

Church- A Male Free Zone? – September 2006

OK!
Let's do it!

Let's venture into an area where even the bravest start feeling a chill down their backs.

First I need to tell you how I once worked on a production line making TVs (it gave a whole new breadth of meaning to the word 'boring').

When first switched on the TVs often revealed similar faults. Now, business gurus say 'Your system is perfectly designed to give you the result you are getting'. True. Therefore, if you don't like the results then change the workers or change the system. One day management changed the process because the same fault continued to show up. Almost immediately better TVs started being produced.

Now what is this fearsome thing I mentioned at the beginning?

Are you ready for it?

Here goes.

It's the lack of men showing up in our churches.

There, I said it.

Yes, I know that your church has men stacked 10 deep on every pew. Yes, I know that your men's evangelism and outreach attracts attention world-wide. You are the exception.

In many churches the men are fewer, older and quieter. Rosters (the source of all information) will reveal that praying, visiting, social events, support networks, etc., etc., are organised by women. Moreover, they are organised very well.

Where are the men?

If our churches are producing congregations, or denominations, that are predominately female then maybe we should examine the production line. Remember, 'Your system is perfectly designed to give you the result you are getting'. Look at the results we are getting. This has little to do with the doctrines of election, substitutionary atonement or justification by faith. It has more to do with how much we are prepared to dramatically review our practices. Do men relate to 21st century church culture?

Since I am taking so many risks with this article I may as well go the 'whole hog'. On a piece of paper list as many of the generally socially acceptable adjectives describing men and men's behaviour as come to mind (e.g. strong, competitive, etc.). On another piece of paper do the same for women (e.g. kind, nurturing, etc.). Compare the two lists of adjectives and work out which list would be more easily applied to your church or congregation. Is your church more feminine? If it is then it will produce a majority of feminine members.

Now, before you try to find out where I live and come after me, please hear me out. Yes, we want our churches to have kind and supportive relationships. No, we don't want raucous behaviour such that occurs in a pub's beer garden. I know that.

However, we must be prepared for serious choices:

- We do need to ask how comfortable our churches are for the average man
- We must look through the eyes of the guy who is on the fringe or who is hanging back from coming along
- We'll have to review music, seating, words & phrases, leadership patterns, etc.
- Like Jesus we do need to raise the bar on challenge and commitment

Men want to good role models.

Tiger Woods, the golfer, cried when he recently won a championship because his dad, who had recently died, was no longer there. Jesus gathered men and women, but it was the men who seemed closest to Him. There are men today who acknowledge Jesus but they don't go to church. Like factory-outlet shoppers, they think they can cut out the 'middle-man' and go direct to the 'supplier'. It's not a good solution. (1 Tim 3:1-13 & Tit 2:1-14)

What to do?

Men, during this week why not gather a couple of the Christian brothers and begin praying and discussing together how your church culture might more accurately accommodate men. Talk it over politely with your minister/pastor and prayerfully investigate how to begin the change process. Women, ask some men in your church as to why they think the number of men is proportionately low and ask them how they would like you to pray about the matter.

We want our churches to have more and more women without developing into male-free zones, while we also want our churches to have more and more men, without developing into female-free zones. We no longer want our ministers to wear dresses but we will have to make some other significant changes if we want the outcome to be different.

So there, I've raised the issue; let's work on getting the process changed. Now if you really want to 'throw the rock into the chook-house at night time' as my uncle, the farmer, used to say, then check out these websites <http://www.churchformen.com> & <http://www.mensfraternity.com> for some controversial ideas. I don't agree with all that they say but it is fascinating seeing how some people are responding to the obvious problem. What do you think?

