

THE AVERAGE CHRISTIAN GUY

Our churches are full of men, thousands of men. What are they like? What do they struggle with? How do they spend their time and money? What are their priorities and core values? What characterizes them and what value are they to the church today?

I ask these questions in light of the current crisis in which we find ourselves living today. There is an urgent battle going on all around us. It intensifies with every passing day. It's relentless! It's a cultural war. It is a spiritual war. We have a clash of civilizations with radical terrorists who will not stop until we who they consider "infidels" are dead. We have a nation divided by the cultural and spiritual values. It is basically a war for people's hearts, minds, and souls. It is a war of beliefs, values, character, and world and life views.

What we are seeing is the most powerful, advanced, wealthy, educated and blessed nation the world has ever known, disintegrating before our very eyes. It's not the first time this has happened to a great and powerful civilization. The same thing happened in the great Greece and Rome. No armies could take them from without. They disintegrated from within. If we judge how we are doing by all of our observations and the current statistics in the crucial areas of moral and spiritual values, we have to conclude that we are losing the battle. It seems that all of our valiant efforts to stem the tide of the wave of darkness that is engulfing us, by fighting the battle in the halls of Congress, in the courts and in the media, are at best, merely slowing down the darkness. It is steadily progressing.

As followers of Jesus Christ, who have been born into this nation and world for such a time as this, it seems to me that there are some crucial questions that we need to ask. Not only do we need to ask these questions, we desperately need biblical answers. While this list is not exhaustive, let's pose a few questions to begin with:

What weapons are we using to fight this battle?

Our first weapon is **PRAYER**. E.M. Bounds said in regard to prayer, "What the church needs today is not more machinery or better, not new organizations or more novel methods, but men whom the Holy Spirit can use—men of prayer, men mighty in prayer."

The weapon God chose to fight the battle when Jesus entered the fray as a man in His Incarnation was **The Gospel**. After all, He did come to fight. And He came to fight for one reason and one reason alone: In obedience to His Father, to bring Him all the glory, He came to die that sinful mankind might be reconciled to His Father by His death and resurrection. It is the **Gospel of Jesus Christ**. God entrusted the Gospel to His church, and only to His church. No other entity or institution has been given this sacred privilege and responsibility.

WHAT WAS HIS PLAN? MEN!! "Again, E.M. Bounds: "Men are God's method. The Church is looking for better methods: God is looking for better men." Without going into all of His plan and strategies, it seems that the crucial one was that "He chose twelve (men) that they might be with Him." The point? Jesus started the first ministry to men. He chose men to accomplish His work. He created men for getting things done, taking risks, loving adventure and He gave us a desire to mix it up. He recruited His guys, trained them, befriended them and deployed them.

He started small. He zeroed in like a laser beam on a small band of the most unqualified, uneducated, poor and ignoble group of guys that you could ever imagine. The Apostle Paul explained it perfectly in I Corinthians 1: 20-31.

He went deep. He spent almost three years with them, living together, ministering together, teaching them, modeling for them, mentoring them, and giving Himself to them in every way. He rebuked and corrected them, instructed and trained them in what it meant to be right with God.

He thought big. When he had finished the job, he died, was resurrected, restored Peter, and gave them their assignment, the purpose for the rest of their lives. Go into all the world and preach the gospel. The whole world. All of the world. There are thousands of men out there who have never really heard the gospel yet to be reached. There are also thousands of men who have put their faith in Jesus as their Savior who are confused about their Christian faith and their identity in Jesus Christ.

WHAT GENERALLY CHARACTERIZES THE AVERAGE CHRISTIAN MAN TODAY?

He's Insecure, Inadequate, Isolated, Lonely and Fearful.

He's Casual Relationally With Jesus And Others.

He's Generally Under-Challenged In His Spiritual Or Christian Life And Has To Look Elsewhere If He Wants To Be A Part Of Something Bigger Than He Is To Give His Life To.

He Has Misplaced Priorities And Rarely Takes Time To Consider How To Make Them Right.

He Works Hard And Usually More Than Is Needed Or Healthy.

He's Stressed Out And Hates It, But Doesn't Think He Can Do Anything About It. He Feels Trapped And Like He's Running On Empty.

He Doesn't Take Care Of Himself Physically:

- doesn't exercise
- doesn't eat right
- is over weight
- will not go to the doctor even when he suspects something is wrong
- has not had a physical exam in recent memory

He Has Basic Struggles With:

- guilt and shame
- believing God loves him
- receiving grace
- giving grace
- making commitments
- keeping commitments
- business ethics (being more of a cultural Christian than a biblical Christian, he might be described more as a businessman who happens to be a Christian, rather than a Christian who happens to be a businessman)

He Struggles With Being Able Or Willing To Say:

- "I was wrong"
- "I don't know"
- "I'm hurting"
- "I need help"
- "I'm sorry"
- "I love you"

He Has A Father Wound:

There's a hole in his heart that he has been trying to fill his whole life.

Possibly...

- he grew up without a dad and has been looking for one all of his life
- had an "absentee" dad who was home but never spent much time with him
- he never heard his dad say, "Son, I love you"
- he could never please his dad or be good enough for him
- his dad was verbally critical of him and did not believe in him, and those "put-downs" have dogged him all of his life
- he had a hard time respecting his dad
- he was hurt seeing his dad mistreat his mom, or seeing his dad dominated by his mom
- he was never mentored or helped spiritually or morally by his dad
- he was never disciplined by his dad and felt that he didn't care about him
- he was punished by his dad a lot, and was physically knocked around

He Is Struggling With Pornography If He is Not Already Addicted To It

He Has An ANGER Problem And Basically Doesn't Even Know Why

He Is Challenged If Not Struggling In His Marriage

- he is not as interested in his marriage as his wife is
- he had no preparation for marriage; read no books; attended no classes; had no pre-marital counseling.
- he does not pray with any consistency with his wife
- he feels he cannot please her and that she doesn't accept him for who he is
- he feels that he cannot be himself as a man or individual and still be loved
- he is not as good a communicator as she would like for him to be
- while he knows he is not perfect, he resents that she spends most of her time trying to change him
- he would like for her to be as interested in having sex as he is

He Does Not Initiate:

- going to counseling for himself or his marriage
- date nights or romantic weekend getaways
- anything that is designed to work on his marriage (such as couples retreats, marriage workshops, classes, small groups, or reading something that focuses on the relationship)
- communication with her past an informational level

He Feels Like He Has Plateaued Spiritually:

- he has heard a thousand sermons
- he has been to numerous retreats, workshops, seminars, classes, small groups, Bible studies, conferences and Promise Keepers
- he has read the latest and most stimulating books about men
- he knows that there is a lot more to God than he has gotten to yet

- he feels that he needs an “accountability group”, but does not really want to be in one and the ones he has been in haven’t helped that much
- he knows he does not serve enough, read his Bible enough, pray enough, share his faith enough, and lives with the accompanying guilt and shame of his habitually poor spiritual performance
- he often feels like throwing in his spiritual towel because he is just can’t seem to be the “good Christian” he is supposed to be
- he doesn’t feel like he can just be himself and still be a Christian or man of God
- he believes that other men have their act together, but he doesn’t
- he believes that God loves the other guys, but not him
- he believes that he is unique and the only guy struggling so much with his particular temptations and sins
- he often struggles with believing that he is really saved
- he spends most of his time in the performance-based game of “sin management” rather than enjoying the sense of freedom and release that comes with a humble and trusting walk with Christ
- he compares himself to other men and comes away feeling inferior and like a second class “loser”
- he is very uncomfortable with the term “Man of God” as it applies to him
- he wants to be a “Man of God”, but doesn’t know what it really means or how to become one
- he’s afraid to get too close to anyone because he’s afraid that he will be found out for who he really is, and he’s getting pretty tired of this
- he is terrified of losing CONTROL

He Feels Uncomfortable On Spiritual Turf

- he does not particularly like going to church
- he has a hard time identifying with the guy up there preaching
- he is afraid that if he really gets serious with God that He will make him go to Africa as a missionary
- he struggles in his prayer life
- he cannot keep up with his wife spiritually and allows her to take the spiritual lead in their relationship and in their home
- he is fearful of sharing his faith because he does not know how and he fears rejection and appearing ignorant and foolish
- he knows he does not know his Bible very well and basically avoids places or situations where he might be asked to pray out loud or look something up
- he is willing to be an elder or deacon, but does not believe he is qualified spiritually, so he ducks and dodges and does a lot of fancy spiritual footwork so as not to be found out to be so shallow spiritually as a leader
- he is more apt to attend a business meeting or a painful root canal than a prayer meeting

He Doesn’t Have A “Best Friend”

- he is generally not that interested in the men’s ministry, if his church has one
- he has a hard time trusting other men
- he feels competitive with and unsafe and threatened by other men
- he is afraid to be really known by another man; he wants to but is afraid to take that risk
- he is afraid he will lose control of his emotions and embarrass himself if he gets too close and vulnerable to other men
- he does not have the time to cultivate a “best friend”, so he settles for shallow relationships with men who are not any more interested in going deeper than he is

- he is more comfortable isolating when he is struggling or hurting than sharing this perceived weakness with another man or men
- no hugging!

He Tends To Find His Identity In His:

- Job (I am what I DO)
- Bank account/possessions (I am what I EARN)
- Sexual prowess (real men always have great sex)
- Self-sufficiency (I walk alone/ the self-made man)
- Emotional strength (big boys do not cry)

He is Confused About:

- what a real man is in our day
- what a "Man of God" is and how he might become one
- what spiritual leadership in the home is all about
- how you become a spiritual leader
- what his role as a Christian husband and father is and how to do it
- how to work out his salvation in the marketplace and still be able to provide for himself and his family

He Sees Himself As Basically A Good Guy, And He Really Is, Even Though:

- he does not tithe, but he does give occasionally, when he can
- he does not help, serve, or volunteer at church much, but feels pretty good about it when he does
- he reads, but not much, and basically when his job requires it
- he walks away from things he cannot do well, solve quickly, or fix easily
- he struggles with feeling unappreciated and not respected for who he is and for what he does contribute
- he wants to be respected, but basically does not feel he deserves it, or worse, does not feel he has earned it

HE WANTS: Things...But Only As Long As He Can Have Them On His Terms

He wants...

- a best friend.....but not if it is going to take a lot of time
- to be in a small group.....but not do homework
- to be involved in spiritual things...but not if they happen in the early morning
- to be a better husband and father.....but no book reading or attending classes
- to write out a check to help.....but not get personally involved
- to want to go to church.....but thinks it is more for women and kids
- the crown.....but not the cross
- to be glorified with Jesus.....but not crucified with Him
- to grow spiritually.....but not if it means abandoning his right to himself
- to be humble.....but not broken
- a clear conscience.....but struggles with humbling himself & repenting
- to be pure.....but without confessing his sin
- to be in an accountability group.....but not held accountable
- to be called a servant.....but is offended if he's treated like one
- to be a man of character.....but not if it means disciplining himself
- to be obedient.....but not if it means giving up control
- to be a man of prayer.....but he's uncomfortable being alone with God
- to be a leader.....but not if it means being a foot washing slave
- to make commitments.....but maintain his right to keep his options open

- to keep his vows.....but only if you keep yours
- to be involved.....but only if it is convenient
- to be able to sin..... without having to face the consequences

This average man has been consistently and successfully evangelized by a secular, worldly culture that has won his heart and affections. This evangelistic effort has taken men who believe in God and Jesus and the whole spiritual, Christian ball of wax, but behave like “cultural Christians” at best and “practical atheist”, at worst. They have been so absorbed and molded into the world’s materialistic, consumer-driven and humanistic mold, that they can hardly be distinguished from the irreligious ranks that they are among every day.

George Gallop’s summary statement at the end of his book, *The Search For Faith In America*, sheds some light on this subject. After surveying huge segments of our culture, Christian and non, he comments, “Never before in the history of the world has the gospel of Jesus Christ made such inroads, while at the same time making so little difference in how people live.”

Chuck Swindoll said that, “If something doesn’t happen in the next ten years, the body of Christ will become a laughing stock.” He said that in the early 80’s.

George Barna weighs in on this in his book, *Vital Signs*, in the last summary chapter he entitles, “Christianity In America: The Tragedy Of Worldliness”. He summarizes in this chapter what he has learned in his research and surveys. In concluding he writes:

“The practice of American believers has proven that pure Christianity—faith in Jesus that is untainted by the values and treasures of a profane world, as exemplified through beliefs, speech, and conduct—is an ideal, unrealized concept. Numerous indicators suggest that rather than adhering to a Christian philosophy of life that is occasionally tarnished by lapses into infidelity, many Christians are profoundly secularized, and only occasionally do they respond to conditions and situations in a Christian manner. Recent research shows that many Christians are especially vulnerable to the worldly philosophies of materialism, humanism, and hedonism.

The frail and self-serving nature of Christianity in the lives of so many believers is nothing new, but perhaps at no prior moment in history have so many Christians waged the battle for piety and holiness so casually and failed so consistently in their quest for righteousness.”

Jerry Bridges in his excellent book, *The Pursuit of Holiness*, addressed the issue like this,

“The call to a holy life is based on the fact that God Himself is holy. Because God is holy, He requires that we be holy. Many Christians have what we might call a “cultural holiness”. They adapt to the character and behavior patterns of Christians around them. As the Christian culture around them is more or less holy, so these Christians are more or less holy. But God has not called us to be like those around us. He has called us to be like Himself. Holiness is nothing less than conformity to the character of God.”

And finally, Pat Morley in his book, *Man In The Mirror*, quotes A.W. Tozer regarding “cultural Christians”:

“A whole new generation of Christians has come up believing that it is possible to “accept” Christ without forsaking the world. In our day we have seen a basic shift in values in the world and in the church. We have moved away from the traditional Judeo-Christian values toward a life view that allows us to self-select values based on whether they serve our self-interests. “Cultural Christianity” means to pursue the God we want rather than the God who is. It is the tendency to be shallow in our understanding of God, wanting Him to be more of a gentle grandfather type who spoils us and lets us have our own way. It is sensing a need for God, but on our own terms. It is

wanting the God we have underlined in our Bibles without wanting the rest of Him, too. It is God relative rather than God absolute. “Cultural Christianity” is Christianity made impotent. It is Christianity with little or no impact on the values and beliefs of our society. When the secular life view is merged into the Christian life view, neither one survives.”

SO WHAT DO WE DO NOW?

All Christian men who have ever had a life-changing encounter with Jesus Christ, however great or small, can find ourselves all over this profile. With any degree of honesty we have to admit to have profoundly affected by the world as our culture has become more and more secular and less and less influenced by the church and religious institutions and values. Most of us, if we are honest, would admit to being average spiritually before we read it, but to see such a detailed description of what we look like can be sobering to say the least.

But it is very important for us to know that the point of this is not to discourage, belittle, berate or condemn God’s men. Jesus did not come to condemn the average confused men of His day, and He truly has no interest in condemning men today. That’s definitely not the point here.

The point is to help us see as men of God that as improbable as it may seem to us average Christian guys, we are deeply loved by God. He understands us completely and He is still choosing men just like us to turn the world right side up. He knows and understands our struggles, and He is sticking to His original plan! That would be us; His MEN!

You see, when Jesus sees you, He sees you not as you are, but as you will be when you fearlessly give yourself to Him in total abandonment and absolute trust. He has not asked us to trust in ourselves, our gifts and abilities, but to trust in Him, in His power, strength and wisdom. In I Corinthians 1:26-29, Paul said, “Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. **BUT** God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.”

I think Paul must have written this just for us men. Not wise...Not influential...Not noble...**BUT**...God Chose...guys like us!! We can all relate to this.

Walt Henrichsen said, “Christianity is a rescue effort for desperate men”, and if he is right, and I believe he is, the majority of men will only make deep, heartfelt commitments to Jesus Christ and His mission in the world when they are truly desperate enough.

Desperate means, “having lost hope; moved by despair; employing extreme measures in an attempt to escape defeat or frustration; suffering extreme need or anxiety;”

When the man is desperate enough, total abandonment and absolute trust start looking pretty good to him. So, if he is not desperate today, be patient. Life has a way of making men desperate.

We could try to help this man work on all of these habits, attitudes, and views, taking them head on, one at a time. We could put him through endless studies, classes, seminars, retreats and counseling programs. We’ve done that and have had, in my opinion, limited success. Experience has shown us that we cannot fix the problem by focusing on the

problem, and the problem is that he, the man, is the problem. We are finding that it works much better when we focus on the solution, which is Jesus Christ.

INFLUENCERS

That being said, we believe that “Any encounter with Jesus Christ makes a man a better man”. As already stated, the world is looking for better methods while God’s plan has always been to make better men. He is going after His men, thousands of men, and He is giving them His influence, power, and authority. As they draw close to Him, He is drawing close to them, and it is a powerful and wonderful thing to see.

We have this vision and passion because we believe that when you reach the man, you reach his marriage, family, church, marketplace, culture and world. **God’s plan is still to use His men to reach a lost world. It always has been. This is not to diminish the invaluable contribution women of God make,** but to inspire men who have proven to be pretty difficult to inspire. For a lot of reasons, women are so much more ready, willing and available to serve God and make a difference than men are. Recent statistics reveal to us that 80% of the volunteers in church are women. There are always more women in worship services than men. Men have been marginalized in our culture and have shrunk back from taking their rightful place before God in servant leadership in the home and the church. A recent poll of men on the street reveals that men in America today feel emasculated; they feel like women are running everything; and that they don’t know what their roles are anymore. We are trying to help men get men back in the God’s ball game.

Probably no statistic I have seen sheds a clearer light on the value, power and the need and influence of a man than this one that is purported to be from a study done by the Southern Baptist. They found that if you lead a mother to Christ, 17% of those families will follow her in the faith. If you lead a Dad to Christ, 93% of those families will follow him in the faith.

When we help men become more intimate with Jesus Christ; when they become “**self-feeders**” and learn to hear God’s voice for themselves, and connect with God at the heart, everyone benefits. Wives, children, families, churches, mission organizations, tithing, the marketplace, culture, community and the world is impacted by these men who have been created by God to be His “**Influencers**” to their generation. He changes their values, priorities, and world and life views and brings them in line with His own. They begin to see the strategic value of marshalling all of their time, talent and treasure for the purpose of getting the gospel out through their lives to their spheres of influence.

We believe that this is more of what the world needs today. Men of God who like the sons of Issachar in II Chronicles 12:32, “... understand the times and know what to do...for such a time as this.”

Better men who are better because they have spent time in God’s presence know that what the world needs is Jesus Christ. As they learn to hear His voice for themselves and become more like Him, that is exactly what the world will get. The world will be more influenced by the gospel at the ground root level where the average guy lives and interacts, than at the church, or in the political arena, or at business or social levels. I heard a comment that I think is insightful and true which says, most people come to Christ through a close friend or relative than through church services or large events and outreaches. This is not to invalidate these event driven ministries, but is to say that teaching and making disciples of the laity to live and share Christ in their own sphere of influence is strategic and vital to the work of God in the world. God’s plan is for men to lead their families, churches and businesses in the Spirit of Christ. That’s what discipleship is all about.

"Steve Farrar in his book, Point Man, speaking about electing a Christian man to the Presidency, said this, "If hundreds of thousands of men seriously began to lead their own homes, the impact on America would be far greater than one Christian man leading in the White House."

We study, memorize, meditate on and hear sermons from the Bible, pray, go to classes to be trained in spiritual disciplines, and hang out with godly, like-minded men, with the goal in mind of becoming like Jesus. Why? It is because His ultimate goal is to win men to Himself. It's to restore men to their rightful place in relationship with Him. It's the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19, 20, and Acts 1:8. Jesus Christ is attractive to the point of being irresistible when you truly get to know Him. The more I think like, behave like, and talk like Jesus, the more men will be attracted to Him through me. That's a good definition for ministry. Matthew said it like this in Matthew 5:16, "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see you good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven." It's all about Him! This is why John the Baptist said, "I must decrease and He must increase."

Men think ministry is something they do, when actually, it is who they are that defines their ministry. We must be the men of God before we can do the work of God. With that in mind, it must truly grieve God's heart that so many men want to serve Him who won't take time to get to know Him. One of our sayings is, "For a man to go to church week after week, month after month, and year after year, and not become more like Jesus is unacceptable. In light of the Great Commission, we believe that there is nothing more strategically important than focusing our ministry on God's men. That's what Jesus did and He has had amazing results!

Pete McKenzie
The Influencers
December 2006