


# A Declining Pattern of Men in the Church: Examining Gender Imbalance and Future Implications



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## ABSTRACT

The church forms one of the instrumental institutions in the society. Its key role involves spiritual nourishment, in which members are encouraged to address their emotional, psychological, and mental issues, as well as family-related matters, in an environment that is marked by hope and expectation. However, recently, one of the worrying trends has been one in which the number of men in the church has declined significantly. The main aim of this paper was to examine trends in men's church attendance around the world, some of the factors contributing to those trends, and probable solutions to the same, as well as the implications for the future of the church and its ministries. The methodological approach entailed a qualitative research technique, focusing on secondary literature analysis. According to the results of the primary studies that were consulted, the leading factors that account for the reduced number of men in the church around the world include worldview struggles, patriarchy, unclear purpose and vision, a lack of men's discipleship, and family fragmentation. Some of the proposed solutions through which these factors might be curbed include discipleship through invitation, gathering groups for men to connect, scouting and skill sharing, creating a platform for feedback, and "doing" rather than "being." While implementing these solutions, however, care should be taken to ensure that the target group is involved in decision-making and action plan development, rather than separate their thought processes and worldviews from the formulated solutions. Also, the implementation of the aforementioned solutions needs to be embraced in a multidisciplinary way to ensure that relevant stakeholders inside and outside the church are brought on board and used to bring about the change process.

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## Publication History

Received: 21<sup>st</sup> September, 2023

Accepted: 12<sup>th</sup> July, 2024

Published online:

2<sup>nd</sup> August, 2024

*Keywords: Patriarchy, Gender Imbalance, Declining Pattern, Worldview Struggles, Family Fragmentations, Discipleship, Feedback Platform*

## INTRODUCTION

Considering the standard lists of some of the most influential religious leaders in history, the group is predominantly and almost exclusively male, including Jesus, Moses, and Abraham. In contemporary society, the majority of religious groups allow only men to serve as clergy, including Orthodox Jews and Roman Catholics. Others, however, have lifted this restriction in the last few decades, including some denominations under the umbrella of the evangelical Protestant tradition. Even in the wake of these trends, however, it often appears that women dominate the faithful's ranks.

When an example of the US context is considered, for instance, the Pew Research Center survey in 2014 held that compared to their male counterparts, women are more likely to perceive religion as "very important" in society, standing at 60 percent compared to 47 percent as a value representing men who

deem religion as “very important”.<sup>1</sup> The same study saw 64 percent of women indicate that they would engage in daily prayer, compared to 47 percent on the part of men who stated that they would engage in daily prayer. Conversely, 40 percent of the population indicated that they attend religious services at least once per week for the part of women, with a value of 32 percent reported for men who stated that they are likely to attend religious services at least once per week.

From a social science perspective, similar gender differences in other countries have been noted in contexts such as Europe, with researchers holding that across faiths, cultures, and societies, women are becoming universally more religious than men.<sup>2</sup> The implication is gender differences in commitment to the church or religious activities have been a key topic attracting scholarly debate for decades. Currently, this topic has continually inspired much academic research and discussion on the part of the general public. According to Beit-Hallahmi, the absence of men in today’s church is at a distressing percentage across most continents.<sup>3</sup> According to Pew Research, in the United States, for instance, the largest ethnicity attending places of worship is the Black population. However, more than 80 percent of Black men fail to attend church services, whether online or in-person. Still, considering the population that fails to attend church, as many as 80 percent continue to consider themselves religious and also believe in a higher power. Relative to the national average of attendance at church services, the 1960s marked the pinnacle of male attendance. Of all ethnicities, however, there has been more than a 60 percent decline in church attendance.<sup>4</sup>

The observations above suggest that, currently, the majority of churches are in decline, with men missing in most cases. This pattern is particularly concerning because, even as the number of men attending church declines, the overall community within which they live continues to maintain a consistent male population year after year.<sup>5</sup> A question that arises is: What are the leading reasons why most men are not in church? Also, what are the future implications for the church? Similarly, what strategies lie at the disposal of religious leaders in a quest to restore gender parity in attending church services and other related activities?

In nearly all established churches, especially those that house smaller congregations, statistics indicate that men are less likely to attend church as often as women. For instance, Francis and Village highlighted that in situations where large numbers of Christians gather, men are never the majority.<sup>6</sup> In other scenarios where a similar number of men and women has been determined in the general population, women have been observed to form a larger percentage of regular church attendees, standing at 61 percent, with men forming 31 percent of the attendees. The implication is that for smaller churches, the gender gap is even more concerning. As stated by Hardy, the latter concern comes at a time when, in the U.S., most churches are smaller on the part of the major denominations, housing less than 100 members.<sup>7</sup> In these contexts, a significant gender gap has been documented. The implication is that the need to contribute to the current literature in documenting the key factors explaining why churches are struggling to attract men and also go a long way in formulating and recommending countermeasures for adoption by the church leadership could not be overstated. The current paper delves into this subject, aimed at sensitising society on ways in which religious leaders could intervene and reverse this concerning pattern in which most churches have experienced women dominating the congregation, hence gender disparity in these institutions of spiritual nourishment.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research technique, focusing on secondary literature analysis. The central aim lay in a quest to gain a deeper understanding of the factors contributing to the declining presence of men in religious institutions, as well as the potential implications arising from this gender

<sup>1</sup> Pew Research Center, “The Gender Gap in Religion Around the World: Women Are Generally More Religious than Men, Particularly among Christians,” 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Pew Research Center, “The Gender Gap in Religion Around the World: Women Are Generally More Religious than Men, Particularly among Christians.”

<sup>3</sup> B. Beit-Hallahmi, *Psychological Perspectives on Religion and Religiosity* (Routledge, 2014).

<sup>4</sup> M. Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture* (Greenville: 3DM Publishing.com, 2016).

<sup>5</sup> M. Conan, “Revitalizing the Church through Reaching Men with Families” (George Fox University, 2019).

<sup>6</sup> Leslie J. Francis and Andrew Village, “The Pandemic and the Feminisation of the Church? How Male and Female Churchgoers Experienced the Church of England’s Response to Covid-19,” *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 43, no. 2 (April 3, 2022): 207–16, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13617672.2021.1933304>.

<sup>7</sup> Gregory Hardy, *Adam Come Home: The Renewed Commitment of the Church to Encourage Black Men to Return to Their Faith Community* (Drew University, 2014).

imbalance in the church. Here, a qualitative research approach was deemed suitable because of its promising role in allowing an in-depth exploration of complex social phenomena, including changes in patterns of religious participation.

An extensive literature review marked the study's initial phase in terms of data collection and literature review. At this point, existing secondary sources were searched and collected systematically. Some of these sources included historical documents, books, and academic articles addressing the topic of the declining participation of men in religious congregations, with a specific focus on the church. The inclusion criteria considered the relevance of the sources to the research question, the recency of the sources, and research quality. In turn, the comprehensive collection of secondary literature served as the data for analysis.

Next was the data analysis process. Indeed, the collected secondary literature was subjected to thematic content analysis. According to Nowell, Norris and White et al., this analysis involves the systematic identification of key concepts, patterns, and themes within the literature.<sup>8</sup> Relative to the subject under investigation, key themes included evolving societal norms, gender dynamics within religious communities, and changing social roles. With relevant passages categorised, the main findings and insights were distilled from the existing literature.

Finally, there was the aspect of interpretation and implications. With the content analysis completed, the study offered an interpretation of the findings and discussed their implications for religious institutions and the remainder of society as a whole. The role of the analysis entailed exploring the causes of the gender imbalance in the church, the potential consequences for church communities, and the broader societal impacts. Upon delving into these aspects, this study strives to contribute to the understanding of gender dynamics within religious institutions and their relevance for the future. Potential areas for further investigation are also discussed in this study, besides policy considerations based on the insights gleaned from the secondary literature analysis.

## DISCUSSION

### Factors Explaining the Decline of Men in Contemporary Churches Worldview Struggles

According to Hirsch, "there is a rise in postmodernism in our current society."<sup>9</sup> This trend, as contended by Kimmel, has come with a unique challenge to the church's life, with women and men no longer searching to believe in something that could be deemed to be greater than themselves overtly.<sup>10</sup> This pattern is worrying because Hebrews 10:24-25 says, "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together..." In Western worldviews, pluralism has transformed into the New Age movement, with the latter pattern advocating for a position in which the centre of reality is deemed to be the individual self. As such, the self is perceived as real. Therefore, transcendence is replaced by immanence, and so individuals would no longer seek transcendent truth in the universe. Instead, they would search for something that might impact their lives in contemporary society.

The position above depicts a scenario in which there has been a movement in culture towards experience while deviating from a quest to realise a common understanding of the transcendent, hence impacting the church heavily. Currently, Christians face struggles in most of the current cultures (including Western culture) in such a way that more and more individuals view the world differently. In the process, the church has failed to adapt well to such changes or ensure that it is well-equipped to engage people in their worlds. The eventuality is that there has been a failure by the church to immerse itself in the thought processes of societal members. The situation is compounded by the fact that most Christians fail to know what they believe about the world, and they end up struggling to share their views with others who may be exhibiting differing views. These views resonate with those that were established by Tate, who noted that the failure of churches to learn to better disciple societal members explains the resulting failure to equip those individuals for the challenge of ensuring that the gospel is shared.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Lorelli S Nowell et al., "Thematic Analysis: Striving to Meet the Trustworthiness Criteria," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 16, no. 1 (2017): 1609406917733847.

<sup>9</sup> A. Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating Apostolic Movements* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2016).

<sup>10</sup> Michael Kimmel, *Angry White Men: American Masculinity at the End of an Era* (Hachette UK, 2017).

<sup>11</sup> Gregory James Tate, "The Decline in Black Men's Church Attendance: The Role of Male Presence on Church and the Family" (George Fox University, 2023).

## Patriarchy

In patriarchal societies, men have been given unique authority and power, with most societies of this nature holding a general agreement on the existence of the “male privilege,” which reflects the inherent power and opportunities given to men in a certain culture. As asserted by Allin, numerous patriarchal traits characterise Western culture.<sup>12</sup> Central to this culture are the traditionally masculine virtues of significance through achievement, the attribute of power, and the aspect of competition, with a more specific emphasis on white middle-class suburban contexts. According to Francis and Village, this culture of conquering and competition ends up creating tension for the local church as churches seek to reach men.<sup>13</sup> Also, the feature of patriarchy explains why, in part, preachers have found it easier and far more comfortable to proclaim a gospel of giving up control and self-sacrifice among women and other subordinated groups, with the majority of men in these societies finding themselves at the crossroads between adhering to the gospel of self-sacrifice and remaining loyal to the notion of patriarchal ideals. As contended by Breen, it is in settings where people exercise little power that the consistent message of Jesus regarding the need to sacrificially love others, love God, deny oneself, and lay down power can be heard more easily, yet the patriarchal culture operates in such a way that men exercise more power, and so this gospel message proves more difficult to receive among men than their female counterparts.<sup>14</sup> At this point, patriarchy forms a strong point that aids in explaining why churches are continuing to struggle to reach men.<sup>15</sup>

## Unclear Church Purpose and Vision

According to White, a growing number of churches have failed to articulate their vision clearly, yet this gap comes at a time when Conan documented that the majority of men in society tend to be task-oriented, implying that the purpose and vision of an institution or an operation motivate them.<sup>16</sup> In a related study, Hardy noted that the situation is worse in settings where church leaders frequently follow a direction in which the messages delivered in the church take the form of more hype than practical teaching that might have substance.<sup>17</sup> Hirsch noted that the latter pattern is consistently driving more and more men away from the church because they are frequently very logical and cognitive and constantly yearn for practical teaching that will enable them to be better businessmen, husbands, and fathers.<sup>18</sup>

In concurrence, Kimmel avowed that in modern society, an increasing number of Sunday worship sessions have been incorporated with excessive displays of emotion, making most men feel uncomfortable, with a particular emphasis on patriarchal societies in which the concept of male dominance persists.<sup>19</sup> For first-time male visitors, Tate cautioned that even though Sunday worship is often 45 minutes or longer, this period continues to prove to be way too long for the average attendee.<sup>20</sup> According to Allin, the majority of men end up leaving the church because they find these programme arrangements to be unnecessary and that most Sunday services are too long and bloated with protracted announcements and elongated verbiage.<sup>21</sup> The latter observation resonated with the indication by Francis and Village, who suggested that in the wake of elongated announcements and lengthy Sunday services if male leadership is lacking among the ministry team, deacons, elders, and pastors, most men experience a hard time in such environments where they are expected to submit to female executive leaders in church settings.<sup>22</sup> The situation tends to be more profound in settings where the senior pastors are female.

<sup>12</sup> D. Allin, *Simple Discipleship: Grow Your Faith, Transform Your Community* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2018).

<sup>13</sup> Francis and Village, “The Pandemic and the Feminisation of the Church? How Male and Female Churchgoers Experienced the Church of England’s Response to Covid-19.”

<sup>14</sup> Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture*.

<sup>15</sup> Beit-Hallahmi, *Psychological Perspectives on Religion and Religiosity*.

<sup>16</sup> Deborah Gray White, *Lost in the USA: American Identity from the Promise Keepers to the Million Mom March* (University of Illinois Press, 2017).

<sup>17</sup> Hardy, *Adam Come Home: The Renewed Commitment of the Church to Encourage Black Men to Return to Their Faith Community*.

<sup>18</sup> Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating Apostolic Movements*.

<sup>19</sup> Kimmel, *Angry White Men: American Masculinity at the End of an Era*.

<sup>20</sup> Tate, “The Decline in Black Men’s Church Attendance: The Role of Male Presence on Church and the Family.”

<sup>21</sup> Allin, *Simple Discipleship: Grow Your Faith, Transform Your Community*.

<sup>22</sup> Francis and Village, “The Pandemic and the Feminisation of the Church? How Male and Female Churchgoers Experienced the Church of England’s Response to Covid-19.”

## A Lack of Men's Discipleship

A lack of male fellowship opportunities and bonding sessions has been observed to contribute to issues that drive most men away from the modern-day church. According to Breen, this absence of men's discipleship implies that even though some men may be leaders in marketplace contexts, the majority of businessmen might feel that in the local churches, their leadership gifting is unrecognised.<sup>23</sup> As such, they may lose their morale, having perceived themselves as societal members who are only viewed as "cash cows" charged with the key responsibility of funding the local church. In concurrence, White noted that with Christianity feminised, numerous men have ended up seeing Christianity as an institution and Jesus himself as effeminate and wimpy.<sup>24</sup>

In the evangelical world, pacifism as an Anabaptist concept has infiltrated. At the same time, therefore, men's innate desires to both protect and defend their country and families have been emasculated. In Matthew 5:38-39, for instance, "turning the other cheek" has ended up being misunderstood to imply that men may not go to war for their country nor defend their families, yet this interpretation may come at a time when the men themselves are threatened with bodily harm.<sup>25</sup> The teaching in these verses is part of the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus encouraged His followers to respond to aggression or mistreatment with non-violence and love rather than seeking retaliation. Specifically, it was a call for mankind to respond to hostility with grace and forgiveness. Notably, in the Old Testament, going to war was expected, and so the latter position may not reflect what Jesus meant, yet the Evangelical world continues to be infiltrated by this state of pacifism.

In Romans 13:3-7, magistrates act as ministers of God when they use the sword to ensure the protection of citizens. Also, Jesus himself resisted the devil forcibly by driving the thieves and money changers out of the temple. The implication is that "turning the other cheek" implies that Christians should not fight merely because they are insulted, as slapping on the cheek would be an insult to the victim and represent no mortal threat, yet misleading teachings that have infringed the evangelical world have seen the innate desires of men to protect their families and country emasculated, hence driving most of them away from the church.

## Family Fragmentations

It is difficult to discipline boys when they attend church because single mothers continue to raise them in fragmented family settings in the majority of urban centres (Conan, 2019). The latter study suggested that most women could not balance strong correction with nurturing to raise boys properly to manhood. Elsewhere, Hardy contended that often, boys in such fragmented family settings become undisciplined and lack experience in the confines of male authority and structure.<sup>26</sup> These findings concurred with Hirsch's assertion that most men, particularly businessmen, have a propensity to associate themselves with successful businesses that exhibit a spirit of excellence and financial responsibility.<sup>27</sup> For the majority of storefront church operations, such men are highly likely to be turned away. The situation becomes compounded in scenarios where pastors operate those churches with autocratic control with no proper church government, accountability, or fiscal disclosure.<sup>28</sup>

## Proposed Solutions

### *A Discipleship through Invitation*

Compared to typical small groups, discipleship groups operate differently. Specifically, these groups represent both sides of God's character. In the Gospel of John, Jesus is introduced as the Son of the Father, perceived to be full of truth and grace. From John 1:34, the Bible says, "I have seen and I testify that this is God's Chosen One." Originating from the testimony of John the Baptist, this verse depicts his recognition of Jesus as the Son of God. Also, in Matthew 11:28-30, God is depicted as one who is simultaneously tender and strong, with Christ's followers expected to be transformed by His Spirit over time to also transform into simultaneously tender and strong selves. According to Tate, most contemporary

<sup>23</sup> Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture*.

<sup>24</sup> White, *Lost in the USA: American Identity from the Promise Keepers to the Million Mom March*.

<sup>25</sup> Beit-Hallahmi, *Psychological Perspectives on Religion and Religiosity*.

<sup>26</sup> Hardy, *Adam Come Home: The Renewed Commitment of the Church to Encourage Black Men to Return to Their Faith Community*.

<sup>27</sup> Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating Apostolic Movements*.

<sup>28</sup> Kimmel, *Angry White Men: American Masculinity at the End of an Era*.

churches have portrayed models that are low in strength and high in tenderness.<sup>29</sup> As such, men in the current society ought to be encouraged, welcomed, and invited to be a part of the group (grace and tenderness) and also ensure that they are challenged (truth and strength), proceeding further to hold them accountable for assuming their cross and following Jesus.

This proposed solution emanates from the observation that most small groups are information-oriented and not transformation-oriented. In these groups, individuals may gather together and seek to get Christianity's facts correct, proceeding to share occasional prayer requests. In such scenarios, passivity may dominate. On its part, discipleship comes with activity. Here, discipleship is about seeking to become like Jesus, and so it is less likely to be realised via mere information transfer divorced from the ordinary and lived life context. Instead, effective discipleship needs to be one in which the learning that is acquired is taken and applied to the everyday lives of men. Matthew 28:18-20 says, "Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'" In this passage, Jesus instructs His disciples to make new disciples by teaching them to obey everything He has commanded. Also, it states that discipleship is not just about teaching but also about helping others to live out the teachings of Jesus in their everyday lives. It emphasizes obedience and transformation rather than just the transmission of information.

In the real world, therefore, groups of fathers may meet each week to become more inspired through the application of the material they will have studied together in their lives. As Allin points out, the application makes sure that these fathers experience the material viscerally, motivating them to learn and study. Also, the application might put the fathers in a position in which they must depend on God and trust the Lord for direction for their lives instead of meeting weekly only to learn together. The effectiveness of the proposed solution of discipleship through invitation to Jesus is poised further to be achieved via the lens of the gospel of grace, whereby it might entail training others to embrace their gospel identity and proceeding to determine how the given identity could be lived in the world. In 2 Corinthians 5:17, Paul, the apostle, instructs humans that those who are in Christ are a new creation, with the old gone and the new setting in. This verse says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" Hence, when seeking to restore church attendance among men, it is crucial that the discipleship programme centres on this new life that the gospel offers.

It is important to note that the content presented in the discipleship relationships is expected to vary, but the ultimate goal needs to involve guiding men to hear the voice of God as well as challenging them to obey the given voice in their lives. During this discipleship through an invitation to Jesus, it is also key to ensure that men hear the voice of God through four main ways, which include the church, circumstances, prayer, and scriptures. Thus, the key objective of the discipleship groups should involve helping men become attentive to these attributes in their lives to hear the voice of God. Some of the core teachings of scripture that the groups ought to train include working with others and the world around them, how to be attentive to God's spirit, and how to pray. Mentors should also proceed to stretch beyond helping men hear the voice of God and challenge them to determine actions that might be required through two key questions. These questions should include what God could be saying to them and what they will do about the same. In so doing, men might gain an opportunity to experience God's tender invitation while also being challenged to follow wherever God's voice might lead them courageously. Through such a discipleship relationship that is based on invitation and challenge, men might be immersed in a joyful experience led by the Spirit and filled with strength and tenderness that gives life to all because of experiencing God together, a pattern that might bring them back to the church, having nourished their souls spiritually.

### ***Gathering Groups for Men to Connect***

Proverbs 27:17 holds, "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another." To avoid losing more and more men from the church, the existing male attendees are also worth targeting and bringing on board as part of the solution, transforming them into fishers of men. Thus, the existing men ought to be taken

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<sup>29</sup> Tate, "The Decline in Black Men's Church Attendance: The Role of Male Presence on Church and the Family."

through a discipleship programme. Even in older churches, Francis and Village noted that it is key to focus on the existing men as mentors for the remainder of men in society.<sup>30</sup> This observation was informed by the position that scripture remains full of older men who would pass on their wisdom and faith to younger men. Also, the apostle Paul wrote three letters in the Bible, targeting Titus and Timothy, his protégés. In these letters, he would offer them some teachings on how to minister to congregations, how to select and empower leaders, and how to stay strong. Also, Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, walked him through his life and ministry, helping him to witness the power of delegation. In Exodus 18:13-27, Jethro advised Moses on delegation. In these verses, he observed Moses carrying the burden of judging and settling disputes for the Israelites all by himself. As such, he advised Moses to delegate this responsibility to capable leaders who could handle smaller disputes, leaving him to focus on more critical matters. Indeed, the passage emphasizes the importance of delegation ineffective leadership.

In contemporary society, however, such a form of hands-on discipleship is seemingly deemed intimidating to the majority in the church, with most of them preferring to act as good Christian churchgoers rather than serving as Jesus' devoted followers. In society, therefore, as churches create programmes for men to meet men and pass wisdom to others in a quest to retain them in large numbers and even attract others from outside, the receiving ends are predicted to gain confidence in the church, having been assured that they will always have someone by their side in case of challenges. This recommendation is informed by and grounded in the observation that Jesus opted to send his disciples in pairs. Specifically, Mark 6:7 says, "And He called the twelve to Himself, and began to send them out two by two, and gave them power over unclean spirits." Indeed, this decision can be inferred to have accrued from the observation that he knew the challenges that those disciples were likely to encounter and the needed encouragement. In the current church, the implication is that partners ought to pray together and establish groups, upon which they might experience both the needed accountability and encouragement to enable them to reduplicate and not lose their momentum and members in the process.

### ***Scouting and Skill Sharing***

In Galatians 6:2, the Bible says, "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfil the law of Christ. Here, the literature documented earlier suggests that currently, in church, women are filling more pews and volunteer positions, as well as participating in more activities compared to their counterparts from the men's side. To strengthen a church's presence in the lives of men even more, including those who are spouses of participating women, the widowed, and single ones, the outreach of the institution needs to ensure the same men have something to do and make men feel welcome.

According to Beit-Hallahmi, the majority of men in society are more likely to prefer activity compared to merely sitting and reflecting on the scripture in church.<sup>31</sup> As such, an effective ministry that seeks to attract more men and retain the existing ones is projected to be characterised by a quest to tell men or indicate to them that the church at hand cares about their needs and interests. Also, Breen contended that such a ministry is expected to sponsor, promote, and encourage activities that might attract the male community.<sup>32</sup>

It is against this backdrop that it is recommended that scouting become part of the church. According to White, it is through scouting that fathers and children are likely to be brought together.<sup>33</sup> Through scouting, Conan asserted that fathers may be enabled to interact with their children while, at the same time, giving back to the community.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, such a trend could translate to multitasking at its best. In scenarios where churches have a historical commitment to civic youth ministry and scouting, Hardy documented that the chances of attracting and retaining men in their larger numbers tend to be higher.<sup>35</sup> On the strategy of sharing skills and hobbies, it is recommended that men be asked to volunteer their talents to ensure that they are not only accommodated as part of the larger church community but also feel valued and wanted in the institution. A more practical scenario illustrating this strategy at work may be a

<sup>30</sup> Francis and Village, "The Pandemic and the Feminisation of the Church? How Male and Female Churchgoers Experienced the Church of England's Response to Covid-19."

<sup>31</sup> Beit-Hallahmi, *Psychological Perspectives on Religion and Religiosity*.

<sup>32</sup> Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture*.

<sup>33</sup> White, *Lost in the USA: American Identity from the Promise Keepers to the Million Mom March*.

<sup>34</sup> Conan, "Revitalizing the Church through Reaching Men with Families."

<sup>35</sup> Hardy, *Adam Come Home: The Renewed Commitment of the Church to Encourage Black Men to Return to Their Faith Community*.

case in which a handyman tends to be willing to work on a less-advantaged congregational member's home as well as work on the home of someone else in the community, thus fulfilling the ministry of the church concerning giving back to the community or becoming fishers of men and others' servants. Another sample illustration would be a case in which an accountant assists with taxes and debates around the same in the church, with a graphic designer charged with the creation of brochures for one of the ministries of the church or for the church itself. An information technology professional or webmaster could also be willing to address computer or website technicalities in the church. According to Hirsch, most community members are abled differently and possess varying gifts and interests beyond those that touch on their employment.<sup>36</sup> As such, being open to an individual such as a banker to break out the power tools and build something might go a long way in creating a directory of talents that the church and members can exploit when the need arises.

### ***Creating a Platform for Feedback***

Proverbs 19:20 indicates, "Listen to advice and accept discipline, and at the end, you will be counted among the wise." This verse emphasizes the value of listening to feedback and being open to discipline, which can lead to wisdom and growth. In James 1:19, the Bible proceeds, "My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry." The implication is that active listening is necessary, which is essential for receiving feedback effectively. According to Kimmel, holding open debates is one of the most promising directions through which the church and its ministries might be better placed to immerse themselves in the worldviews of men.<sup>37</sup>

During sermons on topics such as faith and technology, for instance, it is also key to ensure that a question-and-answer session is embraced. Through such considerable debating and commenting from the congregation, it is predicted that as men argue and become adversarial to reach the truth, the resulting experience aids in binding them as a community in a way that other activities might not have afforded. Still, with the subject of embracing feedback on the focus, it is crucial to foster creative movements. In the study by Tate, it was acknowledged that getting men out of their seats via activities such as placing objects or responsorial singing and having the same activities linked to the theme of the given service ensures that the message of the day is cemented in their minds, a fun approach through which men might feel engaged and part of the church.<sup>38</sup> Embracing online platforms, courtesy of the growing role of technology in the church is also key. During workshops, churches may utilise live Twitter feeds and other social media platforms or sites to pave the way for participating men to ask questions on the topic under discussions, such as dating and relationships, and proceed further to give insight into some of the factors that could be turning a section of them away from the church. Eventually, the church leadership might use this information to attract and engage men in debates, ensuring that their comments and questions become part of the conversation, with post-sermon debates and discussions also used to inform the key weaknesses of the church and its ministries and reveal the needed countermeasures for retaining and attracting more men in a quest to realise gender parity and reap the benefits of the scripture optimally.

### ***"Doing" and not "Being"***

In Matthew 7:21, the Bible advises, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." The verse underscores the importance of not just professing faith but also living in accordance with the will be God (doing). Additionally, James 2:14 says, "What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them?... In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead." Indeed, this passage emphasizes that genuine faith (being) is demonstrated through actions (doing).

In the real world, giving challenges and tasks has been documented as a promising approach to attracting more men to the church. According to Allin, most men might feel at home when they are challenged to take on projects.<sup>39</sup> Here, the study demonstrated that such men may not be too much into

<sup>36</sup> Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating Apostolic Movements*.

<sup>37</sup> Kimmel, *Angry White Men: American Masculinity at the End of an Era*.

<sup>38</sup> Tate, "The Decline in Black Men's Church Attendance: The Role of Male Presence on Church and the Family."

<sup>39</sup> Allin, *Simple Discipleship: Grow Your Faith, Transform Your Community*.



talking or worshipping themselves, but they might enjoy engaging in practical activities. However, as this approach is exploited and implemented, care should be taken to ensure that there is no assumption that all men will like this direction. In the process of balancing their preferences, Francis and Village advocated for the need to give men space to engage in tasks, develop them, and transform them in their own ways with no micromanagement.<sup>40</sup> In scenarios where men accept challenges, they ought to be honoured, especially because, in services, visible tasks might rate more highly than “behind the scenes” tasks, even at a time when both categories of engagements might be essential for the entire faith community. Whether it is project-managing building work, maintaining the gardens, or running the sound system, men ought to be engaged in challenges and assigned tasks as a way of attracting their commitment to the church.

Still, considering the subject of the need to “do” rather than “be,” the linkage between faith and careers needs to be emphasised in the church and its ministries. According to Beit-Hallahmi, this strategy involves encouraging expressions of faith at work.<sup>41</sup> The study indicated that some careers tend to be vocational, and men tend to feel called to do them. Other careers, however, involve earning money to support oneself and one’s family as deemed appropriate. Regardless of whether the career falls into the former or latter category, it is key to stretch beyond mere evangelism and encourage men to exploit opportunities for expressing faith within the work context. A more specific illustration is one in which a male church member serves professionally in the psychology of internet use. Here, they may introduce talks about designing software in an environment marked by ethical behaviour. By spreading these faith messages at work, church members might go a long way in acting as the chaplain to the industry, upon which the targeted men might find value in Christ and, hopefully, express their willingness to join or re-join the church.

### Future Implications

From the results and recommendations above, one of the key takeaways is that the church has a few opportunities at its disposal to reach more men. When it comes to the songs, structure, name of the church, and atmosphere, churches should think about men. This consideration needs to be blended with preaching on subjects such as what it means to be a man, marriage, and relationships, coming at a time when societal culture exhibits numerous questions around these subjects. There is also a need to ensure that preaching is directed at men by posing action steps, clarity, and logic while balancing preaching scenarios that exhibit emotions, feelings, and stories.

For more men to sign up for a church, it needs to have a clear vision and a clear win because the majority of the individuals might seek to understand what could be on the line, the impact it is likely to make, and why they need to show up.

Men in the contemporary church will also need to be shown how their actions impact their legacy. As stated by Breen, men are mostly concerned with legacy, how they will be remembered, and how things will or might end up.<sup>42</sup> As such, when ministering to men, to ensure they are attracted and retained in the church, this consideration is key. Hence, it is crucial to demonstrate to men what they could be doing currently, whether good or bad and how it is likely to impact their legacy. It is further notable that preachers ought to give men clear examples worth following. Given that men follow men, a preacher who wants to reach and attract them may ensure the presence of strong male leaders in the church, especially those who would be out to exemplify Ephesians 5:25-28. Thus, a proper blend between female leaders and strong male leaders in the church is key.

### CONCLUSION

This paper has examined the declining pattern of men in the church today. Some of the leading factors that are driving men away from the institution include worldview struggles, patriarchy, unclear purpose and vision, a lack of men’s discipleship, and family fragmentation. To counter this concerning trend, some solutions have been proposed. They include discipleship through invitation, gathering groups for men to connect, scouting and skill sharing, creating a platform for feedback, and “doing” rather than “being.” It

<sup>40</sup> Francis and Village, “The Pandemic and the Feminisation of the Church? How Male and Female Churchgoers Experienced the Church of England’s Response to Covid-19.”

<sup>41</sup> Beit-Hallahmi, *Psychological Perspectives on Religion and Religiosity*.

<sup>42</sup> Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture*.

is important to remember that a solution to this worrying trend of men turning away from the church requires a multidisciplinary approach in which stakeholders internal and external to the church may be brought on board. Additionally, there is a need for the intervening group to immerse themselves in the worldviews and thought processes of the affected male members of society to understand their motivations for stagnating in church attendance, upon which solutions could be tailored to the emerging needs as informed by the specific factors that might have contributed to their failure to attend church.

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