

Liberty University School of Divinity

**Depression in Black Men: One Church's Solution**

A Thesis Project Submitted to  
The Faculty of Liberty University School of Divinity  
In candidacy for the Degree of  
Doctor of Ministry

By

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**Thesis Project Approval Sheet**

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## THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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Liberty University School of Divinity, 2019

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### **Title**

Depression in Black Men: One Church's Solution

### **Topic**

How The Black Church Has Helped African American Men Deal with Depression Through A Pentecostal Experience

### **Abstract**

This dissertation examines the Black Church's influence on Pentecostal African-American men who are depressed, and how the church may assist these men to heal from the wounds of despair through a Pentecostal experience. While many Pentecostal African-American men have matriculated through the ranks of leadership, establishing successful businesses, churches, ministries, and organizational denominations; they are teetering on the edge of an emotional and spiritual breakdown. Researchers have found that African-American men are understudied and underdiagnosed as it pertains to depression. Eight African-American Pentecostal men were interviewed and given questionnaires to examine how depression affected them while maintaining leadership roles in their perspective places. After implementing a research-based intervention, participants explained their understanding and epiphanies regarding depression in men. The themes that emerged from this project were that men lacked an understanding of depression, were often in denial about their own depressed state and didn't know where to access help (i.e., available resources and counseling tools). This study implies that Black men need more education and developmental programs that build their awareness of what depression looks

like and how to address depression in Black men. Additionally, African-American men could particularly benefit from structures and programs that provide hands-on mentors for men that are struggling with depression. Future studies might include how to build programs within Pentecostal Black Churches that help Black men struggling with depression, along with identifying best practices for interventions located within communities of faith, particularly for men in leadership roles within the church.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### Ministry Context

The context of ministry whereby this doctoral research will be analyzed and completed is in the city of Detroit, Michigan. The geographical location of the research site is Refuge Temple Cathedral of His Glory C.O.G.I.C. located at 12227 Findlay St. Detroit, Michigan 48205. Refuge Temple is a growing congregation of diverse people. The church is strategically located in the inner city of Detroit. It is a church with a burden to restore and bring restoration to the family unit through proclaiming the Word of God. The predominant culture of this church is African American Pentecostalism, commonly comprised of churches that center on humanity, develop specific rules, rituals, and protocols. It was Walter Pitts who stated, “A major concern of the contemporary Afro-Baptist church is to maintain tradition. One cornerstone of that tradition is the ritual structure that has been at the church’s core since its beginnings before the Revolutionary War.”<sup>1</sup>

The implication is that rituals and traditions are the substrates of African American churches whereby members are dedicated and committed to impart these same traditions to others. Even more, Pitts goes on to say, “Both older congregants and preachers want to preserve the ritual performance engendered by that structure, especially the church’s highly distinctive styles of praying and preaching.”<sup>2</sup> The inference is that the African American church is known for its exuberant worship and lively singing, channeled through the ritualistic organizational

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<sup>1</sup> Walter Pitts, “Keep The Fire Burning” *Journal of American Academy of Religion* 56, no. 1 (1988): 77-97.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

standard of the church; whereby African American men find stability and structure for everyday living.

Interestingly enough, the rituals most predictable and central to this contextual ministry are those of singing, sacrificial giving, dancing and hearing the preached Word of God. Other such activities instrumental in shaping people who participate and influence what this group thinks of itself, are those strong denominational allegiances to monthly fellowship and organizational leadership.

Refuge Temple strongly encourages their members to meet and interact with their jurisdictional partners to enhance wisdom and strengthen their local assembly. Moreover, the symbols that best describe this ministry are that of garnered wheat, a rope of grain, a notable date and rain. The significance of collected corn represents all of the people of the Church of God in Christ, Inc. The rope signifies what holds the shaft of wheat together representing the Founding Father of the Church. The importance of the symbolic date is that of their founding father baptismal ceremony and that of the first gathering of their organization. Lastly, the symbol of rain denotes the latter rain or the end-time revivals, which brought about the emergence of their church with other Pentecostal believers.

The events that carry meaning linking them to the ideas of the group are those of their yearly Auxiliaries In Ministry, Men and Women's Convention and the end of year National Conventions which are held annually in St. Louis, Missouri. These annual meetings connote spiritual renewal and the continual fortifying of the brotherhood. It was the Apostle Paul who wrote, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but

exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”<sup>3</sup> The implication is that Paul was urging the early church to remain in constant fellowship as manifested signs of the coming of the Lord Jesus drew near. Therefore, the routine practices and styles of relationship that best capture what this congregation values most, is that of the attendance at weekly routine worship service. The cost of this style of connection in their ministry context is that attending weekly services together helps to strengthen the bond of family and friendship in the Lord.

Moreover, the beliefs and ideas that best describe this ministry’s thought pattern on how a practicing member ought to be, are that of lights in their communities that affect the surrounding atmosphere. It was Roy Winbush who affirmed, “A Christian Church should be recognized in the community in which it is located, as pursuing and maintaining a higher standard of morality than that of a worldly society. It should be the friend, defender, an example of all the virtues and the uncompromising opponent of all wrong and evil.”<sup>4</sup> The insinuation is that members are admonished to live lives that are above reproach whereby secular society is held accountable for their sins. Following this further, Winbush continues to report, “A church member’s department, as an individual or as a part of a corporate society, should be able to command the respect of the world and as the salt of the earth, church members recognize their commission and are true to it.”<sup>5</sup> The interpretation is that practicing members are urged to hold to the belief of holy living which fosters respect as true believers in Christ.

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<sup>3</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the King James Version Bible (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994).

<sup>4</sup> Roy Winbush, Church of God In Christ: Official Manual (Tennessee: Board of Publication, 1973), 88.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 88.

Furthermore, the other social characteristic of this ministry is that of the breaking of bread. As recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, “And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.”<sup>6</sup> The connection is like that of the early church, the breaking of bread was a form of strengthening fellowship and community amongst the brotherhood. In like manner Refuge Temple is intentional about fellowshiping over refreshments as a church family. The specific context of this ministry is that of a medium-sized congregation in the metropolitan area of Michigan.

Even more, the historical information that is helpful to this research is that Refuge Temple has had an affiliation with their organization for many years. Winbush goes on to report in 1897, while seeking a standard name which would distinguish this church from others of similar a title, the name “The Church of God in Christ” was revealed to Bishop Mason while he was walking along a certain street in Little Rock, Arkansas.”<sup>7</sup> The underlying meaning is that Refuge Temple’s foundation is based upon the beginning origins of their founding father's faith which has helped to stabilize their reputation.

What’s more, my relationship with Refuge Temple is that of being a part-time office administrator while completing my studies at Liberty University. Under this ministry’s leadership team, I am considered a watch care member until this project has ended. I attend weekly Sunday morning services while assisting the pastor with his weekly school of theology.

Interestingly enough, the historical and or traditional events of this group which are associated with this project is that of men being the prominent leaders of the African American

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<sup>6</sup> Acts 2:46.

<sup>7</sup> Roy Winbush, Church of God in Christ: Official Manual (Tennessee, Board of Publication, 1973), 88.

church. Pitts confirms, “The congregation ranges in age from infants to the middle-aged and elderly church officials who preside over the deacon bench, church organizations, and pulpit. Women constitute the majority of the congregation; roughly one-third of the members are male.”<sup>8</sup> The notion is that of the one-third of men that accounted for the membership of the African American church in times past; these are they who officiated and led the congregation towards spiritual maturity.

The traditional event which correlates with this project is that of the speaking, singing and exuberant praise which directly affects the psychological mindset of men who are depressed in the African American church. Pitts makes clear that, “The Afro-Baptist church ritual is divided into two parts; the Devotion and the Service. These parts are metaphoric frames that systematically combine to provide the ritual’s structure. In other words, the religious experience that makes up the African American church is that of the natural and spiritual components which help to bring about a greater maturity in God. Even more so, Pitts expresses, “By progressing from one frame to the other within the ritual; congregants are psychologically transformed and emotionally satisfied by the ritual’s end.”<sup>9</sup> The inference is, through the mean of spiritual traditions, African American men are transformed emotionally and mentally into healthy leaders within their communities.

Besides the activities occurring regularly that connect to this research project is that of the Refuge Temple monthly men’s meeting. The structure of these meetings consists of twenty-five men gathering together to discuss issues of the heart as well as the foundational tools of male leadership. The resources that are available regarding finances, people, time and influence

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<sup>8</sup> Walter Pitts, “Keep the Fire Burning” *American Academy of Religion* 56, no. 1 (1988): 77-97.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

are that of one set leader guiding the discussions at hand while offering spiritual concepts that edify, exhort and comfort the male soul. The time made available through the men's meeting are their monthly meetings and social outings.

### **Statement of the Problem**

This project will address how one African American church has influenced African American men who have been depressed. It explains the issues that persist amongst African American men who have struggled for a long time with downheartedness. To begin with, a central problem amongst African American men, as it pertains to the church, is the perception of its importance in conjunction with their personal and spiritual lives. Recent studies have shown a decline among African American men in church attendance. According to Collins and Perry, who both report on the role of the Black church, "The increasing secularization in black communities has reduced the influence of religion and has contributed to the decline in the central importance of black churches."<sup>10</sup> The implication is that because of the transformation of society in and around black men, and the challenges thereof caused a decrease in significance towards the black church.

Moreover, due to generational impartation of insensitivity on spiritual matters, black men have frequented their local churches less than their parental authorities. Collins and Perry noted: "Black adults were less likely than their parents and grandparents to attend church, participate in a church activity outside of worship services, read religious books, pray or ask others to pray for them."<sup>11</sup> The inference is those parental leaders of the past viewed the church as a daily activity

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<sup>10</sup> Wanda Collin and Armon, "Black Men's Perspectives on the Role of the Black Church in Healthy Relationship Promotion and Family Stability" *Journal of Social Work and Christianity* 42, no. 4 (2015): 431.

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

whereby the entire family participated therein. Sadly, the significance of attending church has become less critical to African American men than ever before.

More importantly, the leading cause for the absence of black males attending church is due in part to the, “Conflicted imagery between masculinity and femininity within the rankings of leadership in the black church.”<sup>12</sup> As a result, it is formulated that black men are searching for value and placement within the church. It was Stephen Finley who addressed the issues of conflict by stating: “Black men’s attempts to find meaning in the Black Church arises due to a conflict between the homoerotic, and a problematic masculine-body construct.”<sup>13</sup> The understood thought is that Black males are conflicted over the concept of expressing emotions towards a male God. In other words, men’s expression of love towards a male Savior is different than that of a female’s outward communication of love. Explaining this concept more deeply Finley expresses, “Christian worship requires openness and submission to a male God and a male Savior (Christ). An erotic circumstance that makes the heterosexual Black male quest for meaning exceedingly difficult, particularly given prevalent notions of masculinity that are understood as dominant, closed, and active rather than passive and submissive.”<sup>14</sup> The explanation is that African American men have been programmed to view honesty and emotional expressions as traits of femininity and weakness. Therefore, the fear of being stigmatized as such has barracked black men from receiving all the fullness the church has to offer regarding healing from depression.

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<sup>12</sup> Delroy Hall, “The Alienation of Black Men from Black Majority Churches” *Journal of Contextual Praxis* 78, no. 7 (2018): 435.

<sup>13</sup> Stephen Finley, “Homoeroticism and The African-American Heterosexual Male: Quest For Meaning in the Black Church,” *Journal of Black Theology* 5, no. 3 (2007): 312.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*



Moreover, the stigmatization of depression amongst African American men has become a formidable struggle within its culture. In the eyes of black men, the imagery of despair is a weakness. One study clarified the culture stigmatization surrounding depression in African American by citing, “In the wake of the historical, cultural trauma of slavery, a widely held perception among African Americans surrounds the belief that the presence of mental illness, more specifically depression, denotes a sign of weakness.”<sup>15</sup> Regrettably, this perception has become the driving force within black men who suffer from depression. They are unable to detach from the unspoken rule of don’t ask or tell even to the point of mental and emotional breakdown.

Expressing her final thoughts Wimberley states, “The African American cultural stigma of depression as a sign of weakness causes African Americans to believe they must uphold the image of strength or resilience at the expense of negating one’s own psychological or emotional health.”<sup>16</sup> The implication is that black men will pretend with strong convictions that they do not struggle with depression. They will deny the very existence of prolonged sadness and despair even at the expense of emotional and mental collapse.

With this in mind, a technical terminology that perhaps could be used incorrectly if not clarified within this project is that of the Black church. Research explains the black church as a group of people who have a standard social and spiritual connection. It is Derek Robertson and Janee Avent who affirm, “One hallmark of the Black Church is the social bonding or fictive kinship. Fictive kinship is defined as connections between members of a group who are unrelated

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<sup>15</sup> Wynnetta Wimberley, “The Culture of Stigma Surrounding Depression In The African American Family And Community” *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 25, no. 1 (2015): 24.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

by blood or marriage but who nonetheless share reciprocal social or economic relationships.”<sup>17</sup> Even more, the definition of the black church is viewed as a family unit. Again, Robertson and Avent assert that the black church, “...often refers to one another as a church family, regarding each other as extensions of the nuclear family.”<sup>18</sup> The interpretation is that the summation of the black church is that of a group of people who gather together and have come to know one another in a more meaningful manner such as a family unit rather than church members.

The understood thought of the term Black man is interchangeably used as African American male to speak to the cultural norms of this subject respectfully. It was Jonathan Lassiter who best stated, “This author intentionally uses the term African American instead of the term Black to refer to the culture of the population discussed throughout this paper. African American is a more specific term that highlights culture as well as race.”<sup>19</sup> With this in mind, the problem is that there has been little to no research completed as to the findings of depression within African Americans who are professing Christians at heart. Studies have shown there has not been adequate research within years. Hammond makes clear, “Amid increased attention, African American men’s depression is rarely studied. For example, a recent review identified only 17 articles between 1980 and 2004 that explicitly examined depression risk factors among

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<sup>17</sup> Derek Roberston, Janee Avent, “African American Counselor-In-Training, The Black Church, and Lesbian-Gay, and Bisexual-Affirmative Counseling: Considerations for Counselor Education Programs” *Journal of Counseling & Values* 61, no. 2 (2016): 225.

<sup>18</sup> Derek Roberston, Janee Avent, “African American Counselor-In-Training, The Black Church, and Lesbian-Gay, and Bisexual-Affirmative Counseling: Considerations for Counselor Education Programs” *Journal of Counseling & Values* 61, no. 2 (2016): 225.

<sup>19</sup> Jonathan Lassiter, “Extracting Dirt From Water: A Strengths-Based Approach to Religion for African American Same-Gender-Loving Men” *Journal of Religion Health* 53, (2014): 179.

African American men.”<sup>20</sup> The implication is that research on the subject of depression in African American men has been studied only in limited parameters whereby black communities become conscious of the hidden problems within.

### **Purpose Statement**

Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative DMIN research study on Depression in Black Men: One Church’s Solution, is to analyze and implement a program that addresses the needs of Black men who are Pentecostal by experience and are in despair. This program will be established and executed by a local church Men’s Department which will consist of an open yet private environment for brethren to share and heal from grief.

This research study aims to validate that male camaraderie can aid in healing matters of the heart. Studies show when fraternity cultivates, mutual trust and friendship develop. It was Maxim Bolt who explains the plight of black men working under extreme conditions. He asserts, “A rough camaraderie characterizes these picking teams, often consisting of young men. A picking day entails a long string of attempts to generate and maintain intensity, of trailer after trailer, for up to ten hours.”<sup>21</sup> The author goes on to say, “This self-imposed work pace, and the generation of a work rhythm, rely heavily on a particular mode of interaction in which dynamic productivity is connected with a virile, physically powerful masculinity.”<sup>22</sup> The interpretation is that because of working under such conditions of strain, a bond of unity develops that helps with

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<sup>20</sup> Wizdom Hammond, “Taking It Like A Man: Masculine Role Norms as Moderators of the Racial Discrimination-Depressive Symptoms Association Among African American Men” *Journal of Public Health*, Vol. 102 no. 2 (2012): 232-241.

<sup>21</sup> Maxim Bolt, “Camaraderie and its Discontents: Class Consciousness, Ethnicity, and Divergent Masculinities Among Zimbabwean Migrant Farmworkers in South Africa” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 36, no.2 (2010): 385-390.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 386.

growth and productivity in the workspace. Bolts adds, “Narratives of misogyny and sexual promiscuity are established as means by which male workers can relate to one another and build a sense of collectivism through the work process.”<sup>23</sup> Likewise, the men of Refuge Temple will experience camaraderie through the expression of one another’s struggles with depression.

This paper seeks to address how the image of masculinity within the context of ministry has affected the process of healing from grief. Research has shown that Black men internalize masculinity in such ways that affect their performances in life. It was Dante Pelzer who analyzed, “Masculinity is varied, complex, and appears differently across racial and ethical lines. Therefore, a broad brush cannot paint the full picture of the Black male experience in America. Black men experience masculinity differently as a result of their multiple identities – age group, sexuality, spirituality, or socioeconomic status.”<sup>24</sup> The implication is that the African American men’s image of masculinity is shaped and molded by many different variations of life which affect how strength versus weakness is perceived as it pertains to depression. Furthermore, the author goes on to explain, “This narrative is often rationalized and internalized by Black male youth and can be seen materialized during the college years. The collegiate Black male experience is marred with stories of poor academic performance and apathy toward seeking leadership opportunities.”<sup>25</sup> The connection is that African American men who are depressed will most often hide behind a false masculinity only to conceal their lack of performance in reaching beyond the veil of despair.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Dante Pelzer, “Creating a New Narrative: Reframing Black Masculinity for College Men” *Journal of Negro Education* 85, no. 1 (2016): 16.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

This project will also call into question one Black church's contribution to men who are living in despair. Studies have shown that the church, as a whole, has been effective in succoring Black men in times of crisis. It was Delroy Hall who reported, "In Black majority churches there is a huge emphasis on membership participation or lay leadership. The mentoring project now being employed by community centers, schools, and education services in an attempt to reverse the high number of education exclusion of young Black boys has been in operation within church structures for years."<sup>26</sup> The implication is that similar to organizations which have aided Black communities in times past, the Black church has been the foundation whereby Black men have been able to thrive and grow.

Further, the Black church has been the basis whereby African American men have excelled in education and learning occasions. Again, Hall agrees, "The overall conclusion was that the Black churches had their place within the Black community and that they provided places of learning, opportunities to develop and encouragement."<sup>27</sup> The implication is that the Black church has been a second home for black men to understand their identity in Christ as well as in the world at large.

Moreover, this project will examine the significance of Pentecostalism from an African American perspective. Scholars have noted that Black men perceive Pentecostalism from a place of authority with a no-nonsense approach in life. It was Ashon Crawley who explains Pentecostalism from an African American perspective, pointing out, "The 'space' of the Black Pentecostal tradition is multi-vocal: it is a space where the sensuousness of the black body finds

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<sup>26</sup> Delroy Hall, "The Alienation of Black Men From Black Majority Churches" *Journal of Contextual Praxis* 78, no. 7 (2018): 82.

<sup>27</sup> Delroy Hall, "The Alienation of Black Men From Black Majority Churches" *Journal of Contextual Praxis* 78, no. 7 (2018): 82.

meaning through the conferral of power and authority.”<sup>28</sup> The interpretation is that black men have understood authority through the connection of their local assembly, which has helped to shape their place of power in their homes and communities.

Likewise, Black Pentecostalism has aided black men in shaping their ideas of masculinity within the context of the church. Again, Crawley asserts, “About the Black Pentecostal pulpit; it seems that it not only is normative of masculine gender but also assigns a currency to biological maleness and, as such, social masculinity. It is a space that assigns a positive value to masculinity—it is parochial, not porous; restrictive, not open.”<sup>29</sup> The implication is that black Pentecostalism has shaped the mindsets of black men since its conception, thus providing a positive influence in times of uncertainties. Therefore, this project is not without its basic assumptions which have the opportunity to be verified and tested.

### **Basic Assumptions**

Although respondents have not stated so directly, economic struggles over long periods of time have played a significant part of Black men’s struggles with depression. Even so, environmental upbringing can theorize that Black men are in despair due in part to geographical parameters being that of rural and or urban settings. Another assumption is that African American men are in despair due in part to the lack of parental presence in and throughout their lives. Similarly, one hypothesizes that African American men are depressed due to the lack of educational opportunities offered through institutional organizations. One final assumption is that of negative religion being the catalyst whereby black men have unconsciously submerged

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<sup>28</sup> Ashon Crawley, “Let’s Get It On: Performance Theory and Black Pentecostalism” *Journal of Black Theology* 6, no. 3 (2008): 308-392.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 317.

themselves into the deepest of despair, which has eluded to the delimitations and limitations of this project.

### **Statement of Limitations**

This project aims to be attentive to accuracy. Its goal is to be thorough in its analysis of one Black church's influence in African American men who are depressed. Unfortunately, this research is not without its delimitations. First, because of time restraint, this research will be conducted on a small size population of African American men who reside in the Detroit metropolitan area. Studies have shown when conducting intense research; there can be difficulty in finding suitable matches for one's education. It was Kelley Fitzgerald and Anthony Delitto who both made mention, "Even in the best settings for conducting clinical trials, the need to find specific types of patients as subjects can slow the progress of a study."<sup>30</sup> The implication is that random selection must matriculate into specificity to ensure timeliness in studying respondent's answers to research questionings.

What's more, it is not yet proven, as to whether the participant would be vulnerably honest, as to answer each question without deception. Educators have noted hindrances in finding suitable respondents for specific research. Again, Fitzgerald and Delitto assert, "Perhaps the biggest obstacle encountered in conducting a clinical trial is the inability to recruit adequate numbers of patients as subjects."<sup>31</sup> Both authors words inform readers that research must be direct and honest concerning the intentional study of African American men and their struggle with depression.

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<sup>30</sup> Kelley Fitzgerald, Anthony Delitto, "Considerations for Planning and Conducting Clinic-Based Research in Physical Therapy" *Journal of Physical Therapy* 81, no. 8 (2001): 1449.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

Besides, the restriction of this project is that of studying one congregational men's department when academically the issues of depression in Black men is worldwide. This project will not have the time nor resource to survey all African American men and their experiences with depression. Another delimitation within this project is the unexpected death and or non-participatory actions of respondents as it pertains to questionnaires on disparity.

On the other hand, one of the constraints of this project is that of being subjected to one local church Men's Department. It will primarily focus on men between the ages of eighteen to sixty-five years of age. A major defect of this project will be that of studying African American men who live only in the Detroit metropolitan area rather than the entire African American population of men in the state of Michigan.

Another limitation is not knowing whether the geographical location of the study will remain available until the requested due date. In other words, the facility may close during the time of research. Another downside to this research project is not being able to study other programs which have dealt with African American men and depression. The implication is that by cross-referencing previous works on depression and Black men, the aid of analysis interpretation would provide greater insight into which churches are influential in helping men of despair. One final disadvantage this project would encounter is that cultural misinformation respondents have retained concerning depression. The inference is that Black men have perceived depression as being weak minded. Therefore, their ability to engage in honest confession will become one of the significant challenges within this study.

### **Thesis Statement**

This Thesis Project will analyze a particularly critical issue within the church of today: The Black church's influence on Pentecostal African American men who are depressed. It will



explain the church's role in helping African American men heal from the wounds of despair through a Pentecostal experience. The rationale for choosing such a topic is that Pentecostal African American men have matriculated through the ranks of leadership to be established in successful businesses, churches, ministries, and organizational denominations which hold the substratum for Black Pentecostalism.

Sadly, depressed men have become public successes while teetering on the edge of a mental, emotional, and spiritual breakdown. Hence, the church is one of the critical components in providing inner healing for African American men who are depressed. Moreover, this project will explore how one black church has aided African American men in overcoming the darkness of despair. It will execute a step-by-step program through which the local church's Men's Department in gathering pertinent research information. Further, it will use the methodological approach through questionnaires from respondents who are depressed while maintaining leadership roles in their perspective places. Finally, it will explain the value of this project in personal ministry and its impact on Pentecostal African American men as a whole.

## CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### Problem Importance

Much literature concerning African-American men and depression has recently come to the forefront of society's understanding. Yet, African-American men remain an understudied and underserved population. African-American men who suffer from depression, do so in silence. The pressure of keeping it together or saving face is the goal for most men. Moreover, the fear of losing one's self has kept many from expressing inward feelings concerning despondence to helping professionals. Studies show "the perpetual deceit, discriminatory, prejudicial, and abusive way of interacting with African American men by various helping entities such as medical, mental health, and criminal justice has and continues to contribute to African American men's' mistrust of these agencies and the services they provide."<sup>32</sup>

Researchers have found "that suffering in silence with depression can lead to an increased frequency of illnesses such as hypertension, heart disease, and substance abuse. Additionally, undiagnosed depression diminishes a person's quality of life and can result in suicide."<sup>33</sup> African-American men have learned to particularly walk in silence and carry pain without expressing it to their peers as they struggle to heal, and this isolation precipitates physical complications that lead to a poor quality of life.

A growing body of literature has recently exposed the intersection of poverty in urban communities within the United States and interrelated health and social problems. This complex combination of needs demands a response from our collective conscience as a nation, given that

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<sup>32</sup> Logan Amel, "Suffering in Silence: Mental Health Services Stigma among African American Men, (PhD diss., The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, 2018), 43.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 45.

many of these problems are a result of the demolition of economic systems within urban communities. More specifically, a few of the external systemic changes that have impacted African-American men include:

1. deindustrialization with the subsequent economic restructuring (job losses),
2. induced lack of economic opportunities;
3. flight of individuals and resources away from inner cities;<sup>34</sup>
4. drug trafficking (and the associated maladies of addiction, crime, and violence);
5. deterioration of community institutions and capacity; and
6. the spread of infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS;<sup>35</sup>

Given the prevalence of African-American men residing in urban communities, it is reasonable to connect the despair African-American men experience as being directly related to the poor communities they inhabit. This racial segregation by economics not only enhances the vulnerability of African-American men to depression, but the ongoing economic characteristics of urban community also inhibits healing. The prevalence of lack of resources and opportunities, and deviant behaviors has caused African-American communities to suffer and foster inward depression in their men.

This study will address four critical aspects related to healing depression in African-American men within the Pentecostal Faith tradition:

1. Emotional wounds that lead to depression in African-American Christian men
2. Barriers to healing/addressing depression in African-American Christian men
3. Recognizing how depression is expressed in African-American Christian men
4. Components of effective Pastoral Counseling of African-American Christian men and the scriptural basis of the proposed intervention (Step-by-step counseling).

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<sup>34</sup> Aronson Robert, Tony Whitehead, Willie Baber, "Challenges to Masculine Transformation Among Urban Low-Income African American Males." *Journal of Public Health* 93, no. 5 (2003): 732-741.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 733.

### **Theological Foundations**

The study's proposed step-by-step counseling method is scripturally founded and addresses the unique emotional needs of the targeted population through regulating their thoughts, rehearsing God's promises as affirmations, prayer, and peer mentoring through our men's support group.

### **Regulating Thoughts**

First, African-American men can learn to manage depression and regulate their thinking by focusing their thoughts on the good rather than the evil of their lives. Many other men and women in scripture have similarly overcome their pains of despair. Philippians 4:8 says, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."<sup>36</sup>

The implication of the Apostle Paul's words in conjunction with depression is that men who struggle with despair and hopelessness are affected through their thoughts and minds. The weight of despair causes thought patterns to be scattered, broken, and create a vicious cycle of increasingly negative thought and hopelessness. One study explained, "We live in a culture in which depression, anguish, suicidal ideation and grief are common experience but often devalued and considered as an indulgence, having no merit, no social value, rationed out like coins to the deserving poor."<sup>37</sup>

Within counseling, Black men ponder deeply over the cause and the lingering effects of depression as a constant fixture in their lives. It is described as if time progressively moves

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<sup>36</sup> Phil 4:8.

<sup>37</sup> Debra Phillips, "In God's House There Are many Rooms" *Journal of Feminist Theology* 25, no.1 (2016): 96-110.

forward for others, while those who deal with depression are at a standstill. It was the chief musician of the sons of Korah who asked, “Why art thou cast down, Oh my soul? And why are thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.”<sup>38</sup>

The basic source of the psalmist’s grief was not absence from the Temple, but a desolating sense of separation from God. “His longing for personal fellowship with the living God was like the searing thirst of a panting deer hotly pursued or overcome by thirst in a time of drought”<sup>39</sup>

It is within counseling that African-American men can be persuaded to think of the great love of the Father in their despair and sadness. It was the Apostle Paul who proclaimed, “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”<sup>40</sup>

The significance is that it denotes a full, strong, and affectionate persuasion, arising from the experience of the strength and sweetness of divine love. And here, “he enumerates all those things which might be supposed likely to separate Christ and believers and concludes that separation is impossible.”<sup>41</sup> The interpretation is that there is no object or force that can separate one from the love of God. The love of God reaches beyond death and other entities which can strengthen those who are in anguish. The implications for this research study are that African-

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<sup>38</sup> Ps 42:11.

<sup>39</sup> Franklin Paschall, Herschel Hobbs, *The Teacher’s Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1972), 310

<sup>40</sup> Rom 8:38-39.

<sup>41</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible* (United State of America: Hendrickson Publisher’s, 1991), 2214

American men can find solace and strength in the knowledge of God's steadfast love and faithfulness.

### **Rehearsing God's Promise**

One method of helping African-American men who are in counseling during times of despondency is the practice of rehearsing the promises of God. As written in the Septuagint, Deuteronomy 31:8, "And the Lord, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed."<sup>42</sup> The writer admonishes Israel not to fear the oncoming attack of the enemy. He encourages them to be of good courage because of the presence of their God. The significance of this verse explains to African-American men that comfort is available through the knowledge of God's presence in one's life. Therefore, by exploring the art of rehearsing God's word through times of depression, Black men can find strength through the knowledge of God's word.

Another, aspect of reiterating the word of God to oneself, is viewing the Word of God as a shield of protection. In the book of Psalms, it is recorded how King David fled from Absalom, his son, at a time that trauma was within his household. As mentioned in the biblical text, "But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head"<sup>43</sup> According to the superscription, "this psalm was written by David when he was running away from Absalom, his rebellious son. The danger David experienced during those days led him to write this prayer for help. He describes the protection of God which gives him confidence. The reason he can face his trouble with courage is his belief that God is his shield and his sustainer."<sup>44</sup> The implication is

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<sup>42</sup> Deut 31:8.

<sup>43</sup> Ps 3:3.

<sup>44</sup> Franklin Paschall, Herschel Hobbs, *The Teacher's Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1972), 293

that African-American men can rehearse God's word and build their spiritual shield in times of depression.

The art of repetitively speaking the Word of God can particularly help Black men find security in the love of God while standing in the middle of a depression. It was the Apostle Peter who wrote "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your cares upon him; for he careth for you."<sup>45</sup> Deliberate self-subjection should be the believer's practice realizing God is the sovereign Lord who will exalt the believer in His time. Self-subjection may occur before the people of God in this life, but possibly not until entering eternity. Regardless, "God does not promote people that lack humility. Is it not possible that such humility will cause anxiety as personal rights are surrendered, and others are served? Peter admonishes believers to cast arising anxieties on the Lord, for they know He cares for them."<sup>46</sup> The implication is that there is help for those who would cast their burdens on the Lord and receive his steadfast love. Hence African-American men can learn to trust God and become vulnerable through transferring one's issues to God and receiving His care through knowledge and faith.

Moreover, through rehearsing God's Word African-American men can find help during times of trouble. Prophetically speaking, Isaiah the prophet writes "Fear thou not; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."<sup>47</sup> The insight is that God now turns to Israel as she stands among the assembled nations and reminds her that she is his chosen servant. "He assures her of her unique

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<sup>45</sup> 1 Pet 5:6-7.

<sup>46</sup> Michael Rydelnik, Michael Vanlaningham, *The Moody Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2014), 214

<sup>47</sup> Isa 41:10.

role in the world as God's witness and encourages her in chapter 40 with the promise of his presence and power."<sup>48</sup> The implication is that God is always willing to help those who would place their hands within his hands. The help that African-American men can receive from this scriptural text is to fear not the plight of despair. The presence of God is always available towards those who would reach for His help.

One final thought, African-American men can strengthen their faith in God's planned future for their lives, by rehearsing the Word of God while they contend with depression. It was the prophet Jeremiah who proclaimed, "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end."<sup>49</sup> The commentary explains, "I know the thoughts that I think towards you. Known unto God are all his works, for known unto him are all his thoughts and his works agree exactly with his thoughts; he does all according to the counsel of his will. We often do not know our own thoughts, nor know our mind, but God is never at any uncertainty within himself."<sup>50</sup> Humanity is the prized possession of God's creation. We were made in his image and likeness. Therefore, God knows the thoughts of humanity and works behind the scenes to heal the brokenness of men. The rehearsal of God's Word helps to reassure the plans that God has for those who deal with depression.

### *Prayer*

Consequently, the practice of prayer has been the substratum for many of God's people who have faced the struggles of despondencies. Through counseling, prayer can be used as a

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<sup>48</sup> Franklin Paschall, Herschel Hobbs, *The Teacher's Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1972), 414

<sup>49</sup> Jer 29:11.

<sup>50</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible* (United State of America: Hendrickson Publisher's, 1991), 1284



catalyst to help African-American men cope with despair. It was the chief musician David who stated, “I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined unto me and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.”<sup>51</sup>

The implication is that men who are dealing with despondencies feel as if they are pulled under the weight of depression. The root of this despair is identified as an inward complexity rather than an outward physical battle. Through prayer, African-American men can call upon the Lord and find the Lord willing and able to pull them out of the depths of despair.

Also, the consistency through prayer helps to build the connection of God’s creation to the divine resources of heaven. It was the psalmist who wrote “The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivered them out of all their troubles.”<sup>52</sup> The skilled commentary wrote, “This intimates that it is the constant practice of good people, when they are in distress, to cry unto God, and it is their constant comfort that God hears them. He not only takes notice of what we say but is ready for us to our relief.”<sup>53</sup> The implication is that God hears the cries of the righteous and can help those who find themselves in the depths of despair. Therefore, African-American men can find relief from depression through prayers.

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<sup>51</sup> Ps 40:1-3.

<sup>52</sup> Ps 34:17.

<sup>53</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible* (United State of American: Hendrickson Publisher’s, 1991), 789

### *Peer Mentoring*

Indeed, the mentoring support of other men can help heal African-American men who struggle with depression. The goal in counseling Black men would be to help identify positive peers and create groups who can uphold each other in times of depression. It was King Solomon who remarked, “Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad.”<sup>54</sup> The commentary stated, “An encouraging word is powerful, a glad antidote to an anxiety that weighs down the heart (very core of a person). The good word that encourages may take many forms depending on the circumstances, from giving the person a wider perspective to strengthening him to face the cause of his anxiety.”<sup>55</sup> The suggested thought is that associated with depression is anxiety. Feelings of despair have the propensity to bring one’s spirit down into deep despair. Through words of kindnesses timely spoken in peer support groups, Black men can overcome depression.

### **Theoretical Foundations**

Researchers have found “that emotional distress in men can be constrained by traditional notions of masculinity, explaining why depression in men is often hidden, overlooked, not discussed or acted out.”<sup>56</sup> Interestingly, the presence and impact of depression in African-American men can be hidden and unseen for years from the untrained eye of potential emotional-support providers. Researchers have proposed, “a wide range of masculine depression models. Most models of masculine depression include a significant focus on the components of anger, irritability, agitation, increased activity level, and substance/alcohol abuse. These findings have

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<sup>54</sup> Prov 12:25.

<sup>55</sup> Michael Rydelnik, Michael Vanlaningham, *The Moody Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2014) 551

<sup>56</sup> Kay Wilhelm, “Men and Depression,” *Journal of Australian Family Physician*, 38, no. 3 (2009): 102.

consistently supported that the externalizing of symptoms is a notable component of the presentation of depression in men.”<sup>57</sup> Therefore, mental health workers and clergy should be aware that the indicators of depression in African-American men may manifest as personal neglect, abuse, and other negative behaviors/ tell-tell signs of hidden despair.

#### *Wounds in African-American Men*

African-American men have been affected by depression through customs, social institutions, and other manifestations of human intellectual achievements esteemed over the years of popular culture. “What is known about African-American men and depression is largely based upon cultural competency. When examining depression within our western society, culture may be integral to improve detection, intervention, and recovery efforts for young African-American men.”<sup>58</sup>

#### The Intersection of Race, Gender, and Faith

Middle-aged African-American men are most at risk of experiencing depression as a result of racial discrimination, and more African-American men face the challenge of depression in the middle ages of their lives than in earlier years. Studies have shown “that men between the ages of 35 and 65 with a history of Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) experience ongoing depression that includes oscillating periods of intensity.”<sup>59</sup> The results showed that men evolved and sometimes revolved through a process, that began with some type of stressor(s), which then led to a change in their lives, which they referred to as a “funk.” During the funk, “the men

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<sup>57</sup> Matthew Genuchi, Lauren Mitsunaga, “Sex differences in Masculine Depression: Externalizing symptoms as a primary feature of depression in Men.” *Journal of Men’s Studies* 23, no. 3 (2015): 243.

<sup>58</sup> Roberta Waite, Christina Calamaro, “Cultural Competency.” *Journal of Perspectives in Psychiatric Care* 45, no. 3 (2009): 232.

<sup>59</sup> Keneshia Bryant, Roberta Waite, “Understanding Major Depressive Disorder Among Middle-Aged African American Men,” *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 66, no. 9 (2010): 2050.

isolated themselves, experienced physical and mental changes, felt the need to mask their true feelings, and finally experienced a strained interpersonal relationship. Each of these variables was interactive and influenced by the coping mechanisms and men's spirituality.”<sup>60</sup>

A major complicated component of depression in African-American men includes a decline in health. A recent study showed African-American men (AA) carry unequal burdens of several conditions including cancer, diabetes, hypertension, and HIV. Sadly, many African-American men experiencing internal despair, often neglect their health which results in an increased incidence of illness. Those resulting health challenges consequently begin a virtuous cycle of increasing the psychological and emotional stress experienced by the depressed man. “Engagement of diverse populations including AA men in research and health promotion practice is vital to examining the health disparities that continue to plague many racially and ethnically diverse communities.”<sup>61</sup>

Another factor in addressing depression in African-American men is addressing unresolved issues from their childhood, adolescence, and young adult lives. Concerns left undealt with cause feelings of separation and isolation which foster depression and hinder emotional support and aid. Consequently, helping professionals can bring validation to African-American men whose self-image has been wounded. The effects of despondency in African-American men can be viewed through the eyes of behaviorist, and humanistic psychology. Indeed, there is a need for counselors to focus on the personhood of African-American men due in part to “society not viewing Black men as being fully human. Thus, the premise of a

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<sup>60</sup> Keneshia Bryant, Roberta Waite, “Understanding Major Depressive Disorder Among Middle-Aged African American Men,” *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 66, no. 9 (2010): 2050.

<sup>61</sup> Adam Murphy, N. Moore, M. Wright, “Alternative Locales for the Health Promotion of African American Men: A Survey of African American Men In Chicago Barbershops.” *Journal of Community Health* 42, no. 1 (2017): 139.

humanistic approach helps remind men of the things that make them feel worthwhile. Studies show, “some writers think humanistic approaches to counseling are of limited value for African-Americans,” yet several African-American scholars believe otherwise.”<sup>62</sup>

### Racism

Surprisingly, African-American men avoid seeking medical help for fear of being misdiagnosed and consequently receiving inappropriate and catastrophic treatments more harmful than their pain. Such treatments include misaligned medications that carry horrendous side effects, essentially becoming incarcerated within mental wards, and non-sensitive professional workers that insult the humanity and dignity of the man. Research has found “African-American men are reluctant to report when experiencing depressive signs that may indicate psychological issues for fear of being misdiagnosed. Factors such as a perceived willingness to understand their problems, willingness to help, and willingness to confront cultural stigmas related to mental help-seeking, may support African-American men seeking therapy in increasing numbers.”<sup>63</sup>

Through circumstantial situations such as racial profiling and harsh prejudiced treatment in society, African-American men find it hard to distinguish between biological living (circumstantial sourced) depression over clinical depression. This concept has been debatable amongst African-American men. One researcher expounded, “it is my belief that the pervasive sadness and despondency that is called “depression” in our society is in large part circumstantial

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<sup>62</sup> Susan Johnson, Melissa Moser, “The Integration of Systems and Humanistic Approaches in Emotionally Focused Therapy for Couples,” *Journal of Person-Centered & Experiential Psychotherapies* 7, no. 4 (2008): 262

<sup>63</sup> Taia Willis, “Facilitating Factors and Positive Reasons African American Men Attend Psychotherapy” (PhD diss., Walden University, 2018), 45.

rather than biological and that by exploring matters of the social expectancies and cultural values that frame emotional experiences, we can create a new understanding of depression.”<sup>64</sup>

Counseling African-Americans provides counselors with a chance to become aware of the cultural issues that form a foundation for this particular client group. Although issues “such as mistrust, masculinity, and possible signs of weakness impact each African-American differently, they underlie African-American psychosocial development and are important in establishing a cultural context for counseling interactions.”<sup>65</sup> This commentary gives counselors a deeper understanding of the mindsets of African-American men and the effects of cultural problems. It depicts the need for helping professional to search for root causes into the interrelation aspect of African-American men and their ability to cope with depression.

#### Impact of Incarceration

Moreover, incarcerated African-American men experience a unique kind of depression because of their separation from family members, often being placed thousands of miles away from the presence and support of those that care most about them. Along with this separation, the harsh environments of prison life can cause despondency and hopelessness. An increasing number of studies have found that African-American men experience depression due in part to the number of years they have spent in prison. It is noteworthy that many inmates seek-out education and training, and then influence their children (as well as other inmates) to study. Furthermore, many inmates attempt to “create and/or maintain family connections despite the great distances of separation caused by incarceration and exacerbated by the recently forced

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<sup>64</sup> Tyrone Stewart, “What is a Black Man Without His Paranoia? Clinical Depression and the Politics of African American Anxieties Toward Emotional Vulnerability” (PhD diss., Walden University, 2009), 65.

<sup>65</sup> Alaric Williams, Madeline Justice, “Attitudes of African American Males Regarding Counseling in Four Texas Universities,” *Journal of Education* 131, no. 1 (2010).

diaspora in which the criminal justice system now sends most D.C. prisoners hundreds of miles from Washington for their sentences.”<sup>66</sup>

*Self-Esteem and African-American Male Identity*

African-American men question who they are in American society. They ponder the position of African-American men and their process between progress and peril as well as the struggles of depression. Black men may “find themselves within the social standings in American culture while yet coping with despair. A growing body of literature which has examined being an African-American man, takes readers through a journey of potential and promise, pitfalls and peril.”<sup>67</sup>

Indeed, there has been a measuring rule for masculinity amongst African-American men, and the pros and cons thereof have shaped masculinity from a spiritual standpoint. According to research, “messianic masculinity as a utopian construction of manhood has been found in liberal and conservative constructions of Protestant Christianity. As such, it has been used in constructive and demonic ways, as a measure of manhood among African-Americans. As a utopian construction of masculinity, it has been limited in achieving the religious, political, and economic outcomes that it intends.”<sup>68</sup>

Importance of the Patriarch

Another factor that fosters depression in African-American men is the absence of one or more parental figures. Research has concluded that African-American men reared in single-parent households headed by a mother and with little or no paternal presence, may suffer from a

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<sup>66</sup> Patricia O’Connor, “The Prison Cage As Home for African American Men,” *Journal of African American Men* 6, no. 1 (2001): 71.

<sup>67</sup> *Being A Black Man: At The Corner of Progress and Peril*, The Washington Post, Staff, (2007), New York.

<sup>68</sup> Ronald Neal, “Savior of the Race: The Messianic Burdens of Black Masculinity,” *Journal of Exchange* 42, no. 1 (2013): 51.

variety of mental health problems as adults, which can be linked to higher rates of incarceration. Researchers set out to determine whether there was a connection between paternal presence, attachment style, and depression propensities among African-American men. They found “that in the absence of one or both parents, young men were not able to develop the proper attachment styles which have caused several mental issues.”<sup>69</sup> In addition to the absence of parental guidance, the predispositions to depression in African-American males was mostly undiagnosed, and therefore untreated.

Many African-American men fall subject to depression because of intense, stressful environments. According to researchers: “for youths living in impoverished urban areas, chronic exposure to violence is often paired to the absence of a healthy father figure. Chronic exposure to violence has been linked to adverse psychological statuses such as depression, anxieties, and suicidal ideation. Also, feelings of loss, stress, and isolation associated with chronic and acute violence exposure may manifest as symptoms of post-traumatic stress.”<sup>70</sup>

The profound patriarchal absence in the lives of African-American men has caused inhibitions in viewing God as a Heavenly Father. Belief in God as a Father can bring inner healing from despair caused by the absence of an earthly Father. A growing body of literature has examined in this day of family dysfunction, absent parents, and indifferent fathers, can be assured that there is a Father in heaven who is personally interested in every detail of your life, who showers blessings from heaven upon your life, who kisses you with mercy and peace when you most need it. “Whether you grew up in a home filled with love and support, a home without

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<sup>69</sup> Michelle Tyrus, “The Relationship of Parental Presence and Family Structure on Attachment and Depression Propensities for Adult African-American Men” (PhD diss., Walden University, 2014), 67.

<sup>70</sup> Keisha Paxton La Vome Robinson, Seema Shah, Michael Schoeny, “Psychological Distress for African-American Adolescent Males: Exposure to Community Violence and Social Support,” *Journal of Child Psychiatry and Human Development* 34, no. 4 (2004): 281.



a father, or where very little encouragement was offered, your life can be richer and fuller right now as you discover and experience the everlasting embrace of the heavenly Father.”<sup>71</sup>

### Sexuality and Stereotype

African-American men struggle with an unwritten rule of passing the test of strength to prove one’s emotional masculinity. The understanding is that men need space to unpack their emotions and heal. One writer proposes that the stereotype of the tough stud with washboard abs permeates catalogs and cartoons. But are these the measure of a man? Is gender defined by dumbbell lifting and female conquering? If so, many African-American men would fail that test. “Truth is not all African-American men lift weights or lead groups. Some shed tears, walk normally, and, gulp, get downright nervous talking to ladies. There must be more to being a man than what we learn in the locker room.”<sup>72</sup>

African-American men can experience a stifling fear toward the opposite sex because of hidden sexual hang-ups. The myth of male sexual superiority in contrast to the reality of sexuality has been a cause for despair for Black men. The misunderstood ideas of African-American male sexual performance have fostered insecurities and inadequacies within the mind of many Black men. One researcher studied “the sexuality of the African-American males as neither an academic treaty nor a pop manual on how to become a super-lover, finding misunderstandings abound.”<sup>73</sup> The writer presented a frank and perceptive exploration of the fears, inadequacies and sexual problems that beset a large segment of our society and their consequences, both for males and the females involved with them.

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<sup>71</sup> Ron Phillips, *Kisses From The Father: Coming Face To Face With The Love Of God* (Tulsa: Harrison House, 1982), 62.

<sup>72</sup> Dexter Jakes, *He-Motions* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 2004), 2.

<sup>73</sup> Robert Fike, *Sexual Hang-Ups of the American Male* (San Diego: Grossmont Press, Inc., 1978), 19.

In truth, African-American men can also suffer from depression because of their private lifestyle choices. A study of 39 gay men ranging in age from 30s to their 80s, who are or were married to women found much turmoil and depression within the lives of these men living in secrecy while juggling a double life. The question of how do these men cope with the emotional pain that often accompanies secrecy? “If a man pursues sex with men during his marriage to a woman, how do those affairs impact his wife and marriage? What events or experiences usually precipitate a man’s desire for other men? And how does a man learn he is gay or bisexual and does this distinction matter.”<sup>74</sup>

African-American men have hidden their shame to avoid persecution from their communities. Black men are under silent pressure while trying to cope with despair because stigmas surrounding HIV and sexuality. The shame that is associated with HIV causes at times psychological distress in men who are branded. African-American men have “hidden their shame to avoid persecution from their communities. Research has shown an association between gay-related stigma and adverse mental health outcomes such as depression, but also that concealment or lack of disclosure has a mediating effect on the relationship between stigma and depression.”<sup>75</sup>

Drawn from hundreds of interviews, statistics, and the author’s firsthand knowledge of “Down Low” (DL) behavior, *On The Down Low* “reveals the warning signs and protective measures every African-American woman needs to know.”<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, African-American men that have engaged in sexual practices with other men face a peculiar kind of despair because

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<sup>74</sup> David Leddick, *The Secret Lives of Married Men* (Los Angeles: Alyson Books, 2003), 4.

<sup>75</sup> Amy Wohl, Frank Galvan, Juli Carlos, Hector Myers, “A Comparison of MSM Stigma, HIV Stigma and Depression In HIV-Positive Latino and African American Men Who Have Sex With Men” *Journal of Aids and Behavior* 17, no. 4 (2013): 1454.

<sup>76</sup> J. King, *On The Down Low: A Journey Into The Lives of Straight Black Men Who Sleep With Men* (New York: Harlem Moon, 2004), 5.

of the stigmatization of being labeled as gay. The author goes on to say, “thorough investigation of life on the down low exposes a closeted culture of sex between African-American men who lead straight lives. The trend is proving to have skyrocketing health consequences for wives and girlfriends unwittingly caught in the double lives of their men: an alarming one out of 160 African-American women carries the virus, compared to one out of 3,000 white women.”<sup>77</sup>

African-American men stress and pain over being labeled as gay in all age ranges but are particularly vulnerable during high school adolescence. During high school, young men may fall into depression from having to prove one’s masculinity. The making of masculinity within adolescence identity in high school becomes an obsession for Black men who are pressured over the appearance of weakness. Studies have “identified high school, and the difficult terrain of sexuality and gender identity are brilliantly explored in this smart, incisive ethnography. Based on eighteen months of fieldwork in a racially diverse working-class high school, *Dude, you’re a Fag*, plumbs the dynamics of masculinity among high school boys and sheds new light on masculinity both as a field of meaning and as a set of social practices.”<sup>78</sup>

It is important for African-American men to have space to hear from their fellow brothers concerning their struggles with depression. Men can find strength and healing from the stories of others who have come through despair and seasons of despondencies. African-American men and their growing pains from childhood into adulthood speaks to the matter of family dynamics and their roles and interaction with men who suffer with depression. Researchers have studied, “long-standing issues of sexual abuse, suicide, HIV/AIDS, racism, and homophobia in the African-American, Latino, and Asian-American communities, and more specifically among

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<sup>77</sup> J King, *On The Down Low: A Journey Into The Lives of Straight Black Men Who Sleep With Men* (New York: Harlem Moon, 2004), 7.

<sup>78</sup> C. J. Pascoe, *Dude You’re A Fag* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 8.

young gay men of color. The world is changing rapidly, and so too is our literature. The diversity of this book reflects some of those changes.”<sup>79</sup>

*Barriers to Healing Depression in African-American Men*

In recent years there has been considerable research on the communication styles and preferences of African-Americans. Researchers held “counseling session with African-American couples that began with a focus on a particular domain of stress that couples experienced (e.g., finances, racism, extended family).”<sup>80</sup> The couples were then instructed on effective cognitive and behavioral strategies for handling stressors, with emphasis given to each partners’ use of enhanced communication with the other in response to daily stressors. One finding from this study was that “African-American men were not as communicative, and this lack of verbalizing inhibits their ability to access help and overcome feelings of depression.”<sup>81</sup> Ironically, the cause for non-communication in African-American men is in part due to stressors which have prohibited bonding relationship with others.

Given that male communication patterns irrespective of race are typically less expressive and accommodating than females’ communication, men are more stifled in open interaction as it pertains to seeking help than women who are by nature more willing to seek help. The implication of the differences between male and female communication explains how African-American men struggle to express their need for help from depression.

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<sup>79</sup> Keith Boykin, *For Colored Boys: Who Have Considered Suicide When The Rainbow Is Still Not Enough* (New York: Magnus Books, 2012), 5.

<sup>80</sup> Allen Barton, Steven Beach, Justin Lavner, Chalandra Bryant, Steven Kogan, Gene Brody, “Is Communication a Mechanism of Relationship Education Effects Among Rural African American?” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 79, no. 5 (2017), 1450.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

## Cool

The African-American male's cultural signature is his cool. It is “sometimes the only source of pride, dignity, and worth in the absence of the outward status symbols of materialism and title that mark success in American culture. His status rides on his ability to communicate through human encounters, the most important information about himself: his coolness. Because it is so prized, preserving cool can become an end unto itself.”<sup>82</sup> The support that comes from this specific article certify that African-American men despise appearing weak before others. The author points out how African-American men hold in high regard their reputations as being emotional aloof masculine men. This article also describes how African-American men suppress depression even to the point of a mental break down for the sake of street credit.

The devaluing of human relationships (emotional aloofness) for African-American men has perpetuated the emotional isolation of African-American men. This has caused “a delay in human relations between men. One analysis points out, loving relationships, though necessary for life, health, and growth, are among the most complicated skills. Before we can be successful at achieving relationships, it is necessary that we broaden our understanding of how they work, what they mean, and how what we do and believe can enhance or destroy them.”<sup>83</sup>

Conformity to masculine norms has been “associated with elevated levels of depression in men. Men’s perceived failure to achieve internalized expected standards may, in turn, precipitate maladaptive self-conscious affect, including shame.”<sup>84</sup> The importance of this work in

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<sup>82</sup> Charles Gause, “Navigating Stormy Seas: Critical Perspectives on the Intersection of Popular Culture and Educational Leader-Ship” *Journal of School Leadership* 15, no. 3 (2005): 333.

<sup>83</sup> Leo Buscaglia, *Loving Each Other: The Challenge of Human Relationships* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1984), 4.

<sup>84</sup> Simon Rice, Helen Aucote, Mariamoller Leimkuhler, Alexandra Parker, Rayan Kaplan, Zac Seidler, Haryana Dhillon, Paul Amminger, “Conformity to Masculine Norms and the Mediating Role of Internalized Shame on Men’s

support of this project is that it demonstrates the pressures that African-American men undergo to be accepted within the rankings of brotherhood. It also uncovers the internalized thoughts of men who struggle with depression without being able to express such grief amongst the brethren.

African-American men have been mostly overlooked as it pertained to research study conceding body image because of the false appearances of confidence they exude. Privately African-American men have struggled with body image disorders thereby resulting in depression and sorrow. Research related to eating and body image disturbance in males has focused almost exclusively on Caucasian men. This preliminary study examined the prevalence of “disturbed eating and body image symptomatology in a highly understudied and difficult to assess population—African-American men. Highly related, and much more common is body image disturbance (BID). BID is highly correlated with depression, self-esteem, eating disordered behavior, problematic dieting, and other risky health behaviors.”<sup>85</sup>

#### Hyper-Masculinity

Investigations found “a positive association between depression and traditional masculine role norms encouraging competition, emotional control, stoicism, self-reliance, and avoidance of femininity.”<sup>86</sup> The significance in conjunction with this present study is that most African-American men thrive and feed off of the energy that is created amongst African-American culture when gathered into one place. The energy that is produced has at times helped to give African-American men a false appearance of being strong when in actuality they were weak within.

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Depression: Findings from an Australian Community Sample” *Journal of International Men’s Health* 15, no. 2 (2016): 157.

<sup>85</sup> Leslie Heinberg, Earl Pike Sana Loue, “Body Image and Eating Disturbance in African-American Men Who Have Sex With Men: Preliminary Observations” *Journal of Homosexuality* 56, no. 7 (2009): 839.

<sup>86</sup> Wizdom Hammond, “Taking It Like A Man: Masculine Role Norms As Moderators of the Racial Discrimination-Depressive Symptoms Association Among African-American Men” *Journal of Public Health* 102, no. 2 (2012): 232.

Few studies have been published on masculinity being a direct hindrance towards mental health amongst African-American Men. Men's tendency to "delay health help-seeking is largely attributed to masculinity, but findings scarcely focus on African-American men who face additional race-related, help-seeking barriers."<sup>87</sup> The support that would come from this study would be to describe how African-American men highly esteem masculinity over help-seeking resources as it pertains to depression and mental health.

Culturally shaped notions of health and illness have a strong impact on how individuals engage in help-seeking and how they view service when they are ill. The current study "was designed to look more closely at the impact of culture, specifically cultural beliefs, on help seeking and service use for depression among African-American Americans."<sup>88</sup> This particular study would influence this research project through the means of understanding how African-American men have viewed help services as a means of weakness and a lack of masculine strength.

#### Scrupulosity

Researchers define scrupulosity "as an uneasy and persistent concern that one's actions might be sinful when in fact they are not. Some of the greatest saints of the Church suffered at times from bouts of scrupulosity. This book is meant to help scrupulous souls better understand and effectively battle their malady by uniting themselves with our Lord in His Church."<sup>89</sup> The substratum of this book expounds upon the definition of a scruple being a groundless fear of

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<sup>87</sup> Wizdom Powell, Leslie Adams, Yasmin Lewis, Amma Agyemang, Rachel Upton, "Masculinity and Race Related Factors as Barriers to Health Help-Seeking Among African American Men" *Journal of Behavioral Medicine* 42, no. 3 (2016): 150.

<sup>88</sup> Rosalyn Campbell, Linda Long, "Culture As A Social Determinant of Mental and Behavioral Health: A Look At Culturally Shaped Beliefs and Their Impact On Help-Seeking Behaviors and Service Use Patterns of Black American Men With Depression" *Journal of Best Practices in Mental Health* 10, no. 2 (2014): 48.

<sup>89</sup> Trent Beattie, *Scruples and Sainthood* (Fitzwilliam: Loreto Publications, 2010), 4.

having sinned, when in fact no sin was committed. The author Trent Beattie explains how Christians struggle with depression and sinning (when no sin has been committed). He also highlights the concept of how scrupulous personalities tend to fear that everything they do is sinful which causes depression. The significance of this book in conjunction with this research helps African-American men to discern the source from which the pain of despair is rooted.

An increasing number of studies have found that the spiritual stakes behind the very physical battle of eating and exercise offers a fresh perspective and renewed motivation for making some major changes. This book keeps the “focus of this important discussion on the positive impact physical fitness can have on your spiritual and emotional growth, using the engaging stories of everyday people.”<sup>90</sup> The author reveals how eating and exercising helps to increase the sensitivity to God’s voice. He explains the renewed energy for God’s work through the upkeep of one’s physical temple and how an increased joy for life and living is attainable through physical fitness. The writer also points out “that through disciplined physical health a fortified soul is better able and more willing to serve and love others.”<sup>91</sup> The implication is that African-American men can cultivate stronger and well-nourished bodies that are primed to become instruments for special purposes while coping with depression.

*Pastoral Counseling African-American Males for Depression*

Understanding African-American men and their hidden fears can best be understood through the following 6 sub-themes identified. **(A) “African-American men with depression tend to feel misunderstood and stigmatized; (B) some African-American men admit to a degree of self-stigma; (C) some African-American men deny their depression or any need**

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<sup>90</sup> Gary Thomas, *Every Body Matters: Strengthening Your Body to Strengthen Your Soul* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 6.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.



**for help; (D) African-American men who had therapy found it helpful until the therapist was changed, causing feelings of mistrust and inadequate mental health care; (E) African-American men fear guilt, fear being a burden to others, and feel they should be able to handle their problems; and (F) it is difficult being depressed and African-American in America, which leads to stress, frustration, and perceived racism.**<sup>92</sup> The implication is that

African-American men have many inhibitions that hinder their own help with depression.

Interesting enough, African-American men found it helpful while in therapy sessions, to deal with just one therapist rather than others. The reasoning is because of the time and energy it takes to accumulate a working relationship between client and therapist. It is the long term of a helping professional relationship with African-American men that help to build trust.

An authority on depression, notes many Christians suffer today, more perhaps than in any preceding age, from a sense that the world is out of control. Furthermore, it is the nature of men to want control over their future. Nevertheless, “all should be reminded that God is not baffled or bewildered by mankind’s muddles and follies. The world remains God’s responsibility primarily, and the best any person can do is find out their own path in His vast purpose. Each person must make sure to fulfill purpose to the extent of individual ability.”<sup>93</sup> The author’s book is a vigorous and searching appraisal of the place of both Christian and non-Christian in the modern world and their part of God’s purpose. This author shows how men are affected far more than they may recognize by the standards and methods of the surrounding world. Men typically are affected by pain and depression. By extension, African-American men can also find solace from stress and despair through the understanding that the world remains God’s responsibility primarily and the

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<sup>92</sup> Tiffany Coleman, “Help-Seeking Experiences of African American Men with Depression” (PhD, diss., Walden University, 2019), 65.

<sup>93</sup> J. B. Phillips, *Making Men Whole* (Glasgow: Fontana Books, 1955), 7.

best that one can do is find his purpose in the world and fulfill his assignment. The writer promotes knowing the will and purpose of God in one's life brings forth peace and tranquility.

A few researchers “investigated that there were critical years when people's perceptions of them and their world were shaped and reshaped. Included in these perceptions are cultural values and beliefs regarding health and mental health, particularly among Young African-American men.”<sup>94</sup>

Researchers have found that the African-American church exerts a great influence on African-American men in becoming fathers, husbands, and contributors to society at large. Another study examined “African-American men's perspectives on how religion shapes their attitudes toward marriage and family, how the men perceived the African-American church's role in facilitating healthy relationships and family stability, and how those perspectives may inform the African-American church's efforts to promote family stability.”<sup>95</sup> Given the influence of the church on how African-American men are shaped from childhood to value family relationships, the church is an ideal context to address issues that cause depression.

Health promotion interventions in African-American communities are frequently delivered in church settings. The Men's Prostate Awareness Church Training (M-PACT) intervention aimed to increase informed decision making for prostate cancer screening among African-American men through their churches. Given the significant proportion and role of women in African-American churches, the M-PACT study examined “whether including women in the intervention approach would have an effect on study outcomes compared with a men-only

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<sup>94</sup> Lorna Kendrick, Lois Anderson, Benjamin Moore, “Perceptions of Depression Among Young African American Men” *Journal of Family & Community Health* 30, no. 1 (2007): 63.

<sup>95</sup> Wanda Collins, Armon Perry, “Black Men's Perspectives on the Role of the Black Church in Healthy Relationship Promotion and Family Stability” *Journal of Social Work & Christianity* 42, no. 4 (2015): 65.

approach.”<sup>96</sup> As mentioned earlier, the church has been the catalyst in implementing programs that help to strengthen African-American communities. It has been the church of recent years that has helped to bring awareness to health disparities in African-American men such as prostate cancer. This article aids the project in that it reveals the most effective ways in which to help African-American men and their despondency over health problems.

#### Scripturally Based Instruction

In addition to “offering over 70 ministries to address nearly every age, stage, and concern, a major focus of the church is support for emotional and spiritual needs through its Ministry of Congregational Care and Counseling.”<sup>97</sup> The association of this article in correlation to African-American men and depression is that spiritual counseling helps to heal emotional wounds caused by despair and sorrow. The church being the bedrock for most African-American men provides the necessary support to cope with depression.

#### African-American Male Safe Spaces

Churches are meant to be safe places where spiritual leaders help and equip the members for the work of service. For many African-American men, church is one of the safest places on earth. There are some churches, however, where leaders use their spiritual authority to control and dominate others, attempting to meet their own needs for importance, power, intimacy or spiritual gratification. Through the subtle use of the right spiritual words, church members are “manipulated or shamed into certain behaviors or performance that ensnares in legalism, guilt and begrudging service. This is spiritual abuse, and the results can be shattering. Deeply

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<sup>96</sup> D. R. Saunders, C. L. Whitehead, T. L. Atkinson, N. L. Le, M. Q. Wang, J. L. Slade, B. Muwwakkil, R. Williams, E. Schulz, M. Naslund, “Development of the Men’s Prostate Awareness Church Training: Church-Based Workshops for African American Men” *Journal of Family & Community Health* 36, no. 3 (2013): 224.

<sup>97</sup> Tonya Armstrong, “African-American Congregational Care and Counseling: Transcending Universal and Culturally-Specific Barriers” *Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling* 70, no. 2 (2016): 118-122.

ingrained spiritual codes of written and unwritten rules control and condemn, wounding believers' spirits and keeping them from the grace and joy of God's kingdom<sup>98</sup> The dynamics of both authors writings reveal how spiritual abuse effects those who are submitted to their leadership. It explains the identification of an abusive system and how that abuse is carried out through the means of holy scriptures. It depicts the characteristics of abusive leaders and why their victims remain trapped in their dysfunctional weaved webs. It exposes "the language of abusive leaders stating "because I'm the pastor, that's why," "you can trust me" and "because it's for the spreading of the gospel."<sup>99</sup> The association of this book helps this research by showing how African-American men can escape spiritual traps that cause depression surrounding their spiritual growth. It offers African-American men ways in which to renew their minds by refocusing on what is most important as it pertains to spirituality.

Surprisingly, although African-American men are similar as it pertains to ethnicity. There are differences in the manner in which Black men are reared in families. It would behoove helping professionals to consider African-American mens' cultural and life regime that have shaped their concepts and ideology about life itself. Studies have shown, "in considering counseling strategies and program efforts with African-American boys and African-American men, one has to be aware of cultural and lifestyle factors that affect African-American males as well as the diverse intersections of race, gender, social class, and age. Some of the problems,

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<sup>98</sup> Jeff Van Vonderen, *The Subtle Power of Spiritual Abuse: Recognizing and Escaping Spiritual Manipulation and False Spiritual Authority Within the Church* (USA: Baker Books, 2005), 45.

<sup>99</sup> Jeff Van Vonderen, *The Subtle Power of Spiritual Abuse: Recognizing and Escaping Spiritual Manipulation and False Spiritual Authority Within the Church* (USA: Baker Books, 2005), 45.

challenges, and needs of African-American males originate from their individual lifestyles and manhood identity.”<sup>100</sup>

More recent evidence delves into the very dysfunctional world of emotional health and well-being by challenging the reader to undertake an intense self-evaluation. The book takes the reader on a very intense journey towards emotional health. From questions regarding “being single to discussions about inner peace, no stone is left unturned. Love, anger, rudeness, marriage, and self-love are key topics throughout the book.”<sup>101</sup> The writer explains the negative social behaviors that manifest through unhealthy emotional interaction with others. He challenges readers to intensively look within and deal with the root causes of emotional depression. The author provides support through the means of teaching African-American men how to masters their emotions.

Another author examines the pain from his past and helps us uncover the scars in our own lives. Drawing from tragic news stories like the Columbine shooting incident, he illustrates “how ridicule and rejection can push people beyond the brink. Then, with poignant insight, he shows us the way to heal the wounded spirit that lies within us all.”<sup>102</sup> The author also explains how deliverance eventually comes through time, through prayer, through the teacher’s caring intervention and one’s own willingness to seek help. The weight of this article expresses the trauma that one’s childhood can inflict upon a vulnerable child. It expounds on the complications that young men can face while growing and carrying an inner wound that won’t heal. The

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<sup>100</sup> Frederick Harper, Linda Terry, Rashida Twiggs, “Counseling Strategies with Black Boys and Black Men: Implications for Policy” *Journal of Negro Education* (2009): 216-232.

<sup>101</sup> Oliver Allen, *Master Your Emotions: Take Control of Your Emotions So Your Emotions Don’t Take Control of You* (Atlanta: OC Allen Enterprises, LLC, 2012), 3.

<sup>102</sup> Frank Peretti, *The Wounded Spirit* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 2000), 5.

writer's words validate this research in that it provides ways in which men can find help for wounds caused by other hurting people.

#### Restoration of Patriarchal Role and Model

Most African-American men do not learn masculinity from traditional role models such as household fathers or older brother. Instead, masculinity is taught through the substratum of cultural norms which build identity of what strength looks like. Research has found, "masculinity is viewed as a cultural construction, rather than a psychologically or biologically based characteristic. As applied to men's behavior in close relationships, the idea is that males act in the ways they do because of their male role identity, or their level of masculine traits, but because of the conception of masculinity, they internalize from their culture."<sup>103</sup> Based upon this research, creating spaces where African-American men can help reconstruct and clarify what healthy identity and masculinity looks like would be a powerful way to heal identity and depression simultaneously.

The formative years of a young man's life can be the most critical times of his life. It's during those years where his concepts and ideologies about himself and the world are most easily influenced. One author affirms the years between 18 and 25 represent the final transition from childhood to adulthood, encompassing the end of adolescence and the achievement of full adult status. These are critical years "when people's perceptions of themselves and their world are shaped and reshaped. Included in these perceptions are values and beliefs regarding health and mental health."<sup>104</sup> The proposition is that young African-American men view depression and mental disorder as a weakness. The origin of this belief is imparted into the thought pattern

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<sup>103</sup> Joseph Pleck, Freya Sonenstein, C. Ku, "Masculinity Ideology: Its Impact On Adolescent Males Heterosexual Relationships" *Journal of Social Issues* 49, no. 3 (1993): 11-29.

<sup>104</sup> Lorna Kendrick, "The Views of Young African American Men About Depression" Phd., diss (2004): 1685.

through the interactions of their peers and older male influences. The input that this has on research is through the means of teaching older patriarchal leaders how to instill strength without building walls of distrust against professional therapy for mental disturbance.

#### Touch

Interesting enough, touch is a vital aspect of human life, and without touch, there is a breakdown of emotional and verbal communication, especially for men. The effect of touch deprivation among African-American men have caused depression and has been the driving force behind false masculinity and strength. Researchers have noted, the importance of touch on physical, mental, and emotional health. Several studies have shown “the importance of touch, which cannot be overstated. Ultimately, touch studies have indicated that a lack of touch leads to communication development problems, depression, eating disorders, aggression, and self-injury behaviors.”<sup>105</sup>

#### Spiritual Deliverance

Researchers have studied “evil spiritual forces as being at the root of many of the temptations, failures, and difficulties we encounter in our lives, yet little is known about spiritual warfare in conjunction with African-American men and depression<sup>106</sup> Subsequently, the Black church has been the foundation whereby African-American men have found healing and comfort from life’s struggles. The vehicle whereby healing is executed is that of spiritual deliverance. African-American men validate this culturally theological congruent aspect of healing depression, and deliverance ministry particularly appeals to Black Pentecostal men.

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<sup>105</sup> Jason Wrench “Development and Validity Testing of a Measure of Touch Deprivation” *Journal of Human Communication* 12, no. 1 (2009): 67-76.

<sup>106</sup> Michael Scanlan, Randall Cirner (*Deliverance from Evil Spirits: A Weapon for Spiritual Warfare* (Ann Arbor: Servant Books, 1980), 12,

In addition, both writers go on to explain, “that God has not only equipped us with weapons to overcome the work of evil spirits but examines the ministry of deliverance as one of the most powerful methods to overcome spiritually associated illnesses.”<sup>107</sup> Hence, African-American churches typically perform spiritual deliverance as a component of healing despondency. The execution method is often displayed through the means of short term fasting, long periods of preparatory praying and biblical quoting’s of specific scriptures.

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 14.



## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

In order for readers to understand depression in Black men and how one particular church proceeded to handle the issue thereof, they must first understand the research question. The intention of this study was to learn how one black church helped African American men deal with depression through a Pentecostal experience. The purpose of this research was to analyze and implement a program within a local church's men's department for African American men who struggle with despondency. The significance of this project was to help Black men learn coping skills in handling feelings of despair while helping others to become consciously aware of symptoms and signs of depression in African-American men in general.

The appropriateness of this research design was best understood through the guidelines of a qualitative approach. It was Tim Sensing who explained "qualitative research systematically seeks answers to questions by examining various social settings and the individuals who inhabit these settings. Qualitative research is grounded in the social world of experience and seeks to make sense of lived experience."<sup>108</sup> Even more the author goes on to say, "qualitative researchers, then, are most interested in how humans arrange themselves and their settings."<sup>109</sup> Qualitative describes the quality of something in size, form, and significance. Hence this defers from a quantitative study in that research information will not be measured and written down with numbers.

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<sup>108</sup> Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research* (WIPF & STOCK, 2011), 57.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

## Setting

This particular study was conducted in the city and state of Detroit Michigan. According to the United States Census Bureau, “Detroit, the most populous city in Michigan and the Metro Detroit area, serves as a major port connecting the Great Lakes to the Saint Lawrence Seaway. Detroit is also known as the traditional automotive center of the world and its name is synonymous for the US auto industry, as well as its musical legacies, which have earned it the nicknames Motor City and Motown.”<sup>110</sup> As it pertains to the population, “Detroit’s estimated population is just over 677,00, a steep decline from a peak of over 1.8million in the 1950s.”<sup>111</sup>

Continuing on, Detroit’s population in “2000 was 951,270, which dropped to only 713,777 by 2010. In 2016, the city’s estimated population is 677,116. Detroit’s population has been declining for more than 60 years, and its 2016, estimated population of 677,116 represents a 0.94% decrease from its 2010 population. The urban area of Detroit is home to an estimated 3.7 million, which its metropolitan area has a population of 4.276 million. The combined statistical area has a population of 5.2 million.”<sup>112</sup>

The US Census Bureau concluded, “In 1950, Detroit was the 4<sup>th</sup> largest city in the country, but its population has been in decline for the past 60 years with the second largest population decline in the country (second only to St. Louis). Because of this decline, Detroit now has a large number of abandoned buildings and homes and the area is dealing with urban

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<sup>110</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. 2018. “Quick Facts Detroit City, Michigan” Last modified July 14. Accessed August 12, 2018.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 1.

decay.”<sup>113</sup> The inference is because of the falling decline of Detroit, it has been one of cause of circumstantial depression within African American men.

The causation for the decline of Detroit was centered around the economic decrease that continually experienced hardship over the years. Again USCB reported “Detroit has been going through an economic decline for many years, in part due to urban decline, in which young, educated people move away from the city for better options. Other causes of Detroit’s decline include segregation, politics, and of course, the collapse of the auto industry, which the city has relied on for many years.”<sup>114</sup> The implication is that many men people left the city of Detroit because of relational oppressiveness and environmental harshness.

Specifically, this research project was conducted at Refuge Temple Cathedral of His Glory Church of God in Christ located at 12227 Findlay Avenue Detroit, MI 48205. Refuge Temple Cathedral of His Glory Church was a medium-sized church with association to the Church of God in Christ organization. Refuge Temple offered two weekend worship services. The church service times consisted of a Sunday morning enrichment classes along with a Sunday morning worship. The week day service consisted of a Monday night Bible study as well as a Thursday Evangelistic service.

In the worship services of this church formal attire was most common. There was a blend of traditional and contemporary worship style along with printed worship bulletins. It was the church’s common practice to conduct monthly communion services to the congregation. Refuge Temple Church practiced congregational readings and altar call prayer sessions. The ministry and programs that were offered during operation were that of children’s ministry, youth and teen

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<sup>113</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. 2018. “Quick Facts Detroit City, Michigan” Last modified July 14. Accessed August 12, 2018.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 2.

ministry, small cell groups and young adult ministry. The church also provided a men/women's ministry, community service as well as ministry to those who were single with children.

The significance in selecting the church in conjunction with research is that African American men have held the Black church in high regards as it pertains to shaping one's attitudes towards marriage and family. It was Collins and Perry who reported, "Historically, the black church has played a significant role in the lives of African Americans as it has served as the social and political center of the black community."<sup>115</sup> Consequently the black church was the center core for political strategies whereby African Americans pursued freedom and established community leaders who would become a voice for the people. Again Collins and Perry affirmed, "In many places, prior to the civil rights movement, black churches were the only venues in which black people could exercise autonomy and have access to leadership roles denied to them in the larger, hostile mainstream culture;"<sup>116</sup> hence, the black church became the central force for many African American men who found the courage to become a leaders within their marriages, families and communities which began to grow into a national movement.

Moreover, chosen was a local Black Pentecostal church in which to conduct this research specifically because of familiarity with the traditions of Pentecostalism and primarily because of association with this church. Another reason for choosing this particular church was that of its example-ship of size and socio-economic diversity that most commonly describe black churches. The membership of this church consisted of a strong core of fifty people which varied in age and educational standing. The primary leaders within this church were that of the pastor, elders and

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<sup>115</sup> Wanda Collins, Armon Perry "Black Men's Perspectives on the Role of the Black Church in Healthy Relationship Promotion and Family Stability" *Journal of Social Work and Christianity* 42, no. 4 (2015): 430

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*; 430

deacons. The remainder of the church entailed women and young children who occupied smaller leadership roles in and around the church.

### **Participants**

The selected group of participants that were chosen for this research were that of African American men. There were specifically eight men that were ask to participate in this study. The ages of these men were between eighteen through sixty-five. In an attempt to understand depression in African American men a convenience sample was used to collect the necessary data for research. The precise reasoning for choosing such a population was because of the limited amount of research that has been studied concerning Black men and depression. One researcher proposed, “Research indicated that depression is now the leading cause of disability globally. Depression and help-seeking experiences among African American men have not been adequately studied. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the help seeking experiences of African American men with depression.”<sup>117</sup> Therefore, this study would further aid the academic scholarly community on the research of Black men and depression.

Another, reason for choosing this populace was because of relatable ethnicity in which I myself am African American and have also dealt with depression. The unspoken rule amongst Black men was to keep silent about one’s issues with depression and to never ask for help. It was author Kathryn Green-McCreight who note, “Darkness is my closest companion. I need something, but I don’t know what. I don’t even know how to tell if or when I need help. I don’t know what it means to let myself be helped. I never ask for help, even on the odd occasion when

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<sup>117</sup> Tiffany Coleman, “Help-Seeking Experiences of African American Men with Depression.” (PhD diss., Walden University, 2019), 16.

I recognize my need for help.”<sup>118</sup> As is common among the African American culture men are taught from an early age to feign happiness and maintain a reputation of emotional strength among their peer groups and communities.

The systematic method in choosing eight participants for this research was that of a non-laboratory setting. Each participant was first verbally informed as to the research topic at hand. One Study makes mention of the concept of demand characteristics, which involves research participants being aware of what the researcher is investigating, is well known and widely used within psychology, particularly in laboratory-based studies. This systematic review “seeks to summaries data from studies of the effects of demand characteristics on participant behaviors in non-laboratory settings.”<sup>119</sup>

The specific gender that was chosen for this research project was that of eight African-American men. The age range for this project was that of eighteen years of age through sixty-five years of age. The premise for choosing this specific group was the affiliation and personal experiences with African American men who have experienced depression in or throughout the duration of their life span. The implication is that for most African-American men they are “unaware of the signs and symptoms of depression itself and thereby are unable to express what they are struggling with. According to recent studies, depression is found in 6% of youths, with 4.9% having major depression. Undiagnosed depressed mood and associated suicidal risk may continue for years.”<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Kathryn McCreight, *Darkness Is My Only Companion*. (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006), 34.

<sup>119</sup> Jim McCambridge, De Bruin Marijn, John Witton, “The Effects of Demand Characteristics On Research Participant Behaviors In Non-laboratory Settings: A Systematic Review” *Journal of Plos One* 7, no. 6 (2012) 39116.

<sup>120</sup> Lorna Kendrick, Nancy Anderson, Benjamin Moore, “Perceptions of Depression Among Youth African American Men” *Journal of Family Community Health* 30, no. 1 (2004): 63.

### **Recruitment of Participants**

In order to proceed with a projected scheduled research time frame, permission was requested of the church board to approach respondents who participated actively in the Men's Department of the church. The first initial step was to submit a permission request form to contact members of the church to invite them to participate in said study. The details within the permission request was that of participants would be asked to complete an email survey and contact me thereafter to schedule an interview. Participants would be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. It would be made clear that participants who would take part in this study would do so completely voluntary and would be able to discontinue at any time. Through the use of the church permission request form, creditability was established to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable research behavior. One study explained, "research often involves a great deal of cooperation and coordination among many different people in different disciplines and institutions, ethical standards promote the values that are essential to collaborative work, such as trust, accountability, mutual respect, and fairness."<sup>121</sup>

#### *Announcement*

The second step in the recruitment process was to call each participant and give a brief overview of the research project itself and the execution process thereof. It was also made clear that participant would not receive compensation for taking part in this research project. The reasoning for non-compensation was to ensure that participants responses would be without incentive influences. According to research, "the ethics of compensation of research subjects for

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<sup>121</sup> David Resnik, "What is Ethic in Research and Why is it Important" Journal of National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences1, no.10 (2011): 49-70.

participation in clinical trials has been debated for years. One ethical issue of concern is variation among subjects in the level of compensation for identical treatments.”<sup>122</sup>

### *Consent Materials*

Continuing further, participants received emails whereby they were able to understand the ethical forms attached to this project. The recruitment letter consisted of informing participants of my status as a graduate student in the Religious Department of the School of Divinity at Liberty University. I informed the participants that I would be conducting research to better understand one church’s solution towards African-American men and depression. The letter would give a brief summary of research questions as well as inviting each participant in my study. It would explain participant’s criteria such as age and additional eligibility criteria for this study, along with each participant’s willingness to comply with the study. The recruitment letter would also provide the approximate time frame for each participant to complete the procedures listed. It would include additional information as needed for each participant to complete the survey question as well as contact me to schedule an interview to complete said project. The letter would request for the consent document to be signed and return to me at the time of the interview.

Moreover, participants would be informed that the risks involved in this study would be minimal, which would mean they are equal to the risks one would encounter in everyday life. Contributors would be informed about the direct benefits participants should expect to receive from taking part in this study which are increased knowledge concerning the effects, causation and solution the church has in helping African-American men with depression. As it pertains to

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<sup>122</sup> David Swanson, Rebeca Betensky, “Research Participant Compensation: A Matter of Statistical Inference As Well As Ethics” *Journal of Contemporary Clinical Trials* 45, (2015): 265-269.



compensation, participants would not be compensated for participating in this study. Email addresses will be requested for compensation purposes. They would be pulled and separated from participant's responses by survey question to maintain anonymity.

The confidentiality clause within this study would state that the records of this study will be kept private. It would make clear that I might publish, I would not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Participants will be assigned a pseudonym. I will conduct the interviews in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation. Data will be stored on a password locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted. It will also explain that interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years as well and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

More importantly, the voluntary nature of the study was made clear that participants decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. It one should decide to participate, each would be free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time. It was explained to participants how to with draw from the Study. Each respondent read and understood that if you choose to withdraw from the study, please inform the researcher that you wish to discontinue your participation prior to submitting your study materials. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study. It was finally explained where and how to reach the researcher if participants should have any questions later as well as the contact information for faculty chair.

## Data Collection

The method that was taken to collect the necessary data for this study was survey questions. The reasoning for this type of method was due in part to the sample size being too large to question or interview. It was Sensing who pointed out, “A survey is a lengthy questionnaire that employs fixed choice responses. The purpose of a survey is to describe characteristics or understandings of a large group of people. When the desired sample size is so large that is not feasible to interview or use a questionnaire, then the survey is the best option.”<sup>123</sup>

This particular experimental set up bears a close resemblance to that of researchers who studied the feasibility of a street intercept survey method in an African-American community. The premise is that of easy access into areas that were of a greater population. The authors explain the “street-intercept method is a feasible alternative to traditional population survey methods and may provide better access to harder-to-reach segments of the urban population in a safe manner.”<sup>124</sup> Another study that parallels with the method of surveying within this study is that of mail and internet surveys. The principle of this study is that of “preserving data collection. Researchers expounded although our ability to conduct web surveys has increased dramatically, their use remains limited by inadequate coverage of the general population.”<sup>125</sup> The author goes on to explain caught between these trends surveyors are increasingly drawn toward the conduct of mixed-mode surveys, which collect data from some respondents by one mode and use a different mode to reach other respondents, in order to preserve data quality.

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<sup>123</sup> Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene: WIPF & STOCK, 2011), 26.

<sup>124</sup> Kevin Miller, Lora Wilder, Frances Stillman, Diane Becker, “The Feasibility of a Street Intercept Survey Method in an African-American community,” *American Journal of Public Health* 87, No. 4 (1997): 655-658 .

<sup>125</sup> Don Dillman, *Mail and Internet Surveys: The Tailored Design Method—2007 Update With New Internet, Visual, and Mixed-Mode Guide* (John Wiley & Sons, 2011), 10

## Men and Depression

The aim of this study was to investigate and implement a program for men who were coping with depression and were unaware of the signs and symptoms of despondencies. Traditional masculinity has been viewed as strength void of emotional expressions of pain. Men who were depression would not speak nor seek professional help in order to maintain the image of manhood. One study highlighted “depression in men pointing out it is possible that there is a “masculine” form of depression that is under-diagnosed and under-treated. Health professionals should work toward a greater understanding of cultural masculinity in the service of conceptualizing, diagnosing and treating male clients/patients who may be suffering from a disguised form of this common mental illness.”<sup>126</sup>

Even more, men have been conventionally taught as young boys not to cry but handle their emotional turmoil as one who operates without feelings. Researchers have noticed “men are a numerical minority group receiving a diagnosis of, and treatment for, depression. However, community surveys of men and of their mental health issues (e.g. suicide and alcoholism) have led some to suggest that many more men have depression than are currently seen in healthcare services.”<sup>127</sup> The implication is that healthcare censuses have not been able to collect data on men who are coping with depression but will not come forward and seek help for despair.

Therefore, the specific purpose for studying men and depression is because despondency has been more easily diagnosed and treated in women than men. Women have been more ready to pursue helping professionals because stigmatic barriers have not been created to hinder

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<sup>126</sup> Kilmartin Christopher, “Depression In Men: communication, Diagnosis and Therapy,” *Journal of Men’s Health and Gender* 2, no. 1 (2005): 95-99.

<sup>127</sup> Peter Branney, Alan White, “Big Boys Don’t Cry: Depression and Men.” *Journal of Advances in Psychiatric Treatment* 14, no. 4 (2008): 256-262.

women. On the other hand, men have had to fight with invisible barricades which have prevent men from pursuing help. Researchers have found “women have greater emotional literacy and are more likely to volunteer how they feel, while men are more likely to do something about their negative affect. While men are usually wary about talking about their depression, they will discuss their feelings if provided with a safe environment in which to do so.”<sup>128</sup>

### **Survey Questions**

The particular apparatus that was chosen for this study was that of survey questions. The sample size was that of eight African-American men. The substratum whereby these questions were asked were to consider how conscious Black men were of depression within their own selves as Pentecostal men. The questions that were asked were (1) What has been your experience with depression? (2) Have you ever been depressed for long periods of time? (3) Can you explain your experience with depression? (4) Have you ever tried to hide being depressed from friends and family? (5) Have you ever felt inferior in your manhood for being depressed? (6) How do you define masculinity? (7) Do you think depression has affected your masculinity? How so? (8) Can you explain your salvation experience in coming to know Jesus Christ? (9) Do you think you can be depressed and be a Christian? Why or Why not? (10) Can you explain how your church has aided African-American men cope with their depression (11) Can you explain what impression if any was pressed upon you concerning being depressed in the black church? (12) Can you describe the measures you took while enduring the pains of despair? (13) What is your perception of African-American men who are depressed? (14) During your life time how many African-American men have you known who are depressed.

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<sup>128</sup> Kay Wilhelm, “Men and Depression.” *Journal of Australian Family Physician* 38, no. 3 (2009): 102.

## Premises

The first premise for these particular surveying questions was to investigate respondents theological understanding of depression from a Pentecostal perspective. Each participant hails from a Pentecostal background which has shaped his ideologies and concepts of life. The historical development of Charismatic theology also known as Pentecostalism has been understood as “Classic Pentecostalism began on January 1, 1901, when Agnes Ozman spoke in tongues at Bethel Bible School in Topeka, Kansas. Its worldwide impetus was launched in the Azusa Street Revival of 1906-07 in Los Angeles by William Seymour, pastor and teacher of a black holiness mission.”<sup>129</sup> The conceptualization of Pentecostalism gave birth to the ideas of the supernatural workings of the Spirit. The author goes on to describe “Another distinctive group is called the Third Wave, a term coined by Peter Wagner. They identify with the first wave (Pentecostalism) and the second wave (Charismatic renewal) in their emphases on healing, exorcism, and receiving revelation.”<sup>130</sup>

Subsequently, the idea of Christian men coping with depression while being Spirit filled has caused much static conversation within the faith. One study explored the concept of Pentecostal’s thought patterns and depression. The author points out “One of the chief hallmarks of Pentecostalism is the declaration that joy and happiness are experienced by devoted worshipers. Early Pentecostal publications contained testimonies which professed that suffering

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<sup>129</sup> Paul Enns, *The Moody Hand Book Of Theology* (Chicago, Moody Publishers, 2008), 673.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

could be alleviated and despair transformed into joy if individuals would only “surrender their burdens and their doubts to God.”<sup>131</sup>

The stigmatization behind Pentecostalism and depression fosters negativity against those who struggle with despair. Again the writer expounds “Often, the Pentecostal response to people suffering with emotional illness is to advise them to confess their sin or to have more faith. Pentecostal belief in miraculous healing may cause believers to feel they are failing to exercise faith when they utilize “secular” assistance, and that they are being “a poor witness to the secular professional they are consulting.”<sup>132</sup>

The underlined question that is asked: Has Pentecostalism helped to heal depression within African-American men? The author observes “Pentecostals reported significantly less depression than the general population. Although an explanation is not clear, the result may be due to Pentecostals actually experiencing less depression, or to inhibition based on the shame associated with admission of personal weakness and fear of such being labeled a lack of spiritual maturity.”<sup>133</sup>

Another premise for exploring African-American men and depression in the church in conjunction with these survey questions is because of the aspect of leadership that Black men hold in their religious communities. Studies have found “Leadership is a complex social phenomenon that has generated an extensive body of research that has identified attributes,

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<sup>131</sup> Pamela Trice, “Pentecostal Beliefs Concerning the Causes and Treatments of Depression” (PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2003), 8.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Pamela Trice, “Pentecostal Beliefs Concerning the Causes and Treatments of Depression” (PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2003), 8.

characteristics, styles and qualities of leadership.”<sup>134</sup> The quality of leadership within the African-American church has been the foundation by which social and political changes have manifested over time. Researchers further point out “Through the leadership of African American clergy, the role of the church as the catalyst for generating social and political changes to improve the lives of African-Americans is unequivocally accepted by this community.”<sup>135</sup>

The leadership of the black church has helped men to become better leaders within their families, communities and peer groups. It has been the strength of the black church which has given birth to powerful influential spirits of faith and perseverance while its leaders were coping with silent depression. Interestingly enough, the role of leadership itself comes with a price that causes many to hide the struggle of depression itself. Studies have shown “some of the recurring pathologies of CEOs – narcissism, over-optimism, fear, anger, and depression. The impact of these pathologies on organizations are—hyper-deference, reluctance to provide truthful information to the boss, bullying and intimidation up and down the chain of command, and constantly shifting corporate priorities.”<sup>136</sup> The implication is that because of the stigmatization and myths of black masculinity, African-American men have had to wrestle with depression while standing in leading positions to their own hurt.

One final premise for such questions regarding black men and depression is that of awareness. The assumption is that most men are not conscious of the signs and symptoms of despondency and or despair within their lives. Research has observed “there is evidence that

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<sup>134</sup> Mary Langley, William Kahnweiler, “The Role of Pastoral Leadership in the Socio-politically Active African-American Church,” *Journal of Organization Development* 21, no. 2, (2003): 43.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>136</sup> Jayne Barnard. “Narcissism Over-Optimism, Fear, Anger, and Depression: the interior lives of corporate leaders,” *Journal of U. Cin. L.* 77, (2008): 405.

depressive symptoms in men are often undiagnosed and untreated. It has been suggested that men may find it difficult to seek help because culturally dominant (or hegemonic) forms of masculinity are characterized by emotional control and a lack of vulnerability, while depression is often associated with powerlessness and the uncontrolled expression of emotion.”<sup>137</sup>

In addition, emotional barriers have caused men to become unconscious of the signs and symptoms that are associated with being depressed. One study pointed out, “participants described aspects of the male gender as being in conflict or incongruent with their experiences of depression and beliefs about appropriate help-seeking behaviors. Second, men outlined alternative symptom profiles that could interfere with the recognition of depression and willingness to seek help.”<sup>138</sup> The connotation is that without awareness of the marks and indications of despondency men will not seek for helping professionals to walk along side with them into help and wholeness.

### **Interview**

That being said, the next phase after surveying was to interview each participant. The significance of the interview process is best understood through the lens of Tim Sensing who explains “Interviews allow people to describe their situations and put words to their interior lives, personal feelings, opinions, and experiences that otherwise are not available to the researcher by observation.”<sup>139</sup> Hence, interviewers are challenged by their own preconceived

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<sup>137</sup> Carol Emslie, Damien Ridge, Sue Ziebland, Kate Hunt. “Men’s Accounts of Depression: Reconstructing or Resisting Hegemonic Masculinity,” *Journal of Social Science & Medicine* 62, no.9 (2006): 2246-2257.

<sup>138</sup> Aaron Rochlen, Debora Paterniti, Ronald Epstein, Paul Duberstein, Lindsay Willeford, Richard Kravitz. “Barriers in Diagnosing and Treating Men with Depression: a focus group report,” *Journal of American Men’s Health*, 4, no. 2 pp. 167-175.

<sup>139</sup> Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 103.



notions concerning the responses of participants. The interview process enables researchers to validate and adjust their conclusions concerning the questions that are asked. Again the author points out “A researcher might arrive at certain conclusions through observation that will be confirmed, modified, or even corrected through interviews. Interviews not only provide a record of interviewee’s particular views and perspectives, but also recognize the legitimacy of their views.”<sup>140</sup>

The specific purpose of interviews is the peer deeper into the thought patterns of respondents that are concealed due in part to prohibitions because of fear of rejection from others. Sensing expounds, “While even interview data is only a representation of the interviewee’s opinions, experiences, and understandings, it does allow you to gain insight into thoughts that are not expressed through a person’s actions or that are too sensitive for people to discuss in a group setting.”<sup>141</sup> Therefore each respondent was provided information on the process of how the interview process would function. The instructions that were given was to call and make set an appointment whereby the interview process might be held.

The time frame for each interview process was fifteen to thirty minutes. The specific questions that were asked during the interview process were (1) Can you explain your theological concept on depression? (2) Have you perceived a stigma on black men who are depressed? How so? (3) What programs has your church established to address the issues of depression in black men within the church? (4) In time past have you sought out professional counseling for depression? (5) can you explain what support system did you have surrounding you during you time of depression? (6) Have you ever felt pressured to suppress your struggle

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

with depression within your leadership sphere? (7) What areas has depression effected your life?  
 (8) What lessons have you learned while dealing with depression?

### Premise

The importance for asking these questions was to investigate deeper into each respondent's intellectual understanding of depression from a theological standpoint. The logic stems from how one belief system effects the actions of an individual. One study defined theology "as the study which, through participation in and reflection upon a religious faith, seeks to express the content."<sup>142</sup> What's more theology "comes from the Greek words theos, meaning God, and logos, meaning word; hence, a word or discussion about God. Theology is normally taken in a broad sense to signify the entire scope of Christian doctrines."<sup>143</sup> The significance of understanding theology is that theological concepts shape the belief systems of men and influence the actions where with relational interactions intercept one another. In recent years a number of studies "have investigated the relationship between beliefs about basic Christian doctrines and opinion on major social issues. The studies have sought to "ascertain the effects of theological self-conception, a preference for collective responsibility or self-reliance, and denominational affiliation, upon pastor's opinions and behavior regarding these issues."<sup>144</sup>

Therefore, African-American men who are Pentecostal through theological belief have come under the influences of their denominations, which has helped to shape their religious identity and understanding of depression. Research Stephen Sorenson observed, "recent physiological research ties brain areas involved with depression to areas that process emotions.

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<sup>142</sup> John Macquarrie, Edwin Davies, *Principles of Christian Theology*. (London: SCM Press, 1966), 45.

<sup>143</sup> Paul Enns, *The Moody Hand Book of Theology* (Chicago Moody Publishers, 2008), 725.

<sup>144</sup> Jeffries Vincent, Clarence Tygart, "The influence of Theology Denomination and Values Upon the Positions of Clergy On Social Issues," *Journal of Scientific Study of Religion* (1974): 309-324.

Among the research surveyed, a link was found between the activity levels of the prefrontal cortex. This link proves to be useful in understanding how an individual might have problems processing emotional experiences.”<sup>145</sup>

In addition, the author continues to explain “this relates directly to how a person interacts in a religious environment. Religious leaders should share the physicians’ mantra of *primum non nocere*, which means first, do no harm. Skewed views of God can emerge from "gaps in understanding" related to topics such as sin, substance abuse, divine intimacy, and end-of-life questions.”<sup>146</sup> The implication is that black men who struggle with depression either can view their experiences as a weakness or a process of life that all of humanity experiences one time or another. The effect of one’s perception of depression from a Pentecostal viewpoint is based upon those to whom one’s spirit is open to hear and learn from.

The second rationale in asking these types of interview questions was to understand what programs has the church established to address the issues of depression in black men. The research behind church-based programs for depression for African American men has been limited and understudied. Research confirms “African Americans, compared with white Americans, underutilize mental health services for major depressive disorder. Church-based programs are effective in reducing racial disparities in health; however, the literature on church-based programs for depression is limited.”<sup>147</sup> Recent studies have shown a growing interest in the need for therapeutic church-based programs that deal with issues of despondencies within Black

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<sup>145</sup> Stephen Sorenson, “Depression and God: The effects of major depressive disorder on Theology and Religious Identity,” *Journal of Pastoral Psychology* 62, no. 3 (2013): 343-353.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Hankerson Sidney, Kalycia Watson, Alicia Lukachko, Mindy Fullilove, Myrna Weissman, “Ministers Perceptions of Church-Based Programs to Provide Depression Care for African Americans,” *Journal of Urban Health* 90, no. 4 (2013): 685-698.

men. The author goes on to validate these programs. Although not a new concept, church-based health promotion programs have yet to be widely researched. Few of the initial studies “used randomized and controlled designs. Dissemination of study results has been sporadic, with findings often reported in church periodicals. A renewed interest in church-based health promotion programs (CBHPP) is emerging.”<sup>148</sup> Has the church helped to establish programs that meet the needs of those who are coping with despair? Therefore, African American men are able to learn and grow from programs that help to inform, instruct and provide coping skills to handle depression.

A final premise is the influential support system that aids in the self-esteem of those who are in despair. One study observed “social support was associated with high self-esteem, which in turn increased optimism and was related to decreased depression.”<sup>149</sup> The factors that contribute to emotional health are friends, family, and significant others. One study reported “three subscales, each addressing a different source of support, were identified and found to have strong factorial validity: (a) Family, (b) Friends, and (c) Significant Other.”<sup>150</sup> This particular study also explained how by having a strong support system while coping with depression helped to decrease emotional trauma. The writer expounds “as predicted, high levels of perceived social support were associated with low levels of depression and anxiety.”<sup>151</sup> The implication is that

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<sup>148</sup> Jane Peterson, Jan Atwood, Bernice Yates, “Key Elements for Church Based Health Promotion Programs: Outcome-Based Literature Review,” *Journal of Public Health Nursing* 19, no. 6 (2002): 401-411.

<sup>149</sup> Petra Symister, Ronald Friend, “The Influence of Social Support and Problematic Support On Optimism and Depression in Chronic Illness: A Prospective Study Evaluating Self-Esteem as A Mediator,” *Journal of Health Psychology* 22, no. 2 (2003):123.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

African American men are able to cope with despair by surrounding themselves with a varied strong support system that upholds during the time of sorrow.

### **Implementation of the Intervention Design Program**

The program that was designed to yield researched results was that of a twofold project. The project consisted of two all-night prayer sessions and two half day outreach evangelistic programs. The initial implementation design was executed using the conditions described above for a period of two months. Each session took place on two weekends of a Friday and Saturday within each month. Both weekend sessions took place within the time frame of twenty hours. The duration for Friday's session went from 7pm until 7am. The time frame for Saturday's session was that of five hours; 11:00am until 4:00pm. The significance was to create a successful program that was based upon strong characteristic qualities that would be sustainable over time. One study found organization characteristics were the success for a health care program that was sustained over time. Evashwich and Ory observed "sustaining a successful program over time is critical in today's rapidly changing health care environment. This study sought to identify the characteristics of organizations that implemented innovative health programs for older adults and sustained those programs over time."<sup>152</sup>

### **Agenda Design Program**

The structure for each Friday session entailed five one-hour prayer periods, five teaching sessions, and a one hour and thirty-minute video presentation along with three thirty-minute break periods. The rationale for the structured agenda was to foster the discipline of prayer, teaching, fellowship and transparency. Each respondent was lead through five different types of

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<sup>152</sup> Connie Evashwick, Marcia Ory, "Organizational Characteristics of Successful Innovative Health Care Programs Sustained Overtime," *Journal of Family & Community Health* 26, no. 3 (2003): 177-193.

prayer principles that would help with the coping of depression. The epistle of James admonishes readers by stating: “Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing psalms.”<sup>153</sup> The connotation is that those who are afflicted are exhorted to find relief and comfort through the discipline of prayer. Similar research was conducted on a randomized trial base on the effect of prayer on depression and anxiety. The study points out “individuals in the direct person-to-person prayer contact intervention group received six weekly 1–hour prayer sessions while those in the control group received none. Rating scales and cortisol levels were repeated for both groups after completion of the prayer sessions, and a month later.”<sup>154</sup>

Consequently, the result of this study reported “at the completion of the trial, participants receiving the prayer intervention showed significant improvement of depression and anxiety, as well as increases of daily spiritual experiences and optimism compared to controls ( $p < 0.01$  in all cases).”<sup>155</sup> The summation is that African-American men who participate in consistent prayer can find comfort from despondency from the perspective of Pentecostalism. The authors conclude: “Direct contact person-to-person prayer may be useful as an adjunct to standard medical care for patients with depression and anxiety. Further research in this area is indicated.”<sup>156</sup>

The second element within the design program was that of the teaching aspect on spirituality and depression. It was the prophet Hosea who stated: “My people are destroyed for

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<sup>153</sup> James 5:13.

<sup>154</sup> Peter Boelens, Roy Reeves, William Replogle, Harold Koenig, “A Randomized Trial of the Effect of Prayer on Depression and Anxiety,” *Journal of Psychiatry in Medicine* 39, no. 4 (2009): 377-392.

<sup>155</sup> Peter Boelens, Roy Reeves, William Replogle, Harold Koenig, “A Randomized Trial of the Effect of Prayer on Depression and Anxiety,” *Journal of Psychiatry in Medicine* 39, no. 4 (2009): 377-392.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

lack of knowledge.”<sup>157</sup> The implication is that because men are unaware of information that is conducive for therapy and emotional stability from depression they are destroyed by the despair of their own souls. Studies have shown the effects that teaching coping skills can have upon those who deal with despondency and anxiety. The authors report “The role of a psychiatric nurse in the school system providing short-term psychoeducation interventions is a practical and effective mental health practice.”<sup>158</sup> The writers go on to report: “Results indicated improvement in depressive symptomatology and certain coping skills. Students in the intervention reported a higher use of cognitive problem-solving coping strategies.”<sup>159</sup> The significance of this study in conjunction with Black men and depression is that the teaching portion of the implementation design helps to provide men with coping skills to handle on coming troubles which leads to despair.

Moreover, video presentations that are geared toward positive images of men who have endured depression are most helpful in time of pain and sorrow. It was during the second session, “An Interview with God” was shown and discussed with the respondents. The video presentation showed in detail a man who was struggling with depression and was soon to commit suicide without divine and human intervention. One study found “To examine the effectiveness of videotaped memory training, two groups of middle-aged and older adults were given imagery training that included videotaped presentation of interactive imagery for object location recall

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<sup>157</sup> Hosea 4:6.

<sup>158</sup> Puskar Kathryn, Susan Sereika, Kathleen Tusaie-mumford, “Effect of the Teaching Kids to Cope Program On Outcomes of Depression and Coping Among Rural Adolescents,” *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing* 16, no. 2 (2003): 71-80.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

and linking items on a list, and the image-name match method for name recall.”<sup>160</sup> The connection is that men who deal with depression have bouts of memory losses and struggle to maintain focus. The authors point out “the training group performed significantly better than the waiting list on the initial post-test, and the two groups were comparable after both groups had received training. Videotaped presentation of imagery training is effective for mature adults as a self-paced at-home intervention, and has cost-saving advantages over the predominant training methodology.”<sup>161</sup> The key point was imagery training. It was through training that these mature adults were able to have recall through memory of their learned linking skills. Even so African-American men through video presentation can grow and retain positive imagery of men coping with depression.

One final thought concerning video presentations is the influence that it can have upon the brain itself. One study reported brain activity and desires for internet video games have significant influence upon our emotional moods. Researchers explain, “studies have suggested that the brain circuitry mediating cue-induced desire for video games is similar to that elicited by cues related to drugs and alcohol.”<sup>162</sup> The implication is that this study affirms the notion that video presentations can provide positive or negative effects on respondents’ emotional moods.

### *Outreach Session*

The principle of outreaching as it pertains to African-American men and depression is that helping helps the helper. When men help other men who are in despondency, they in return

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<sup>160</sup> Robin West, Thomas Crook, “Video Training of Imagery for Mature Adults,” *Journal of Applied Cognitive Psychology* 6, no. 4 (1992): 307-320.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>162</sup> Robin West, Thomas Crook, “Video Training of Imagery for Mature Adults,” *Journal of Applied Cognitive Psychology* 6, no. 4 (1992): 307-320.



help themselves in sorrow. Research findings explain: “The helper therapy principle suggests that, within mutual-help groups, those who help others help themselves. The current study examines whether clients in treatment for alcohol and drug problems benefit from helping others, and how helping relates to 12-step involvement.”<sup>163</sup> The findings predicted that the helping principle emerged from others taking action to help those who were struggling with similar symptoms as their own. It was the apostle Paul who wrote “who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.”<sup>164</sup>

The details of the outreach design were that of the time frame of five hours each session. It consisted of meal prep and packaging. The session entailed packaging blankets, sweaters, socks and other hygiene products for those who were in need. The first part of the outreach session consisted of respondents taking care packages to men and women who were homeless living in make shift tents and boxes. Along with serving the homeless the respondents were lead to a convalescent center where they ministered to elderly men and women who suffered from dementia and depression. The execution of ministry unto the elderly was comprised of sitting and conversing, providing them with blankets and socks, as well as offering prayer and ministry through hymns.

The desired result for respondents participating in outreach programs was the fostering of strength and transparency. It was the Apostle Luke who wrote “but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.”<sup>165</sup> Jesus was

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<sup>163</sup> Sarah Zemore, Lee Kaskutas, Lyndsay Ammon. “In 12 Step Groups, Helping Helps the Helper.” *Addiction* 99, no.8 (2004): 1015-1023

<sup>164</sup> 2 Corinthians 1:4.

<sup>165</sup> Luke 22:32.

encouraging Simon Peter that when you are tested by the enemy and are changed, then rise up and strengthen the brethren. The implication is that when African-American men are built up from despondencies they too are able to help strengthen their brethren who themselves are weak. Studies have shown those who have struggled with depression have increased their emotional state through the means of family and friendship. The author notes “Support from friends, support from family and a composite of emotional support were significant predictors of depression beyond the effects of initial depression severity.”<sup>166</sup> Therefore looking outside of self and serving others has therapeutic value

The second reason for the implantation design program in outreaching was to create transparency and accountability. It was Jonathan Fox who described the relationship with transparency and accountability by stating: “The concepts of transparency and accountability are closely linked: transparency is supposed to generate accountability.”<sup>167</sup> The notion is that through consistent fellowshipping of men, transparency is created which fosters accountability amongst Black men who deal with despair. It was the Psalmist who penned “behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.”<sup>168</sup>

That being said, chapter four will provide a deeper understanding of this research project. It will explain the results of addressing the research question. It will detail the results of the research project’s intervention plan. It will describe the results which the intervention plan

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<sup>166</sup> Nasser Elizabeth, James Overhoiser, “Recovery from Major Depression: The Role of Support from Family, Friends and Spiritual Beliefs,” *Journal of Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica* 111, no. 2 (2005): 125-132.

<sup>167</sup> Jonathan Fox, “The Uncertain Relationship Between Transparency and Accountability,” *Journal of Development in Practice* 17, no. 4 (2007): 663-671.

<sup>168</sup> Psalm 133:1.

yielded. It will expound upon the steps taken to create both prayer and evangelistic outreach designs to help African-American men who were coping with depression.

## **CHAPTER 4: RESULTS**

### **Restatement of the Purpose**

This research study was on Depression in Black Men: One Church's solution. The project was to investigate the experiences of African American men and their struggles with depression. It was to describe how one black church influenced African American men positively who have endured the sorrows of despair. The study addressed the perception black men had concerning the church in conjunction with their spiritual lives. The struggle for spiritual meaning while combatting secularization within their communities has been the challenge for black men.

Moreover, because of parental insensitivity of spiritual matters African-American men have frequented their local churches less than their parental authorities. One leading cause for the absence of black males attending church is that of conflicted images of masculinity and femininity within the ranks of leadership in the black church. In summary the lack of participation in the church for black men has been due, in part, because of the long search for value and placement therein. The persistent question is where do the black men fit in a church that is predominantly female by population due to the lack of male presence?

The study also addressed the stigmatization of depression among African-American men with the black culture. Black men have viewed depression as a sign of weakness and have suppressed their emotional expression due to community persecution from their peers. This ideological concept of depression being a form of weakness has caused many African American men to resist any type of professional help due to the appearance of emotional vulnerability and the stigmatization of mental illness.

## Introduction

As it pertains to depression, women have been diagnosed more frequently than men. Black men in particular have been under diagnosed due to stigmatization and misinformation. One study found “Women are diagnosed with depressive disorders twice as frequently as men, and yet evidence from differential rates of substance abuse, incarceration, and especially suicide calls into question the assumption that men are less susceptible than women to depression. It is possible that there is a “masculine” form of depression that is under-diagnosed and under-treated.”<sup>169</sup>

One of the leading causes for underdiagnosing men with depression has been due to professionals overlooking the lack of emotional expression concerning their need for therapy. The author points out “Therapists who treat conventionally gendered male clients/patients should educate these men about masculinity as an important context of their problem, and should attend closely to issues of emotional expression, premature termination of therapy, and grief.”<sup>170</sup> The suggested thought is that helping professionals should become more culturally aware of masculine depression versus feminine depression. The writer goes on to express “Therapists who treat conventionally gendered male clients/patients should educate these men about masculinity as an important context of their problem, and should attend closely to issues of emotional expression, premature termination of therapy, and grief.”<sup>171</sup> Hence the best approach for this

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<sup>169</sup> Kilmartin Christopher, “Depression In Men: Communication, Diagnosis and Therapy,” *Journal of Men’s Health and Gender* 2, no. 1 (2005): 95-99.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*

research project was qualitative in nature, because it is “multi-method in focus involving an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter.”<sup>172</sup>

### **Portrait of the Participants**

This study included eight men: Christopher, Larry, William, David, Deion, Joseph, Jordon, and Russell. Pseudonyms were used to provide confidentiality. In this section, the eight responders were presented from the researcher’s perspective. It consisted of a brief biographical sketch gleaned from the data of the shared experiences from the personal interviews. It was significantly important to identify a few characteristics shared by the participants. In like manner, Dr. Johnny Baker’s Dissertation affirms, “This section provides brief individual biographical sketches of the eight participants in hopes of connecting the reader to the research in a personal way. As the stories of the eight men were compared and contrasted, common themes appeared and since they were connected to the individual participants, yielded rich associations and conclusions about the phenomenal nature of the study.”<sup>173</sup>

### **Individual Biographical Sketches of the Participants**

#### ***Christopher***

Christopher is an African American male. He is 41 years old and is currently single with five children. His occupation is that of a college recruiter at a local college. When asked how would he describe his Christian experience he stated “grace and mercy.” Christopher is most passionate about helping, leading and teaching others.

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<sup>172</sup> Tim Sensing *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Oregon: WIPF 7 STOCK, 2011), 57.

<sup>173</sup> Johnny Baker, “Finishing Well: A Phenomenological Investigation of Spiritual Transformation In Retirement Age Evangelical Men” (PhD diss., Liberty University, 2012), 189.

***Larry***

Larry is an African American male. He is 31 years of age. He is employed as a Manager of Major Disk helping homeless men and women at a nonprofit organization. Larry is a single male. His Christian experience can be summed up as fulfilling and informative. Larry is most passionate about souls, music and black culture issues.

***William***

William is a 31-year-old African American male. His occupation is that of a truck driver. William has just recently become engaged and is soon to marry at the end of the year. When asked how would you described your Christian experience, he said “constantly pursuing”. William is most passionate about his relationship with Jesus.

***David***

David is a 31-year-old African American male. He is currently unemployed. David is a recent newlywed and describes his Christian experience as “uniquely mine.” His passion entails working with young people and helping the underdogs.

***Deion***

Deion is 20 years old. He is an African American male who works as a Human Resource Department Autism Learning agent. Presently he is single and focuses on his studies. His Christian experience is defined as “exciting and yet challenging.” His passion is helping others, playing music, and loving God and his church.

***Joseph***

Joseph is a 47-year-old African American. His is a full-time single student. His Christian experience is explained as an “ever changing dynamic.” His passion consists of family and music.

**Jordan**

Jordan is a 25-year-old African American. His occupation is that of a Wrap Around Facilitator with Ascent Health Inc. He is a single male. He explains his Christian experience as “ever evolving and constantly growing.” Jordan’s passion is finances and relationships.

**Russell**

Russell is a 28-year-old African American male. His occupation is an account manager passenger. He has recently become engaged to his love. When asked about his Christian experience he stated “love and faith.” Russell is most passionate about people, leadership and ministry.

To investigate depression and the correlation with African-American men, questionnaires and interviews were used to gather the needed data. The survey and interview questions were used to predict the extent of how Pentecostal churches helped heal depression within Black men. The analyses highlighted the role of leadership influence/impact Pentecostal African American men’s struggle with depression. The questions also examined the extent of Pentecostal African-American men’s consciousness of the signs and symptoms associated with depression in men.

**Reporting Results from Questionnaires and Interviews**

Of the study population eight African-American men completed and returned the questionnaires and submitted to be interviewed as well. The response rate was that of 100% with full participation during the interview process. Each respondent felt that the survey and interview questions were clear and direct and brought about a greater awareness and a deeper understanding of the concept of depression being an issue among Black men. The survey and interview had three primary research questions:



1. To what extent have Pentecostal churches helped heal depression with African-American men?

In response to question one, the majority of respondents commented that there were no programs that were made available to their congregation. Additionally, participants concluded that they had never even seen any programs that aided African-American men with depression in their entire Pentecostal denomination. Of the eight participants who completed the questionnaire and interview process, five of the them replied that:

**Larry** “I can’t think of a way that they church has aided African American men with depression”

**William** “No programs has been offered to Black men from our church”

**David** “Being completely honest my church has done nothing that I have personally observed to aid African-American men with depression”

**Jordan** “I haven’t noticed anything in church that was geared toward depression in the Black church”

**Russell** “nothing has been put into place to help African-American men in the church”

A small minority of participants indicated that their church had other means in place of programs that were not an official ministry program, but helped Black men to cope with depression. The participants indicated:

**Christopher** “I know that most men at my church feel more comfortable talking about their problems to people they look up to or admire in the church. Our Pastor is a person who is very approachable and easy to talk to I know that he does some Counseling session”

**Deion** “Men look up to men. The Pastor may provide counseling sessions”

**Joseph** “Our church used to have a therapist on call and there were a few sermons on depression”

2. In what ways does being in a role of leadership influence/impact Pentecostal African American men's struggle with depression?

When the subjects were asked about question two six of the participants indicated:

**Larry** "The impact made me feel like I had to hide my depression because I did not want to discourage others or shake anyone's confidence nor have any one to question my ability to lead as a leader"

**William** "I felt like I can't be trying to give out hope and I be depressed at the same time"

**Deion** "I feel like I have to hide being depressed because I am a man and I don't want to give an impression to others that I am weak"

**Joseph** "Because of the stigmatization of being depressed amongst Black culture I felt the pressure to hide my sorrow because of being perceived as a leader of having a lack of faith"

**Jordan** "I felt like I had to hid being depressed; because people look up to you and if they see you are weak they except that they are weak as well"

**Russell** "There is an unsaid stigma that something is wrong. They will think as a leader that I am un-capable of doing my job"

One the other hand, of the eight participates who were surveyed two of the respondents replied:

**David:** "No I did not have to hide being depressed. I have not felt a need to hide"

**Christopher** "I have never had to deal with hiding being depressed"

3. To what extent are Pentecostal African-American men conscious of the signs and symptoms associated with depression in men?

The overall response to question three was expressed by four of the participants:

**Jordon** “Honestly, I’m sure I’ve experienced at least some symptoms of depression. I’m not sure that I’ve haven’t done enough research to recognize what depression really is”

**Larry** “I didn’t know what I wanted to do in life and plus I just wasn’t happy with life”

**Christopher** “I haven’t personally experienced depression”

**David** “I’ve had one time when I’ve genuinely been depressed”

**Joseph** “I’ve had depressing moments”

The other half of the respondents reported:

**Russell** “Depression is a mind thing; not a spirit”

**Larry** “Because of my doctrinally understanding depression I have only come to understand it as something the saints can’t have or be.”

**William** “It’s when something just comes over you”

**Deion** “It’s a lack of hearing from God; something that makes you question yourself”

### **Statement of Findings**

Consequently, the first findings of the survey and interview questions validated my research that although Pentecostalism has become reputable in its stance in religious doctrine; it has however not been successful in creative programing for African-American men who are depressed. One study questioned the perceptions of church-based program to provide depression care for African Americans. The authors observed, “African-Americans, compared with white Americans, underutilize mental health services for major depressive disorder. Church-based

programs are effective in reducing racial disparities in health; however, the literature on church-based programs for depression is limited.”<sup>174</sup>

Further analysis affirmed that black churches have even fewer studies of health outreach programs for African-American men. Mental and emotional health programs have been overlooked due in part to the lack of research development and implementation. The writers report, “The Black church has a long history of addressing unmet health and human service needs, yet few studies have examined characteristics of churches involved in health promotion.”<sup>175</sup>

The second findings from this project confirmed my studies in that African-American men struggle in private with depression because of the perceived thoughts of others appearing to be weak. It was William Terrie who explained Black pain. The author observed “when I think back on that time I’m stunned. There I was, a mental health professional, and I couldn’t bring myself to admit that I was suffering from a major clinical depression.”<sup>176</sup> The pressure of having to appear strong before others has been the root cause for many Black men suppressing their feelings of despair without pursuit of any type of professional help. Consequently, African-American men feel pressured to conform to social norms of hyper-masculinity. The fear of being vulnerable causes men to become defensive and distant which give a false facade of emotional control. One study explained: “It has been suggested that men may find it difficult to seek help because culturally dominant (or hegemonic) forms of masculinity are characterized by emotional

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<sup>174</sup> Hankerson Sidney, Kalycia Watson, Alicia Lukachko, Mindy Follilove, Myrna Weissman. Minister’s perceptions of Church-based programs to provide depression care for African Americans,” *Journal of Urban Health* 90, no.4 (2013): 685-698.

<sup>175</sup> Thomas Stephen, Sandra Quinn, Andrew Billingsley, Cleopatra Caldwell, “The Characteristics of Northern Black Churches with Community Health Outreach Programs,” *Journal of Public Health* 84, no. 4 (1994): 575-579.

<sup>176</sup> Williams Terrie. *Black Pain: It Just Looks Like We’re Not Hurting* (New York: Simon and Schuster 2009), 77.

control and a lack of vulnerability, while depression is often associated with powerlessness and the uncontrolled expression of emotion.”<sup>177</sup>

The third finding supports this project in that most African-American men do lack understanding of the symptoms of being depressed. Research has observed “Socialization processes leave many men prone to experience pervasive feelings of shame when confronted by challenging life events. These feelings may be associated with a depressed mood, requiring the help of a counselor.”<sup>178</sup> The implication is that most Black men are unaware of the associations that are in conjunction with depression which causes a delay in seeking help. The weight of shame and guilt hinders Black men from even acknowledging their struggle with despair. It was Jennifer Biddle who reported, “shame is powerful stuff, contagious and self-propagating. To discuss it is likely to invoke it, for so ashamed are we in Eurocentric cultures-so shame bound am I- that it is shameful, shame-making, even to speak of shame.”<sup>179</sup>

### **Statement of None Findings**

The analysis did not show respondents having a concrete theology concerning Pentecostalism and depression. The question that was asked as a Pentecostal how do you define depression from a theological stand point? Although each participant has had years of experience within Pentecostalism, they themselves expressed not having a strong doctrinal understating of depression in Black men. Participants responses confirms:

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<sup>177</sup> Emslie Carol, Damien Ridge, Sue Ziebland and Kate Hunt, “Men’s Accounts of Depression: reconstructing or Resisting Hegemonic Masculinity,” *Journal of Social Science & Medicine* 62, no. 9 (2006): 2246-2257.

<sup>178</sup> Shepard David, Fredric Rabinowitz, “The Power of Shame In Men Who Are Depressed: implication for counselors,” *Journal of Counseling & Development* 91, no. 4 451-457.

<sup>179</sup> Biddle Jennifer, “Shame,” *Journal of Australian Feminist Studies* 12, no. 26 (1997): 227-239.

**Larry** “it’s the external and introduction of unproductivity and other factors that keep you from moving forward”

**William** “depression is not being able to accelerate. It not being able to function or focus. I think it’s a spirit, something that comes on you”

**David** “depression is a momentary chink in the armor. It’s an opportunity for the devil to play tricks on the mind”

**Deion** “I view depression being a lack of hearing from God. It’s something that makes you question yourself; a major factor; a human aspect of life”

**Christopher** “depression is in the heart; therefore, out of the heart comes the feelings that are actualized in life”

**Joseph** “depression is related to a person’s walk with Christ. It’s a gage of your faith. The psychological response to a spiritual imbalance”

**Jordan** “I view depression as a time in bondage; no matter the length of time”

**Russell** “depression is a tool of the enemy. It’s the trick of the enemy that overtakes people if they allow it”

The implication is that theology plays a strong factor on how and what we believe concerning issues of life especially depression. Studies have spoken on theological correctness and its influence on our thought patterns. Justin Barrett points out “In both natural and religious thinking, people have multiple versions of the same concepts that may be contradictory. Versions of religious concepts range from fairly simple or concrete to very complex and abstract.”<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Barrett Justin, “Theological Correctness: cognitive Constraint and the Study of Religion,” *Journal of Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 11, no. 4 (1999): 325-339.

With a few exceptions, the results did not find professional counseling to be a need for participants to aid their recovery from depression. The stigmatization for African-American men in seeking out professional counseling, has prevented most from experiencing recovery from of despondency. Participants replied:

**William** “no I have not sought out professional counseling”

**David** “no I did not seek for counseling for depression”

**Deion** “no I have not had counseling for depression”

**Christopher** “no I have not had counseling for depression”

**Jordan** “no I did not seek professional counseling. I thought I could handle it on my own

**Larry** “yes I have a therapist”

**Joseph** “yes a psychiatrist”

**Russell** “yes for grief counseling”

The correlation is that many African-American men view professional counseling as unhelpful and as a sign of weakness. The concepts of masculinity amongst Black men are skewed and harsh. Researchers have observed, “Masculinity ideologies are ideas and concepts that individual men hold about what it means to be a man. The study of masculinity ideologies is concerned with the extent to which men endorse ideologies that emphasize self-reliance, competitiveness, emotional control, power over others, and aggression.”<sup>181</sup>

Traditional masculine roles have created psychological barriers for Black men to even perceive counseling as a means of help. Research points out, “marginalized men are both more likely to subscribe to some traditional masculinity ideologies and to lack access to health

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<sup>181</sup> Mansfield Aabigail, Michael Addis, James Mahalik, “Why Wont He Go To The Doctor? The Psychology of Men’s Help Seeking,” *Journal of Men’s Health* 2 (2003): 93-110.

services. Subscription to traditional masculinity ideologies thus adds an ideological barrier to the material barriers marginalized men face in procuring health care services.”<sup>182</sup> The implication is that African-American men seek to rely upon their own means of psychological strength rather than looking unto those who are skillful to help. Again researcher affirm, “masculinity ideologies might be invoked in statements like “I should be able to handle this on my own” or “I’d hate for the guys at work/school/on the team to find out I was here.”<sup>183</sup>

### **Highlighting Significant Results and Achievements**

The most striking result to emerge from the data is that each participant knew personally of other Black men who were depressed. The issue of depression amongst Black men has been concealed under the notion that real men do not deal with depression. When asked during your life time how many African American men have you known who were depressed, participates replied:

**Larry** “I know of plenty men who are depressed”

**William** “Yes I know many men who are depressed”

**David** “I can’t say how many men are depressed; because it’s a taboo subject”

**Deion** “I probably encountered 2 or 3 men who have been depressed”

**Christopher** “I have known of 5 men in my life time to be depressed”

**Joseph** “I have known of a lot of black men to be depressed”

Jordan “I would say 2 or 3 men have I known to be depressed”

Russell “I know of 7 men who are depressed”

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>183</sup> Mansfield Aabigail, Michael Addis, James Mahalik, “Why Wont He Go To The Doctor? The Psychology of Men’s Help Seeking,” *Journal of Men’s Health* 2 (2003): 93-110.



The significance is that each respondent knew of other Black men who were depressed and were silent in about expressing their sorrows out openly. The number of African-American men suffering from depression is unclear because of unwritten rule of keeping one's pain to themselves. One study highlights, "African-American men are significantly less likely to be diagnosed with depression when compared to men of other ethnicities. Some research provides evidence that these disparities in diagnosis are not related to actual differences in prevalence rates, but rather are due to the underdiagnoses and/or misdiagnosis of depression among African-American men."<sup>184</sup>

Another, important highlight was that of the functionality of participants in conjunction to their careers while dealing with depression, with the exception of one. Studies have shown that men can work and be depressed at the same time. One study observed clergy men serving and being depressed within their own parishes. The authors report, "through their work in parishes, they also carry the greatest pastoral responsibility for Roman Catholics in the U.S. The researchers found that Roman Catholic clergy reported significantly greater depression and anxiety (both state and trait) than the general population."<sup>185</sup> The correlation is that each participant is a part of the Christian faith and are vocational workers in their perspective places and yet while experiencing depression to varying degrees. Respondents describe their career:

**Larry** "I work for a nonprofit organization which helps homeless men/women"

**William** "I am a Truck Driver"

**David** "I am unemployed at this time"

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<sup>184</sup> Bryant Keneshia, Tiffany Haynes, Nancy Hartwig, "Too Blessed To Be Stressed: A Rural Faith Community's Views of African-American Males and Depression," *Journal of Religion Health* (2014) 53: 796-808.

<sup>185</sup> Knox Sarah, Stephen Virginia, Jessica Thull, John Lombardo, "Depression and Contributors to Vocational Satisfaction in Roman Catholics Secular Clergy," *Pastoral Psychology* 54, no. 2 (2005): 65.

**Deion** “I work for the Human Resource Department working with Autistic children”

**Christopher** “I am a College Recruiter”

**Jordan** “I am a wraparound facilitator; working with children and families”

**Joseph** “I am a full-time student”

**Russell** “I am an Account Manger passenger”

The importance of noting respondents vocational training is that studies show how the effects of depression can be debilitating to one’s mind and body whereby making it difficult to fulfill work related responsibilities. One study sought to understand how successful management professionals handle being bipolar while working in their careers. It was Maria Calderon who pointed out, “That work and how one approaches it is a core part of one’s definition of oneself, whether one is diagnosed as bipolar or not. I chose to focus on successful managers because I was interested in seeing how people with such severe mood swings could lead and manage an organization.”<sup>186</sup>

The general knowledge concerning depression is that men and women who are depressed are unable to work and are placed on disability. However, many men are functioning in their careers while dealing with despondency. Again Calderon state, “they found that many individuals with mental illnesses are employed. This is significant information that is not common knowledge for dispelling the myth that most people with mental illness can’t work.”<sup>187</sup> The implication is that employer’s expectation of men as well as the responsibilities of life that drives humanity is the catalyst which keeps men working while dealing with depression. The author concludes, “Employers know they are part of the workforce since they know what various

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<sup>186</sup> Maria Calderon, “Successful Management Professionals with Bipolar Disorder” (PhD diss., Alliant International University. 2012), 1-65.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 10

illnesses cost them. I also found in this report that mental illnesses are considered to be short term disabilities because these employees are expected to return to work and do.”<sup>188</sup>

### **Stating Results Confirming Previous Evidence**

The research project was consistent with previous evidence concerning prayer. It was studied to be a compound in helping African-American men cope with depression. When respondents were asked can you describe the measures you took while enduring the pains of depression, their responses were:

**Larry** “I began to go to church and asked God to help me”

**William** “I gave myself over to fasting and prayer”

**David** “I prayed and read my Bible”

**Deion** “I talked to God about my problems and just began to cry out to Him”

**Joseph** “I prayed and stayed in the Word of God

**Russell** “I prayed and read my Bible”

The implication is that prayer has been the substratum for Pentecostals and has been the stimulus whereby African-American men have received help with despair. It was Nicole Brown who researched the “role of prayer and depression of African-Americans and concluded “personal prayer has been researched in the context of mental and physical health benefits. Although research findings are mixed, there is some empirical evidence that suggests that certain types of personal prayers are related to positive benefits.”<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Brown Nicole, “Prayer and Self-Disclosure: The Role of Prayer Disclosures on the Sleep and Depression of African-American” (PhD diss., Howard University, 2016), 45.

One factor that Pentecostals have attributed the effectiveness of praying in conjunction with depression is that of speaking in tongues. It was Paul Enns who explained the “purpose of tongues, “to speak in tongues, is a Pentecostal and charismatic teaching based on Acts 2:4, 11; 10:45-46; 19:6 and 1 Corinthians 14. The tongues were known languages, needing no interpretation; they were immediately understood by people who spoke those languages.”<sup>190</sup> The implication is when men pray unto the God in tongues they are heard directly by God. It was the Apostle Paul who penned, “for he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.”<sup>191</sup> The inference is that praying in tongues has benefits that does aid those who are Pentecostal in belief. Brown concludes, “The mechanisms underlying the benefits of personal prayers are not entirely understood, but some researchers contend that intimacy and dialogue are important factors in prayer that relate to better wellbeing and functioning.”<sup>192</sup>

A second confirming evidence was that of peer mentoring through the men’s support group. It is noted that men find strength and brotherhood amongst each other which helps to foster transparency and openness. When asked how do you perceive the men’s support group the responses were as such”

**Larry** “Seclusion is not the best answer”

**William** “Without help you can stay in the rut of depression”

**Deion** “Friends are needed. Those who will not tell your business”

**Jordan** “Friends are a support system”

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<sup>190</sup> Enns Paul, *The Moody Hand Book Of Theology* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2008), 674.

<sup>191</sup> 1 Corinthians 14:2.

<sup>192</sup> Brown Nicole, “Prayer and Self-Disclosure: The Role of Prayer Disclosures on the Sleep and Depression of African-American” (PhD diss., Howard University 2016), 45.

**Russell** “I need help. I am one hundred percent human and don’t have to be strong all the time”

The rationale for men supporting men through a group effort is to be informative of life issues as well as support of emotional despair. It was Edward Barton who studied men’s peer mutual support groups and reported, “it looked at men’s support groups as a form of social support. That support may be in the form of informational support, such as that found in father’s rights groups, emotional support, as offered by mythopoetic support groups (which includes both open and closed mythopoetic men’s support groups), and/or instrumental social support, such as a loan or gift of money.<sup>193</sup> The Psalmist David stated, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.”<sup>194</sup>

Even more, close networks have helped to shape Black men’s thoughts and concepts of depression and sorrow. The formal networks include that of close and distant family members who are limited in helping men become transparent with other men. Again Edward makes clear: “although, there are also more formal support networks, such as family of origin and extended family, which are considered “formal” because they are legally sanctioned with contractual obligations, this study chose to examine the more informal social support networks, such as those found in self-help groups and men’s peer mutual support groups.”<sup>195</sup> The insinuation is that men have the ability to help other men through the means of informal conversing and spiritual connecting through prayer and support.

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<sup>193</sup> Barton Edward, “A Qualitative Exploration of Participation In Men’s Peer Mutual Support Groups: Beyond Men Hugging Trees” (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 2003). 2

<sup>194</sup> Psalm 133:1

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

### **Admitting Limitations**

This project may have two limitations. The first is that of scheduling. The chosen location for this project was set with certain protocols that pertained to calendar scheduling. Giving that there are four weeks within a month, space for implementation design became difficult. This location had multiple auxiliaries which required scheduling programs forty-five days ahead. The conflict was that of implementing the program design for two consecutive sessions without intruding upon other auxiliary program.

The second limitation was that of antagonistic leaders who were competitive in nature due in part to the apparent success of the program. The program rendered fruit to the point that outsiders began inquiring of the mechanics of the program and how they could duplicate the program as well. Initially the program was given permission to run once a month for future sessions. Later the program was restricted to operate only quarterly because of over scheduling.

With this in mind, the conclusion of chapter five will provide a deeper understating of the research project in and of itself. Chapter five will describe the direction that this research problem should go futuristically. It will explain how the results of the research project compared to the information gleaned from previous studies or the published work analyzed in the literature review. It will expound upon what the researcher learned while implementing the project. It will clarify how might the results apply in other settings as well as new emerging information that would merit future research.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study suggests that Pentecostal African American men have matriculated through the ranks of leadership and established successful businesses, churches, miniseries and organizational denominations which hold the substratum for Black Pentecostalism; however, Black men have become public successes while teetering on the edge of mental, emotional, and spiritual breakdown.

The Pentecostal faith and Black Pentecostal churches have passed rituals and traditions to parishioners that has fostered dedications and commitment to pass such elements of faith down to their children children's. The Black Pentecostal church has been known for its exciting worship style and fiery sermons which has helped to keep African-American families uplifted and encouraged.

The Black church has exercised great influence upon parishioners throughout its existence. This influence has shaped the minds of many Black families to remain close and consistent to the church and the faith of Pentecostalism. Sadly, because of insensitivity on spiritual matters, black men have frequented the local church less than their parental authorities. The cause of this de-sensitivity is because of conflicted imagery between masculinity and femininity with in the ranking of leadership. The bottom line for Black men as it pertains to the church is the searching for value, meaning and placement within the church and their communities.

The probing question, is the church strong enough to sustain and hold the attention of African-American men who struggle with depression while occupying leadership positions. Even more, the piercing though has the church any foundational strengthen and intestinal fortitude to spiritually and intellectually handle the issues of depression in Black men.

### **Acknowledgment of Issues**

This research has led me to conclude that culture stigmatization of depression amongst African American men is a great fear within itself. The fear of being labeled weak, pitiful, and mentally ill has kept Black men from acknowledging and confronting the issue of depression in and amongst male peer groups. The dread of being stigmatized has led many Black men to create a false image of hyper-masculine strength that hides the anxiety of appearing less than a man. The seed of fear has been planted within African-American men through and by parental guidance, family and friends as well as surrounding communities

Moreover, the way in which African-American men perceive depression is a second issue that must be acknowledged amongst Black men. Black men have perceived depression to be a sign of weakness. The mental struggles of having to appear strong and emotionally uninvolved by the issues of life, has become the additive imagery projected to one's family and peer group. The reasoning behind such falsehoods is to avoid the harsh persecution that comes from those who are threaten by any perceived image of vulnerability and weaknesses.

Another, issues as it pertains to depression and African-American men is that of being misdiagnosed by professional counselors who would label them as mentally ill. The fear of being involuntarily hospitalized or pressured into taking medication that would impair one's judgment, causes men to avoid and deny the very existence of depression itself. Professional counseling for Black men is just another sign of failure. The ideology for Black men is that of self-sufficiency. The language of self-sufficiency is that of handling despair alone and away from judgmental eye and ears.

Taken together, these results suggest that African-American men are understudied and underserved population. Black men suffer in silence and stand under the pressure of having to



appear strong before those who hold them in high regards. This type of emotional suffering most often leads to physical discomfort and long-term illnesses. Black men have learned to suppress physical and emotional pain both at the same time which has been the root causes for depression therein.

The finding of this study addressed critical issues that African-American men deal with in relation to healing depression in the Pentecostal Faith tradition. The issues of emotional wounds that lead to depression is one such issues that research unveiled. The issues of barriers to healing and recognizing how depression is expressed in Black men is another finding during literature research. The components of effective pastoral counseling for African-American men was another important finding whereby Black men could obtain healing in a Pentecostal setting.

An implication from this study showed the unique emotional needs of Black men who struggle in silence with depression. The wounds of Black men have been caused through customs, social institutions and other manifestations of human intellectual achievements. The need to regulate one's thoughts, rehearse God's promises, prayer, and engage in peer mentoring through men support group are the proponents whereby Black men are able to heal from depression. As a result, Black men are able to experience intervention and recovery through the knowledge of culture sensitivity being integral to improve detection.

### **Methodological Review**

The evidence from this study provided the setting of eight African-American men who were Pentecostal through religious faith. The methodological approach underlined the importance of in-depth research questioning in order to understand the mind set of Black men as a people. Environmental settings, family dynamics and culture influences each have helped to shape the mental capacity of Black men who deal with depression.

The factor of religious faith has been the saving grace for Black men who are without secular knowledge of mental disturbances such as despair. The Pentecostal church has cultivated a strong religious faith to seek God in the times of despondency. It has been the second home for the Black community as a whole. From the church many Black leaders have come to the forefront of society to stand against injustices in and around their assigned communities. Hence the Pentecostal church is purposed to develop the theological concepts of God and foster a deeper understanding of spiritual elements that effect life as a whole such as depression.

Further, the devised methodology provided evidence of that African-American men who are depressed have been an understudied group of people. The outside stereotypical perception of black men who are depressed in society are seen as angry distracted men who are unable to control their behavior actions. However, when deeply concerned individuals begin to peer deeper behind the walls of pseudo masculine strength, the foundation will reveal men who have been deeply wounded by depression which has been concealed through images of unquestioned cultural acceptable Black hyper masculinity.

### **Highlighted Concerns**

This research project highlighted three main concerns as it pertains African-American men who deal with depression. One concern was how Pentecostal churches helped to heal depression within Black men. The Pentecostal denomination and its sub-churches have remained to be the safe haven for Black men who are overwhelmed with stress and despair. A second concern that was highlighted was the role of leadership and its impact on Pentecostal African-American men who struggle with depression. The Black church has been known for its strong leadership role in the community and its ability to develop others in leadership roles. The

significance is that leaders who deal with depression and stand in leadership roles who are unable to express as well as deal with emotional pains, are in danger of mental breakdowns.

The third important factor within this study was how unaware African-American men are towards the symptoms and signs associated with being depressed. The study showed how unconscious participants were to the factors of being in despair. The common thought amongst Black men is to feign being in despondency while upholding an image of strength. Hence depression can be hidden from the normal view and seen as anger, momentary sadness and or just being fatigue.

That fourth issues this research project emphasized was the importance of African-American men having a strong supportive system to help in the times of despair. Black men who are actively engaged in a system of male support groups are able to relate and become transparent with their own issues with depression. Male camaraderie has been suggested to be a catalyst whereby men have been able to understand the pressures of having to keep walls of psychological protection around one's mental state. The knowing of having peers who are able to relate is healing in itself from depression.

### **Future Studies**

Further work needs to be performed to establish the bearings of depression and Black men who are incarcerated for long periods of time. The importance of this study would be to investigate how separation from family support systems affects the mental state of those imprisoned behind bars. The relevance is in conjunction to our present day culture of Black men being the highest rates of imprisonments. Further studies are needed to estimate how many young Black men drop out of school because of circumstantial depression. The importance is

early detection by guardians, professionals and peers can help prevent young Black men from becoming proverbial statistics.

Additional, work on depression in African-American men, would help future researchers to better understand the suicidal rates within the Black community as it pertains to men. This study would help in prevention efforts of high rates of Black men ending their lives because of suicidal ideations. Researcher that is geared towards the study of addiction to pain medication and depression could serve as a base for future studies. The bases for such a study would be to investigate if pain medication causes addiction in men or rather depression itself is cause for compulsion towards prescription drugs.

On a wider level, research is also needed to determine the effects of depression cross culturally. The significance would be to investigate how other culture define and cope with depression amongst their civilization. Along with culture depression research is needed to determine how religion helps parishioners and civilization as a whole handle depression. This study would help establish the percentage of how religion either aids or hinder the healing process of despair.

Continuing, studies need to investigate the prevalence of depression amongst African American men in the military. This study could determine the beginning stages of depression from deployment until retirement. It would explain the hidden pressures of international warfare and the after effects thereof upon Black men. It would also help researchers create a better system of identifying those who are already predisposed to depressive environments which could trigger depressive attacks effecting the task at hand.

### **Possible Applications and Implication of the Research**

This study has gone some way towards enhancing understanding of awareness in Black men concerning depression. One aspect of awareness is educational information. It is through the means of teaching that African-American men can become more conscious of healthy mental and emotional stability within the dynamics of their relationships. This research has proved the need for professional counselors to be more culturally sensitive towards those who are outside one's sphere of ethnic background. Each ethnic cultures have unwritten rules concerning issues within life, such as depression. The implication is early detection can help professional counselors provide proper treatment for circumstantial depression rather than clinical.

The present findings suggest a few courses of action in order to solve the problem of depression in Black men. One such course of action is prayer. This study can aid Pentecostal churches in creating and strengthening prayer groups for men to aid in the manner of emotional healing. A second possible course of action is leading Black men through techniques of serving others through evangelism. The notion of men serving others through the means of outreach can help change the perspective of depression in Black men.

In view these results represent an excellent initial step toward building a stronger network for Black men in the Pentecostal faith. The many facets of Pentecostalism is executed quarterly through church services such as district meetings, state and national convention meetings. From these meetings accountable systems are able to be created to provide private transparent moments for brethren who deal with depression and hold leadership positions within their organization.

As reported above, this project has some limitations. In regards to educational awareness there may be some men who are unable to access due to illiteracy functionality. Some men may

deem depression as a fact of life and not seek educational understanding as to preventing one from experiencing mental breakdowns. The implication is for Black men to seek educational understanding would be a sign of admittance to struggling with depression itself.

This current study was limited by only studying a small populace of African-American men. It did not include other ethnic groups which could have helped to provide a greater depth of knowledge as to the effects of depression in men as a whole. This study was also restricted to men and did not include women. The benefits of studying women and depression could have shown are fetal babies effected in the womb of their mothers by their mother's melancholy.

Moreover, this study was incomplete in that it only focused on Pentecostal Christian men and not on non-believers. Studies could have been conducted with men who are void of religious faith, to investigate in general how men cope with depression. Illustrating better, Pentecostal men in past times, have used prayer and faith to deal with issues of gloominess. On the other hand, men of non-faith may use other methods to cope with sorrows that could be deemed as negative.

The most important limitation being the limited amount of academic research that has been conducted on Pentecostalism, Black men and depression. This caused research to be delayed in search of more in-depth studies concerning Black men who have dealt with depression while living out their faith through Pentecostalism.

### **Recommendation**

The first recommendation that could be beneficial in conjunction with this study is that of a professionally developed curriculum training program for senior leaders within the Pentecostal denomination. The training program would detail and in-depth understanding of depression, the perceptions of Black men and their thoughts about depression, techniques in counseling African-American men as well as establishing a follow-up team to continue ongoing relationships with

Black men. This training program could be presented as a seminar workshop to leadership heads, sub-leaders, staff and those who are concern about Black men in the Christian faith.

A second recommendation is to help local pastor develop and establish a counseling program within the frame work of the church. The Pentecostal faith views the Holy Spirit as being the counselor for those who are in mourning rather than seeking out those who are skilled professional to help in times of distress. This could help in that mankind is relational and needs human contact to help resolve issues of the mind and heart. Through Christian counseling the Holy Spirit is able to assist professional counselors in ministering to hurting Black men within their local assemblies.

A third recommendation would be to developed a program that could research ancestral depression within the one's family blood line. The implication would be to study parallels, symptoms and similarities that could affect men mentally and emotionally. Such a program could help men to learn the rhythm and patterns of depression and how to avoid mental breakdowns from its on stages. It could also be used a tool to help with early detection within one's future bloodlines. The benefits thereof could help parents determine what stage of emotional or mental turmoil their child could be facing as well as what methods of treatment may be needed.

A fourth recommendation would be to create a mentorship program for young Black men who are guided by mature men that are in the Pentecostal faith. The implementation design would be three-fold in its nature. The first would be personal connected older/younger consistent dialogue. The purpose would be to strengthen emotional and mental awareness through supportive relational guidance. The rational is to teach young men how to seek out help from those who have endured the pains of depression rather than struggling alone. The biblical

principle is that two are better than one. Those who are older and more experienced in matters of despair are able to teach younger men how to cope and endure such times of sorrow.

The second purpose is to create male bonding through outside fellowship. Male bonding can often be cultivated through events that foster togetherness. One example is project building. When men focus on a projects that demand communication and excellent working skills male camaraderie can be established which can last throughout years. Hence through male relationships young black can find friendship to help times of depression.

The third reasoning for mentorship programing is for educational-relational training. The logic is that young men who are trained in matters of depression, its origins as well as symptoms and signs thereof can help other youth understand their own feelings of despair. The importance is depression that goes unresolved can matriculate into clinical depression which can cause greater harm to one's self and family.

A final recommendation would be to create a strong marriage and family program for African American men who desire to become better leaders within their family structure. One premise would be to foster hope and courage in times of despair. It would help Black men to create a strategy and develop a strong vision for their family unit. The program would focus on problem solving techniques, anger management skills and value planning.

The second logic would be to help strengthen communication skills amongst the Black men and their spouses. It would provide detail information on conflict resolution and changing of negative cognitions. It would also seek to promote closeness amongst the Black family unit by stimulating the foundation of confession and forgiveness thereby promoting a stronger love connection with the family itself.



### **Final Summary**

This study examined Pentecostal African-American men and depression within the Black church. It explained the church's role in helping Black men heal from the wounds of despair through a Pentecostal experience. Chapter One gave the ministry context, the problem and purpose statement, basic assumptions, definitions, limitations and delimitations and thesis statement. Chapter Two gave a review of the conceptual frame work, literature review, theological foundations and the theoretical foundations. Chapter Three explains the methodological approach to research, intervention design, and the implementation of the intervention design. Chapter Four described the results from the surveys and interview questions that were conducted. Chapter Five provided the conclusion of the entire research. It details restatement of problem, acknowledge of issues, literature review, methodological review, highlighted concerns, future studies, possible application and implications, highlighted limitations ad recommendation.

**APPENDIX A: CONSENT FORM**

## Depression in Black Men: One Church's Solution

Dwayne T. Baskin

Liberty University

Liberty University School of Divinity

You are invited to be in a research study on African American men and depression and how one church over help and healing. You were selected as a possible participant because you are of the age between 15 to 65 and are of an African American decent. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Dwayne T. Baskin, a doctoral candidate in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

**Background Information:** The purpose of this study is analyze how the Black Church has helped African American men deal with depression through a Pentecostal experience

**Procedures:** If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Go to qualtrics.com and find the study of African American Men and Depression and complete the survey question. The time that is estimated to complete the survey will be between 10 to 15 minutes.
2. When finished with the survey please contact me at to schedule an appointment with me to complete an interview questionnaire which will consist of 15 to 30 minutes of your time. The interview process will be recorded and stored safely for review purposes only.

**Risks:** The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

**Benefits:**

The direct benefits participants should expect to receive from taking part in this study are increased knowledge concerning the effects, causation and solution the church has in helping African American men with depression.

**Compensation:** Participants will not] be compensated for participating in this study. Email addresses will be requested for compensation purposes, however they will be pulled and separated from your responses by qualtrics.com to maintain anonymity.

**Confidentiality:** The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report, I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject.

Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participants will be assigned a pseudonym. I will conduct the interviews in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.].
- Data will be stored on a password locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.]

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:** Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time

**How to Withdraw from the Study:**

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please inform the researcher that you wish to discontinue your participation prior to submitting your study materials. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

**Contacts and Questions:** The researcher conducting this study is Dwayne T. Baskin. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at (313) 614-6886 or at dtbaskin@yahoo.com. You may also contact the researcher's faculty chair, Dr. Johnny Baker, at jjbaker3@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher[s], **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 1887, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at

*Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.*

**Statement of Consent:** I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

The researcher has my permission to [audio-record/video-record/photograph] me as part of my participation in this study.

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Signature of Participant

Date

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Signature of Investigator

## APPENDIX B: SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. What has been your experience with depression?
2. Have you ever been depressed for long periods of time?
3. Can you explain your experience with depression?
4. Have you ever tried to hide being depressed from friends and family?
5. Have you ever felt inferior in your manhood for being depressed?
6. How do you define masculinity?
7. Do you think depression has affected your masculinity? How so?
8. Can you explain your salvation experience in coming to know Jesus Christ?
9. Do you think you can be depressed and be a Christian? Why or Why not?
10. Can you explain how your church has aided African American men cope with their depression?
11. Can you explain what impression if any was pressed upon you concerning being depressed in the black church?
12. Can you describe the measures you took while enduring the pains of despair?
13. What is your perception of African American men who are depressed?
14. During your life time how many African American men have you known who are depressed.

## APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Can you explain your theological concept on depression?
2. Have you perceived a stigma on black men who are depressed? How so?
3. What programs has your church established to address the issues of depression in black men within the church
4. In time past have you sought out professional counseling for depression? if so which type.
5. Can you explain what support system did you have surrounding you during your time of depression
6. Have you ever felt pressured to suppress your struggle with depression within your leadership sphere?
7. What areas has depression effected your life?
8. What lessons have you learned while dealing with depression.

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## INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

August 6, 2018

Dwayne Thomas Baskin IRB Approval 3389.080618: Depression in Black Men: One Church's Solution

Dear Dwayne Thomas Baskin,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):

6. Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. (NOTE: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) and (b)(3). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt.)

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project. Sincerely,

*Administrative Chair of Institutional Research*

**The Graduate School**

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