

Finishing Well

Forging Relationships to Encourage Men to Finish Well in Life

REFLECTIONS ON *Faith*

Barry Morrow

“MEN LUST,
BUT THEY
KNOW NOT
WHAT FOR;
THEY WANDER,
AND LOSE
TRACK OF THE
GOAL;
THEY FIGHT
AND COMPETE,
BUT THEY
FORGET THE
PRIZE;
THEY SPREAD
SEED, BUT
SPURN THE
SEASONS OF
GROWTH;
THEY CHASE
POWER AND
GLORY, BUT
MISS THE
MEANING OF
LIFE.”

-GEORGE
GILDER

MEN & CHURCH...UNEASY SPIRITUALITY

H. L. Mencken once defined a clergyman as “a ticket speculator outside the gates of heaven.” It’s fair to say that many men feel a “disconnect” with pastors, and can’t really identify with their religious world. This is one of the major themes addressed in David Murrow’s book, *Why Men Hate Going to Church*, as he describes the challenges facing the church in attracting the interest of men. One of Murrow’s key points is that churches have a *spiritual thermostat* that is often adverse to many men, a thermostat which “values safety over risk, stability over change, preservation over expansion, and predictability over adventure...almost everything about today’s church—it’s teaching style, it’s ministries, the way people are expected to behave—is designed to meet the needs and expectations of a largely *female* audience.” Church is sweet and sentimental, nurturing and *nice*, but not very enticing to men.

THE THREE GENDER GAPS...

Murrow contends that there are three gender gaps plaguing many churches today, the gap of *presence*, *participation*, and *personality*. The gap of presence is the general truth that women attend church in greater numbers than men. Today 20 to 25 percent of America’s married, churchgoing women regularly attend without their husbands, and a U.S. Congregational Life Survey pegged the typical American churchgoer as “a fifty-year-old, married, well-educated, employed female.”

THE GAP OF PARTICIPATION

Studies also show that women are much more likely than men to devote themselves to their faith beyond simple worship attendance. They are also more likely than men to shop in a Christian bookstore, watch a Christian television station, or listen to Christian music. Savvy retailers and booksellers know that women buy about 75% of Christian products, so they work hard to create an atmosphere of femininity. The moment a man walks into a religious store, he often quickly realizes that he’s out of his element!

THE GAP OF PERSONALITY

While this gap is more difficult to describe than the previous two, it essentially holds that certain types of people rarely involve themselves in a local church, particularly men who have strong, entrepreneurial, risk-taking personalities. In contrast, studies suggest that churchgoers are more likely to have *passive* personalities than the general population.

The implication of such an imbalance is that the church will itself become passive, and tend to value tradition and stability over innovation and growth. (Anyone who’s served in leadership in a local church knows the truth of this statement...) This lack of “machismo” among churchgoing men has not gone unnoticed. The average churchman is what writer Robert Bly calls the *soft male*, for he is a tamed man, with Mr. Rogers as his mascot. There is little wonder that the risk-taking, “man’s man,” often finds little in common with the typical churchgoing male.



In her book, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Male*, author Susan Faludi describes her observations of a Promise Keepers rally:

If they were plotting the overthrow of a feminist world, they showed no signs of it. Mostly they seemed intent on being mannerly and tidy. In an era when the sports spectators who were the bleachers’ usual clientele left the stadiums littered and vandalized, the Promise Keepers were careful to throw away all their trash. They obediently took notes during the speeches and displayed at all times their Promise Keepers ID bracelets, which looked exactly like the identification bands worn by hospital patients...They were willfully docile, as though, if they obeyed long enough, they would at last get their reward.

ARE WE GETTING BETTER OR WORSE?

When a man is getting better he understands more and more clearly the evil that is still left in him. When a man is getting worse, he understands his own badness less and less. A moderately bad man knows he is not very good; a thoroughly bad man thinks he is all right. Good people know about both good and evil; bad people do not know about either.

--C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

“TO LIVE IN
THE PAST
AND FUTURE
IS EASY. TO
LIVE IN THE
PRESENT IS
LIKE
THREADING
A NEEDLE.”
-WALKER
PERCY

“This book, being about work, is, by its very nature, about violence—to the spirit as well as to the body. It is about ulcers as well as accidents. About shouting matches as well as fist fights. About nervous breakdowns as well as kicking the dog around. It is, above all (or beneath all), about daily humiliations. To survive the day is triumph enough.” –Studs Terkel, *Working*

“We’re urged to stand for what is right, for honor, country, state and town; but when the hard decisions arise, the first thing said is, ‘Let’s sit down.’” –Art Buck

“By working faithfully eight hours a day, you may eventually get to be a boss and work twelve hours a day.” –Robert Frost

“The husband who wants a happy marriage should learn to keep his mouth shut and his checkbook open.” –Groucho Marx

“The most important thing in acting is honesty. Once you’ve learned to fake that, you’re in.” –Samuel Goldwyn

“Men never cling to their dreams with such tenacity as at the moment when they are losing faith in them, and know it, but do not dare yet to confess it to themselves.” –W. G. Sumner

“Money’s easy to make if it’s money you want. But with few exceptions people don’t want money. They want luxury and they want love and they want admiration.” –John Steinbeck

“The root of the word *miserable* is miser.” –Cullen Hightower

“A man is in bondage to whatever he cannot part with that is less than himself.” –George MacDonald

“In His holy flirtation with the world, God occasionally drops a handkerchief. These handkerchiefs are called saints.” –Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking*

SCRIPTURE FOR REFLECTION...

“Don’t store up treasures here on earth, where they can be eaten by moths and get rusty, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven, where they will never become moth-eater or rusty and where they will be safe from thieves. Wherever your treasure is, there your heart and thoughts will also be...So I tell you, don’t worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food, drink, and clothes. Doesn’t life consist of more than food and clothing? ...Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? Of course not.” –Jesus’ words, Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6: 19-21, 25, 27)

WHAT IS *FINISHINGWELL*?



FINISHINGWELL is a unique and personalized service for men to assist them in balancing their work, family, and faith. In a world of constant pressure and change, we often find ourselves under the “tyranny of the urgent.” The benefits of *FINISHINGWELL* include:

- A relationship based upon strict confidentiality in all matters.
- Realistic strategies to balance your personal and professional life.
- Encouragement to make course corrections in life that you want to make.

Contact me to see how *FINISHINGWELL* might be of benefit to you. A two-page document describing *FINISHINGWELL* is available upon request.