

GROWING YOUR MINISTRY

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Growing Your Ministry: 3.1 Early Growth

Early Stage Growth

We have stressed the importance of growing slowly and striving for meaningful discussions instead of trying to attract large numbers in the early stages of your ministry.

Once you've worked with the model as a Core Team and feel your discussions are staying grounded in the men's faith experience and on track with the questions, it is time to start expanding the ministry. We've found the best way to do this is to begin extending personal invitations to men you know or meet at Mass. The key in the early stage of growth is to invite men you believe would be attracted to and grasp the model.

People will accept invitations from acquaintances more easily than from strangers. If you start inviting people you know even causally and they do the same, the ripple effect kicks in and growth picks up.

As a core team, when you are ready, here are some starter questions to ask:

- Ask the team for suggestions of men they know who may be interested in attending.
- Whom might your Pastor or Deacons suggest you invite?
- If you have other complimentary ministries that involve men, for example; the Knights of Columbus, or a traditional Bible Study, ask them if they might be interested in attending a meeting.
- Set a goal that each core team member will try to invite one person to your next meeting.

If you work at this one-on-one invitation process you will often see your group double in size within a few months.

Think broadly about these invitations. In addition to the low hanging fruit of men in the parish, we've had men invite their neighbors or men they know might be struggling to get more involved in a faith journey.

We've had non-Catholics who started attending meetings and eventually went through the RCIA program and joined the Church. Some have become leaders of their Men's Ministry.

Also, it's important to keep track of any new men that begin to attend and then stop coming. Following up with them to learn about their experience and their reasons for not staying with it can sometimes provide helpful feedback for the team.

Growing Your Ministry: 3.2 Parish Wide Launch

Parish Wide Launch

When your attendance grows to between in 15 -20 men, you can begin to split your group into two or three tables of five men each. Remember this a small group model, so as the numbers grow you'll want to maintain the integrity of the small group discussion experience. This is also a good time to start considering a Parish Wide Launch of your ministry.

The Parish Wide Launch involves introducing the newly formed men's ministry to the parish at mass. This can occur before, during or after mass. We recommend before the opening procession or during the mass for the highest impact, not when people are taking their seats or leaving during announcements.

Option one: Easy launch

- Set up a Core Team with your Pastor and Deacons. Discuss the best timing and weekend for the launch according to their schedule and other parish events going on.
- One pastor told us he felt the ministry was so important, he wanted to do this before mass began while he had everyone's attention. He didn't want it to be swallowed up in the other announcements. This made a big impression.
- Your Pastor introduces the men's ministry explaining that you've been meeting each week for the last 4 to 6 months. He gives a brief overview of the purpose of the ministry and his thoughts on the importance having a ministry that addresses the unique challenges men face in building faith based relationships and growing in their spiritual lives.
- As a team, select a few men to speak and have them standing with your Pastor as he gives the overview and introduces them to the parish.
- Choose men who are comfortable speaking and who can be compelling about their experience. Each man should speak *briefly* about one aspect of his experience at the weekly meetings. Talks should be choreographed ahead of time to avoid redundancy.
- For example: one man speaks about how men's ministry has helped his faith journey, another about positive changes in his mass experience, another on new awareness gained in his role as a husband and father.
- After the men speak one of them can invite the men and women of the parish to a pre arranged coffee reception where your team can circulate and meet men and their wives. This should be an opportunity for men to meet one another and casually discuss the ministry without pressure, invitation without expectation.

Option Two: A more involved launch

Follow the guidelines above but instead of a coffee reception, host a talk on a theme that will pique men's interests. Most guys will sign up to attend something that helps them to be a better father and we've successfully used fatherhood as a topic when launching to the parish.

- Have a guest speaker come to your parish (or a compelling lay member) to address the importance of fatherhood as a vital role in a man's faith journey. (see our sample Fatherhood talk by MM leader Ed Tonnessen in our Resources Section)
- We serve a simple buffet style breakfast. Coffee, Eggs, Pancakes and Bacon. (Catered or cooked by the men) We begin with an opening prayer. Have people get their breakfast and take their seats. The talk begins once everyone has been seated and started with breakfast.
- The talk is usually about 30 minutes long. Afterward we hand out discussion questions for each table based on the talk.
- After another 30 to 40 minutes we have a large group sharing to hear comments about the talk and the discussions, usually facilitated by the speaker or your Pastor. Then we close with a prayer.
- This entire process mirrors the men's weekly meeting format pretty closely. In closing we tell the men present, if they enjoyed this discussion ... they have just experienced what we do every Saturday morning on a variety of topics at Men's Ministry. Please come join us any Saturday.

Growing Your Ministry: 3.3 Topics and Content Development

Topics and Content Development

In our Archived Sessions Material under the Resources tab you will find complete weekly Men's Ministry Sessions available for use. The sessions cover the Sunday Gospel reading for Liturgical Cycles A, B and C and follow the Liturgical Calendar for each year.

We've included these sessions for two reasons.

- As a help in jump starting ministries for those who may not have clergy available to attend meetings or put material together each week.
- We felt providing proven material would be the best way to demonstrate this particular model of ministry while also giving you a feel for developing solid faith sharing questions and eventually your own sessions.

As most of groups we've worked with meet toward the end of the week or on Saturday mornings, the men are exploring the Gospel reading they will hear read at Mass that following Sunday. This provides an opportunity to reflect, discuss and absorb readings from the lectionary within community and in a prayerful way prior to mass. We have had consistent feedback over the years that men have found this to enrich their mass experience.

In addition to sessions that cover the Sunday Gospels throughout the year, listed below are stand-alone sessions by topic and thematic sessions that cover six-week blocks. Some of these will be included in the archive for your use, but the list is intended to give you an idea of the creativity being used in developing new content at various parish men's ministries.

Stand Alone Topics

- Love
- Forgiveness
- Accountability
- Ego
- Faith
- Church vs church
- The Sacraments
- Work/Life Balance
- Faith in Community
- Developing our Relationship with God
- Mercy
- Serving The Poor
- Love in the Family

Thematic Topics

- Masculinity- The Real Jesus
 - Spiritual Basics
 - Pain and Suffering
 - Gifts and Calling
 - Discipleship
 - Prayer Life
 - True Self- False Self
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- Advent-Preparing for Christmas
 - Preparing for Lent
 - Preparing for Easter
 - Easter People
-
- The Beatitudes
 - The Creeds
 - The Ten Commandments
-
- Marriage
 - Fatherhood
 - Parenting Strong Willed Children
 - For Men Only
 - Men at Work
 - Financial Stress
 - Marketplace Employment
 - Attitude Adjustment
 - Accountability

As your ministry grows and men adjust to the small group model, it's important to listen to what you and your Core Team leaders are hearing at the tables. Often, world events and other news can come up in discussion. If you see a pattern where your weekly discussion keeps reverting to a particular topic, it may be worthy of developing it into a complete session for discussion. *As long as the focus is centered on how the topic impacts one's faith experience, there is wide range of possibility for developing additional content for weekly sessions.*

Further, the Reading Room archive, under the Resources menu is a great way to help men develop a spiritual reading practice that can stimulate discussions leading to new session material. There are so many great books out there and with enough variety, there is truly something for everyone. We encourage you to occasionally but consistently challenge the men on the importance of developing a spiritual reading habit as a support to the spiritual journey and faith life.

Growing Your Ministry: 3.4 Ongoing Events for Growth

Ongoing Events for Growth

Generally within 18 months from beginning, most men's ministries grow to a total number of approximately 50 men with around 20 to 30 attending each week. This typically happens through word of mouth and personal invitation. Growing beyond that number takes a consistent and ongoing effort. Hopefully your Core Team leader for Development / Recruitment will be leading the charge here with some ideas for recruiting new men.

Some suggestions to help:

- Strive to host at least one Men's Ministry sponsored event per year. The Fall and Spring are often a good time for this.
- Events are tailored to attract new men to the ministry but can also be directed toward families if the topic fits well: i.e. Effective Fatherhood is always a draw.
- Remember when considering events and recruiting new men, wives are often instrumental in getting men to church and to participate in community events. Leverage this where you can.
- Promoting events at mass during the announcements can help create broader awareness and build community sponsorship

Event ideas:

- Fall- Monday Night Football Event with Pizza and Beer in the Hall
- Spring- Pancake breakfast with a speaker presenting on a Faith / Spiritual related topic
- Effective Fathering
- Bring your Son to Men's Ministry Day. The success of this prompted a repeat for a Wives and then Daughters day
- Christmas Men's Ministry Social, and other couples dinner events.
- Men's Ministry retreats.

Any of these event ideas provide an opportunity to invite new potential members and for the Core Team and the men to introduce themselves and say a few words about men's ministry and the impact it is having on men's faith lives. We have included more details on the structure and promotion of these events in our Resources section.