

# Men Reaching Men

## The Indispensable Necessity of Connecting Men to Church

Unedited Transcript

*2 Timothy 4:19-22, Titus 2:2-6*

David Delk

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Good morning, men.

I was at a conference last week and for some reason, the subject of a concert came up. They were talking about something, and I wanted to mention something in the conversation and I could not remember the name of the group that I went and saw. I'm sure none of you have ever had this issue, right? It was so bad that I remembered two of the names of the members of the group and I could not remember the name of the group. Finally, I remembered the name of a song, and I was so bothered by the fact that I could not remember the name of this group that I got on my phone and I started digging around to try to find that song so I could figure out what the stupid name of this group was. Okay? Some of you know this.

It reminds me of the story of the two older guys that were talking one morning and one of them said to the other, "You know, hey, we saw this great movie last night. It's one of those action movies and it was amazing. It had that guy in it, that big star in it, and it was incredible." The other guy says, "Oh, yeah. Well, who was in it?" He said, "Oh, you know that actor that's in all the action movies. He's done that spy stuff, all those different ones." "Oh, yeah, what's his name?" "Well, you know, he's the guy that's been ... you know, he's got all the awards and everything." "I know, but what was his name?" The guy says, "Um, listen, what's the name of that flower, it's real pretty and it's got like thorns on it and stuff?" The guy goes, "A rose?" He says, "Yeah. Hey, Rose, what was the name of that guy that was in that movie last night?"

Sometimes that's how I feel, and if that's how you feel, we want to refresh your memory a little bit this morning about what we've been talking about. Today, we're going to talk about the indispensable necessity of connecting men to church. It's heading towards the end of our series on men reaching men, and we've been talking about the idea of an intentional spiritual friendship. Today, I want to try to prove to you, from the scriptures, that the goal of that intentional spiritual friendship should be to submit a man into the heart of an actual local church. That's a little bit countercultural for some guys today, so we're going to look at the scriptures together and see if we can't see that that's the teaching of the Bible.

Before we do that, I want to refresh our memories a little bit about what we've been doing. We've been talking about men reaching men, our big ideas. Discipleship is one man caring enough about another man to help him build a relationship with Christ, a world view that's Biblical, and a lifestyle worthy of Christ, a lifestyle worthy of Christ. Then we said, "Be a friend." That's what we're talking about, be a friend, pray, serve, give. We talked about Jesus calling us to go, not to wait around and see if they will come to us, and how sometimes we have to go and get on the turf of a guy, maybe do some things that aren't our favorite things so that we can just be with a man where he is to show him that we really care about him.

Then we said, "Just take a man as far as he is willing to go toward Jesus at the moment." Take a man as far as he is willing to go toward Jesus at the moment. We've been equipping you during this series. We've given you some different ideas about going to coffee with a guy. We've given you a Man Alive booklet that you could distribute. We've helped you write a three-minute testimony that you could use. Then last week, we talked about an intentional spiritual friendship is built over time. It's a relationship, not a transaction. It takes time. It's going to be a commitment if we're going to invest in the lives of men.

Today, we're going to look at this idea of connecting men to church, and to do that, I want you to turn to 2 Timothy, Chapter 4. We're going to bring in more scripture today than we normally would, and part of that is because the argument, if you want to use that term, that I'm going to be making is really an argument from the whole of the scriptures, the whole of the New Testament, certainly, and not necessarily from any one specific passage. I do have a couple of representative passages that I want to share with you. The first one's in 2 Timothy 4 and the next one's in Titus Chapter 2.

At the end of 2 Timothy in Chapter 4, Verses 19-22, we see something that we often see in the letters, particularly of Paul, that says, "Greet Prisca and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus. Erastus remained in Corinth and I left Trophimus, who was ill, at Miletus. Do your best to come before winter. Eubulus sends greetings to you, as do Pudens and Linus and Claudia and all the brothers. The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you." Here's Paul at the end of this book, and he mentions all of these people. You may wonder why we read that passage. I'm going to come back to it a little bit later.

In Titus, Chapter 2, Verses 2-6. You just need to turn over one page, probably, in your Bible. Titus 2:2-6, "Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love and in steadfastness. Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands that the word of God may not be reviled. Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled." We have these admonitions to these different groups of people that Paul is giving Titus to use within his church.

Today when we go around the country and interact with people, there's a trend that we see, frankly, more and more. There's one successful businessman who's been at the very pinnacle of business in America. We've met with him a couple of times, and he basically believes the church doesn't work. It's not effective, it's not a very good use of resources. His thing is to invest in marketplace ministries, because marketplace ministries is where he believes that we can really make a difference in the lives of people, since they spend so much of their time at work.

Was on the phone with another very successful entrepreneur just a couple of weeks ago. He was basically telling me in his city, the church is broken, not making disciples, people aren't being reached, people aren't being connected to the word of God, aren't being connected more deeply to Jesus Christ.

He's going to launch a ministry that's going to do discipleship outside of the local church. Some of you in the room may have some of these feelings. We see this going on with men all across the country. Lots of men feel this way. Now why do they feel this way? Let's be honest, there are a lot of churches that are broken. Right? Every church is broken in some way, because we're fallen human beings, but there are a lot of churches that aren't as effective as they could be.

There's also a lot of churches that don't know what to do with men. Okay? This is part of why we do what we do at Man in the Mirror. There are a lot of churches where a guy that's during the week is solving all kinds of problems. He's dealing with millions of dollars, maybe, or he's dealing with a lot of people and very complex issues, feels like he's really doing something substantive with his life. Then he gets to church and they say, "Hey, will you hand out these sheets of paper?" "Seriously, this is all you want me to do is hand out these sheets of paper?" No wonder a lot of guys aren't all that excited about church.

Certainly, there are some things that the churches are doing that are contributing to this in general, but the reality is that the scriptures still tell us what we should be doing with church and the nature of the church. What happens is we have such a pragmatic culture that a lot of men check out from what they feel like is not working. They start looking to all these other places to build their spiritual life. The problem with that is that we aren't called to be pragmatic. We're called to be Biblical.

Today, I want us to look at what does the Bible say about church and our connection to it. The first thing that we see in the New Testament is that Jesus established the church. Jesus established the church. I said I'm going to read a lot of scriptures to you, okay? You can jot down these places if you want. I'm not expecting that you would be able to turn to all of them. Mathew 16:18, "And I tell you, you are Peter and on this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

Here we have Jesus' plan. He's going to build his church, and he's going to give his church actual authority, spiritual authority to actually do things that make a difference. You bind things on earth, they're going to be bound in heaven. You loose things on earth, they're going to be loosed in heaven. Just real authority, a delegated authority from Jesus Christ to the church that's being described in this. This is Jesus' plan, this is what he planned to do. Now what was Plan B?

There was no Plan B. This is it. Think about this. Jesus was here, he did all of this ministry. He goes to the cross, he dies, he rises from the dead. He's got who knows how many hundreds of people maybe that are following him at most, some of them teeter-tottering, even, in that. His plan was to establish the church. That's how Jesus planned on reaching the world and building a people for himself.

Look at Ephesians, Chapter 5, Verse 25 and following. It describes the idea of marriage, but it compares human marriage to the deeper reality of Christ in the church. "Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word so that he might present the church to himself in splendor without spot or wrinkle or any such thing that she might be holy and without blemish." Jesus' whole purpose in one sense was to sanctify, to purify the people that God was redeeming, that he came to save, to seek and to save the lost. This is what Jesus was all about.

Revelation 19 and 21 talks about the new Jerusalem, the bride of Christ, the people of God coming to the marriage supper of the lamb, this consummation of everything. The whole point of what Jesus did was to redeem a people. Now the interesting thing about that is that in the New Testament, we go on to realize that that's not just a people in general, but that's a people in specific situations, so the second thing that I want us to see is that the whole New Testament is really about the establishment and practice of the local church. You might not see this if you read a particular passage, particularly in English, because of an issue I'll get to in a minute. When you read the whole of the New Testament, all of the letters in the New Testament, you can see that they are directed to real people, in a real location, with real elders, with real deacons, with real relationships and that this was the pattern that we are to follow.

Ephesians, Chapter 4, for example, 11-16, "And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ." Think about that. Who is called the body of Christ?

The church in general? Every time it happens in the New Testament, it is to a church. Who is this being written to? It's called Ephesians. Okay? It's to the people at Ephesus. It's to a church, and he is calling that church the body of Christ. You actually have to do a little assumption to assume that somehow in general we are all the body of Christ. I happen to think that's valid, but that's not what the New Testament says. The New Testament says, "You people at Ephesus are the body of Christ. You people in Galatia are the body of Christ." Okay?

He gives that body of Christ, these teachers, these shepherds, the apostles, all of that, why? So that, "Until we all attain the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the son of God to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness and deceitful schemes."

The whole point is that we go from immaturity and just kind of flitting around, believing whatever, to maturity. How does that happen? It happens in a local church, because of shepherds and leaders and teachers who are building entire lives. This is the pattern that Paul is giving us in the New Testament. It says, "We speak the truth in love. We are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped. When each part is working properly makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love."

What does this say? It says that we should be doing several things in the life of a local church, that we should be growing, that we should be maturing in our understanding, that we should be going away from childish doctrines to true doctrines, that we should be able to speak the truth in love, that we should be seeing one another grow into maturity in Christ. This is the pattern. This is what it should look like for your life in the local church. If that's not happening, then you're not experiencing what the New Testament has for us.

What happened over and over again in the Book of Acts? Everywhere Paul went, you see something going on. Acts 14:23, "He appointed elders for them in every church." He appointed elders for them in every church. This was important. It was important to have elders and leaders in these churches, because there was a real group of people who really had a spiritual authority from Jesus Christ and all of these things were supposed to happen in the life of that body, and Paul was very, very concerned about

it. Look at the Books of Timothy and Titus. These are basically books to pastors about how to lead a church, to elders about how to lead a church. That's how important it was.

In the New Testament, in English we don't have the "you" word. When I say "you," you don't know whether I mean singular or plural. Right? I could say "you" or I could say "you," and we can't tell the difference. When we read an English translation of the Bible, to me this is actually the worst thing about reading a Bible in English is because we tend to take those things singularly, but in almost every case in these letters of Paul and the other letters in the New Testament, when it uses the word "you," it is "you" plural. It is "you" plural. A thousand times in the New Testament, the plural form of "you" is used, a thousand times.

Why is that so important? Because many of the things that we take as individualistic commands, the scriptures are actually saying this is true about you all as the church in Ephesus, as the church in Galatia, as the church in Corinth. If you're not in that church body, if you're not committed to that church body, if you're not experiencing the life of that church body, then you have no reason to really believe that this is true about you, because it's you all that this is true of.

Think about this passage that we began with from 2 Timothy. Paul is giving this list of people, Prisca and Aquila and Onesiphorus and Erastus and all these names here, and he does it in Romans 16 and he does it in several other places. Why does he do that? How can he do that? He does that because these are real people, with real relationships, that he really knew, that he had invested his life into, and that they had invested their lives into him within the context of a local church. That's what's going on in the whole New Testament.

What does this look like with men? I have a good friend, Pastor Matt, from Salem Heights Church in Salem, Oregon. I called Pastor Matt yesterday and I said, "Hey, I want to make sure I get some facts straight here." He told me a little of the story. I knew the basic outlines because I've been with them a couple of times, but one of the most unique experiences I've ever had. I go to do a men's retreat with them and there's about a hundred seventy-five guys in the room. There's about thirty or forty guys from a recovery center. There's about thirty or forty guys from Project SOAR, which is a reintegration from prison life, and then there's about whatever is left, eighty or ninety guys that are teachers and coaches and salesmen and business owners and dentists, whatever. They're just all there. It's not this group and this group and this group. They're just all there.

I asked him a little bit about how this happened. He said, "Well, we have these two major things. We have the Union Gospel Mission in our town and we have this Project SOAR, this reintegration from prison, and for both of them, we've established this one-year mentoring program. What we do is if guys want to get involved ... It's totally voluntary, but if they want to get involved, we get a mentor from our church and we give them a mentor for one year. They meet weekly. They have a process they go through. It's whole-life mentoring, everything from jobs to finances to their spiritual life, everything.

He told me the story about Steve. Steve was an alcoholic, drug addict, been on the streets for years, felt like he was never going to be able to have anything different happen in his life. He got connected to the Union Gospel Mission, finally decided that he would give it a try, even though he didn't think anything was going to be different. He got a mentor from the church, Mike. Mike met with him for a year, and they became more than just mentors, they became friends.

Mike began to get Steve connected into the life of the local church, so Steve started meeting these other men there at the church, including a business owner. This business owner became so impressed with what he saw God doing in Steve's life that he eventually offered him a job, which if you're coming out of that life situation, it's not the easiest thing in the world to find a good job. Found a good job, and now, two years later, Steve is actually considered one of this guy's best employees, highest rated employees on their annual reviews.

He's involved in the church life. He and Mike are still great friends, and he's now beginning to give back to other guys who are coming out of the same situation. How does that happen? It happens because one man built an intentional spiritual friendship with another man and connects him into the life of the church, into the power of community, the power of relationships, the power of process, that ends up changing his life forever.

The last point I want us to see from the scriptures is that men need the church to truly be men. Men need the church to truly be men. Galatians, Chapter 6, Verses 1 and 2, "Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ." Now who is this written to? The church at Galatia, and Paul is saying, "Bear one another's burdens." Within that local body, bear one another's burdens, get involved in each other's lives, sacrifice, be inconvenienced. By the way, I hate hearing this, okay? I hate being inconvenienced. I hate having to go out of my way to do things. I want to take the easy way, but that's not what Paul says here. If you're spiritual, restore men in a spirit of gentleness, but you've got to be engaged in their lives.

Now look at the promise that he says this will do for us at the end of Verse 2. It says, "Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ." Have you ever stopped to kind of think about that for a second? That's a pretty big promise. Think about it, fulfill the law of Christ? This is kind of like the ultimate thing you could possibly do. This is like scoring seven touchdowns in a football game. All of us would want to.

What is the law of Christ? You could go back to the great commandment. Jesus was asked, "What's the greatest commandment?", "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength and love your neighbor as yourself." He says that this fulfills the law. The whole law is contained within these two commands. Paul is echoing that and says if we will get involved in our church, if we'll get involved in men's lives, then we have a chance to be the men that God has always called us to be as we bear one another's burdens, as we really have spiritually intentional friendships.

A second thing that we have for the church is that all of us need to be submitted to authority. All of us need to be submitted to authority. There's no such things as truly a mature, lone-ranger Christian. In today's culture, we all like to kind of do our own things. We want to be the master of our fate. The more skilled you are at what you do, the longer you've done it, the more successful you are in your business life, the less you like to be under anybody's authority. If you're the best mechanic in the shop, how do you fix the cars? Any way you want to. Right? Any way you want to. Nobody else is going to tell you. You're the guy that can fix what none of those other guys can fix. I fix the car my way. If I want to do it this way, if I want to order the parts this way, if I want to do it in this order, I'm the guy who knows how to get it done, so I can do it however I want.

That's what we all kind of look to get to as men. The only problem is that is a very unbiblical kind of life, because basically, I'm the master of my fate, I'm the one who calls the shots, and when we start living

out of that kind of mindset, we get into deep, deep trouble. The scriptures say that we were meant to be under authority, ultimately under the authority of Christ, but then under the authority of a local church. We need that authority so that we can't just, everybody just do whatever they want, that we are all aiming in the same direction.

I tell people ... You probably heard me say this before if you've been here when I spoke. I love it when my church does something I disagree with. Now why would I say that? That sounds crazy, right? I disagreed with it. Why would I want them to do it? Obviously, at the moment they're making the decision, I don't love it, but what I've learned to do is pretty quickly make a shift to say, "You know what? This is an opportunity for me to be a man under authority. This is an opportunity for me to remember I don't always have to get my way. The world does not revolve around me. There are people who have different ... I could be wrong." Whoa. Take a step back. I could actually be wrong here, so to go along and support whatever my church is doing.

This is probably confessing myself to be a little crazy, but anyway, I'll tell you. It's worked out fine, so I'll go ahead and tell you. I was on a pastor search committee, and our associate pastor ended up putting his name in the hat. We met for awhile and we decided ... We looked at the candidates and stuff, and I felt like he... I felt like he wasn't the right candidate at the time.

We came down to the vote and everybody else voted for him but me. I figured the likelihood of this being a secret that it wasn't unanimous is probably zero, so I just went to him. I said, "Hey, listen, I want you to know I was the one guy that didn't vote for you, but now that you've been elected, I'm a hundred percent behind you. I'm going to do whatever I can to make you be successful. Just let me know how I can help." We have a fantastic relationship, because I am submitted to the authority. I believe it was God's will. It was God's will through those people, different decision than I would have made, but it's God's will and I'm going to get behind God's will, whatever it is because I want to live my life as a man under authority. That's one of the reasons we need the church.

There are fifty-plus "one anothers" in the Bible, in the New Testament. Fifty-plus times it says "one another." Almost all of them are in the context of a local church, a local church. That's where they marry us, they bury us, they baptize us, they provide all these different things. It's the place that we ought to be investing our lives. Here's the thing, and this is tough to say. I'm not that much of a prophet. I don't like yelling and screaming and laying down the law on people, but this is what I believe to be the truth of the New Testament. Men who are abandoning church are abandoning the plan of Jesus. I don't see how you can read the New Testament and come up with anything else.

You may be frustrated with your church. You may feel like you can't really connect with your church. You may feel like you're not really being used well by your church. If you abandon your church, you're abandoning the plan of Jesus. This is what the whole New Testament was about. Having to tell a Christian man that church is important is like explaining to a fish that water is important. Yet, that's what I find myself doing today. To me, this is how far we've gotten away from the scriptures.

Now part of what's happened is we've lived in a culture that has been very favorable to us. We can kind of swim around in the world and we can have our little Bible studies at work, and we can have our little prayer times, and we can go to a great Bible study like this in a neutral location on a Friday morning. Right? If you lived in the culture that they lived in back in the New Testament, your local church was the only place that you felt safe and secure and likeminded people and all those things. We may be headed

back there, and if we do get back there, my guess is a lot more men are going to invest a lot more of themselves in the life of their church.

The **Big Idea** here is that: **A real man invests in his church and then helps other men do so as well.** A real man invests in his church and then helps other men do so as well. The church ought to be one of your highest priorities. It ought to be right up there with your work. It ought to be right up there with your family. You ought to be thinking about your church life, praying for your pastors. How can I make a significant contribution? How can I make a difference? Then you ought to help other guys get connected.

A great story came from one of our field staff in Maryland. He had been working with a church and sharing with them the ideas about how powerful it is to get men connected into the life of a local church. They were thinking about the fact that they had an Awana program, and they had noticed that when guys dropped off their kids ... This is in the suburbs, so guys drop off their kids. ... they were driving away from the church. They knew they probably weren't going home because they wouldn't have time to get home and come back, so they were heading to Panera or wherever.

These guys said, "What if we started hanging out at the church with some men during Awana? We've got Wi-Fi. We can get coffee. Let's see if these guys want to hang around." They had some guys stationed to greet these men, invite them to come to the hangout. "Hey, we've got Wi-Fi, we've got coffee. Just come here and hang out. You don't need to drive anywhere." They ended up with seventeen-eighteen guys who started staying, and they realized that seven or eight of these guys were not involved in any church anywhere, so this is the only connection that they have to a church is hanging out with these guys while their kids are in the Bible club.

They began to kind of shape the discussions. They had a man that sort of led it a little bit. Of course, didn't call it a small group, and they didn't say they were studying anything, but he kind of shaped the discussions and asked some questions. About eight or ten weeks into it, they started talking about marriage. He made a suggestion and asked the guys if they would make the commitment to pray with their wives that night when they got home. Every guy said they would. He gave them a very simple prayer to take home to pray with their wives if they didn't know what to do, and every guy said they would do it.

The next day, he said his phone blew up, because he had set up a group for the guys. His phone blew up. Three of the guys said, "This is the first time I've ever prayed with my wife since we got married. Thank you so much." He got a note from a spouse saying, "My husband actually prayed with me. I don't know what's going on, but keep it up." Why? Because they intentionally connected men into the life of a church. They just found a man where he was and they found a way to help him make a next step.

My challenge to you today is to pray that God would help you find a disconnected man and help him take a next step with your church. It could be somebody already at church that maybe comes because his wife is making him. It could be the man that you've been meeting with during these last five-six weeks. Find a man who's disconnected and help him take a next step in the life of your church. It might be inviting him to be a guest of the group that you go to. It might be inviting him to come to a class that you and your wife attend. It might just mean going out with him and having a cup of coffee and helping him think through some of the things that are going on with the church that he might want to be involved with, introducing him to the people who run the children's ministry or connecting him with

some people who work in a sports ministry. Whatever it is, find the guy and see if you can help him take a next step in the life of your church.

We've done in the past now, we've been giving you all of these specific steps. What I'd like to do is I'd like to get a hand count, just for encouragement. I'd like to get a hand count of how many guys have taken a step that we have recommended with a man to start to build a spiritual intentional friendship, anything that we've talked about doing or anything you've decided to do during these five or six weeks. If you've taken a step to initiate or move forward in an intentional spiritual friendship with a man, would you raise your hand during this time. Wow, look at that. Let's see if I can count these very quickly. I got close to sixty. Amazing. Let's give a hand. That is amazing.

What we'd like for you to do is we'd like you to fill out this survey that we have there. You can take five minutes this morning to do it. There's an online version. We'd really like to get that done, though, because that would be so encouraging and helpful for us. This week, your next step is to pray, see if God will lead you to a disconnected man and help him take a next step with your church. Next week, we want you to bring your stories because you are the Bible study. Pat's going to be up here, but he's not preparing a message. Okay?

You are the message. Unless you want Pat to stand up here and look really, really awkward, you need to be writing down what you're going to be saying next week to share. Now some of you are like, "Oh, that sounds pretty good. Let's see if we can make Pat ..." No, that's not what this is about. It's not about embarrassing Pat, as fun as that might be. All right? Bring your stories. Let's celebrate what God is doing in the lives of men to be an encouragement not only to this group but to men around the country as well.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you so much for your word, and, Lord, I do thank you for the church. I thank you for local churches in all of their flaws, and yet in the New Testament we don't see anything else but actual local churches that are being established with leaders and members and responsibilities to one another and the opportunity to invest our lives in ways that bring you glory. I pray for the men in this room that you would help us to lift our eyes to see the incredible opportunity that you give us within our church, as flawed as it may be, that we have a chance to make a difference in the lives of people, that we have a chance to use our gifts and our talents, God, to change and to reach our communities and to see people's lives transformed by the power of the gospel.

Lord, I pray that you would lead us to that disconnected man, maybe the man that we've been connecting with, the man that we've been talking to, maybe a guy that we see who just sort of sits in the back and avoids everybody at church, maybe the husband of a woman who comes but he rarely attends. Lord, whoever it might be that you bring to mind, would you give us the opportunity to help that man take a step forward with you in the life of our local church so that we could invest in our church and we could help other men do so as well. For your glory we pray. In Jesus' name, Amen.