



Where Have All the Young Men Gone?

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at

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The next time you go to church, take a moment and look around your sanctuary. While you are looking around, notice who is attending your worship service. How many women are there? How many older couples or older single people are attending on a regular basis? How many families do you see sitting together?

Finally, how many young men, between the ages of 18-34 do you see in your church on a regular basis? My guess is, there aren't many, if nay, young men who fall into that category. There are two questions you should ask yourself.

First of all, why aren't the young attending church these days? The young men of today are very spiritual, as 79% of young men say they believe in God. However, only 43% of young men attend church once a month while 32% say they attend once a year or never.*

While most of the young men of today say they believe in God, they are generally skeptical about the institutional church choosing instead to develop a personal relationship with God. To support this idea, 60% of young men say they do not think that church is the best place to pursue their faith.*

If young men today are skeptical, about church, what does make a difference in the lives of young men? According to a study done in Minneapolis, the biggest difference in a young man's faith life is a relationship with a mentor. When paired with a man who has a lot of experience with life, the younger man's faith life was strengthened and his life was enriched.

According to the book *Coming of Age*, there are several things men can do to reach out the young men in their communities. The following is a partial list of these things:

1. Invite a younger man to lunch and ask him how his life is going, and then sit back and just listen. Every young man has a story to tell and they are waiting for you to ask them. While you are listening, listen with ears that are not judgmental. The pur-

- pose of this meeting is to begin a relationship with the younger man.
2. Do cross-generational men's retreat weekends or hunting or fishing trips together. Put younger men in charge of planning the retreat so they have a stake in the outcome.
 3. Invite a group of young men on a hiking or canoeing trip. Many young men say they experience God in many places, specifically outdoors doing activities that interest them.
 4. Provide mentoring couples for newlyweds or those who are engaged. Many young men do not know what a healthy relationship is supposed to look like, and by providing a couple that has a healthy relationship, they can get their marriage off to a better start.
 5. Become familiar with how this age group communicates. Don't be afraid to create a Facebook page or learn how to "Twitter". If you communicate with them on their terms, they will be more likely to respond to your attempts to communicate with them.
 6. Invite a young man to join a mission trip. Many young men want to make a difference in the lives of others and this is one good way to accomplish that goal. In addition, by inviting the young man to go on the mission trip with you, it is another opportunity to strengthen the relationship between you.
 7. Don't be afraid! Don't hesitate to reach out to a young man in need. You have a lot to offer someone and your gifts and knowledge can make a huge difference in the life of someone else.

**Coming of Age, Augsburg Fortress, 2006, Anderson, Hill and Martin.*