

1

MEN'S MINISTRY IS ROCKET SCIENCE

Pat has a favorite business saying he picked up somewhere along the way, “Anyone can bring me a problem; I’m looking for people who can also bring me a solution.” This chapter provides an overview of a proven system to help you disciple every man in your church. The rest of the book will unpack this system in detail.

DURING A HIGH-TECH BOOM, a few young professionals in Orlando, Florida, were creating a dream company. With backgrounds in helping the homeless, the jobless, the disadvantaged, and the sick, they created a unique computerized system to track cases as they passed through the social services community.

As word got out about this new technology, inquiries poured in from all over the country. Soon they had a for-profit company, investors, and consultants. They were going to do good in the world. In the process, they hoped to do well for themselves too.

THE AMERICAN DREAM

Brett was one of the dreamers. In the company’s first year, they did their first million dollars in sales. It was hard work. One person was responsible for selling the software—Brett. He would go anywhere, anytime, to talk to anybody. Brett attended countless conferences and made dozens of sales presentations. He was living the American Dream: being in on the ground floor of a technology company.

Soon, venture capitalists started calling. They told Brett and his team how they should grow. They said if certain benchmarks were hit, they

would be ready to invest. Brett and his team began to believe they would hit it big.

Following the venture capitalists' advice, Brett hired a national sales force. Soon six people scattered across the country were looking for potential customers. But those salespeople were new to both social services and the technology, so after they found the prospects, Brett flew out to make the presentations. Instead of one person scheduling trips for him, Brett now had six people doing it!

THE BUBBLE BURSTS

Then the stock market started to go south. Suddenly, the venture capitalists who had been breathlessly waiting for the company to grow stopped returning phone calls—even as Brett and his team met the potential investors' benchmarks.

“When the going gets tough, the tough get going,” Brett had heard all his life. So he worked even harder. Even without the capital from those investors, he was determined to make the company a success through sheer will.

One afternoon, Brett got an excited call from his representative in Texas. He asked Brett to come the next day to meet with a large government prospect. A little weary, Brett called his wife, Kimberly, to break the news. He told her he had to go on another trip, and on short notice. Kimberly's response caught him off guard. “That's OK,” she said. “It's easier when you're not here.”

Brett tried to laugh it off. “Easier when I'm not there. Ha!” He and his wife had two small children, were active in their church, and owned a home. What was she talking about? So when Brett got home, he asked her.

“I mean it's easier when you're not here,” she repeated. “You're trying to build a company, I understand. But it's not easy for me either. You call at 5:30 to say you're finishing up and you'll be home in thirty minutes, then you walk in at 8:00. I try to keep dinner warm, but it's ruined. I'm the one who has to answer the kids when they ask, ‘Where's Daddy?’ or ‘Why is Daddy so grumpy?’ When you are here, you're so tired that you pretty much ignore us. So go on your trip. We'll be fine. Really. It's just easier when you're not here.”

Brett was in trouble. Worst of all, he didn't really know how it happened. He had told himself he was doing it all for his family. He would buy

a nice house in a good neighborhood for his wife; send his kids to good schools; give money to charity. But somewhere along the line, he had lost his way. He realized it wasn't really about his family; it was about Brett.

Ironically, while he was losing himself in his company, he and his wife were busy at church, where they led worship for several hundred grade school children in multiple services every weekend.

How did this happen? Brett grew up in church. Now he was a leader in his present church! And yet his wife and family preferred for him to be gone. It was easier. He had become a distraction in their lives.

Why was Brett being left behind? Why hadn't he connected with his church in a way that helped him become a passionate disciple of Jesus Christ?

THE PARADOX OF MEN'S MINISTRY: IT IS ROCKET SCIENCE

Men's Ministry. How hard can it really be? Think about it: You've got men; you've got a church. Add a testimony, some pancakes, a prayer, and—poof!—a men's ministry, right?

Man in the Mirror has worked with thousands of churches across America to help them disciple men. Leaders from churches all over the world have journeyed to Orlando to attend classes at our Leadership Training Center. This book is based on what we've learned from these and other churches. You get to stand on their shoulders.

To encourage and motivate these leaders, we used to tell them: "Look. What we're trying to do here is not rocket science."

And then during one class . . . a new insight. As we stared at this group of leaders struggling to reach men in their churches, we realized these were not clueless men. Many were successful businessmen and leaders in their churches. They were accomplished, intelligent, hardworking men. And yet, year after year they were struggling to reach and disciple their men.

Why? Because men's ministry is just grueling. As one of our leaders has said, "A man is a hard thing to reach."

Men's ministry actually is rocket science. While the process is simple enough, men themselves are quite complex.

When you are working on rockets, things are pretty objective. It's all about physical laws and mathematical concepts like gravity, velocity, angles of ascent, and coefficients of drag. But men are not nearly as predictable. Rockets don't get laid off, have trouble with their kids, or endure a health crisis.

Still, there are some parallels between rocket science and men's ministry. For example:

- **Gravity.** Most men shoulder the burden of supporting a family financially, trying to be a good husband and father, and resisting the temptations of a world that wants to drag them down.
- **Velocity.** New Christians go like gangbusters; but many men have been in church for a long time, and their enthusiasm is waning.
- **Angles of ascent.** Some men get it and steadily move forward; others careen back and forth in their spiritual journey, veering off and hurting people as they go. The key is to ensure they are moving toward Christlikeness.
- **Coefficients of drag.** Jobs, soccer games, family problems, church commitments, hobbies . . . All of these seem to hold men back—leaders too—as they seek to develop their faith and their ministry.

If you've been struggling to get traction in your men's ministry, this should bring you relief and hope. It brings relief when you understand it's not just you (it really is hard to reach and disciple men), and hope because this book contains a strategy that can help you do it. You can reach men in your church. You can get them to grow closer to Christ. This book will show you how.

THE PHYSICS OF MEN'S MINISTRY

You must accept several constants, however, if you are going to launch and sustain a powerful men's ministry. (These will come up again later, but it's good to manage your expectations from the start.) Here are three realistic parameters to remember:

First, it takes a long time to make a disciple. Jesus spent three years with His disciples, traveling with them, eating with them, teaching them. Even then, one of them sold Him out, another one denied he even knew Him, and all of them panicked and hid after Jesus was killed. How can we expect to make disciples in a twenty-four-week class? The corollary to this is . . .

Second, it can take up to ten years to build and sustain a successful men's

ministry. That's right. Ten years. 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."¹ There's just no such thing as an "overnight men's ministry success story." If you stick with it, eventually you'll look around your church and see men who are disciples and leaders. You'll realize that your ministry is responsible in some way for most of those men. And it will take ten years. You are not called to produce immediate results, just to be faithful.

Third, there are no "Five Easy Steps to an Effective Men's Ministry." There aren't even five hard steps. At the Leadership Training Center we sometimes refer to this as "Insert Tab A into Slot B Men's Ministry." It just doesn't work that way. This book is *preceptive*, not *prescriptive*. We explain "why" and "how" to disciple men, but we don't specify exactly "what" you should do. Instead, we will help you plan your own concrete next steps according to the culture and needs of your church.

FROM PROTOTYPE TO MANUFACTURING

The hard, cold reality is that we will not see a revival in America and the world if effective disciple-building of men in churches does not move from the prototype stage to the manufacturing stage. What do we mean by that?

Imagine you were alive in 1900. You might have seen an automobile drive through town. People would have gathered to point and stare at this unusual new apparatus. But only twenty-five years later, to see an automobile would have been no big deal. Why? Because in 1913 Henry Ford invented the assembly line with a conveyor belt. By 1927 the Ford Motor Company had manufactured fifteen million Model T's! Ford helped move the auto industry from the prototype stage to the manufacturing stage.

Right now, hundreds of churches are doing a wonderful job discipling men. You may have heard about some of them—we can all point and stare and learn from their success. But there are about 350,000 churches in America. Our passion is to see a dynamic disciple-making ministry to men in hundreds of thousands of churches. Discipling men needs to move from an unusual activity in a few churches to a common characteristic of the life of most churches.

THE BIG IDEA

The discipleship system of your church is perfectly designed to produce the kind of men you have sitting in the pews.

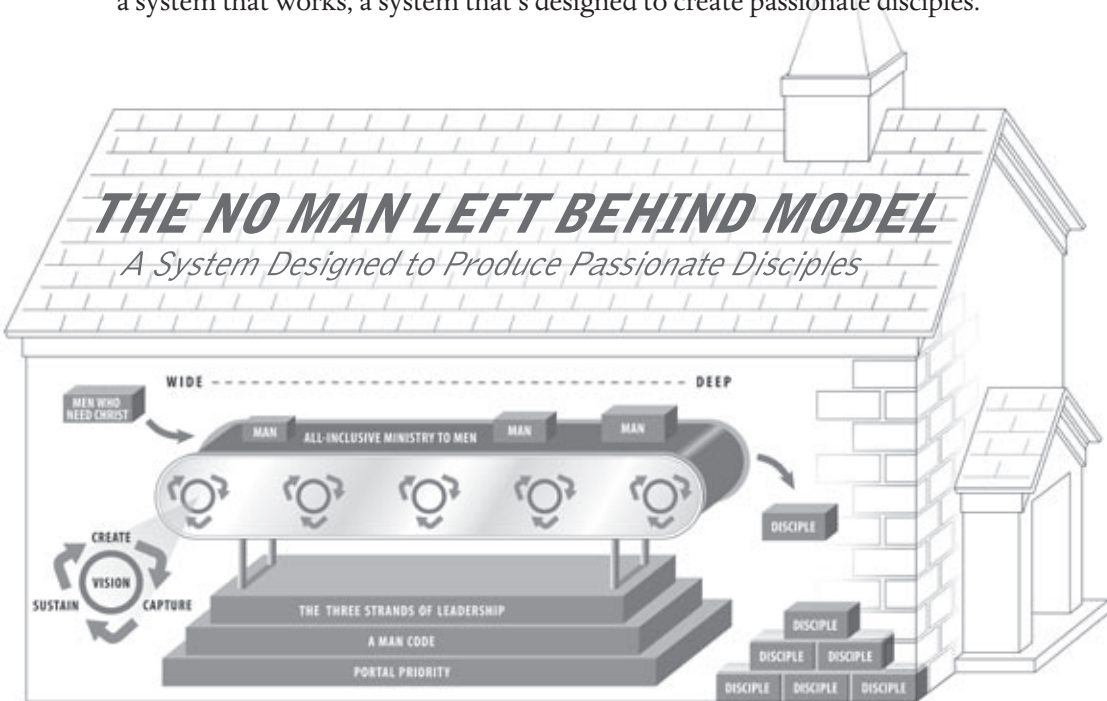
A SYSTEM PERFECTLY DESIGNED

What about your church? In business we have an axiom: “Your system is perfectly designed to produce the results you are getting.” Imagine a factory where the front right fender falls off of every third car that rolls off the assembly line. The manufacturing “system” of the factory is perfectly designed to produce cars that have a one in three chance of a fender falling off!

This applies to more than manufacturing processes. The same can be said of ministry systems (or models). In other words, the discipleship “system” of your church is perfectly designed to produce the kind of men you have sitting in the pews (or not sitting in the pews, as the case may be).

HOW THIS BOOK IS STRUCTURED

That’s why at Man in the Mirror we focus on helping churches by equipping and training leaders, and that’s why we wrote this book. We will present you with a system designed to sustain an effective disciple-making ministry to men in your church. This model has been proven in local churches—it’s a system that works, a system that’s designed to create passionate disciples.



This model demonstrates how to build a “people mover” or “conveyor belt” to disciple men within your church. Just like a moving sidewalk at an airport or an assembly line at Henry Ford’s factory, this process helps men get from where they are to where God wants them to be.

The remainder of this chapter presents an overview of the components of the model as well as a preview of what’s to come in the rest of the book. We’ll take a helicopter view and fly over the major concepts and insights. Don’t feel like you have to grasp it all now because the following chapters unpack each aspect step-by-step.

Why are we presenting these items here? It’s important to be familiar with all these ideas before discussing each one in detail because together they form an integrated whole. This system is most definitely more than the sum of its parts.

The model—and this book—has three sections. The focus of *Part One: The Promise of Men’s Ministry* is to better understand how men are doing, what they need, and how to help them. The focus of *Part Two: The Foundations of Your Ministry to Men* is to understand the building blocks of a sustainable discipleship system in your church. The focus of *Part Three: Executing Your Men’s Ministry* is to give you a strategy to disciple every man in your church.

By the end of chapter 12—especially if you work through it with a team—you will create a concrete plan for exactly what to do in your church.

Part one will be explored in chapters 2–4; part two in chapters 5–7; and part three in chapters 8–12. Here’s a quick introduction to each.

PART 1: THE PROMISE OF MEN’S MINISTRY: WHAT YOUR CHURCH CAN DO FOR MEN

Before you start building a system, it’s a good idea to understand both your starting and ending points. We begin with the men. Exactly what is it we hope to accomplish with them?

The men you are trying to reach are the raw materials of your system. The men in your church and community are the inputs on the left side of the conveyor belt. You will read more about the state of men in America in chapter 2.

Disciples. Your goal is to create an environment that God can use to produce disciples. *Disciples* are men who are called to walk with Christ,

equipped to live like Christ, and sent to work for Christ (1 Timothy 3:15–17). These are the *outputs*, or products, of your men’s ministry system. Disciples are biblical Christians. Some will become leaders, and some of these leaders will become allies. (Read more about disciples in chapter 3.) What do men look like at each of these stages?

1. **Biblical Christians.** These are men who grasp the gospel and are hungry to grow. They have stopped seeking the God they want and have begun to seek the God who is. They understand that change takes place from the inside out. They know from their own experience that Christianity is not about behavior modification; it’s about heart transformation. We go into greater detail about biblical Christians in chapter 9.
2. **Leaders.** These are men who are beginning to live out of the overflow of their own personal relationship with Jesus. No longer are they concerned only with their walk with God; now they want to do what it takes to help other people grow too. These are the “trustworthy” men who will, in turn, pass what they have learned on to others (2 Timothy 2:2 TLB). Read more about leaders in chapter 6.
3. **Allies.** These are men who have become passionately convinced that God can use them and your church to transform the world for His glory. These are the men who become future members of your men’s leadership team and fuel growth in your discipleship ministry with men. Pray and focus your energies on creating allies. Read more about allies in chapter 4.

PART 2: THE FOUNDATIONS OF YOUR MINISTRY TO MEN

Three components provide a solid base on which to build your men’s ministry—the *Portal Priority* (your philosophy of ministry), a *Man Code* (the environment you create for men), and the *Three Strands of Leadership*.

The Portal Priority. Churches that reach men effectively make discipleship their *portal priority* (see Matthew 28:19). By this we mean that all the other initiatives of the church serve the purpose of discipleship. You cannot produce worshipers by begging men to worship; you can’t produce tithers by guilting men to give; you can’t create evangelists simply by training men to share. Men will not worship a God they do not know and revere; they won’t give to a God they don’t love; and they won’t share about a God

they aren't passionate about. Jesus' model is to produce disciples who worship, disciples who tithe, and disciples who are passionate to share the good news about what He has done for them. We discuss the portal priority in chapter 5.

A Man Code. Churches that effectively disciple men have a strong masculine atmosphere. They create an unwritten “man code” that defines what it means to be a man in their church. New men soak it in from the atmosphere: “To be a man here is to be important and valuable, and also to play a part in what God is doing to transform the world.” Sometimes the incredible adventure of following Christ is buried beneath boring bulletin announcements. Make your church a place where men can be men. You'll read more about a man code in chapter 5.

The Three Strands of Leadership. To disciple all the men of your church and community, your conveyor belt will need a strong foundation—leadership. Successful discipleship ministries for men have the active involvement of the senior pastor, a committed leader, and an effective and renewed leadership team—three strands of leadership (like the cord of three strands in Ecclesiastes 4:12). Leadership is explored in chapter 6.

ABOVE THE FOUNDATION: THE PROCESS

On top of this foundation, we will help you build a “conveyor belt”—the process of your men's ministry.

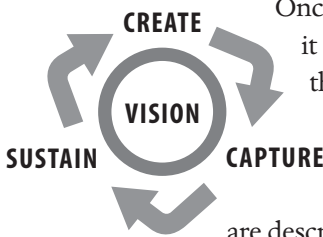
Wide to Deep. Churches that reach men build a system that moves men along the “Wide-to-Deep” continuum. A goal of your church's ministry with men is to take men who don't know Christ (interested in opportunities on the wide side) and move them along to become passionate disciples (invested in ministry on the deep side). Each activity or program in your church will appeal to men who are at different points on the continuum. One role of leadership is to make sure all your leaders are on the same page and that you have the entire continuum covered to help disciple every man.

All-Inclusive. Develop an all-inclusive mind-set by recognizing that everything your church does that touches men is men's ministry. In other words, the size of your men's ministry is equal to the number of men in your church. The traditional definition of men's ministry is only those activities that happen when men are by themselves, such as a Saturday morning breakfast. An all-inclusive ministry discipled men right where they

are, maximizing the kingdom impact of every interaction with every man. You have a “men’s ministry” with every man in your church—the only question is, “Is it effective or ineffective?”

The wide-to-deep continuum and the all-inclusive ministry are both detailed in chapter 7.

PART 3: PLANNING AND EXECUTING YOUR MEN’S MINISTRY



Once the conveyor belt is built, you need an engine to start it in motion. You’ll build and execute your plan with the “Vision-Create-Capture-Sustain” strategy. Implementing this strategy helps move men step-by-step along the continuum to become mature disciples. Here’s a brief introduction to each element. (They are described in detail in chapters 8–11, respectively.)

Vision. Churches that produce disciples clearly define and communicate their *vision* in ways that resonate with men. Use a name, slogan, and/or phrase that connect with men at a gut level. In every interaction you have with men, explain clearly and passionately how this event or activity helps fulfill your purpose and brings glory to God.

Create. *Create momentum* with men by creating *value*. Get a man started in discipleship by helping him take a new step spiritually. Invite him to breakfast, to church, or to a special men’s activity. If he says yes, it’s because you have given him something he believes will be valuable.

Capture. *Capture momentum* by giving every man a “right next step” at the time that you create momentum. Use short-term, low-threshold activities that make it easy for a man to keep moving forward. For example, offer a six-week topical study on a commonly felt need, such as money or work. Make sure you capture momentum by asking men for a commitment at the time they most feel the value.

Sustain. *Sustain momentum* by engaging men in the most effective long-term discipleship processes of your church. As quickly as possible, help men enter into meaningful relationships with other men. Most lasting change takes place in the context of relationships. Sustain change by focusing on the heart rather than allowing men to simply be nice and perform.

Repeat this cycle over and over through your interactions with men and see how God uses it to help men become passionate disciples.

Building Your Plan. This system will work differently in every church. In chapter 12, we walk through the entire model again step-by-step. We give you two sets of exercises—one to work through in the next three months, the other in the next year. This will give you a chance to build a concrete plan that fits *your* church.

What's the result of implementing this system in a local church? You'll be a part of a dynamic church filled with passionate men who live and love like Christ. We have seen this in hundreds of churches across America.

WHY IS THIS SO IMPORTANT?

Many leaders we talk to have expressed astonishment over the statistic from Barna Research that only 4 percent of Americans and 9 percent of born-again Christians hold a biblical worldview.²

Given the vast amount of money spent by the church each year—approximately \$31 billion in 2001³ (churches representing 49.4 million members)—one is tempted to ask, “What has the church been making, because it sure doesn't seem like it has been making disciples?”

The consequences are staggering. A whopping 40 percent of the baby buster generation were raised by divorced or separated parents. Now the sins of the fathers are being visited on the next generation: Tonight, 33 percent of America's 72 million children will go to bed in a home without a biological father. And 66 percent of them are not expected to live with both biological parents through age eighteen.⁴ We are now bearing the full brunt of our failure to disciple men.

THE OPPORTUNITY: THE MAN COMES AROUND

The story we told at the beginning of this chapter is not an illustration. It's the true account of one of the authors—Brett Clemmer.

About the time his wife told him it was easier when he was gone, Brett got a call from a friend, Kevin. “You know how our wives are meeting in that women's Bible study? Well, I was talking to some of the other husbands. Maybe we should have a guys' group too—if for no other reason than to protect ourselves, because I'm pretty sure they're talking about us.” Brett was pretty sure too. He wondered what Kevin had heard about *him*? “Sure,” Brett said. “What are we going to study?”

“Remember the book they handed out in church a few weeks ago? Just bring that and we'll see if we want to use it.”

Brett brought the book. That group, Brett says, was the beginning of a rebirth of his faith:

“The book was *The Man in the Mirror*. We decided to study it, and it saved my marriage, my family, and in many ways, my life. The book spoke directly to what I was going through—the whole concept of *cultural Christianity* seemed like it was taken right from my experience.”

Brett adds the most important part of their study was the half-dozen guys he met—“all of us struggling to be good fathers and husbands, all working too hard and trying to find balance. It gave me brothers. And together, we journeyed toward Christ.”

Brett’s software company eventually went out of business. “But a funny thing happened as my dream of building a company died,” Brett said. “As my career plummeted, my relationship with my wife and my kids soared. And I found new life in my relationships with my brothers and with God. Why? Because someone chose to disciple me.”

You have men in your church like Brett. This book has been written to help you reach them and disciple them for their good and the glory of Christ. Thanks for joining the adventure. Together, we can ask God to help us make sure that no man is left behind.

REMEMBER THIS

- Men’s ministry actually is rocket science, only harder.
- It takes a long time to make a disciple.
- It can take up to ten years to build a successful men’s ministry.
- There’s no such thing as “The Five Easy Steps to an Effective Men’s Ministry.”
- Discipling men needs to go from the prototype stage to the manufacturing stage.
- Your system for building disciples is perfectly designed to produce the men who are sitting in your pews—or not.
- *The No Man Left Behind Model* will help you move men step-by-step toward becoming mature disciples.

TALK ABOUT THIS

Discuss these questions with your leadership team.

1. “Men’s ministry actually is rocket science.” Do you agree or not, and why? What has been your past experience trying to build a men’s ministry?
2. In a few sentences, how would you describe the “system” for reaching and discipling men in your church today? What kind of results have you been getting?
3. Look back at *The No Man Left Behind Model*. Which concepts are you looking forward to learning about, and why?

PRAY ABOUT THIS

Pray together as a leadership team . . .

- that God will unite your hearts as you seek to develop an effective discipleship ministry to men in your church.
- that God will reveal how you can apply what you learn.
- that your church will be a place where every man is discipled and no man is left behind.