

The Devastating Effect of Losing Everyman's Battle

Spiritual Trends of our Sons, Brothers, Boyfriends, Husbands & Dads



Research Brief
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In a recent CBE survey, men described their spiritual journey this way:

I started off great, did even better, took a hard hit with divorce, fell away somewhat, came back close with the Lord, hit with another divorce, grew disillusioned, and now I'm struggling to maintain my Christianity. - Jim

Mine is the story of the prodigal son, but since I have returned I once again am wandering in the desert. I know I can return home at any time; however, when it comes down to the facts I want to continue to wander all the while bemoaning the fact that I am wandering aimlessly. - Clint

I accepted Christ at age 13, then turned away because of ignorance. I fell to the lowest point of my life and then experience deliverance from drug addiction. Now I find myself yielding to carnal TV programs, followed by computer training and falling to pornography - Daniel

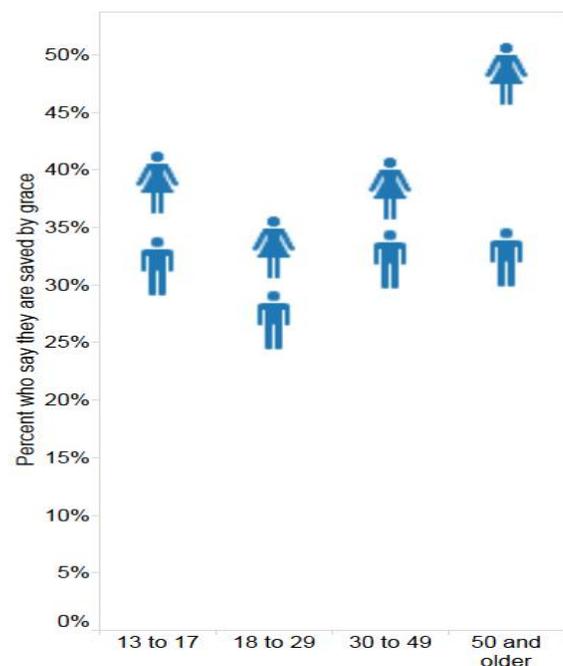
My life can be best described as a three-step-forward and two-steps-back agonizing pilgrimage. I am my own worst enemy. I get in God's way too often. I continue to sense the presence of God but I continue undermine my sense of worthiness in His presence. I have often felt that taking a job that doesn't express my greatest spiritual potential has driven me to devalue myself and therefore made me more susceptible to temptations in my area of weakness. - Bill

These testimonies illustrate a disturbing reality: Christian men are struggling to maintain their faith. In this world where you can ruin your spiritual life within a matter of minutes with a few mouse clicks, too many men are disconnected spiritually and vulnerable.

If he does not come to know Christ as a youth, he's unlikely to at all.

Several years ago researcher George Barna (2004) observed that the majority of Christ-followers make their profession of faith before their 18th birthday. Thus, if someone does not come to faith as a youth, the odds are that they will not at all. Moreover, the means by which people come to faith vary according to their age. Family is the most common means early in life, with friends, media, and pastors playing more of a role in adulthood.

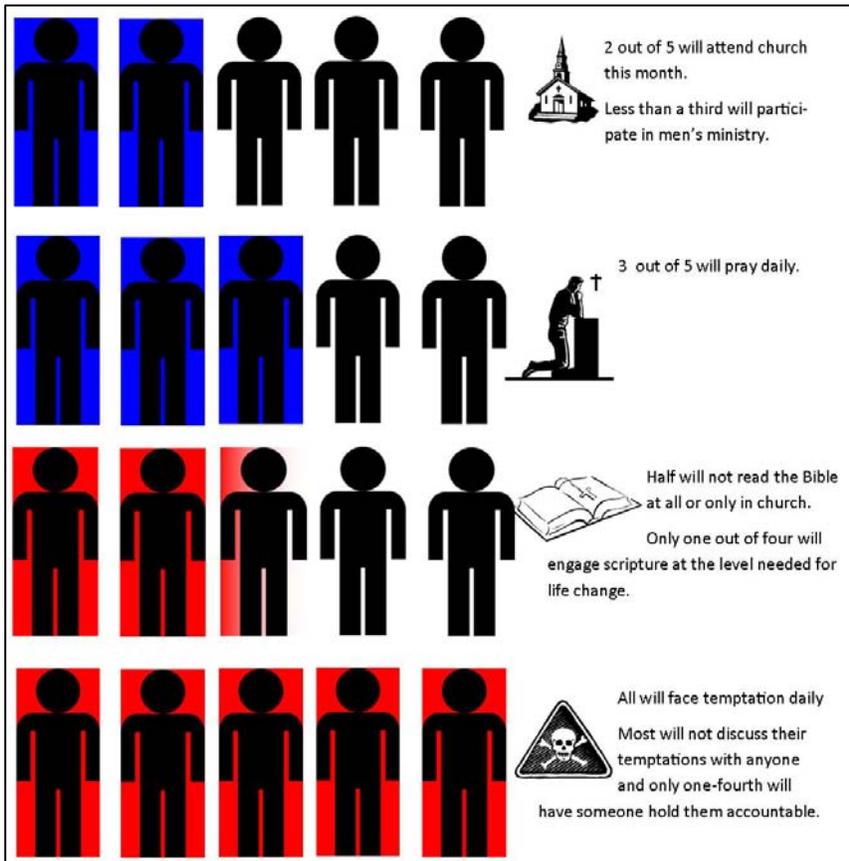
The statement that the chances of someone coming to faith decrease as they get older is particularly true of men. For instance, our surveys of the general U.S.



population show that 29% of males and 36% of females under the age of 24 say they expect to go to heaven when they die because they are saved by grace through Jesus. For women, this percentage increases across the age groups, so that more than half of women over the age of 54 know Christ. The percentage of men, however, remains fairly flat. This reveals a critical truth: current evangelism and discipleship efforts must do a better job reaching boys and men.

Few Christian men are spiritually engaged.

Historically, women have outpaced men in church attendance, involvement in church ministries, frequency of prayer, and several other measures of spiritual activity. This gender gap has essentially closed over the past two decades, due to substantial declines among women (Barna Group, 2011).



So what do the lives of men who claim the name of Christ look like today? As the graphic below shows, most are not well connected to their church and men's ministry. In fact, similar to David Murrow's (2004) contention that "men hate church", we find that men find church worship services, music, and practicing the teachings of the faith less helpful to their spiritual growth than women do.

In terms of private spiritual practices, daily prayer is the most common. Most men are not engaging the Bible regularly, through receiving its truths, reflecting on them, and responding to them in daily life. Moreover, they feel

spiritually stuck four months out of the year.

While connecting with God through prayer and His Word is not a daily activity, temptation most definitely is. The consequences of these facts are devastating.

The majority of men who attend church say pornography is their biggest temptation, occurring more often and for longer periods of time than any other temptation.

Each day we encounter thoughts or circumstances when we are tempted to do something that we know will not honor God. Over the past six years, the CBE has extensively studied the topic

of temptation. We've found that everyone – old or young, male or female, mature saint or new believer – feels tempted in some way on a daily basis. For men, lust and pornography present a nearly universal temptation. While rates are lower among men who attend church, the fact remains that three out of five list this as their most common temptation.

Pornography has some particularly insidious qualities among other temptations:

- Temptations to use pornography occur more times a day and men with this temptation spend more time thinking about it, than other temptations.
- The temptation of lust and high rates of pornography use are also associated with more feelings of hopelessness & bitterness, feeling like you need to hide from others, feeling unable to please God and experiencing spiritual stagnation.
- Men who do not engage scripture regularly and do not have someone who holds them accountable have the highest rates of pornography use, at 42%.

Through Bible engagement and accountability, Christian men can “finish well”.

Despite these sobering realities, there is hope of helping Christian men thrive spiritually. The hope lies in a strategy of daily spiritual engagement and accountability.

CBE research with more than 100,000 people reveals that engaging the Bible four or more days a week produces radical life change. Specific to the temptation of pornography, men who regularly engage scripture are 59% less likely to view pornography. Those who combine Bible engagement with accountability lower their risk even more.

Small amounts of scripture throughout the day appear particularly effective, both for men who are new to Bible engagement and those who are already engaged. For instance, we have found that, compared to American men in general, those who receive small amounts of scripture several times a day through *goTandem* report feeling spiritually stalled 10 to 20% less. One-third of men improved in their ability to resist the temptation of pornography. This last outcome is particularly noteworthy because pornography addiction is one of the most difficult to overcome.

The time has come for churches and ministries to rethink how they minister to men. By focusing on an approach to daily discipleship that combines engaging the Bible several times a day and having accountability with another Christ-follower, we can help men get spiritually engaged and triumph over daily temptation. These changes will produce a generation of men whose spiritual journeys sound more like this:

The road is full of uncertainties but you're sure of a safe trip to your destination. The major turn I took was handing the steering to the one who knows the road better than I. The mile makers were the times of refreshing I've had with others while they share their experiences, it makes you understand you're not alone.

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About the Center for Bible Engagement:

The Center for Bible Engagement (CBE), a research and development division of Back to the Bible, seeks to answer the question: *Why do so many people own Bibles but so few read them?* The center goes beyond simply usage statistics to consider attitudes and behaviors that significantly impact spiritual growth and a person's relationship with God. The primary goal of the CBE is to develop tools and resources that will engage people with God's Word. Since its inception in 2003, CBE has become the major world center addressing Bible engagement and spiritual growth.

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