

## Getting Men Involved

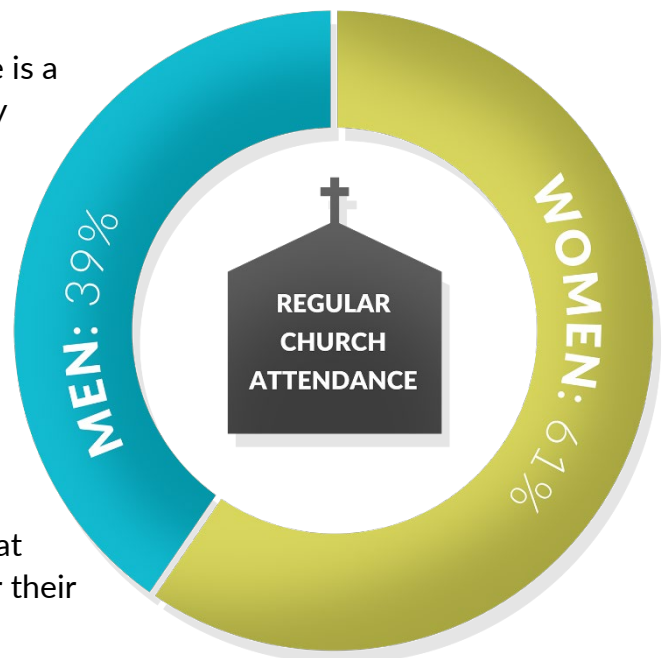
A U.S. Congregational Life Survey found that there is a large gender gap in the American church. Men only make up 39% of regular church attendance. Look beyond mere attendance and turn your attention to the volunteer workforce and will see the gender gaps widens even more. The volunteers in churches are predominantly female.

Let's get specific about the gender gap in the world of disability and its impact on the church. A staggering statistic is that up to 88% of marriages fail when there is a child affected by disability. An overwhelming majority of the time it is the man that leaves. Single moms are left to try to hold together their family with improbable responsibilities.

What if there wasn't a gender imbalance in the church? What if men weren't absent or hiding on the sidelines? What if men were involved? How much a difference would it make not only in the church but specifically in the world of disability?

**The difference would be beyond measure!**

The fact of the matter is... men need the church, but more importantly, the church needs men! The presence of excited men is one of the surest indicators of church health, growth, and giving.



**So how can you get men excited about serving in your church, specifically in the world of Disability Ministry an area where they are sorely needed?**

## Key Concepts to Start With

- There is a place for every man to serve. If you cannot find a place for everyone you probably are not thinking BIG enough about Disability Ministry.
- Think outside the box! Yes, this is about getting creative, but that is not the entire conversation. If you are wanting to find a place for everyone than you will need to get outside the box, the box being Sunday morning programming inside the walls of the church. Sunday morning is only part of one day a week. There are six more days where men can serve.
- Call men to action! Men are not attracted to doing something to merely “fill a spot” or “need.” Men want an opportunity to make a difference and to be part of something bigger than themselves.
- “Forever” will forever scare men away. Make sure to offer multiple one-time events and service opportunities with well-defined start and stop dates. No one likes to be locked into doing only one thing forever. For those serving long term scheduled time off and breaks are important too.
- Don’t wait for men to become men. Start by recruiting boys who are leaders in your Student Ministry. Don’t limit yourself to just High schoolers. Middle School boys are more than capable to serve in your Disability Ministry.

## Outside the Box Service Opportunities

We are literally talking about opportunities that are outside the box of Sunday morning programming inside the walls of the church. These are great opportunities that are low commitment or literally one-time events. A great place to get men involved especially if they feel like serving in Disability Ministry is way out of their comfort zone.

- **Jesus Prom Volunteer:** There are endless opportunities at Proms to serve. The biggest need at all Proms is to be a “buddy” or a friend for the evening.
- **Wishlist Champion:** Either an online wish list or literal wish list of ministry items or personal items that families need. Men are often labeled “hunters and gatherers”. Well give them something to hunt and gather for that will either benefit your ministry or families affected by disability in your ministry. Make sure that the items collected are hand delivered and not shipped. The personal connection is a must.

- **Weekend Warriors:** Think Habitat. Families affected by disability in your congregation or community could probably benefit from a handyman or a whole team of them! On a Saturday a lot of yard work, vehicle repair/cleaning, painting, home repairs, moving furniture, etc. could easily be tackled. In addition to volunteering time, make it personal! Take up a small donation and provide the family with a gift basket of useful items (sensory items, Amazon gift card, etc.).
- **Gamer's Night:** Host a video game tournament at your church. Who couldn't have fun playing video games, crushing pizza, and soda? Great non-intimidating way to build relationships.

## Opportunities Somewhere In-Between

For those that find themselves in the land between are good with serving at all the one-time events and re-occurring opportunities. They still are not ready for the signing up for a weekly commitment though. Those in this category are open to doing some inside the box opportunities for trial periods or to fill in from time to time.

- **Security:** Every Disability Ministry from time to time needs help from the Security Team. If there is a runner in the ministry, it is always good to have a Door Man.
- **Respite Volunteer:** This like the Prom is an event with many different volunteer opportunities. If you enjoyed the Prom you will no doubt enjoy Respite events. Jump in and have fun for a night!
- **Outings Chaperone:** Disability Ministries often will have monthly or quarterly outings. An extra set of hands is always needed. Tag along and see that you are more alike than different.
- **Van Driver:** Public transportation doesn't run on Sundays. This is a major obstacle for many in the disability community when it comes to attending church. Remove that barrier by driving a van and bringing people to church. It wasn't so long ago that the Bus Ministry was a thing! Bring it back and bring hope to those who are isolated in your community.
- **Greeter:** Every church could use warmer and inviting people sharing a smile and a hello. What if you had greeters specifically on the lookout for families that had loved ones affected by disability. What if you had a welcome package? What if you could escort them wherever they went or make them aware of everything they needed like the location of handicap accessible bathrooms?

- **Small Group Host:** Don't feel comfortable leading a Small Group? That is okay! Many groups just need a place to meet. Are you willing to open your home to a group that is looking for a place to meet? Be a host and bless the group that meets in your home with a nice place and a bunch of goodies!
- **Guys Night Out:** Genuine friendship is a much-needed thing for teens and young adults in the disability community. On a "guys night out" it can be a larger group of guys going to a ball game or a smaller gathering of guys with shared interests doing something they enjoy.
- **Pen Pals:** Not comfortable working one on one with someone yet? That's cool. Consider being a Pen Pal or someone who regularly sends encouraging letters in the mail. Everyone loves getting mail! Want to take it up a notch? Consider sending a SASE so that the person they are writing to can always send something back.
- **Dudes & Drawing:** It is exactly what it sounds like. Just a bunch of guys that enjoy or at least have an appreciation of art. It doesn't just have to be drawing. Art is a bit more intimate than video games so that is why you see it in this category.
- **Book Club:** Similar idea as "Dudes & Drawing". Get together with individuals who love to read. Pick a book, any book! Read and discuss. Meet at a library, coffee house, etc.

## Inside the Box Opportunities

These are opportunities for men who are "all-in" with serving in Disability Ministry. They have had a chance to test the waters and have found a place where they can see the incredible difference they are having with individuals and families affected by disability. These opportunities are long term service opportunities.

- **Buddy:** Be a friend one-on-one with someone on Sunday mornings. Travel with them in their age appropriate ministry environments.
- **Table Host:** If your church has a class for teens or adults with disabilities, they are often looking for someone to be a Table Host. This person is not responsible for teaching. They are just looking for people to be hospitable, lead discussion, and make sure everyone is included.
- **Teacher:** Do you enjoy teaching! There is always a place for at church. Discipleship in Disability Ministry is a must.

- **Small Group Leader:** If your church has small groups instead of classes there will no doubt be a need for small group leaders. Help facilitate discussion and build relationships.
- **Athletes in Action:** Staying physically fit is tough for everyone. It is an especially big issue in the disability community. You can help change that! Become a coach for a Special Olympics team. Approach your gym about doing a special fitness class for adults with disabilities. Start a running club, lifting club,
- **Mentor:** This is a one-on-one situation outside of Sunday morning. This is a high investment with huge potential for return on investment.
- **Family Adoption:** We are not talking literal adoption here so take a deep breath! What we are talking about is making an intentional effort to bless an individual family. You and your family will get to know a family in the disability community. You will celebrate birthdays and holidays together. You will meet needs as they arise. You will do life together.

## The Church is Good for Men

Below are just a few of the benefits. *Source: churchformen.com*

- Churchgoers are more likely to be married and express a higher level of satisfaction with life. Church involvement is the most important predictor of marital stability and happiness<sup>1</sup>.
- Church involvement moves people out of poverty. It's also correlated with less depression, more self-esteem, and greater family and marital happiness<sup>2</sup>.
- Religious participation leads men to become more engaged husbands and fathers<sup>3</sup>.
- Teens with religious fathers are more likely to say they enjoy spending time with dad and that they admire him<sup>4</sup>.

Footnotes:[1, 2] "Why Religion Matters: The Impact of Religious Practice on Social Stability," *The Heritage Foundation Backgrounder*, 1064, 25 January 1996,

[3] Penny Edgell (Becker) and Heather Hofmeister, "Work, Family and Religious Involvement for Men and Women," Hartford Institute for Religion Research, <<http://hrr.hartsem.edu>>.

[4] Christian Smith and Phillip Kim, "Religious Youth Are More Likely to Have Positive Relationships with Their Fathers," The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 12 July 2002, findings based on the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997).