

How to ATTRACT MEN TO CHURCH

By Chuck Loftis



Chuck, and his wife, Kelly, and son, Brandon, have resided in Bismarck, North Dakota, since 1996, planting and leading Prairie Family Church. An Open Bible minister and staff columnist for *Dakota Country Magazine*, Chuck has written many articles concerning fly angling and other outdoor activities for magazines and newspapers. Visit his website, www.ChuckLoftis.com, for more concerning his outdoor ventures.

For more information on attracting men to church, visit www.churchformen.com

Statistically, one of our greatest ministry challenges is attracting and retaining men in our congregations. As a pastor since 1993, my responsibility has been to plant and develop new works. This has placed me in a position to hear men's objections to attendance and involvement with contemporary evangelical churches. It has also put me in a unique position to do something about it.

Objections are generally summed up in an expression that church involvement is not worthwhile; and when pressed for specifics, unchurched men express repulsion over irrelevant teaching, things that make them uncomfortable as males, and a seeming lack of purpose for "being there."

In my experience, the primary issue remains the same: To follow Jesus costs everything. Non-believers and nominal, unchurched Christians have not misunderstood that part of the gospel; thus, they resist the call to believe in and follow Christ. However, even with the absence of an outpouring of Holy Ghost power – confirming gospel preaching with signs and wonders that will attract men along with everyone else – there are practical ways to combat men's conspicuous absence in our churches. Mind you, I do not condone nor suggest an "edifi-tainment" strategy as a way of competing with idolatry. My suggestions assume a great level of prayer and fasting for the harvest of lost souls.

One suggestion in keeping with the Celtic Method of evangelism by which unbelievers are welcomed in and exposed to the love of God, is to schedule gender-focused events that dually serve

as fellowship and fish-pool events...an event that is scheduled for your constituency but accommodates the invitation of the unsaved and/or unchurched. Not to say that a fair amount of ladies don't enjoy strapping on a backpack and tromping off into the forest, but generally speaking, the fellas outpace the gals' participation levels in this activity. I have found multi-day forays into wilderness areas an effective challenge men like. I'm speaking in

broad generalities, of course, but men don't seem to mind several days in the woods with other guys who've been without a hot shower and razor access.

How about overnight or day-long fishing trips (such as bottom or the deep-sea charter type) where a bunch of anglers convene for an entire day on the water "fightin' the big ones," while reminiscing on the way home about the ones that did and didn't get away. Friendship evangelism goes a long way, if plowed out in prayer, in settings like this.

A second suggestion is also a programming/calendar issue. Schedule outreaches that appeal to men such as ventures onto the mission field through a MOVE (Men of Vision Evangelize) trip or a local strenuous mission event requiring men's natural, God-given tendencies and abilities. Swinging a hammer and building something probably has a lot more appeal to a man than passing out lemonade along a bike path – a noble evangelistic endeavor, to be sure. Nonetheless, efforts that require physical strength tend to appeal to the generally wholesome side of a male's ego. Men like to behold their accomplishments before walking away. This

Swinging a hammer and building something probably has a lot more appeal to a man than passing out lemonade along a bike path ... efforts that require physical strength tend to appeal to the generally wholesome side of a male's ego. Men like to behold their accomplishments before walking away.

plays to a strength and is not a weakness.

My third suggestion may require the most work. Consider men's valid complaints. Ask, "What about our ministry, and/or the way we do ministry, constitutes a genuine stumbling block or obstacle to men joining our church?"

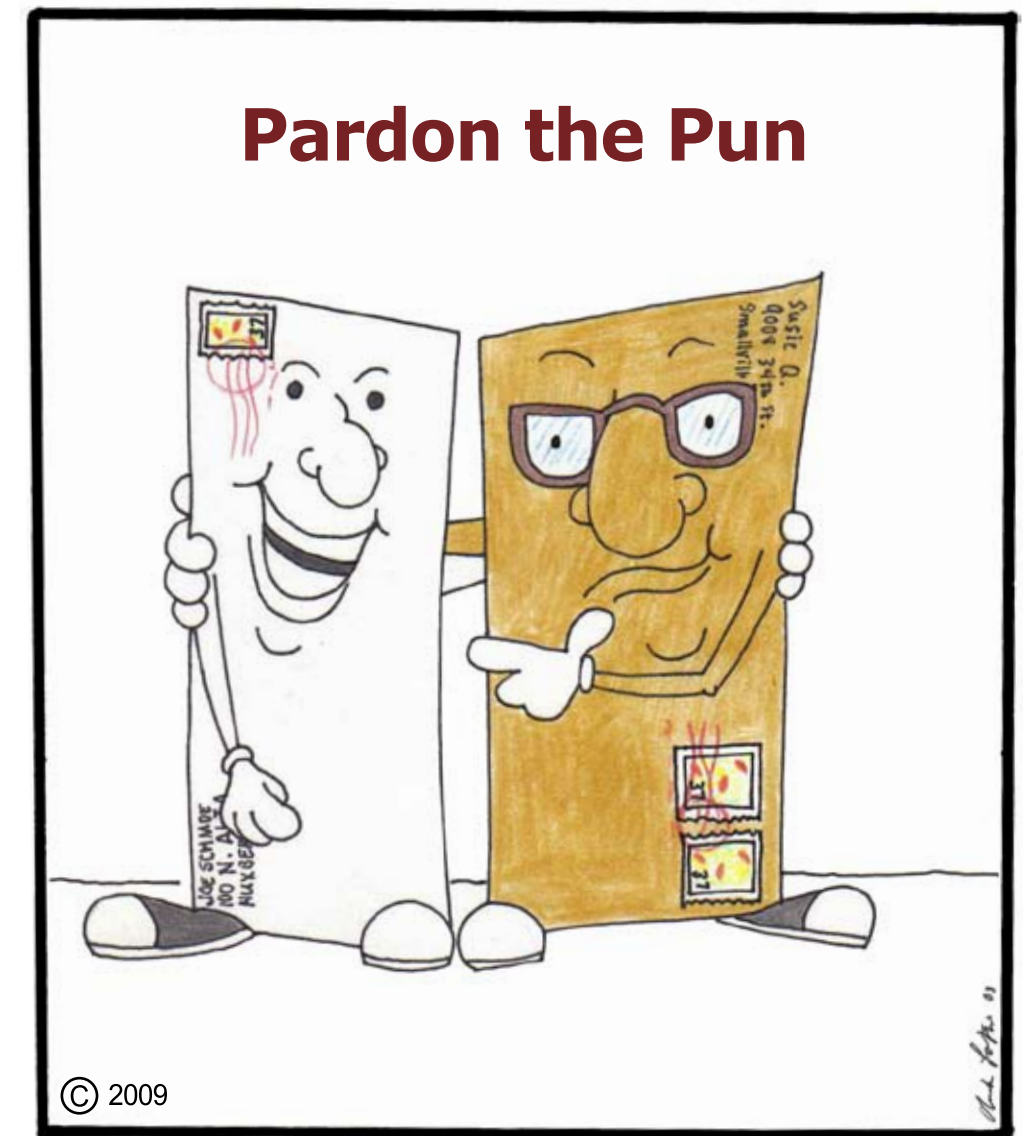
Gender-neutral décor for your church facilities is a good idea, especially in foyers and sanctuaries. Why should men be made to feel like they're at Bath and Body Works? I know a LOT of women and, generally speaking, not too many of them would enjoy a celebration service held at Cabela's, with stuffed moose and grizzly bears staring at them, no matter how cool their husbands thought

it was. It is a good idea to accommodate both genders in our physical plants' décor. Why provide for one to the exclusion of the other?

How about the sensual style of contemporary worship or the very lyrics of many of today's choruses as a hindrance? This problem is more extensive than most care to admit or address...an "elephant in the room" sort of issue. Loving the Lord is already an abstract concept for the unbeliever and many "newbies" in the faith. Add to that the fact that the Lord God is the ultimate portrayer and example of the male persona. It is a difficult thing for many to sing words to Him that are more fitting on Top 40 radio stations or sung softly to their lovers as "pillow talk." A heady critique, I'm well aware, but I've been hearing this from men for a long time. For that reason I

have guided our worship leaders over the years to accommodate men and women in music selections expressing as much about the Lord as what we do to the Lord.

Men and activity-based get-togethers go hand in hand. This seems to complement what God promised Adam his "modus operandi" would be. Guys are wired to accomplish things. Doing it "together" among Christians is a good door into the Church. And it's in the "together" that the Holy Spirit can do much softening, persuading, and convicting of men's hearts to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved.



Mail bonding.