

**Hervé Talom**

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## **Introduction:**

Every responsible man ought to protect their future, and that comes through having a will. A will is a legal document that says what you have accumulated in life and states how you want it passed on to those you leave behind. To create a will is saying you are a future mind. You will only sometimes be here. So, you will think about tomorrow and today in your financial or asset planning. Unfortunately, many men do not understand that there are not only wills of physical assets; there are wills of spiritual assets, which you pass on generationally, with a spiritual value attached to them. And unfortunately, many men don't even bother to pass on physical assets. They refuse to pass on spiritual assets. One or both because they are not future-minded and because of not being future-minded.

There is chaos in the future because there is no clarity. The Bible has much to say about legacy and what is passed on to the next generation and beyond.

Proverbs chapter 13, verse 22. "***A good man. Leaves an inheritance to his children's children.***" A good man is not only thinking about what is happening with him today but what will happen at three generational levels. He is concerned about today, he is concerned about his children, and then he is concerned about his children's children, his grandchildren. So, God says a man who is not three generationally minded is not good because he is not thinking long term. He may only think about today, as though tomorrow will never come. Where are the men in our communities? Men gradually lose their power; many children are raised by their single mothers and grandmother without a male role model. In attempting to address this challenge facing our communities, this paper will highlight the missing role of the male in the black communities in Upstate NY, Rochester, the theological reflection and formation, and the theological application.

## **Theological Analysis**

Where are the men? Because these days, it seems like men are not around. Because most men in the black communities in Rochester, NY, choose to be more like the abominable snowman that leaves footprints everywhere but nowhere to be found. We live in a generation of boys being raised to be men just like their mothers because 70% of them in the African American community do not even have fathers. Women are forced to be mothers, fathers, leaders, protectors, nurturers, and providers. Women are doing it all in some sense, operating all outside of their created being. So, if men are supposed to be men who are following Christ, we are to submit as He did so that our kids can watch us submit to God. So, the problems you feel you may have with your wife, the next man will not experience with your daughter.

In the black community, boys think their manhood is wrapped in how many women they can sleep with, just like their Rolling Stone daddies and handling their problems with the gun in their hand. It is all because of the absence of a man. Our culture is suffering because of the man's unwillingness to suffer. Moreover, we must hold that legacy tight until Jesus says it has been done. What about you? What is your legacy become? And if your legacy has not started yet, I dare you to be the first man in your family, Church, or community to start the legacy of restoring manhood to fulfill God's purpose. Start building your legacies today because that is your greatness.

In today's postmodern world, the Church is challenged to lead and support single mothers without fathers. Meeting those challenges can only be accomplished when the men in our communities understand their role and influence in raising the next generation. To encounter continued transformation and renewal, the Church's relationship with men must be more than

just a part of the life of the Church; it must become fueled by Jesus, "becoming a dynamic, ongoing presence every moment we live."

Transformational men understand that where they are positioned is strategic for carrying out God's purposes for a given family and community. Intentionality involves getting to know the challenge of men in our communities.

Bill Hybels argues, "*The local church is the world's hope.*"<sup>1</sup> Churches that are focused on their call and positioning have the grace to adapt to the culture in which they exist to relate to the people and serve the needs of that culture. This requires prayer, planning, and preparation. Stetzer and Dodson believe that evangelism does not just happen; it requires preparation.<sup>2</sup> Every major problem in the black community in Rochester can be solved if we address the problem of missing fathers.

A Reuter Headline in 2007 proclaimed that "***father absence decimates black community in the US.***" From inception, the male gender has always been the enemy's primary target. The male represents authority and leadership in the household. Any family or home must have structure and leadership to experience success.

President Obama has been one of the biggest advocates of this idea. In a 2008 speech delivered on Father's Day at a church on Chicago's South Side,

*Too many black fathers are missing from many lives and homes. "They have abandoned their responsibilities, acting like boys instead of men. We know the statistics that children who grow up without a father are five times more likely to live in poverty and commit a crime; nine times more likely to drop out of schools and 20 times more likely to end up in prison."*

Before the covid 19 pandemic I volunteered as a chaplain in Utica prisons, every Wednesday I visited the inmates, we gathered for bible study, I was always dazzled by the high percentage

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<sup>1</sup> Bill Hybels, *Courageous Leadership*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 15.

<sup>2</sup> Stetzer and Dodson, *Comeback Churches*, 106.

black inmates in the facilities. As I began to listen to their stories, I found out that the source of their problem was connected to fatherless homes.

Obama said.

***"They are more likely to have behavioral problems, run away from home, or become teenage parents. Furthermore, the foundations of our community are weaker because of it."***

The U.S Census Bureau calculates 48.2% of all children in Rochester live in poverty.

Within that 48.2% of all children in Rochester living in poverty, the majority come from Black According to the latest Census figures, about 50% of African American boys under age 17 live with a mother only, compared with 16 percent of their white counterparts. Research shows that children in fatherless homes are more likely to drop out of school, exhibit behavioral problems, end up in the criminal justice system, suffer unemployment, and are at a greater risk of substance and drug abuse.

According to the report from US News, Black Americans are incarcerated at a state average of 1,240 per 100,000

In 2018 in the black community 48% of men were incarcerated,

### New York State 2018 Arrests and Sentences by Race/Ethnicity

New York State								
Race/Ethnicity	Population		Arrests		Felony Arrests		Prison Sentences	
	#	% of Total	#	% of Total	#	% of Total	#	% of Total
White	10,830,524	55%	136,081	33%	36,837	27%	3,813	28%
Black	2,833,908	15%	157,052	38%	61,848	45%	6,505	48%
Hispanic	3,754,130	19%	96,854	24%	33,001	24%	3,042	22%
Asian	1,710,183	9%	13,122	3%	4,678	3%	148	1%
Other-Unknown	413,464	2%	6,307	2%	1,852	1%	147	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>19,542,209</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>409,416</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>138,216</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>13,655</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Statistics and facts about the role of men in our communities: <sup>3</sup>

63% of youth suicides are from fatherless homes. <sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The National Center for Fathering – <http://www.fathers.com/statistics-and-research/the-extent-of-fatherlessness/>

<sup>4</sup> US Dept. Of Health/Census

90% of all homeless and runaway children are from fatherless homes

85% of all children who show behavior disorders come from fatherless homes

80% of rapists with anger problems come from fatherless homes.<sup>5</sup>

71% of all high school dropouts come from fatherless homes.<sup>6</sup>

### **Father Factor in Education**

Fatherless children are twice as likely to drop out of school.

Children with Fathers who are involved are 40% less likely to repeat a grade in school.

Children with Fathers who are involved are 70% less likely to drop out of school.

Children with Fathers who are involved are more likely to get A's in school.

Children with Fathers who are involved are more likely to enjoy school and engage in extracurricular activities.

75% of all adolescent patients in chemical abuse centers come from fatherless homes.

### **Father Factor in Drug and Alcohol Abuse**

Researchers at Columbia University found that children living in a two-parent household with a poor relationship with their father are 68% more likely to smoke, drink, or use drugs than all teens in two-parent households. Teens in single-mother households are at a 30% higher risk than two-parent households.

70% of youths in state-operated institutions come from fatherless homes.<sup>7</sup>

85% of all youths in prison come from fatherless homes.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Justice & Behavior, Vol. 14, p. 403-26)

<sup>6</sup> National Principals Association Report

<sup>7</sup> US Dept. of Justice, Sept. 1988

<sup>8</sup> Fulton Co. Georgia, Texas Dept. of Correction

## Theological reflection and formation

Proverbs 4:1-9 ESV

*Hear, O sons, a father's instruction, and be attentive, that you may gain insight, for I give you good precepts; do not forsake my teaching. When I was a son with my father, tender, the only one in the sight of my mother, he taught me and said to me, "Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments, and live. Get wisdom; get insight; do not forget, and do not turn away from the words of my mouth. ...*

Throughout the Bible, we discover countless examples of men filled with awe when time was spent in the presence of God. Abraham worshiped by living a life of praise and obedience during and after encounters in the presence of God. Moses experienced instant transformation resulting in a life-changing destiny of personal, cultural, and national worship to the One and True Living God after spending intimate time on holy ground communing with the 'Great I Am.' David made worship a lifestyle that he described extravagantly in music and writings, portraying his love for the 'Good Shepherd.'

Worship engages the Church to celebrate with saints and sinners and provides an atmosphere for the Holy Spirit to move in the hearts and lives of all people. In worship, men are brought together in the experience of unified transformation.

Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson believe that transformed and renewed churches encounter an experience that redirects and re-energizes lives.<sup>9</sup> Worship provides the atmosphere for men to be refreshed, see and experience the glory of God. Worship engages men's hearts, minds, and souls.<sup>10</sup> Stetzer and Dobson argue, "Unbelievers who see true worshippers focused on God, experiencing His presence in genuine praise and worship, will be drawn to the true and living God. God uses it to touch their hearts and change their lives."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson, *Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around and Yours Can Too*, (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2007), 15.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

Telling God's story is expressing the impact of the cross of Christ.<sup>12</sup> It is sharing the message of the hope, of the Kingdom, and the "power of God's love and grace confronting and defeating the power of the enemy,"<sup>13</sup> which has enslaved and oppressed the men through sin. God's commission to His Church is to make disciples of every nation and preaching and teaching the Bible faithfully in proper context in congregations, to individual, or group encounters, will accomplish God's objectives.<sup>14</sup> God's story, which is the Word of God; 'is living, sharp and powerful,' it can be told from the pulpit by a Doctor of Theology, or by a six-year-old on a teeter-totter. It is a story that includes all of us; we can be one of the star characters and simultaneously be the storyteller. God allows each of us a chapter of our life to be incorporated into His story when we accept Him as our God, Father, Savior, King, and Friend. We become empowered to testify of our part, our life chapter of His story. The more we read and study God's story, the better equipped we are to share it. Transformation occurs while reading and telling the story for the storyteller and the listener. Churches that are devoted to sharing God's story are churches that experience the wonder of transformation.

## Culture

*The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise. Prov. 11:30.* Men who experience transformation are intentional about how they do things for the Lord. A good man will spend time scouting an opponent, and a treasure hunter or explorer will study maps to understand the demands of making a significant discovery.

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<sup>12</sup> Rick Rouse, Craig Van Gelder, *A Field Guide for the Missional Congregation: Embarking on a Journey of Transformation*, (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2008), 134.

<sup>13</sup> Rouse and Van Gelder, *A Field Guide for the Missional Congregation*, 134.

<sup>14</sup> Stetzer and Dodson, *Comeback Churches*, 93.

The goal and mission of the Church is to accomplish God's will in individuals and the world for both to have a meaningful relationship with God. Scripture clarifies that God wants us to be transformed as individuals and a body of believers and conformed to the image of Christ.<sup>15</sup> God wants godly offspring who exhibit His nature and character, who think as He does, and talk as He talks. Our heavenly father wants His children to act just like their "daddy." As men experience transformation individually and collectively, they can love God and their family unconditionally, an agape love. This is his image since "God is Love."

During His ministry, Jesus understood the importance of close communication with His Father. He intentionally sought the father's heart for direction, comfort, and inspiration. Jesus further taught His disciples and all believers to follow His example.

The Book of Judges says, and every man did that which was right in his own eyes because there was no king in those days. No standard had been passed on. Today, we live in a day of societal chaos. That chaos can be rooted back to men who refuse to build a spiritual legacy.

We live in a day when a man has surrendered meaning to convenience and a purpose to existence. When a man accepts Jesus Christ as his personal Savior, he is drafted into the purpose of God. Unfortunately, many men who go to Church do not even care to know the purpose of God. Furthermore, therefore, they lived distracted by the purposes of culture. Proverbs 20 verse five says that. In the heart of every man is a purpose, but the man must draw it. In other words, God has already given you a reason for being in seed form, but you must grow it if you can only grow it in pursuit and relationship with God. Far too many men are living without a divine purpose. They can talk about their career. They can talk about their business goals. They can talk

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<sup>15</sup> Chester and Betsy Kylstra, *Restoring the Foundations: An Integrated Approach to Healing Ministry*, (Hendersonville, NC:

about their finance. But when you ask them what God's purpose is for you, they get quiet because they have not discovered it.

God has drafted every man to fulfill his role in his Kingdom. Every man has been given responsibility under his leadership. To be an impact influencer in the sphere in which he has been placed. Every man has been called to face opposition and challenges and to overcome them so that God's purposes can be fulfilled. God is calling his men to get in the game so that he can bring healing to a nation and a culture in crisis. So, let us leave our passivity behind. Let us decide between God's men to accept the call to restore manhood in our communities.

### **Theological implementation**

According to The Fatherhood Initiative, "*In Rochester, fatherlessness Is at the Root of Every Problem We Face*" Poverty, Addiction, Crime, Mental Health/Suicide, Failing Schools, and Teen Pregnancy. Fatherlessness is a spiritual issue, and until we call on God to do His redemptive work on our mind, body, and spirit, we are simply treating the symptoms and never solving the problem. ***The Solution for Fatherless in Rochester, NY, is Getting the Church Involved***

The goal of the father initiative is to build an Army of Healthy Male Role Models that can give kids the stability, discipline, character, and confidence that only a dad can provide.

We want to equip men in the Church with the skills to be fathers and mentors and expand opportunities for them to pour into the lives of our youth.

- Discipleship/Mentorship

Discipleship is everyone's responsibility; it begins with men, as parents raise godly children in the Word of God. It happens at Church through preaching, teaching, fellowship, and worship. It occurs in jobs and in communities. When men partner with God in making disciples, men become linked to God's divine purpose in their families and communities.

In Rochester, The Fatherhood Initiative seeks to impact the 75% fatherless homes in the city by raising an army of Godly Father Figures. Everyone understands the situation's urgency; none of us want to see another generation lost. Together, we are standing in the gap to become part of the solution and bring discipline, confidence, stability, and love to a child's life.

Obama said at a poverty summit, *"I am a black man who grew up without a father, and I know the cost that I paid for that."*

However, responsible fatherhood only goes so far in institutionalized oppression. For black children, the presence of fathers would not alter racist drug laws, prosecutorial protection of police officers who kill, mass school closures, or water poisoning. By focusing on the absence of black fathers, we allow ourselves to pretend this oppression is inaccurate while further scapegoating black men for America's societal ills.

- Leadership

Healthy men are renewed and experiencing consistent transformation flourish because they are led by people who possess and deploy the spiritual gift of leadership.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Hybels, *Courageous Leadership*, 26.

Strong Spirit-filled leaders "see the big picture and understand how to help men find their place of service within that picture. These types of leaders are focused on the things of God and teach this focus to those who follow them.

- Federal Child Tax Credit

A popular idea to give families in need more support is starting up through jobs and internships.

Great men help others find their burning bush encounter with God because their experience of being in the presence of God is an everyday experience, and they want others to partake in a similar life-changing encounter. This kind of man stays on fire for the mission, not notoriety or money. They follow Christ and His Word and encourage other men to join the journey. They build teams based on trust and relationship, and not on the lordship of power, knowing that trust builds a strong community in which relationships are founded, creating a mutual passion for the vision and call that God has placed on their congregations. In building trust, God's leaders make themselves vulnerable.

However, the "mistake of not embracing vulnerability can destroy the people they lead if and when they fail." Being vulnerable shows others that they make mistakes and sometimes fail and that it is normal for them to fail and make mistakes. Most of God's leaders mentioned in the Bible had moments of failure. The mission of God continued as leaders learned and developed the skills necessary to be successful men of God.

*"Effective leader teams cast a vision that unites men around a God-given cause. Visionary teams are motivated by a strong sense of mission and purpose"*

Casting vision not only gives purpose for men but direction. Knowing what needs to be done without knowing how leads to frustration, wasted energy, and disinterest.

Mentoring younger men is a significant investment; churches that invest in restoring fatherhood through mentoring programs and youth are not only building the future leaders of the

Church but also the future leaders of the world. My deepest desire for the black community in Rochester is to see Christian men adopting boys with single mothers for a few hours weekly to mentor and equip them to become a man shaped by God, not by the evil influence of the community.

I have grown tired of men missing in homes. I hope to train young men in the manner of Jesus, the Good Shepherd—shepherds willing to lay down their lives for the sheep (John 10:15). Shepherds are willing to take less for those with little to have more. I intend to join other mentoring programs tailored towards restoring manhood in upstate NY, Rochester. Lord, help me and others to be great leaders who make great leaders and good shepherds who make good shepherds for your glory.

Lottie Joiner states that *“As the African American community grapples with the school-to-prison pipeline, high unemployment and mass incarceration of young black men, it’s important that we look at the “structural violence” they endure and form a community of social fathers to help guide, protect and support them. This is an issue that touches the lives of not only African Americans but all those who want to create a society of emotionally healthy men. Their skills and talents are needed for a better world.”*<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Lottie Joiner *How absent fathers are hurting African American boys*, center for Health journalism , <https://centerforhealthjournalism.org/resources/lessons/lessons-reporting-how-absent-fathers-are-hurting-african-american-boys> Accessed : April 24/2023

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