

(translation: boring) they get a sense that your church is a place where they can fit in.

A note of caution: Humor at the expense of men sends the wrong message. Don't make men—or an individual man—look stupid for a laugh, especially in mixed company. You would never tell racist or sexist jokes, so be careful about “stupid men” jokes.

They listen for the vision.

Men want to believe that God is doing something through your church. They want to be part of a church that is going somewhere. They want to know that being a man in your church matters. Reinforce the vision of your men as often as you can in ways that resonate with them.

Why is this so important? If your church's dress code is business casual, what would it take to get every man in your church to show up in a suit and tie? It would be pretty difficult, wouldn't it? You could make an announcement that you were having “Suit Sunday,” the pastor could preach about it, but you would have a hard time convincing men to actually wear suits.

The truth is this: It will be just as difficult to get men to break out of the man code that the atmosphere of your church has defined. No matter what you say in your announcements, no matter how you address men in your personal conversations, no matter how passionate you are about a ministry or an opportunity, their understanding of what it means to be a man in your church will already be set by your church's man code. Get this wrong and everything else will be a lot of hard work. Get it right and everything else will be easier as you seek to reach and disciple men for the glory of Christ.

A LOOK IN THE MIRROR™

EQUIPPING LEADERS IN THE BATTLE FOR MEN'S SOULS

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Understanding Your Church's Man Code

Adapted from No Man Left Behind by Pat Morley, David Delk, and Brett Clemmer (Moody, 2006)

By Patrick Morley, David Delk and Brett Clemmer

Quick...in a phrase or sentence, what's the dress code in your church? Is it business casual, suit and tie, or cowboy boots and blue jeans? (At our training, one group from Hawaii said “shorts and thongs.” They meant sandals, of course.)

How do guys know this? Is there a sign in front of your church: “First Community Church, Shirt and Tie required”? Do you have fashion police standing at the doors? Of course not. Men are smart. It doesn't take more than a week to figure out what to wear.

Just as your church has an unspoken—but well-known—dress code, it also has an unspoken “man code.” The man code is the environment your church creates for men. Within a few weeks after beginning to attend, a man understands what it means to be a man in this church. Just like with the dress code, men soak it in from the atmosphere.

What impression does your church give about the importance of men? “Men Are _____ Here” “Important?” “Tolerated?” “Needed?” “Leaders?” “Supposed to do the hard work but leave the thinking to the women?” These are some of the answers we've gotten from leaders who have attended our training. One man said their man code was, “If you'd like your wife and children to go to church, bring them here.” Another said, “Successful men wanted here.” Finally, one man said their man code was simply, “Hi.” Obviously, we've also had many positive man code statements as well.

What about your church? Imagine a new man comes to your church three or four times. In a phrase or sentence, how would he honestly sum up what he thinks it means to be a man in your church? Write a draft of your man code in the space below.

Since it's not explicitly stated, how exactly do men figure out the "man code" of your church?

In *Why Men Hate Going to Church*, David Murrow points out that every church has a "thermostat." Unfortunately, many churches' thermostats are set to "Comfort." Men, says Murrow, need a thermostat set to "Challenge."

Here are some ways men learn about the environment of your church:

They look at the leaders.

Men follow strong leaders. They like to know that their leader is certain of where they are going. If a man doesn't believe in the leader, he can't follow the vision.

This is particularly important to men who are either young or new to your church. When you hold up a man as a standard, does he look boring, tired, and half-dead? Or does he look vibrant, excited, and wellspoken (regardless of age)? Men should be able to look at the visible leaders in the church and say, "I want to be like that."

They listen to the music.

While contemporary music may connect stylistically with people, some of those praise choruses aren't exactly "man-friendly." Men resonate with songs that talk about challenge, adventure, and the battle of following Christ and seeing His kingdom become a reality. They tend to connect less with songs that ask another man—Jesus—to "hold me in your arms."

They read the bulletin.

Does your bulletin have a section with information for men? How does it communicate with the congregation in general? If your bulletin has articles in it, think about adding a strong article for men once in a while.

Be sure the bulletin makes concrete statements about what God is doing through men in your church. "Bible Study, Wednesday night, Room 202, 7:30 p.m." is not appealing to most men. But "Disruptive Jesus: A Bible Study for Men. Come learn how Jesus challenged the norm, and how He can change your life and our community"—that's a Bible Study that has a chance at catching

men's attention.

They listen to the pastor.

Pete Alwinson, pastor of Willow Creek Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Winter Springs, Florida (and Brett's pastor), makes a point of speaking directly to men in just about every sermon. Often he will say, "Men, this is what this means for us..." That sends a clear message that men matter.

They look at the décor.

We've noticed an interesting trend in church design: the ladies' bathroom is amazing. It's like a lounge: a couch, mirrors, counter space—a place where women can feel comfortable. (Perhaps you're wondering how we know this.) Unfortunately, in many cases the ladies' room spills out into the rest of the church. Mauve window treatments, flowery wallpaper, pastel colors—all of these send the message to men: "We've designed this space to make women as comfortable as possible."

Get some guys on the decorating committee! Fight (nicely) to make the physical environment of your church manfriendly. This is as simple as leather couches, striped wall paper, earth tones—even some black and white nature photos on the wall.

Men are extremely sensitive to quality.

While there certainly needs to be times when the children's choir sings in 13-part disharmony, the church choir should not. Men don't think it's sweet when the drama team "tried really hard" but forgot their lines. This applies to the flyers you hand out, the events you hold, the materials you use in small groups and Sunday school, and even the Web site for the church. While you can't expect to compete with Madison Avenue, men can tell when there is a sincere effort to offer quality. If you think about it, the message we are delivering deserves our best efforts.

They listen for humor.

The men's ministry at David's church held an event for men called Rise Up where they were laying out the vision for men for the year. They invited men by calling it a "Mandatory Meeting for All University Presbyterian Church Men (unless you have a problem with authority, in which case, you're not allowed to come!)" When men see that everything doesn't have to be "prim and proper"