

PLANNING MAJOR MEN'S MEETINGS

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PURPOSE

Most often, the first place to begin creating momentum is to motivate men toward a specific event. Events built around a “gathering” type of church event can motivate men. Or, you could hold a breakfast, campouts, weekend “encounter.” You may consider a service-oriented event such as a community-building project, after which you bring them together to celebrate the job done and give the vision for the future.

Critical mass will greatly help you launch and build momentum for your local men’s movement. Kick off the Majoring In Men® ministry by introducing the men to the teaching they will be receiving. Whatever type of event you use, just get the men together, as many men as you can gather, to get off to a strong start.

APPOINT A STRONG TEAM OF MEN WHO SHARE THE VISION

The first step is to gather your core leadership team to discuss holding a momentum event. It is important that you, as the pastor or men’s leader, do not do everything alone. You will exhaust yourself and defeat your purposes. Be sure to involve others.

As you gather your team, remember that, “What a man doesn’t know, he is against.” The initial idea for holding an event is best approached on the individual level. Let each man know you are inviting him to the meeting to plan an event. That way, you can take care of any objections in advance. At the meeting when the team is together, you can simply begin to plan.

If you have a large pool of men, you may wish to promote some men to leadership, or test the talents of your men, by giving some the opportunity to serve on a special Events Team. This begins to build the pool of experienced leaders in your group, and also keeps the leadership team from having to make every decision.

SET CLEAR GOALS

“Fellowship is always a by-product, never a goal.” It is not enough to have an event just so the men can get together to see each other.

The second step to a higher-profile event is to determine the specific purpose for bringing the men together. It might be:

- To cast the vision for a new men’s movement with a major launch
- To announce new initiatives.
- At the start of new classes.
- For honoring men for their achievements, leaders for their service and to introduce newly developed leaders and group facilitators.

You will want to assess the needs of your men, and set your goals accordingly. This will influence when and where you have your meeting, who speaks, the format, topics and types of presentations and what kind of follow-up you prepare.

Your basic goals are always to help men establish closer relationships with each other and bring them into a closer walk with the Lord. More specific goals depend on your group. Set priorities so that you emphasize your most important goals at all times.

At your first meeting, set goals and discuss dates and formats. One idea is to plan a major event or even a special men's retreat with an exciting theme. If your men cannot get away somewhere, then doing a weekend event, such as on a Friday night and Saturday morning can work. The most typical men's event has been all-day Saturday meeting.

From the start of your discussions, ask each man on the team to accept a responsibility —location, food, promotions, program.

The third step is to start praying.

COVER IT IN PRAYER

The first thing on your committee's agenda should be a commitment by every member to pray daily for the retreat.

Prayer produces intimacy.

As the men agree together in prayer, they will begin to work together. As they begin to pray for the others who will attend, they will begin to love those brothers more. This will set the tone for the retreat.

Some men's ministries have ministry captains with a ratio of 1 to 5 men attending. These "captains" have the names of their men far in advance and start covering that brother in prayer before they even meet at the event.

People are saved only through prayer. You will never see the power of God's Presence in your meetings without prevailing intercessory prayer. Your prayer life will determine the prayer life of your men.

The place of agreement is the place of power. You must be in agreement, in prayer, with the other leaders of the group. If you are not in agreement in spirit, purpose, planning or personnel, then your meeting will not be maximized to its fullest potential.

Intercessory prayer ministry will undergird the rest of the ministry. No one ever gets

saved without prayer. Your meeting will be only as effective as your intercessory prayer ministry because prayer is the foundation for successful ministry.

Pray for more people to be saved. Though every meeting is not the same, your consistency will ensure increasing attendance. Never be satisfied with what you have. Always seek God for greater meetings. Too often, men have become satisfied with what measure of success they have. They eventually decline and disintegrate. Jesus said, “My true disciples produce bountiful harvests. This brings great glory to my Father” John 15:8 TLB. The more bountiful the harvest, the greater the glory.

Prayer for Successful Ministry

Here is a basic prayer for the leader of the men’s group written for you by Dr. Cole:

“Father, in the Name of Jesus, I love You. I love Your Church. I love the Body. I love my brethren. I love the ministry. I love Your ministers. I love what You’ve done in my life.

“I want to be a success in ministry. It’s Your ministry through me, Lord.

“Give me my pattern for ministry. I don’t want to wear someone else’s. I don’t want to fit theirs. I want mine, Lord. I want to pay the price to be alone with You until You give it to me. And then, with uninhibited zeal, lifestyle, fervency of spirit, singleness of mind and devotion to purpose, I want to give myself to it, Lord.

“Flow through me, Lord. Raise me up, I pray.

“For Your glory and for Your Kingdom, I praise You for what You are doing today in me. AMEN.”

NOTHING SUCCEEDS LIKE WORK

Next comes the hardest step, but it will make the event easy—hard work. Proverbs 18:9 says the “lazy man is brother to the saboteur.” Laziness will sabotage anything you desire to do. Recruit and train *workers!*

Your success will be directly proportionate to your efforts. The only thing God can bless is an effort. Without an effort, there is no blessing.

Have you ever noticed how hard it is for men who win a sports championship to win again the next year? Few ever do if they “rest on their laurels” from the previous year.

One of the greatest boxers of all time, who won the championship three times, was asked what the hardest part was to becoming a champion. His answer was succinct

and potent: “The day after is the hardest part. You don’t want to get up as early, run as much or train as hard.”

For the same reason, many men’s ministries do not maintain their level of effectiveness. They wait too long after an event to plan their next meeting, assume everyone will come because they merely announce it and don’t spend the same amount of time in prayer and planning as they did before.

Nothing breeds failure like success. No matter how many times you do a major event, remember what you did to get there and do it all over again. Start with this description and planning guide, and keep going from success to success.

There is an old adage in the ministry that states: “Work as if it is all up to you, but pray as if it is all up to God.” In Hebrews 11:6 we read, “He is a rewarder of them that DILIGENTLY seek Him.” Your efforts in seeking God will allow God to bless your efforts in seeking men.

Don’t blame yourself for failures, but don’t take glory for success either. Remember, it is God who gives the increase.

Ninety percent of an iceberg is below the surface of the water, out of sight. Ten percent is visible. That is the same as a successful meeting—ten percent is seen, but there is ninety percent unseen that includes prayer, preparation and planning.

WORK MUST BE PLANNED

In the Bible, the prophet always precedes the deliverer. In the same way, preparation must always precede the inspiration. Glibness in the pulpit does not compensate for preparation for the pulpit. The old adage to “plan your work and work your plan” has merit for you.

Meditate on the goals you have determined to accomplish. Plan it. Prepare for it. And then enjoy it. Planning is simply the development of a strategy for achieving success.

In *Majoring In Men*[®], men learn:

THE GLORY IS IN THE VICTORY; THE WISDOM IS IN THE STRATEGY!

Men who do not plan properly are only one of two things: lazy or dumb. Be wise—plan—prepare for every detail.

Plan Far In Advance

Check early to book the facility. Confirm the date, then count backwards to determine when everything will have to be done. Prepare for printed advertising materials. Allow yourself enough time to accommodate your ideas. For example,

have T-shirts made with a slogan or the retreat date on it, but make them far enough in advance to show the men what they'll be receiving when they sign up.

If you are trying to reach more than just the most dedicated men in the group, think of the holidays surrounding the event—football games, high school graduations, and so forth. Plan accordingly for the fewest possible barriers for men not to attend.

Set The Schedule

Know what you're going to do and when you're going to do it. Allow time for fellowship and recreation. Ensure prayer captains know when the teachings end and one-on-one ministry begins. Know when the men will be free to go to snack bars, make phone calls, and so forth, and make sure the facility and concessions are aware and prepared.

Prepare for follow up to occur later. Many leaders design the program to break into smaller groups. The men may break into a group with a leader who will follow up with them after the meeting. Or, they may break into pairs with each other, and help each other get into a small group, if they aren't already.

The bottom line is to get results, to reach your goals—not just to have a great reaction that won't last. A man who has a life-changing experience at the event will need someone to help him through whatever difficulties he encounters when he returns home. A friend he can call at any time could make a tremendous difference in his life.

THE FIRST IN INTENTION IS THE LAST IN EXECUTION

In this life, your first intention as a Christian is going to Heaven to be with the Lord, but that is the last thing you will do. Everything in between leads up to the “first in intention.” When a man wants to fly to Washington, D.C., that is his “first in intention.” But he has to buy a ticket, pack his bags, plan a ride to the airport and complete other arrangements before he can get where he wants to go.

This means that in planning, always begin with the day after the meeting and work toward the day you begin planning. In other words, plan backwards. Most people, when planning a meeting, plan only up to the meeting time and never make arrangements for afterward. Then, since they had to do everything themselves, they create a negative attitude toward the meeting.

Remember, it's not how you start that counts but how you finish. Follow-up calls and thank you letters are as important as all the promotions you do beforehand. If they are done properly, then when you want to have your next meeting, you will not have to start all over again to build interest and enthusiasm.

“Begin With The End” Planning Chart Example

This is a brief guideline to let you see that planning begins after the meeting and works toward the time you are planning it. Once you have thought about the details of your specific meeting, its location, members and other logistics, write down the details, and take some time to think about them. Meditation is the matrix of creativity. Make sure you have prayerfully considered every aspect of the meeting—it is vital to having a success.

30 days after	Know the dates of future meetings before you conduct this one! Announce the dates—build excitement!
2 weeks after	Send out announcements for the next meeting.
1 week after	Have a committee critique the last meeting in preparation for next one. Be honest with yourselves to improve. What worked? What didn't work? What worked the last time but not this time, and why?
Day after	Inventory materials. Add information to database. Write thank you notes. The principle is, “Gratitude confirms relationships.”
Night of meeting	Lock up, carry out trash, load materials, clean tables. Have someone assigned to these tasks. Asking for volunteers during the meeting is amateurish.
Meeting	Schedule of events, personnel, time frame – all has been pre-determined in the planning of the meeting
Pre-meeting	Arrange for personnel to be responsible for set-up such as setting up tables, adding table cloths, bringing in materials, setting up tables, manning tables. Arrange for greeters and parking guides. If selling materials or products, have adequate cash to make change.
Prior to meeting	Publicity, promotion, announcements
Planning meeting	Prepare, print and communicate.

PLAN FOR THE UNEXPECTED

Prepare for emergencies and interruptions. Be prepared for surprises. Make a plan in advance for what you'll do IF.... Then, if something unexpected does happen, you will be ready to move into action immediately.

Some things you could think about are a PowerPoint not working (even after being checked and re-checked), a wife wanting to attend with her husband, materials not arriving in time. On a retreat, it might be men not able to sleep because someone in the room snores or someone not being able to eat the meals prepared, etc.

The steps to achieving success are:

Decision
Dedication
Discipline
DETAILS

Details that are not taken care of make men lose their concentration, feel uncomfortable and get distracted. Details that have been taken care of will make a retreat smooth and enable the Lord to do a great work in the men's lives.

"The little foxes spoil the vines" is the scripture in Song of Solomon 2:15. That is another way of saying that details have a way of killing the greatest of efforts.

WHERE TO HOLD A MEETING

Esthetics, the environment of your meeting, can often determine its success or failure. If you are a pastor, you may have heard this before, but it bears repeating: Do not let the facility where you worship dictate your limits. You must determine to lead personally, not circumstantially. Ensure the location is as inviting as possible.

Testifying to faith, signs, wonders, miracles and "maximized" manhood while meeting in a room that is deteriorated or moth-eaten is to work in opposition to yourself. Many men will not invite friends or neighbors to the meeting if they are embarrassed by the location or the conduct of the meeting.

Check the looks! Is the room lighted properly? Can men easily read their Bibles as well as see the screen without glare?

Are the ceilings so low that you feel cramped? If all the ceilings are low in your facility, choose a room with a window, and leave the door open. Men have a tendency to feel "boxed in" easily.

What about the physical dimensions of the room? Is there too much space for too few men? This will be intimidating and produce distance instead of intimacy. Make sure the room is the appropriate size for your group. The rule of thumb is that it's better to have standing room only than too much space.

If you absolutely cannot find a smaller room to use, then set up fewer chairs than what you're expecting and arrange them on one end of the room, while keeping the other end of the room available for display tables, snacks or concession. Give the appearance that you meant it to be that way.

Walk through every inch of space that will be used. Ensure there will be easy access to the platform. Envision where people will sit, what kind of equipment will be used. Know it exactly.

WALK IT THROUGH

On the day of the meeting, survey the scene. Personally check every detail of the meeting. Do this until your men are trained to do it the right way. Once they are, empower them to do this job.

Esthetics determine first impressions. Make sure everything has the look of “excellence.” Men read about sports because they want to read about winners. Make yourself a “winner” in their eyes.

Ensure that all papers are properly placed if you have a display of books for sale or to give away. Remove unsightly boxes. (Stow empty boxes that you’ll need later under tables if there is a table cloth or in a closet. If necessary, put them in a car, but get them out of sight). Ensure there are no materials lying around haphazardly. You do not want planning materials in view. All stage and podium equipment (lectern, piano top) must be dusted and cleaned.

Use your equipment to project the name of the event. Don’t allow the screens to be filled with someone’s computer desktop.

For major events, banners help men identify with the men’s ministry name, church or theme of the event. Hang them evenly. Place them in a location where they can be seen at all times but without obtrusion or intrusion into attendees’ view.

If you have a small meeting in a home, chairs should be arranged so every person is facing each other. Also, make sure there is a conveniently located bathroom and that the room is tidy.

For large meetings, chairs must face the speaker. Sit in some of the chairs to ensure everyone has an unobstructed view. Spacing of chairs is vital in a men’s meeting. Men require plenty of legroom and at least two inches of space between each chair to be comfortable. When chairs are packed together, the discomfort undermines the concentration of the attendees.

When possible, set up no more than seven chairs in a row between aisles. Men tend to seek out the “end” chair, and this allows more “choice seats.” It is better to have too few chairs set up and have to increase than to have too many chairs set up. Too many chairs intimidate people. Attendees will be looking around to see who else is coming or they may feel that they are part of something that failed.

The speaker should be the only person on the platform for the message. He needs to be the focal point of interest. Others who sit around him may distract from him. If a woman is going to address your audience, plan in advance who will escort her to the podium and promptly take her elbow as soon as she rises. She should not be left unaccompanied as a point of respect. Quite often, after a woman speaks to men, having a man follow up her comments helps the men make proper commitments.

Temperature is important. Air conditioning and heat must be monitored at all times during the meeting. The responsibility needs to be assigned to someone responsible. Men tend to generate more heat than mixed crowds, so set your thermostat lower in summer and do not use as much heat in winter.

SOUND SYSTEM

The sound system is an extension of your voice. If it is not good, your presentation is adversely affected. Muffled, garbled or “tinny” sounds make listening an effort. The audience will tire of straining to hear. If you don’t trust your sound system, don’t use it. It is far more conducive to learning to listen to a man’s voice directly, even if faintly, than to a faulty sound system.

Have your sound check at least one hour prior to the meeting. Musicians will generally want to have the sound check at the last minute, which creates confusion just as you are making last minute preparations to have your men seated. That should not be allowed. The room should be completely ready, with appropriate background music and visuals at least fifteen minutes before the start of the program.

GUESTS

Whether at a home, in a restaurant or at a public meeting location, parking places should be arranged. When needed, someone should be assigned to guide guests to parking and to the entrance of the event if there is any chance of confusion. Don’t let your own familiarity dictate your hosting responsibilities. Make sure men are clear on where they are supposed to go.

Hosts need to be assigned to assist special guests. Instant readiness and anticipation of needs is appreciated by speakers, local politicians, or anyone else you have invited to attend.

FOOD SERVICE

Don’t major in the meal rather than in ministry. Before you have a meeting involving food, remember that there is a corollary between flesh and carnality. Take into consideration what you serve, how much and when.

Food should never become a focal point or an issue at a men’s meeting where you are trying to reach the spirit of the man. Disciplining the physical appetite heightens the spiritual receptivity. It is more important to minister to the spiritual man than to the physical man. Keep it “lean and mean”!

For Saturday men's events ending in the early afternoon, you can serve coffee and a pastry in the morning and fruit and soft drinks at the break. Never serve men a heavy lunch if you want their attention after the meal!

If you meet for breakfast, serve quickly. For an evening meeting, a simple refreshment is nice for a time of fellowship *following* the ministry. Something light and digestible is desirable. But remember, men need to return to their families rather than linger aimlessly—don't give them an opportunity to escape practicing what they learned!

There are those occasions when it is appropriate and desirable to "break bread" together. There may be a Valentines Day banquet with the men's wives attending or a special "honors" banquet for special achievements.

At any meal function ALWAYS start the program before the meal is finished. Don't let people become bored or distracted. Hold their interest by giving them something interesting as they finish their meal, even if it is just to read greetings from dignitaries or to show a video.

When you are serving a plated meal, limit the time for serving and clearing to just 45 minutes. If, for example, the food takes over an hour, and the leaders wait to start the program until after the meal is served, the people are worn out long before the end of the program. By limiting the time, the program, prayer and testimonies will not be interrupted by clanging dishes and scurrying waiters. The people will be fresh through to the end.

To shorten the serving time, pre-set as much food as possible. For example, have the beverage, salad, rolls and dessert on the table before people enter. Then, serve the entree ten minutes after the blessing is said.

Give the caterers the exact length of time in which you want the meal served. Make them fit your time schedule. When catering is done by church groups, they can have the best food, but often the slowest. Set out expectations far in advance, before committing to them. In a restaurant or hotel, they may argue with you, but remind them YOU are paying the bill, and you want the meeting done to YOUR specifications.

If serving buffet style, make sure to have enough tables and food lines to get the people through in twenty minutes maximum. Again, they may argue, but if you have it agreed upon and put into the contract, it is a "done deal," and they must comply.

Do not put your meeting at the mercy of the caterer. You must not allow the time taken to serve the meal to ruin your meeting. In *Maximized Manhood*, you can read about people creating your world for you. Don't let other people create your world for you!

PROMOTING YOUR MEN'S MEETING

The most important element affecting attendance at your meetings, other than prayer, will be if men are not even aware of the meetings. Promote, promote, promote. Promotions are necessary to bring the men. You must create a sense of destiny, urgency and interest in the place, theme and goals of your meeting. Call. Text. Email. Write. Encourage and promote constantly

The same amount of work goes into a meeting that has twenty people as one that has two hundred people...or two thousand. When you are going to invest all the work to make a men's meeting happen, you want to meet your attendance goals. For small groups, your goal may be to have all 8 members present. For retreats, your goal may be to fill the 50 beds at the facility. For events, you want to have as many men as possible in the facility. In any gathering, typically only 70 percent who commit will attend. Don't cut back when you think the facility is filled. Keep promoting.

Use every opportunity to promote in the local church. Print inside the bulletin, use flyers, create screen images and ask that the images be on church screens as people arrive. You may also put a table at the back of the church. Ask the pastor to promote from the pulpit. Promote with flyers, texts, emails, and social media. Use a breakfast or event to launch groups or classes. Promote promote promote. Encourage, encourage, encourage.

Even if a meeting is free, *always* have men sign up to attend. The principle is, "You are committed to what you confess." Give them every opportunity to confess that they will come. If you give them a t-shirt or sell one just for signing up, it will boost their identification with the event, their involvement and investment. Prepare a video for the announcement at weekend services. Create posters. Keep the same images on everything you create. Ensure the date and time is on everything.

You may also send a press release to the local newspaper. Many churches fail to notify their local media of the events going on and lose a great deal of free publicity. Also make sure you send a press release to any "community calendar" publications or programs. They will usually run the information for free. Don't be afraid to send out press releases each month. Change the wording a little, and keep sending them out until you get someone's attention!

People respond to free gifts. Although it is difficult to get the press to drive to a meeting you might have, they may respond if you send them a complimentary copy of a book or flash drive. If you use the local press, keep your witness with them. See the members of the media not just as a tool, but as other men and women who need Jesus Christ!

COMMUNICATE CLEARLY

The success of a football coach is not revealed by what he knows but by what his players know. Same with you. It's not what you know that will make your ministry successful but what the people know from you that will augur success.

Assumption is life's lowest form of knowledge. Don't assume anything!

Immediately notify team members of changes. Announce details to the rest of the group as they are finalized. Make a list of prayer needs, although not individual men's needs, so you can engage the wives, mothers or other prayer groups in prayer for the meeting.

Confirm Plans in Writing

In the CMN offices, we say, "If it isn't in writing, it doesn't exist." The reason is that memories are faulty at best. When instructions are only verbal, without the ability to refer to them in writing, the possibility of misunderstanding is ever present.

Finalize preparations in writing with your facilities coordinator, printer, anyone you may enlist for your retreat. Keep a steady flow of communication going out. This will minimize any confusion people may have and keep the meeting in the forefront of people's minds. Make it a great, serious event to you so it will be a great, serious date to them.

Email is best used to confirm a conversation, not to initiate or carry on one. It is best if planning meetings are held, phone conversations are had, and an email goes out that confirms it, or the shared document is updated with what was agreed to.

Create Many Volunteer Positions

Let everyone make a contribution to the effort by engaging them in tasks, whether large or small. Have two volunteer meetings, or meetings with volunteer captains, at least a month in advance and again a week before the meeting.

Make a list of all items needed, from the microphones and video projectors, to the lights and offering buckets. Ensure someone is assigned to each specific duty and knows what to do when the time comes. Know where everything is, who will get them and when and who will be the back up in case of emergency.

As you "begin with the end in mind," remember to plan in advance who will take registration money to the bank, who will turn out the lights when the event is

over, who will pay the bill at the facility, who will pack up the extra books and tapes. Also have someone designated as the last to leave to inspect the facilities for any possible loss or damage. Get a signed statement that the facilities are in order at your departure.

Don't expect people to perform to their maximum if you have given them something to do that is not their strength. As you continue to hold meetings, rotate positions until you find what suits each of your leaders.

Give People Recognition. You do not have to make a public display of appreciation in every meeting, but it is necessary to give people a private word of recognition and gratitude. Don't overlook anyone. Their good works make you look good.

Maintain the unity of the faith. Power is produced through agreement. However, too many times, there is a compromise given to someone else's desires simply to satisfy him, when the truth is that he is not in agreement with the purpose of the meeting. Compromise simply dilutes the power of ministry. Bring people into agreement with the total vision first, then you will find agreement on the details.

CHRISTIAN MEN'S EVENTS

For 40 years, Christian Men's Network has brought personal ministry to men through regional and citywide "Christian Men's Events." Few regions in the United States have been missed.

Holding such an event, or taking your men to one nearby exposes men to new depths of teaching. Joining an area-wide men's events affords you the opportunity to reap the benefits of the ministry without the burden of conducting it yourself.

While every Christian men's event varies, when the power of God is evident, the results are life-changing. The most impressive aspects of a men's event are the freedom and openness of hundreds of men joined together for one purpose and the powerful altar calls for salvation, repentance and commitment.

You may also use such events as an evangelistic tool to bring more men into the Kingdom of God and into their fellowship.

Watch the Christian Men's Network website for details of upcoming events, and contact the office if you want to bring a Christian Men's Event to your city.

Next Topic: "Anatomy of a Great Meeting"
You may order the full Majoring in Men® MoMENTum Guide at:
ChristianMensNetwork.com