

# So Many Kids, But So Few Fathers...

Dedicated to Those Men who Wonder Where their Father's Day Cards Went This Year



This short presentation is based in part on a Sermon delivered by Brother Marvin Miller at the Holmes Road Church of Christ on Father's Day, June 15, 2014. The Author of this Presentation is solely responsible for the Content of this Presentation, and the Opinions and Ideas raised in this presentation are not necessarily those of any other person or organization.

The purpose of this presentation is to raise awareness concerning public policy issues relating to parenting and problems confronting our children on a daily basis as they attempt to mature and become the people they will be as members of our communities in the future.

The author does not pretend to be an expert in child development, and readily acknowledges that his own life and parenting have been full of mistakes which, in retrospect, he might have avoided with a bit more guidance - both spiritual and also from child development experts and social workers, and maybe also by remembering better some of the life lessons his own father taught him over the many years...

# Happy Fathers Day?

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- On Father's Day I went to Church, anticipating a typical sermon praising Fathers, and Exhorting Children to Honor their Father So that their days on Earth could be long and happy ones
- Brother Marvin Miller, substituting that Sunday as a pulpit minister for our congregation, gave a sermon that really caught my attention and caused me to start thinking
- By the time the service ended and I, along with all the other Fathers present, had received my Father's Day recognition "gift" booklet, I had resolved to share some of the information that caught my attention with others in my community and Facebook Friends...

# Love is the First Step Towards Being a Father

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- None of us are born with all the skills needed to be a Father, we all have to learn to be a Father...
- If no one takes the time to teach a man how to be a Father, or to show a man how to be a Father, it all evolves down to being a matter of “hit or miss” as to whether that man will ever be a “good” or “true” father
- The First step for anyone man to take to become a good father is to Learn to LOVE his children, and to LOVE his mate. Remember, God is LOVE, so reflect God when you try to be a Father.

# Fathers ARE Special and Greatly Admired By their Children...

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I THANK GOD FOR MY FATHER, AND STILL HOPE THAT I EVENTUALLY “GROW UP” TO BE LIKE HIM IN SO MANY WAYS THAT ARE IMPORTANT AND THAT I ADMIRE

MY FATHER ONLY WENT TO THE 4<sup>TH</sup> GRADE IN SCHOOL BECAUSE HE HAD TO GET INTO THE COTTON FIELDS IN MISSISSIPPI TO HELP SUPPORT HIS FAMILY- BUT I RECOGNIZE AND ADMIRE HIS ENDURING WISDOM AND COMMON SENSE THAT I STILL RESPECT AND RECALL AND TRY TO FOLLOW IN MY LIFE EVEN TODAY...



# My Father Was Always “There” for His Children, and Helped My Mother “Raise Us”

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My Father and Mother Had 7 Children Who Lived, and I was the Oldest, and, Importantly for the Southern Culture from Which My Family Evolved, I was the OLDEST SON

My Father and Mother Were Married for Over 50 years before he Died when HE WAS in his 80's... I got to be the “Best Man” when they Repeated their Wedding Vows on the 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary Celebration

My brother and sisters and I were very fortunate and blessed to have our father with us and loving us...



# Dad Was Always There, but Seldom Around

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Dad worked in a Local Foundry - hot dirty work, long hours, coming home tired and covered with soot late at night

On the Weekends Dad Drove an old truck around our town collecting other people's garbage... Sometimes he would take me with him to help.

He did so much trying to make ends meet to take care of his seven kids and still have something to put in the collection plate on Sunday mornings...



# Dad Was an Elder in the Church of Christ

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For Someone who only went to the 4<sup>th</sup> Grade, Dad sure knew his scriptures... He could quote from books in the Bible I did not know existed... <grin>

Dad made sure that all his Children were raised in the Church

The Only “Rules” followed in our Home were Dad’s Rules... And I still can remember (feel?) the consequences of breaking any of the really serious rules...

We ALL loved Dad very much, even though sometimes we did not agree with him or his view of the world... And just as much as we loved him, we respected him!

Dad and Mom sacrificed greatly for their kids, and they always made sure we knew that they LOVED us! And, we went to church EVERY Sunday that we slept under his roof...



We All Knew that we Could Count on Dad,  
and that He Loved Us...

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# It's A Wonderful Thing to Grow Up in A Home Where You have Both a Father and a Mother

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Here is a Picture of Dad with His Beautiful Bride at their 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary... Dad Showed His Love and Respect for Our Mother Every Day... We saw that, and we appreciated that!

And We all Learned to Respect and Honor Both Our Father and Our Mother Every Day... Under Possible Penalty of Early Death! <grin>

I have ALWAYS felt so sorry for kids who Don't have Both a Mother and a Father...



# Kids Try to Be Like Their Father, Whether Good or Bad

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Not only do Kids Try to Be Like their Father, But they Many Times Try Very Hard to Do Something that they think would make their Father Proud

Here is a Picture of Me returning from Washington DC Where I Had Just Met President Lyndon Johnson after being Appointed to Be a Presidential Scholar when I graduated from HS and went off to Michigan State University - the First one in my family to go beyond high school...

The Best Part of that memory? Seeing my Father (and my Mother) swell with pride and almost cry when they Met LBJ and shook his hand...



# Son, Don't Be an Educated Fool...

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I have had Many Successes in my life, and I think I have learned Many Things... I have 4 Master Degrees and a Juris Doctor Law Degree from UM Law School...

But some of my most important and enduring lessons in my Life came from my Father...

One thing He Always Told Me was “Don't Forget Where You Come From and Don't Grow Up to Be an Educated Fool...”

Kids can learn the most important things in Life from their Fathers... It's amazing to me how much smarter Dad seemed to Become as I grew up and Learned More About Life and People...



# So What Does This Have to Do with the Father's Day Sermon I Recently Experienced?

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My Father Was There for Me... I thank God for a Father Who I could Love and Respect

Just Like the Bible taught me, A Good Father Loves Unconditionally and Loves Very long...

Father's hurt when their children do wrong, but Fathers are quick to Forgive.

Children Eventually Grow Wise Enough to Want to Emulate or Be Like their Fathers

So this is the Lesson I expected to hear as the Father's Day Sermon



# Surprise, Surprise... Look Around the Community and You See the Kids... But Where are the Fathers??

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# The Lesson Comes From the US Census Statistics - not Matthew, Mark, Luke or John...

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## DID YOU KNOW...

\*Statistics from US Dept of Health/Census; Center for Disease Control; US Dept of Health and Human Services; US Dept of Justice; and other identified sources

63% OF YOUTH SUICIDES ARE FROM FATHERLESS HOMES - 5 TIMES THE AVERAGE

90% OF ALL HOMELESS AND RUNAWAY CHILDREN ARE FROM FATHERLESS HOMES - 32 TIMES THE AVERAGE



85% OF ALL CHILDREN WHO SHOW BEHAVIOR DISORDERS COME FROM FATHERLESS HOMES - 20 TIMES THE AVERAGE

80% OF THE RAPISTS WITH ANGER PROBLEMS COME FROM FATHERLESS HOMES - 14 TIMES THE AVERAGE

71% OF ALL HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS COME FROM FATHERLESS HOMES - 9 TIMES THE AVERAGE



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

71% of all high school dropouts come from fatherless homes - 9 times the average

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

Children with Fathers who are involved are more likely to get “A’s” in school

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

75% of all adolescent patients in chemical abuse centers come from fatherless homes - 10 times the average



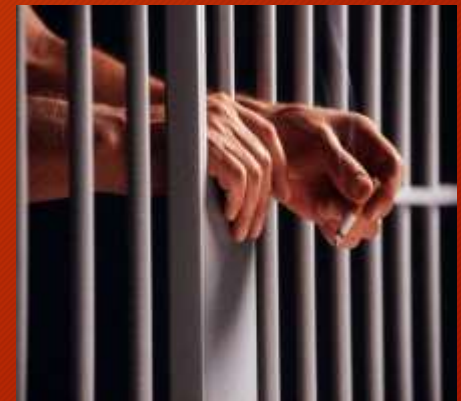
Researchers at Columbia University found that children living in two-parent households with a poor relationship with their fathers are 68% more likely to smoke, drink, or use drugs compared to all teens in two parent households; Teens in single mother households are at a 30% higher risk than those in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

70% of youths in state-operated institutions come from fatherless homes - 9 times the average (Dept of Justice, 1988)

Youths in father absent households still had significantly higher odds of incarceration than those in mother-father families

A US Dept of Justice survey in 2002 revealed that 39% of jail inmates lived in mother only households

A study of 13,986 women in prison showed that more than half grew up without their father





71% of pregnant teenagers “lack a father” in their lives

Daughters of single parents without a Father involved are 53% more likely to marry as teenagers, 711% more likely to have children as teenagers, 164% more likely to have pre-marital birth, and 92% more likely to get divorced themselves...

Adolescent girls raised in a 2 parent home with involved Fathers are significantly less likely to be sexually active than girls raised without involved fathers...

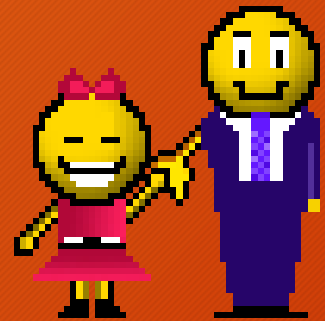
**So, What if anything does this Say about the  
“value” of a Father in a HOME?**

I am not arguing the correlation of these statistics from a cause and result viewpoint today... I will leave that exercise to those of you who question the value of a Father in a home with his Children

# Fatherhood by the Numbers

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So, Where are those Fathers??



More than 24 million children (34%) live absent their biological father

More than 20 million children (27%) live in single-parent homes

43% of first marriages dissolve within 15 years; about 60% of divorcing couples have children; and approximately 1 million children each year experience the divorce of their parents

Compared to children born within marriage, children born to cohabiting parents are three times as likely to experience father absence, and children born to unmarried, no-cohabiting parents are four times as likely to live in a father-absent home

About 40% of children in father-absent homes have not seen their father at all during the past year; 26% of absent fathers live in a different state than their children; and 50% of children living absent their father have never set foot in their father's home...

# The Lesson is Given... There is a Problem Here!

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So what is a Father? And What can a Father Mean for his Children?

Without Assessing Blame or Giving Useless Judgment, the Question Becomes What can be done about this problem, and Do we really CARE?

# Whether I Deserved it or Not, I Got My Father's Day Cards and Calls this Year from My Kids...

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## What is a Dad

*A dad is someone who  
wants to catch you before you fall  
but instead picks you up,  
brushes you off,  
and lets you try again.*

*A dad is someone who  
wants to keep you from making mistakes  
but instead lets you find your own way,  
even though his heart breaks in silence  
when you get hurt.*

*A dad is someone who  
holds you when you cry,  
scolds you when you break the rules,  
shines with pride when you succeed,  
and has faith in you even when you fail..*

©You Are My O<sup>2</sup>~  
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## I Even Got one from a Young Friend on Facebook Who is Struggling to be a Better Father to His Son than He Felt He had Himself When Growing Up...

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Drew XXXX Thank you, Mr. Howard Spence! Coming from a man of your stature, one of the few men in my life I have always respected, your kind words brought tears to my eyes, as well as guidance to the proper path. You see, I was/am fatherless and the so-called Dad and Step Dad in my life were, and still are, less than desirable role models. This resulted, in part, in a plethora of mis-steps I made earlier in my life. While I have completely reversed things for the better in recent years, as a 42 year-old man, oftentimes I am lost as to how to be a good parent. In these times, I turn to my Pastor, Dr. Melvin T. Jones, fb friends whose children have graduated college, etc. Under Dr. Jones' instruction, I have prayed to God specifically for, among other things, the wisdom, knowledge, and understanding for me to be a good parent. Well, you just bestowed upon me volumes of knowledge and wisdom in your above words and, I understand it beyond measure. I am not a super-religious person, but this post being evidence of God granting my prayers; my prayers will now be upgraded from being a good parent to an excellent one. Thank you, again, Mr. Spence. Peace.



# I Didn't Deserve THAT, But It Sure Felt Good!

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Don't be Discouraged, God Isn't Through with YOU yet...

I know I have made some big mistakes when raising my kids... Sometimes I felt like a Complete failure as a Father

It Really is NOT EASY to be a Father.

Be prayerful, seek help, be strong for your kids - even when they don't appreciate you...

Just Remember: "A saint is just a sinner who fell down, but then got up!" 😊

# Maybe I or Someone Else Got YOUR Father's Day Card this Year???

If so, start today to make sure you get your own Card next Father's day!



# Where Can a Father Get Help to Be a Father?

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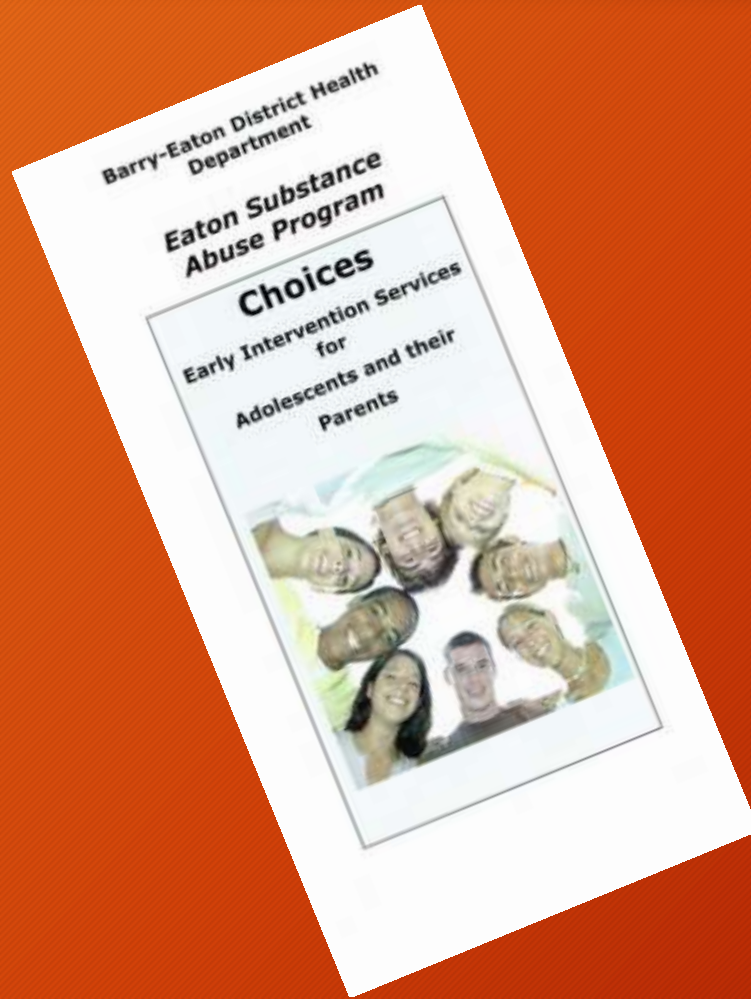
The Best Place to Start to Find Help or a Model to be a Good Father is in your Own Home if You were Lucky enough to have a Real, Present Father...

If you are a religious person, check with your minister, priest, rabbi, or religious advisor... Almost all Religions have important Teachings to share with their members about raising children and the roles of Mothers and Fathers

Believe it or Not, Even Government can help a father learn how to be a Real Father... I am involved in county government as a Commissioner, and I have learned that schools, social service agencies, health department staffs, and many other government employees have important job functions designed to help keep families together - and hopefully out of the Juvenile Justice or Foster care systems.

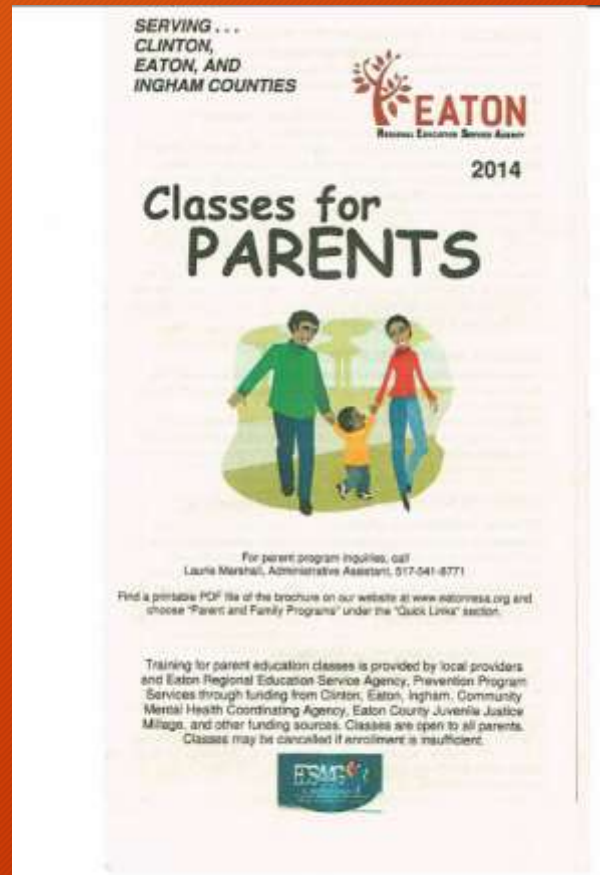
# Government and Schools Have Hundreds of Information and Training Pieces for Fathers!

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# There are Even Free or Low Cost Classes on Parenting that Fathers Can Take...

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# Schools are a Great Resource for Fathers Too!

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Get INVOLVED at your School and Use Your Tax Dollar Paid Resources to Help You Get the MOST you can from the Schools to Help you be a Better Father

Participate in School with your Son or Daughter - even if you are not in the Family Home. Be there for More than Just the Basketball game or Father Daughter Dance...

Get Counseling for your Kid if Needed... And maybe get Counseling for Yourself also.

Learn from professionals at School

Learn from the mistakes and successes of your Friends and Acquaintances in the Community to Help YOU be a better Father!

# If YOU Can't or Won't be a Father, WHO will Raise YOUR Kid?

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The Mother Alone?

Some Other Man who is Willing to Be the Father YOU should have Been... ?

Other Community Organizations Like Scouts, Big Brothers, 4-H, Turning Point, Community Civic Groups and Fraternities?

The Dept of Social Services or a Foster Home Parent?

The Juvenile Justice System which could be just another step on the School to Prison Pipeline so many of our Kids have already been given tickets to ride...?

The Community? The "Village," Your Kid's Friends in the Street?

Yes, As the Old African Proverb States, It Does  
Take a “Village” to Raise a Child...

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But Somewhere in that  
Village there still has  
to be at least a few  
**FATHERS!**

You are in the Village...  
Can you be a Father to  
**YOUR** own Children?



# Do You Deserve to Be a Father? Do YOU Care?

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Having a Baby is Easy...

Being a FATHER is not.

YOU Have to Earn that Father's Day Call or Card Each and Every Year that YOUR Kid is loving you or needing you...

Kids Don't Grow up... Sometimes the Fathers just die.

# Been There... Done That. God Isn't Through with Me or YOU yet!

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I'm an Old Man, and I have "Been Around." But I am still learning how to be a better Man and maybe an OK parent. I look at my own mistakes in parenting, and maybe I can say something to some one else that will encourage them to be a better Father and to Avoid some of the Mistakes I made in my own Life with my own Children.

I will never forget the night when one of my children told me I was the sorriest excuse for a Father she had ever seen. <ouch> Yes, I cried that night, and wondered what I should do better or differently.

In my law practice I have agonized with families whose kids have encountered trouble in the juvenile justice system, and watched the families react - knowing in my heart that the kids might be having problems because of problems or absence of a Father.

# Sometimes as a Father YOU Want to Give Up

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I Tried to Mentor or be a Surrogate Father to this Young Black Kid who Lived in the Apartments Behind my Condo... He was Raised in a Single Family Home with Little or No Positive Involvement from his Biological Father who Lived in Atlanta.

The Kid Idolized his absent Father, and Sometimes I got Angry at the Kid and/or his Father because I Knew that the Father must Really not Care for his own son...



# Be Patient, Be Prayerful, Be Realistic, Be a Father...

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That Kid, and Each of His Three Friends in the Picture, came from Single Parent homes in the Black or Blatino Communities here in Lansing... They were doing the “best” that they could, and not realizing they could be something “better” than I thought they were on track to be...

He was a really tough, calloused case... He’d lie about anything, steal a little, smoke a lot of “trees and blunts,” run around with his hormones out of control continually, but still I liked him and had hope for him... I gave up a few times. He kept coming back for help when I thought he had disappeared and died.

But that Kid gave me a Father’s Day card (figuratively) after 4 years of working with him when he called me out of the blue and told me he could never say it before, but he Loved me and he knew I was the only man who had ever tried to do anything good for him.

# I Got More Father's Day Cards than I Deserved This Year

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Trying to Be a Father is Definitely NOT Easy... Even Fathers in Ozzie and Harriet Type Families Face Daily Challenges that They May Not Share

I Saw an Advertisement for Foster Care Families a Few Weeks ago... It Said, "You may not be Perfect, But you are Perfect for Some Kid that Needs a Family."

I thought About that... I realize that Failure is sad, but Acceptable - Just as Long as When you Fall, YOU get back up!

**IF YOU DIDN'T GET YOUR FATHER'S DAY CARD THIS YEAR, OR IF YOU DIDN'T DESERVE THE CARD YOU DID GET, RESOLVE THAT NEXT YEAR YOU WILL EARN A FATHER'S DAY CARD - WHETHER YOU GET ONE OR NOT.**