

# STRAIGHT TALK FOR MEN

## WE MUST SAVE MEN

By Melvin L. Latimer

The U.S. Bureau of Prisons just recently reported that there are nearly 2 million (over 1 million are African American men) incarcerated in our federal and state prisons/jails in the U.S. alone. That represents an alarming 2.4% of all men in the U.S. and 6% of all African American males in the U.S.

Most of the damage committed in society is widely contributed to by men.

- 91% of drunk drivers – men
- 90% of parental abuse – men
- 80% of suicide deaths – men
- Boys between the ages 10-18 are 4 to 5 times more likely to commit suicide than girls – future men
- Men are increasingly isolated from their homes due to work or divorce.
- Over 60% of high school drop-outs are boys – future men
- 80% serious drug addictions – men
- 80% of America's homeless and 35% of those are Vietnam Veterans – men
- Men are 43 times more likely than women to be admitted to psychiatric hospitals and 25 times as likely to end up in prison.
- Nearly 80% of all homicide victims – men
- 50% of domestic homicides committed against –men
- Life expectancy for men is 7 years less than the life expectancy for a women.

Consequently, what a man does or does not do in his relationship with his family can affect up to four generations this being the determining factor in the make-up of ones' family tree. The problem in our society is the state of our men! We spend hundreds of millions of dollars to save our water-friendly pals, air-abiding creatures, and our rain forests, but sadly we do very little when it comes to saving the world's greatest commodity – men. Tragically, men are slowly becoming endangered species. If we are going to bring about change in America than we must save men.

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In closing, I challenge every religious, federal and state leaders to pour all necessary resources to save our men. If we do not save men, America has very little chance of survival in this new millennium.

God help save men!

### FATHERLESS HOMES BREED VIOLENCE

According to a new publication called Getting Men Involved: The Newsletter of the Bay Area Male Involvement Network, Spring 1997:

Begin quote:

- 63% of youth suicides are from fatherless homes (Source: U.S. D.H.H.S., Bureau of the Census)
- 90% of all homeless and runaway children are from fatherless homes
- 85% of all children that exhibit behavioral disorders come from fatherless homes (Source: Center for Disease Control)
- 80% of rapists motivated with displaced anger come from fatherless homes (Source: Criminal Justice & Behavior, Vol 14, p. 403-26, 1978.)
- 71% of all high school dropouts come from fatherless homes (Source: National Principals Association Report on the State of High Schools.)
- 75% of all adolescent patients in chemical abuse centers come from fatherless homes (Source: Rainbows for all God's Children.)
- 70% of juveniles in state-operated institutions come from fatherless homes (Source: U.S. Dept. of Justice, Special Report, Sept 1988)

- 85% of all youths sitting in prisons grew up in a fatherless home (Source:Fulton Co. Georgia jail populations, Texas Dept. of Corrections 1992)

(Because only a portion of each age group grew up in a fatherless home,) these statistics translate to mean that children from fatherless homes are:

- 5 times more likely to commit suicide
- 32 times more likely to run away
- 20 times more likely to have behavioral disorders
- 14 times more likely to commit rape
- 9 times more likely to drop out of high school
- 10 times more likely to abuse chemical substances
- 9 times more likely to end up in a state-operated institution
- 20 times more likely to end up in prison.

*(Fathering Magazine)*

### HOPE FOR STEPFATHERS

If you're a stepfather, you're part of the most rapidly emerging group of fathers in our nation. Recent estimates have placed the number of divorced mothers who remarry at around 80%. Every new stepfather walks into an emotional mine field as he tries to simultaneously recover from the wounds in his past, build a new marriage with his wife, and settle into this new family situation with his wife's children and possibly children from his previous marriage. And all this takes place in the aftermath of your wife's ex-husband, who still seems to linger mystically – if not physically – in the

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shadows of this new household. It isn't surprising that a large percentage of abuse cases occur in step or mixed families.

But there are those of you who are truly instruments of hope and healing to fatherless homes, and you deserve praise for your willingness to step in and be a father figure for those who have none. You face a tremendous challenge.

As a stepfather, you're really more like a mentor than a father. You're a helper, a caretaker, a steward of sorts, who gives the children a needed perspective and becomes an important source of strength as they grow and mature. You don't actually have the responsibility that your wife does in raising them-though you can earn that responsibility over time-but you do possess a potential to influence them that is equal to, though different from, your wife's.

Here are five ways you can ease the tension of being a stepfather:

1. **Keep encouraging the children's relationship with their biological father.** What often happens in second (or third) marriages is that everyone in the household tries to forget the ex-husband completely. This new family has a good chance of working, you say, and you don't need to stir up memories and bring back all the tears. But no matter how hard you try, you can't forget him, and neither can the children. If you try to ignore his existence, trying to keep his bones in the closet, so to speak, you can be sure that sooner or later,

probably during a confrontation, your children will not only drag those bones out, but will use them as weapons against you and your wife.

The better alternative is to be open and honest about him in your household. If he is still trying to be involved with his kids, encourage him in that, remembering that he is their father, and that his children have a need to be reconciled to him, and to feel at peace about their relationship to him. You may grow to have a lasting and rewarding relationship with your stepchildren, but setting yourself up as the "new father" and asking them to accept you as a replacement to their real father is only asking for turbulence in the future, if not right away.

As a stepfather, you can never truly be a father to your children. This presents you with some real obstacles, but also gives you certain advantages. You don't have blood connections to your children, so there won't be the natural emotional attachment, but the pressure and expectations biological real fathers face won't be there either. You may have more difficulty establishing close relationships with the children, but whatever you do accomplish with them will be a bonus instead of a half-fulfilled obligation.

2. **Discuss discipline and exercise it with extreme caution.** Perhaps the greatest point of tension for a new stepfather is knowing how and to what extent you should be involved in the discipline of your

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children. Here are two examples that illustrate right and wrong ways of handling the situation:

Janice married Reggie because they needed each other. Both of them had problems from their previous marriages, and they decided they could help each other heal. Reggie believed in strict discipline, and so naturally he began to take control with Janice's kids, and Janice felt it was right to yield to him. But Reggie was bringing expectations upon her children for which she had never prepared them, and instead of protecting her children from his heavy-handed discipline and criticism, she gave him full authority over them. He had taken it upon himself to impress upon them his own views regarding their music and many of their other habits-things that she had never really worried about in the past.

As you would expect, the children didn't take to Reggie very well. The family entered counseling and long after he moved in, one son became a delinquent, and one of Janice's daughters underwent psychiatric care and was eventually placed in another home. This family demonstrates the major and lasting fallout when a stepfather dives in or is pushed into a role as disciplinarian with his new children.

Norm and Trudy are a far different story. After Trudy's divorce, she and her kids were utterly disillusioned. When Norm, who had never been married, met Trudy and they began

to think about marriage, their plans included her four children. They discussed his role in discipline-he would be there to back up Trudy and support her decisions, and if he had any questions or disagreements he would bring them up in private, away from the kids.

This kind of sensitivity on Norm's part not only won him a loving wife, but her kids viewed him as an answer to their prayers. His devotion to Trudy has strengthened their marriage and her children's sense of security in the household. Men like Norm should give us all hope that there are men who can provide children with the male leaders that they need.

- 3. Schedule regular times away from the kids as a couple.** Even more than in first marriages, it is vital that you and your wife spend time alone, strengthening and revitalizing your marriage. Besides the benefits you will see as a couple, your stepchildren will take great comfort in your commitment to one another. They've already seen one marriage end, and some children even blame themselves for it. Their outlook on life each day will be greatly improved if they sense love and commitment between their mother and stepfather at home.

These outings can also serve as times of reassessment and planning as a parenting team. If all wives are ambassadors of sorts between fathers and their children, they are

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even more essential where stepfathers are concerned. Your wife is really the key person in the situation. She knows you well, and she knows her kids. She also knows the children's father; his influence, and his strengths and weaknesses. This can be a time of real enlightenment in which you ask for feedback regarding your relationships with the children, compare notes, and gain valuable insights into the kids' behavior.

- 4. Practice acceptance.** It's good to realize from the beginning that this new family will take some getting used to. It will take time for them, as well. There will be times when you feel like an outsider. That's why it's so important for you to take the initiative and show the children unconditional acceptance. Be flexible when it comes to mannerisms and personal habits, and be a healthy model of someone who cheerfully adapts to your new family members as they are-faults and all. Your openness and willingness to deal with their idiosyncrasies and unique family atmosphere will be contagious, and will encourage them to accept you more easily.
- 5. Don't force her children to call you "Dad."** In marrying you, your wife has brought her children some new (and not entirely welcome) obligations and commitments that they have not chosen to make. Forcing them to accept you on such

terms will only cause resentment, especially with older kids. Instead, allow the children to define their own comfort zones as they relate to you.. Your desire for a quick and smooth transition is natural, but it will be best served by patience, as you earn the respect and love of your wife's children in their time.

*(Fathering Magazine)*

### TESTICULAR CANCER

**By: Dedrick Russell**

What you're about to read will make most men cringe.

It's a story that contains touchy information that attacks men where it hurts. For men of all walks of life and of virtually every age group the area of the body housing the "family jewels", as some would call them, is a most treasured and guarded area.

But there is a disease that attacks men in this very prized region. It's painful issue to talk about and most men either skirt around discussions of this potentially deadly disease or are completely ignorant of it. But we're going to tackle it head on because this story could save your life. Later on in the story we're also going to show you ways to check yourself.

Testicular cancer is a somewhat painless disease that can slip up on you. It accounts for one percent of all cancers in men. The American Cancer Society reports that last year about 7,600 men were diagnosed with testicular cancer and 400 men probably died from this silent killer.

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As you know that testicles are vital organs that make up part of the male reproductive system. Testicles or testes hang in the scrotum, a sac located right beneath the penis.

They are separated into right and left regions, produce the male hormone, testosterone, and are a passageway by which sperm cells travel in their mission to fertilize the female egg in reproduction.

Have you ever experienced a pain, swelling or hardness in one of your testicles?

Have you had a heaviness in your scrotum or even a slight pain in your groin?

Have you felt a painless lump on your testicle? Or, have you ever awakened in the morning and experienced a tenderness in your breast and wondered what was going on? Well my brothers, these are symptoms of testicular cancer.

There is no definite way to determine who gets testicular cancer and who doesn't, but doctors have determined that men between the ages of 15-35 are most at risk.

White men are four times as likely to get diagnosed with testicular cancer than Black men. This can be primarily attributed to the fact that black men aren't as diligent about seeking regular medical check-ups.

Men who work as miners, oil and gas workers, food and beverage processing

workers, leather workers, and utility and janitorial workers are at risk.

Researchers say it could be the high level of chemicals these workers deal with that initiates the development of this type of cancer. Also men with HIV, especially those with the AIDS virus are high at risk as well.

Moreover, men with a history of testicular cancer in their family should be on alert too because their likelihood for development is high.

Most specifically though, doctors point out that those who are the most seriously at risk are men who have a condition known as cryptorchidism (*pronounced kriptor-chidizm*).

This happens during the time the male child is being formed in the womb. While still a fetus, testicles of the male normally form inside the abdomen and descend into the scrotum. But, sometimes during this process the testicles get stuck in the groin area and don't descend into the sac. Men with this happening to them are more likely to get testicular cancer.

Once cancer is detected, doctors begin chemotherapy and radiation treatments which can wipe out the man's ability to produce sperm.

In worst case scenarios, doctors may remove the affected testicles altogether in a procedure called an orchiectomy (*pro-nounced or kee-ek-to-mee*).

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I can imagine by now, you are saying that this is some pretty serious stuff!

But all is not lost fellas. You can wipe the sweat from your brow and crawl out from your ball of fear because testicular cancer is highly curable if detected early. According to the American Cancer Society, although there is no known way to prevent it, the overall cure rate for testicular cancer is 90 percent.

Whew!!!

They also recommend that just as women do monthly self-examinations of their breasts, men do monthly self-examinations of their testicles and surrounding areas.

It could save your life!

Many men are unaware of a cancer that means so much in producing life. That's why we brothers have to stay on guard and educate each other about this disease that the enemy uses and will continually keep trying to use, along with other sicknesses and diseases, in an attempt to cut us off and to kill our seed.

If you want more information about Testicular Cancer call the American Cancer Society at 1-800-ACS-2345 or visit their [website at www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

### HOW TO DO A TESTICULAR SELF-EXAMINATION

Testicular cancer is among the easiest to cure when detected early. A simple monthly self-examination can help catch it before it starts.

Become familiar with the normal size, shape and weight of your testicles to detect any changes.

It's best to examine yourself during a shower or bath, at that time the scrotal skin is relaxed.

#### **First:**

Examine your TESTICLES. Slowly rolling each between the thumb and fingers. Try to find any hard, non-sensitive lumps.

#### **Second:**

Examine the EPIDIDYMIS for lumps. It is a crescent-shaped cord behind each testicle. This area is tender so do not be alarmed.

#### **Third:**

Examine the VAS (the sperm-carrying tube which extends from the epididymis) of each testicle.

#### **Symptoms**

Early on, testicular cancer can be symptomless. When symptoms do occur, they include:

- Lump on testicular cancer, epididymis or vas that may feel like a kernel of uncooked rice or a small hard pea.
- Enlargement of a testicle.
- Heavy sensation and/or dull ache in the testicles, groin or abdomen area.

Report any of these finding to a doctor. Other conditions produce similar symptoms.

*(Church Boy Magazine–Fall 1999)*

**MEN ON A MISSION**  
**WORLDWIDE MINISTRIES**

*Men On A Mission* is a Bible-based, (non-profit organization), Christ-centered ministry dedicated to helping men become Godly influences in their homes, families, communities and the world.

As the founder of *Men On A Mission*, my goal is to reach men through:

- education empowerment;
- financial empowerment;
- substance abuse counseling;
- alternative lifestyle counseling;
- fellowships;
- sports enrichment;
- fresh start programs;
- youth mentoring.

*Men On A Mission* requires no dues or other financial obligations. *Men On A Mission* is, rather, supported solely through charitable contributions.

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For Prayer and Counseling Write:

Melvin L. Latimer  
Men On A Mission Worldwide Ministries  
P.O. Box 452  
Temple Hills, Maryland 20757  
Or  
E-Mail Address: latimer2k@netzero.net