your commitment and responsibilities. Live your life as an example. Tom Skinner said, “We must become the live demonstration here on earth of what is happening in heaven, so that any time anyone wants to know what is happening in heaven all they have to do is check with us.”

When we visit churches, we remind the staff to relate to one another as brothers. We don't need a church full of committees. Treat others as you would be treated. Remember we are passing the message of God and He is represented in each one of us. Be mindful in your approach to your ministry and remember the humanity that is the key to success. While Mahatma Ghandi reminded us to “Be the change you want to see in the world,” remember that holds true when building a ministry. Demonstrate respect, compassion, enthusiasm, and relationship. Your leaders must be the models that guide the team. Demonstrate joy in planning and preparation. Set an example that others want to aspire to. Find the way to make being a disciple or a leader in your ministry the “hottest ticket in town” while never losing sight of your mission.

Schedule events across your calendar that feed into and complement one another. While momentum events are great for just that, and they stir up adrenaline and enthusiasm, plan on events that speak to other parts of your constituents' and disciples' passions and interests. Consider inviting guest speakers to provide fresh perspectives. Plan an evangelistic fishing trip. Get a group together to participate in your local Mayor's prayer breakfast. Think of new ways to host events that have a special appeal to your particular group. Reach out to other church groups in your area and encourage true fraternity. Big events capture momentum but it's the follow up afterward that will work to cement exciting new mutually supportive future participation.

The third component in building effective, productive and strong men's ministry is the discipleship group. It is in this group that men receive their spiritual care. I like to say that there

is no such thing as a “Lone Ranger Christian.” You can see by the depth of what I am touching on today that although each one of us must take responsibility for our faith, we are blessed to have a brotherhood of fellow disciples, leaders, friends and Pastors to guide us and walk with us on our path to religious enlightenment.

Disciples are pupils. We were all placed on this earth for the purpose of learning. One of the most essential parts of disciple groups is Bible study. There is no substitute for achieving direct contact with the living Lord except through his living word, the Bible. Of course there is other essential literature that works to enhance Bible study and each group can determine what reading best supports their quest for Godliness.

The second component of discipleship groups is an accountability group. To us, accountability is defined as, “To be regularly answerable for each of the key areas of our lives to qualified people.” These groups serve to shine a light on all relationships and they are designed to see how you're doing and standing up in the world. We have small reminder cards that can fit in your wallet that serve to describe the essentials of what these groups can do. Feel free to contact our office for complementary copies. You can also request a copy of “A Look in the Mirror issue, “How to Start an accountable relationship.”

I know we have covered a great deal of territory in the time we've spent together. Ultimately, our message is clear: embrace your faith, be a man of God, and know that you have partners to support you in your mission. Remember we are all equal but some men come to God at a slower, quieter, more introspective pace while others may express overt enthusiasm. All have a place at the table of a Godly mission. Embrace difference, respect one another's opinions and input, and know that you're in the right place when you walk with God. Our practice is not a race. It takes time and consideration and a certain amount of personal introspection in order to find your sustained path to enlightenment. Know that you have partners. Know that if you struggle with something.... A concept... a challenge, an expression of faith in the outside world, you have a whole network of brothers ready to walk with you.

I want to thank you for being here to explore your enriched expressions of faith and I am proud of the Godly community we have built. May you all find the strength to carry His word with you and to inspire a whole new generation of godly men to join us. Our door is always open and our ministry is available to answer questions and provide even more guidance. You can find us at _____.

Thank you all and God Bless!