

A common situation I encounter while doing Baptist Men's Training sessions across the state is hearing a leader tell of how his church once had a strong men's program, but is now struggling to "get it going again". The root of the problem is almost always leadership. No men's church organization will function in a healthy, growing fashion without a leader who feels called to men's ministry. Does this mean that in order to lead a well-balanced, effective men's ministry – one that sees men come to Christ, grow in their faith, witness to others, and serve in missions – he must be a gifted expert in all areas? Certainly not. But it *is* important that he have two things: 1) the vision to see these things happen, and 2) the willingness to share leadership with those who do have gifts in these areas.

Burnout is a common word among working men today. Unfortunately, it happens to many of our church leaders far too often. The best way to avoid burnout is to share the load of responsibility. Sharing leadership not only helps avoid burning a leader out, it also has the potential to add diversity and new direction to the men's ministry. If you want to see your men's group grow, you have to think about how to involve those who are not currently active. This may require thinking "outside the box", and offering a new direction.

There is probably a great (and possibly unrealized) need for spiritual growth among the men of your church. Perhaps there would be interest in men's Bible studies or men's small groups – vehicles by which men could build friendships and trust while growing in their faith. But maybe this is not where the skills of the Men's Ministry Leader lie. Not to fear! There is bound to be a man in your church who is gifted in teaching and has a heart for seeing just such a ministry begin. Perhaps this is someone who has never been involved in your men's group before because he didn't feel like there was a place for him. Share the leadership and give that area of ministry room to grow.

The same thing may be said of evangelistic outreach opportunities. Perhaps men of your church and community would enjoy fellowship, such as a wild game supper, father/son campout, or golf tournament. Maybe your church could reach out to other men by offering seminars in areas that are challenging to men, such as being a more effective father, facing sexual temptation, a Christian perspective on financial management, etc. Again, this may not be the Men's Ministry Leader's "bag", but as long as he has a vision to see it happen, it can happen. Share the leadership and give that area of ministry room to grow.

But you say men are not exactly lining up to take on these leadership roles and ease your burden. If only it were that easy. Most men need to be asked – or even challenged. Here are some suggestions:

1. Pray for God to reveal His vision for the men of the church. Ask God to be working in the hearts of those he would lift up for leadership.
2. With the help of your pastor, or other church leaders, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, identify men in your church who may have the gifts needed for a particular area of men's ministry.
3. Pray for those men.
4. Present to each one your vision for men's ministry and ask him to prayerfully consider serving. Do this in a face-to-face, personal setting, not over the phone or as he is leaving church on Sunday morning. Don't ask for an immediate answer, but ask him to pray about it.

As men are led to grow spiritually, I am convinced they will desire to use their time and talent in missions. Sharing leadership develops future leaders. Share the leadership and watch your men's ministry grow!