



Men in CE, part 1 of 3—

# Why Children Need Men In Christian Education

by Gene Roncone

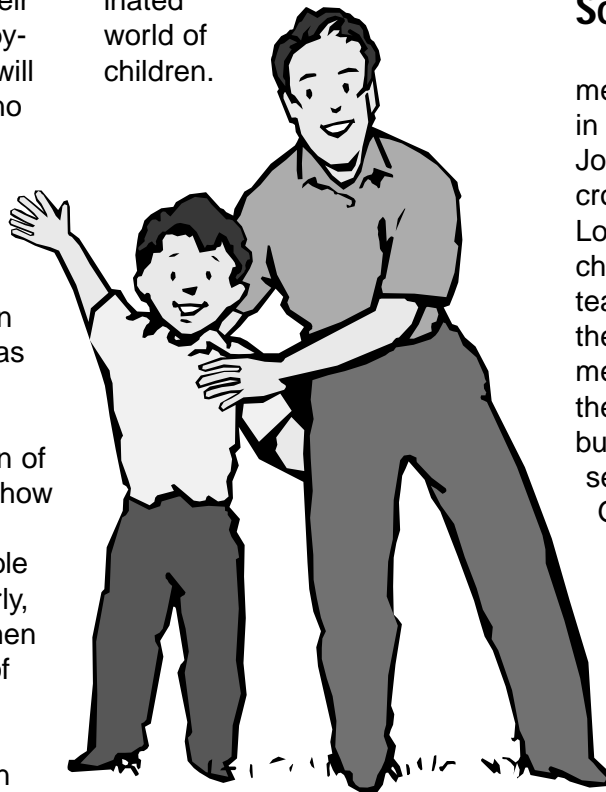
Too many American children are mentored in a feminine world. They grow up in homes, schools, and churches which are led and taught by women. Children have over a ninety-eight percent chance that their primary schoolteachers, baby-sitters, and day-care givers will be women. The situation is no different in the church. Most Sunday School teachers, nursery workers, and children's church leaders are also women. How might society be affected if children had more exposure to men as mentors?

How can one address the need and unique contribution of male teachers without somehow implying that men are more effective, desirable, or capable than female teachers? Clearly, we need both men and women in the discipleship process of children. However, anyone involved in church work can attest to the shortage of men who are committed to discipling children. Men are not more effective; they are just more needed.

## Positive Male Role Models

Christian men bring a unique contribution to children's min-

istry that cannot be successfully substituted by females. Only men can serve as male role models and communicate the fatherhood of God in the female-dominated world of children.



**The church may be the only place some children are exposed to positive male role models.**

Manhood is learned. In today's culture many children will grow up in single-parent families. The church may be the

only place where children have an opportunity to interact with men who model the loving, caring, and nurturing values of manhood.

## Scriptural Mandate

Scriptures make it clear that men are to be actively involved in the discipleship of children. In Joshua 4:4-7, after the Israelites crossed the Jordan River, the Lord instructed Joshua to charge the men with the duty of teaching God's faithfulness to the next generation. The twelve men were to take stones from the bottom of the Jordan to build a monument that would serve as a vivid reminder of God's faithfulness and assist the Israelite men in teaching their children about Him.

Other examples of male responsibility for teaching children about God are found in Exodus 12:21-27; 13:8,14; and Deuteronomy 6:7,20,21.

Now, as then, children need exposure to Christian men who are actively involved in ministry, possess spiritual passion, and are faithful fathers and husbands.





Men in CE, part 2 of 3—

# The Unique Contributions of Men

by Gene Roncone

A child's world is primarily female dominated. A distinction made between male and female teachers is not determined just by the depth of their voices, their physical sizes, or by other noticeable differences. Certain characteristics describe most men who are in a teaching role.

## 1. Direct vs. Passive

Men are seldom passive and rarely allow children to be idle in their growth and learning. Men approach problem solving in a very direct way. They tend to be more aggressive and physical in how they interact with children. Men allow children more independence and freedom to investigate. One author says that men's practical priorities more closely resemble those of children than do those of women. It is rarely too cold, too hot, too wet, too windy, too late, or too early for men and children. Wearing hats, washing hands, listening quietly, sitting still, and staying clean are rarely valued by children or their male teachers.

## 2. Men and Boys

Male teachers are able to bring out the best in young boys. A study entitled "The Effects of Teacher Sex and Student Sex on Classroom Interaction," in the *Journal of Educational Psychology*, reported the following:

- Self control.* Young boys exercise a greater level of self-control when taught by male teachers.

- Patience.* Male teachers are less likely to use harsh or angry tones with boy students.

- Achievement.* Young boys receive higher grades than their objective scores on achievement tests would merit when taught by male teachers.



## 3. Point of View

Studies show that males tend to employ a perspective that relates one part of a concept to another until a proper understanding of the whole is accomplished. Females however begin by intuitively taking in the whole picture and gravitating toward understanding the parts. These differences result in males pos-

sessing unique values, priorities, and interests that prove to be a positive contribution to the learning process.

- Male teachers were more likely to give process feedback following correct and incorrect answers by students.

- Male teachers behave more optimally in failure situations than do female teachers. They were much more willing to work with students to improve their responses, while female teachers behaved more optimally in success situations by following correct student responses with feedback and praise.

- Male undergraduates preferred to work with children labeled as "underachievers," while females preferred to work with children labeled as "overachievers."

## God the Father

*Only men can provide children with a spiritual understanding of God as Father.*

Metaphors, such as marriage, fruit, doors, and shepherds are used in the Bible to communicate spiritual concepts. Perhaps the most important metaphor in the Bible is one God chose to help us understand His desired role in our lives. When God wanted to communicate His commitment, love, and dedication to us, He selected a word from the human language that best described His

nature. God revealed himself as *Father*.

However, our society is becoming increasingly fatherless. About one-third of all children born in the nation now occur outside of marriage. In most of these cases the place for the father's name on the birth certificate is left blank. In at least two-thirds of every case of unwed parenthood, the father is never legally identified. Before today's children reach the age of

eighteen, more than half of the nation's children are likely to spend a significant portion of their childhood living apart from their fathers.

When God revealed himself to us as our "Father," He wanted to capitalize on the images we associate with that concept—nurturing, responsibility, commitment, provider, and of the One who gives us a future and life itself. However, in our society, the word

*father* is associated with images of unfaithfulness, abandonment, irresponsibility, and a lack of commitment.

Christian men can help children understand the intended meaning of the metaphor of God as Father. Their lives can stand as a testimony against the winds of abnormal normalcy. Only men can validate the divine metaphor of God's character and self-revelation found in the word *father*.

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### Questions For Further Study—

1. What is the difference between the way men and women approach problem solving? What is the difference in the way that men and women interact with children? What is the difference between a male and a female point of view?
2. How might the characteristics of men enhance your children's ministries programs?
3. How might good male role models provide children with a better understanding of God as Father?



Men in CE, part 3 of 3—

# Optimizing the Opportunities

by Gene Roncone

**H**ere are a few of many creative ways to take advantage of the opportunities to involve men in children's ministry. These ideas are a product of various conversations with several leading children's pastors, workers, and teachers around the nation.

## Individual Opportunities

- *God's salesman:* If you are experienced in making presentations, sales, marketing, or advertising, help recruit workers for your church's children's ministry.

- *It's my turn:* Involve yourself in the monthly rotation of volunteers who commit to helping once or twice a month in Sunday School or children's church.

- *Spiritual field trips:* Take the children on spiritual field trips to practice the things they are learning about their faith in God. Feeding programs, inner-city holiday projects, children's hospitals, and nursing homes are some events and places that love to involve children.

- *Rock a baby:* Volunteer to work in the nursery, rocking infants and demonstrating the power of male affection to children who may not have fathers.

- *Hauling for Jesus:* Drive a bus, van, or large car for kids who need a ride to church.

- *Building Blessings:* Build sets, puppet stages, and creative props for your children's ministry or remodel, expand, or maintain children's ministry space.

- *Pinewood derby partners:* Help children who do not have fathers to make a pinewood car for racing in a derby.

- *Out of character:* Be a recurring character (human, animal, puppet) in children's church, such as a wacky professor who does

your spouse in the nursery, Sunday School, and children's church. Teams of couples are greatly needed in Christian education. Children need to see adult Christian couples who show warm feelings of affection toward each other.

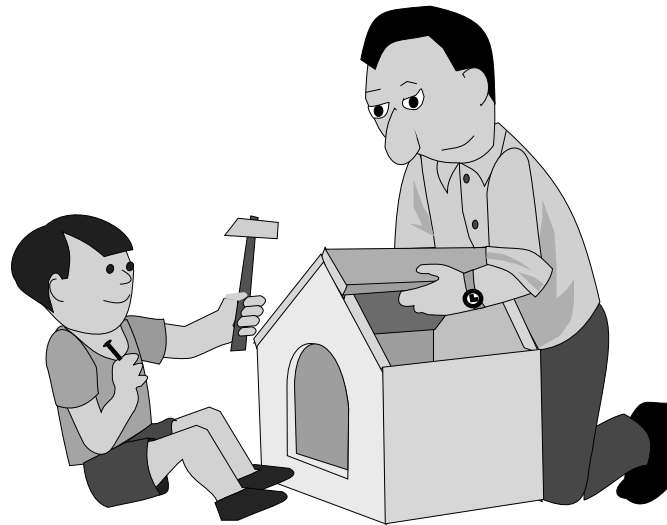
- *Large events:* Use your leadership skills to help organize a portion of a large event for children, such as Vacation Bible School, Kid's Camp, Halloween alternatives, and kids musicals.

- *Good Samaritans:* Organize teams of children to assist needy families with light jobs, such as caulking windows, raking leaves, cleaning garages and yards, painting, and hauling.

- *Safety first:* Assist with safety by volunteering to serve as ushers at the doors to the children's area, assisting mothers who are dropping off multiple children, or by helping as hall monitors.

- *Greeters:* Serve with your spouse as a children's church greeter/

helper. As kids come in to take their seats, go up and down the aisle shaking hands, talking with the kids, and finding out how their week went. This ministry should not be related to discipline; it should be done to build relationships with the kids.



an object lesson, a construction foreman, or a detective who comes in and shares something pertaining to the lesson.

## Couple Opportunities

- *Team ministry:* Work with

## Team or Group Opportunities

- *Grandpas for Jesus:* Recruit a few men from your church's senior fellowship and rotate them in the younger children's classes. Bring a rocking chair to rock the children while you read stories and pray with them. Help with

crafts and activities and build relationships with the children.

- *Men's ministry:* Implement the biblical responsibility to disciple children into the activities of the church's men's ministry. Ask a leader from the children's ministry to sit on the men's planning team. Encourage the men's ministry leadership to set goals that

involve children. Teach men to pray with and for children by actively supporting your church's ministry to the boys' group.

- *Active activities:* Involve a group of men in taking interested children fishing, hiking, canoeing, or other outdoor events. Use the event as an object lesson to teach a spiritual principle.

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## Questions For Further Study—

1. Why is it important for men to be involved in children's ministry?
2. Why is it important for children—boys *and* girls—to have positive male role models?
3. List at least three ways you can involve men in your church's ministry.