

How the Christian Church in America is

FAILING

Men

*A **Wake-Up Call***

*that left untended will become a **Requiem***



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Part One — The Role of Senior Pastors

Introduction

“They aren’t strong enough!” was the response from a highly regarded author and senior pastor friend when I asked if the words in this title were too strong. “Fail” is a strong word—one neither lightly given nor received. We know there were seasons in the nation of Israel in which the Lord strongly called out the Israelites through the prophets and Jesus’ own words. So, the Christian church in America must be given similar admonitions. The question is will they be heard and received and, in so doing, effect the requisite change through repentance and obedience that alone can restore Christ-centric hope and healing and Holy Spirit power in the body of Christ.

A Story Too Often Told

Like many of you, I have witnessed firsthand, public and private, failures of pastors and church leaders. I recall one pastor friend with whom I was in an accountability group. He quit showing up for our meetings, and when we did see him, his appearance was gaunt and temperament uneasy. We ultimately learned he was having an affair with someone in the church. We know the hell that follows such exposure for those involved, perhaps even more so for their families, and the church. Every man reading this can throw similar stories on the heap—some their own.

Keenly aware many do not like reading statistics, it is mandatory I share a few to set the table for the main point of this article: **the Christian church in America is failing men.** I call your attention to these numbers that consist solely of Christian church men.

- 1) **Marriage Infidelity:** More than 30% of born-again married men admitted to having had an affair. As bad as that number is, it does not include the rest of us whose “affairs of the heart” leave us equally culpable in the eyes of God. (Reference Jesus’ words in Matthew 5: 28)

- 2) **Divorce:** 38% of people in church today have been divorced. Whether that figure is low or high is not the point. The point is God said, “I hate divorce” (Malachi 2: 16). Jesus had equally strong words on the subject in Matthew 19. God still loves divorced people—His steadfast love remains unconditional.
- 3) **Addictions** including alcohol, drugs, and sexual sin enslave Christian men and pastors. Sexual sins stand out in this category.
- 54% of pastors said they viewed pornography in the last year; 37% admit it is a current struggle.
 - 95% of Christian men admit having looked at porn; 54% do so with some regularity.
 - 18% of born-again Christian men admit to being addicted to pornography.

Consider millennial men—the first generation to come out of so many single-parent, absentee-dad homes. They provide a scary glimpse into the future if the church continues down its current failed path.

- 77% view pornography at least monthly; 36% do so daily; 32% admit having an addiction.

No greater need exists among men than in this young generation of husbands and fathers who are already floundering. If we fail to reach and disciple them in biblical manhood, we lose one of our largest and most needy demographics. Another generation of single-parent homes and children born out of marriage will be spawned—further confusing the issue of what real biblical manhood looks like.

This unexplained apathy toward (even Christian) men leads one to wonder how much time and attention these issues receive at denominational conventions and other Christian leadership meetings. As I gathered information and research over a number of months, I found the interest in discussing “man issues” and men’s ministry, in general, incredibly low in too many places—even among some high denominational levels and within churches of all sizes. This is not only unacceptable, it is appalling.

Worse than that, it breaks the heart of God. We are in a spiritual war that too many churches seem content to sit out or send men into battle ill-equipped to fight.

We don't need a roadmap out of this malaise. We need a battle plan!

Examining the "Fail"

No one likes to be associated with the word "fail"—nothing positive or redeeming in that. But **every man, from pastor to businessman to professional athlete, has failed at something and will again.** It is a fact and forgivable. What is not is denying the problem exists and/or deflecting the blame, which brings us to another contemptuous word—*blame*.

No one likes the word *blame* when it is being thrown in our direction.

Since this a wake-up call, I am going to call out failure and assign blame—there is plenty to go around.

Three people groups must stand up and give an account for contributions to this massive fail. We begin, as we should, at the top of the church food chain—*the senior pastor*.

Part One: How Senior Pastors are Failing the Church

*"and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses **entrust to faithful men**, who will be able to teach others also."* (2 Timothy 2: 2 ESV)

No individual has a greater role and responsibility for the health and development of biblical Christian men than the senior pastor. Of course, none want to fail in any area of ministry. I know many pastors, at all levels, and each wants to serve God and tend His flock or execute his ministry well. Like their business counterparts, most maintain very full calendars. There is no challenge here to the work ethic or the hearts of men of God who have answered this high calling.

But when we step back and assess the state of our world, nation, and churches from a biblical Christian worldview, and in light of those statistics, one conclusion stands out: ***the Christian church in America is failing men.***

Too many senior pastors have been looking upward at the “big picture” or perhaps consumed by dodging the visible portions of icebergs in their path and failed to account for the massive part below. As we saw with the mighty, *unsinkable* Titanic, the damage caused by *invisible workings of Satan* can sink even the largest mega-churches, not to mention smaller ones, sucking down many men in the wake of its death-spiral toward the ocean floor. Those men populate the statistics I shared.

This begs the question,

Why aren't more senior pastors invested in taking up this mandate to produce an army of biblical Christian men befitting our King and executing His commission?

I noted in the full version of this article months of preparation and investment of time listening and seeking input from both senior pastors and leaders of men's ministry. The following summarizes some of those thoughts and comments.

- 1) **“All men are desperate whether they admit it or not.”** That includes pastors. Some come to their ministries with baggage they should have unpacked before or during seminary. Referring to the title of my book (this heading), one senior pastor said, “They haven't dealt with their own ‘desperate man’ issues. How can they call out or lead other men from desperate places with which they still struggle?” The sad, sobering statistics on pastors bears this out.
- 2) **Not in community with other men.** This could be a subset of the first. Accountability is built in small communities of men. Senior pastors are not going to usher other men into communities, large or small, if they are not there themselves or comfortable being there.

- 3) **Fear.** This is one of Satan’s most powerful weapons wielded against men of God. One such example is fear of exposure of aforementioned issues and the consequences—humiliation, loss of a job, even ministry. Senior pastors clothed in invisible garments of fear will not lead men into community, much less war. It has often been said, “churches rush quickly to shoot their wounded.”

- 4) **Lack of church support for ministry to men.** There are few “squeaky wheels” crying out for men’s ministry in our churches. The flawed thinking is men are strong and taking care of themselves. Really? We already noted examples of failed pastors, elders, and deacons. Investing in building biblical Christian men pays dividends in many ways. Consider how many other ministry needs would diminish if we build healthy, biblical Christian men who step up and into our God-appointed roles. Senior pastors must run point and take the lead in their churches if this is going to happen.

- 5) **Time.** We are too busy. Most senior pastors will tell you they are too busy to take on another ministry or activity. They are. The question is one of priority. Time management, for all of us, is as much a *heart issue* as it is one of priorities. We do what matters most to us, despite what we say. Until the church, under the leadership of the senior pastor, makes the decision that building biblical Christian men is of great value to the kingdom (which it obviously is) and makes it a priority, it will not get traction and has no chance to succeed.

Numbers matter. During my inquiries about the state of the ministry to men in their churches, some suggested it was good, even vibrant. I guess that depends on how you define those words. I ask three questions that can be met with defensiveness, but they get to the heart of the matter.

- 1) How many men are in your church?
- 2) How many are engaged in small or large groups/communities?
- 3) How many are you discipling? (Jesus had twelve in His small group.)

Do not include men who attend Sunday School classes or community groups with their wives. That is great, but not specific to this issue.

One fallback answer is, “Numbers don’t really matter.” That is not only wrong, it is also hypocritical. Numbers matter in every other area of church life—we count heads in every service, take roll in every class, track the number of conversions, baptisms, visitors, money collected...numbers matter a lot. **“Man” numbers matter because they matter to God.**

Here are three questions every senior pastor needs to ask himself and leadership team.

- 1) What is your vision for the men of the church?
- 2) Have you communicated/transferred ownership of that vision to the church body?
- 3) Do you have a **“a man plan”**?

Jesus, the Carpenter, built men after His own heart. He invested in them in every format—small group, medium-sized groups, and large crowds. He was intentional and direct because He “knew what was in the hearts of men.” Every senior pastor reading this knows in their hearts the truths of this article and which ones they need to own and commit to change.

If we want to see our world impacted by the love, life, and saving grace of Christ, our nation turned back to the biblical principles upon which it was founded, husbands who love and remain faithful to their wives, and dads who stay home and set an example for their kids, the best place to begin is leading and teaching men how to biblical Christian men after God's own heart. The vision and motivation for that flows from the heart of the senior pastors of the Christian church.

On to Part Two—***How Christian Men are Failing the Church in America***