

Men's Unspoken Needs

Adapted from Men 's Ministry
by Steve Sonderman

Eleven Important Needs of Men are:

1. Men Need Action. Men's self-image is largely determined by what they do and what they accomplish. A man's goal orientation pushes him to achieve things and to focus until the task is accomplished. Men enjoy working on projects where results can be solid and tangible.

2. Men Need Safety. One rule of masculinity has been "Thou shalt not show emotion." Men are rarely open with one another unless there is a safe environment for openness. A key ingredient that makes this happen is a clear commitment to confidentiality. Men need time and safety in order to develop authentic relationships with other men,

3. Men Need to be Challenged. Men grow up with challenges. In school it's the big exam. In athletics it's the big game. In the business world it's the big sale--or a takeover or a new product or a new venture. Men expect to be challenged. In the Gospels we see Jesus over and over again drawing a line in the sand and daring the disciples to meet Him on His side. It's no different today. Men aren't interested in a ministry that gets together to chew the fat. They want to be challenged to act, pray, behave and think in a way that glorifies God.

4. Men Need to Get to the Point. The Christian man wants to know what the program is all about. He doesn't want to spend time on fluff, trappings and extracurricular activity. This mind set will greatly impact what and how we do our men's ministry--from how we present the mission and vision to how we advertise, to how to run small groups and large events. Men want to know what two or three practical life-applications they can take away from their time together. Adventist Men Unspoken Needs Page 2

5. Men Need to Win. Almost all of us have grown up with pressure to win. We are taught to be independent and self-sufficient. Failure isn't an option. Men bring this strength into men's ministry. We have to plan challenging, yet achievable goals. Programs that aren't working must be quickly set aside.

6. Men Need to Dream. Men grow up dreaming and scheming big. In designing men's ministry, give the men a chance to be a part of the brainstorming process. Allow them to think big and see themselves involved in something bigger than themselves. This need to dream should impact informal times as well. Men want to discuss their dreams and find ways to act upon them.

7. Men Need Other Men Like Them. Men like to be in the company of men just like them. That isn't always the best thing in the world, but it's not a bad place to start. Some have found that the best way to reach doctors was to have a small group for doctors. They have reached lawyers by having a group of those in that field. They discovered that men naturally gravitate toward men facing the

pressures they face and doing the same jobs they do. This flocking together of birds of a feather isn't always true, but keep it in mind.

8. Men Need Help Working Around Daily Work. Downsizing and takeovers are wearing out men and their families. Add to that emotional weariness the long, odd hours most men work. The result? How and when we do ministry with men will largely revolve around their lives at work.

The most precious commodity for men is time. They don't have enough of it. How they divide it is crucial. Leaders of men's ministries need to consider the competing time demands men face and be sensitive about how many meetings to have and how long they last. Announce how long each meeting will last. The men may stay two hours for the first meeting and be too busy to ever come again. Look carefully at the yearly schedule to ensure that they are not pulled away from home and work too much.

Since some men start early in the morning and others work late, it is important to offer activities at a variety of times to meet the needs of the men.

9. Men Need Healing. Not many of the men you minister to go to work and hear what a great job they are doing. When they get home their kids don't usually say what a great dad they have and thank him for working all day long so they can have a roof over their head and food to eat. Later that evening their wives probably won't applaud their performance as a dad or a husband. No, most of the guys you work with will be rather discouraged about life. They need a refuge where they can heal and be encouraged in their roles as men, fathers, husbands and workers.

10. Men Need Freedom. Men who are taught from boyhood to win develop a fierce independence. Men have difficulty forming friendships with other men. They would rather stand alone and fight alone than work together. Men's ministry will work to pull men together at the same time they reflexively pull apart. Men need respect for their space.

11. The Need to Identify. God established the Seventh-day Adventist Church to be the carrier of a unique message that would help to prepare those who would be alive when Jesus comes the second time. We live in a time when there is a spirit of brotherhood among men. This can cause some men to become confused as to what role they play as Adventist Men among men of other faiths and traditions. As men become more comfortable in sharing with men of other faiths they need to be encouraged to identify with the unique message that gives them a special mission and role in the events leading up to the coming of Jesus.

These are a few needs to consider when beginning a men's ministry.