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UNDERSTANDING THE EFFECTS OF FATHERLESSNESS  
AT BETHANY CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis is a qualitative study examining the effects of fatherlessness on the students at Bethany Christian Assembly (BCA). BCA is an Assemblies of God church, located in Everett, Washington, in the Pacific Northwest. BCA currently averages 1,800 in attendance on any given Sunday and has a strong focus on Compassion Ministries. This project sought to help BCA understand the effects that absent fathers have had on their students and help provide a solution to reach out to those without a father figure.

The foundation of the research was built on answering one main question: What is the role of a father? Based on biblical research, the role of a father was categorized into five specific characteristics. These five essential characteristics were used to assess the effects of fatherlessness at BCA. The five essential characteristics of a father included one who leads, protects, provides, accepts, and corrects. These five essentials provided an understanding of what the role of a father is, but also provided a helpful standard, which revealed detailed effects that occur in families when these essentials are not present. The research then determined if BCA was a church that was meeting the essential needs for those children without a father present in the home and, if not, what potential solutions could directly meet the needs.

This project employed interviews with participants at BCA in order to obtain the specific data needed. The information was specifically targeted towards four cluster groups to ensure as accurate data as possible. These four cluster groups consist of: 1) high school students without fathers, 2) single mothers with a high school student, 3) BCA youth pastor and adult leaders, and 4) well known and recognized fathers attending BCA. The information taken from the interviews was analyzed and divided into specific categories. Data from the categories was used to assess the effects of the fatherlessness at BCA and also answer two main questions in this

project, including: Is BCA effectively fulfilling the needs of the fatherless? If not, what is a possible solution for BCA to meet the needs of this fatherless generation?

The data obtained from the interviews with the fathers at BCA was evaluated to understand the positive traits of strong families. These traits contributed to building possible solutions for BCA to help build momentum towards reaching the needs in homes absent of the father role. The solutions proposed are meant to help fulfill the purpose of what God intended the role of the father to be. In providing solutions for BCA, and possibly other local churches, the goal is to help Christians meet the needs of this fatherless generation.

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To my beautiful princess! Thank you, Hosanna, for letting daddy go to school. Thank you for the phone conversations and video chats of encouragement that assured me mommy was doing a good job. Thank you for letting me come back home and be your prince.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	Page 07
MY STORY .....	Page 07
THE PROBLEM .....	Page 09
LITERATURE REVIEW .....	Page 12
INTRODUCTION .....	Page 12
THE ESSENTIALS OF A BIBLICAL FATHER .....	Page 12
A FATHER WHO LEADS .....	Page 13
A FATHER WHO PROTECTS .....	Page 17
A FATHER WHO PROVIDES .....	Page 19
A FATHER WHO CORRECTS .....	Page 22
A FATHER WHO ACCEPTS .....	Page 23
THE RESULTS OF LACKING THE ESSENTIALS OF A FATHER .....	Page 25
THE RESULTS OF POSSESSING THE ESSENTIALS OF A FATHER .....	Page 28
THE ROLE OF THE FATHER .....	Page 31
METHODOLOGY .....	Page 33
METHOD / RATIONALE .....	Page 33
SAMPLE .....	Page 34
RESEARCHER .....	Page 36
INSTRUMENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND VALIDATION .....	Page 37
DATA .....	Page 38
PROCESS FOR THE INTERVIEWS .....	Page 38
DATA ANALYSIS .....	Page 39

INTERVIEWS .....	Page 39
THE EFFECTS OF FATHERLESSNESS AT BCA .....	Page 39
CURRENT SOLUTIONS .....	Page 54
THE BCA ESSENTIALS .....	Page 57
IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION .....	Page 61
SOLUTIONS .....	Page 62
INTERNAL .....	Page 62
EXTERNAL .....	Page 65
CONCLUSION .....	Page 67
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	Page 68
APPENDICES.....	Page 72
APPENDIX A: Interview Informed Consent Form .....	Page 72
APPENDIX B: Interview Questions for Group 1 - High school students .....	Page 73
APPENDIX C: Interview Questions for Group 2 - Mothers of students .....	Page 74
APPENDIX D: Interview Questions for Group 3 - Youth pastor and leaders .....	Page 75
APPENDIX E: Interview Questions for Group 4 - BCA Fathers .....	Page 76
APPENDIX F: The Resolution .....	Page 77
APPENDIX G: Interviews of high school students .....	Page 78
APPENDIX H: Interviews of mothers of high school students .....	Page 87
APPENDIX I: Interviews of youth pastor and adult leaders .....	Page 95
APPENDIX J: Interviews of the BCA fathers .....	Page 101

## **Introduction**

### *My Story*

This motivation for this project begins with my story. As a young boy, born in Geneva, Illinois, I had two parents who brought me into this world. Three years after I was born, my sister Jamie joined our family. A tumultuous two years after that, our family broke apart and became another divorce statistic. We never could have predicted how traumatic and life altering that decision was for each of us. Twenty-five years later, I find myself as a husband, a man, and a father still wrestling with the rippling effects of being abandoned by my parents.

My mother left our family to continue her adulteress relationship with another man. She had another child out of wedlock and continued down a destructive lifestyle. Jamie and I had inconsistent weekend visits that were littered with abuse. We were exposed to drug abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, and sexual abuse. In a situation where three kids desperately needed a motherly connection, our mother neglected and failed to nurture a relationship with us.

For a brief period, my sister and I were a family unit with my dad. I believe my dad always wanted the best for his kids. However, the combination of his childhood issues and the divorce rendered him emotionally and physically absent. Within a year after my mom left our home, my dad spent most of his time at work or dating other women. When I think about my childhood years, I can only recall the divorce and distant memories with babysitters and my dad's many girlfriends. By the time I was ten years old, my dad had re-married my first step mom, who brought her son and daughter into our lives.

As a hurting twelve-year-old boy, I desperately yearned for the affection of a mother and the attention of a father. The deep pain was the catalyst that caused me to run away from home. After I left my dad's house, I was abused by my step-dad and began living with random friends

from school. My life only continued to spiral downward as I strained for survival until I ended up in juvenile hall at the age of sixteen. It was during this sixty-day period that my life only had one way left to go, and I found myself moving into the loving arms of God the Father. With nowhere else to go and no one else to turn to, I submitted my life to Christ as a cry for help, though I was ignorant of the power of God and how he would answer my plea. The day after I got out of juvenile hall, God sent me a Christian family with whom to live and a Christian church with whom to belong.

Since that day, in April of 1996, I have learned how to be loved by my Heavenly Father, and in return, share with others the amazing gift of grace that I have received. Today, this project is an endeavor to help me empathize in the pain of not having a father in my life and to understand the significant effects that are taking place with others whom have been abandoned by their fathers. As my eyes are opened, I am becoming more aware that I am only one of the millions of kids who grew up without a father in the home or a father figure during their adolescent years. Today, 40% of America will go to sleep in a home where their father does not live.<sup>1</sup> Our current generation is rapidly being deeply scarred with the pain and devastation of being abandoned by their fathers. Statistics are beginning to catch up to what was predicted long ago by many, and our current society is facing major social issues<sup>2</sup> due to the lack of fathers.

My hope is that this project can be motivational and part of the solution that helps the local church to be proactive in reaching the fatherless. A few years ago, I was afraid to look directly at my fatherless issues, but if you listen closely to the voices in this current generation, you will hear broken hearts all around that are screaming for a Heavenly Father to come in and fill the very depths of their soul.

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<sup>1</sup> David Blackenhorn, "About David Blackenhorn," [http://www.americanvalues.org/html/about\\_david\\_blackenhorn.html](http://www.americanvalues.org/html/about_david_blackenhorn.html) (accessed March 3, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> George Alan Rekers, *Family Building: Six Qualities of a Strong Family* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1985), 36.



### *The Problem*

In 2010, a book titled *The Fatherless Generation* was published. The author and president of The Mentoring Project, Dr. John Sowers, refers to the millennials (people born between 1982 and 1999) as the fatherless generation.<sup>3</sup> Sowers writes that this fatherless generation “desperately wants to be found.”<sup>4</sup> Moreover, he observes, “The deep pain of desperation in fatherless boys and girls is what makes up most of the societal problems we face today.” *The Fatherless Generation* reveals startling statistics of these major societal issues. A study from the U.S. Department of Health found that children from fatherless homes account for 85 percent of all youths sitting in prison, 63 percent of youth suicides, and 75 percent of all adolescents in chemical abuse centers.<sup>5</sup> More statistics report that 80 percent of rapists with anger problems come from fatherless homes<sup>6</sup> and 71 percent of all high school dropouts come from fatherless homes.<sup>7</sup> The evidence is impossible to ignore, and the effects of fatherlessness are drastically shaping our homes and nation. Our current culture is only facing the repercussions of what many educators and leaders predicted would happen.

Dr. George Rekers wrote a book, in 1985, that addresses the importance of a strong family. A major component in his studies was observing the various outcomes that would take place in a home with and without the role of a father in it. In his book, *Family Building*, which was published over fifteen years ago, Rekers predicts that the lack of a quality home (which included an active and involved father) would result in juvenile delinquency, abuse, and mental

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<sup>3</sup> John Sowers, *Fatherless Generation: Redeeming the Story* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 18.

<sup>4</sup> Sowers, *Fatherless Generation*, 21.

<sup>5</sup> Wayne Parker, *Statistics on Fatherless Children in America* (Fatherhood at About.com: Resources and Support for Fathers), accessed October 05, 2011.

<sup>6</sup> Sowers, *Fatherless Generation*, 35.

<sup>7</sup> John Sowers, “Fatherless Generation Statistics”, <http://thefatherlessgeneration.wordpress.com/statistics/> (accessed November 12, 2012).

illness.<sup>8</sup> The research done by Sowers is now affirming the predictions Rekers was beginning to see unfold. From a cultural perspective, if we are not intentional about building strong families, our nation will implode. The effects of fatherlessness will only continue to grow as our nation continues to have fathers abandoning their primary role.

The need for a father has never been as great as it is today. We can see, from the current trend, “the number of fatherless in America will soon eclipse the 50 percent mark.”<sup>9</sup> One can only imagine the effects that will have on our society. Cultural trends are not just revealing the effects of being fatherless but are drawing attention to the pain that comes from not having a dad. Artists represented in pop culture are dealing with it in their music. The American pop rock singer-songwriter Kelly Clarkson sings about her difficult childhood in her song, “Because of You.”<sup>10</sup> Clarkson sings, “Because of you, I find it hard to trust not only me, but everyone around me. Because of you, I am afraid.” She is one of many who share her pain via song. Chester Bennington from the band Linkin Park also shares the effects of a fatherless childhood in the song, “Somewhere I Belong.”<sup>11</sup> The chorus reiterates the lines, “I wanna find something I’ve wanted all along. Somewhere I belong, somewhere I belong.” These songs and other media communicate an irritation in which almost half of America feels today. The hurt of this fatherless generation is appearing in our cultural issues, media and even our churches.

Over the last decade, Christian leaders and pastors have also begun to address this vexation that is invading our families and communities. John Eldredge, an author and counselor, helped bring the discussion of the father wound to Christian men in 2001, in his widely known book, *Wild At Heart*. The book designates an entire chapter to what he calls “the wound.”

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<sup>8</sup> George Alan Rekers, *Family Building: Six Qualities of a Strong Family*. (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1985), 36.

<sup>9</sup> Sowers, *Fatherless Generation*, 40.

<sup>10</sup> Kelly Clarkson, “Because of You,” from the album *Breakaway* (RCA Records, November 30, 2004).

<sup>11</sup> Linkin Park, “Somewhere I Belong,” from the album *Meteora* (Wea International, March 17, 2003).

Eldredge explains the wound as “something that happens to a boy when he fails to discover who he is and what he was created for, without the company of a father figure, or other men.”<sup>12</sup>

Eldredge describes this as an “emotional wound” that is at the center of masculinity.<sup>13</sup> He states that masculinity is natural to boys and is passed on between men.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, the father wound occurs when a boy is denied this right of passage. Eldredge is adamant that God’s plan from the beginning of time was for the father to pass on the strength and knowledge of manhood to his son,<sup>15</sup> and without the role of a father, a young man experiences the misery of being fatherless. The passing of the masculine torch is a dilemma the church is going to have to face, and a question that every fatherless boy will have to address.

*The Fatherless Generation* gives a voice to the millions who are blindly grappling the wound that comes from the lack of a father figure in their lives. This voice is getting louder in our nation, and many are asking themselves one of the most difficult questions a person could ever address: “If my own father couldn't love me, how could anyone else?”<sup>16</sup> A question of this magnitude deserves an answer. How is the church addressing this question?

Now is a pivotal time for Christ followers to come face to face with this painful reality and take initiative in being what they were not: fathers to the fatherless. Gordon Dalbey, author of *Healing the Masculine Soul*, has written four books to promote the importance that Christ followers and the church have in this healing process. Dalbey concluded that “healing between fathers and children is not simply a psychological exercise to bring greater peace of mind; in fact, it's the essential prerequisite to fulfilling God’s purpose on earth.”<sup>17</sup> Addressing the needs

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<sup>12</sup> John Eldredge, *Wild at Heart: Discovering the Passionate Soul of a Man* (Nashville, TN: T. Nelson, 2001), 62.

<sup>13</sup> Eldredge, 62.

<sup>14</sup> Eldredge, 66.

<sup>15</sup> Eldredge, 62.

<sup>16</sup> Eldredge, 20.

<sup>17</sup> Gordon Dalbey, *Healing the Masculine Soul: How God Restores Men into Real Manhood* (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 2003), 142-143.

of the fatherless is central to the calling and purpose of Christ. Therefore, I believe every church should be addressing the fatherless issues at hand.

This project seeks to exhort the church by understanding and addressing the needs in my local church first. By clarifying the role of a father and looking at the fatherless needs at Bethany Christian Assembly (BCA), I hope to unveil enlightening information that encourages us and others to be proactive in our central purpose of uniting the fatherless with a father figure. This project will accomplish this goal by addressing the following questions: What is the biblical role of a father? Is BCA effectively fulfilling the needs of the fatherless? If not, what is a possible solution for BCA to meet the needs of this fatherless generation?

## **Literature Review**

### *Introduction*

As long as humans have been on the earth, they have been trying to explain the effects that they have on each other. Human relationships began when God “made a woman from the rib he had taken out”<sup>18</sup> of Adam in the Garden of Eden, and our world has never stopped trying to understand the dynamics of relationships since. More recently, there has been clear data and research that now provides a more concise understanding of relationships and, more specifically, the effects that the role of a father has on others. This section will look at biblical materials and current literature on the essentials of a biblical father, the role of a father, the results of lacking the essentials of a father, and the results of possessing the essentials of a father.

### *The Essentials of a Biblical Father*

Scripture provides clear principles, as well as a strong foundation, for what a father looks like. In a blog written by Dr. Ken Canfield, he writes, “There is much more in the biblical source code to provide a framework for the church’s ministry with fathers. In the Scriptures, the

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<sup>18</sup> Genesis 2:22, NIV (New International Version).

words “father,” “fathered,” “father-less” and their derivatives appear more than 1,190 times.”<sup>19</sup>

Being a father is central to the message of the Bible and the character of God. Canfield notes that God first appears as a father to Israel and then is ultimately displayed with his son Jesus.<sup>20</sup>

The Bible sets the standards for the church and humanity for what a father should look like.

Pastor and author, Dr. Adrian Rogers, states that God, “established the primacy of parenthood.”<sup>21</sup>

God is humanity’s prime example of what a father should look like.

The New and Old Testament, in the Bible, provide multiple pictures of God as a father and His role amidst people. Marianne Thompson’s book, *The Promise of the Father*, also reveals many examples of God fulfilling His role as a father. Not only is this revealed through his relationship with Jesus, but also via God's relationship to Israel.<sup>22</sup> The Bible provides the foundation for discovering the essential characteristics of a father. These main essentials are narrowed down to five in order to provide the basic structure for what the role of a father entails. The five essential characteristics of a father are one who leads, protects, provides, accepts, and corrects.

### *A Father Who Leads*

The Lord has been in the business of leading his people since the very beginning. It started with Adam when God led him into the Garden of Eden to work and then later led him into relationship because God knew it was not good for man to be alone.<sup>23</sup> Later on, He removed the first man and woman from the Garden and leads them into what Dr. Henry Cloud refers to as

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<sup>19</sup> Ken Canfield, “The Modern Fatherhood Movement and Ministry to Fathers in the Faith Community”, *Family Ministry Today*, Oct 18, 2011, <http://www.sbts.edu/family/blog/the-modern-fatherhood-movement-and-ministry-to-fathers-in-the-faith-community/> (accessed November 7, 2011).

<sup>20</sup> Canfield.

<sup>21</sup> Adrian Rogers, *Ten Secrets for a Successful Family* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1996), 86.

<sup>22</sup> Marianne Meye Thompson, *The Promise of the Father: Jesus and God in the New Testament*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 116.

<sup>23</sup> Genesis 2, NIV.

"a place of safety."<sup>24</sup> The creator of the world set the precedent of leading His children, starting with Adam and Eve, and it continued in their family. Right before Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, an angel of the Lord led Lot and his family safely out of the destruction.<sup>25</sup> The story of Abraham continues the heritage of God leading His family. Abraham was led to become the father of many nations,<sup>26</sup> he was led to the region of Moriah to sacrifice his son;<sup>27</sup> he led many people into the lives of His family.<sup>28</sup> On one occasion, Abraham was led by God to sacrifice his son, and as a descendant of Adam and Eve, Abraham regularly speaks about God leading him to various locations. The heart of God the Father is consistently leading His children and people into safe places, as well as out of slavery.

The story of Moses is about a man being used by God to lead an entire nation out of slavery. The Lord first appeared to Moses in the form of a burning bush,<sup>29</sup> in which he made himself known as the God of Abraham.<sup>30</sup> Moses began his journey and witnessed the power of God as He led the nation of Israel out of slavery.<sup>31</sup> The provision and leadership did not stop there, as the Lord led the Israelites to the Red Sea<sup>32</sup> where He parted the waters. He led them into the desert,<sup>33</sup> into His presence,<sup>34</sup> and eventually into the Promised Land.<sup>35</sup> The Lord began leading His children out of slavery with Moses and has led everyone out of slavery to sin through Jesus.<sup>36</sup> A father does not just lead his children out of slavery, but he leads them into freedom.

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<sup>24</sup> Henry Cloud, *Changes That Heal: How to Understand Your past to Ensure a Healthier Future* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 24.

<sup>25</sup> Genesis 19:16, NIV.

<sup>26</sup> Genesis 17:5, NIV.

<sup>27</sup> Genesis 22:2, NLT (New Living Translation).

<sup>28</sup> Genesis 24:27, NLT.

<sup>29</sup> Exodus 3:2, NIV.

<sup>30</sup> Exodus 3:6, NIV.

<sup>31</sup> Exodus 12:42, NIV.

<sup>32</sup> Exodus 13:18, NIV.

<sup>33</sup> Exodus 15:22, NLT.

<sup>34</sup> Exodus 19:17, NLT.

<sup>35</sup> Exodus 33:1, NLT.

<sup>36</sup> Galatians 4:7, NLT.

The way to a life of true freedom is by following Christ. Phillip Keller, author and missionary, describes this way of living within a greater life.<sup>37</sup> Keller views a free and abundant life as, “exchanging your life for His life.”<sup>38</sup> Pastor Mark Driscoll believes that it is the role of the dad to raise his children in the abundant and free life that God has to offer.<sup>39</sup> Driscoll articulates this role for the dad as someone who has been ordained to lead and cultivate his family. For him, the church and other institutions are only in place to help support the role of the father, and not the other way around.<sup>40</sup> He explains that God gave this leadership role to the head of the household. The father, and head of the house, accomplishes this by following Christ first, marrying a woman who loves the Lord, and then fulfill the duty of a father by leading “all aspects of his child to maturity in the Lord.”<sup>41</sup> An important component to being led cannot be complete without an essential component from a child. That component is the willingness to follow and obey the leader. In scripture, God’s children trusted Him to lead them out of slavery and into a better life. It is the role of a dad to cultivate a family that is obedient to Christ, and the results will be freedom and becoming a whole person. Scripture refers to this as being, “mature and complete.”<sup>42</sup> It is the role of the father to lead his family into a mature and spiritual life.

Brian Pruitt, a pastor and former NFL player, also addresses the leadership role of the father, in *The Power of a Dad*. He addresses the topic of understanding the influence that a dad has on their children. Pruitt believes that a dad uses his God-given influence to change the

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<sup>37</sup> Phillip Keller, *What Is the Father Like?: A Devotional Look at How God Cares for His Children* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1996), 48.

<sup>38</sup> Keller, 48.

<sup>39</sup> Mark Driscoll, *Pastor Dad: Scriptural Insights to Fatherhood*, [http://theresurgence.com/files/2011/03/02/releit\\_ebook\\_pastordad.pdf](http://theresurgence.com/files/2011/03/02/releit_ebook_pastordad.pdf) (Accessed November 3, 2011), 19.

<sup>40</sup> Driscoll, 19.

<sup>41</sup> Driscoll, 20.

<sup>42</sup> James 1:4, NIV.

course of his children's life for the positive or the negative.<sup>43</sup> A father is influential in his children's lives. He must use his leadership to influence for the positive.

Pruitt's research revealed, "24 million will live absent of their biological father. This means that there is a fatherless generation that is larger than the state of Texas by one million people."<sup>44</sup> That large of a population significantly affects our nation and culture. This generation is aimlessly floating around and desperate for men to fulfill their role in society. What does this role look like for a family? Pruitt notes that young men are yearning for a role model, and young women are longing for their dads to be the standards for whom they should marry.<sup>45</sup> According to Pruitt, not only are dads influential, but they are meant to lead by being the roles model in families. Becoming a role model who leads is not done by accident.

One great example of a dad being a leader is the example of a shepherd. Isaiah, the prophet, portrays God as a "gentle and loving shepherd."<sup>46</sup> The Lord "shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are young."<sup>47</sup> In the gospel of Luke, Jesus refers to God as a shepherd that goes after the lost sheep.<sup>48</sup> Psalm 23, a well-known passage written by King David, acknowledges the Lord, "as my Shepherd."<sup>49</sup> King David testifies to the leadership of God as a shepherd. He confirms that the Lord "makes me lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside quiet waters, He refreshes my soul."<sup>50</sup> Harold Bryson, author of *Portraits of God*, validates God the shepherd as "one of the clearest and sharpest pictures of God."<sup>51</sup> It is clear that, like a shepherd, a father

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<sup>43</sup> Brian Pruitt, *The Power of a Dad*. (Salem, OR: Xulon, 2008. Kindle Edition), Location 111

<sup>44</sup> Pruitt, 246.

<sup>45</sup> Pruitt, 178.

<sup>46</sup> Allan Coppedge. *Portraits of God: A Biblical Theology of Holiness*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 11.

<sup>47</sup> Isaiah 40:11, KJV (King James Version).

<sup>48</sup> Luke 15:1-7, NIV.

<sup>49</sup> Psalm 23:1 NIV.

<sup>50</sup> Psalm 23:2-3 NIV.

<sup>51</sup> Coppedge, 12.



leads himself and his family. Also, in Psalm 23, King David describes a shepherd as one who leads and then as one who protects.

*A Father Who Protects*

W. Phillip Keller wrote a book titled *A Shepherd's Looks at Psalm 23* that describes the role and relationship of a shepherd with his sheep. Keller was a shepherd for many years and compared the shepherding relationship between the relationships that God has with his people. He assimilates the relationship dynamics to those that a father has.<sup>52</sup> King David, in the continuation of Psalm 23, conveys the Lord as one who protects. David claims to not be afraid when God is by His side and that the shepherd's crook makes him feel secure.<sup>53</sup> Keller understands this profound relationship because of the practicalities that play out between humanity and the Maker.<sup>54</sup> Like a father, the protective and carrying heart of God is revealed in the imagery of a shepherd. King David declares the strength of God as a place of refuge while he carries "them like a good shepherd."<sup>55</sup> A shepherd carries and protects his sheep, like a father should take care of his own children.

Deuteronomy 1:31 portrays a God who carries his children through the wilderness.<sup>56</sup> In this passage, according to Canfield, this carrying through the wilderness is the same description used when God carried Israel through the desert.<sup>57</sup> Carrying uncovers the imagery of a God who uses His arms to cover and protect. This is also revealed in Exodus 19:4, where God reminds Israel how he carries them on wings of eagles and holds them close.<sup>58</sup> The imagery of being

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<sup>52</sup> W. Phillip Keller. *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1970), 16.

<sup>53</sup> Psalm 23:4, NIV.

<sup>54</sup> Keller, 16.

<sup>55</sup> Psalm 28:8-9, MSG (The Message).

<sup>56</sup> Deuteronomy 1:31, NKJV (New King James Version).

<sup>57</sup> Canfield.

<sup>58</sup> Exodus 19:4, NIV.

carried and protected in the arms of God illustrates a place of safety where this is no fear of being harmed.

Harold Bryson refers to this place of safety as a universe full of goodness, order, and harmonious and happy relationships.<sup>59</sup> Our country may not exhibit that kind of world now, but a father that protects is able to obtain a home full of goodness, order, and happy and harmonious relationships. Bryson believes that Jesus illustrated this type of life in the parable of a farmer getting rid of the weeds.<sup>60</sup> In this parable, God is pictured as a farmer who exterminates the weeds from the harvest. Bryson sees the role of God, and the role of fathers, as one who protects the harvest by getting rid of anything that is trying to pervert the good wheat.<sup>61</sup> The farmer had the responsibility of growing the wheat and the weeds together, and then separating the tares from the wheat at the proper time, and then destroying the weeds.<sup>62</sup> In order for a father to establish a safe home for his family to grow, he must be active to destroy the weeds and redeem the good harvest.

The protective Father is also revealed in Isaiah 63:9, which describes God as one who personally carries, rescues, and redeems.<sup>63</sup> Isaiah communicates God as being his ultimate protector. Canfield also discovers a protective God through the scriptural images of an eagle, shepherd, farmer, and arms large enough to hold and carry His children. He writes, “These vivid images offer a clear picture of what God as a father does, and what fathers who follow him will do.”<sup>64</sup> When the head of the house makes it their primary responsibility to follow God, the result of his obedience, will be revealed in the way they reflect the very nature of God as the primary

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<sup>59</sup> Coppedge, 92

<sup>60</sup> Matthew 13:24-30, NIV.

<sup>61</sup> Coppedge, 90

<sup>62</sup> Coppedge, 90.

<sup>63</sup> Isaiah 63:9, NLT.

<sup>64</sup> Canfield.

example of a Father. Dads will be able to protect their home out of the fear and reverence he has for the Lord.

Pastor Mark Driscoll, the founding pastor of Mars Hill Church in Seattle, Washington, clarifies the importance of a father who protects starts with an initial fear of the Lord. In his small book titled *Pastor Dad: Scriptural Insights on Fatherhood*, Driscoll consistently reiterates that the safest place for children is in a home where the dad fears the Lord.<sup>65</sup> This statement is taken from his observations and from what scripture says in the book of Proverbs. Proverbs 14:26 says, “In the fear of the Lord one has strong confidence, and his children will have a refuge.”<sup>66</sup> When a father fears the Lord, he will be able to protect his family, and his children will have a safe refuge. The role of a father is not only to lead and protect, but also to provide.

#### *A Father Who Provides*

The prophet, Jeremiah, and King David both understood God as a shepherd who led them, protected them, and provided for them. Jeremiah refers to God as one who makes sure they lack nothing and live in their own land.<sup>67</sup> Not only is Jeremiah referring to God as the primary shepherd, but he also refers to other shepherds who will provide for their sheep. King David claims that since the Lord is his shepherd, he “shall not be in want.”<sup>68</sup> For David, provision not only included never being in want, but also being led to still waters,<sup>69</sup> the preparation of a table,<sup>70</sup> being anointed,<sup>71</sup> having goodness and love follow him,<sup>72</sup> and being able

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<sup>65</sup> Mark Driscoll, *Pastor Dad: Scriptural Insights to Fatherhood*, [http://theresurgence.com/files/2011/03/02/relit\\_ebook\\_pastordad.pdf](http://theresurgence.com/files/2011/03/02/relit_ebook_pastordad.pdf) (Accessed November 3, 2011), 8.

<sup>66</sup> Proverbs 14:26, NLT.

<sup>67</sup> Jeremiah 23:8, NIV.

<sup>68</sup> Psalm 23:1, NLT.

<sup>69</sup> Psalm 23:2, NLT.

<sup>70</sup> Psalm 23:5, NLT.

<sup>71</sup> Psalm 23:5, NLT.

<sup>72</sup> Psalm 23:6, NLT.

to dwell in the house of the Lord.<sup>73</sup> A father who provides is able to establish a home where the family gets their needs met and grow into the fullness of who they were designed to be.

In the gospel of Luke, there is an account of Jesus spending time in the temple with other teachers of the Law.<sup>74</sup> His parents came back to pick him up, and they headed back to Nazareth.<sup>75</sup> Luke observed this as the time where Jesus began to "grow in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and men."<sup>76</sup> This observation is one of the focal points in the book, *On Being a Family*. Authors Anderson and Guernsey strongly believe this is the goal for a healthy family.<sup>77</sup> They characterize the roles of the parents as those who provide every opportunity they can for children to grow like Jesus did.<sup>78</sup> In this scenario, the structure of the home provides to make sure children are able to grow. How do parents develop this in the lives of their children?

Anderson and Guernsey conclude that there are many tasks involved in establishing a strong family home. These tasks will sometimes vary on age and needs, but they all are founded on four specific tasks. The first task of a parent is to develop the attachment bond in a child.<sup>79</sup> This primarily takes place in the early years of development. In order for attachment to take place, trust and love must be provided by the primary care givers.<sup>80</sup> The second task is the task of differentiation.<sup>81</sup> This is the process of helping children understand who they are, separate from their parents. Differentiation begins around the age of one, as the parents begin to encourage their kids to expand their world and boundaries.<sup>82</sup> The third task is cultivating separation and

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<sup>73</sup> Psalm 23:6, NLT.

<sup>74</sup> Luke 2:46, NLT.

<sup>75</sup> Luke 2:51, NLT.

<sup>76</sup> Luke 2:52, NLT.

<sup>77</sup> Ray Sherman Anderson and Dennis B. Guernsey, *On Being a Family: A Social Theology of the Family*. (Pasadena, CA: Fuller Seminary, 2009), 77.

<sup>78</sup> Anderson and Guernsey, 77.

<sup>79</sup> Anderson and Guernsey, 79.

<sup>80</sup> Anderson and Guernsey, 77.

<sup>81</sup> Anderson and Guernsey, 80.

<sup>82</sup> Anderson and Guernsey, 77.

individualism in a child.<sup>83</sup> A child reaches this stage when they are able to accomplish goals without their parents. Anderson and Guernsey claim, “Healthy parents raise their kids to not need them.”<sup>84</sup> The final task of a parent is to help their children establish consistency.<sup>85</sup> This is where the child can understand his or her parent's strengths and weaknesses from his or her own. At the same time of understanding their own individuality, children have the solid foundation from their parents of knowing things will be okay no matter what difficult thing may happen.<sup>86</sup> A successful father is adamant about establishing a healthy family, and is intentional about providing this kind of environment.

Robert Lewis and Rich Campbell break down the process of establishing a healthy environment to a set of family values. In their book *Real Family Values*, they unfold the core values that every father needs to establish in his family. Lewis and Campbell point out the necessary values for parents are to love their children, listen to each other, lift up one another, establish limits, lead their children, and laugh with their children.<sup>87</sup> In the book *Family Building*, author George Rekers interprets family values as what he refers to as common characteristics. Rekers discovered that strong families value and spend time together, are committed to the family unit, have good communication, express appreciation to each other, have a spiritual commitment and are able to solve problems while in crisis.<sup>88</sup> A father who can provide a home with these strong values and common characteristics will be advantageous in producing a healthy and strong family.

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<sup>83</sup> Anderson and Guernsey, 77.

<sup>84</sup> Anderson and Guernsey, 80

<sup>85</sup> Anderson and Guernsey, 81.

<sup>86</sup> Anderson and Guernsey, 81.

<sup>87</sup> Robert Lewis and Rich Campbell, *Real Family Values: Keeping the Faith in an Age of Cultural Chaos* (Gresham, OR: Vision House Pub., 1995), 89-97.

<sup>88</sup> George Rekers, *Family Building: Six Qualities of a Strong Family* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1985), 38

In the book *Ten Secrets for a Successful Family*, Adrian Rogers writes about the importance of a strong family and how valuable the role of the father plays in creating one. Rogers writes that fathers can provide homes that "don't merely survive, but thrive."<sup>89</sup> A thriving home is essential for individuals to obtain their full potential. American professor and psychologist Abraham Maslow believed that individuals also had particular needs that needed to be met in order to reach their full potential. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is physiological, safety, belongingness and love, and esteem.<sup>90</sup> These basic needs are fundamental and essential in a strong family. Once these needs are met, Maslow believes one can begin to move towards aesthetic needs and reaching one's full potential.<sup>91</sup> God gave the responsibility to dads, the heads of the house, to provide for every aspect of their child's needs in order reach their full potential in Christ. A father needs to lead, protect, provide, and also correct.

#### *A Father Who Corrects*

King David acknowledged another important aspect in Psalm 23. He referred to the good shepherd as one who guides along the right path.<sup>92</sup> A good father is able to notice which path his child is on. More importantly, he is able to help them get back on the right path. David also recognized that shepherd carried a rod and a staff.<sup>93</sup> What did David say about the rod and the staff? He wrote that the rod and staff "comfort me."<sup>94</sup> In a culture where proper discipline and correction has become convoluted, King David affirmed their importance.

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<sup>89</sup> Adrian Rogers. *Ten Secrets for a Successful Family*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1996), 17.

<sup>90</sup> W. Huitt, "Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs", *Educational Psychology Interactive*, (Valdosta, GA: Valdosta State University, 2007), <http://www.edpsycinteractive.org/topics/regsys/maslow.html> (accessed March 2, 2012).

<sup>91</sup> Rogers.

<sup>92</sup> Psalm 23:3, NLT.

<sup>93</sup> Psalm 23:4, NLT.

<sup>94</sup> Psalm 23:4, NLT.

King Solomon wrote that a father disciplines the “son he delights in.”<sup>95</sup> In regards to God being a father that corrects, Canfield argues that discipline is simply a form of correction.<sup>96</sup> Not only does Canfield provide illustrations of God the father from the Old Testament, but he also provides the practicalities of a father that are revealed in the New Testament and points out that correction is an essential tool to fathering.<sup>97</sup> It is clear in scripture that God disciplines his children and it is clear that a biblical father corrects his children because he delights in them.

An important element to add to discipline is the loving side of correction. Canfield makes the point that scripture has “two facets in this simile: discipline and delight.”<sup>98</sup> His observations are rooted in similar language to how God delights in those that serve Him.<sup>99</sup> Driscoll also agrees and adds to the importance of a father delighting in his children as a foundation to correction. Driscoll stands firm that a correcting father is commanded to delight in his children first.<sup>100</sup> As a loving father, God demonstrates the ability to lead, protect, provide, correct and accept.

### *A Father Who Accepts*

The purest picture of God the Father as one who accepts unconditionally can be found in the story of the prodigal son, in Luke’s gospel.<sup>101</sup> The story begins with a younger son who asks for his inheritance early. The son wastes his money on wild living,<sup>102</sup> ends up with nothing, and finds himself alone. Henri Nouwen, author of *Return of The Prodigal Son*, observes that the

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<sup>95</sup> Proverbs 3:12, NIV.

<sup>96</sup> Canfield.

<sup>97</sup> Canfield.

<sup>98</sup> Canfield.

<sup>99</sup> Canfield.

<sup>100</sup> Mark Driscoll, *Pastor Dad: Scriptural Insights to Fatherhood*, [http://theresurgence.com/files/2011/03/02/relit\\_ebook\\_pastordad.pdf](http://theresurgence.com/files/2011/03/02/relit_ebook_pastordad.pdf) (Accessed November 3, 2011), 8.

<sup>101</sup> Luke 15:11-32, NLT.

<sup>102</sup> Luke 15:13, NLT.

prodigal son is alone and that his surroundings have lost interest for him.<sup>103</sup> This leaves the younger son with nothing, no one, and nowhere to go.

The prodigal son has a revelation as he is sitting and sharing a trough with pigs<sup>104</sup> for food. The story continues, and he decides to go home and apologize to his father and declare that he is “no longer worthy of being called your son.”<sup>105</sup> The younger son returns home to expect the worst, and instead, is greeted by a father who is “filled with love and compassion.”<sup>106</sup> This is demonstrated when the father runs to the son, embraces him, and kisses him.<sup>107</sup> The father models how God also receives and loves his children no matter what they have done. Nouwen confirms this when he notes that the return of the son follows the same theme of the “Son of God who has drawn all people into himself and brings them home to his heavenly Father.”<sup>108</sup> God is a father who keeps his arms open to anyone and will unconditionally draw them close. Nouwen makes this personal as he recognizes, by faith, that God also has pulled him in close and whispered his favor in his ear.<sup>109</sup> The Father loves accepts us right we are.

In Christianity, Jesus is the prime example of the unconditional love of God. Jesus was God’s gift to the world<sup>110</sup> so that he could reconcile everyone back to Him.<sup>111</sup> God is the ultimate example of a Father who accepts us as we are and demonstrates this by making the ultimate sacrifice: sending His son to die on the cross.<sup>112</sup> God exemplifies acceptance and love that is available for all of humanity.

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<sup>103</sup> Henri J.M. Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son: a Story of Homecoming* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 47.

<sup>104</sup> Luke 15:16, NLT.

<sup>105</sup> Luke 15:18, NLT.

<sup>106</sup> Luke 15:20, NLT.

<sup>107</sup> Luke 15:20, NLT.

<sup>108</sup> Nouwen, 56.

<sup>109</sup> Nouwen, 44.

<sup>110</sup> John 3:16, NLT.

<sup>111</sup> Colossians 1:20, NLT.

<sup>112</sup> 1 John 4:10, NLT.



The Bible provides clear examples and instruction for the structure of a biblical father. A father who leads, protects, provides, corrects, and accepts carries the essential components for a father who produces strong and healthy families. Dr. Rekers makes it clear that our society's major social issues will only continue to increase<sup>113</sup> with a poor quality of life in our families. The role of the father is essential to establishing excellent quality life in the home and in the development of this generation. It is time for fathers to stand up to their true calling and become the men that this generation is desperately yearning for.

*The Results of Lacking the Essentials of a Father*

David Blankenhorn, author and founder of the Institute for American Values, has been recognized as one of the pioneers in the fatherhood movement.<sup>114</sup> Blankenhorn has addressed the issue of fatherlessness and the effects it has on the family as well as our nation. In his book, *Fatherlessness in America*, he describes the lack of fatherhood as being the single most harmful demographic trend<sup>115</sup> in this nation. He describes fatherlessness as the “engine driving our most social problems, from crime to adolescent pregnancy, to child sexual abuse to domestic violence against women.”<sup>116</sup> Blankenhorn is not the only one who recognizes the cause of our major issues is due to the lack of fathers. Statistics are proving these statements to be true.

Among teenagers today, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, depression, sexual activity and psychological issues can often be traced to the lack of a father figure. Without a father, adolescents have been found to engage in sexual activity much earlier.<sup>117</sup> U.S. Department of

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<sup>113</sup> Rekers, 36.

<sup>114</sup> David Blankenhorn, “About David Blackenhorn”,

[http://www.americanvalues.org/html/about\\_david\\_blankenhorn.html](http://www.americanvalues.org/html/about_david_blankenhorn.html) (accessed March 3, 2012).

<sup>115</sup> David Blankenhorn, *Fatherlessness In America: Confronting Our Most Urgent Social Problem*, (New York: Harper Perennial, 1996), 1.

<sup>116</sup> Blankenhorn, 1.

<sup>117</sup> Carol W. Metzler, "The Social Context for Risky Sexual Behavior Among Adolescents," *Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, (1994), 17.

Health found that 71% of pregnant teenagers lack a father.<sup>118</sup> They also proved, from a survey taken in 1993, that fatherless children are dramatically at a greater risk for teen pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse, mental illness, suicide, poor educational performance, and criminality.<sup>119</sup> Research shows that teenagers without a father are more likely to drink earlier in childhood,<sup>120</sup> and Columbia University recognized that teenagers with little to no relationship with their dads were 68% more likely to abuse alcohol than those with a father figure.<sup>121</sup> Researcher Deane Scott Berman confirmed that adolescents without a father have a greater use of alcohol and marijuana.<sup>122</sup> Not only does the lack of a father result in higher drug, alcohol and sexual abuse, but also higher psychological disorders.

The Journal of American Academic Child Adolescent Psychiatry reported students living without their fathers “quadrupled the risk of having an affective disorder.”<sup>123</sup> Another article affirmed the discoveries and reported that children without both parents are more likely to be treated with depression and other emotional problems.<sup>124</sup> These psychological issues make up the majority of the teenage suicides that have been reported.<sup>125</sup> Students in single-parent families

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<sup>118</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Center for Health Statistics, *Survey on Child Health*, Washington, DC, 1993.

<sup>119</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

<sup>120</sup> Terry E. Duncan, Susan C. Duncan and Hyman Hops, "The Effects of Family Cohesiveness and Peer Encouragement on the Development of Adolescent Alcohol Use: A Cohort-Sequential Approach to the Analysis of Longitudinal Data," *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 55 (1994).

<sup>121</sup> "Survey Links Teen Drug Use, Relationship With Father." *Alcoholism & Drug Abuse Weekly* 6 September 1999: 5.

<sup>122</sup> Deane Scott Berman, "Risk Factors Leading to Adolescent Substance Abuse," *Adolescence*, (1995), 30

<sup>123</sup> Cuffe, Steven P., Robert E. McKeown, Cheryl L. Addy, and Carol Z. Garrison. "Family Psychosocial Risk Factors in a Longitudinal Epidemiological Study of Adolescents." *Journal of American Academic Child Adolescent Psychiatry* 44 (February 2005), 121-129.

<sup>124</sup> L. Remez, "Children Who Don't Live with Both Parents Face Behavioral Problems," *Family Planning Perspectives* (January/February 1992).

<sup>125</sup> John Sowers, "Fatherless Generation Statistics", <http://thefatherlessgeneration.wordpress.com/statistics/> (accessed November 12, 2012).

have more psychological issues and commit more suicides<sup>126</sup> than teens living in families with the five essentials of a father.

Canfield mentions that the absence of the father role leaves a child at high risk while an involved dad “can breathe hope and life into a child.”<sup>127</sup> He adds later that significant mental and emotional impacts get carried into adult years.<sup>128</sup> He later concludes that a home with a father will have fewer “psychological and social challenges” than those who do not.<sup>129</sup> Not only is the lack of a father detrimental to the health of a child, but the neglect is a form of abuse.

The author of *Abuse and Neglect*, Barbara Lowenthal, describes this kind of neglect as emotional abuse and as a form of maltreatment. Lowenthal defines maltreatment as abuse as well as neglect,<sup>130</sup> and states that neglect “refers to the absence of the essential needs, which are the: physical, emotional, social, psychological, developmental, and mental needs”<sup>131</sup> and that wounding will occur when there is a lack of caregiver to provide these essential needs.<sup>132</sup> The absence of a parent will not only affect a child in the present but will also impact the child’s future.

In *Wild at Heart*, Eldredge also discusses the impact of an absent father. He says that a father can be absent both physically and emotionally. He refers to the emotionally absent father as the “silent father.”<sup>133</sup> The wounding of a silent father is discussed in Claude Stein’s book, *Emotional Literacy: Intelligence with a Heart*. Stein writes that a physical and emotionally

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<sup>126</sup> David A. Brent, "Post-traumatic Stress Disorder in Peers of Adolescent Suicide Victims: Predisposing Factors and Phenomenology." *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, (1995), 34.

<sup>127</sup> Canfield.

<sup>128</sup> Canfield.

<sup>129</sup> Canfield.

<sup>130</sup> Barbara Lowenthal. *Abuse and Neglect: The Educator’s Guide to the Identification and Prevention of Child Maltreatment* (Baltimore, MD: P.H. Brookes Pub. Co., 2001), 1.

<sup>131</sup> Lowenthal, 13.

<sup>132</sup> Lowenthal, 13.

<sup>133</sup> John Eldredge, *Wild at Heart: Discovering the Passionate Soul of a Man* (Nashville, TN: T. Nelson, 2001), 71.

absent father creates an emotional wound that injures the health of one's emotions.<sup>134</sup> Stein's book provides examples of this wounding and writes that it causes numbness<sup>135</sup> and will make children unaware of their own emotions.<sup>136</sup> Being unaware and numb to our emotional needs can cause people to make more harmful decisions. *Emotional Literacy* recognizes the emotional role that a father has in his child's life and notes that, without it, "we are rendered emotionally illiterate"<sup>137</sup> and can have a tougher time dealing with life circumstances. Not only is it important for kids to have fathers in their lives, but fathers need to be actively engaged with their children.

The essential characteristics of a father are important because they produce memories for children that will help them in their adult years. In his book, *The Blessing*, Gary Smalley writes about the importance of meaningful touch and a spoken message of high value.<sup>138</sup> When these basic needs are neglected, the pain will continue to be carried into adulthood. Author Charles Swindoll writes about the effects that take place when kids are without a masculine role model or unaffectionate dads. He states, "A young woman who opts for immoral sexual relationships does so because she can scarcely remember a time when her father so much as touched her."<sup>139</sup> The pain runs so deep and the absence of a father can destroy a life. At the same time, when children have the essential characteristics in a father, they experience a dramatically different life.

#### *The Results of Possessing the Essentials of a Father*

The results of having a dad who possesses the essentials of a father are significantly more rewarding. Michael Lamb found these children have better relationships,<sup>140</sup> sex-role

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<sup>134</sup> Claude Steiner, *Emotional Literacy: Intelligence with a Heart*, (Fawnskin, CA: Personhood, 2003), 11.

<sup>135</sup> Steiner, 10.

<sup>136</sup> Steiner, 23.

<sup>137</sup> Steiner, 24.

<sup>138</sup> Gary Smalley and John Trent, *The Blessing*, (Nashville: T. Nelson, 1986), 24.

<sup>139</sup> Charles Swindoll, *Father: Masculine Model of Leadership*. (Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1990), 11.

<sup>140</sup> Michael E. Lamb, *The Father's Role: Applied Perspectives*, (New York: J. Wiley, 1986), 41.

development,<sup>141</sup> cognitive development,<sup>142</sup> and social competence.<sup>143</sup> Author and pastor Stephen Kendrick states, “When dads are present, then it will increase their [children's] safety, access to resources, and the psycho-emotional development.”<sup>144</sup> Children that have the essentials of a father in their home are not guaranteed to have no psychological issues, but research reveals their issues are significantly lower than those without a father.

Our society is now beginning to recognize and reveal the important component to having the essentials of a father, as well as the significance of a father’s connectedness with their kids. Father connectedness is a vital component to this. A study done in 2006 displayed how differently children will develop dependent not based solely on the quantity of parent interactions, but the quality of those interactions.<sup>145</sup> The healthy development of children does not just happen with a dad physically present, but is dependent on the level of connectedness a dad has with his kids. The study in 2006 was conducted by JK Shears that assessed four different “classes” of children. Class 1 were kids with “Stable Resident Biological Father,” Class 2 were kids with “Nonresident Involved Biological Fathers,” Class 3 were kids termed “Stable Father Figure,” and Class 4 were kids were the ones with “No Father Presence.” Shears reported that the findings suggested “a complex relation between classes of father presence and child developmental outcomes. To some degree, children living with their biological fathers seem developmentally better off, primarily in the self-regulatory and behavioral domains.”<sup>146</sup> But, in his concluding statements he writes that the researchers connected cognitive development

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<sup>141</sup> Lamb, 41.

<sup>142</sup> Lamb, 42.

<sup>143</sup> Lamb, 42.

<sup>144</sup> Wade C. Mackey, "Father Presence: An Enhancement of a Child's Well-Being." *Journal of Men's Studies* 6.2 (1998), 227.

<sup>145</sup> JK Shears, "Relation Between Father Connectedness and Child Outcomes." *Parenting: Science & Practice* 6, no. 2-3 (April 2006), 189-209.

<sup>146</sup> Shears, 204.

with the quality of the interactions a child had with their fathers during play.<sup>147</sup> He adds that communication and engaging activities with their children are consistent with other research.<sup>148</sup>

Children without a father lack the quality play that is essential for cognitive development.

Researchers within the Oregon State System of Higher Education also looked at a sample group of elementary students for one year to discover the results of a male teacher on fatherless boys. The research included twenty-two fourth grade fatherless boys who were going to be studied for various social and emotional developments.<sup>149</sup> Half of the students had a female teacher for the year, while the other half had a male teacher. Data was obtained through classroom observations, child interviews, parent ratings, and teacher ratings.<sup>150</sup> The results “consistently favored the male teacher influence, with significantly higher ratings on overall social and emotional development for boys in male teacher classrooms.”<sup>151</sup> These scores resulted in higher self-confidence, feelings of self-worth, ability to accept responsibility, emotional stability, and level of interest in school.<sup>152</sup> Not only do these results reveal the benefit of a male in the role of a child’s life, but they also they reveal the needs and behaviors that remain in a child’s life when they are absent of that male role.

The need for a father has never been as great as it is today. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, one out of three people live in biological father-absent homes.<sup>153</sup> This means there are over 24 million children in America yearning to be lead, provided for, protected, accepted, and

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<sup>147</sup> Shears.

<sup>148</sup> Shears.

<sup>149</sup> Paul Dawson, “Oregon State System of Higher Education”, *Fatherless Boys, Teacher Perceptions, and Male Teacher Influence: A Pilot Study. Final Report*, (1971), 3.

<sup>150</sup> Dawson, 3.

<sup>151</sup> Dawson, 3.

<sup>152</sup> Dawson, 3.

<sup>153</sup> Roland Warren, “The Father Factor”, *National Fatherhood Initiative*, <http://www.fatherhood.org/media/consequences-of-father-absence-statistics>, (accessed March 13, 2012).

corrected. King David declares that God is a “father to the fatherless, a defender of widows.”<sup>154</sup>  
 If that is the case for God, what is the role of the father?

### *The Role of the Father*

It is important to narrow down exactly what the role of a father is when studying the fatherless. Scripture reveals that the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church.<sup>155</sup> This biblical principle has been interpreted differently throughout history and culture. Michael Lamb wrote a book in 2010 titled *The Role of the Father in Child Development* that shares basic principles for how a father passes down traditions and beliefs. Lamb mentions the roles of early fathers being “powerful patriarchs who wielded enormous power over their families.”<sup>156</sup> In those earlier days, the father was expected to pass on the role of being a father to his son. Is this sacred biblical position upheld the same today as in the past? Driscoll provides part of the answers in *Pastor Dad*. He points out that the earlier homes that had fathers were also the safe homes, where we currently have homes that are filled with neglect, abuse, molestation, fornication, and rape.<sup>157</sup> Driscoll makes the point that the role of a father is one who does not allow his children to be unsupervised, oversees his children’s relationships, goes to great lengths to ensure the safety of his home, has close friends, and fears God.<sup>158</sup> For Driscoll, the primary role of a father is to fear God and to pass on that role to his children.

The role of a father is passed down to their sons for when they become men. Henry Abramovitch, author of *The First Father: Abraham: the Psychology and Culture of a Spiritual Revolutionary*, understood rituals and initiations as a way of passing down traditions from one

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<sup>154</sup> Psalm 68:5, NIV.

<sup>155</sup> Ephesians 5:23, NIV.

<sup>156</sup> Michael E. Lamb, *The Role of the Father in Child Development*, (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2010).

<sup>157</sup> Mark Driscoll, *Pastor Dad: Scriptural Insights to Fatherhood*, [http://theresurgence.com/files/2011/03/02/reliit\\_ebook\\_pastordad.pdf](http://theresurgence.com/files/2011/03/02/reliit_ebook_pastordad.pdf) (Accessed November 3, 2011), 8.

<sup>158</sup> Driscoll, 8.

generation to the next.<sup>159</sup> Abramovitch believes that the passing of traditions began with Abraham.<sup>160</sup> John Eldredge determines that men realizing their role as men happens in the company of other men.<sup>161</sup> Frank Pittman alludes to the importance of men passing on traditions of masculinity in his book, *Man Enough: Fathers, Sons and the Search for Masculinity*. He establishes that “men without models don't know what is behind their shame, loneliness, and despair, their desperate search for love, for affirmation and for structure, their frantic tendency to compete over just about anything with just about anybody.”<sup>162</sup> The role of father is to model a Godly life to his family and ensure the passing of Godly traditions and living to his children.

In 2011, the movie *Courageous* came to theaters. *Courageous* was written and directed by Alex Kendrick, and based off of a book, *The Resolution for Men*, written by his brother, Stephen Kendrick. Both book and movie encapsulate the call of Christian men in their role as husbands and fathers. In his book, *The Resolution for Men*, he is adamant about incredible men leaving legacies intentionally.<sup>163</sup> Kendrick believes that men should not be passive in their faith or in his role to his family, and he does this by making daily decisions knowing that he is impacting future generations.<sup>164</sup> Out of these findings, Kendrick develops what he refers to as the Resolution (See Appendix F), which is a “bold declaration stating that from this point on, you are choosing to live for what matters most”<sup>165</sup> and is “based upon the highest priorities for Men in God’s Word.”<sup>166</sup> The Resolution helps clarify what the role is for men. Not only are roles,

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<sup>159</sup> Henry Hanoch Abramovitch, *The First Father: Abraham : the Psychology and Culture of a Spiritual Revolutionary*, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994), 37.

<sup>160</sup> Abramovitch, 37.

<sup>161</sup> Eldredge, 62.

<sup>162</sup> Frank Pittman, *Man Enough: Fathers Sons and the Search for Masculinity* (New York: Berkely, 1993). 1.

<sup>163</sup> Stephen Kendrick, Alex Kendrick, and Randy C. Alcorn. *The Resolution for Men*, (Waterville, ME: Christian Large Print, 2011), 3.

<sup>164</sup> Kendrick, 3.

<sup>165</sup> Kendrick, 4.

<sup>166</sup> Kendrick, 4.



similar to those in the Resolution, meant to be upheld, but they are specifically meant to be passed on as well.

The church was intended to pass down the traditions of fatherhood to the next generation. Without the passing of the Christian beliefs and traditions, children will continue to be raised in homes without the knowledge or structure of a strong family home. Raymond Lindquist wrote, "Nearly all that I know about God I learned from my father."<sup>167</sup> Fathers and men who make up the church pass on the essential characteristics to the next generation. The following section seeks to discover if BCA has been successful in meeting the essential needs of their fatherless youth.

## **Methodology**

### *Method and Rationale*

This project employed interviews in order to obtain the data needed. Qualitative methodology is interpretive and allows for information to be obtained by what the researcher sees, hears, and understands.<sup>168</sup> The interviews provided data and information<sup>169</sup> that was needed to support this project. The information collected in this project does not specifically deal with numbers, but focused on interview data gathered through individuals. Qualitative research deals specifically with ideas and people.<sup>170</sup> The data was collected via four interviews with individual students, three interviews with parents of a high school student, three interviews with the youth leaders, and three interviews with BCA fathers.

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<sup>167</sup> Raymond Lindquist. *Notes for Living* (New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1968), p. 35

<sup>168</sup> John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approach*. 3rd Edition. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2009), 176.

<sup>169</sup> Nancy J. Vyhmeister, *Quality Research Papers: for Students of Religion and Theology*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 4.

<sup>170</sup> Vyhmeister, 162.

The interviews allowed for deeper and more specific understanding of the thoughts from the interviewees.<sup>171</sup> For the best results, the interview had a clear purpose and an outline.<sup>172</sup> A clear purpose and outline provided the structure needed to gather data and allowed for the flexibility that cannot happen using other methods, such as a survey or questionnaire. This project used ten interviews with individuals to uncover the effects of “being fatherless” from the homes of BCA families. The other three interviews helped the researcher understand positive characteristics from a strong family home. The qualitative method, with the interview approach, helped identify the needs of the effects of fatherlessness at BCA.

### *Sample*

In order to receive concise information, various sample groups from BCA were interviewed for this project. Only pseudonyms will be used, and there will be no personally identifiable information. The sample groups were divided into four different cluster groups. The first cluster group included four high school students: three boys and one girl. The second cluster group included a mother with a high school student. The third cluster group contained the youth pastor and two adult leaders in the youth ministry: one male leader, and one female leader. The final group contained three fathers from BCA who are currently involved in the lives of their own family and the church. Information obtained in the cluster groups were analyzed within their particular cluster in order to accurately evaluate and assess the individualized needs.<sup>173</sup> Each cluster included their own set of questions, with the hopes of discovering similar patterns and themes.

The first cluster group, the high school students, was individually interviewed only with their and their guardian’s consent to be interviewed for the project (see Appendix A for consent

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<sup>171</sup> Vyhmeister, 161

<sup>172</sup> Vyhmeister, 162

<sup>173</sup> Vyhmeister, 157.

form). There was an outline of questions that focused on their effects of being fatherless (see Appendix B for interview questions). The questions were designed to reveal the effects of fatherlessness on the individual, in relation to their family dynamics and in contrast to the essentials of a father discussed in this research project. The data I obtained in the interviews revealed a myriad of needs from the lives of the students who were interviewed.

The second cluster group, the mothers of the high school students, were individually interviewed with their consent with the purpose of gaining a wider understanding of the effects of fatherlessness in the home. Their questions focused on family dynamics, identifying behaviors, and discovering the effects the church has on their family (see Appendix C). The interview followed the outline of the questions, but also allowed flexibility for the researcher to discover new insights. The ideas and information collected were then sorted through to see if any common patterns or themes arose.

The third cluster group, the youth pastor and leaders, were interviewed to gain another perspective on the effects that fatherlessness has had on these students and families. The interview questions circulated around the observations of self-esteem, social skills, relationships, and spiritual vitality (see Appendix D). The data collected in this cluster group also helped reveal what BCA is currently doing to address this need, and allowed space to brainstorm what else could be done to minister to these families. The answers from these interviews provided insight and possible solutions for how BCA can more effectively reach out to the fatherless at BCA.

The fourth and final cluster group, the fathers at BCA, was interviewed to understand their role in their family. The interview provided a deeper understanding of the role and healthy expectations of a father in the home. The questions asked focused on understanding, from their

perspective, what they bring to the family, how they are able to meet these needs, and how the essentials of a father have impacted their parenting (see Appendix E). This information helped the researcher to understand the effects of fatherlessness from a different perspective, as well as understand key elements to possible solutions for other families. The insights of these fathers were important.

### *Researcher*

I had my first visit at Bethany Christian Assembly in late 2010. I was in the middle of a staff transition from a different church when I discovered BCA. Within a few months after the first visit, I was informed of the Creative Arts and Media position that became available in early January 2011. The associate pastor of BCA, who is also a fellow colleague in the MAML program, approached me, and I was asked to come be a part of the staff. It was my passion for media and seven years of pastoral leadership in youth ministry that qualified me for the position.

I have a professional, as well as a personal, interest for those who are fatherless. As someone who lacked a father figure and is currently, a father, I unintentionally brought some bias to the research. I was not solely objective to the topics, but did have a detached role to the families being observed at BCA. The Visual Arts Director role did not place me in direct authority over those that are participating in these sample groups. After I had gathered the information, I had John Murphy read through the data. This ensured for accuracy within the deduction of the information. John Murphy was chosen because he is not a member of BCA, a Christian father, and will not have a distorted or personal relationship to the data. The research report should be logical and the researcher should identify similar results.<sup>174</sup> These third party's observations and findings needed to be compared and contrasted with those of the researcher's. This was done to ensure accuracy and authenticity.

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<sup>174</sup> Vyhmeister, 4.

As a former youth pastor and current dad, I still contain a passion to help students and families. My passion for the church and ministry continues to grow and expand to see others become closer to Christ. I was not in a position of leadership oversight with any of the participants and participants were able to withdraw from the study at any time.

*Instrumentation, Analysis, and Validity*

As highlighted in the method/rationale section, the information was collected using the interview approach. The data that was uncovered was categorized to understand the effects of fatherlessness at BCA. Understanding the effects helped gain insight to how BCA can more effectively fulfill meet these needs. In order to accrue concise information, data was recovered from all four cluster groups that were interviewed. The data collected from Group 1 (see Appendix G) helped us get first hand insight to the effects of fatherlessness. The data collected from Group 2 (see Appendix H) provided a broader understanding of these effects and the importance of a father's role. Group 3 (see Appendix I) revealed an outside perspective to understandings that may have not been otherwise noticed. Group 4 (see Appendix J) provided information and a deeper understanding that BCA may be able to use to know how they can minister more effectively to the fatherless that are attending BCA.

In the analysis portion of this project, the researcher “developed an analysis from the information supplied by the participants.”<sup>175</sup> Qualitative research builds from “particular to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data.”<sup>176</sup> I identified the common themes of the effects of fatherlessness and noted exactly where these themes emerged. The data revealed sensible and reliable information that pointed directly to the effects of not having a father in the home. The information gathered from the interviews was

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<sup>175</sup> Creswell, 184.

<sup>176</sup> Creswell, 4.

pivotal in evaluating the effectiveness BCA had on meeting the needs of the fatherless. The data also helped provide possible solutions for BCA to more effectively reach this fatherless generation.

### *Data*

The data that was collected for this research project was collected from four different cluster groups. There were 13 completed interviews total. Each group represented a particular role and answered a set of questions that was specific to their group. Group 1 had four participants, Group 2 had three participants, Group 3 had three participants, and Group 4 had three participants. Each participant in the interview considered BCA his or her home church. This helped the data to stay consistent and relevant to understand the effects of fatherlessness at BCA. Within each cluster group, the researcher collected the data using a combination of email, over the phone, and face-to-face interviews. In the circumstances where face-to-face interviews were not possible, the researcher conducted a phone interview while allowing the participants to email any responses they thought would be helpful to maintain accuracy. The face-to-face interviews were digitally recorded and later transcribed by the researcher. A summary of each interview is provided.

### *Process for the Interviews*

All thirteen interviews were conducted with BCA attendees. I interviewed two high school students over the phone and two high school students face to face who were deeply affected by the absence of a father. I conducted two phone interviews and one face-to-face interview with single mothers who are raising high school students on their own. I interviewed one BCA youth leader over the phone and two youth leaders face to face, who are highly active in the current youth ministry. Finally, I interviewed two BCA fathers over the phone and two

fathers face to face, who are all well known and recognized in their community. The purpose of these interviews was to obtain the most simple and raw form of data.

Many of the phone interviews were done in various places during my transition to my new home in Colorado. Many of the face-to-face interviews were done in my office at Bethany Christian Assembly as well as at a Starbucks coffee shop. In each of the face-to-face interviews, I took research notes and digitally recorded the conversations to ensure accuracy. During each of the phone and email interviews, I jotted down memos and observations to ensure authentic information. As noted above, the transcripts and data of each interview are provided in the Appendix (see Appendices G - J) should the reader desire to learn more about any individual interview in greater detail.

## **Data Analysis**

### *Interviews*

This section reveals the information collected from the interviews. Each of the four different cluster groups shared their current perspective to fatherlessness. A summary of the interviews is provided below in order for the reader to gain an overview of the conversations that took place. Out of those conversations, the data was analyzed and narrowed into the pertinent information needed. They revealed the effects fatherlessness had on them, what BCA was currently doing to meet those needs, and the BCA essential themes.

### *The Effects of Fatherlessness at BCA*

#### **Ray**

Ray spent most of his life in Lake Stevens, Washington, but lived in Las Vegas, Nevada, from infancy. One of the few memories he has of Las Vegas was also his last and most haunting memory of his father. According to Ray, his dad came home one night and parked his truck

outside when Ray was young. As Ray and his mother went to greet his dad in his truck, they were surprised to see his father having sex with another woman. This memory is an image that Ray cannot get out of his head, and he said the layers of pain grow deeper each year that he tries to forget it.

After that incident, he, his mom, and brother moved to Lake Stevens. Ray recently turned 18 at the time of the interview and still had not graduated high school. He has been attending BCA for the past few years and has tried to attend every church service that he could. He has found it difficult to make it to church, but always loved it when he did attend. Ray said during the interview that Jesus saved his life, and he is glad he isn't following the Mormon religion like he was raised to believe. When asked about how life would have been growing up with a dad, he said,

*I think if I had a dad while growing up, I think I would have focused more on my school instead of fighting with my family. I would not have been so stressed out about things, knowing that my parents were taking care of all of it and that my mom was not alone. Finances would have been easier, we would not have been poor, not having been able to afford things, and just barely getting through the month... I wouldn't have felt the pressure to get out there everyday and get a job. It's difficult as it is already.*

Not only was there pressure financially, but Ray shared the difficulties of not having a dad.

*I would have to say it's a lot more stressful because there is not a father figure around. I don't have, like, that support of someone who can understand what I am going through and not overreact to it. My mother does not know how to handle that kind of a situation. Things get out of hand, and we all kind of yell at each other, and my mom and I are both stubborn heads, and we fight so much. It causes a lot of stress in both of us and depression.*

As I talked about life in the home to Ray, he shared how a lot of this has been discovered over the last few years since he had been going to church. He saw himself more as an adult, but



still felt unsure of how to get where he needed to go. In regards to his identity and purpose, he stated,

*I feel like I have a pretty good grip on who I am as a person. I feel like there are still parts of me I am trying to figure out and are lost, but I am still at a young age and figuring all that out. I know I have now... I love on people, I am nice, I am sweet, I take care of my family, I am a hard worker, and I am funny. Those are the things I know for sure, but there are still a lot of things out there. Sometimes I feel like I don't know who I am, you know?*

The more I let him talk, the more he wavered back in forth about knowing who he was. He started out by saying he was sure of himself but would always end up talking himself out of that security. There are not many eighteen year olds who have spent their high school years trying to provide for the family. His mom was still on disability at the time of the interview, and his brother was very distant. Ray said that he has felt like an outcast most of his life and that everyone around him had a better life.

*I always felt like my friends and other people at school had a lot more security because their dads were there and they were the ones providing the most for them. You know what I mean? They loved their sons and they spoiled them. My dad didn't. He doesn't even send child support. He owes so much child support it's ridiculous. The fact that he won't pay hurts even more. I always felt like my friends had it way better off than I did and that always caused major guilt and depression.*

When asked about how he spent his high school years, he said his focus was different than others. He said, "Not having my dad around caused me to mature and grow up a lot faster than other people." He believes that not having a dad made him into the stubborn person that he is today and blames a lot of his anger on his father.

In regards to his newfound Christian faith, Ray has a lot of hope. He claims that he has God in his life and, "I am not alone and He is my Father." There was a smile on his face when he said this. Shortly after he shared his faith, the smile dissipated and his attitude changed. He took a deep breath and shared, "At the same time, it can be really, really hard at times. It's not

an easy life.” Ray was confronted with the hope of his new faith and the reality of his circumstances. What excited him the most is when he shared about the friends he had met at church. It truly was the people he had gotten to know whom have helped him through his darkest moments. He briefly shared about church friends whom have been there to pick him up when his mom was unable, or the time they drove him to the hospital, and the multitude of meals that have been shared.

Near the end of our conversation, Ray was still mulling over the time he saw his dad in the truck with another woman. When asked if there were any other memories of his dad, he stated,

*I can still remember the time when I was four and he punched through glass and went to the hospital. Sometimes, I still see myself in him, that resemblance. I don't want to be that person, and this could really help people have that self-discovery. If only people were there to hear what is going on and to give wisdom.*

Ray knows that he still deals with anger, just like his dad did. He knows that not having a dad in his life has affected who he has become today. There are still hopes and dreams in his head, but he said he was trying to figure, “all of that stuff out” and just doesn’t quite know how to get there yet.

## **Bill**

Bill joined the youth program a couple of years ago. He had tremendous growth in the Lord and gives that credit to the mentorship of the youth program. His high school years had been difficult for personal reasons, and he mentioned that he had not put a lot of thought into the effects of not having a dad. When asked about not having a dad growing up, he stated,

*It was really hard growing up. I don't really remember a whole lot from when my dad was around either. I'm not sure really how it would all be different if I did have a dad around, because mostly what I remember from him as a little boy was that he was always hitting me.*

Bill had never thought of life as with or without a dad. Being without a dad for twenty years was normal for him. He did not know any other way; so thinking about life with one was a foreign concept to him. He agreed that most of his life he felt “scared, lonely, and sad.” Again, that was normal for Bill and how he perceived most of the homes around him. On the day of the interview, he discussed his fear of being a dad. He stated,

*Now it's more like thoughts and fears of being left or me even leaving my future child or stuff like that. But I know if I can count on my Heavenly Father, then I know everything will be all right.*

He talked about how he does not want his future home to be similar to the one he grew up in and believes that God will help him down that path. When asked about his sister, he mentioned that she had already begun to “follow in his biological dad’s foot steps. She has gotten into drugs and beer.” He still gets worried about her but tries to help her however he can.

At this point in the conversation, Bill was excited to talk about his possible future. He noted that he never really knew what he wanted to do when he got older until he came to church. Life growing up was more about surviving each day, and there was not much attention to his future. He said church and youth group showed him that he could “go to foster care homes and preach the good name of God” or possibly “be at a church and be a youth pastor.” When talking about this, there was excitement, but there was also an evident sense of insecurity or uncertainty if this is what he felt he should do. He has a desire now to do the right thing and do what he is called to do.

When asked if life would have been different if he had a dad growing up, he said:

*It would probably be good. If it was a different dad than my real dad, then it would be pretty good. Like, if I had a normal, loving, caring dad then things would be a lot happier today. I also would have someone talking about basketball with me all the time.*

He does believe life would have been better with a dad, but not necessarily his biological dad. He does not think this is the same for everyone, though, because he observed that kids with dads “are much happier, they have someone to talk too, and they seem secure.” He agreed that life could have been that way for him if he would have had a nice dad growing up.

Overall, Bill knows that not having a dad growing up has affected him, but he does not know all of the specific ways yet. He recently has been in contact with his dad, as his dad has been in and out of jail. He has kept his distance because he does not think his dad is a good influence on him.

### **Jill**

I met Jill’s mom, Jenny, while she was serving in the BCA Connection Center one Sunday morning. Jenny briefly described to me the heartache her family has gone through over the last five years from not having her husband in the home. When I asked her if she thought Jill would help me with this project by answering a few questions, Jenny was very doubtful, but suggested I try contacting her anyway. Jill was willing to answer some questions, but preferred to answer them over email so she could take the time to think about them. This was what she wrote in regards to not having a dad growing up:

*I have been without a father in home for the last 5 years. Life has been different for sure. I have missed out on having my dad at a lot of events, and getting to see him on holidays. Also, I have missed out on just having a father in the house to check my grades and ask me about school, to hang out with when I am sad and to comfort me and give me reassurance when I need it. Me and my sister would definitely be a lot more confident in ourselves and how we look because a girl's dad is her center.*

Jill mentioned many similar ideas her mom had discussed with me at the connection center. Jill went on to mention:

*I have a younger sister and she has been really depressed by not having a father. My sister and I have been depressed and really insecure about ourselves. Other kids who*

*have a dad in the house are different because they have 2 parents to support them and make them feel loved.*

There is a lot of pain in Jill. Whereas Bill is in the numb stage, Jill sounds very hurt and angry still. It surprised me at how she answered the question in regards to knowing her purpose in life. She wrote, "I don't think I have a strong sense of who I am, but I plan to find it through men I look up to." Jill did not find purpose from her mom. She was planning on finding her direction from other men she admired. That could be a healthy response, but it could end up leading to more pain to look to men to find direction and purpose. The absence of a father has deeply affected Jill and her possible future.

High school students are a great source of information to understand the effects of fatherlessness. With them, there is a raw understanding of the pain that comes along with not having a dad. There is an understanding that comes from listening to them, and there is also a greater sense of wisdom that comes from listening to the perspective of the single mom that has to raise these students without a dad in the home. Below are perspectives from two single moms on the effects that have taken place in their home without a dad.

### **Jenny**

Jenny is a working mother with two kids in the home. Her husband left the family over five years ago. She shared the impact that has had on her family. Her oldest was in middle school when the father left, and her youngest was still in grade school. Her youngest daughter has had very little exposure to a father figure. In regards to home life without a dad for her family, she stated,

*It has been very difficult raising two girls without a father in the house for the last five years. It has been stressful at times, sad at times, frustrating at times, tiring at times, happy at times, silly at times, rewarding at times. Sometimes, the whole range of emotions happens in the span of 24 hours. It is a strain financially as well and I am not*

*the least bit of a fix-it person. I feel guilty sometimes because I can't afford to take them on vacation. I can't be both mom and dad.*

There is an obvious love that Jenny has for her kids. She feels guilty for not being able to provide everything for her daughters. She shared some significant changes she has seen:

*My oldest daughter, who is a freshman in high school this year, has suffered greatly without her father in the house. She used to be daddy's little girl and cuddle with him on the couch. She has struggled a lot with fear and anxiety, anger, feelings of betrayal, and feeling like she is no longer a priority. My oldest has mentioned many times that she would feel safer with a man in the house. She is more fearful than many girls her age who come from 2 parent households. She is often more insecure in things and needs more words of affirmation to account for the lack of the father in the house. My younger daughter lately has distanced herself from her father as well.*

Overall, there had been more outward signs of anger and depression from her oldest daughter. The youngest daughter had been pretty withdrawn and quiet since her dad left the home. Jenny gave her space, but was still a little concerned on how things for her will unfold. Jenny knows that the last five years would have been dramatically different had her husband stayed around. She has recognized that her home has become more “emotionally driven” and believes it is because there is not a “male species to affirm them and tell them that they are beautiful.” In regards to discipline and how the girls treat each other, she stated:

*My oldest is very sensitive. She takes everything to heart, even discipline. She crumbles when I try to correct a behavior sometimes because she is so sensitive and I am just trying to explain the behavior or why I was correcting her. They sometimes get away with things because I am distracted or too tired.*

*My girls definitely know how to push each other's buttons and annoy each other and sometimes, don't know when to stop. They end up hurting each other sometimes. They typically treat others well: but my younger daughter sometimes has issues with self control and doesn't know when to stop.*

Jenny has noticed a drastic difference in the way everyone has treated each other without their dad in the home. Part of it has to do with the lack of consistent discipline, and the other part has been due to her feeling too exhausted most of the time to reinforce consequences. Near

the end of the interview, Jenny shared a few other things that stuck out in her home due to the absence of a dad:

*Emotionally, they are a little more fragile. They cry because they don't feel affirmed by their father or feel de-prioritized by their father. Relationally they search for approval from boys or guys in general, especially my seventh grader, but also my ninth grader. My ninth grader has flat out told me that she looks for approval from guys because her dad doesn't tell her she is pretty and affirm her.*

*Socially they sometimes struggle with interpersonal relationships and have difficulty knowing that other girls their age at church mostly have their dad around and hear about them spending good times with their dad, and that is very hard for them.*

Jenny has been very thankful for the relationships she has built at BCA and gives them big credit for their continual support. She also knows that her husband leaving has had a traumatic effect on her kids, and is still trying her best to help them through the pain.

### **Melissa**

Melissa is a close friend to Jenny. They share the unique bond of being friends, going to the same church, and raising kids without a dad in the home. She has a heart for families that also do not have a dad in the home. She shared about her struggles of not having her husband in the home.

*Our economy is a two person economy, and when the primary bread winner leaves, everything changes. We had to downsize our home, sell our horses and quads. We quit shopping at Macy's and Nordstrom's and became very frugal about what clothes we bought and when and where to buy groceries. For me, I became both a mother and father. It all fell on me. All the cooking, cleaning, bill paying, landscaping, homework helping, chauffeuring, and discipline became my sole responsibility. It's exhausting, although you can't be exhausted because you have to be there for your children.*

Melissa knows that having her husband leave the home was the hardest thing her family has been through. The first major change she saw in her kids is that they became “extremely mature.” Melissa recognized that her kids all lost their innocence as children, and they “lost out

on the ability to be kids because they had to grow up and help me with the house and taking care of each other.” After that, the family dynamics in her home began to change:

*My oldest daughter has taken on a much more parental role with her younger brother than is probably healthy, but the three of us are extremely close. The lines are really blurry as to who is the parent and who is the child. We act as a unit. We all watch out for each other, keep each other on task, and keep each other accountable.*

On one hand, Melissa is proud of her kids for stepping up the painful situation but also is sad at what was lost for her kids. Even with the quick maturity growth, Melissa has noticed some big effects on them:

*Emotionally, they have gone through feeling abandoned and have anger towards him. Relationally, unfortunately, it has scarred them and neither one wants to be married or have children. They both want careers and to live with mom forever. Spiritually, that has been a struggle because their father insists on them attending his very orthodox church instead of BCA. They do have religious convictions, but you can see where they aren't as grounded as I would like them to be.*

Melissa was quick to respond to the needs of her children when her husband left. A positive side effect for her has been seeing how close she and her two kids have become. She mentioned, “I think if there was a man in the house, I'd be split more between being a wife and being a mom.” Now, she spends all of her time and energy on her kids. For her, the closeness of her family was a result of the dad leaving the home. Out of survival, her family has learned how to lean on each other for support and become closer to each other through the separation.

The mothers in the home are able to offer valuable insight to the devastation that takes place on a kid when there is no dad in the home. They provided data that was more behind the scenes instead of what the kids show to the world. Appearances can often be deceiving. In order to gain a broader perspective, I was able to interview three youth leaders from BCA.



## Samuel

Samuel is the youth pastor and oversees the middle school and high school students at BCA. His primary role has been working with the high school students over the last two years, and he talks about seeing incredible change over those two years. He has the benefit of seeing a fast growing ministry but was unclear as to some of the individual stories of the students and the home life they came from. His perspective on the students that do not have a dad in the home included the following thoughts:

*Some of them I know and others I have not even gotten to know yet. I would say the biggest difference is direction. I can think of two guys, who have recently accepted Christ within this past year who don't have a relationship with their dads, and this is the biggest obstacle for them. They need constant attention, affirmation, with a mix of strong conversations. With lack of direction comes a lack of drive to achieve or accomplish something. They are looking for that male figure to help lead them and show them what to do.*

When asked about the fatherless issues, Samuel believed that the bigger issue has to do with the dads that are in the home and not doing anything:

*I think another issue we have seen is not only the absence of the father physically in the life of our students but fathers who just don't take much interest in students but still live in the home. We have several fathers that don't take an active role in the lives of their kids, and they seem to express similar characteristics as those who grew up without a father.*

In both situations, Samuel has become aware of the troubles of pastoring students who do not have a dad in the home. He says that those students “require a little more attention and care.” Part of that gets mixed in with the difficulty of being a teenager. He agreed. “Every student is different, and I don't know if the process is always much different than a kid who has 2 parents in the home.” As the youth pastor he believes that every student has difficulty with spiritual matters.

Samuel believes there are around 65% of the students who do have a father in the home. He claims that even with that number, the dynamics in youth group are affected. He has found that on one hand, they need more attention and care from others. On the other hand, “they can also bring deep passion and desperation for the Lord as they discover this new relationship that begins to fill them in ways they haven't experienced.” Samuel sees the pros and the cons of having 35% of his students missing dads in the home. The biggest challenges he noticed were the following:

*I think it can be easy for those who come from a single parent home to resent or be jealous of those who have both. The obvious struggle is typically finances, but then you see and hear about the different things others get to do with their dads, and it can present the "Why" question: Why did God allow this to happen to our family? Some of our students go through stages of grief, pain, and struggle and then continue to grow in the Lord even as they continue to experience different life things without a father in the mix, which provides its own challenges.*

A big surprise for him was seeing how not just the students are affected, but also how his leaders have been affected:

*We had a leader in the past who struggled with same sex attractions, and he would say that a big part of this was because he lacked a strong father figure. We also see many of them really longing for attention and will do anything to get it. It happens with the students and leaders.*

Samuel still recognizes that due to growth and his experience, he still has a lot more stories to learn about. As the youth pastor, he has a heart for these families:

*My heart really goes out to single parents, and I think the church could do a better job in supporting them. It is a unique struggle for a parent to try and raise a child by themselves, and I feel like the church could get creative in helping support them during these crucial years.*

Understanding the dynamics of the family is important. Samuel is still learning about the effects of fatherlessness and hopes to continue to share Jesus with those students.

## Tim

Tim is the True56 youth pastor. His role oversees the fifth and sixth graders at BCA. He also helps out with the youth group on Wednesday nights. When asked about his role and the students without a dad in the home, he stated:

*I try to be a mentor to every student that I come into contact with. Sometimes I don't find out until later that they don't have a father figure at home. I try to build relationships with everyone. On the surface, it is actually difficult for me to tell who has a father and who doesn't. There is nothing that I notice at first, but find out more about them later.*

When asked what he notices about the ones who do not have a dad, he stated:

*They tend to be a little insecure or unsure on how to relate to me as an adult male who is a potential mentor. It varies from case to case, though. There is one student that has a huge issue with authority. Another one puffs himself up in an overcompensation of something missing. They don't have a strong male role model at home to show what it is like to commit to something long term and lead.*

On a Sunday morning, during the True56 service, Tim has noticed the wide variety of responses he gets from students when talking about Jesus. He has noticed a difference in the fatherless students in their faith. He has observed, “One of them will get hyper spiritual, another will be extremely skeptical and independent, another will proceed with caution.” Tim has seen an eclectic mixture of responses. Tim has only been at BCA for less than a year. He also believes he is getting to know the kids and their stories more. He hopes that he can continue to build relationships and that BCA can help him learn how to reach out to these students more effectively.

## Erika

Erika has been attending the youth ministry on Wednesday nights over the last year. She is a wife, mother, youth leader, and active member at BCA. With almost 200 students at youth group, she feels like she has only just begun to get to know the kids and their stories:

*I have not been involved long enough to pinpoint which kids have fathers and which don't. I am aware of a few that do, and they are friends of my daughter, so I offer a home for them to come hangout in, pray for them, give advice sometimes and act as a stand in parent. I try my best to help out anywhere that I can.*

Erika says she only knows a few that do not have dads at home. The biggest concern she sees is the “lack of supervision in the home.” She knows some of the moms, and they are “usually working long hours” and are unable to watch their kids. Erika mentions that some of the ones she knows about “have been involved in drugs, alcohol, fighting at school, other problems at school with teachers and peers.” She feels lucky, though, because she knows some of them have gotten connected to the youth group, and she has seen some change in them. Other observations she has made about challenges and spirituality for the fatherless included the following:

*I have only spoken with a few kids that do not have a father in their home. One of them seems to be doing ok and has totally trusted Christ with every aspect of her life. The two others seem to be insecure and unsure of their security in Christ. I believe that they are at greater risk to experience feelings of insecurity and worthlessness. They seem to have a more difficult time being able to accept that Christ loves them, no matter what they do.*

Erika has recognized some of the obstacles for the students that come from a fatherless home. She believes her job is mainly to pray for them and help every teenager out that she can. She is aware that some students will slip through the cracks but wants to do her part in helping them out.

Overall, it is clear that there are students currently attending BCA who are being affected, or have been affected, by not having a dad in the home. The students themselves are aware of the pain, the mothers recognized the significant difference in the home, and youth leaders know it has an impact on the way ministry is being done. The pain, devastation, and tragedy is clearly effecting the students and families that attend BCA. Specifically, here is a list of the effects that were voiced from these interviews:

- Fighting in the family
- Emotional stress
- Financial stress
- Poverty
- Loneliness
- Anger
- School and grade issues
- Drugs
- Alcohol
- Abuse
- Fear
- Social struggles
- Identity issues
- Lack of direction
- Deep insecurities
- Lack of affirmation

The effects of fathers abandoning their role are clearly impacting the families that attend BCA. The next section takes a look at what BCA is currently doing to meet these needs.

### *Current Solutions*

Groups 1, 2, and 3 were all asked what BCA was currently doing to reach out to the fatherless. Each participant agreed that there was not a specific program BCA had to meet the needs of the fatherless and the families. According to Jill:

*BCA does not have anything to help the fatherless. I think they should have a husband and wife sign-up to support a kid without a father and have events like every other month where it's just the 3 of them (the husband and wife to make sure girls feel comfortable) also they should have a class on discovering how God is your heavenly father.*

Jill recognized that there is nothing currently taking place, but suggested the idea of a program that would include meetings where kids could spend time with another father. She believes BCA should provide something, while making sure it is safe for the young woman.

Ray also agreed that there is a need for a fatherless program at BCA. He said BCA is not “purposefully doing it. I don’t feel like they know what some of the kids are going through. They don’t have a special program for that.” When asked about the possibility of a program, he said:

*If we had a ministry for the fatherless, I think there would be a lot of attraction for it, and people would learn how to handle themselves properly. They would learn how to handle their feelings, or their anger, or drug addictions, or attitudes or issues. They wouldn't feel so depressed, and they would think they could become a better person. Even if it was not a father, it could be a mother who could be there to help release that stress so they can help others move on with their lives.*

He believes it could have been something that could have helped him:

*Actually, I really, really think you guys need a program like that. I could have needed it back in high school. I got expelled twice in high school, and I blame it all on my dad. Whenever I got angry, I just wanted to beat someone up.*

BCA may not have a current program that addresses these family needs, but Jenny and Melissa have felt the support from others that attend BCA. Jenny was quick to talk about the appreciation she had for her church family:

*The church has tried to be very helpful. They have supported me and offered counseling for a while. They made it clear that they supported me. Some people in the church have continued to pray for the girls and me throughout this whole time which is a gift from God because I covet prayers. One or two men in our small group have been a Godsend and stepped in somewhat and have let my high schooler know that they care who she dates.*

Melissa also voiced her appreciation for the guidance and friendship from the people at BCA:

*"BCA literally was my lifesaver. I was so lost, I actually came one day because I had so many questions as to why God did this to me, I had to find answers. What I found instead was a new set of friends, people who I can count on and care about me, and a father/husband I never knew I had. BCA is fantastic. It offers so many small groups to help in so many different areas. We have classes and sermons that relate back to single parenting. BCA really bends over backwards to try and help all types of families. It's unbelievable."*

Melissa was the most positive voice of the participants. She has felt the love and concern from the people in her small group and in the relationships she has made. Jenny, on the other hand, felt like BCA was not quite getting it:

*It is hard though as there aren't many resources available. It is also hard for them to understand fully as most of them came from two parent families and are married with children.*

When asked how BCA could have been more helpful, she replied:

*I don't know. Maybe have some guys, dads, or grandpas to mentor some of the kiddos from single parent homes, to spend time with them and affirm them, to let them know they are valuable! Also, sometimes it would be nice to have a mechanic ministry or something where there are men to help with car issues or little fix-it jobs around the house once a month as the kids can tell that we are stressed out when we are stressed out because we don't have the extra money to do some repairs on the car or know how to do simple repairs around the house.*

Jenny mentioned she knows other single moms that would benefit from a mechanic ministry. She expressed the need to have support in areas that are completely foreign to her. She did not feel that BCA was meeting the specific needs of the homes without a dad.

The youth leaders echoed the lack of there being a specific program at BCA that targets the needs of the fatherless. Samuel did not know of any time period that BCA had done something to meet these needs:

*I don't know if we have done anything specifically to target these demographic of students, but we do make an intentional effort to love on all our students and to learn their story.*

When asked if there was anything the church as a whole was doing to meet these needs, he said:

*Similar to what we are doing in the youth ministry, Pastor Rob will preach on the role of a father and also on forgiveness through the year, which can be a helpful healing point for some.*

Samuel knows that there is not a targeted program as well but believes youth ministry is a part of that solution for many:

*At a minimum, our youth ministry offers these kids a safe, welcome, encouraging environment to be at every Wednesday and Sunday. It also offers them the opportunity to hear the gospel and provides opportunities for them to make changes in their lives and build healthy relationships with other youth and/or leaders.*

According to Bill, BCA has been a part of the solution. He believes that the staff has been prime examples for him to look up to and relate to:

*They have a bunch of youth pastors like Ryan Gilbreath who have been in my place. They know what I am going through, and they have a load of wisdom too offer me. Ryan Gilbreath or Rob Carlson. They both have passions for the Lord and both can reach out to lost souls and pour their life into them.*

Bill has been one of the few that have been mentored closely by Samuel. Samuel agrees that mentorship is the only way they have been able to address this issue. He stated, "There is no



official program that is set in place, but we try to mentor one on one.” He was also aware of the limited capacity that mentorship has to offer. For him, the issues are larger than the lack of mentoring.

In each interview, the students were always eager to share their ideas on how to meet these needs. It almost appeared as if they had been thinking about this for a while and were just waiting for someone to ask them their thoughts. Jill believed strongly that the church should do something. She stated:

*I think the church should find ways to fit everyone's need and having a father is a need so trying to do something would be where the church should start.*

Samuel voiced his frustrations in wanting to do more:

*My heart really goes out to single parents, and I think the church could do a better job in supporting them. It is a unique struggle for a parent to try and raise a child by themselves, and I feel like the church could get creative in helping support them during these crucial years.*

Tim had a thought about how to reach the needs, but wasn't sure on how it would pan out:

*It would be great if BCA had an adopt a family program or had a special group that met with all of 'fatherless'. I am not really sure what else we can do at the moment. We just keep on doing the things we are doing great at now.*

Overall, it was unanimous that there was nothing designated to helping the homes of the fatherless. In all scenarios, the only support that was found was in a small group or in the natural relationships that were built. Without a specific ministry, the needs will continue to be unmet, and BCA will be void in fulfilling the essential call of God, which is to be a father to the fatherless.<sup>177</sup> As discussed earlier, the church was intended to pass down the traditions of fatherhood to the next generation. BCA has the advantage of having capable men in the church that could potentially create momentum to fulfill this duty.

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<sup>177</sup> Psalm 68:5, NLT

*The BCA Essentials*

The final cluster group that was interviewed was the BCA fathers. The data collected from them was intended to find out if there were men in the church who currently fulfilled the essentials characteristics of the biblical father. This section is designed to discover how they are fulfilling those essentials, as well as initiate ideas on how BCA could capitalize on ideas what is being done as a solution to meet the needs of the fatherless.

**Steve**

Steve has been married for 10 years. Together, they have two biological children and have adopted two children. He and his wife both serve at BCA and help in any area that they can. He is well known and is an example to many. He speaks about some of the things he does in his role as a father:

*I watch movies with them, take them on little shopping or eating dates, play games with them, and try to sit down and eat with them at least once a day. I find that if I take a little time to listen to them, not multi-tasking at the same time, that they feel like I have paid attention to them. With home schooling our kids, we get a daily availability to their lives. We try to live good examples so that there is no contradiction in what we tell them. I love team sports and like to continually tell them that we are part of the Kilroy Team! No one person is more important than another.*

In regards to how his faith plays out in his parenting, he stated:

*I believe the role of a father is both as a shepherd and role model. We have to nurture our children so they know they are loved no matter what is going on. I also believe we are supposed to “train up a child” so that they will know who Jesus is. I can’t save them, but I can be a great example of what a Christian is so they will want to be one. I try to do these on a daily basis with my wife. With reading God’s word and skimming through parenting material, I have tried to approach my kid’s with love and forgiveness.*

Steve has a clear understanding of the role of a biblical father. He shares ideas on how he is the shepherd in the lives of his family. Faith is important to him. Steve is open about his struggles and how he handles difficult situations. He makes it a point to be honest with his

family about his shortcomings and does his best to teach them to rely on Jesus. When asked about why other parents fail at their role as parents, he replied:

*It is a reflection on the lack of teaching by fathers and grandfathers. I believe there has been a big disconnect between generations and many fathers have just written it off and gone on. We cannot shirk our responsibilities of teaching our children what is right for a man and a woman. If we don't pass down the knowledge then who will?*

He carries the essentials of a father. He is active in the life of his family as well as other families in the church. Steve knows that bad parenting has been passed down and will only continue to be passed down, unless something is done about it.

### **Bob**

Bob and his wife, Carol, have an amazing story to share with others. Their youngest daughter was a special needs child who passed away at an early age. The heartache they encountered of losing a child motivated them to help other families who also have special needs children. They started a foundation to raise money for other struggling families. They also have become foster parents to many and have adopted a son. They have been a part of the life at BCA for many years and are still active in helping when and where they can. Bob shared some of the things he does to stay involved in the life of his kids:

*Where I am mentally is as important as where I am physically in relation to my kids. I invest significant amounts of time with my children in all kinds of activities and one-on-one time. I get down on the floor with them and play with toys, we play games, cuddle up in the recliner and watch a movie, spend a few extra minutes at bed time, and just talk about anything. They go with me on simple errands or day long trips. Spending time together, whether planned activities, lounging around the house or just running an errand, is a way to show my kids that "I want to be with you, you are important to me."*

Bob understands that being there for his kids is a large part of the battle. He believes it is important to be there physically as well as engage on emotional, mental, and spiritual levels. He believes that the world has the potential to start being a better place if dads would a point to start showing up in their kids lives. He also attributes his attitude as a dad to his faith and the Bible:

*The Bible is all about being a father. We discipline, sacrifice, weep, walk through deserts, calm the storms, forgive the gravest sin, provide, judge, be wise, merciful, dance, celebrate, etc. Each principle has a time and purpose, and I demonstrate actions that are appropriate for each one. For example my kids will not respect discipline if I am not likewise disciplined. They won't be merciful or forgiving if I am not the same. They will learn to not trust if I break promises. Principles play out in my children's behavior.*

Bob not only believes in the essential characteristics of a biblical father, but he stressed the importance of living out the things that you believe:

*It calls me to a higher standard in all aspects of my family. Faith is not just believing in those things that you cannot see, it is also living for those things that you cannot see. I may be disappointed, bewildered, distraught, broken hearted, but faith tells me God has a plan even though I cannot see, in any way, what or why.*

When asked about why other dads are not living out their responsibility, he responded that it is a “learned behavior.” He attributes it to a generational hardship where parents have been consistently lazy and selfish.

Bob believes the role of a father is vital to our culture and also requires a lot of work. He believes that the best method to passing on biblical standards is to be an example to his kids that you want them to become. He is unsure of what the best solution would be for the church, but he knows it must require active men being involved in the lives of kids.

## **Jack**

Jack has been married for twelve years and has three children. He teaches Bible classes at a local Christian school. His wife stays at home with the kids, and they have both been involved at BCA for a long time. Jack shares some insights to what he does to maintain a relationship with his kids:

*My oldest daughter and I have a scheduled "daddy-daughter date" that we plan on going on every third Thursday evening of the month. I almost always take my son crabbing with me when I go during summers. We love to go on walks to the park. We're huge on "experience" gifts, like zoo memberships. Time is huge for us. We value our relationships with each other and our friends to take priority over making money.*

Jack provides the primary income for his family but values his three months off during the summer. Having the summers off was a huge perk for him to choosing to teach. He mentions his thoughts on what the Bible says about being a father and how that plays out in his life:

*It is his (the dad's) job to raise his family in the same way that Christ is the head of the church. That is found in first Corinthians. He is to be the spiritual leader of the home and should make it his concern for the education of his children. He must love his family in the same way that Christ loves his church. It is our goal to help our children fall in love with Jesus more than anything else. I want to love my family because I love Jesus.*

He also shared about some key qualities they hope to pass down to their kids:

*Loving Christ, people and hard work. The signs of righteousness more than anything else.*

Life for Jack and his wife is about valuing each other and being a family. They both believe in educating their kids and maintaining relationship with them however they can. Jack is a great example in his family, in the classroom, and in the church.

During the interviews with Steve, Bob, and Jack, they all reiterated in their own way the importance of loving Christ first and passing that tradition into their family. They believe strongly in the role of the father as being the primary leader in the home. They each mentioned concepts of how the essential characteristics of a biblical father is seen their role. Being a father that leads, protects, provides, corrects, and accepts is something they believe in and find ways to implement in their home. They each agreed those essential characteristics are foundational within the role of a biblical father.

### **Implications and Conclusion**

After reviewing the data, there are three clear conclusions. The first conclusion is that the effects of fatherlessness are taking place at BCA. Not only is there awareness that many students lack a dad in the home, but the damage of fatherlessness still causes real issues and

concerns in the lives of the families that attend BCA. The second conclusion revealed that there is not a designated group, or program, designed to meet the needs of fatherless students and their families. When discussing the possibility of BCA creating something to target this group, the fatherless families were unanimously excited about the hope of what that could look like. Finally, from the interviews with the BCA fathers, it was clear there are Christian men attending BCA that possess the five essential characteristics of a biblical father.

### *Solutions*

The following section is intended to answer the final question that was addressed; what is a possible solution for BCA to meet the needs of this fatherless generation? According to Sowers, the most significant impact of an absent father is the low-self esteem<sup>178</sup> that occurs. The cure can only be found in the context of relationship and by the church fulfilling their biblical mandate to pass on the tradition of the essentials for the biblical father to the next generation. Solutions for doing this can be found by looking at some internal and external solutions.

### *Internal*

During the interviews, there were a number of suggested solutions that were brought up. This information is worth adding to the mix as possibilities for what BCA could add and/or expand on what may already be taking place. The majority of the feedback agreed that there should be an additional program specifically for those without dads. Ray shared his perspective:

*They should have a special program. I think that they should make an invitation at the church to have people tell their story. Where they can share what they have been through and what life has been like without a dad. I feel like if they learned how to tell others that, then there would be a lot of stress relief for people. They would not have to hide it or feel degraded because of that. If we had a ministry for it, I think there would be a lot of attraction for it and people would learn how to handle themselves properly. They would learn how to handle their feelings, or their anger, or drug addictions, or attitudes or issues. Actually, I really, really think you guys need a program like that. I could have needed it back in high school.*

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<sup>178</sup> Sowers, 19.

Ray believes that a program could provide the safety and comfort that others would need to be open to their personal struggle of not having a dad. He not only believes it should be an open environment, but also that it could include training and teaching. For him, that would have helped him learn how to process his emotions and could have given him some direction.

Chris found a lot of healing and wisdom from the pastoral staff but believed that there could still be more. He also voiced a need for a special type of program:

*They have Ryan and some of the pastors to help people. But, they do not have something set in stone. I think they should have something, because I did not know who to talk to or who to turn to at first. I was stuck in the middle trying to figure out which way to go. If they had a group of people that were set in stone, it would be way better because then that person who lost their father can turn and get grouped up into a big hug. They can say, 'It's gonna be okay to you.*

Tim had an idea for a type of program but was not sure on the details of how it would practically work out. He suggested the idea of some type of an “adoption” program to those that are without dads:

*It would be great if BCA had an adopt a family program or had a special group that met with all of 'fatherless'. I am not really sure what else we can do at the moment. We just keep on doing the things we are doing great at now.*

An adoption would allow kids to experience the benefits of having a mother and father on a periodical basis. The “adoptive parents” would be committed to doing what they could to meet the needs as well as pass down the essentials of a biblical father to them. Jill agreed that BCA did not have something like this, but agreed to how beneficial it would be:

*BCA does not have anything to help the fatherless, I think they should have a husband and wife sign up to support a kid without a father and have events like every other month where it's just the 3 of them (the husband and wife to make sure girls feel comfortable) also they should have a class on discovering how God is your heavenly father.*

Jenny also provided some insight to what a possible adoption program could look like:

*Maybe have some guys, dads or grandpas, to mentor some of the kiddos from single parent homes to spend time with them and affirm them, to let them know they are valuable!*

Starting a special program that includes spiritual adoptive responsibilities and a teaching component could be a very viable option for BCA. Not only did Jenny speak to the mentorship idea, but she also spoke to the needs of supporting the moms without a husband:

*Also, sometimes it would be nice to have a mechanic ministry or something where there are men to help with car issues or little fix-it jobs around the house once a month as the kids can tell that we are stressed out when we are stressed out because we don't have the extra money to do some repairs on the car or know how to do simple repairs around the house.*

Jenny was the only one to mention the idea of a mechanic ministry. The solution for BCA may not be mechanic ministry, but it sparks the need to offer some type of ministry to meet those needs as well.

The steps of starting something like this could come internally because there is already proof that BCA currently has dads that meet the essentials of a biblical father. Not only could BCA start something new internally, but they could broaden some of the things they are currently doing.

The students and mothers all agreed that the mentorship and teaching found from the pastoral staff to be helpful. Not only was this helpful to them, but they desired more of it. A possibility of having leaders targeted towards the fatherless is something that could be addressed. Finding creative ways to weave in teaching topics to address the issues and awareness was an idea they felt comfortable with. The current teachings have been helpful, but the majority of the support was found in BCA's small groups. Melissa found the small groups to be very helpful for her situation:



*BCA is fantastic. It offers so many small groups to help in so many different areas. We have classes and sermons that relate back to single parenting. BCA really bends over backwards to try and help all types of families, it's unbelievable.*

Sylvia agreed that the small groups were helpful for her and her son. For her, the small groups and counseling was pivotal in providing the stability they needed when her husband left:

*For me, they do have a lot. They were able to give me counseling and were able to help me out with other things financially. And there are other groups. I never would have asked for help had someone not been there to help me tell someone that I needed help. I know they have compassion ministries, but if there was a group for abused or divorced mothers, it would help.*

A current internal solution for BCA could be to add a special program using the men and women who are currently at the church. They could also expand their counseling ministry, compassion ministry, and small groups to specifically meet the needs of the fatherless. Additional classes and resources would be helpful in providing training and support to the mothers that do not have a man around the house. Not only could BCA start internally, but they could also look at external solutions.

#### *External*

The data received made it clear that the best solution to solve the epidemic of fatherlessness at BCA would be to provide a type of mentorship program that includes teaching and support for the families. The research done by Michael Lamb confirmed that students are able to have their fatherless needs fulfilled by someone other than their own dad.<sup>179</sup> Lamb discovered that a key component was having quality interactions from the right person as opposed to numerous interactions from the wrong ones. The Mentoring Project (TMP) is a program that would effectively meet these specific needs at BCA as well as be a benefit to the greater community.

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<sup>179</sup> Michael E. Lamb, *The Role of the Father in Child Development*, (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2010), 41

TMP is an organization that is committed to being the liaison for faith communities to “end the waiting list”<sup>180</sup> of the fatherless boys. Their mission occurs “through dynamic church trainings, national mentor recruitment, and the creation of sustainable mentoring communities.”<sup>181</sup> Their vision is to equip churches with the necessary tools to end the list of fatherlessness in their own community.

They are able to provide tool kits, workbooks, and training materials<sup>182</sup> that provide everything a community would need to create a sustainable mentoring community. TMP believes, “The American church could effectively shut down prisons, end school dropouts, curb youth suicide, and reduce homelessness for a large number of boys affected by the fatherless epidemic.” These resources would help BCA begin to establish a healthy community that could become a safe haven and place of mentorship for the greater Snohomish County.

Not only is TMP designed to equip communities, but they also hope to establish a partnership with them. A partnership would help establish the support for becoming a sustainable community and to help care for the fatherless on a local and national level. By participating with TMP, the ability to make a difference becomes deeper and wider.

The central purpose of TMP is to raise mentors. If establishing a mentoring community is too big of a first step, TMP will also help begin to raise mentors. They will work with individuals to help them become mentors,<sup>183</sup> and will even connect them with other churches if they do not have a home church. Learning how to mentor the fatherless might be a possible first step for BCA. This can be made possible by using the tools provided by The Mentoring Project.

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<sup>180</sup> John Sowers, “What We Do”, <http://thementoringproject.org/about> (accessed April 10, 2012).

<sup>181</sup> John Sowers, “What We Do”, <http://thementoringproject.org/about> (accessed April 10, 2012).

<sup>182</sup> John Sowers, “The Mentoring Project Toolkit”, <http://tmproject.storenvy.com> (accessed April 10, 2012).

<sup>183</sup> John Sowers, “Become a Mentor”, <http://thementoringproject.org/join-us> (accessed April 10, 2012).

### *Conclusion*

My goal for this project was to accumulate the appropriate amount and type of data needed in order to develop a program that would meet the needs of the fatherless at BCA. The stories of these hurting families make it loud and clear that they are asking, if not begging, for something and someone to hear their pain. These current needs could be met by being more strategic and intentional with what is currently taking place, but also by partnering with the tools and resources from The Mentorship Project. Providing a mentorship style program for the fatherless at BCA is the solution to meet those needs and to pass on the tradition of Christianity into the next generation. It will give our grandchildren the blessing of one day being able to say, “Nearly all that I know about God I learned from my father.”<sup>184</sup> May this become true at BCA and other churches in America.

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<sup>184</sup> Raymond Lindquist. *Notes for Living* (New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1968), p. 35.

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### **Appendix A: Interview Informed Consent Form**

I am conducting research on the effects of fatherlessness at Bethany Christian Assembly for my Master's Thesis. If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked your age range, gender (for data purposes), and a series of research questions in a face-to-face interview with the researcher, Adam Bradley. You will be asked to provide verbal responses to each of these questions. The interview will last approximately 15-20 minutes.

This study involves personal disclosure through honest oral responses. All of the information you provide will be kept confidential. The interview will be recorded; however, the recording will not be shared with anyone besides the researcher. Your responses will be transcribed and your name changed for the purpose of confidentiality within this thesis. This study is expected to produce a greater understanding of the effects of fatherlessness on the families at BCA. If you choose to partake in this study you will contribute greatly to this increased level of understanding. If you decide to participate in this in this study, you have the option of withdrawing at any time for any reason without any penalty. This project has been approved by the Human Subjects Review Board at Northwest University.

If you have any questions or comments about this study please contact me at 425.280.7493 or [adamb@bca-online.com](mailto:adamb@bca-online.com). You can also contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Board, Dr. Kevin Leach, at Northwest University at 425.889.5248 or [kevin.leach@northwestu.edu](mailto:kevin.leach@northwestu.edu).

You will receive a copy of this form.

Sincerely,

Adam Bradley  
Master of Arts and Missional Leadership Grad Student at Northwest University

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I have been made aware of my responsibilities as a participant. Furthermore, I have been made aware that I may withdraw from participation at any time and for any reason without penalty whatsoever.

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Print Name

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Date

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Signature

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(If under 18, Signature of Guardian)



### Appendix B: Interview Questions for Group 1 - High School Students

Participants Gender (Please Circle):        Male    or    Female  
 Participants Age Range (For research purposes):    14-15            16-17            18+

#### Interview Questions:

1. How long have you been without a father?
2. What is life like without having a dad around?
3. How would your family be different if you had a dad while you were growing up?
4. What have been the effects in your family as a result of not having a dad in the home?
5. How are other students different that have dads in their family?
6. Do you feel like you have a strong sense of who you are and your purpose in life?
  - a. If so, what is it?
  - b. If not, how do you think you will discover that?
7. If you have siblings, how are they affected by being fatherless?
8. Does BCA have anything in place to help those that are fatherless?
  - a. If so, what are they?
  - b. If not, do you think they should?
9. What do you think is the role of the church to reach out to those without a dad?
10. Are there any role models in the church for you that are an example of what a Biblical father should look like? If so, what is your relationship to them?

**Appendix C: Interview Questions for Group 2 - Mothers of the high school students**

1. What was it like raising children without a father in the home?
2. What effects have you see on your kids without the presence of a father?
3. What type of role has the church had on your family in this area?
4. How are family dynamics different without a father in the home?
5. How would family life be different with a father figure for your kids?
6. What could the church possibly do to help meet those needs?
7. Are there any specific behaviors at home that stick out as abnormal?
8. How does your child (or children) handle discipline?
9. How does your child (or children) treat family members and others?
10. What areas does the absence of a father effect your kids?
  - a. Emotionally?
  - b. Relationally?
  - c. Socially?
  - d. Spiritually?

**Appendix D: Interview Questions for Group 3 - Youth Pastor and Adult Leaders**

Participants Gender (Please Circle):        Male    or    Female

1. What is your role and involvement with the youth at BCA?
2. What kind of a relationship do you have with the fatherless youth in the youth ministry?
3. What are the differences between the fatherless and those who have a dad in their lives?
4. Do you notice any abnormal behavior from students that do not have a healthy relationship with a father figure?
5. What is the percentage of students in the youth ministry that have a dad in the home?
6. How do the fatherless students affect the dynamics of the overall youth ministry?
7. How do the fatherless respond to spirituality and the message of Christ?
8. What kind of challenges, if any, do the fatherless have in living out their faith?
9. What is the youth ministry currently doing to reach out to these students?
10. What is the church as a whole doing to reach out to these families?
11. Is there anything else you think BCA could be doing differently to have a more effective impact on these students and families?

**Appendix E: Interview Questions for Group 4 - BCA Fathers**

1. Please describe your family dynamics and the roles you play within them.
2. What things do you do to stay in relationship with your kids?
3. What was your home like growing up?
4. What does the Bible say in regards to the role of a father?
5. How do these principles play out in your parenting?
6. How does your faith effect your role as a husband, dad, and family man?
7. Why do you think we have a large number of fathers abandoning their roles in the home?
8. How do you handle life when you feel like things are too difficult to handle?
9. What types of values do you hope to pass down to your kids?
10. How do you educate your kids about the importance of family and their roles in the home?

### Appendix F: The Resolution<sup>185</sup>

(Taken from *The Resolution for Men* by Stephen Kendrick, Alex Kendrick, Randy Alcorn)

I do solemnly resolve before God to take full responsibility for myself, my wife, and my children.

I WILL love them, protect them, serve them, and teach them the Word of God as the spiritual leader of my home.

I WILL be faithful to my wife, to love and honor her, and be willing to lay down my life for her as Jesus Christ did for me.

I WILL bless my children and teach them to love God with all of their hearts, all of their minds, and all of their strength.

I WILL train them to honor authority and live responsibly.

I WILL confront evil, pursue justice, and love mercy.

I WILL pray for others and treat them with kindness, respect, and compassion.

I WILL work diligently to provide for the needs of my family.

I WILL forgive those who have wronged me and reconcile with those I have wronged.

I WILL learn from my mistakes, repent of my sins, and walk with integrity as a man answerable to God.

I WILL seek to honor God, be faithful to His church, obey His Word, and do His will.

I WILL courageously work with the strength God provides to fulfill this resolution for the rest of my life and for His glory.

*“As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”* – Joshua 24:15

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<sup>185</sup> Stephen Kendrick, Alex Kendrick, and Randy C. Alcorn. *The Resolution for Men*, (Waterville, Me.: Christian Large Print, 2011), 5.

**Appendix G: Interviews of High School Students**  
Interview Questions for Group 1 - High School Students

**Bill Stewart: Phone Interview**

**1.) How long have you been without a father?**

I have been without my father for twenty years.

**2.) What is life like without having a dad around?**

It was really hard growing up. I don't really remember a whole lot from when he was around either. I'm not sure really how it would all be different if I did have a dad around, because mostly what I remember from him as a little boy was that he was always hitting me.

**3.) How would your family be different if you had a dad while you were growing up?**

It would probably be good. If it were a different dad than my real dad, then it would be pretty good. Like, if I had a normal, loving, caring dad, then things would be a lot happier today. I also would have someone talking about basketball with me all the time.

**4.) What have been the effects in your family as a result of not having a dad in the home?**

As a kid, I would say that we were all scared, lonely, and sad. Now it's more like thoughts and fears of being left, or me even leaving my future child. But, I know if I can count on my Heavenly Father, then I know everything will be all right.

**5.) How are other students different who have dads in their family?**

They are much happier. They have someone to talk too. They seem secure.

**6.) Do you feel like you have a strong sense of who you are and your purpose in life? If so, what is it?**

Kind of. I feel like I could go to foster care homes and preach the good name of God. Or, I could be at a church and be a youth pastor.

**7.) If you have siblings, how are they affected by being fatherless?**

My sister has followed my biological dad's footsteps and has gotten into drugs and beer.

**8.) Does BCA have anything in place to help those that are fatherless? If so, what are they?**

Yes they do. They have a bunch of youth pastors like Ryan Gilbreath who have been in my place. They know what I am going through and they have a load of wisdom to offer me.

**9.) What do you think is the role of the church to reach out to those without a dad?**

I haven't thought of that yet, but I remember them having a Men's Conference and a BBQ Conference. I think that was to help fatherless kids.

**10.) Are there any role models in the church for you that are an example of what a Biblical father should look like? If so, what is your relationship to them?**

Mr. Ryan Gilbreath or Rob Carlson. They both have passions for the Lord, and both can reach out to lost souls and pour their life into them.

## Interview Questions for Group 1 - High School Students

**Jill Smith: Phone Interview****1.) How long have you been without a father?**

I have been without a father in home for five years.

**2.) What is life like without having a dad around?**

Life has been different for sure. I have missed out on having my dad at a lot of events, and getting to see him on holidays. Also, I have missed out on just having a father in the house to check my grades and ask me about school, to hang out with when I am sad, and to comfort me and give me reassurance when I need it.

**3.) How would your family be different if you had a dad while you were growing up?**

My sister and I would definitely be a lot more confident in ourselves and how we look, because a girl's dad is her center.

**4.) What have been the effects in your family as a result of not having a dad in the home?**

My sister and I have been depressed and really insecure about our selves.

**5.) How are other students different who have dads in their family?**

Other kids who have a dad in the house are different because they have two parents to support them and make them feel loved.

**6.) Do you feel like you have a strong sense of who you are and your purpose in life? If so, what is it?**

I don't think I have a strong sense of who I am, but I plan to find it through men I look up to.

**7.) If you have siblings, how are they affected by being fatherless?**

I have a younger sister and she has been really depressed by not having a father.

**8.) Does BCA have anything in place to help those who are fatherless? If so, what are they?**

BCA does not have anything to help the fatherless. I think they should have a husband and wife sign up to support a kid without a father and have events like every other month where it's just the 3 of them (the husband and wife to make sure girls feel comfortable) also they should have a class on discovering how God is your heavenly father.



**9.) What do you think is the role of the church to reach out to those without a dad?**

I think the church should find ways to fit everyone's need, and having a father is a need. So, trying to do something would be where the church should start.

**10.) Are there any role models in the church for you who are an example of what a Biblical father should look like? If so, what is your relationship to them?**

Yes. One guy is the home group leader for our small group and he calls me his daughter. He is just an amazing example of what a father should be like.

## Interview Questions for Group 1 - High School Students

**Ray Thompson: Face to Face Interview****1.) How long have you been without a father?**

I've been without a father for about fourteen years of my life.

**2.) What is life like without having a dad around?**

I would have to say it's a lot more stressful because there is not a father figure around. I don't have, like, that support of someone who can understand what I am going through and not overreact to it. My mother does not know how to handle that kind of a situation. Things get out of hand, and we all kind of yell at each other. My mom and I are both stubborn heads and we fight so much. It causes a lot of stress in both of us and depression.

**3.) How would your family be different if you had a dad while you were growing up?**

I think if I had a dad growing up, I think I would have focused more on my school instead of fighting with my family. I would not have been so stressed out about things, knowing that my parents are taking care of all of it and that my mom is not alone. Finances would have been easier; we would not have been poor, not being able to afford things, and just barely getting through the month. If he were there to support us financially, we would have stability because he had a good job and was a trucker. He could have done something and that would have taken the stress off me. I wouldn't feel the pressure to get out there everyday and get a job. It's difficult as it is already.

**4.) Anything else other than financially?**

I think, maybe moral support. Maybe with sports. It could be nice to have someone there who is rooting you on all the time instead of working full time to provide for my brother and me. I play basketball.

**5.) What have been the effects in your family as a result of not having a dad in the home?**

Not having my dad around caused me to mature and grow up a lot faster than other people. The negative is the stress and the anger of everything, just being mad at him still. I wanted that father figure around, even though I didn't have one. Now, I am pretty stubborn and I say I don't need him anymore. I also have God in my life. I am not alone and He is my Father. At the same time.... it can be really, really hard at times. It's not an easy life.

**6.) How are other students different who have dads in their family?**

I always felt like my friends and other people at school had a lot more security because their dads were there and they were the ones providing the most for them. You know what I mean? They loved their sons and they spoiled them. My dad didn't. He doesn't even send child support. He owes so much child support. It's ridiculous. The fact that he won't pay hurts even

more. I always felt like my friends had it way better off than I did and that always caused major guilt and depression.

**7.) Do you feel like you have a strong sense of who you are and your purpose in life? If so, what is it?**

I feel like I have a pretty good grip on who I am as a person. I feel like there are still parts of me I am trying to figure out and that are lost, but I am still at a young age and figuring all that out. I know I have now... I love on people, I am nice, I am sweet, I take care of my family, I am a hard worker, and I am funny. Those are the things I know for sure, but there are still a lot of things out there. Sometimes I feel like I don't know who I am, you know?

But, what BCA brings to me is that peace and that God gives me a place to help figure that out. I think God is going to set me on a path where someone is going to affirm and show me who I am and what I am supposed to do. And they are going to show me the appreciation that I need to find that path. Kind of like some current events that will happen and I will feel good. I feel like it is a path of self-discovery.

**8.) If you have siblings, how are they affected by being fatherless?**

My brother was one or two when my dad left. When dad left, he didn't even know him. My brother has always been angry that he left, that he never did anything and that he never even paid child support. He never calls and then comes back in 2011 for only three months. All I remember is seeing my brother be angry, cry and wouldn't even talk to him. He said only two words and I completely understand. I think he is shut down from everything. He acts out even more than a normal teenager and I can't help him because I am not his dad. If I do, he just says, "shut up, dad." He just needs to get it out somehow.

**9.) Does BCA have anything in place to help those who are fatherless? If so, what are they?**

I don't think they are purposefully doing it. I don't feel like they know what some of the kids are going through. They don't have a special program for that.

**10.) What do you think is the role of the church to reach out to those without a dad?**

They should have a special program. I think that they should make an invitation at the church to have people tell their story, where they can share what they have been through and what life has been like without a dad, you know? I feel like if they learned how to tell others that, then there would be a lot of stress relief for people. They would not have to hide it or feel degraded because of that.

If we had a ministry for it, I think there would be a lot of attraction for it and people would learn how to handle themselves properly. They would learn how to handle their feelings, or their anger, or drug addictions, or attitudes or issues. They wouldn't feel so depressed and they would think they could become a better person. Even if it was not a father, it could be a mother who could be there to help release that stress so they can help others move on with their lives.

Actually, I really, really think you guys need a program like that. I could have needed it back in high school. I got expelled twice in high school and I blame it all on my dad. Whenever I got angry, I just wanted to beat someone up.

I can still remember the time when I was four and he punched through glass and went to the hospital. Sometimes, I still see myself in him, that resemblance. I don't want to be that person, and this could really help people have that self-discovery. If only people were there to hear what is going on and to give wisdom.

**11.) Are there any role models in the church for you who are an example of what a Biblical father should look like? If so, what is your relationship to them?**

Yeah. I think that Josh Kilroy is someone I would think as a biblical father. He is a young father, not very educated, but has a good head on his shoulders. He is responsible and trusting in God and I feel like that is the kind of guy I want to be when I grow up.

Someone who is devoted to God, his wife and his kids. I feel like I want a big family so my kids can hang out with each other. I feel like he, as a Christian father, is setting it up good for his kids. He's taking them to church, he is very involved and he is working two or three jobs to provide for his family. That is really admirable.

The fact that he has that stability with God, in work and in his family is something that I really want. So, I kind of look up to him as a role model for being a real man. You know what I mean?

## Interview Questions for Group 1 - High School Students

**Chris Woods: Face to Face Interview****1.) How long have you been without a father?**

I am fourteen years old and I have been without a father about a year now.

**2.) What is life like without having a dad around?**

Surprisingly, it has turned out for a better relationship with my dad. But, still I miss a father figure being there for me all of the time. Then, now I just have my mom, but that's not so bad. I miss the guy playing ball with you in the yard. It is harder.

**3.) How would your family be different if you had a dad while you were growing up?**

I think it would have been worse because I know that my mom and dad did not get along too well. Now that he is gone, I am happier and my mom is happier... sometimes happier. My dad, I don't know what he is.

**4.) What have been the effects in your family as a result of not having a dad in the home?**

Pretty much my mom has to make decisions by herself, and I know that it is hard for her. She does not have someone to back her up to help her guide her through. I know that what happened, and when stuff happens at school, it takes a toll on her because she does not know what to do or what decision to make. It's pretty hard for me, but for me I got to kind of stick thru. The hardest part was watching how it all went down. It was not a clean divorce. It was a "we need to separate."

**5.) How are other students different who have dads in their family?**

It's what everyone says, "You can't judge a book by its cover." You can't judge a student that has a dad just because he has a dad. Me having a dad, it sucked, I hated it. We were always fighting and getting yelled at. I wish it could be like how it is now, but with him there. I mainly have friends where their dad is gone and they have divorced parents. But a lot of them have a stepdad too.

**6.) Do you feel like you have a strong sense of who you are and your purpose in life? If so, what is it?**

I'm pretty sure growing up this last year in the church has shown me that I have gone through a lot and I want to help kids that have gone through that too. Just because you can't take it for granted because it can all be gone like that. I took my dad for granted and now he is gone. I feel like God wants me to be a pastor so I can be like Ryan Gilbreath. He grows up and helps all of these kids. Watching him is crazy because he has gone through close to what I have and now he is a godly man.

**7.) If you have siblings, how are they affected by being fatherless?**

I have a half sister on my dad's side. It's hard for her. My dad works and she does not get to see him much, so it's just like me. I also don't get to see her.

**8.) Does BCA have anything in place to help those who are fatherless? If so, what are they?**

They have Ryan and some of the pastors to help people. But, they do not have something set in stone. They don't have a place like Celebrate Recovery, where you can just turn and find a group of guys that are fatherless.

I think they should have something because I did not know who to talk to or who to turn to at first. I was stuck in the middle trying to figure out which way to go. If they had a group of people that were set in stone, it would be way better because then that person who lost their father can turn and get grouped up into a big hug. They can say its gonna be okay to you.

**9.) What do you think is the role of the church to reach out to those without a dad?**

They should be there. I grew up with a dad who was yelling and arguing a lot. I had to protect myself and my mom a lot. I did not want to turn and just be like, help me. So, I was trying to help myself. But once I turned to get help, it was fantastic. They knew their role and they were ready with arms wide open for me.

**10.) Are there any role models in the church for you that are an example of what a Biblical father should look like? If so, what is your relationship to them?**

I would say, Bill Stewart really, and Ryan Gilbreath. They are energetic and fun, and I know I can turn to them. I would say when I want to calm down and talk with somebody, I would also say Adam Bradley because I know he will help me. But Bill was someone that was there for me and I knew I could call him anytime.

**Appendix H: Interviews of Mothers of the High School Students**  
Interview Questions for Group 2 - Mothers of the High School Students

**Jenny Smith: Phone Interview**

**1.) What was it like raising children without a father in the home?**

It has been very difficult raising two girls without a father in the house for the last five years. It has been stressful at times, sad at times, frustrating at times, tiring at times, happy at times, silly at times, rewarding at times, sometimes the whole range of emotions in the span of twenty-four hours. It is a strain financially as well and I am not the least bit of a fix-it person! I know how to use a screwdriver, but that is about it. I feel guilty sometimes because I can't afford to take them on vacation. I can't be both mom and dad. I don't know how I would have made it this far without God. God has always been faithful. It has also been very rewarding to see them love God and come to know Him better!

**2.) What effects have you seen on your kids without the presence of a father?**

My oldest daughter who is a freshman in high school this year has suffered greatly without her father in the house. She used to be daddy's little girl and cuddle with him on the couch. She loved spending time with him! She has struggled a lot with fear, anxiety, anger, feelings of betrayal, and feeling like she is no longer a priority in her dad's life anymore. She doesn't feel as though, her dad loves her many times. My younger daughter lately has distanced herself from her father as well.

**3.) What type of role has the church had on your family in this area?**

The church has tried to be very helpful. They have supported me, and offered counseling for a while. They made it clear that they supported me. It is hard though, as there aren't many resources available. It is also hard for them to understand fully, as most of them came from two parent families and are married with children. Some people in the church have continued to pray for the girls and me throughout this whole time, which is a gift from God because I covet prayers. One or two men in our small group have been a God-send and stepped in somewhat and have let my high schooler know that they care who she dates, that there is an application that they will have to pass, and that they will be going on that first date with her, to her delight. She is honored that they joke about it but that she feels that they truly care! She is counting on them being on that date with her at this point! One of them is kind of like a father figure in her life. He has commented when he sees her, "There's my girl!" even though he has children and grandchildren of his own. You would have thought that she was floating on air when he said that to her! He lets her know that he checks her Facebook from time to time, not that she ever has or ever will do anything that she shouldn't, but she likes that they check up on her and it also makes

her feel important and cared for!

**4.) How are family dynamics different without a father in the home?**

Family dynamics differ in that there is no back-up available. If I say something and they don't want to do it, there is no one to back me up. I am responsible and on duty 24/7. There is really no time off. I work forty hours a week and then work on homework, clean house, make sure they have what they need for school etc. I can't possibly replace their father. Dads fulfill a special place in their daughters' lives, that cannot be met by a mom. It is probably a lot more emotional in our house as we are all three girls and there is no man to even us out!

**5.) How would family life be different with a father figure for your kids?**

Family life would be different, and by God's grace is a little better for my girls as they do have a couple, one in particular, father figures in their life. It might be a little less emotion driven. They would have a "male of the species" to affirm them and tell them that they are beautiful and not feel the need to look to guys their age for that affirmation!

**6.) What could the church possibly do to help meet those needs?**

I don't know. Maybe have some guys, dads or grandpas, to mentor some of the kiddos from single parent homes to spend time with them and affirm them, to let them know they are valuable! Also, sometimes it would be nice to have a mechanic ministry or something where there are men to help with car issues or little fix-it jobs around the house once a month as the kids can tell that we are stressed out because we don't have the extra money to do some repairs on the car or know how to do simple repairs around the house.

**7.) Are there any specific behaviors at home that stick out as abnormal?**

My oldest has mentioned many times that she would feel safer with a man in the house, that she would feel like there was a "protector" around the house especially at night. She is more fearful than many girls her age who come from two parent households. She is often more insecure in things and needs more words of affirmation to account for the lack of the father in the house.

**8.) How does your child (or children) handle discipline?**

My oldest is very sensitive. She takes everything to heart, even discipline. She crumbles when I try to correct a behavior sometimes because she is so sensitive and I am just trying to explain the behavior or why I was correcting her. The girls are amazing young ladies and are very well behaved but sometimes get away with things because I am distracted or too tired.

**9.) How does your child (or children) treat family members and others?**

My girls definitely know how to push each other's buttons and annoy each other and sometimes don't know when to stop. They end up hurting each other sometimes. They typically



treat others well but my younger daughter sometimes has issues with self-control and doesn't know when to stop, although she is getting better.

**10.) What areas does the absence of a father effect your kids?**

**a. Emotionally?**

Emotionally, they are a little more fragile. They cry because they don't feel affirmed by their father or feel de-prioritized by their father.

**b. Relationally?**

Relationally, they search for approval from boys or guys in general, especially my seventh grader but also my ninth grader. My ninth grader has flat out told me that she looks for approval from guys because her dad doesn't tell her she is pretty and affirm her. She catches herself but still struggles with it.

**c. Socially?**

Socially, they sometimes struggle with interpersonal relationships and have difficulty knowing that other girls their age at church mostly have their dad around and hear about them spending good times with their dad and that is very hard for them!

**d. Spiritually?**

Spiritually, God has been and is SO faithful!!! They both believe in God and have a relationship with Him! It is sometimes hard because their dad sometimes supports their endeavors and sometimes asks them why they read the Bible? Really? Yikes!

## Interview Questions for Group 2 - Mothers of the High School Students

### **Melissa Hansen: Phone Interview**

#### **1.) What was it like raising children without a father in the home?**

It's a struggle. Our economy is a two person economy, and when the primary bread winner leaves, everything changes. We had to downsize our home, sell our horses and quads, we quit shopping at Macy's and Nordstrom's, and became very frugal about what clothes we bought and when or where to buy groceries. For me, I became both a mother and father. I no longer had the luxury of working with someone and asking "should we do this, or can we do that?" It all fell on me. All the cooking, cleaning, bill paying, landscaping, homework helping, chauffeuring, and discipline became my sole responsibility. It's exhausting, although you can't be exhausted because you have to be there for your children.

#### **2.) What effects have you see on your kids without the presence of a father?**

They are extremely mature. They lost out on the ability to be kids because they had to grow up and help me with the house and taking care of each other.

#### **3.) What type of role has the church had on your family in this area?**

BCA literally was my lifesaver. I was so lost, I actually came one day because I had so many questions as to why God did this to me I had to find answers. What I found instead was a new set of friends, people who I can count on and care about me, and a father/husband I never knew I had. When I feel overwhelmed now, or lost, I turn to Him and His comfort and wisdom and it brings me peace. BCA has brought a whole new focus to my life.

#### **4.) How are family dynamics different without a father in the home?**

My oldest daughter has taken on a much more parental role with her younger brother than is probably healthy, but the three of us are *extremely* close, much more so than if we had a father or husband in the mix. The lines are really blurry as to parent and child. Instead, we act as a unit. We all watch out for each other, keep each other on task, and keep each other accountable.

#### **5.) How would family life be different with a father figure for your kids?**

It would probably be much more traditional parent and child role: I am your mother and he is your father and you are the child. These are the rules and the expectations. Also, I don't think I would spend near as much time with them as I do. When we are together, it's the three of us. We watch television together, play games together, go out together. I think if there were a

man in the house, I'd be split more between being a wife and being a mom.

**6.) What could the church possibly do to help meet those needs?**

BCA is fantastic - it offers so many small groups to help in so many different areas. We have classes and sermons that relate back to single parenting. BCA really bends over backwards to try and help all types of families. It's unbelievable. I can't imagine how much more they could possibly do.

**7.) Are there any specific behaviors at home that stick out as abnormal?**

I'm blessed that my kids don't seem to have resentment issues. I try hard to keep my ill will towards their father away from them and do my best to get along with him for their sake. The only thing that is abnormal would be their maturity. My son is nine, but he acts like he's 16 or 17. My daughter is fifteen but acts like she's twenty one and a mother herself. So far, knock on wood, they've stayed away from the drugs and alcohol and what not that a lot of kids fall into.

**8.) How does your child (or children) handle discipline?**

My daughter crumbles. It shatters her to think she has done something wrong. My son is very pragmatic about it. "Why is this wrong Mom? What should I have done?" It's hard to stay mad at them!

**9.) How does your child (or children) treat family members and others?**

I have always been a stickler for being polite and respectful. Fortunately, my kids don't have outbursts, and are very respectful and polite. My daughter makes friends very easily. My son is much more picky but they both seem to get along well with others.

**10.) What areas does the absence of a father effect your kids?**

**e. Emotionally?**

They've gone through feeling abandoned, anger towards him, and now they just accept it. They seem to be pretty well adjusted and actually seem to thrive on things being just the three of us. I've been forbidden to date!

**f. Relationally?**

Unfortunately, it has scarred them and neither one wants to be married or have children. They both want careers and to "live with mom forever." Hopefully that will change.

**g. Socially?**

They are very outgoing socially and seem to make friends pretty easily when they want to. I've tried hard to make them feel secure so hopefully that has made a difference.

### **h. Spiritually?**

That's a struggle because their father insists on them attending his very orthodox church versus BCA. They do have religious convictions, but you can see where they aren't as grounded as I would like them to be.

## Interview Questions for Group 2 - Mothers of the High School Students

### Sylvia Stone: Face to Face Interview

#### 1.) What was it like raising children without a father in the home?

It is difficult. In our case, it a little easier because there was a temper involved. However, it is hard to make all of the decisions yourself. And financially, you are responsible for everything. And, there is the fact that he misses him so much that there is a horrible guilt of, "I can't fix it."

#### 2.) What effects have you seen on your kids without the presence of a father?

Just the sadness of his dad not being there. The depression. Anger sometimes. He did horrible in school the first half. This year has been better, and he has been more focused. But it has been a real struggle. I have always had to shield him from the temper and he would always try to protect me.

#### 3.) What type of role has the church had on your family in this area?

They have had a huge role. They have helped me with counseling and have approved the counseling for both of us. We just have not been able to go. The support of TrueLife that was given to Chris was huge! If that would not have been available, then it could have been really disastrous. It gave him a place to go.

#### 4.) How are family dynamics different without a father in the home?

Everyone's situation is different. With ours, his dad was always the one who was so harsh. Not that I did not give discipline before, but now I am the sole discipline one and that means that I have to be the bad guy. It definitely is a different dynamic. That is very different for us. But, Chris does respect that I do not have a choice. And his dad told him he has no choice and that he is the man of the house. His dad regrets what has happened and wishes that he could turn back time.

#### 5.) How would family life be different with a father figure for your kids?

I am afraid that it never would have changed and would have stayed the same. They would not have the relationship that they do now. It would still be bad. I think our relationship would be a very volatile situation. What happened is what opened his eyes. I don't think anything would have changed. It had to happen in order for Chris and I to be free even though it makes Chris very sad. It is a double-edged sword: he hates being there away from me, and he

hates being here away from him.

**6.) What could the church possibly do to help meet those needs?**

I think Chris was very fortunate in being able to seek someone out in TrueLife. But, I think that if there was an actual program where kids knew where to go, it would be huge, just huge. I am so thankful he had someone to go to whenever he needed to. He was able to call those guys at night. And there were anger issues and things he did not want to talk to me about. For me, they do have a lot. They were able to give me counseling and was able to help me out with other things financially. And, there are other groups. I never would have asked for help had someone not been there to help me tell someone that I needed help. I know they have compassion ministries, but if there was a group for abused or divorced mothers. I was so distraught that I could barely function. But what I got here helped make a huge difference.

**7.) Are there any specific behaviors at home that stick out as abnormal?**

Just the depression that I see in him. Especially when his dad comes and then has to leave. The depression is gut wrenching.

**8.) How does your child (or children) handle discipline?**

We struggle with it. When his dad said to do it, it was done pretty quickly. For me, it might take a couple of days.

**9.) How does your child (or children) treat family members and others?**

Nothing has really changed. If anything, he has gotten more caring because he has realized that he has lost something. He tends to value things a little more and I know most situations that do not end up that way. It certainly was not that way in the beginning.

**10.) What areas does the absence of a father effect your kids?**

**i. Emotionally?**

He has a depression I have never seen before, and sometimes it scares me.

**j. Relationally?**

Sometimes, he will cut himself off from other people. It makes me nervous. I have had to call others and ask them to talk to him because I get so nervous.

**k. Socially?**

When he is not hanging with his friends it is the same. He tends to snap out of it kind of fast, except the last one was a long one. I had to call and ask for help!

**I. Spiritually?**

He does not want to go to church, and there are times when it really scares me. But I know that he will be back and everything will be fine.

**Appendix I: Interviews of Youth Pastor and Adult Leaders**  
Interview Questions for Group 3 - Youth Pastor and Adult Leaders

**Samuel Greene: Phone Interview**

**1.) What is your role and involvement with the youth at BCA?**

I am the youth pastor at BCA.

**2.) What kind of a relationship do you have with the fatherless youth in the youth ministry?**

I have great relationships with several of them, and then, not as close with others. I would even say we have new kids that come into our ministry all the time. We haven't been able to hear about their personal family life yet. So, some of them I know, and others I have not even gotten to know yet.

**3.) What are the differences between the fatherless and those who have a dad in their lives?**

I would say the biggest difference is direction. I can think of two guys that have recently accepted Christ within this past year who don't have a relationship with their dads and this is the biggest obstacle for them. They need constant attention, affirmation, with a mix of strong conversations. With lack of direction comes a lack of drive to achieve or accomplish something. They are looking for that male figure to help lead them and show them what to do.

**4.) Do you notice any abnormal behavior from students that do not have a healthy relationship with a father figure?**

Nothing right off the bat about students, but we had a leader in the past who struggled with same sex attractions. He would say that a big part of this was because he lacked a strong father figure. We also see many of them really longing for attention and will do anything to get it. It happens with the students and leaders.

**5.) What is the percentage of students in the youth ministry that have a dad in the home?**

Oh man, I don't know if I can give an accurate answer. I think another issue we have seen is not only the absence of the father physically in the life of our students but fathers who just don't take much interest in students but still live in the home. We have several fathers that don't take an active role in the lives of their kids and they seem to express similar characteristics as those who grew up without a father. But if I were to just give a percentage of students that did have a father it would be over 65% I would guess.

**6.) How do the fatherless students affect the dynamics of the overall youth ministry?**



They require a little more attention and care. But they can also bring deep passion and desperation for the Lord as they discover this new relationship that begins to fill them in ways they haven't experienced. There is a positive and negative to both sides of it.

**7.) How do the fatherless respond to spirituality and the message of Christ?**

Some will respond immediately but then others can take a long time. Every student is different, and I don't know if the process is always much different than a kid who has two parents in the home.

**8.) What kind of challenges, if any, do the fatherless have in living out their faith?**

I think it can be easy for those who come from a single parent home to resent or be jealous of those who have both. The obvious struggle is typically finances, but then you see and hear about the different things others get to do with their dads and it can present "the why question": Why did God allow this to happen to our family? Some of our students go through stages of grief, pain, and struggle, and then continue to grow in the Lord, and even as they continue to experience different life things without a father in the mix, which provides its own challenges.

**9.) What is the youth ministry currently doing to reach out to these students?**

I don't know if we have done anything specifically to target these demographic of students, but we do make an intentional effort to love on all our students and to learn their stories. Once we begin to hear about their life, it allows us to begin to encourage and pray with them. One of the biggest things we have found is that our students want to be known and feel like they are cared about. So I guess that is how we attempt to reach out to them.

**10.) What is the church as a whole doing to reach out to these families?**

Similar to what we are doing in the youth ministry. Pastor Rob will preach on the role of a father and also on forgiveness through the year, which can be a helpful healing point for some.

**11.) Is there anything else you think BCA could be doing differently to have a more effective impact on these students and families?**

My heart really goes out to single parents, and I think the church could do a better job, in supporting them. It is a unique struggle for a parent to try and raise a child by themselves and I feel like the church could get creative in helping support them during these crucial years.

## Interview Questions for Group 3 - Youth Pastor and Adult Leaders

### **Erika Black: Face to Face Interview**

#### **1.) What is your role and involvement with the youth at BCA?**

I help out with TrueLife youth group on Wednesday evenings. I also spend time praying for the needs of the students in our youth ministry.

#### **2.) What kind of a relationship do you have with the fatherless youth in the youth ministry?**

I have not been involved long enough to pinpoint which kids have fathers and which don't. I am aware of a few that do, and they are friends of my daughter, so I offer a home for them to come hang out in, pray for them, give advice sometimes and act as a stand in parent. I try my best to help out anywhere that I can.

#### **3.) What are the differences between the fatherless and those who have a dad in their lives?**

The big difference in the kids I know is the lack of supervision in the home. The mom is usually working long hours and they have no one who can watch them.

#### **4.) Do you notice any abnormal behavior from students that do not have a healthy relationship with a father figure?**

I know that some have been involved in drugs, alcohol, fighting at school, other problems at school with teachers and peers. A few have gotten involved in TrueLife and have seen some that have made some changes to their lives.

#### **5.) What is the percentage of students in the youth ministry that have a dad in the home?**

I do not know. Not really sure what the percentage is.

#### **6.) How do the fatherless students affect the dynamics of the overall youth ministry?**

I am not sure how it affects the dynamics. I know as a leader, it gives me something to pray for.

#### **7.) How do the fatherless respond to spirituality and the message of Christ?**

I have only spoken with a few kids that do not have a father in their home. One of them seems to be doing ok and has totally trusted Christ with every aspect of her life. The two others seem to be insecure and unsure of their security in Christ. They do not really respond as much,

but seem to be a little open to talking about it.

**8.) What kind of challenges, if any, do the fatherless have in living out their faith?**

I believe that they are at greater risk to experience feelings of insecurity and worthlessness. They seem to have a more difficult time being able to accept that Christ loves them, no matter what they do.

**9.) What is the youth ministry currently doing to reach out to these students?**

The students that we do build relationships with have leaders praying for them and investing in their lives. I am sure there are many others that slip through the cracks, and we are unaware of their hurts or what is going on with their lives in a personal way. At a minimum, our youth ministry offers these kids a safe, welcome, encouraging environment to be at every Wednesday and Sunday. It also offers them the opportunity to hear the gospel and provides opportunities for them to make changes in their lives and build healthy relationships with other youth and/or leaders.

**10.) What is the church as a whole doing to reach out to these families?**

I am not sure what the church is doing, other than having a youth ministry that reaches out to all students. There does not seem to be anything specific or a program for them.

## Interview Questions for Group 3 - Youth Pastor and Adult Leaders

**Tim Cooper: Face to Face Interview****1.) What is your role and involvement with the youth at BCA?**

I oversee the fifth and sixth grade ministry. It is called True56. I also help out with the middle school and high school group on Wednesday nights.

**2.) What kind of a relationship do you have with the fatherless youth in the youth ministry?**

I try to be a mentor to every student that I come into contact with. Sometimes I don't find out until later that they don't have a father figure at home. I try to build relationships with everyone.

**3.) What are the differences between the fatherless and those who have a dad in their lives?**

On the surface, it is actually difficult for me to tell who has a father and who doesn't. There is nothing that I notice at first, but find out more about them later.

**4.) Do you notice any abnormal behavior from students that do not have a healthy relationship with a father figure?**

They tend to be a little insecure, or unsure on how to relate to me as an adult male who is a potential mentor. It varies from case to case though. There is one student that has a huge issue with authority. Another, who puffs himself up in an overcompensation of something missing.

**5.) What is the percentage of students in the youth ministry that have a dad in the home?**

Probably about one third of them.

**6.) How do the fatherless students affect the dynamics of the overall youth ministry?**

The leaders are the ones that are influenced more than the other students. Leaders tend try to help them and mentor them. It changes the way they try to interact with them and talk with them.

**7.) How do the fatherless respond to spirituality and the message of Christ?**

It varies from case to case. One of them will get hyper spiritual, another will be extremely skeptical and independent, another will proceed with caution. A lot of that depends too on the subject at the time.

**8.) What kind of challenges, if any, do the fatherless have in living out their faith?**

They don't have a strong male role model at home to show what it is like to commit to something long-term and lead.

**9.) What is the youth ministry currently doing to reach out to these students?**

There is no official program that is set in place, but we try to mentor one on one.

**10.) What is the church as a whole doing to reach out to these families?**

It would be great if BCA had an adopt-a-family program or had a special group that met with all of 'fatherless'. I am not really sure what else we can do at the moment. We just keep on doing the things we are doing great at now.

**Appendix J: Interviews of the BCA Fathers**  
Interview Questions for Group 4 - BCA Fathers

**Steve Anderson: Face to Face Interview**

**1.) Please describe your family dynamics and the roles you play within them.**

I am the father of four children. My wife of ten years and I chose to adopt two of them about three years ago. This made my first-born baby the middle child after about two and a half years of her life. I have made an extra point to treat them equally so as not to have bitterness between the children. My wife is the one who puts in play the law, and I back her up when I get home from work. We try to make decisions together before bringing stuff to the children as to show a united front and limit the tries to play each other.

**2.) What things do you do to stay in relationship with your kids?**

Watch movies with them, take them on little shopping or eating dates, play games with them and try to sit down and eat with them at least once a day. I find that if I take a little time to listen to them, not multi-tasking at the same time, that they feel like I have paid attention to them.

**3.) What was your home like growing up?**

My home life was very unorganized but consistent. Both of my parents worked with me and that a lot of our meals were not eaten as family. All of our physical needs were taken care of, but the emotional, character ones weren't. I learned to live with it and just get what I could from them. I knew they loved me; I just didn't know how to communicate what I needed from them.

**4.) What does the Bible say in regards to the role of a father?**

I believe the role of a father is both as a shepherd and role model. We have to nurture our children so they know they are loved no matter what is going on. I also believe we are supposed to "train up a child..." so that they will know who Jesus is. I can't save them but I can be a great example of what a Christian is so they will want to be one.

**5.) How do these principles play out in your parenting?**

I try to do these on a daily basis with my wife. I want my children to surpass me in every way possible. With reading God's word and skimming through parenting material, I have tried to approach my kids' with love and forgiveness. One thing that I have had to gain is patience! Not an easy thing to master with four kids wanting something all at the same time.

**6.) How does your faith affect your role as a husband, dad, and family man?**

My faith helps to give me the tools to communicate to my kids what is important in life. My wife and I try to drive home that we need to do all things with God on our mind. We

continually tell them that people are more important than stuff, and if our love for something is hurting someone, including themselves, then it is not worth having.

**7.) Why do you think we have a large number of fathers abandoning their roles in the home?**

It is a reflection on the lack of teaching by fathers and grandfathers. I believe there has been a big disconnect between generations and many fathers have just written it off and gone on. We cannot shirk our responsibilities of teaching our children what is right for a man and a woman! If we don't pass down the knowledge then who will?

**8.) How do you handle life when you feel like things are too difficult to handle?**

I talk with God and my wife. I have learned to not take on too many things at once knowing that I will get frustrated if I cannot finish it on time. Before I used to just push back and try to make it someone else's problem for things becoming too difficult for me. The Lord will not give us too much that we cannot handle!

**9.) What types of values do you hope to pass down to your kids?**

That God is our friend and our maker! We can live for God and have an exciting life! There will never be a time that we will be alone or separated from the love of God. If we have love in our heart for the Lord then all else will start to make sense. And a lesson that we try daily to impregnate in their minds is that people are more valuable than stuff!

**10.) How do you educate your kids about the importance of family and their roles in the home?**

With home schooling our kids, we get a daily availability to their lives. We try to live good examples so that there is no contradiction in what we tell them. I love team sports and like to continually tell them that we are part of the Kilroy Team! No one person is more important than another!

## Interview Questions for Group 4 - BCA Fathers

### **Bob Houston: Phone Interview**

#### **1.) Please describe your family dynamics and the roles you play within them.**

We are giving, easy-going, flexible, have a sense of humor, adventurous, (to name a few), and more often than not I set the tone. If I am indecisive or negative, it will have a like affect on my family, same if I am merciful and kind. I can be silly, and my children will know it's okay to be silly sometimes. My behavior, attitude, integrity, all directly affect family dynamics, good or bad.

#### **2.) What things do you do to stay in relationship with your kids?**

Location, location, location. Where I am mentally is as important as where I am physically in relation to my kids. I invest significant amounts of time with my children in all kinds of activities and one-on-one time. I get down on the floor with them and we play with toys, we play games, cuddle up in the recliner, and watch a movie. We also will spend a few extra minutes at bed time and just talk about anything. They go with me on simple errands or day long trips. Spending time together, whether planned activities, lounging around the house, or just running an errand are all ways to show my kids that "I want to be with you, you are important to me."

I stay "in the moment" with my kids, trying (but not perfect) to stay focused on them when we talk. They know without doubt that I love them deeply. I hug, kiss, and tell them I love them several times a day. It is almost criminal in our house to go to bed without a hug, a kiss, and "I love you" before going off to bed for the night. This isn't just mindless routine but rather another way that we express our love for each other, the icing on the cake.

#### **3.) What was your home like growing up?**

Typical middle class in small town U.S.A. Very low key. Friendly and welcoming, but somewhat distant, and by that I mean there was very little affection initiated by my parents. They loved us and provided everything we needed but there was no emphasis on building relationships. My parents' style was very hands off, in almost every aspect of a parent-child relationship.

#### **4.) What does the Bible say in regards to the role of a father?**

The Bible is all about being a father. We discipline, sacrifice, weep, walk through deserts, calm the storms, forgive the gravest sin, provide, judge, be wise, merciful, dance, celebrate, etc.

#### **5.) How do these principles play out in your parenting?**

Each principle has a time and purpose, and I demonstrate actions that are appropriate for each one. For example my kids will not respect discipline of I am not likewise disciplined. They



won't be merciful or forgiving if I am not the same. They will learn to not trust if I break promises. Principles play out in my children's behavior. That is a sobering reality.

**6.) How does your faith affect your role as a husband, dad, and family man?**

It calls me to a higher standard in all aspects of my family. Faith is not just believing in those things that you cannot see, it is also living for those things that you cannot see. I may be disappointed, bewildered, distraught, broken hearted, but faith tells me God has a plan even though I cannot see, in any way, what or why. In fact, I may never know this side of heaven, but faith tells me to persevere. Perseverance leads to commitment, commitment leads to action, and action leads to God's plan for my life, which affects every aspect of my role in the family.

**7.) Why do you think we have a large number of fathers abandoning their roles in the home?**

Blind selfishness or laziness, both a learned behavior.

**8.) How do you handle life when you feel like things are too difficult to handle?**

Initially I become introverted and withdraw. I tend to analyze and think too much before I resolve to handing it over to God. Then I take an honest inventory of myself and ask God to help me do whatever I can to make or find peace.

**9.) What types of values do you hope to pass down to your kids?**

Pray, pray, pray; be transparent; never be afraid to admit you were wrong no matter the consequence; laugh at yourself; remember that there is always two sides to every story, unless it's child or woman abuse, then only the child or woman's story matters.

**10.) How do you educate your kids about the importance of family and their roles in the home?**

By being the best living example I can be and taking advantage of every opportunity to give them positive reinforcement. By discussing direct cause and affect relationships when they are, or are not fulfilling their role.

## Interview Questions for Group 4 - BCA Fathers

**Jack England: Phone Interview****1.) Please describe your family dynamics and the roles you play within them.**

We have been happily married for over twelve years now with three children, ages five, three, and seven months. I am the "primary earner," but my wife works at her gym as the Kidz Fitness coordinator as well as Childcare Coordinator. She has that job so that she can have our children with her at all times.

**2.) What things do you do to stay in relationship with your kids?**

As a high school teacher, I have three months off, but I tend to work very long hours, especially in the spring due to my main stage drama productions. I don't take work home with me very often, and I tend not to schedule anything during my breaks so as to spend as much time as possible with my family. My oldest daughter and I have a scheduled "daddy-daughter date" that we plan on going on every third Thursday evening of the month. I almost always take my son crabbing with me when I go during summers - I plan on taking him hunting as soon as he is old enough. We love to go on walks to the park. We're huge on "experience" gifts - like zoo memberships. Time is huge for us. We value our relationships with each other and our friends to take priority over making money.

**3.) What was your home like growing up?**

I had a loving stay-at-home mom and hard-working father. They were remarkably interested and involved in my growth, and my mother often told me that raising her children (my sister and I) was the most important job she had. There was never any abuse, but we were frequently grounded and "beat," meaning spanked.

**4.) What does the Bible say in regards to the role of a father?**

It is his job to raise his family in the same way that Christ is the head of the church (First Corinthians). He is to be the spiritual leader of the home and should make it his concern for the education of his children. He must love his family in the same way that Christ loves his church.

**5.) How do these principles play out in your parenting?**

It is our goal to help our children fall in love with Jesus more than anything else. Even as a teacher (my wife is trained as a teacher as well), we value a relationship with Christ way over any education. Period. We engage our children in discussion and focus on the role of the church in education of our children.

**6.) How does your faith affect your role as a husband, dad, and family man?**

It is the first and foremost reason for doing anything that I do. I do not act out of coercion or manipulation. I also do not act due to any utilitarian function. People are not meant to be used. They are to be loved for their intrinsic value in being made in the image of Christ. I want to love my family because I love Jesus. It's free. I feel the exact same way about my family. I take interest in them and the things they do because they love this stuff.

**7.) Why do you think we have a large number of fathers abandoning their roles in the home?**

Fear. The difficulty of the world around them. The frustration of the difficulty that comes with the task. Misunderstood and misappropriated perspectives on the relationship with their spouses. They are to love Christ first, their spouse second, family third. When those things get out of whack, people continue loving themselves in that, they miss the mark.

**8.) How do you handle life when you feel like things are too difficult to handle?**

I look to Christ and my partner, my bride. We constantly say, "We're in this together," and try to help each other out in everything we do. I try to make time for her to go out with friends; being able to be her (not mommy or wife), and she does the same for me. When things get really tough, we're on the same page enough to be able to be aware when one of us needs to go out for a jog, etc.

**9.) What types of values do you hope to pass down to your kids?**

Loving Christ, people and hard work. The signs of righteousness more than anything else, especially greed or the love of money.

**10.) How do you educate your kids about the importance of family and their roles in the home?**

Repetition. Each of us is aware of our roles and how they are to play out with each of us. We value each other's time and space, but don't allow personal space to be the driving factor or highest agenda. We're a family. Period. We stay together and we'll learn to "fight it out" and continue to love. Talk, talk, talk. Educate, educate, educate.